

## 1984-1985 Class AAA Sectional Tournament

# Little Giants are hurting, but they are ready to play

By **BOB MARKER**

News-Messenger Sports Editor

"Yeah, everyone is healthy," John Sawyer said. "As a matter of fact, we are as healthy as we have ever been."

That was before the Ross High School boys basketball team went out to practice Thursday. The Little Giants were not so healthy after that.

Two players collided, banged foreheads and stitches were required to close the wounds while another dislocated a little finger during shooting practice.

Shawn McCarthy, a 6-8 junior and the starting Ross center, and John Cahill, 6-3 sophomore who starts at the wing, banged heads during a non-contact drill, Sawyer, the Ross coach, explained.

"John Stierwalt," Sawyer continued, "dislocated his little finger on his left hand but Doc (Joe) Hershey put that back into place and he should be able to play with a little tape on that finger."

"After practice," Sawyer was able to laugh, "we all joined hands and walked into the locker room. I told them not to take a shower because they might slip and fall."

Adding to those woes, freshman Nick Hall turned an ankle and will probably be lost for junior varsity duty.

Early this morning, Sawyer said that Cahill and McCarthy have been cleared to play. Both had seven stitches in their foreheads.

"Their eyes are swollen a little," he said, "so I am going to watch them during pre-game drills to determine whether I will play them."

The walking wounded of Ross will face Findlay tonight in the Trojans' home. What was hoped to be a game in which the Little Giants would keep momentum going, has suddenly turned into one of survival.

Sawyer said that the regular season ending game is a big one for Ross as it bids to keep third

place in the Buckeye Conference race and pick up momentum going into the sectional tournament. Ross, 14-5 overall, is 7-4 in the conference race while Findlay is 11-8 and 6-5 and a win by the Trojans could force Ross to share third place.

"A win would help us a lot," Sawyer said. "We have been playing good ball. We had our six-game winning streak stopped at Admiral King and it would be good going into the tournament with two straight wins."

Ross defeated Fostoria 74-47 Saturday after losing to Admiral King 47-40 Friday.

The Little Giants also have a score to settle with the Trojans, Sawyer hinted. It was Findlay which handed Ross its first loss of the season after the Little Giants had opened with four consecutive victories.

Findlay is a good ball club, Sawyer said while noting that the Trojans are the only team to have beaten Admiral King this season.

The Ross coach said the only things he planned differently for the game is to look at new wrinkles in his man-to-man offense and try some new things with his press-breaker.

That was, of course, before the injuries occurred Thursday at practice.

The junior varsity game begins at 6:30 this evening.

**ROSS NOTES:** Tickets for the Ross versus Mansfield Senior Class AAA Sectional Tournament game, 6:30 p.m., Tuesday, at Ashland College, will go on sale at Tremper's in Fremont at 5 p.m., today. Tickets are \$2.50 for adults and \$1.50 for students. No student tickets will be sold at the door.

Tickets for the North-South All-Star games April 20 in Canton are available from Coach John Sawyer. Tickets are \$4 and are good for both the A-AA game at 7 p.m. and the AAA game at 9 p.m. Greg Bender of Ross will be playing for the North team in the AAA game.

# Quick start key for Ross's sectional debut

By BOB MARKER

News-Messenger Sports Editor

Fremont Ross may have to lace on its track shoe this evening to get a quick start against Mansfield according to Coach John Sawyer.

"That's the big thing," Sawyer said before Monday's practice. "We have to get a good start so that our defense can take over."

Ross will play Mansfield Senior this evening at 6:30 in the first round of the Class AAA Boys Sectional Basketball Tournament at Ashland College. In the second game, Shelby will play Sandusky.

Ross, 15-5, is the top-seeded team in the tournament. Mansfield, 13-7, is not seeded but is considered one of the top teams in the tourney.

"They are a good team," Sawyer admitted. "They are not as tall as us but make up for that with their jumping ability."

Mansfield Coach Joe Prats raised the eyebrows of many observers when he elected to face the Little Giants in the first game. He could have opted to play Ashland, 3-13 at the time of the drawing.

Sawyer reasoned that Mansfield has held a bit of a jinx

over Ross in the sectionals pointing out that the Tygers have ousted the Little Giants from the tournament two of the past three years.

"And they stand a chance of making it three of four," Sawyer admitted but added that his team "was not scared."

"If we play the way we have the past six or seven games, Mansfield has to be scared of us."

The Tygers have virtually the same team that knocked off the Little Giants last season with Eric Toddie, a first team selection by the coaches in the

District VI voting, spearheading the group.

During the drawing it was speculated that Prats felt his team had improved over the past season and reasoned that if they were good enough to beat Ross last year, they would be good enough to do it again. Sawyer, although admitting that he was surprised by Prats' move, said he could understand it.

"If they had not taken us, they would face the possibility of playing three games in less than five days should they make it to the finals," he explained. "That is what we had to do last year

and we were tired the final quarter of that game against Mansfield in the finals."

Ross led by two entering the final quarter last year.

Sawyer pointed out that Mansfield will play a zone defense like Ross but the Tygers will use full and half-court presses throughout the game. Mansfield, according to Sawyer, does not play a man-to-man defense much.

