

Ross hopes experience makes up for loss of talent this spring

By Kevin Shields

Sports writer

FREMONT ROSS

Coach: Lisa Wolfe, 7th year.

Last year: 5-13 overall, 1-6 TRAC (sixth).

Key Departures: Malcolm Leake, Erik Paulson, Curtis Hinsch and Josh Woughter

Key Returnees: Seniors Taran Rodriguez and Mason Sloma; junior Jonathan Alexander; sophomores Nick Hoffman, Robert Joerg, Connor Martin, Joe Meyer, Nate Rellinger and Dylan Willey.

Key Newcomers: Seniors Gaetan Brugger, Nate Garza and Domenic Meins; juniors Dylan Henry, Nick Owen, Carl Spears and Casey Wright; sophomores Marquel Harris and Justin Havice; and freshmen Marshall Kuieck, Henry Nguyen and Hunter Smith.

Outlook: Ross lost Leake — a four-time district qualifier — but the return of five lettermen, plus the addition of two talented foreign exchange students has coach Wolfe looking forward to the season. “We will be a solid team with lots of



Oak Harbor's Eli Boldt returns the serve during a high school tennis match against Fremont SJCC on Thursday, Mar 29, 2012. JONATHON BIRD/NEWS-MESSENGER

depth,” she said. “They are great conditioners and haven’t been intimidated by the cold practices we’ve had outside the last couple of weeks. I’m sure with all the talent we have this year and the positive attitudes, we will have a successful

season. Joerg played No. 3 singles and some doubles as a freshmen going 14-22 overall and earning honorable mention all-TRAC honors. Rodriguez was 12-22 a year ago, while

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Rellinger was 12-25 and Alexander was 10-22. Sloma lettered as a sophomore, but took his junior year off. "He's ready to play," Wolfe said. Brugger, the goalie on the Ross hockey team this winter, is a talented foreign exchange player from Switzerland. Kuieck^N and Nguyen are two freshmen expected to jump in and compete. Hoffman, Martin, Meyer and Willey are JV players from a year ago that bring some experience.

Tennis: Bowling Green 4, Ross 1

FREMONT — Nate Rellinger and Connor Martin earned a 6-3, 6-3 win at No. 2 doubles for the Little Giants Monday as they dropped a non-league boys tennis match to Bowling Green.

Taran Rodriguez and Mason Sloma dropped a 6-3, 6-4 decision for Ross (0-1) at first doubles.

Ross tennis team has depth, sweeps SJCC

By Kevin Shields

Sports writer

FREMONT—Taran Rodriguez is seeing a culture change in the Ross tennis program.

Known more for the play of talented individuals in recent years, Rodriguez is a senior in a Little Giants' lineup loaded with depth and versatility.

"A lot people have really stepped it up this year," said Rodriguez on Tuesday, after Ross topped St. Joseph Central Catholic 5-0 in a non-league match at Alumni Fields. "Even with the loss of Malcolm (Leake) as a collective team, we have way more depth this year. We can already tell we're going to be competitive in the league

this year."

Rodriguez teamed up with newcomer Gaetan Brugger for a 6-0, 6-0 win at first doubles Tuesday. Brugger, a foreign exchange student from Switzerland, played goalie for the Ross hockey team this winter and is pretty talented with the tennis racket as well.

"We know right now that we're not as good as a St. John's (Jesuit), but we want to get to that level very soon," Rodriguez said. "We got a bright future ahead of us."

Added sophomore Robert Joerg, "Considering we had a player that could beat St. John's that gives us hope, too. If Malcolm could win matches against them, any of us can if we work

and put in the dedication that he had."

Leake, now competing at the University of Mount Union, earned a spot on the all-district team four times and was by far the Little Giants top player since stepping in as a freshman. No one on Ross' record had a winning record in 2012 other than Leake. Rodriguez was 12-22 as a junior, as was sophomore Nate Rellinger.

Rellinger topped SJCC's Hunter Harrison at second singles, winning 6-0, 6-1 as he's started the year 2-0 after he and second doubles partner Connor Martin earned the lone victory for the Little Giants in a 4-1 loss to Bowling Green Monday.

