

1999 Division I Sectional Tournament

Boys tournament action starts tonight

News-Messenger reports

After watching their girls counterparts play in the sectional tournament, boys basketball teams get their postseason shots this week. A full slate of sectional semifinal games is scheduled for tonight.

In Willard, Fremont Ross (16-4), fresh off an emotional 88-63 defeat of rival Sandusky, gets a rematch with Tiffin Columbian (7-13). The Tornadoes, coached by Matt Hutchinson, lost to Ross 75-54 on Jan. 16 at the Purple Pit.

In the first game, Ross

jumped out to a 10-0 lead less than two minutes into the game and never looked back. Juan Vela hit five 3-pointers for Ross to finish with a game-high 21 points, and Steve Dagg chipped in 19.

Columbian, which finished fifth in the Northern Ohio League, is led by Craig Hill, who averages 14.3 points per game. Beau Carmon, a Bowling Green football signee, chips in around 10 ppg. and is the Tornadoes' leading rebounder.

The game will start 30 minutes after the comple-

tion of the Ashland-Mansfield Madison game, which begins at 6:30 p.m.

At Sandusky High School, Clyde takes on Port Clinton in a rematch of Friday's regular season finale. The Fliers (12-8) won the last meeting 68-49, and the Redskins (3-17) have lost eight straight games.

The Clyde game, which starts at 6:30 p.m., will be followed by Bellevue-Vermilion. The Redmen finished the regular season 8-12 after an overtime loss to Columbian on Friday.

Suburban Lakes League

Boys basketball

rivals Lakota and Genoa (12-8) square off in the first game of the doubleheader at Old Fort High School, starting at 6:30 p.m. The 3-point shooting Raiders lost their last regular season game at Woodmore on Tuesday to finish 4-16.

Sandusky Bay Conference runner-up Oak Harbor (16-4) travels to Sylvania Southview High School to face Maumee at 7:30 p.m., while Margaretta faces Western Reserve at Mohawk

at 6:30 p.m.

Midland Athletic League teams Bettsville (3-17) and Old Fort (5-15) play their first round games at a familiar venue, Hopewell-Loudon High School. Bettsville battles New Riegel (7-13), while Old Fort faces Buckeye Central, with the winner facing St. Joseph Central Catholic on Friday.

Woodmore (17-3), the other area team with a first-round bye, plays the winner of Tuesday's Cardinal Stritch-Northwood game on Friday at Holland Springfield High School.

Tonight's schedule

Ross vs. Columbian at Willard, 8:15 p.m.

Clyde vs. Port Clinton at Sandusky, 6:30 p.m.

Bellevue vs. Vermilion at Sandusky, 8:15 p.m.

Lakota vs. Genoa at Old Fort, 6:30 p.m.

Oak Harbor vs. Maumee at Southview, 7:30 p.m.

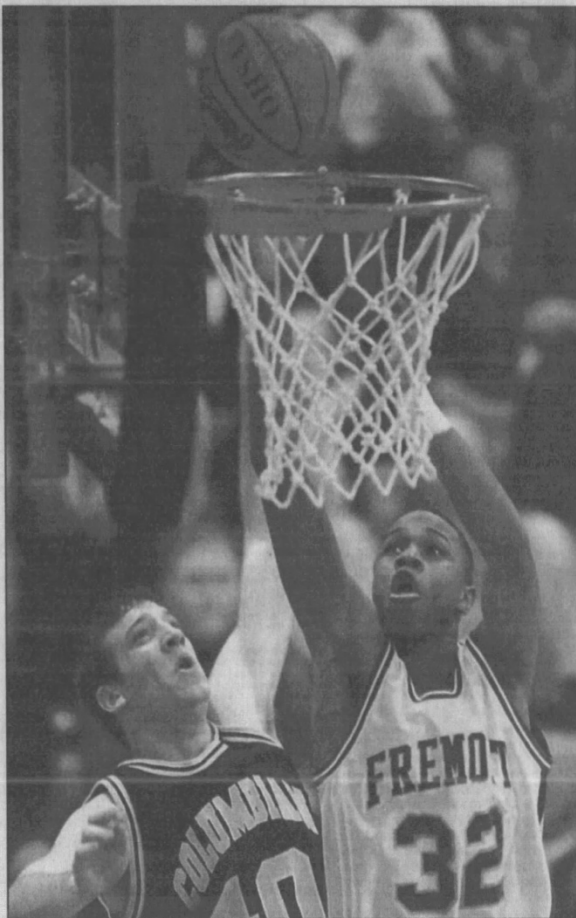
Margaretta vs. Western Reserve at Norwalk, 6:30 p.m.

