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MATT SALAS (15) of Fremont Ross steals the ball from Daniel Hudson of Bowling Green during Wednesday's sectional match at Graham Memorial Soccer Stadium in Findlay.

Bobcats frustrate, boot Little Giants

Bowling Green ousts Ross from tourney

By **TIMOTHY R. WOLFRUM**
Sports editor

FINDLAY — The entire Fremont Ross boys soccer team endured a night of frustration Wednesday during a Division I sectional match against Bowling Green.

It just so happened senior Luke McElfresh personified that frustration on the most important play of the match.

With his team trailing 1-0 and four minutes, 10 seconds remaining in the match, McElfresh was awarded a penalty kick in front of the Bowling Green goal. The veteran midfielder had been Ross's designated penalty kicker all season and was 3-for-3 in that role.

This time, though, McElfresh's foot betrayed him. His shot cleared the crossbar by more than five feet, allowing Bobcats goalkeeper Jimmy Green to escape the threat without even a dive.

Bowling Green then tacked on a late goal to sew up a 2-0 victory at Graham Memorial Soccer Stadium, ousting the Little Giants from the tournament.

"He had been perfect on the season. That's the rule of thumb: If you stay perfect, you take them until you miss," Ross head coach Jeff Pendry said of McElfresh.

"When we got the PK, I turned to Ben (Hickey), my assistant, and my statement was, 'I hope he's good under pressure situations.' ... Maybe the pressure got to him. Maybe he saw the keeper moving and thought too much



TATSUYA TANAKA of Bowling Green, in red, collides with Ross goalkeeper Anthony Weiker during Wednesday's match in Findlay. Tanaka scored both goals in a 2-0 Bowling Green victory.

about it instead of picking a spot and putting the ball away."

Ross (8-7-2) fell to the unheralded Bobcats (6-8-3) despite taking six shots on goal to BG's four. Bowling Green will advance to meet either Findlay or Perrysburg in the sectional final at 7 p.m. Monday.

As a measure of the Little Giant's

struggles Wednesday, they picked up four disciplinary yellow cards for overly aggressive play and arguing with officials.

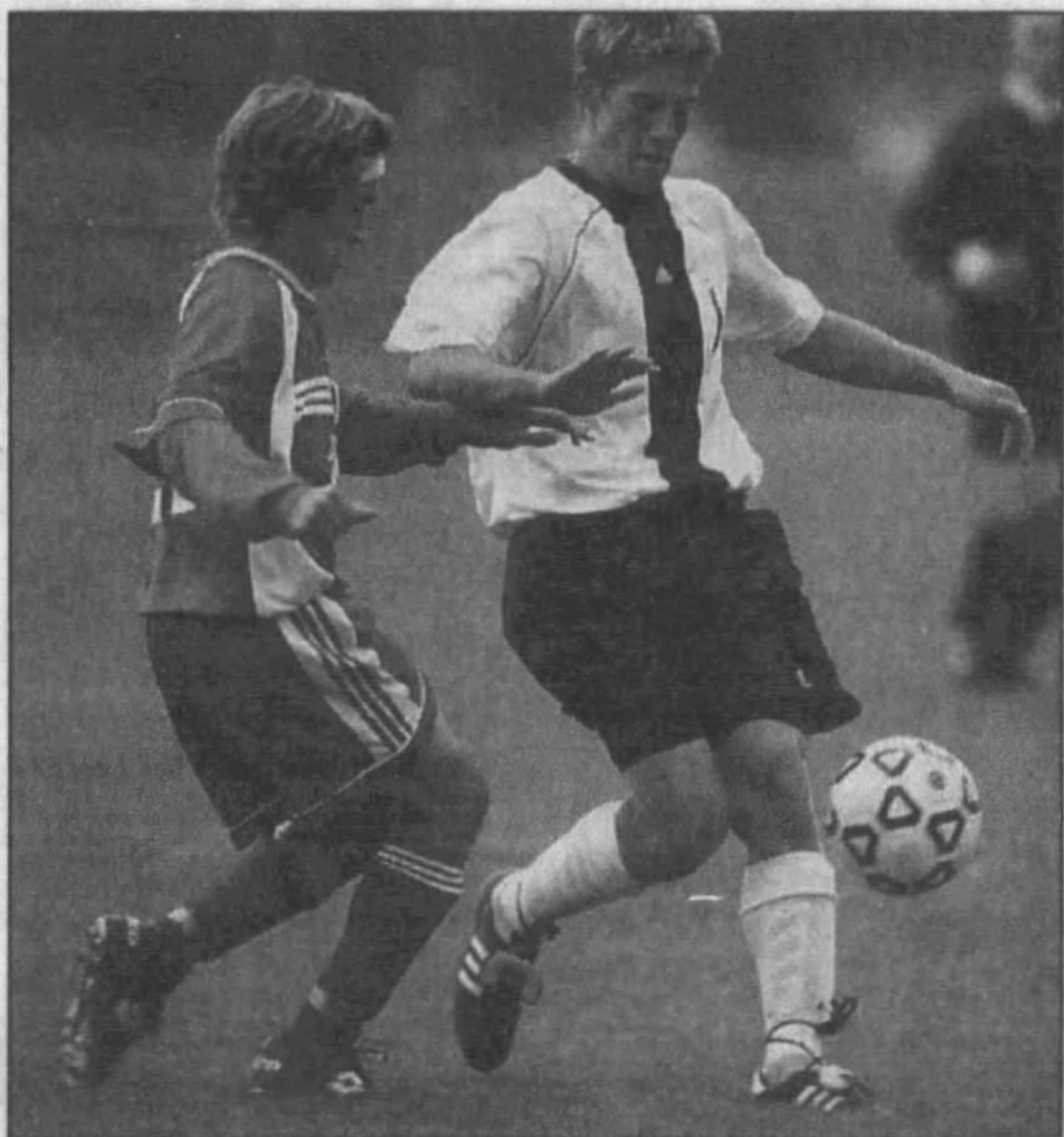
"I think a lot of the yellow cards just came out of frustration," Pendry said. "For the most part, we were controlling things. It was just that 30 yards and in, we weren't able to generate quality opportunities."