"Connor was a JV player last

year and you can tell he's really matured with how he mentally thinks about the game and how he approaches it," Rellinger said.

Martin played with Mason Sloma Tuesday, earning another 6-0, 6-0 decision for the Little Giants (1-1). Joerg earned the fourth 6-0, 6-0 victory with a victory at No. 1 singles.

"I think we all served well tonight. That was one thing I saw from both teams," Joerg said. "For us, though, we had guys playing aggressively and going for their shots."

Veteran coach Lisa Wolfe will have lots of wiggle room in determining her lineups match by match.

"I have a very deep team

with talent and it's going to give me that ability this year to fluctuate different positions," she said. "That's a very good thing to have and it's something we haven't always had here."

"They're just a very enjoyable group of young men."

A group that enjoys competing against their cross-town rivals.

"It's always fun playing St. Joe," Rodriguez said. "It was a good competitive match that allowed us to work on a lot of smaller things tonight. We'll be ready for Clyde on Wednesday."

Ross will travel to Clyde today for a 4 p.m. match.

KShields@gannett.com

419-334-1043

Twitter: @KShieldsNM

Tennis: Ross 3, Clyde 2

CLYDE — Gaetan Brugger battled back from an opening set loss to win the next two, 6-0, 6-2, and steal a win at third singles for the Little Giants as they squeaked by the Fliers in a Wednesday non-league contest.

Taran Rodriguez won 6-3, 6-1 at second singles for Ross (2-1) which also got a three set win at second doubles from Nate Rellinger and Connor Martin.

Isaac Prunty won a three set match at first singles for Clyde (0-1). Eli Gibson and Daniel Wyss were 6-3, 6-1 winners at first doubles.

Tennis: Fremont Ross 4, Tiffin Columbian 1

TIFFIN — The Fremont Ross boys' tennis team swept the Tornadoes singles matches in a 4-1 win Thursday. Robert Joerg, Taran Rodriguez and Gaetan Brugger each won in straight sets.

In doubles action, the Little Giants (3-1) split matches as Nate Rellinger and Connor Martin (No. 2 doubles) won 6-1, 7-5, and Mason Sloma and Dom Meins (No. 1 doubles) lost in three sets.

Tennis: Bowling Green 4, Ross 1

Nate Rellinger and Connor Martin remained unbeaten (5-0) in doubles play topping the Bobcats' second doubles team of Jaden Nichols and Holly Rothweiler 6-2, 5-7, 7-6 (2) on Monday but the Little Giants fell in the first round of the OTCA Tournament.

Taran Rodriguez and Gaetan Brugger won 6-0 in the first set at first doubles before losing 6-2, 6-2.

The Woodmore girls' track and field team won the first Northern Buckeye Conference tri-meet of the season held at Rossford. Woodmore had 62 points to better Otsego, who had 53 points, and Rossford, which had 55 points.

Freshman Courtney Burner won two individual events and was a member of the winning 1,600 relay. Burner won the 3,200 in a time of 12:21.0 and the 1,600 with a time of 5:42.0. Other winners for Woodmore included senior Karli Keaton in the long jump (16-3), senior Megan Pendleton in the discus (118-0), and freshman Jessica Sotak in the pole vault (8-0). Keaton and Burner comprised half of the 1,600 relay team that won the event in a time of 4:38.0.

The Woodmore boys track and field team won six events and finished second in the first Northern Buckeye Conference tri-meet of the season at Rossford. Woodmore had 62 points to finish behind Otsego (83.5 pts.) and ahead of the host school (29.5 pts.).

Winning events for the Wildcats was senior Michael Travis in the 110 hurdles (17.2) and 300 hurdles (47.0), freshman Zach Sandwisch in the 400 (51.6), junior Dan Sprinski in the high jump (5-8), junior Deric Anthony in the 800 (2:11.0) and senior Ryan Sandwisch in the pole vault (10-6).

Tennis: Ross 5, Lima Senior 0

LIMA — The Fremont Ross boys' tennis team traveled to Li-

ma Tuesday and swept the Spartans 5-0.