Bettsville vs. New Riegel at Hopewell-Loudon, 6:30 p.m.

Old Fort vs. Buckeye Central at Hopewell-Loudon, 6:30 p.m.

Boys basketball

Giants advance



News-Messenger/Andrew Morrison

REGGIE JONES hits a layup over Beau Carmon in Ross's 67-43 win Tuesday night.

Ross gets final with Sandusky

By SCOTT TAPPA
Sports editor

WILLARD — For Fremont Ross, playing Tiffin Columbian in between two games with Sandusky was like sitting through NBC's 8:30 p.m. Thursday offering during the mid-1990s: no matter what show was on, there was no way it could match *Friends* before it or *Seinfeld* after it.

Tuesday night, the Little Giants gritted their teeth and withstood the basketball equivalent of *Suddenly Susan*, *The Single Guy* and *Jesse*, beating the Tornados 67-43 in a Division I sectional semifinal game, setting up a third meeting with Sandusky on Friday.

"We came out flat, we weren't as hyped as we wanted to be, but we were

Tuesday

Ross	67
Columbian	43

Friday

Ross vs. Sandusky, 9 p.m.

still ready to play," said Ross guard Steve Dagg, who along with Reggie Jones led the Little Giants with 12 points.

With the win, Ross improved to 17-4 and tied the 1953-54 team for most wins in a single season. Still, the rematch with a Columbian team Ross had beaten handily earlier this season concerned coach Mark Gedeon, especially after three Tuesday losses at Sandusky, Toledo St. John's and Toledo Rogers.

"This game was a huge concern for me," he said.

"If you look at the last three Tuesday road games that we've had, they've all been losses."

But Tuesday was also a road game for Columbian, and both teams struggled to find an offensive rhythm early. Jones and Joell Heidelberg scored four points apiece in the first quarter, but Ross held just a 13-9 lead, a far cry from the 21 first-quarter points the Little Giants scored in the teams' Jan. 16 meeting.

"We talked about how imperative it was to get off to a good first quarter, especially when you look at the box score of what Fremont did against Sandusky (Friday)," said Columbian coach Matt Hutchinson.

See ROSS, B2

Ross beats Columbian going away

Continued from B1

"We tried some things to try to control tempo a little bit, and I thought our halfcourt defense was pretty solid throughout the first half."

The game remained close throughout the second quarter, but a 3-pointer from Juan Vela gave the Little Giants a 27-20 cushion at halftime. Ross had eight turnovers in the first half, while Columbian coughed it up 10 times.

"I thought in the first half, we were trying to do some of the things we wanted to do, but we were doing them too fast, make the big play instead of the fundamental play," Gedeon said. "We had eight turnovers in the first half, and many of those came in transition where we had numbers, and those are situations we expect to score on. We felt lucky going into the locker room up seven."

With Jones getting into foul trouble midway through the third quarter, Tyson Liggins stepped up his scoring, netting eight points in the quarter. Offensive putbacks from Liggins and Dagg put Ross up 47-34 after three quarters.

Ross eventually completed its 12-0 run with Liggins' layup midway

through the fourth quarter, taking a commanding 21-point lead the Tornadoes could not overcome. Liggins and Vela each added 10 points apiece for Ross.

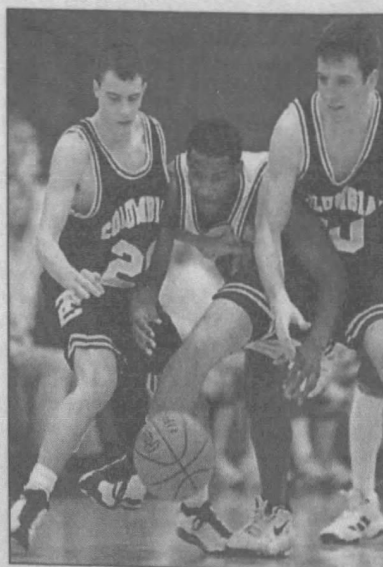
"We came out early and took a lot of unnecessary shots, but as the game went on, we just started executing, and before you knew it, the lead was 20," said Dagg. "It just came out of nowhere, it was a quiet 20, it wasn't one of those real quick two-minute, 20 points kind of deals."

