

Division II State Playoffs...



Ross' Bryson Hammer runs with the ball. DOUG HISE

# Ross plays winless Parma Normandy

Matthew Horn

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USA TODAY NETWORK

Coronavirus or not, here they come. Ohio teams made it through the six-game regular season format.

Every program was then eligible to play in the postseason. A year of uncertainty capped with a special reward.

Football players are likely to remember both.

Unbeaten fifth-ranked Bellevue earned the only playoff bye for teams in the coverage area. Top-seed Bellevue plays the winner Oct. 17 between 16-seed Galion (3-3) and 17-seed Rocky River Lutheran West (2-4) in Division IV.

Eleven-seed Clyde (3-3) plays host Saturday to 22-seed Sheffield Brookside (1-5). The winner plays six-seed Wauseon (5-1).

Twelve-seed Port Clinton (3-3) plays host Saturday to 21-seed Perkins (2-4). The winner plays five-seed Van Wert (5-1).

Division III's Tiffin Columbian (5-1) beat Port Clinton 31-7 and Perkins 42-7 in Week 1 during the regular season.

Nine-seed Fremont Ross (3-3) plays host Friday to 24-seed Parma Normandy (0-4) in Division II. The winner plays eight-seed Medina Highland.

Normandy didn't play the first two weeks.

Nine-seed Genoa (3-3) plays host Saturday to 24-seed Brooklyn (0-3) in



Bellevue coach Ed Nasonti.  
MATTHEW HORN

Division V. Brooklyn had an open date Week 3-5.

The winner plays the winner between 25-seed Fostoria (0-6) and eight-seed Richwood North Union (4-2).

The Comets are scheduled to visit Eastwood on Oct. 30 if possible to complete the Northern Buckeye Conference schedule.

Thirteen-seed Oak Harbor (3-3) plays host Saturday to 20-seed Doyles-town Chippewa (1-5). The winner plays four-seed Elyria Catholic (3-2).

Seventeen-seed Lakota (3-3) visits 16-seed Elmwood (3-3) on Saturday. The winner plays top-seed Findlay Liberty-Benton (6-0).

Sixteen-seed Gibsonburg (3-3) plays host Saturday to 17-seed Haviland

Wayne Trace (3-3) in Division VI. The winner plays top-seed Archbold (6-0).

Twenty-one seed Woodmore (1-5) visits 12-seed Hicksville (3-3) on Saturday. The winner plays five-seed Defiance Tinora (5-0).

The Wildcats are scheduled to visit Lake on Oct. 16 if possible to cap the NBC schedule.

Twenty-three seed Margaretta (1-5) visits 10-seed Collins Western Reserve (4-2) on Saturday. The winner plays the winner between seven-seed Liberty Center (4-2) and 26-seed New London (0-6).

Margaretta is scheduled to host River (4-2) on Oct. 24 in a non-playoff matchup.

Danbury, which is unbeaten its first season with an eight-man format, scheduled eight regular season games in nine weeks. The Northern 8 Football Conference has a two-game postseason bowl configuration for Week 10, including St. Mary Central Catholic this season if it's among the top four.

St. Joseph Central Catholic (0-6) scheduled a non-playoff game Friday at Hilltop (0-6) in Division VII. The Crimson Streaks fell to Cardinal Stritch 21-13 and Tiffin Calvert 54-0, while Hilltop lost the respective matchups 21-0 and 54-6.

North Baltimore (2-4) is scheduled to visit SJCC on Oct. 24.

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Ross' Kelandre Jones carries the ball. DOUG HISE

# Jones option to help provide Ross depth

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Spencer Price, London Johnson and Anthony Vann of Fremont Ross each had at least one downfield block Friday that helped spring a touchdown.

That makes sense, because two of them are wide receivers. Johnson is a 315-pound offensive lineman.

He sprinted more than 15 yards across the field to eliminate a defender from the equation around the 30-yard line, while creating a mammoth obstacle for Kelandre Jones to waltz the rest of the way for a 45-yard scoring run in the Little Giants' 71-0 shutout of Parma Normandy in a Division II postseason opener.

Ross has two playoff wins in program history. It won a first-round game in 1983.

Normandy (0-5) was eligible for the postseason because the coronavirus pandemic forced a shortened regular season before the playoffs. The nine-seed Little Giants (4-3) visit eight-seed Medina Highland (3-2) in the second round.

Jones did plenty of work of his own Friday, including a slipped tackle about the same time Johnson arrived. Jones

rushed twice, including a touchdown from 13 yards as he consumed the snaps on a scoring drive.

"He was running at will," Ross coach Chad Long said. "When we get this kind of result with Kelandre, we know we can utilize him. We can have two feature backs. We can keep them fresh. He impressed us.

"He ran hard, read blocks, he was patient and he made some cuts. (He and Labronze Barnett) both did a good job. Sometimes it's hard to be patient."

Especially when you want nothing more than to make the most of your opportunity, both to help now, but also because you want more of them. Long removed his starters before the end of the first half.

Jones probably would have gotten more run time in the third quarter, but he played too much like a starter.

He earned an expanded role to provide depth with Jon Szymowski injured and help Barnett get a rest. Jones occasionally played as a backup running back and defensive end last season.

"Keep up the squad and go hard every day," Jones said. "Be ready and play hard. I've been with them since grade school. Get the ball and score."

