

GIRLS BASKETBALL

# OVERMYER, BULGER RETURN AS STARTERS FOR FREMONT ROSS

MATTHEW HORN  
REPORTER

FREMONT - Fremont Ross' varsity girls basketball team won eight games last season and had opportunities to take several others late in the fourth quarter.

"We competed in a lot of games we didn't finish," Little Giants coach Juan Vela said. "Hopefully, the girls understand you have to go the extra mile to win at the end. We fought. Hopefully, this year we work together and we're a little tougher down the stretch in games."

Senior center Mattie Overmyer and junior guard Jazmin Bulger return as starters for Ross. Overmyer is the tallest girl on the roster, but she can shoot from the perimeter.

"Every year, she's taken her game to another level," Vela said. "She gained confidence as she made some shots last season. She always adds something to her game. She can shoot and post up."

"She communicates on defense, and she does a lot of good things. We're hoping she's aggressive and consistent."

Overmyer has learned focus and poise must be mixed with execution to win.

"We have to stay mentally strong to be able to finish," she said.

Bulger is quick and can be dangerous in transition.

"She can handle the ball and penetrate and score," Vela said. "Jazmin has worked hard. She can make things happen with her ball-handling skills."

Senior forward Logan Lamalie and senior guard Kristen Widman also started on occasion last season. Center Aiyah Shepard and guard Imani Elkins earned letters as juniors



Senior Mattie Overmyer is among the returning players for Fremont Ross.

last season, and classmate Vanashia Elkins returns after playing junior varsity as a sophomore.

"I'm excited about this season because a lot of people see us as the underdog, but we are ready to give all we have and upset some people," Overmyer said. "We share the ball very well."

Junior center Ahlia Simms

also earned a letter last season.

"They have a good relationship," Vela said. "They've played ball together since elementary. They're having fun with it. It's good chemistry right now."

Sophomore forward Marissa Overmyer and junior guards Braelyn Horn and Breyari Nason are varsity



Jazmin Bulger, left, is back as a junior for Fremont Ross.

newcomers. Elayna Ackerman, Lexi Holmes, Valerie Samson and DeRae James were seniors last season.

"Marissa can play in the post and make jumpers," Vela said. "Breyari and Braelyn are athletic, and they work hard. They'll gain experience and help us against quick teams. It's exciting to put the pieces together, and the personalities

are fun to coach.

"Their teammates are important to them. You have to put the ball in the hole and play good defense, but players have to communicate and have a bond. They're close this year, and that helps in the tough games."

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PHOTOS BY MOLLY CORFMAN/THE NEWS-MESSENGER

FREMONT ROSS 33, PORT CLINTON 28

# Little Giants top Redskins in opener

**JOSH MORGRET**  
CORRESPONDENT

PORT CLINTON - Fremont Ross finally has a game under its belt after a week of waiting. The game wasn't pretty but the Little Giants topped Port Clinton 33-28 in a non-conference matchup Thursday.

Matallyn Overmyer tallied 16 points and six rebounds and Ross used a huge rebounding edge for the win.

"We just tried to survive," Ross coach Juan Vela said. "My bench came in and gave us a spark in the second half and it was just enough to get us over the top. We came out with a win and that's all that matters."

The Redskins got within three points after two free throws by Paige Steyer, but Overmyer slammed the door with consecutive buckets in a 50-second span for Ross (1-0).

"She hit some big shots down the stretch and she's very versatile," Vela said of Overmyer. "The great thing about her is she can pass the ball, so it's nice to have a player like that that can help our team."

Ross out-rebounded the Redskins 43-18, including a 36-10 edge after three quarters.

"The difference to this game and what

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DOUG HISE/CORRESPONDENT

**Ross' Matallyn Overmyer led Ross with 16 points in the victory over Port Clinton.**

# Opener

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it boils down to was rebounding," Port Clinton coach Toby Bickel said. "They killed us on the offensive boards. You can't give a team four or five opportunities, and their offensive rebounding turned the game around."

It was Port Clinton (0-3) that jumped on the Little Giants early. Two free throws by Delayna Laurel pushed the early lead to 7-2 before Overmyer responded.

