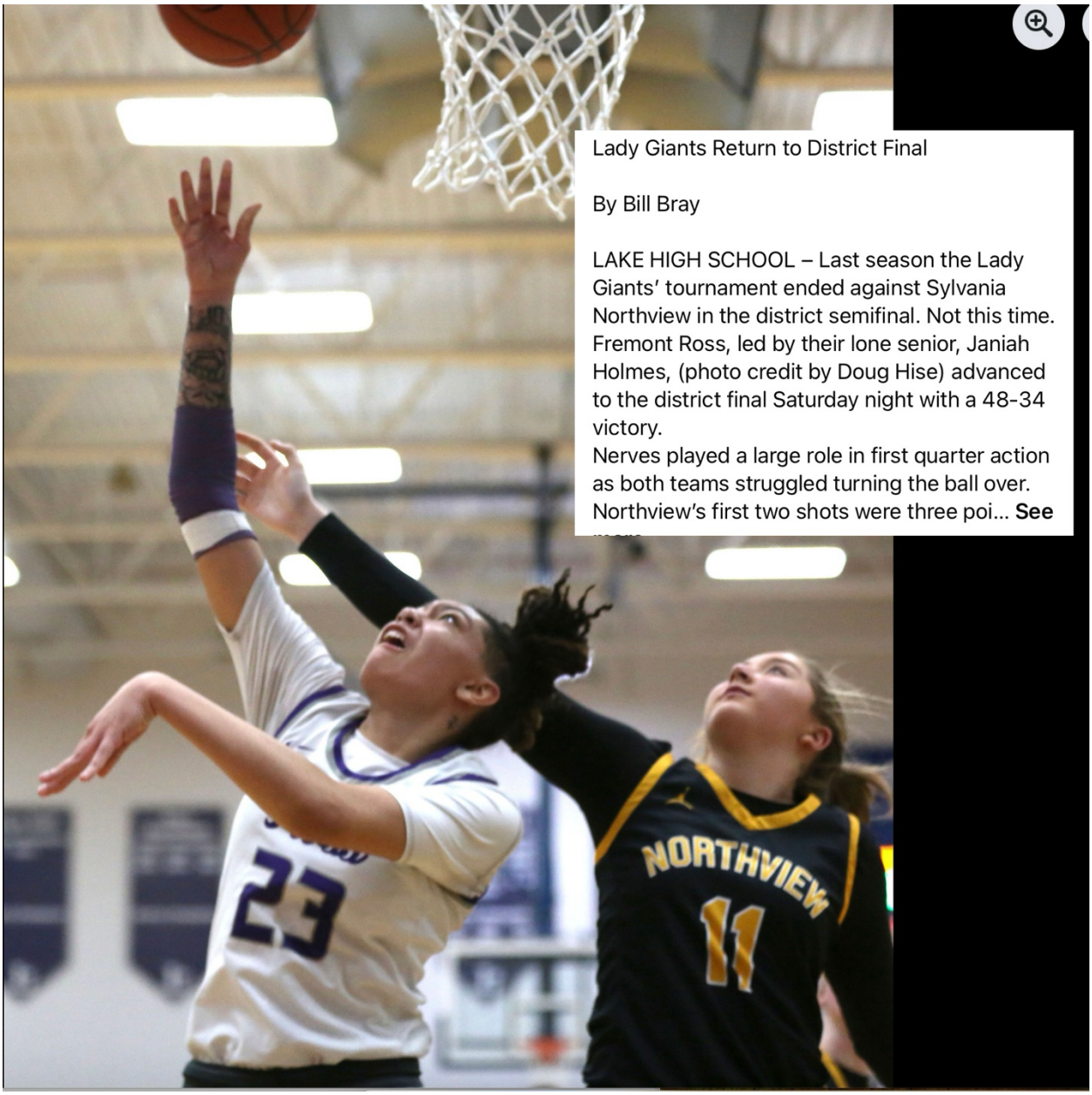
2023 Division I District Tournament



Lady Giants Return to District Final

By Bill Bray

LAKE HIGH SCHOOL – Last season the Lady Giants' tournament ended against Sylvania Northview in the district semifinal. Not this time. Fremont Ross, led by their lone senior, Janiah Holmes, (photo credit by Doug Hise) advanced to the district final Saturday night with a 48-34 victory.