Tatsuya Tanaka, a sophomore sweeper, scored two second-half goals for the Bobcats. His first goal, in the eighth minute of the half, came off a corner kick from Matt Carle. The kick found Tanaka's right foot in front of the goal, and he directed it into the right corner past Ross goalkeeper Anthony Weiker.

With only 2:38 remaining Tanaka got a nice pass from Toby Huber and pushed a header past a charging Weiker and into the net to put the match away.

"When Tatsuya gets the chance, if he gets a little space on somebody, there's not many people going to be able to stop him," Bowling Green head coach Tim Memmer said. "He's very quick, and he does a good job finishing if he's not getting run over."

The diminutive Tanaka was Bowling Green's top scorer. He became Ross's sole defensive focus when second-leading scorer Ian Manahan left the game after colliding with McElfresh late in the first half.



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ROB STRAIGHT, right, of Fremont Ross battles Bowling Green's Alex Smith for the ball during Wednesday's Division I sectional at Findlay.

Giants bow out of Div. I sectional

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"No. 19 (Tanaka) was the main guy that we emphasized before the game," Pendry said. "We emphasized him again at halftime. When BG had the ball, somebody was supposed to be on No. 19. The unfortunate situation was on both opportunities that created their goals, the ball got played to 19, and nobody was marking him. He was their main threat, their only threat."

Ross had precious few opportunities at the net. Other than the penalty kick, the Little Giants' best chance came with 24:50 left in the match. Ross defender Danny Chavez lofted a high shot from about 35 yards that hit the crossbar. It rebounded to Tyrone George, whose rocket was stopped by Green.

As the clock ticked down, Ross pushed for a chance to tie the game. It came when George was fouled in the box by Bowling Green's Daniel Hudson. That set up McElfresh's ill-fated penalty kick.

"We pushed up the three forwards to generate more offense. It worked to our advantage. It was just unfortunate we didn't put it in," Pendry said.

Matt Salas led the Ross defense with 13 intercepts. Derek Sprouse and Rob Straight added nine and eight intercepts, respectively.

The Little Giants ended a fine season that saw them repeat as Great Lakes League champions despite losing six talented seniors, including a trio of four-year starters.

"Our feeling is we lost a lot of guys and had three seniors," Pendry said. "With the quality of the schedule we played, we feel like we did an adequate performance to last year. The overall skill wasn't as high as it was, but I think the composure and the experience level was there. Next year, we could even be stronger."