She drilled a 3-pointer and scored after one of Port Clinton's 15 turnovers. Kristen Widman hit a 3-pointer with

three seconds left in the quarter to put the Little Giants up 12-9 after eight minutes.

"I have 11 girls that everyone is going to give me something," Vela said. "Usually you have your core starters and maybe some bench players that fill in or give rest. But I think every player on this team is ready to play."

Ross's lead reached eight points when Ahlia Simms and Overmyer scored to open the third quarter. Port Clinton cut the lead to 23-19 when Laurel scored, but Jazmin Bulger, who grabbed a game-high nine rebounds, split a pair of free throws near the end of the third quarter.

The Little Giants opened a 28-21 lead with 4:32 left when Logan Lamalie scored. Ross had six girls grab at least five rebounds.

Braelyn Horn, who is 5-foot-4, provided a spark off the bench by nabbing seven rebounds. Many of the Little Giants' rebounds were offensive, as they took 25 more shots than Port Clinton.

"(Bickel) and I talked before the game about offensive rebounds, but it doesn't matter how many you get, it only matters if you score in the end," Vela said. "You can grab 20 rebounds, but if you don't score, it doesn't mean anything. I'm hoping it was just first game jitters."

Laurel had seven points and seven rebounds for the Redskins.

"We're very much a work in progress," Bickel said. "We've struggled with pressure and struggled to get in the half-court offense. Some of it is these kids just aren't used to playing at the varsity level."



DOUG HISE/CORRESPONDENT  
Port Clinton's Delayna Laurel drives to the basket against the Ross defense.

FINDLAY 55, FREMONT ROSS 38

# Little Giants come up short

MATTHEW HORN  
REPORTER

Fremont Ross scored 14 straight points in the third quarter Monday but fell 55-38 to visiting Findlay in the Three Rivers Athletic Conference.

The Little Giants (1-1, 0-1) trailed 31-16 after two quarters. Jazmin Bulger scored Ross's first eight points in the third quarter, including two three-pointers and the Little Giants trailed 33-30.

"Before the second half started with talking about cutting it to single digits and we got even closer," Ross coach Juan Vela said. "We cut the whole thing and then lost some gas and some focus."

Bulger finished with 10 points. "We needed somebody to step up in that third quarter," Vela said. "She hit two threes and passed the ball well to cut it to (three)."

Vanashia Elkins made a three and split two free throws and Ahlia Simms scored off an offensive rebound during the Little Giants' scoring spurt. Bulger wants to help lead the team as a junior point guard.

"My job is to bring the team together," Bulger said. "We realized we were down and we flowed more as a team (in the third quarter). We could have been better on defense. They started to hit some threes."

Simms also had 10 points for Ross, including six in the second quarter. She demonstrated an ability to establish position, navigate down low and draw fouls.

"We've been working on that," Vela said. "When she gets her feet under her, she can finish."

Findlay scored eight consecutive points bridging the third and fourth quarters after the Little Giants' run for a

41-30 advantage. Ross seemed discouraged it still faced a deficit after its comeback and appeared a bit frazzled during the stretch.

Simms answered with a bucket off her own offensive rebound but Ross got no closer.

Ross held Findlay scoreless for the first 4 minutes, 13 seconds of the game. Findlay had only one field goal as the game was tied 7-7 after one quarter.

"We started the game with tough defense," Vela said. "They responded with (three) threes in the second quarter."

Emily Heiman scored a game-high 18 points for Findlay.

**Stat book:** Fremont Ross (Logan Lamalie 3, Vanashia Elkins 6, Matallyn Overmyer 7, Jazmin Bulger 10, Ahlia Simms 10, Alyah Shepard 2; Findlay (Jacklyn Bredt 11, Sam Shardt 7, Morgan Kirk 7, Emily Heiman 18, Britney Haas 2, Ali Taylor 6, Kirsten Paris 2, Mikaela Ramsey 2).

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DOUG HISE/CORRESPONDENT  
Ross' Matallyn Overmyer puts up a shot Monday against Findlay's Kayla Laube.

# ROUNDUP

## GIRLS BASKETBALL

### Fremont Ross 44, Clay 42

Ross led 31-18 after three quarters and held off a rally in the Three Rivers Athletic Conference.

