

1999 Football Season...

Eicher rejects Ross football coaching job

Second, third choices also withdraw from consideration

By SCOTT TAPPA
Sports editor

Mike Eicher, who quarterbacked Fremont Ross to a 9-1 record in 1980, has turned down his alma mater's offer to return as its head football coach.

Superintendent Don King said this morning that Eicher, who is the coach at Willoughby South High School, turned down the school's offer Thursday night. King said Ross athletic director Art Bucci called him between 9 and 9:30 p.m. Thursday to inform him of Eicher's decision.

Eicher's decision is apparently based on financial reasons. He would have had to take a pay cut of about \$11,000 to come to Ross, King said.

"I'm very surprised," King said. "Getting down that far, to where the day before we're ready to make a recommendation ... that's his choice to do so.

"I thought he would have been a good choice for our program. He's very knowledgeable, very positive. He would have related well to our players. He would have been a good member of our staff."

King had planned to appear before a special school board meeting this morning to recommend Eicher be hired as head football coach and physical education teacher. Instead, officials must come up with a new plan because their No. 2

choice, Toledo Start coach Doug Pearson, and their No. 3 choice, former Fostoria coach Dick Kidwell, have withdrawn from consideration.

Pearson said he withdrew from consideration on Tuesday for a combination of family and health reasons. He said that the salary range indicated by the search committee was "comparable" to his salary at Start.

"I felt I had a very good interview, thought the whole interview process was very professionally done," Pearson said. "I think it's a very flattering position. Fremont is a good football town. I was impressed with the school. The community seemed to be into it."

"Things didn't work out this time, but I hope they keep me in mind in the future."

King said the school's next course of action would be decided at a board meeting today.

"I can see us reconvening the committee again," he said. "We're going to have to be on a pretty fast track here. Maybe we'll even open the thing back up again, maybe revisit other applicants. I want to make sure we're hiring the best person for our program."

Eicher also was a finalist for the Ross job two years ago, which eventually went to Dan Pallante. Attempts to reach Eicher this morning were unsuccessful.

Ross coaching search ends

Eicher comes home

1981 Ross grad returns to alma mater

By SCOTT TAPPA

Sports editor

Thursday, Mike Eicher visited Harmon Stadium as a job applicant.

Friday, he returned to Fremont as the new head football coach at Ross High School.

"As a matter of fact, (Thursday), when (Ross athletic director) Art Bucci and I were walking on the field, I got the chills of beating Sandusky to win the Buckeye Conference championship," Eicher said Fri-

day. "It felt good to walk on the field."

On Halloween night 1980, Eicher executed one of the biggest runs of the season to help Ross beat Sandusky 7-0, and clinch the Buckeye Conference title. Midway through the second quarter, on first-and-22 from the Ross 48, Eicher ran 43 yards to the Sandusky 9-yard-line, setting up Eric Bates' 6-yard touchdown run.

Nineteen years later, after head coaching stops at three Ohio high schools, Eicher

Mike Eicher profile

Education: High School—Fremont Ross; College—Ohio Northern

Previous coaching experience: Edon, Defiance Tinora, Willoughby South

Personal: Three daughters, Brittni, 13; Brooke, 9; Erika, 5.

has accepted his alma mater's offer to return as its head football coach.

See EICHER, B3

Little Giants relieved

Ross players happy to have new coach

By MICHAEL PIDANICK

Staff writer

The 1999 football season just got a little more exciting for Fremont Ross junior quarterback David Rhodes.

Rhodes, who is expected to take over the starting quarterback job, said he is looking forward to playing under new head coach Mike Eicher, who replaces the run-oriented Dan Pallante.

"To my understanding, he's not afraid to pass the ball as much as 40 times a game," said Rhodes. "What



RHODES



LEGG



MYERS



HINES

else can a quarterback ask for?"

Rhodes, who saw some varsity action as Aaron Coonrod's backup last year, said he expects to benefit from the experience of Eicher, who was the starting quarterback at Ross in 1980.

"He has more experience, he can teach me a lot of fundamentals," Rhodes said.

See PLAYERS, B3

Eicher returns to coach alma mater

Continued from B1

"Mike just decided that he'd like to come back to Fremont," Bucci said. "Money wasn't that important. Wanting to coach at his alma mater is very important."

After graduating from Ross in 1981, Eicher played quarterback at Ohio Northern University. He then got a job as an assistant coach at Edon High School, and was eventually promoted to the head coaching spot, which he filled for two years.

From 1989-94, Eicher coached at Defiance Tinora, where his teams won two Green Meadows Conference championships. He then moved to Willoughby South, where he has coached the last five years.

During his first four years at Willoughby South, Eicher's teams competed in the Greater Cleveland Conference against the likes of Euclid, Bedford and Maple Heights.

"We were a Division II school in a predominantly Division I conference," Eicher said.

Nonetheless, South advanced to the state playoffs in 1996, and after two rebuilding years, Eicher said the team would be back in playoff contention in 1999. Still, the lure of home prompted Eicher to apply for the Ross opening a second time, after being a finalist for the job after Rex Radeloff's retirement in 1996.

"Fremont's got great tradition," he said. "The last time it was open, I looked at it, and it was the same thing this time. It was the only job I've looked at since I've been here at Willoughby South. I realize the tradition and pride at Ross, so as far as a decision, it was very easy."

Now that Eicher is aboard as the new Ross coach, pending approval at a June 21 school board meeting, he has 59 days until the official start of fall practice, less than two months in which to accomplish a whole offseason's worth of activity.

"He's going to be on a real fast track," said Superintendent Don King. "The kids are out of school, their last day was (Thursday), and he has to start thinking about putting a staff together."

Eicher admitted that with his time commitments during the football season at Willoughby South, he did not know much about the current state of Fremont Ross football. As such, some of his first moves as coach will be to evaluate the existing players and coaching staff, and proceed from there.

"I know they've had two real good years," he said. "One of the

first tasks is to evaluate the kids and get the weight program going. I'd like to sit down and interview the (assistant) coaches there. I've got a couple guys here who are interested."

Eicher said that while his new players are probably up to speed lifting-wise, the installation of new offensive and defensive systems, along with the system of terminology, will have to be accelerated.