"We have been bothered by 'man' defenses," Sawyer said, "but we have had success against the zones." Defensively, Sawyer said, his

team has played well all season but he added that his team's defense is much tougher when it sits on a lead.

"That is the hole key for us in this game," he repeated. "we have to get off to a good start."

The starters for Ross will be Greg Bender and Dave Kovaleski at the low posts, Shawn McCarthy at center, John Cahill and Mark Miesle at the guards.

Should Ross win tonight, it would play the winner of the Columbian-Ashland game at 6:30 p.m., Friday. Ashland upset Madison Monday 53-50.

# Mansfield halts Ross's season 68-63 in OT



GREG BENDER of Ross has the ball in the key against Tyrone Buck of Mansfield during action Tuesday.

## Jackets sideline Streaks

By ROB BOKUISSEN  
News-Messenger Sports Writer

OLD FORT — Opportunity knocked several times for St. Joe Tuesday night, but the Streaks didn't answer, and the result was a 56-50 season-closing loss at the hands of the New Riegel Blue Jackets in the Class A sectional semifinal at Old Fort High School.

On three occasions in the final quarter, the Streaks had chances to turn the tide back in their favor after trailing the entire second half. But each time, they failed to convert.

The first and possibly most important time came with just under three minutes to go in the game. The Streaks had run off six straight points to trim their deficit down to two points, 45-43.

With 2:51 left, New Riegel's Scott Theis went to the foul line. He made his first free throw, but he missed the second. St. Joe's Steve Gabel grabbed the rebound in the middle of the key and was looking to pass it off.

But New Riegel's Rick Wank cleanly slapped the ball away, took it to the hoop, scored and was fouled. He made the ensuing free throw, and instead of the Streaks trailing by just three, 46-43, with the ball and a chance to cut it to one, they trailed by six, 49-43, with 2:42 left.

"I'll probably see that play a couple times in my sleep tonight," St. Joe Coach Biz Paeth said about Wank's steal and ensuing three-point play. "That was a big play. The momentum was going our way and we had a chance to cut it to one, but it was like a five-point turnaround."

"And I don't think he (Gabel) got fouled. Wank just made a good play. That was the turning point, at least until the last 40 seconds."

In the last 40 seconds, the Streaks came up with their other two missed opportunities to get back into the game.

After St. Joe's Dave Dick hit two free throws to trim it to 54-50 with 42 seconds left, the Streaks fouled Greg Rumschlag with 33 seconds left. He missed the front end of a one-and-one and Tom Gonya rebounded for the Streaks. But their chance to cut it to two failed when Randy Wammes missed a running 10-footer from the right side.

Still, the Streaks had one more chance to cut it to two when Gonya rebounded another missed free throw by New Riegel with 20 seconds left. But this time Bret Pavlica missed a 15-foot jumper from the left corner.

The Blue Jackets finally put matters to rest when Theis made two free throws with 10 seconds remaining for the final margin.

"We had two chances to cut it to two points in the last 40 seconds and we got a couple good shots, but they wouldn't fall," said Paeth.

Those three late mishaps wasted an otherwise solid performance by the Streaks. They shot 49 percent from the field (23 of 47) and committed just seven turnovers.

But the Blue Jackets were just as effective on their offensive end, hitting 61 percent of their shots (22 of 36), including an unbelievable 81 percent (13 of 16) in the first half when they went up 27-21.

New Riegel also held an advantage at the foul line, hitting 12 of 19 to St. Joe's four of five.

Randy Reinhart was the hottest New Riegel shooter, drilling a perfect nine of nine from the field in the first half. He had 19 of the Blue Jackets' 27 first-half points and finished with 21 on the night after taking just two shots in the second half.

Reinhart's first-half display came about mostly as a result of Gabel's solid defensive play on the Blue Jackets' leading scorer Wank. Gabel, at 5-10, was fronting the 6-5 Wank, forcing the Jackets to look elsewhere for their shots. They found them in Reinhart.

"Gabel did a real good job on Wank," said Paeth. "That's what we wanted to do, front him. But we sure let 23 (Reinhart's number) have fun."

Wank still finished with 17 points to support Reinhart's strong showing. He had seven in the final quarter.

The Blue Jackets are now 11-10 and will play Postoria St. Wendelin, 13-8, in the sectional finals Friday night at 6:30. St. Wendelin beat Woodmore 80-63 in the first semifinal last night.

Gonya led St. Joe with 15 points. Pavlica added 14 and Kevin Yockley had 10. The Streaks bow out with an 8-13 record.

## Turnovers are costly to Giants

By BOB MARKER  
News-Messenger Sports Editor

ASHLAND — Ahmed Kent scored seven points in overtime to lead Mansfield Senior to a 68-63 win over top-seeded Fremont Ross in the Class AAA Boys Sectional Basketball Tournament Tuesday at Ashland College.

The Little Giants were victimized by key turnovers and the opportunistic Tyger defense in absorbing their sixth loss in 21 games. Ross had 20 turnovers, including two in the final quarter and another in overtime which cost the Little Giants dearly.