Ahlia Simms scored a game-high 13 points and Jazmin Bulger added 12 for the Little Giants.

Ross has won five of its first six games.

“The only thing our girls care about is playing tough for each other,” Little Giants coach Juan Vela said. “The most unselfish team I’ve been a part of. They know they have to get better but are having fun.”

**Stat book:** Ross (Logan Lamalie 5, Mattie Overmyer 4, Aiyah Shepard 2, Marissa Overmyer 8); Clay (Sydney Hess 11, Elizabeth Vincent 12).



Ross' Matalyn Overmyer looks to pass inside against Notre Dame's Maelyn Kizer.

PHOTOS BY DOUG HISE/CORRESPONDENT

# LITTLE GIANTS NO MATCH FOR IRISH

## Ross only makes 4 field goals for game, none in 2nd quarter

**JOSH MORGRET**  
CORRESPONDENT

FREMONT - Matalyn Overmyer had a lay-up roll around the rim and out in the third quarter.

That's the kind of night Fremont Ross had against Toledo Notre Dame on Thursday.

The Little Giants made more free throws than field goals, committed 35 turnovers and watched the better Eagles team steamroll to a 64-13 win in Three Rivers Athletic Conference play.

"They are that damn good," said Ross coach Juan Vela. "They could have four or five Division 1 players who could play at the collegiate level, and we have zero. It showed tonight, and it is two totally different levels. They will probably beat a lot of teams like that. They are not average."



Ross' Jazmin Bulger drives to the basket against Notre Dame's Mariah Copeland.

Ross (5-2 overall, 3-2 TRAC) made just 4-of-38 (10.5 percent) shots on the night, including none in the second quarter, as Notre Dame (6-2, 5-0) built a 33-8 lead at halftime.

"I thought we did a great job sharing the ball, especially in transition," Notre Dame coach Travis Galloway said. "We always like to play fast, but today I thought we did a good job passing the ball ahead."

The Little Giants hung in the game for the first seven minutes. A make by Ahlia Simms was the first bucket for Ross after missing its first eight shots. Later, Marissa Overmyer scored to cut the Notre Dame lead to 12-5, but the Eagles scored the next 17 points.

"Usually a good high school has one, maybe two good players, and you can do different things to stop

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# Ross

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them,” Vela said. “This team, you have to have the same skillful players to play with that.”

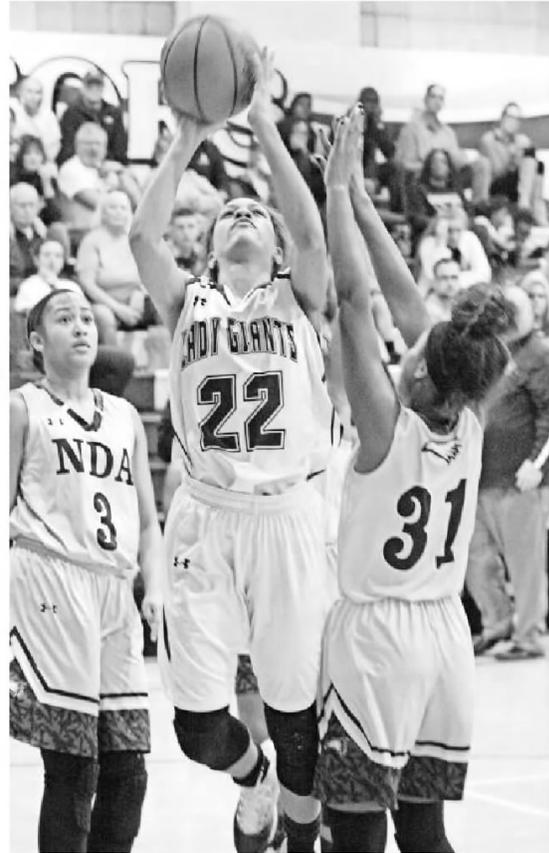
The second half didn’t get much better for the Little Giants. They missed their first five shots of the quarter before Simms scored off of an offensive rebound. That ended a 9-0 run by Notre Dame, but was the only bucket for Ross in the third quarter. The Eagles led, 48-11 after three quarters.