"There's a lot of learning to take place amongst coaches and players, as far as philosophy, terminology," he said. "That's something we're going to have to work on all summer. This is the time we're going to be cranking it up in the weight room, working on weight development. I don't think we're behind in that realm of things."

"As far as terminology and getting coaches on the same page, that part of it's going to have to be speeded up. It's definitely going to be a challenge. I guess coming in as a first-year coach and not knowing a whole lot about the players makes the challenge even greater."

The challenge is great indeed, as the Little Giants lose 17 players who started regularly in 1998. The young but talented team will also face a strengthened schedule, which adds Massillon, Toledo St. Francis and Toledo St. John's this year in addition to what promises to be a tougher Great Lakes League schedule.

"A school like Fremont Ross can play a schedule like that," Eicher said. "The goal every year should be to get into the playoffs, especially with the expansion to eight teams (from each region), and if you want to be the best, you have to play the best."

Eicher said he will teach health at Ross. He is certified to teach both health and physical education.

"One thing I think is a great challenge for a teacher is to challenge kids who need to be challenged, and to help the ones that need help," he said. "Sometimes in life you don't always use math and English, but health is a subject you use every day of your life."

Former Fostoria coach Dick Kidwell, a finalist for the job, did not withdraw his name from consideration, as was reported in Friday's News-Messenger. Kidwell was "still in the running" for the job at the time the story was published, King said. The mistake came as a result of an editor's error.

Second time's the charm for new Ross football boss

By SCOTT TAPPA
Sports editor

Two years ago, Mike Eicher applied for the football coaching vacancy at Fremont Ross, but was passed over in favor of Dan Pallante.

"There was definitely some disappointment," said Eicher. "I guess any time you're turned down for a position you're disappointed, but it helped me in the long run. Sometimes you learn that you need to continue to work, or that the time wasn't right. It made me come back and work again."

The work paid off, as Eicher accepted Ross's offer to become its next football coach on Friday. A solid football resume, combined with several solid interviews, made Eicher the top choice to fill the position.

"When I met with him, he just comes across as so sincere in his love for football," said Superintendent Don King. "You could tell he wanted to be in Fremont, it was quite obvious in the way he talked about tradition and heritage."

"The other thing I liked about Mike, is he's the kind of coach who will adapt his offensive and defensive philosophies around the abilities of his players. He said it all depends on skill level: if he has a sprint-out quarterback, he'll design around that, if he has a dropback quarterback,

he'll design around that."

Said Jon Peters, a member of the hiring committee who participated in the interview process: "His style of football is a more wide-open style of play, more diversified than the last two years. He runs an I-back offense, kind of like the old days at Fremont Ross."

"He throws the ball a lot, he made the comment that he threw the ball 50 percent of the time last year, but it was probably not what he wanted to do. But with the type of team he had, it's what he had to do."

Tom Manahan, another committee member, said that Eicher and fellow finalists Doug Pearson and Dick Kidwell were very close, but what set Eicher apart was his personality and his roots.

"They were close, all three of them were really good candidates," Manahan said. "He just came across as a likable person, a smart person, and being a Fremont native had a lot to do with it. He really wanted to come back."

Manahan said the committee asked the candidates questions regarding their football philosophy, what their possible contributions to the football program might be, why they wanted to come to Fremont and what they could do to get more students to join the football team.

"When I met with him, he just comes across as so sincere in his love for football."

— Don King
on new Ross coach Mike Eicher

"I've heard just today that there were kids that would be coming back out for football," Manahan said.

Peters represented the interests of the Ross Athletic Boosters Association, and said that when pressed about booster issues, Eicher responded well. Peters said Eicher showed game films to boosters at Willoughby South, and was also very active in the boosters' bingo program, raising large sums of money to support the football program.

Perhaps a deciding factor was the fact that Eicher's athletic director at Willoughby South, Frank Platzar, was so afraid of losing his football coach.

"We could just sense the love and the compassion coming from his athletic director, who really did not want to lose him," Peters said. "But, in the same sense he understood Mike's situation. He was a Willoughby South graduate, and he was at Mayfield (before returning), so he could understand (Eicher's) point of view."

Coaches mull options

By MICHAEL PIDANICK
Staff writer

When Dan Pallante was named head coach of the Fremont Ross football team two years ago, several changes took place in the assistant coaching staff.

A similar turn of events is likely this year, now that Mike Eicher has been named to replace Pallante, who resigned in April.

Assistant coach Del Enders said only that he would talk to Eicher before he makes a decision on his future.

"I will consider that after I meet with the coach," said Enders, who declined further comment and did not say if he had other options. Enders had applied for the Ross job earlier, but the school decided to hire from outside the system.

Assistant Jim Kettner has already left, accepting the head coach and athletic director position at Arcadia High School.

Assistant Tony Burel, who graduated from Ross a year before Eicher, said he would be glad to remain on board. He also said he is confident that Eicher's tenure will be a successful one.

"As a coach, he'll do a great job," said Burel. "I always thought he was a great football player, and everywhere he has gone he has been successful."

Players relieved that new coach finally in place

Continued from B1

Rhodes and the Little Giants said they were just glad a new coach is in place, so they can get down to work.

"By this time last year, we were lifting real hard," said offensive lineman Rick Legg. "We really want to have a winning season, so we have a lot of work to do to catch up. We're just going to have to work our tails off."

Several assistant coaches had been working with the players in the weight room. While the lack of a head coach may be some-

what of a problem, assistant coach Tony Burel said the Little Giants have the talent to overcome that.

"I think we have a very talented group of kids," Burel said. "They can adjust to anything that's put in front of them. Everybody needs a leader, but with the good people we have we shouldn't lose a step."

Pallante officially left Ross April 19, leaving the Little Giants without a coach for nearly two months. With the first regular season game just 12 weeks away, Little Giants players expressed relief that they finally had a

coach.

"They needed to make a decision," said offensive lineman Kyle Myers. "It's only a couple months before the season, I was starting to get worried. If you wait too long to get started, you're not going to have a great season."

Said running back Aaron Hines: "I was really starting to get worried, the season is just around the corner. Before you know it, we'll be playing our first game."

