

2002-2003 Great Lakes League Champions

Ross grabs GLL 3-peat

Zilles catches fire, catapults Giants past Whitmer

By TIMOTHY R. WOLFRUM
Sports editor

TOLEDO — It was another big game, another catalyst for the Fremont Ross boys.

Oh and another Great Lakes League title.

Bench player Matt Zilles erupted for 10 points in the first three minutes of the second quarter Friday to bring the Little Giants from behind and catapult them toward an easy 77-63 victory at Toledo Whitmer.

Ross's 10th consecutive triumph clinched for the Little Giants at least a tie for their third straight GLL title. But when the coaches and players returned to Fremont, they learned the crown was theirs



Tuesday
Ross (15-2) at
Rogers (5-11)
6 p.m.

alone because Oregon Clay upset Sandusky, 81-73.

Ross (15-2, 8-0 GLL) leads Whitmer and Sandusky by three games in the loss column with two to play. The Little Giants became the first in school history to record three straight league crowns.

"It's great," Ross senior Terrence Jones said after the game. "Our name is going to be in the record books. I'm glad we got to do it. I'll never forget this."

Head coach Mark Gedeon rel-



ZILLES



JONES

you have goals and work hard for them, they can be achieved."

Ross placed four players in double figures Friday. Luke Lyle led the way with 17 points, Chad Clark had 16 and Jones and Zilles added 12 apiece. Dan Thompson contributed eight points and a game-high 11 rebounds.

Todd Lindroth led all scorers with 28 points for Whitmer (10-6, 5-3 GLL). Darnell Randolph overcame a sore ankle to score 10 points.

The Panthers, who were coming off two ugly losses last weekend to Findlay and Toledo Central Catholic, roared out of the gate Friday. Whitmer led 10-2 and hit 9

See LITTLE GIANTS, B3

Little Giants clinch third straight GLL crown with triumph

Continued From B1

of 13 field-goal attempts in the first quarter to enjoy a 20-12 advantage.

But even though his team played well, Whitmer head coach Bruce Smith was worried about the tempo of the opening period.

"What we attempted to do was play a game in the 40s or 50s," Smith said. "We knew if they had 77, we would have considerably less. That's exactly what took place."

Zilles and benchmate Kyle Tucker combined to own the first two minutes, 25 seconds of the second quarter and get Ross right back into the game.

Zilles hit two rebound buckets and a pair of 3-pointers, and Tucker knocked down a pull-up 17-footer as Ross went on a 14-1 run. The Little Giants took the lead for good at 27-24 on a Jones three-point play with 4:55 to play in the quarter.

"I was just feeling it," said

Zilles, who finished the game 5-of-5 from the floor. "During practice, we have a drill called rapid-fire. I just shoot 3s and make them."

Zilles entered the game 1-of-5 from behind the arc for the season. His sudden long-range aptitude surprised even his teammates.

"I was like wide open in the corner, and he just pulled it and made that first one," Jones said. "I'm thinking, 'OK, Z, keep on shooting.' He shot the next one and hit it again. I was like, 'What is going on?' He shoots like that all the time in practice, but he never shoots it in the game. Hopefully, he can be another guy people are going to have to worry about."

Said Gedeon of Zilles, "What a dynamite second quarter he had. They were collapsing in the paint there. This is something that Matt actually started working on last April. He used to come out of study hall 10th period and come down to the gym and shoot. He would practice

shooting 3s and shooting free throws. Tonight, it paid off for him.

"It's another situation where somebody else steps up for us."

Ross led 38-31 at the intermission and never led by fewer than five points the rest of the way. The Little Giants put the game away with a 12-0 run midway through the third quarter and led 55-35.

Whitmer tried to make fourth-quarter runs, but Ross beat back every rally. A Jones slam dunk with 1:20 to play gave the Little Giants a 70-52 lead and inspired the large Ross contingent to break out into a celebratory chant of "G-L-L."

Smith laughed when asked if Ross is a worthy league champion. The answer, he said, is obvious.

"I don't think I'm going out on a limb to say that in my 12 years here, that's the best Ross team that I've seen," he said. "They're better than the (Joell) Heidelberg-(Reggie) Jones era because they're deeper and they've got a

better point guard than any of those teams ever had."

Gedeon wasn't ready to crown this team the best yet, but he said it's on the right path.

"That's a tremendous compliment coming from somebody who has won more than his share of GLL titles," he said when told of Smith's comment. "That means a lot. This is a special team, no question. Where it ranks in the all-time, who knows. Each team is different, each schedule is different, each year is different. But this team, hopefully, goes down as being one of the best."

Ross will try to extend what is the longest winning streak during Gedeon's tenure on Tuesday at Toledo Rogers.

"It doesn't really seem like 10 straight wins," said Luke McElfresh, a Ross senior starter. "We're just trying to take one game at a time, and whatever happens, happens."

High School Boys

Ross 77, Whitmer 63

ROSS — Luke Lyle 5-6-17, Luke McElfresh 1-0-3, Terrence Jones 6-2-16, Chad Clark 5-2-12, Dan Thompson 4-0-8, Kyle Hintze 0-0-0, Carl Sabinas 0-1-1, Antoine Davis 0-0-0, Kyle Tucker 2-2-6, Matt Zilles 5-0-12, Jake Kingsborough 0-0-0, Fred Shearon 1-0-2. Totals 29-13-77.

WHITMER — Jermain Fletcher 2-1-5, Todd Lindroth 11-4-28, Cory Burghardt 3-1-7, J.J. Fought 1-2-4, Darnell Randolph 3-4-10, Justin Sparks 3-0-9, Justin Hennagir 0-0-0, Ray LeRoux 0-0-0, Andre Thompson 0-0-0. Totals 23-12-63.

Ross 12 26 19 20 — 77

Whitmer 20 11 11 21 — 63

3-point goals: Ross 6-11 (Lyle 1-3, McElfresh 1-1, Jones 2-5, Zilles 2-2), Whitmer 5-14 (Lindroth 2-4, Burghardt 0-2, Fought 0-1, Sparks 3-7).

Rebounds: Ross 33 (Thompson 11), Whitmer 22 (Randolph 6). Turnovers: Ross 14, Whitmer 13.

Records: Ross 15-2 (8-0 GLL), Whitmer 10-6 (5-3 GLL).

JV score: Ross 52-37.

JV leaders: Ross — Antoine Davis 12, Fred Shearon 11.

JV record: Ross 7-10.