“When you get a team like that and they play hard, it is going to be tough to get any shots to fall,” Vela said. “Obviously, there are things we could have done better, but overall, they took it to us.”

The Little Giants missed their first eight shots of the fourth quarter and were scoreless until Imani Elkins scored with 11 seconds left.

“I thought our defensive energy was good from the get-go,” Calloway said. “I thought we did a good job rebounding their first miss, which allowed us to run. I thought we did a good job of pressuring the ball and making them go faster than they wanted to.”

Bre Hampton-Bey, a former Michigan commit, topped the Eagles with 16 points. Simms scored seven points and grabbed eight rebounds for Ross.



DOUG HISE/CORRESPONDENT

**Ross' Jazmin Bulger puts up a shot against Notre Dame's Jala Johnson.**

“They are a better team and there is no doubt about it,” Vela said. “I don’t believe one game makes a season. Whether you lose by 100 or you lose by one, it is a loss. I told the girls in the locker room that we have to continue to be better, and this is just one step toward our journey. We can’t let one game take everything out of it.”

ROSS 55, MARION HARDING 48 (OT)

# BULGER, ROSS OUTLAST PRESIDENTS IN OVERTIME



Fremont's Matallyn Overmyer makes a shot.

MOLLY CORFMAN/THE NEWS-MESSENGER

JOSH MORGRET  
CORRESPONDENT

FREMONT - Fremont Ross coach Juan Vela paused for a moment when trying to recall the end of regulation.

Vela then acknowledged that the Little Giants executed the exact play drawn up to tie the game and force overtime with Marion Harding.

Once in the extra session, Ross clamped down forcefully on the defensive end and made key free throws when they mattered the most.

The Little Giants scored all seven points in overtime en route to a 55-48 non-league win over the Presidents on Thursday evening.

"We basically just denied their two best players and made their other players beat us in overtime," Vela said. "I think they got tired because a lot of their shots were short. I think that helped us."

Jazmin Bulger drove down the lane, scooped, and banked-in a shot to knot the game at 48-all with five seconds left for the Little Giants (6-2). The inbound pass by Marion Harding was stolen by Marissa Overmyer, who nearly made a short jumper to end the game as time expired, but the shot bounced around the rim and out.

"The kids ran out of gas, to be honest," said Presidents' coach Evan Geyer. "We were about four girls short tonight and we had a short bench. We had a couple of girls that didn't think they'd play that ended up playing. The girls ran out of energy, but give all credit to Fremont, because they were able to withstand what we threw at them in the fourth quarter."

Neither team was effective on offense for the first half of overtime. Ross finally got on the scoreboard when Matallyn Overmyer sank a pair of free throws. After a miss by the Presidents (1-9), Vanashia Elkins scored for a 52-48 lead.

Marion Harding committed one of its 20 turnovers on the other end and Elkins

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# Overtime

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went coast-to-coast before being fouled. Elkins made both free throws and Logan Lamalie added a free throw to polish off the Presidents, who missed all seven shots they took in overtime.

"We forced a couple of shots, but it's our first overtime game this year," Geyer said. "We have only been in a similar situation once this year. It is stuff you try to practice, but it is hard to get that game simulation. We will work on that, come back, and get better."

Kia Branstetter scored with 2:49 left in the fourth quarter for a 46-40 lead. Ahlia Simms split a pair of free throws and later, after a turnover by the Presidents, Bulger scored to bring Ross within three points.

The teams exchanged turnovers and after two missed shots that both went out of bounds off of Marion Harding, Bulger scored and was fouled. She missed the free throw with 40 seconds left, but the Presidents committed another turnover.

Bulger was fouled on the next possession and split the shots to tie the game at 46. Branstetter grabbed the rebound and was fouled. She made both free throws before Ross committed one of its 24 turnovers. Marion Harding missed the front end of a 1-and-1, setting up Bulger's final drive.

"I think Jazmin struggled at times, but I thought she kept her head in the game," Vela said. "She made some big plays toward the end. Anyone that scores 20 is going to help you. I thought her composure was the biggest thing to help us."