Eicher will be the Little Giants' third coach in four years. Hines, who will be a junior this season, said learning another offense

may be difficult.

"It's going to be tough, it's my third offense in four years," he said. "I was just getting used to the Wing-T (the offense preferred by Pallante). I heard he runs a Power T with a split back."

"But just as long as he comes in and does a good job, I'll be happy with him."

The board will make its official decision on Eicher's hiring on June 21. The players hope to get a chance to meet with him soon.

"I really hope he tries to get us all together to meet with us soon," said Myers. "We want to get started."

1998 All-GLL

First Team

Offense

Player(School)	Gr.	Ht.	Wt.
Greg Fleming (Fostoria)	Sr.	6-1	175
El Da'Sheon Nix (Sandusky)	Jr.	6-3	175
Ryan Donley (Clay)	Jr.	6-3	205
D.J. Lutz (Bedford)	Sr.	5-9	170
Ryan Hite (Findlay)	Sr.	6-2	172
Sean Salah (Whitmer)	Sr.	6-3	235
Frank Kaiser (Ross)	Sr.	6-6	285
Brian Hill (Ross)	Sr.	6-3	255
Michael Moran (Bedford)	Sr.	5-9	190
Ben Roethlisberger (Findlay)	Jr.	6-4	180
John Garrow (Whitmer)	Sr.	5-9	145

Placekicker

Josh Huston (Findlay)	Jr.
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Defense

Ryan Ditty (Bedford)	Jr.	5-11	185
Cory Echelberry (Fostoria)	Sr.	6-2	255
Mike Iriti (Findlay)	Jr.	6-0	168
Bobby Conry (Whitmer)	Sr.	6-3	215
Aaron Coonrod (Ross)	Sr.	6-3	190
Cory Freshour (Fostoria)	Sr.	5-9	170
Rob Dunnigan (Bedford)	Sr.	5-8	160
Jim Arnold (Findlay)	Sr.	6-1	192
John Rosekelly (Sandusky)	Jr.	6-2	227
Steve Lisk (Bedford)	Sr.	5-10	160
Andrew Diller (Ross)	Sr.	5-11	175

Punter

Dan Cobb (Ross)	Sr.
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Second Team

Offense

Ryan Gerritsen (Fostoria)	Sr.	5-9	170
Steve Stewart (Sandusky)	Sr.	6-6	325
Derek Besgrove (Clay)	Jr.	6-2	200
John Forshay (Ross)	Sr.	5-11	215
Josh Adams (Bedford)	Sr.	6-3	240
Tyson Liggins (Ross)	Sr.	6-3	220
Robert Burch (Sandusky)	Sr.	5-11	205
Andy Baker (Bedford)	Sr.	6-0	185
John Seng (Findlay)	Sr.	6-1	330
Zach Frasure (Ross)	Sr.	5-10	265
Rob Hulka (Whitmer)	Sr.	5-9	185

Defense

Zeb Wedge (Fostoria)	Sr.	5-9	165
Eric Hugueley (Clay)	Jr.	6-1	200
Art Snowberger (Bedford)	Sr.	6-4	260
Mick Bloomfield (Findlay)	Jr.	6-0	154
Josh Lozano (Ross)	Jr.	6-0	185
Jay Watt (Whitmer)	Sr.	6-2	190
Josh Liggins (Ross)	Sr.	6-0	210
Nick Salyers (Findlay)	Jr.	6-3	200
Pat Gill (Bedford)	Sr.	6-1	180
Nick Gallup (Whitmer)	Jr.	5-11	165
T.J. Battisti (Findlay)	Sr.	6-0	239

Special Recognition

Bedford—Mike Nash; Whitmer—Ben Sheriff

Honorable Mention

Bedford—Joe Lapari, Brian Seitz, Jeff LaPointe, Tony Peake, Aaron Swick, Eid Fouad; Clay—Josh Vieth, Matt Casey, Tony Katschke, Kurt Baumgardner, Jered Donley, Matt Gornoll; Findlay—Owen Merrill, Dane Whitted, Jason Rhoads, Ben Farnsworth, Tyler Zeto, David Gallegos; Fostoria—Tony Agapiou, Jameson Botimer, Brandon Distel, Jeremy Smith, Scott McElwain; Ross—Jorel Heidelberg, Weston Hineline, Jason Billow, Bryson Sewell, Robert Atkins, Dave Fennel; Sandusky—Kevin Smith, Aaron Williamson, Jon Krabill, James Bickley, Nick Van Dooling, Jimmie Cherry; Whitmer—Mike Merideth, Alex Salwitz, Jim Ziliox, Ryan Ethridge, Justyn McNett, Adam Dubendorfer

Offensive Lineman of The Year: Brian Hill (Ross)

Defensive Lineman of the Year: Cory Echelberry (Fostoria)

Defensive Back of the Year: Aaron Coonrod (Ross)

Coach of the Year: Cliff Hite (Findlay)

Young DBs no secondary concern for Lindsey

By MICHAEL PIDANICK
Staff writer

Fremont Ross defensive coordinator Chuck Lindsey said he has always been fortunate to have outstanding sophomore players.

Two years ago, one such super sophomore was safety Josh Lozano, who picked off five passes and earned All-Great Lakes League first team defense honors.

Lozano is now a senior, and Lindsey's defense will rely heavily on the 6-foot, 180-pound free safety.

"Josh is probably one of the best free safeties, as far as the total package," Lindsey said. "It's not great speed, not great ability, he's not a great hitter — but he does all things well, especially the mental part of it. He's made outstanding checks in practices, he's the quarterback of our defense, he gets everybody where they're supposed to be."

Lozano, who intercepted four more passes last year and returned to the All-GLL team, leads a secondary that graduated leading tackler Aaron Coonrod and solid Jorei Heidelberg and speedy junior Kelly Lyle to a knee injury.

Jose Simms (6-0, 176), transferred to Ross from St. Joseph Central Catholic and will start along with either junior Jeremy Jones (5-11, 186) or senior Jordan Mackey (6-2, 173) at cornerback. Whichever corner doesn't start will likely see time in passing situations.

"Fundamentally, (Simms) has picked up on everything that we're doing," Lindsey said. "He's a great cover guy, he has great speed, great agility, he's really going to be an asset."