Robert Joerg (No.1 singles), Jonathan Alexander (No. 2 singles) and Gaetan Brugger (No.3 singles) all won in straight sets for the Little Giants.

Ross (4-2) also took both doubles matches in straight sets behind the teams of Taran Rodriguez and Mason Sloma (No. 1 doubles) and Nate Rellinger and Connor Martin (No. 2 doubles).

SBC triangular track

Rebekah Raburn won the 100, Athena Eli the 200 and Allie Dresser the 800 for Oak Harbor's girls.

Trinity Gephart won the 1,600, Allie Dombrowsky the 300 hurdles and Andrea Cecil the long jump for the Rockets. Dombrowsky, Paige Velliquette, Sidney Allen and Rayburn won the 4x100 while Allie Jett, Allen, Karis DeWalt and Eli won the 4x200.

Gephart, DeWalt, Dombrowsky and Eli won the 4 x 400 relay while Coral Petersen, Maria Boers, Gephart and Dresser took the 4x800 relay.

Ben Wollenslegel won both hurdle events and the high jump, Collin Rieman the 400 and Nicklas Huey the discus for Clyde's boys.

Clayton Guhn won the pole vault and Damien Coburn the long jump while Thomas Davis, Trent Johnson, Guhn and Kaleb Herrera won the 4x100 for the Fliers.

Tressa Eberly won the 400, Olivia Hammons the 3,200 and Kelly Wollenslegel the 100 hurdles for Clyde's girls. Paula Wollenslegel won the high jump,

Tennis: Port Clinton 3, Ross 2

Nate Rellinger and Connor Martin moved to 6-0 at second doubles, dropping only two games in a pair of 6-1 set victories as the Little Giants (4-3) dropped a non-league match to the Redskins.

Ross' Gaetan Brugger battled back from a 6-4 defeat in his first set to come back and win 6-2 and 6-1 over Max Mercoso at third singles where he's 4-0 on the spring.

"Once again Gaetan did a fabulous job at third singles," Little Giants coach Lisa Wolfe said. "He's a very calm and cool player. He knows how to win matches by picking apart his opponent and finding their weaknesses.

Tennis: Findlay 5, Ross 0

FREMONT — The Little Giants' first doubles team of Taran Rodriguez and Mason Slo-ma dropped a pair of 6-4 sets in the closest match for Ross in a loss to the Trojans on Tuesday in Three Rivers Athletic Conference play.

Nate Rellinger and Connor Martin lost their first doubles match for the Little Giants (4-4, 1-1), dropping a 6-2, 6-3 decision to Findlay's Stephen Hoban and Mike Sapienza.

Tennis: Norwalk 3, Ross 2

Gaetan Brugger won 12 straight games to sweep his third singles match, but the Little Giants fell to the Truckers on Wednesday.

Ross (4-5) also got a win at first doubles from Robert Joerg and Taran Rodriguez who earned a 6-2, 6-1 victory.

“It was a great team effort and a close match,” Little Giants coach Lisa Wolfe said. “Taran and Robert played with a lot of confidence. Gaetan had a steady match. He’s a great third singles player.”

BELLEVUE SHOWS PROMISE IN FINISH

Redmen get second against bigger teams

By Yaneek Smith

News-Messenger correspondent

FREMONT — Behind two firsts and one third-place finish, the Norwalk Truckers won the 2013 Little Giants Tennis Doubles Invitational on Saturday.

Norwalk was first with 77 points, led by the winning first doubles team of Trevor Bowers and Harry Love and fourth doubles team of Collin Buckstaff and Kyle Lang.

Bellevue was second with 64 points, followed by Anthony Wayne (59), Port Clinton (58) and Bowling Green (44). Fremont Ross' "A" team was sixth with 28 points, followed by Huron (26) and Ross' "B" team.

The Redmen got one first- and two third-place finishes. Seniors Tony Harper and Cody Henderson won all three matches at third doubles comfortably. They beat Bowling Green (6-2, 6-3), Port Clinton (6-0, 6-1) and Anthony Wayne (6-3, 6-3).