Jones is yet another sophomore to step up for Ross. Classmates Kaden

Holmes, Anthony Vann, Bryson Hammer, Adam Hrynciw, Mason Villarreal, Alex Sims and Brayden Guhn are already key contributors.

"He didn't surprise me," Holmes said. "He's been my teammate since the fourth grade. He can see the field. He proved himself (Friday). He's a dog."

Confidence continues to increase for Jones and in him. He will certainly be an option if someone finds a way to prevent Ross from passing, even if Szymonowski returns.

"He's a special kid," Long said. "He's a big, huge, powerful kid. We just need him to keep growing with the playbook. He's learning the system more and more and he's starting to get comfortable. The only thing stopping him is his knowledge of the offense."

The Little Giants' best offense is Holmes with the freedom to pass or keep the ball himself on RPOs. They hope to play in postseason games when they will need to have viable options to hand to if their own defense is tired and the offense must stay on the field, they want to eat clock with a lead or simply to mix it up for a variety of reasons.

Jones is still hungry to help.  
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Ross' Ethan Green, center, and Alex Sims get to the quarterback. DOUG HISE

# Ross' Holmes plays like alpha in most packs

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Fremont Ross quarterback Kaden Holmes endearingly refers to teammates as dogs.

Consider him and his other skill breeds to be of the Pavlov variety, salivating a bit entering Friday's game at Medina Highland.

Little Giants lineman Ethan Green didn't have to push through an injury last week in a lopsided Division II shutout of visiting Parma Normandy in the first round of the postseason. Nine-seed Ross hopes he's relatively fresh for eighth-seed Highland.

Holmes doesn't need much time to get the ball to three receivers with big-play potential, or maybe Adam Hrynciw for a first down. Holmes made only a cameo appearance against Normandy and completed 3 of 7 passes for 44 yards, including touchdowns to Bryson Hammer and Anthony Vann.

Holmes has been off the chain with 23 touchdowns passing and eight rushing. He completed 121 of 201 passes for 1,547 yards, with four interceptions.

He has 509 yards on the ground. Hammer has 47 catches for 497 yards and eight scores, Vann has 384 yards and eight touchdowns on 26 catches, and Spencer Price has 356 yards and five scores on 19 receptions.

"Their Front 7 is pretty aggressive and pretty good, but the secondary is suspect," Ross coach Chad Long said.

Highland (3-2), which didn't play Week 1 and had a bye last week, allows 33 points per game. It scored at least 31 points in each win, although two came by a combined seven points.

Quarterback Aaron Filips is a returning starter for Highland, which won four games last season, all in the final five contests.

Lukas Stiles is a running back and Filips likes to throw to tight end David Petruzzello.

Marcus Peters and Green are consistently disruptive in the opposition's back yard — er, backfield — for Ross.

"They're similar to Whitmer on offense with formations and style," Long said. "They're physical and traditionally they've done well in the playoffs. They've been in the final four quite a few times.

"They're a sound team. They have a quarterback that's a winner. He knows how to put their team in good positions to win."

Ross beat Whitmer 35-33 during the regular season. The Panthers thrived with two receivers to one side and the fullback in motion, until the Little Giants finally adjusted.

Green isn't the only one who should benefit from an extra week on the sideline as linebacker Carson Clark, who was a key to the Little Giants' recognition on Whitmer's motion, remained out. Jon Szymanski is also battling an injury.

"Brayden Guhn was outstanding," Long said. "Mason Villarreal was excellent. Labrone Barnett has stepped up taking control at the linebacker position. High praise for the sophomore linebackers. We can put them in any time.

"We got experience. There was no letdown."

Ross (4-3) scored 41 points per game against Three Rivers Athletic Conference opponents, including at least 35 in six games and 159 in the last three. The Little Giants broke a two-game losing skid last week.

"It was a confidence booster for our kids," Long said. "Even our young kids got to play. They were excited. They deserve it. They got to play in a playoff game. We got everybody in. It was a great experience for the seniors."

"The highlight was for our kids to see the young kids play and be dominant. That's what they were excited about. They want to win. A great experience for the kids. For their families. It's been a while since we won a playoff game."

Sophomore Kelandre Jones rushed for 94 yards and two touchdowns on five carries in his first audition off the leash this season.

"(He) had a hold of the back of London Johnson's jersey and he pancaked two people along the way and Kelandre said, 'I'll take it the rest of the way big fella.' Those kids ate it up and were laughing. It was awesome."

Labrone Barnett rushed for 88 yards and one touchdown on four tries, and Holmes rushed for one score.

Defensively, Kalijah Alejandro intercepted his fourth pass of the season as he narrowly managed to slide his hand under the ball before it hit the turf. Ross is plus-10 in turnover ratio.

"The kid's just a steady kid that makes plays," Long said. "He studies film and sees what teams are trying to do. He's smart. Our defense was lacking confidence for a long period. The last three games of the season, we lost confidence."

"We had a good week of practice and played with some aggression."

Every team was eligible for the postseason because of the coronavirus this year. Ross earned its other postseason victory in program history in 1983.

"This is more comparable," Long said. "You're not just automatically going to be in this situation, like last week. It's always a thing. It hasn't happened in Fremont history, winning two playoff games in a row."

These dogs are no longer sleeping.  
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Medina Highland 41, Fremont Ross 21

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