"(Jones) played a little last year, he's a typical strongside corner. He's big, strong, he needs to work on the coverage a little more, but what a great kid. He moved from a whole different world, especially now that teams are throwing the ball more in high school."

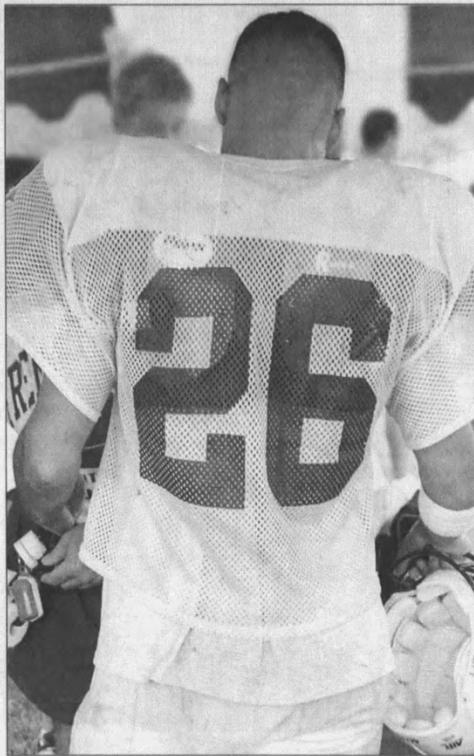
Sophomore Bo Martin (6-1, 182), the backup quarterback, is "going to be a good one," said Lindsey. He will back up Lozano this year. Juniors Derek Carnicom (5-10, 160) and Mike Ziemke (5-10, 150) are the backups at cornerback.

"The secondary's not looking too bad," Lozano said. "We've got a few things to work on, but we've got some good cornerbacks. We just need to learn to work together and communicate on the field."

Said Simms: "The defensive backs look real good. Josh is back to lead us and Jeremy Jones and Jordan Mackey, they can play. We should be pretty good."

Martin and junior David Rhodes (6-0, 182) will play in the nickel and dime packages. Rhodes, who will be the team's starting quarterback, would be an every-down defensive back if not for his offensive responsibilities.

"The best defensive back we have is probably David Rhodes,"



News-Messenger/Travis Johnson

JOSH LOZANO will oversee the Fremont Ross defense this year from his safety position. Lozano is a three-year starter for the Little Giants.

Lindsey said, "He'll definitely be in on passing defenses, nickel and dime, he can flat-out play."

Lindsey said he expects to mix his coverages to make the quarterback think. But the inexperience may translate into big plays for opposing offenses.

"I believe in making the quarter-

back think about what he's doing, not be able to think 'They're going to be in three-deep, we're going to be able to throw the ball here and there,'" Lindsey said. "We will give up some big plays, because some of the kids will make some checks and not check into the right things."

Lozanos team up on both sides of the ball

Jamin starts at linebacker, Josh at safety

By MICHAEL PIDANICK
Staff writer

As Fremont Ross senior Josh Lozano lines up at free safety for the third straight season, he will see a new, but familiar player in front of him.

Junior Jamin Lozano, Josh's younger brother, will start at outside linebacker for the Little Giants, after seeing limited varsity action last year.

"Jamin's working out real well," Josh said. "It'll be good to have my brother out there. I got to play with him a little bit last year, but this year I'll get to play with him a lot more, so it should be a lot of fun this year."

Jamin Lozano started one game last year at strong safety in a Great Lakes League game at Fostoria. Late in the second quarter, Josh scooped up a fumble, and behind a block from his brother, scampered 17 yards for a touchdown. The Little Giants went on to an easy 17-0 win.

While Josh Lozano will start at safety for the third year in a row, Jamin said he is ready to get his chance to start.

"I'm looking forward to us being back there together, especially with this being his senior season," Jamin said. "He helps me out a lot, he's always looking out for me. If he sees me do something wrong, he teaches me and tells me what I did wrong."

The two get along well on and off the field. But a little brotherly competition always creeps into the mix.

"It's good competition," Jamin said with a smile. "We're always trying to be a little better than the other one."

Both will also see some time on offense, with Josh at fullback and Jamin at flanker. But defense will be the strength of both players, especially for Josh, a two-time All-GLL selection.

"I'll probably play a little running back, a little special teams, but the main thing this year is my defense," Josh said. "I'm going out there to help the secondary."

"We have some inexperience on defense and it's time for me to step up and be a leader."

The success of the secondary will likely rest on Lozano, the only returning starter. That's just fine with defensive coordinator Chuck Lindsey.

"Josh is a leader on the field and off the field," Lindsey said. "He's in a great position, he's got great academics, he's a great baseball player, and an outstanding football player. He'll be able to choose where he goes to school."

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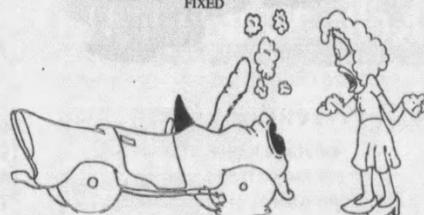
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Giants' defensive front eight young, but talented

By MICHAEL PIDANICK

Staff writer

Fremont Ross may have lost 10 of 11 defensive starters, but there will be a new face that will bring some experience to the unit.

Defensive coordinator Chuck Lindsey is back after a year away from the team, and the Little Giants said they are glad to have him.

"I'm real glad Mr. Lindsey is back," said junior linebacker Jamin Lozano. "He's a good coach and we'll be doing a lot better with him back. He brings a lot of intensity to the team. He picks practice up when we're down, picks everyone up and gets us going."

Lindsey is well-known for being very vocal. But that's exactly what the defense needs, said cornerback Jose Simms.

"He'll yell at you, but that's what you need," said Simms. "Coach Lindsey works hard, he's a good coach."

Lindsey's ample experience will come in handy for the young defense, which returns only safety Josh Lozano to a unit that stumped Great Lakes League foes all year.

The most inexperienced area is the defensive line. Junior Bryan Root (6-4, 187) and senior Brooks Obermeyer (6-1, 215) are the starters at end and senior Kyle Myers (6-5, 264) and junior Aaron Hines (6-0, 238) start at tackle.