"I'm thrilled, I really am," Bellevue coach Jim Picciuto said. "It shows how much of a team sport tennis is (because) our second and fourth doubles teams placed third. We have a lot of seniors that have been playing for four years. I'm pleased because we went up against some good teams and some bigger schools in Norwalk and Anthony Wayne."

Anthony Wayne got two second- and one third-place finishes to finish a point ahead of the Port Clinton for third place. The Redskins got a first-place finish from their second doubles team of Matt Fillmore and Jeff Griffin.

Fillmore and Griffin had a bumpy road to victory but played well when it mattered most.

After defeating Anthony Wayne, 6-3, 6-0, the duo lost the first set to Bellevue, 4-6, before recovering to win the second, 6-4, and winning the tiebreaker, 10-8, to claim victory. In their win over Bowling Green in the final, Fillmore and Griffin won the first set in a tiebreaker, 7-6 (8) before cruising to victory in the



Ross' Taran Rodriguez returns a shot at the Little Giants Tennis Doubles Invitational. DOUG HISE/NEWS-MESSENGER CORRESPONDENT

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second set, 6-0.

"They did very well," Port Clinton coach Aaron Taylor said. "They played a strong mental game. They won a big tiebreaker in their second match and got back to playing their game and hitting their shots. They got themselves going mentally."

Ross, which had to use two teams in the event because another school backed out at the last minute, got a fourth- and two fifth-place finishes from its "A" team.

Mason Sloma and Gaetan

Brugger finished fourth at second-doubles, defeated the Ross "B" team in the first round before losing in heartbreaking fashion to Bowling Green, the eventual runner-up. The Bobcat duo of Justin Overhulse and Austin Ezzone needed two tiebreakers to defeat Sloma and Brugger, winning the first set, 7-6 (2), losing the second, 4-6 and winning the final tiebreaker, 10-6, to eek out the win.

"Mason and Gaetan did a great job today," Ross coach Lisa Wolfe said. "I'm proud of the way they played. Everybody (on our team) probably could've done a little better (but) this is a tough tournament."

Tennis: St. Francis 5, Ross 0

TOLEDO — The Little Giants were swept in straight sets by the Knights Tuesday in a Three Rivers Athletic Conference match-up. Ross (4-6, 1-2) will try to rebound against Whitmer on Thursday.

Tennis: Ross 5, Whitmer 0

FREMONT — Ross' Robert Joerg didn't lose a game, dominating the Panthers' Alex Bayes 6-0, 6-0 at first singles as the Little Giants swept Whitmer in a Thursday Three Rivers Athletic Conference match.

Taran Rodriguez won 6-2, 6-1 at second singles for Ross (5-6, 1-2) while Gaetan Brugger was a 6-3, 7-6 (7-2) winner at No. 3 singles.

The Little Giants top doubles team of Jonathan Alexander and Dom Meins won 6-1, 6-2. Nate Rellinger and Connor Martin were 6-2, 6-0 winners at second doubles.

"Everyone was playing very focused and with confidence," Ross coach Lisa Wolfe said. "It was a nice win and a total team effort."

Little Giants third on two courts

By Matthew Horn

Sports writer

PORT CLINTON — Absence makes the heart grow fonder.

Fremont Ross' Taran Rodriguez and Nate Rellinger played No. 2 doubles together last season before Rodriguez shifted to No. 2 singles this year while Rellinger remained at second doubles. The two were reunited Friday and finished third at No. 2 at the Port Clinton Doubles Tournament.

"We went to a big tiebreaker," Rodriguez said of the match for third. "We were calm, we knew what we wanted to do and we accomplished the goal of winning."

Rodriguez and Rellinger enjoy playing together but have tried to utilize their time apart to continue to improve and experience the game from a different perspective.

"Playing together is nice," Rellinger said. "You develop chemistry. Every once in a while you have to split it up. We were apart for awhile and when we're back together it's so much better. It was fun to play together."

Connor Martin and Marshall Kuieck finished third at No. 4 for the Little Giants. The pair tried to hit winners off the second serve but fell to eventual champ Edison in their second match.