For Columbian, leading scorers Beau Carmon and Craig Hill combined for 16 of their 23 points in the second half, but the post players scored all the Tornadoes' second half points until Greg Hoke's layup with three minutes to play.

"We knew from the beginning that they were the people to stop," said Dagg. "We practiced all week on post pins, because we knew that's what they were going to do. When you're 6-7, you're going to get your points."

Ross pulled away without Jones and Vela, who both sat out the entire fourth quarter. In their places, Gedeon got solid performances from Andrew Diller, Bryan Root and Greg Garcia.

"If you'd have told me that we'd sit both Reggie and Juan for the fourth



News-Messenger/Andrew Morrison

TYSON LIGGINS squeezes through the trap of Tiffin Columbian's Greg Hoke, left, and Beau Carmon, right, in the second half of Ross's 67-43 win over the Tornadoes Tuesday.

quarter of a sectional game, I'd have been surprised," Gedeon said.

Friday's Ross-Sandusky game will be at 9 p.m., at the tail end of a split session. Tickets are on sale at the Ross athletic department.

Ross-Sandusky, Round 3 at Willard tonight

By **SCOTT TAPPA**
Sports editor

Ross vs. Sandusky.

Sandusky vs. Ross.

The two long-time rivals meet at 9 p.m. tonight for the third time this season in a Division I sectional final at Willard, and there aren't many new things for coaches or players to say.

Or are there?

"We still have to emphasize, do we want our season to go on?" said Ross coach

Mark Gedeon. "Do we want to win a sectional title for the third straight year? The 18 wins would set an all-time record for most wins in a season, there's a lot of things that we could make a stamp on what this team has really accomplished."

Ross (17-4) beat Tiffin Columbian 67-43 in the semifinal Tuesday night, and while the Little Giants struggled offensively at times, Gedeon said the exposure to the gym

Boys basketball

at Willard High School should help tonight.

"For us, that's the advantage of playing this extra game, at least our kids have the familiarity of playing in this gym, they know what to expect when they step on the floor Friday night," he said. "It's not the shooter-friendly gym we're used to at the Purple Pit, the rims are a lit-

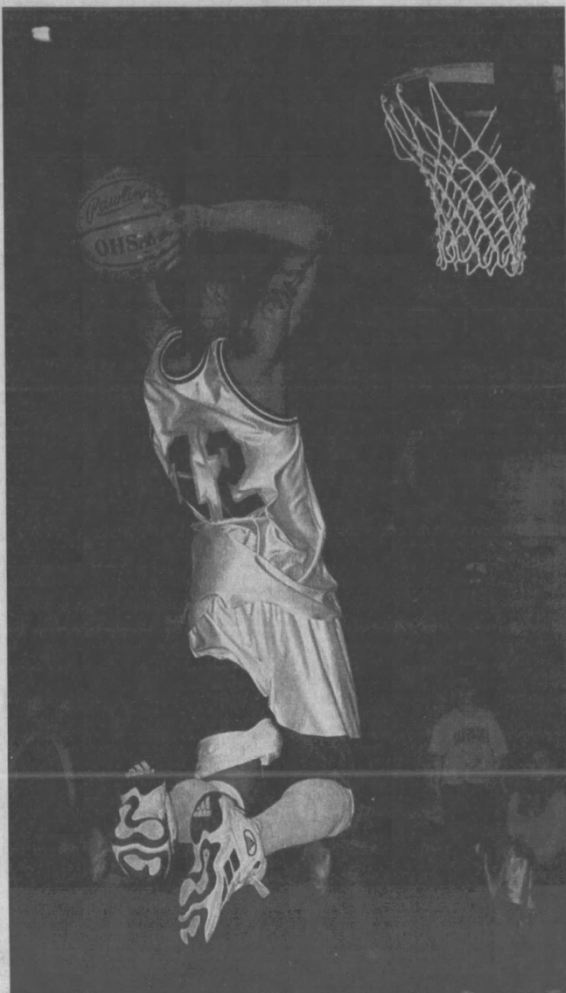
Inside: Tonight's basketball schedule. **Page B2**

tle bit tighter, the lighting is different, the background is different."

Ross guard Steve Dagg, who along with Reggie Jones, led Ross with 12 points Tuesday night, said it's a lot simpler than any hype.

"We want to keep playing," he said. "I don't want to quit playing basketball right now."