"Neither one of the defensive ends have any experience from last year, but I think they'll both do an outstanding job," Lindsey said. "Myers is going to be asked to play both ways, he's going to have to work real hard to get that accomplished, he's doing a great job. Hines has never played defensive tackle, with a little work and understanding the game a little more, he's going to be OK."

Senior David Cobb (6-3, 189) and junior Kendrik Nason (6-1, 215) are the backup ends and sophomores Anthony Vann (6-2, 330), Josh Bowler (5-11, 280) and Steve Sieberg (5-9, 220) are reserves at tackle.

Myers said he has confidence in the line, despite the lack of game experience.

"We're not very experienced, but we just need do our jobs," said Myers. "If we follow our assignments and let the linebackers come up and make the hits, we'll be OK."

The linebacking corps is also inexperienced, but talented.

Junior Alfonso Vann (6-2, 190) and junior Jamin Lozano (5-10, 160) are starters on the outside and senior Jason Hull (5-10, 215) and junior Rick Legg (6-2, 205) man the inside positions. Hull started one game in place of Jason Billow last season, and Lozano also saw playing time.

"It's all back to experience," Lindsey said. "Those kids have no experience whatsoever, but in our defense those four linebackers have got to be able to make plays."

Lindsey is especially high on Alfonso Vann.



News-Messenger/Travis Johnson

DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR Chuck Lindsey instructs Jamin Lozano, 25, and other Ross defenders during preseason practice.

"He's an outstanding player, he is the key to our defense from the front eight," the coach said. "He's going to be the kid that makes the big plays. As long as I've been at Fremont Ross, there's always been an outstanding outside linebacker, you can take (Derek) Isaman, you can take (Shawn) Simms, you can take (Aaron) Coonrod. I'm looking for big things from Alfonso Vann."

Seniors Kurt Prosser (6-1, 201) and Ryan Wilhelm (5-9, 166) will back up outside, and sophomores Matt Thiessen (5-10, 180) and Jared Kingsborough (6-0, 200) will back up inside.

"Our linebackers are looking good," Vann said. "I think we're going to do pretty good, we have good all-around team speed."

try to put our best athlete at that position, and I think he's definitely going to fill that role."

Seniors Kurt Prosser (6-1, 201) and Ryan Wilhelm (5-9, 166) will back up outside, and sophomores Matt Thiessen (5-10, 180) and Jared Kingsborough (6-0, 200) will back up inside.

"Our linebackers are looking good," Vann said. "I think we're going to do pretty good, we have good all-around team speed."



McCord replaces McCord

By SCOTT TAPPA

Sports editor

Lytle will be missed

Fremont Ross had hoped junior Kelly Lytle was going to be one of the better receivers and cornerbacks in the Great Lakes League.

That all changed this summer when Lytle suffered a serious knee injury in a pickup basketball game. He will miss the entire football season, possibly the basketball season, and may not even be back for track and field in the spring.

"When you lose somebody like that it's devastating," said defensive coordinator Chuck Lindsey. "Hopefully he'll be able to come back next year and play."

Lindsey, who helped coach Lytle in basketball, said he has what it takes to make a comeback.

"He has great speed, he's very intelligent," said defensive coordinator Chuck Lindsey. "He has a lot of heart."

—SCOTT TAPPA

Jose Simms will get the first look as the primary punt returner. At kickoff returner, where Jorel Heidelberg averaged 31.5 yards per return and broke free for two touchdowns last season, Simms, Jeremy Jones, Ryan Wilhelm and Kendrik Nason will get looks.

It's not
whether you
win or lose.
It's where
you go after
the game.



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SAM-ME-1096

Line gets four new starters

Legg is lone holdover from last year

By MICHAEL PIDANICK
Staff writer

It wasn't hard to see why Fremont Ross was able to knock opponents all over the field last season, en route to 2,524 rushing yards and an 8-2 record.

The Little Giants featured a mammoth offensive line. Frank Kaiser, who stood 6-foot-6 and weighed 285 pounds, Brian Hill (6-2, 250), David Fennel (6-2, 295), Rick Legg (6-1, 180) and Zack Frasure (5-9, 270) pushed opponents around like rag dolls.

The bad news is four of the five were seniors, and only Legg returns to this year's team.

But that doesn't mean the Little Giants' line will be a weakness, said starting center Brooks Obermeyer.

"We're doing good, we've got some athletes," said Obermeyer. "We play a lot of different sports. We're a lot more athletic than last year, but just not as strong yet. We'll rely a lot more on quickness."

Obermeyer (6-1, 215), Legg (now a 6-foot-2, 205-pound junior) and senior Kyle Myers (6-5, 264) should form a solid nucleus to the line. Legg and senior Jason Hull (6-2, 205) are the likely starters at guard with junior Andrew Hanson (5-9, 180) and sophomore Jared Kingsborough (6-0, 200) backing up.

Myers, who saw a little action on the line last year, starts at one tackle. Big sophomore Anthony Vann (6-2, 330), sophomore Josh Bower (5-11, 280) and junior Tim Mooney (6-5, 220), who transferred over from Toledo Waite will

also see time at tackle. Sophomore Steven Sieberg (5-9, 220) will back up Obermeyer.

In the scrimmage against Euclid, Myers and Vann flip-flopped sides of the line from play-to-play, with the tight end most often lining up next to Vann.

"I think the line's looking pretty good," said Myers. "We just have to communicate well. We're pretty inexperienced. But we're learning to pick up our assignments pretty well."

Obermeyer, who is a co-captain along with safety/running back Josh Lozano, said he is happy with the learning progress made by the entire line.

"We're picking it up pretty fast," he said. "We have to fill a few holes but we'll be OK."

The Little Giants also lost two quality tight ends when Dan Cobb and Andrew Diller graduated.

The void will be filled by senior Kurt Prosser (6-1, 201), junior Alfonso Vann (6-2, 190) and first-year senior Dave Cobb (6-3, 189).

"That's a situation where we have to wait and see which guy steps up and takes the job," Eicher said.

Prosser had three catches in the Euclid scrimmage, although a 20-yarder was called back by a penalty.

