

Sectional Preview Capsules

Ross, Wildcats begin run today

DIVISION I at Hopewell-Loudon

Area team: Fremont Ross (8-12).

Today's games: Sandusky (0-20) vs. Ross, 6:30 p.m.; Findlay (11-9) vs. Ashland (4-16), 8:30 p.m.

Seeded teams: 1. Mansfield Senior (19-1), 2. Oregon Clay (17-3).

Dark horse: Findlay — The Trojans beat Clay once this season and will get another shot if they knock out Ashland tonight.

Players to watch: Kristen Hammer, Ross (10.4 points, 3.8 assists per game); Kate Achter, Clay; Canea Williams, Mansfield (24.4 ppg, 7.2 apg); Candice McQueen, Findlay.

Outlook: The Lady Giants head to what used to be their district site and pick up Great Lakes League rivals Clay and Findlay. Ross will try to beat struggling Sandusky for the second time in a week and a third time this season. Up next would be 10th-ranked Mansfield and Eastern Michigan-bound point guard Canea Williams. The Tygers pounded the Lady Giants, 80-42, on Feb. 1.

Coach's quote: "Anytime you're playing a team for the third time, you worry about that. We need to take control of the game early." — Sue Wolf, Ross.

The Messenger says: Everything goes according to plan. The seeds win the sectional, and Mansfield whips Clay in the district semifinal.

Ross, G'burg, OF advance

Lady Giants survive Sandusky upset bid

By TIMOTHY R. WOLFRUM
Sports editor

BASCOM — Something funny happened to the Fremont Ross girls on their way to a sectional final date with No. 10 Mansfield Senior.

They almost tripped over winless Sandusky.

The determined Blue Streaks, who lost to Ross twice by a total of 34 points during the regular season, led by three points early in the fourth quarter Tuesday.

But the Lady Giants settled down, and Sandusky suddenly remembered its record.

Sophomore Paige Kingsborough started a 9-0 Ross run with back-to-back buckets, and the Lady Giants survived with a 45-39 victory in the Division I sectional opener at Hopewell-Loudon High School.

The ugly victory wasn't exactly what Ross (9-12) was looking for heading into Saturday's matchup with the powerful Tygers (19-1). But at least the Lady Giants are still playing.

"Anytime you win in the tournament, you've got to be glad," Ross head coach Sue Wolf said. "I don't think they rate the victories on style."

It's a good thing because neither team had much pinache.

Ross finished 17-of-50 from the field (34 percent) and 11-of-24 from the free-throw line (45.8 percent). Sandusky committed 29 turnovers and

Girls



BASKETBALL TOURNAMENT

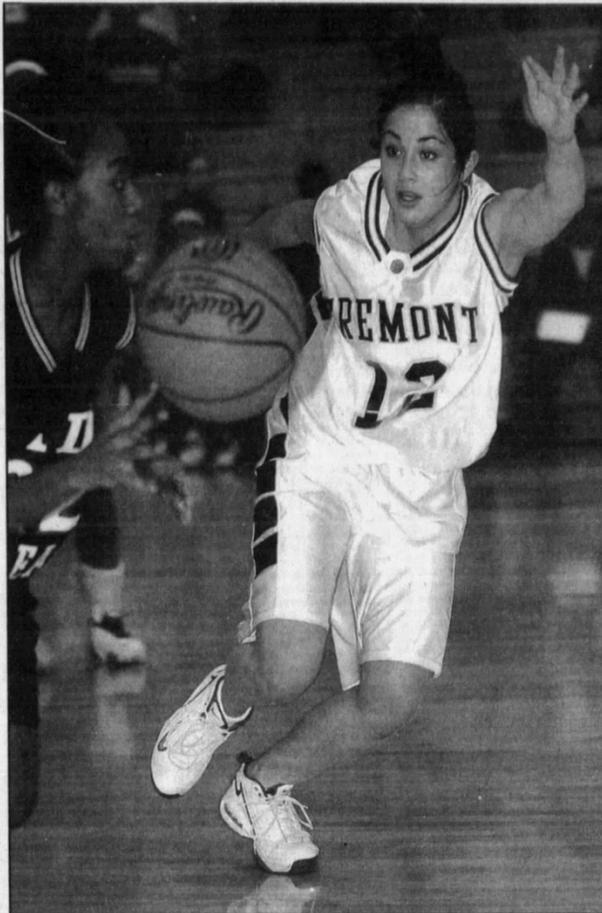
made only 14 of 42 field-goal attempts (33 percent).

