

2021 Division I District Tournament.

GIRLS BASKETBALL



Ross' Carma Johnson scored nine points in Thursday's win. MATTHEW HORN/NEWS-MESSENGER

Johnson helps Ross advance to district final

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Defense. All day, every day.

That was Fremont Ross coach Juan Vela's message to his team to start the third quarter. It was also a theme for the Little Giants' 41-35 victory Thursday over Toledo Start in a Division I district semifinal at Lake.

Ross (18-5) plays top-seed Toledo Notre Dame at 1 p.m. Saturday.

The Little Giants allowed no more than 12 points in any quarter Thursday and 13 in the first half.

"Make sure we know where the ball is at all times," Ross point guard Destiny Robinson said. "He wants us to play consistent all the time and have energy. Our defense reflects onto our offense."

Tailaya Garrison led Start with 22 points, including eight in the fourth quarter.

"Having a young group — the average high school player thinks offense

first," Vela said. "With such a young group, I wanted to emphasize defense. They've bought in and they enjoy playing defense."

Ross, however, scored no more than 13 points in a quarter and led 23-13 at the half. Start had quickness and athletic ability to harass the ball the length of the floor.

"The biggest thing was to control the paint," Vela said. "We wanted to stop transition. We did that in the first half and got sloppy in the second half."

Start forced several turnovers with traps and pressure in the second half.

"The amount of minutes she played, handling that pressure," Vela said of Robinson. "She had some uncharacteristic turnovers, but she pushed through."

She scored 12 points, including eight in the second quarter. Her poise was tested and she seemed to respond well in the final two minutes or so.

"My confidence is higher," she said. "Coming in as a freshman, I'm getting

more comfortable and confident."

Brooklyn Baptista dropped in a 3-pointer and Carma Johnson scored off an assist from Abby Cahill to break a scoring spell in the fourth quarter.

"We're not one-dimensional," Vela said.

Johnson scored nine points, including 4-of-4 free throws in the fourth quarter. Jannah Holmes scored five of her eight points in the second quarter.

"In our offense, we want to attack the paint," Vela said. "[Robinson] did well attacking to the paint."

Robinson is one of three freshman starters and two sophomores who play heavy minutes, along with senior Baptista. They don't set big picture goals, choosing to focus on the moment.

"Ever since the beginning of the season, the goal was just to win," Robinson said. "We're going to continue to try to execute our plan."

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Ross was defeated in the finals, ending their season.