The Little Giants, who were almost exclusively a running team last year, hope to pass the ball approximately 30 percent of the time. The man responsible for delivering those passes, junior quarterback David Rhodes, said the line will key the offense's success.

"I predict a good season, but we can only be as good as the offensive line," Rhodes said. "We have some good guys up there, big Kyle Myers is there, Rick Legg is back. I think all of the guys up there will do the job and we'll have a real good year."



LEGG



MYERS

Athletic junior Rhodes takes over at quarterback

By MICHAEL PIDANICK
Staff writer

David Rhodes has the one thing required of a quarterback being thrust into the starting varsity lineup: confidence.

That's something he will need as he becomes the first starting quarterback of the Mike Eicher era at Fremont Ross.

"I'm confident that I can get the job done," said Rhodes, a 6-foot, 182-pound junior. "I think I can make the right plays at the right time and get the job done."

Rhodes saw limited action as Aaron Coonrod's backup last year. He rushed 11 times for 47 yards, and misfired on both of his passing attempts. But that was in the Wing-T offense.

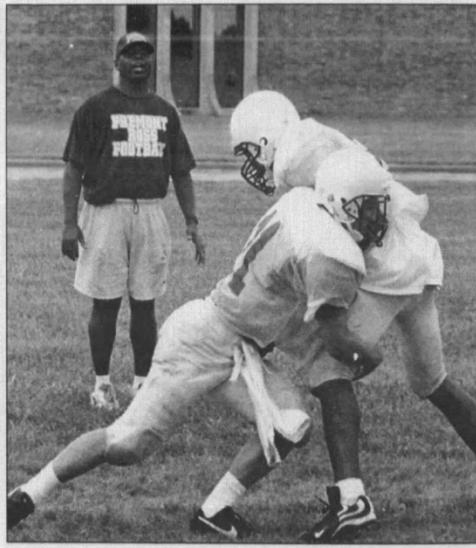
Eicher, who quarterbacked the Little Giants to a 9-1 season in 1980, said Rhodes has the necessary skills to run the diverse offense.

"Dave definitely can do some very good things at quarterback for us," said Eicher. "He's a very good athlete, he can run and throw the football both."

"What we have to do is find his biggest strength and use that to help the offense. He's very, very athletic and we want to utilize a little bit of both of his skills."

"He's grasping terminology and he's running the offense pretty well."

The first step in turning his varsity career into a successful one is learning Eicher's offense. So far so good, Rhodes said.



News-Messenger/Travis Johnson
DAVID RHODES, left, is one of the better defensive backs on Fremont Ross, but his main role this year will be at starting quarterback.

different ways he can go at the defense."

Said fullback Josh Lozano: "David's looking real good. He's worked a lot on his passing over the summer and he's come a long way. He's got good speed and a good arm on him."

Jordan Mackey, who will play the "X" receiver position, will likely be the recipient of many Rhodes passes. He has high hopes for his quarterback.

"David's looking great," Mackey said. "He's going to be one of the best quarterbacks Ross has seen in a long time. He's looking real good."



Ross offense looks to pass more often

By MICHAEL PIDANICK
Staff writer

During last year's training camp, then-Fremont Ross coach Dan Pallante promised a more balanced offensive attack, and said he planned on his team throwing 10 passes per game.

That number wound up dwindling to 5.6 per game, less than a pass per game more than 1997.

Several factors led to the one-sided attack: a solid rushing attack, inconsistent pass protection and the fact that the Little Giants held a lead for most of the first seven weeks of play.

But this year, with new coach Mike Eicher running the show, the pass-to-run ratio is expected to soar. Indications have the attack being as much as 60-to-40 in favor of the run.

"We're definitely looking to throw more," said split end Jordan Mackey. "We're definitely going to throw the ball more. We're looking to be about 70-30. I'm having fun out there, it's looking real good."

Eicher said he would like to see more balance. But with a new starter at every skill position, there are some questions to be answered.

"First of all, who's going to catch the ball for us?" Eicher said. "We need someone catching the ball. If you want to mix the run with the pass, you have got to be able to threaten them deep."

The Little Giants have a plethora of talented, but inexperienced players at the two receiver positions in Eicher's I-Wing offense.

Playing the "X" receiver spot are seniors Mackey, a 6-2, 173-pounder, and Ryan Daugherty (6-2, 170) and junior Bryan Root (6-4, 187). Seeing time at the flanker position will be senior Joe Lopez (5-11, 168) and juniors Jamin Lozano (5-10, 160), juniors Derek Carnicom (5-10, 160) and Mike Ziemke (5-10, 150).

Of course, the key to the attack will still be the running game. The

New face in backfield

Fremont football fans will see a familiar face in a different uniform this year.

Senior Jose Simms transferred to Fremont Ross after two successful seasons at St. Joseph Central Catholic.

"I think it's a good thing for me to come over here," Simms said. "I'll get more competition, and I'll see if I can make it to college. This is a good test for me. I think good things will happen here."

With the graduation of John Forshtay, Weston Hineline and Robert Atkins, the Little Giants' top three runners in 1998, Simms will have an opportunity to compete for the starting job at Ross. He figured to split time with junior Wade Kuns at St. Joe.

—MICHAEL PIDANICK

Little Giants lost a bunch of good backs, including John Forshtay (857 yards), Weston Hineline (452) and Robert Atkins (460).

Eicher said he would like to use several running backs, instead of one featured guy.

"I want to try to do a committee thing, if it works out," he said. "If there becomes one clear-cut guy later, we'll give him the ball. But it'll be nice to have a fresh guy in there, especially since a lot of these guys play defense. But if a guy's having a good game, he'll obviously run the ball more that night."

Senior Josh Lozano (6-0, 180) and juniors Kendrid Nason (6-1, 215) and Aaron Hines (6-0, 238) "have done a good job in camp," and will see time at fullback. Senior Jose Simms (6-0, 176), junior Jeremy Jones (5-11, 186) and senior Ryan Wilhelm (5-9, 166) are the tailbacks.

"I think our running backs are looking good," Simms said. "We have a bunch of good guys back there."

Fremont Ross Little Giants

Out with the old, in with the ... old, at Ross

By SCOTT TAPPA
Sports editor

Perhaps it's appropriate that as the rest of the world gets ready to turn the page and begin a new millennium, the Fremont Ross football program turns to its past for strength.