Kingsborough led Ross with 16 points, 12 coming in the second half. Rachel Hammer added 11 points, seven steals and six rebounds. Stacy Hall had seven points and a team-high seven rebounds.

Sandusky (0-21) got 18 points from Kelly Wilke.

Wilke, a long-range shooter, scored all nine of her team's first-quarter points on 4-for-4 shooting. The Blue Streaks trailed 14-9 after one quarter, but they stayed within striking distance of Ross the whole game.

See ROSS, B2



News-Messenger/Ben French
NICOLE MARROQUIN, right, of Fremont Ross stays in front of Sandusky's Tiffany Reed during Tuesday's Division I sectional tournament game at Hopewell-Loudon.

Bears cruise; McCool nets 1,000th point in OF victory

News-Messenger reports

BOWLING GREEN — Gibsonburg started its post-season run with a sprint.

The Golden Bear girls basketball team jumped to a 29-4 lead following the first quarter and coasted to an 86-59 triumph over Toledo Christian in a Division IV sectional opener on Tuesday night.

Div. IV Roundup

Gibsonburg (13-8) advances to play top-seeded Van Buren (15-5) at 6:30 p.m. Saturday in a sectional semifinal back at Bowling Green. It will be the fourth time the two teams have met in the final.

Early foul trouble wasn't trouble at all for Gibsonburg. Julie Beaschler came off the bench and had a career night — 27 points and 10 rebounds — to lead her team.

"Julie Beaschler was outstanding tonight, as was the rest of our bench. Mallory (Fleming) got into foul trouble early, and they really stepped up," Gibsonburg head coach Shawn Ginnan said.

Fleming also had a double-double with 12 points and 12 rebounds. Aisha Kaemming finished with 19 points. She had 11 first-quarter points, and Joni Rupke added eight in the opening-quarter barrage.

Ross holds off Blue Streaks, looks ahead to Tygers

Continued From B1

Sandusky finally tied the game at 28 on a Jamie Matthews deuce with 33 seconds to play in the third quarter. A Vanessa Randleman layin at the buzzer sent the Streaks into the fourth quarter with a 30-28 lead.

Sandusky took its biggest lead of the second half at 33-

30 when Brittany Walker put in a rebound bucket with 6:19 to play in the game.

The Blue Streaks began to think their first win was imminent.

"I sure thought we were in a position to do the things we needed to do (to win)," Sandusky head coach Karen Phillips said. "But we've only been in six or seven close

games all year, and they weren't in any last year. It's something we need to work on as a team. It's just the experience of being in that situation."

The Streaks still led 34-33 when Ross began its run with Kingsborough's two buckets. The Lady Giants held Sandusky scoreless for nearly five minutes during

the streak and forced six turnovers.

"We always hope our defense is going to win the game for us," Wolf said. "We could have shot the ball much better. Maybe we only needed that many tonight. Maybe the next one, they'll all go in."

Ross leading scorer Kristen Hammer struggled

through a long night. She finished 1-of-15 from the field and scored two points.

But Wolf was pleased with the play the Lady Giants got off the bench. Kara Willoughby, Erica Wolfe, Tia Simms and Rachael Daugherty all scored.

Ross meets Mansfield Senior at 6:30 p.m. Saturday at Hopewell-Loudon.

Mansfield's Williams shoots down Lady Giants' upset bid

By **TIMOTHY R. WOLFRUM**
Sports editor

BASCOM — The Fremont Ross girls gained 25 points on Mansfield Senior in just three weeks.

Unfortunately for the Lady Giants and their tournament fortunes, one thing hasn't changed.

Mansfield still has star guard Canea Williams.

Williams scored 14 of her 31 points in the fourth quarter Saturday as the 10th-ranked Tygers held off a determined Ross squad, 62-49,



R. HAMMER

Michigan-bound guard nailed a pair of 3-pointers — one came from more than 25 feet — as the Tygers stretched a four-point lead to 14 in a three-minute span. “She’s really a nice play-

er,” Ross head coach Sue Wolf said of Williams. “She can pull up and hit the 3 from NBA range, and she strokes it. Plus, she can take it to the basket.”

