

District berths bittersweet for Giants

Ross players 'shocked' by coach's death

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Staff writer

The feeling of achievement quickly turned to sorrow.

After a trio of Fremont Ross tennis players accomplished its goal of qualifying for the district tournament on Friday, the Little Giants were hit by a backhand of bad news.

The Ross players — Dave Albrechta, Christopher and Justin



J. OROFINO

Orofino — learned that long-time assistant coach Gil Ravas had passed away just a short while earlier.

Ravas, 67, was a volunteer coach with the Ross program, but so

much more.

"He was more like an uncle or grandpa for a kids," Little Giants head coach Rick LaFountain said. "He'd do anything for the kids. He'd stay late or come early and hit balls with the kids. He gave real good advice to the kids because he was a good tennis player himself."



C. OROFINO

"I started here in 1996 and Gil has been here every year except one as a volunteer assistant. Probably out of the 190 wins I've got in my career, he's been here for 165 of them."

Ravas, an Oak Harbor native, also aided the St. Joe Central Catholic girls program, the Oak Harbor teams and the Ross girls team off and on. The 1953 graduate of Oak Harbor is survived by his wife Carol, son James Ravas of Fremont and daughters Jackie (Tim) Shiets and Jodi (Todd) Buehler.

The entire Ross tennis team attended the family's private service on Monday.

"Everyone was shocked," LaFountain said. "We were coming home from the sectional tournament. We were calling his wife to tell him how we did and she said Gil had passed away a half an hour before we finished up. There was a lot of emotion from the kids."

District play begins at 9 a.m. Friday at Sandusky High School. Taking the court will be bittersweet for the Ross players. The top two singles players and doubles teams qualify for the 84th annual state tournament on May 30-31 at the Ohio State University Stickney Tennis Center.

"It was shocking," said junior

Dave Albrechta, who owns an 18-11 record. "And the worst part was coming to practice and not having him there. He was always the first one at practice. He gave us a lot of support mentally and spiritually."

Albrechta finished fourth at the sectional and will face Deepak Adappa of St. John's, who won the Jermain Park sectional in Toledo.

"I got fourth at sectional, so I'll have a real tough player first round. But, yeah, Gil will be on all of our minds."

All season long playing at No. 1 singles, Albrechta has faced the toughest competition, which his coach hopes will pay off.

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"He's had a real tough last couple of weeks as far as competition goes," LaFountain said. "But he's playing solid tennis right now."

The Orofino team boasts an impressive 24-6 record and opens district play with the Toledo St. Francis team of Jeff Serpa and Justin Jordan, which took second at the Perrysburg sectional.

The brothers have worked with Ravas four seasons and at several summer camps.

"He was a coach and then he was more than a coach," Christo-

pher Orofino said. "He helped all of us out by giving us to do this and do that. I think of Gil every time I step on the court. When I hit the ball out of bounds, I see Gil sitting over there saying 'Keep it in play.'"

Added Justin Orofino, "Even if he just got done playing two matches, he stuck around and hit balls with us. He was a quiet gentleman, but we learned so much about tennis from him, especially in the summer at camps.

"After we found out that we made districts and coach told us he passed away, from then on, it was all for Gil."

LaFountain said that not since Mike Moxley and Marc Brough has a Little Giant doubles team fared so well. The Orofinos came out for tennis after being cut from the baseball team as freshmen. Their hard work has gotten them to the district for the first time.

"They're playing as well as any Ross doubles team has played in the last few years," LaFountain said. "I don't know if there's been a Ross doubles team win more than 24 matches. They could be heading where no team has been before."