"It went to deuce a lot," Martin said. "One of the deuces was at least 15 minutes. We couldn't get away from the net guy."

Martin plays second doubles this season while Kuieck is the top Little Giant on junior varsity.

"It was exciting," Kuieck said of moving up. "It was good to play with a partner with more experience and learn different (techniques)."

Clyde's Isaac Prunty and Alex Medley were third at No. 1.

"We started off slow but after a couple games we warmed up and played well," Prunty said. "We went up 7-2 (in our final match) and just had to close it out."

Prunty plays No. 1 singles for the Fliers while Medley is typically at No. 2 singles.

"It's fun," Prunty said of the doubles format. "It's relaxed. It's about communication and making smart decisions."

Clyde finished fifth among eight teams while Lima Shawnee was first. Ross was sixth and St. Joseph Central Catholic eighth.

Matches in the winners' bracket consisted of one 10-game super-set while those in the losers' bracket were played to eight.

mhorn@gannett.com

419-734-7519

Twitter:@MatthewHornNH

Tennis: Ross 5, Fostoria 0

FOSTORIA — Robert Joerg (No. 1 singles) and Taran Rodriguez (No. 2 singles) each won 6-0, 6-0 in singles play as the Little Giants shutout the Redmen in a Monday non-league tennis match.

Nate Rellinger and Connor Martin were also 6-0, 6-0 winners at second doubles for Ross (6-6). Jonathan Alexander and Dom Meins won 7-5, (10-2) at first doubles.

Tennis: Toledo CC 3, Ross 2

FREMONT — The Little Giants won both doubles matches Tuesday, but the team lost 3-2 to the Fighting Irish in Three Rivers Athletic Conference action.

Taran Rodriguez teamed up with Mason Sloma to win the No. 1 doubles match over Andrew Kirkam and Aaron Powers, 6-1, 6-1. Ross' No. 2 doubles team of Nate Rellinger and Connor Martin also won in straight sets.

Robert Joerg (No. 1 singles), Jonathan Alexander (No. 2 singles) both lost in straight sets and Gaetan Brugger (No. 3 singles) lost his match in three to Central's Isaac Moline, 6-2, 4-6, 3-6.

"Gaetan did a nice job keeping the ball in play and staying positive," Ross coach Lisa Wolfe said.

Tennis: Oregon Clay 3, Ross 2

FREMONT — The Little Giants boys tennis team fell to the Eagles 3-2 Thursday in the Three Rivers Athletic Conference.

Gaetan Brugger (No. 3 singles) was the lone Ross victor in singles play. Nate Rellinger and Connor Martin (No. 2 doubles) beat Clay's Danny Klorler and Jared Lutz in three sets for the other team point.

Robert Joerg (No. 1 singles), Taran Rodriguez (No. 2 singles) and the duo of Mason Sloma and Jonathan Alexander (No. 1 doubles) all lost their matches in straight sets for Ross (6-8, 2-4).

ST. JOHN'S JESUIT 5, FREMONT ROSS 0

» **Site:** Shadow Valley Tennis Club, Maumee

» **No. 1 singles:** K. Brown def. Robert Joerg (R), 6-0, 6-0.

» **No. 2 singles:** R. Brown def. Taran Rodriguez, 6-0, 6-0.

» **No. 3 singles:** Zychowicz def. Gaetan Brugger (R), 6-0, 6-0.

» **No. 1 doubles:** Carter/Majdalani def. Jonathan Alexander/Dom Meins, 6-0, 6-0.

» **No. 2 doubles:** Micklar/Laungani def. Nate Rellinger/Connor Martin (R), 6-0, 6-1.

» **Records:** Ross 6-9 (2-5 TRAC).

» **Next:** Ross at Sandusky, Wednesday.

Tennis: Sandusky 3, Ross 2

SANDUSKY — Jonathan Alexander and Dom Meins won 6-1, 6-0 at first doubles for the Little Giants who dropped a Wednesday non-league decision to the Blue Streaks.

Ross also got a win from Nate Rellinger and Connor Martin, who won 6-3, 6-3 at second doubles.