In two years under Dan Pallante, the Ross program went 18-3 with two Great Lakes Leagues titles, an undefeated regular season and a playoff appearance. But something didn't quite sit right.

Sure, the Little Giants were rolling through their schedule, but really, Akron Buchtel, Fostoria, Sandusky and company aren't what they used to be.

Sure, the Little Giants were rolling up yards on the ground, using the much-maligned Wing-T, but when it came time to make up a deficit by passing — or when it came time to stop the pass in the first place — the team was ill-equipped.

Sure, the coach was an up-and-comer, but as was suspected, he was also an up-and-gone.

So with the old coach off to a rebuilding project in Pennsylvania, the school brought in Mike Eicher, a starting quarterback under coach Pete Moore in 1980, to be the new head coach. Eicher is the first graduate of the Fremont public high school to serve as head football coach since Les Binkley a half-century ago.

And the trip down memory lane hasn't stopped there. A number of names out of recent Ross history stopped by the practice field during preseason practice, including Moore, former defensive coordinator Joe Siesel and former athletic director Dick Sherman.

Eicher's staff, while it retains holdovers like Joe Bajornas, Del Enders and Tony Ruiz, also has a distinct historical flavor to it, as Chuck Lindsey, Les Hull and Mike Gilbert

Ross in '98

8-2 Overall, 5-1 GLL

Ross 21, TOLEDO CC 13
ROSS 14, Akron Buchtel 6
ROSS 29, Toledo Bowsher 6
ROSS 34, Oregon Clay 14
Ross 28, BEDFORD 6
Ross 17, FOSTORIA 0
ROSS 38, Toledo Whitmer 14
Mansfield Senior 25, ROSS 20
FINDLAY 45, Ross 8
ROSS 49, Sandusky 28

HOME TEAM IN CAPS

1999 schedule

Fri., Aug. 27TOLEDO CC
Fri., Sept. 3ST. JOHN'S
Fri., Sept. 10St. Francis (at Pennington)
Fri., Sept. 17FINDLAY
Fri., Sept. 24OREGON CLAY
Fri., Oct. 1FOSTORIA
Fri., Oct. 8at Whitmer
Fri., Oct. 15MASSILLON
Fri., Oct. 22BEDFORD
Fri., Oct. 29at Sandusky

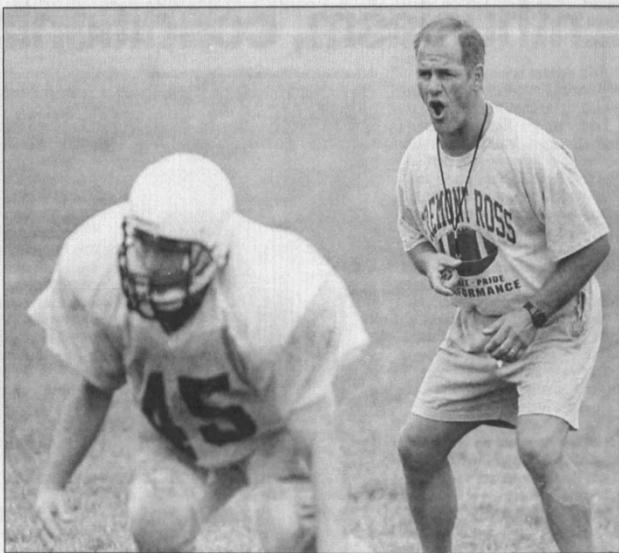
return.

If only Eicher could bring back some of the players these guys used to coach. Ross loses starters at 20 of 22 offensive and defense positions, and both the punter and kicker are gone, too.

Gone are powerful linemen Frank Kaiser and Brian Hill, pile-moving back John Forshay and the speedy Weston Hineline and Robert Atkins. Gone are quick defensive ends Bryson Sewell and Tyson Liggins, tough linebackers Josh Liggins, Andrew Diller and Jason Billow and the GLL's top defensive back, Aaron Coonrod.

Into the void steps a group that's young, talented and eager to prove it belongs on the field.

David Rhodes takes over for Coonrod at quarterback, and will use his considerable talents to run Eicher's I-Wing hybrid offense. At running back, four players are vying for play-



News-Messenger/Liz Margerum

DEL ENDERS, a holdover from last year's staff, barks instructions at Matt Thiessen in preseason practice.

ing time, most interesting among them St. Joe transfer Jose Simms. Aaron Hines, Kendrik Nason and Josh Lozano will be the fullbacks.

On the line, only guard Rick Legg returns. Kyle Myers saw playing time at tackle last year, guard Jason Hull was a spot starter at linebacker and center Brooks Obermeyer earned a co-captain nod.

Though Eicher says he doesn't like playing guys both ways, the lack of experienced depth this season may force him to. Myers, Obermeyer and Hines figure to start on the line, Legg and Hull at inside linebacker.

Co-captain Lozano anchors the defense at safety, and will help break in new cornerbacks Simms, Jeremy Jones and Jordan Mackey. Outside linebacker Jamin Lozano will also help out in pass coverage, and fellow outside 'backer Alfonso Vann might make the biggest impact.

The schedule gets tougher, as Toledo St. John's and Toledo St. Francis replace Buchtel and Toledo Bowsher. The most anticipated non-conference opponent, Massillon, pays a visit to Harmon Stadium on Fremont's birthday, Oct. 15.

Findlay appears to be Ross's biggest challenge in the GLL, but Toledo Whitmer, Sandusky and Bedford will not go down quietly. "We've got a lot of work to do," said Jamin Lozano. "Nobody's expecting us to do too much, but I think we're going to come out here and show some people we're going to step up."