Nerves played a large role in first quarter action as both teams struggled turning the ball over. Northview's first two shots were three poi... **See**

Ross' Janiah Holmes looks to score. DOUG HISE/NEWS-MESSENGER

Holmes sits alone atop Ross' rebound list

Matthew Horn
Fremont News-Messenger
USA TODAY NETWORK

MILLBURY - You can't stop Janiah Holmes from doing what she does well.

You can play physical and make her earn every rebound, but that's exactly what the Fremont Ross senior does. Athletic and determined, Holmes has the most rebounds in Little Giants history.

Holmes collected a defensive rebound, before Ross ultimately scored the next six points to close the game in a 51-42 victory Saturday over top-seed Anthony Wayne in a Division I district final at Lake.

"They were tough," she said. "You have to pull through. We knew we had to stop [Elise Bender]. I knew it was going to be tough, I have to be tougher."

Two-seed Ross (22-3) plays top-seed Olmsted Falls at 6 p.m. Tuesday at Sandusky. The Little Giants matched the single-season program record for wins.

Bender scored 27 points Saturday, but 14 were in the first quarter. Rebounding and working to shut down an opposing post isn't new to Holmes, who enjoys the dirty work.

Holmes, who averages 11.3 points and eight rebounds per game, was first-team in the Three Rivers Athletic Conference. She's proud to be first on the rebound list for Ross.

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Holmes

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"It's not easy," she said. "You have to go every day and give it your best. It's tough. You fight through. It feels good."

Holmes, who is 5-foot-10, has played all over the floor for Vela.

"When she came in, she had a little skill," he said. "We turned her into a guard and then we put her back in the post. She's come a long way with her length and the way she seals. She listens. When you tell her she's not very good at something, she works until it's a strength.

"She can dribble down hill. She's tough, and she wants to win. She's a fun girl to coach, and she doesn't want to be done yet."

She's fun for her teammates as well. She can run the floor and often provide point guard Destiny Robinson with plenty of margin for error with an immense catch radius.

This allows Holmes to reach and deflect balls away from opponents that she has no chance to secure, so Holmes can chase them down for herself. She can jump twice, compared to once for many girls in the post, and slither through congestion with a little agility.

She can bring a defensive rebound up the floor and keep possessions alive on offense.

"She works for it," Robinson said. "Rebounding is a big part of the game. Outsiders don't pay attention, but rebounding can define a game, especially in moments like these."

Holmes is the only senior on the first team in program history to advance to regional.

"It's special because we've never been to this level," she said. "Leave it all on the court."

Even if you have to first collect it from another court you left it on. That's how Holmes rebounds.

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Ross' Janiah Holmes looks to score. DOUG HISE/NEWS-MESSENGER

HIGH SCHOOL GIRLS BASKETBALL

Ross reaches regional tourney for first time

Matthew Horn
Fremont News-Messenger
USA TODAY NETWORK

MILLBURY - Destiny Robinson took a rough fall and banged the back of her head on the floor.

She won't have trouble remembering the night she scored 32 points and Fremont Ross advanced to regional for the first time in program history, beating Anthony Wayne 51-42 in a Division I district final at Lake.

The district second-seed Little Giants (22-3) play top-seed Olmsted Falls at 6 p.m. Tuesday at Sandusky. Ross tied the single-season program record for victories.

"I have a headache," Robinson said. "I took a second. You have to go into another gear. You have to finish for your team. I'm a competitor. I didn't care if I hit [my head] or not."

Ross led 44-42 when Robinson tried to secure a possession and got swung onto her back. She rose to her feet slowly, eyes clearly watering.

Still, she split two free throws with 56 seconds left. Janiah Holmes collected a defensive rebound and Lyndi Wolf rebounded a missed free throw on the offensive end.

Robinson made six free throws to close out the game.

"I was in rhythm," she said. "When you're in rhythm, you can't stop it. It flows, it's natural. It's nothing forced."

No, the only thing Robinson forces are awkward movements from defenders who can't stop when they thought Robinson was headed somewhere else with her dribble.

"She knew with two minutes left, take care of the ball and hit free throws," Little Giants coach Juan Vela said. "She's going to take charge. When we need her, she knows she's a leader. The ball is in her hands 75 percent of the time and she knows what she has to do."

Anthony Wayne led 34-31 early in the third quarter, before nine points from Robinson during a 13-3 run for Ross. Robinson dropped in two free throws for a 44-37 advantage, but Anthony Wayne's Elise Bender turned a steal into a three-point play and added a bucket for the 44-42 deficit.

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