The Little Giants forced their will early on, using key shooting to counter the Presidents. Elkins scored consecutively and Simms dropped in a bucket for a 15-8 lead after one quarter. Marion Harding came alive in the second quarter,



MOLLY CORFMAN/THE NEWS-MESSENGER

Fremont's Matallyn Overmyer, right, and Marion's Taylor Foust fight for possession.

using a 13-2 run to take a 21-19 lead.

The lead was 27-25 at halftime for the Presidents. A 3-pointer by Taylor Foust — her second of the third quarter opened the Presidents' lead to 36-31.

"We were getting defensive stops and for the most part, giving them one chance to score," Geyer said. "We were able to get the ball and run at them. We used the dribble-drive to space them."

Ross battled back and tied the game at 36-all after the third quarter. Marion Harding scored six straight points over a 2:39 span for a 46-40 before the Little Giants again battled back.

"We are not professionals, so we are going to have some ugly games like that," Vela said. "We keep fighting and trying to figure it out."

Bulger finished with 20 points and six rebounds, while Elkins tallied 12 points and 12 rebounds.

"She's big, too, and I think she is getting better as the games go on," Vela said of Elkins. "She's big for us coming off of the bench. Her physical abilities help her as far as getting stops and rebounds. She is important to the team."

Branstetter totaled 16 points and 10 rebounds while Brittany Persinger scored 13 points — all of which came in the first half. Foust added 10 points.

"We have struggled to score throughout this season, but we feel if we can get three girls in double digits, we have a good chance to win," Geyer said. "We put ourselves in that position tonight, but just came up on the short end of the stick."

## Ross routed by Whitmer



MOLLY CORFMAN/THE NEWS-MESSENGER

Fremont's Ahlia Simms, right, fights for a rebound. Ross fell 62-31 to Toledo Whitmer on Thursday in the Three Rivers Athletic Conference. The Little Giants are 7-3 overall and 3-3 in league play. See page 7A for a roundup of Wednesday's high school action.

## Clay 53, Fremont Ross 36

Ross scored nine points in the first half in the nonconference setback Thursday.

Vanashia Elkins scored 13 points, including 11 in the third quarter for the Little Giants (10-7, 4-7). Ross trailed 24-9 at the half and 37-26 entering the fourth quarter.

"They came out and played hard," Little Giants coach Ross Vela said. "They played harder than us. We were uptight. We had a good third quarter, but we couldn't defend and we couldn't throw it in the ocean. It's a home game. You want to win at home and we were tied with them in the league.

"They're in our sectional. We got our butts kicked. Sports can be messy and unpredictable. You have to respect it and you have to be ready. We'll learn from it and move on."

Ross topped Clay earlier this season.

### STAT BOOK

**Ross:** (Logan Lamalie 3, Braelyn Horn 3, Matallyn



## Gibsonburg's Shylee Schmeltz, from right; Kalee Rakosky, Erin Uhinck, and Gibsonburg's

Overmyer 6, Jazmin Bulger 5, Ahlia Simms 2, Aiyah Shepard 2, Marissa Overmyer 2);

**Clay:** (Hailey Clere 2, Sydney Hess 15, Hannah Jehany 4, Shannon Coughlin 7, Karleigh Clere 5, Caitlyn Kuetcher 5, Kim Nagel 1, Chyna Wiggins 2, Elizabeth Vincent 10).

## Woodmore 59, Genoa 44

The Wildcats (11-7, 8-4 NBC) won at home Thursday against Genoa (7-12, 5-7 NBC). Woodmore led at the half, 28-26.

Woodmore was led by Camryn Bench who scored 10 points in the second half and ended with a team high 12 points while Katie Brugger, Hayley Freund and Lily Rothert had eight points apiece.

Genoa was led by Emily Edwards with a

HIGH SCHOOL BASKETBALL

# Vela, Ritzler earn coach of the year honors in District 6

NEWS-MESSENGER REPORT

Fremont Ross's Juan Vela was recognized Division I coach of the year in District 6 by the Ohio High School Basketball Coaches Association.

Old Fort senior Alli Adelsperger and Jenny Ritzler were player and coach of the year, respectively, in Division IV.

Little Giants junior Jazmin Bulger and senior Maddie Overmyer were first-team, junior Ahlia Simms was second-team and senior Logan Lamalie was honorable mention.