Junior Rachel Hammer led the Lady Giants (9-12) with 15 points and four rebounds. Stacy Hall and Kristen Hammer both scored 11 points in the final game of their careers.

Brooke Brafford added 14 points for the Tygers (20-1).

See **ROSS, B3**

Girls



BASKETBALL TOURNAMENT

Ross girls end season with valiant battle against No. 10 Mansfield Sr.

Continued From B1

The Lady Giants were beaten 80-42 on Feb. 1 at Mansfield. But on Saturday, Ross stayed right with the Tygers for three and a half quarters.

Hall scored seven straight points in the final one minute, 15 seconds of the third quarter to get Ross within 41-35 heading into the fourth period.

When Rachel Hammer picked up a loose ball and scored on the Lady Giants' first possession of the fourth quarter, Ross trailed only 41-37.

Mansfield head coach Andrea Thompson couldn't help but think of the 2000 tournament. That year, Ross upset the eighth-ranked Tygers by 22 points after losing earlier in the season.

“Sue is an excellent coach,” Thompson said. “I told them (her players), ‘She’s going to bring something to the table, and you guys better be ready.’ ... I think they were shook up a little bit tonight.

“I’m glad we won, but you

can't always skate through games like this by playing the poor defense we played and not running the offense like we should have.”

Williams responded after Hammer's bucket. She missed a trey but got a second chance after a teammate's rebound and sank her second try at a 3-pointer. After an Amanda Smith 3-pointer, Williams came up with a pair of layups and her long 3-pointer. Ross's Rachael Daugherty fouled Williams on the trey, giving Mansfield the ball back. Brafford's ensuing deuce put the Tygers up 56-42 with 4:06 to play.

Wolf said Mansfield's 29-19 rebounding advantage doomed Ross.

“We're not going to get any bigger, so we better get more physical. We've got to go get it,” Wolf said.

Mansfield led 22-11 early in the second quarter Saturday and appeared ready to blow out the Lady Giants. But Ross scored 11 of the next 13 points to get within 24-22 late in the first half. The Tygers led 31-24 at halftime.

The score was 34-26 when several of the lights dimmed at Hopewell-Loudon with 4:36 to play in the third quarter. There was a 15-minute delay as the lights slowly came back on.

A Tara Ginn deuce put Mansfield up 38-26 before Hall spurred the Ross comeback late in the third quarter.

“I was real happy with the effort,” Wolf said. “I thought the seniors did a great job of leading them tonight. I told Kristen, ‘You've got to step up and show them this means a lot to you.’ I thought she did a nice job. Stacy Hall came in and got hot, and that helped us.”

Although Ross finished with a losing record, Wolf said her team responded well after starting the season 0-6. The Lady Giants turned in a 9-7 record after the poor beginning.

“I told our kids that we spotted everybody we played six games before we decided we were going to try to win a game,” she said. “If you take that off, we were actually a halfway decent team.”

Bears, Raiders, Rockets chase sectional titles today

News-Messenger reports

Saturday's winter storm hit just in time to force the postponement of three girls basketball sectional finals.

Games involving Gibsonburg, Lakota and Oak Harbor — all scheduled for the Toledo area — were delayed until today.

Gibsonburg (13-8) will meet top-seeded Van Buren (15-5) in a Division IV sectional final at 6:30 p.m. today at Bowling Green High School. The winner will advance to the Fostoria District on Thursday to battle St. Joseph Central Catholic.

Lakota (7-13) faces Northwood (14-7) for a Division III sectional title at 8:30

p.m. today at Perrysburg High School. The winner heads to the Bowling Green District.

Top-seeded Oak Harbor (20-0) does battle with Rossford (2-19) at 6:30 p.m. today at Ottawa Hills in a Division II sectional. A victory would send the Rockets to meet Fostoria on Thursday in the Old Fort District.

Also postponed until today was the second game of the Division I sectional at Hopewell-Loudon. Findlay and Clay will meet at 7:30 p.m. today. They were scheduled to play after Fremont Ross on Saturday, but icy roads caused tournament officials to postpone the contest.