

BOYS GOLF
STATE TOURNAMENT

Ross looking good heading into D-I tourney

By Kevin Shields

Sports writer

FREMONT — No hole has been too long for the Fremont Ross golf team this week.

As the Little Giants have readied themselves to make just their second trip to the state golf tournament in the last 37 years, they've tried to make sure they get as close to the pins as possible.

The Ross golfers know they'll have to muscle up if they want to be successful on Ohio State's 7,400-yard Scarlet Course.

The Division I state tournament will tee it up Friday and conclude on Saturday. Ross topped second-place Findlay, 316-317, at Red Hawk Run on Thursday to qualify by winning the district title. It'll be the Little Giants' first trip to Columbus since they last shot a 316 to qualify at the same course, nearly seven years to the date in 2004.

Scarlet is a course that features plenty of sand and trees to go with its lengthy fairways and massive greens.

"We're playing every hole as far back as we can, right next to the grass at the back of the tee-box," second-year Ross coach Jim Scharer said. "The sand down there doesn't worry me too much. We played out of the bunkers all last week at Red Hawk Run.

"I'm more concerned with the kids being intimidated by the length. We haven't played many 7,000-yard courses."

So far, though, it's just tough removing the smiles on the kid's faces.

The team wore their district medals to school last Friday, including senior Brandon Hoelzer — the district medalist — whose taken more pleasure in the fact he's not making his first trip to state alone.

"He was the most excited one of us," junior Brandon Weiker said. "He was smiling and giving each of us hugs."

Hoelzer topped Norwalk's Dustin Lieber in a playoff after each golfer shot an even-par 72. Upon winning, he immediately turned to Weiker and said "you're the reason we made it to state this year," to the first-year varsity player.

Hoelzer missed the state tournament by a stroke as a junior and lost in a five-man playoff as a sophomore.

Weiker shot an 86, which along with a pair of 79s from senior Clay Schwartz and sophomore Albert Baumann gave Ross its 316 total. Junior Michael Hall wasn't far behind, carding an 88.

"I had been playing football," Weiker said, who is also good bowler for Ross and plays baseball too. "But I was hit with a

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lot of injuries, which was getting me messed up for my main sports. I just didn't want to deal with that stuff anymore."

Scharer said there are few players more determined than Weiker.

"He's a true ball-striker," he said. "He'll hit balls all day for you. He works really hard, and he's a great teammate."

Unselfishness was the main characteristic shown by the Little Giants this season.

"If we as a team couldn't have made it, I'd of liked to of seen Brandon (Hoelzer) make it," Baumann said after last Thursday's round. "He had all kinds of bad luck trying to make it before and I look up to him and Clay."

Hoelzer won the Three Rivers Athletic Conference player of the year honors, winning by 20 strokes. The honor was based on his overall totals in all four of the league's tournaments.

"It's going to be so much fun having my teammates down at the tournament with me," Hoelzer said after last Thursday's title. "They all came up big for us."

Hoelzer and Schwartz have made a great one-two punch for Ross.

Schwartz was on pace to challenge Hoelzer last Thursday, until he had a mishap on a par-3 when he had three shots land in the water.

"I was 1-under after 14, then I

made a nine, so I really didn't have a lot of time to make-up shots," he said. "I just tried to keep it in the 70s."

Schwartz said practicing play in the sand on the greens and off the tee were the priority in his practice rounds at the Fremont Country Club. To him, however, the pressure is off. Sectionals and districts were the hard part.

"Hopefully, it's going to be fun down there," Schwartz said. "It means a lot. We expected to make it down there the past couple years and we didn't, so to do it this year is special."

The team's big upset at the districts has yet to sink in.

"I don't think it will all sink in until we're in the practice round down in Columbus on the first tee at Scarlet," Scharer said.

For Scharer, golf has brought him his first opportunity to coach at the state level.

The former boys basketball coach at Lake, and longtime basketball assistant came close to reaching the state Final Four in basketball in 1996 as an assistant for Dan Dippman at Genoa. But the Comets fell in the Division III regional final to top-ranked Archbold.