District-bound



News-Messenger/Guy Schultz

JOELL HEIDELBURG soars for a dunk in the first quarter of Ross's 63-50 win over Sandusky.

Ross beats Sandusky in title game

By SCOTT TAPPA
Sports editor

WILLARD — It was all right there for Fremont Ross in Friday's Division I sectional final against Sandusky.

A chance for a second win in seven days against the rival Blue Streaks.

A school-record 18 wins, breaking the record of the 1953-54 team.

And, most importantly, a chance to win a sectional title for the third straight season, and the chance to meet Mansfield Senior in next Thursday's district semifinal.

Break out the scissors. In a game of runs, Ross came up with the most, beating Sandusky 63-50 at

Friday

Ross.....	63
Sandusky.....	50

Thursday

Ross vs. Mansfield
at Willard, 7:30 p.m.

Willard High School.

"We feel like we're on top of the world right now," said Ross forward Reggie Jones, who led all players with 20 points and 14 rebounds.

"It feels great, it feels great," said center Tyson Liggins, who was also a force inside with 13 points and 13 rebounds. "We should have beaten them the first time."

The first time, as Lig-

gins referred to, was an 80-69 Sandusky win on Feb. 2 in which the Blue Streaks pounded Ross on the offensive boards and used several lightning-quick runs to take control. The Little Giants (18-4) came up with answers for both Sandusky weapons on Friday.

On the glass, Ross was dominant, outrebounding Sandusky 42-23. The Great Lakes League champion Blue Streaks (17-4) came up with just four points off offensive putbacks, all coming in the fourth quarter when the game was out of reach.

"Before we came out, we were talking about how we

See ROSS, B3

Ross beats Sandusky for second time in seven days

Continued from B1

had to own the boards, crash the boards hard," said Liggins, who burned Sandusky for 16 points in last Friday's win. "We just had to do it like we know we can play."

As for the second key, Ross answered every serious Sandusky challenge with a firm response, never losing the lead over the last 3½ quarters.

The first serious Blue Streaks run came at the tail end of the second quarter. After Ross had jumped to a 22-8 lead after one quarter, Sandusky took the Little Giants completely out of their game in the second quarter, forcing 10 turnovers and allowing just six points.

"We really got out of our game in the second quarter and allowed them to get back in the game," said Ross coach Mark Gedeon.

Brock Alexander's 3-pointer cut the lead to 28-21 near the end of the quarter. With time running out, Chante Smith stole the ball for Sandusky and raced in for a dunk attempt. Out of nowhere, Jones swooped in to block the shot, re-energizing the junior the Little Giants

as they headed for the locker room.

"(It helped) a lot, it gave me more momentum," said Jones, who admitted to feeling winded at times during the first half.

Jones looked as if he were using rocket boosters on his dunk to open the third quarter, as Ross stretched its lead to 32-23. But Sandusky made another run, cutting the lead to 32-29 on Alexander's free throws with 5:18 remaining in the quarter.

From there, Ross went on a 15-3 run, scoring the last seven points of the quarter with three points from Greg Garcia and two each from Robb Ritzman and Jones. Gedeon said his team's response at the end of the third quarter was crucial.

"They had cut it to three, had momentum in their favor, and then we started executing the way we were capable, like we did in the first quarter," he said.

From there, it became a free throw shooting contest, with Ross winning. While Sandusky's Jahn Farris uncharacteristically missed 3-of-4 free throw attempts, Juan Vela nailed 5-of-8 in a 1:10 span.

"Yeah, I wanted the ball," said Vela, who had 10 points. "(Brandon

Pettis) was talking trash, but it was fun. Good thing I started making some."

Joell Heidelberg added 11 points for Ross, Garcia scored five points in a solid effort off the bench, and Ritzman added to his school record with seven assists. Alexander led Sandusky with 13 points, Farris had 10 and El Dasheon Nix had 10 points and seven rebounds.

"We didn't advance in the tournament because they were able to execute their offense," said Sandusky coach Ed Kurt.

Ross advances to face Mansfield Senior, a 64-46 winner over Ashland in the first game at Willard Friday. The district semifinal game is 7:30 p.m. Thursday at Willard.

"It's a great feeling, it's one of those things you work for all year," Gedeon said. "It's nice, with the work these kids have put in since last spring, to know that we've won a championship, it's very, very rewarding for our kids."

"This team is improving, they came up with some plays when they had to make them. We came together as a team, and as a coach that's always the goal."