Ross, according to Coach John Sawyer, got off on the wrong foot.

"I felt both teams were tight at the beginning," Sawyer explained, "but even though both teams were missing shots, I felt that Mansfield was setting the tempo."

"They were getting the ball out quickly after our misses and we were slow getting back."

That was characteristic of the entire game.

Ross led after one quarter 12-9 as Mark Miesle carried the Ross offense. The Little Giants' leading scorer, Greg Bender, was bottled up by the Mansfield zone during the first half, finishing with five points as the Tygers carved out a 29-26 halftime advantage.

The Mansfield lead climbed to eight in the third quarter, 43-35, before Ross began to claw its way back into the contest.

Two baskets by Shawn McCarthy got Ross to within six, 45-39, at the end of the third quarter.

Sophomore John Stierwalt and Bender got Ross rolling in the final eight minutes. The two hit on back-to-back baskets as the Little Giants cut the Tyger lead to 45-43. Eric Toddie made it 47-43 for Mansfield with six minutes to play before Ross ran off six straight points to take the lead 49-47.

McCarthy hit two free throws. Stierwalt hit from long distance and Bender hit two charity tosses to give the Little Giants the lead with just under five minutes remaining.

Robbie Andrews made two free throws to tie it for the Tygers but Bender sank a pair of free throws as Ross regained the lead 51-49. Kent answered with a pair of free throws to tie it a 51-51 before Stierwalt hit from the side for a 53-51 Ross lead with 3:30 to play.

The first of the key turnovers hit the Little Giants at that point. After a Mansfield turnover, Ross had a shot at going up by four, but a steal and Kent's layup tied it 53-53.

Stierwalt followed with a pair of free throws and Ross had a second chance to go up by four when Andrews was called for charging. Again, a Ross turnover followed by a Tyrone Buck layup deadlocked the game 55-55.

Bender's two free throws with 2:25 left gave Ross a two-point lead but Kent's jumper tied it again 57-57 at the 2:15 mark.

Sawyer sent his team into a delay game after that bucket, but with 57 seconds left, Miesle was called for a five-second violation and Mansfield had the ball for the final shot.

That did not work out as two Mansfield timeouts later and a Toddie air ball sent the game went into overtime.

Bender missed the first shot of the overtime and Kent wound up



JOHN STIERWALT of Ross fires up a jump shot from the corner during action against Mansfield Tuesday night at Ashland College.

with the ball at the left sideline after a wild scramble.

Kent drove to the baseline and ran into Ross's Dave Kovaleski while putting the ball up. The shot went in as Kovaleski was called for the foul. Kent hit the free throw and the game was on the skids beneath Ross.

Bender canned a shot with two minutes to go and Ross got the ball back a few seconds later on Tim Harless' missed shot.

After a timeout, Stierwalt drove the right baseline but traveled. Mansfield jumped on that chance, running the clock down to 1:02 before Miesle fouled Buck.

The 6-5 Mansfield senior hit both shots to put his team up 62-59. A Bender miss was followed by two free throws by Toddie with 34 seconds to play and the game was nearly out of reach for Ross.

Miesle's bucket was followed by Kent's two layups which leed the contest.

"We knew that we could not play Ross a half-court game," Mansfield Coach Joe Prats said while admitting the start of the game helped get the tempo of the game where he wanted it.

"We had to get out quick and get going; that was the only way that we were going to beat Ross," Prats said.

"We knew we had to play a

good game to beat them," Sawyer said outside the quiet Ross lockerroom. "and we really did not have that good of a game."

"We took a couple of charges that went against us I felt," the Ross coach said, "and that hurt us."

"Mansfield is a good team. We were surprised that they shot free throws so well because we felt that they were weak there. Down toward the end, they showed they could play disciplined ball with the passing game."

"The only other thing I can say," Sawyer concluded, "is these kids have nothing to be ashamed of this season."

Mansfield was 14 of 18 at the foul line and 27 of 49 from the floor. Ross was 15 of 18 and 24 of 48 from the floor.

Kent's 25 points led all scorers with Toddie getting 13, Buck 12 and Harless 11. Bender finished with 22 for Ross with Miesle hitting eight of 11 shots and finishing with 18. Stierwalt had 13.

Mansfield had only 14 turnovers. Ross had a 25-23 advantage in rebounding.

Mansfield, 14-7, will play the winner of tonight's Ashland-Tiffin columbian game for the sectional title at 6:30 p.m., Friday.

## Mansfield 68, Ross 63 (OT)

### Score by quarters

Mansfield	9	20	16	12	11—68
Ross	12	14	13	18	6—63

### Scoring

**MANSFIELD** — Eric Toddie 5-3-13, Tyron Buck 5-2-12, Ahmed Kent 10-5-25, Robbie Andrews 3-0-6, Tim Harless 4-3-11, totals 27-14-68.

**ROSS** — Greg Bender 7-8-22, Dave Kovaleski 1-0-2, Shawn McCarthy 3-2-8, Mark Miesle 8-2-18, John Cahill 0-0-0, John Stierwalt 5-3-13, totals 24-15-63.

Season records: Ross 15-6, Mansfield 14-7.