"We just want to make sure our kids don't get to the point where they're tired of it," Scharer said. "You don't want tired kids when you go down there. You want to be fresh, physically and mentally."

Email Kevin Shields at kshields@gannett.com.

Ross golfers struggle on Day 1 at Scarlet Course

News-Messenger reports

Weather canceled Thursday's practice rounds at the Division I boys state golf tournament.

That meant Friday was the first time the five golfers from Fremont Ross saw the Scarlet Course at The Ohio State University — and it showed.

The Little Giants finished the first day 12th out of 12 teams, with a team score of 346.

"We came out of the gates really tight," Ross coach Jim Scharer said. "This course won't show you any forgiveness."

Little Giants 12th of 12 Division I teams

"I'm looking forward to us having a lot better day (today). I expect big things from our guys, and I think we can shoot close to 330. The weather will be better, the course will be dryer and our guys should know what to expect now."

Senior Brandon Hoelzer, making his first state appearances after two near misses, led the Little Giants with a 75, putting him in a tie for seventh.

"I'm really happy with Brandon, he did an outstanding job,"

Scharer said. "We're shooting for the top-five, if not medalist honors for him, and having him get first team all-Ohio."

"If he can come out, though, and shoot a 71, who knows what will happen."

Dublin Jerome leads the Division I team arace after one day with a team score of 308. Upper Arlington is second at 309 with Centerville nine shots back of the leaders at 317.

Findlay, the other qualifier

from Ross's district, shot a 339 and is in 11th place.

The Trojans and 10th-place Walsh Jesuit (338), will be the Little Giants' playing partners during today's final round.

"There could be some frost," Scharer said. "It's suppose to get pretty low tonight and then get pretty clear. But the course is in outstanding shape for how much rain we've gotten."

Justin Wick, of Upper Arlington, and Beau Titsworth, of Cleve-

land St. Ignatius, lead the Division I individual race with a pair of 72s. Two others golfers are at 73 and two more at 74.

Clay Schwartz fired an 88 for Ross, Albert Baumann shot 90 and Michael Hall carded a 93.

"It was mainly the greens giving us trouble, because we didn't get to putt them at all Thursday," Scharer said. "Length was somewhat of an issue, too, with the rain and lack of bounce, but we didn't hit the ball in a lot of bunkers. I saw our guys in maybe five bunkers all day and we made par out of two of them."

Hoelzer 16th at state golf

News-Messenger reports

Fremont Ross shot 353 on Saturday on The Ohio State University's Scarlet course to finish the Division I boys state golf tournament in 12th place at 699.

Brandon Hoelzer paced the Little Giants at 158 (75-83). Hoelzer finished 16th out of 72 competitors.

"If it were a math test, Hoelzer would have got an A playing 33 of the 36 (91 percent) holes well enough to be the state medalist, but three holes on the back nine cost him eight shots, and that was what cost him being the best golfer in the state," Ross coach Jim Scharer said.

"Brandon proved that he is one of the state's elite, that is for sure, but you have to be perfect on that course and that is really tough to be."

Clay Schwartz shot a 174 (88-86), Albert Baumann a 182 (90-92), Brandon Weiker a 190 (98-92) and Michael Hall a 195 (93-102) for the Little Giants.

"It was a great season for the Little Giants and their experience at state will be something they will carry with them the rest of their lives," Scharer said.

"There are 253 Division I golf teams and only 12 competed in Columbus. Playing in the state tournament was a dream come true for our kids and they gave it their all and that is what I and all of Fremont should be proud of. This was a great accomplishment."



Brandon Hoelzer of Fremont Ross lines up a putt Saturday during the Division I state golf championship at The Ohio State University's Scarlet course in Columbus. JONATHON BIRD/NEWS-MESSENGER

Cassidy Kasischke was 25th (22:18.09) as Gibsonburg was sixth in Division III, District 1.

Volleyball:
Division III sectionals
Liberty-Benton 3, Lakota 2