1999 roster

No.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Pos. Gr.
5	Xavier Darden	5-9	143	WR/DB 12
8	Craig Hickey	5-11	160	P/K 10
9	Joe Lopez	5-11	168	WR/DB 12
10	Brian McCord	5-11	150	K 10
11	David Rhodes	6-0	182	QB/DB 11
12	George Forbes	5-11	162	TE/OLB 10
13	Clayton Billow	5-9	165	QB/OLB 10
14	Jordan Mackey	6-2	173	WR/DB 12
15	John Meggitt	5-9	153	P/K 10
16	Allen Keegan	5-9	132	WR/DB 12
18	Nate Frasure	5-10	140	WR/DB 11
19	Bo Martin	6-1	182	QB/FS 10
20	Derek Carnicom	5-10	160	WR/DB 11
23	Tommy Wagner	5-8	154	RB/OLB 12
25	Jamin Lozano	5-10	160	RB/OLB 11
26	Josh Lozano	6-0	180	FB/FS 12
27	Jose Simms	6-0	176	RB/DB 12
28	Jamison Reynolds	5-9	139	WR/DB 10
30	Rob Abernathy	5-7	132	WR/DB 10
31	Dennis Richey	5-10	157	WR/DB 10
32	Jeremy Jones	5-11	186	RB/DB 11
33	Kendrik Nason	6-1	215	FB/DE 11
34	Jose Deleon	5-9	210	FB/ILB 10
38	Thomas Agnew	5-10	136	WR/DB 10
39	Aaron Hines	6-0	238	FB/DT 11
40	Alfonso Vann	6-2	190	TE/OLB 11
42	Tyrus Hamilton	5-8	160	RB/DB 10
45	Matt Thiessen	5-10	180	RB/ILB 10
51	Jeremy Joseph	5-8	210	OT/DT 10
52	Steven Sieberg	5-9	220	C/DT 10
53	Brooks Obermeyer	6-1	215	OG/DE 12
54	Jason Hull	5-10	215	OG/ILB 12
55	Jared Kingsborough	6'0	200	OG/ILB 10
56	Tommy Brown	6-3	232	OT/DT 10
57	Matt Escher	6-1	234	OT/DT 10
58	Cody Amor	5-8	149	WR/OLB 10
59	Rick Legg	6-2	205	OG/ILB 11
61	Grant Gegorski	5-10	210	OT/ILB 10
62	Josh Bower	5-11	280	OT/DT 10
64	Andrew Hansen	5-9	180	OG/DT 11
66	Nathan Fassnacht	6-0	272	OT/DT 12
67	Tony White	5-8	166	OG/DE 10
68	Kyle Myers	6-5	264	OT/DT 12
69	Joe Kaiser	6-4	200	TE/DE 10
70	Jesse Saucedo	5-11	270	OT/DT 10
71	Anthony Vann	6-2	330	OT/DT 10
72	Victor Salinas	6-2	204	TE/DE 12
74	Tim Mooney	6-5	220	OT/DT 11
76	Raul Pena	5-9	184	OG/DT 10
77	Mike Adams	6-4	274	OT/DT 12
78	Chris Collins	6-2	272	OT/DT 10
80	Mike Shanahan	5-10	154	TE/OLB 10
81	Brian Root	6-4	187	WR/DE 11
82	David Cobb	6-3	189	TE/DE 12
83	Bobby Crawford	5-11	198	TE/ILB 10
86	Kurt Prosser	6-1	201	TE/OLB
87	Billy Butler	6-4	190	TE/DE 12

Fremont Ross at a glance

Coach: Mike Eicher
Years at school: 0
Record at school: 0-0



EICHER

Last year: 8-2
Last playoff berth: 1997
OHSAA playoff division: 1
Key losses: QB/S Aaron Coonrod, FB John Forshay, T/DL Brian Hill, T Frank Kaiser, G Zack Frasure, DE Tyson Liggins, DE Bryson Sewell, LB Jason Billow, CB Jorel Heidelberg, TE/P Dan Cobb, HB Weston Hineline, HB Robert Atkins, LB Andrew Diller

Starters returning

Quarterback: 0
Running back: 0
Tight end/receiver: 0
Offensive line: 1
Defensive line: 0
Linebacker: 0
Secondary: 1
Kicker/punter: 0

Return of a Little Giant

Eicher returns to coach alma mater

By Scott Tappa, sports editor

On June 11, Mike Eicher accepted Fremont Ross's invitation to return to replace Dan Pallante as head football coach. In doing so, he became the first graduate of Fremont's public high school to serve as head coach for his alma mater since Les Binkley's stint from 1946-49 (Binkley graduated from Fremont High School, before the school's name changed to Ross).

After Eicher left Willoughby South, he had less than two months before the start of fall practice to get a lot of things accomplished: hire a coaching staff, learn his kids' names, install offensive and defensive schemes, set up his office, find an apartment, get cable installed, etc. There hasn't been much time for activities unrelated to football, but that suits the "new" coach just fine.

Eicher sat down recently with News-Messenger sports editor Scott Tappa and talked about the state of the Ross program.

N-M: Did you know that you're the first graduate to return as head coach in like 50 years? What does that mean to you?

Eicher: First guy in 50 years? Really? I didn't know that. I just feel it's a great opportunity. I had great experiences here as a player, and my coaches made an impression on me.

N-M: When you came back into town to look more closely at the program, what did you think about it, compared to 20 years ago, compared to two years ago?

Eicher: I think the pride in the football program is something that remains. I hear it from the coaches, I see it in the players' eyes, they know about the pride and tradition of the program. The difference is back then we had more kids playing football, but I don't think that's a Fremont Ross problem, I think that's a problem all over the state of Ohio.

N-M: What about the kids themselves, their attitudes toward football, toward athletics?

Eicher: Kids' attitudes have changed toward athletics in general. It's hard work, and nowadays it's easier to do other things, like Nintendo or other things. A lot of

times, kids just don't want to put the hard work in.

N-M: So how are Friday nights going to be different now? Are you going to keep the cannon after touchdowns?

Eicher: (Laughing) Yeah, yeah. I don't know the gentleman's name, but he brought it out and tested it, and it was pretty loud — and he said it was only half full!

N-M: What about uniforms? Are you going to keep it the same, or put names on the back?

Eicher: We're going to try to go back to putting the names on the back. When I played here that was something that was nice, the parents were able to recognize their kids.

N-M: What about on the field? Offensively, what will remain from the Wing-T?

Eicher: There's some base run

philosophy that the Wing-T has

that is just outstanding. The trap-

ing concept, the sweep concept is

what I like most in the offense.

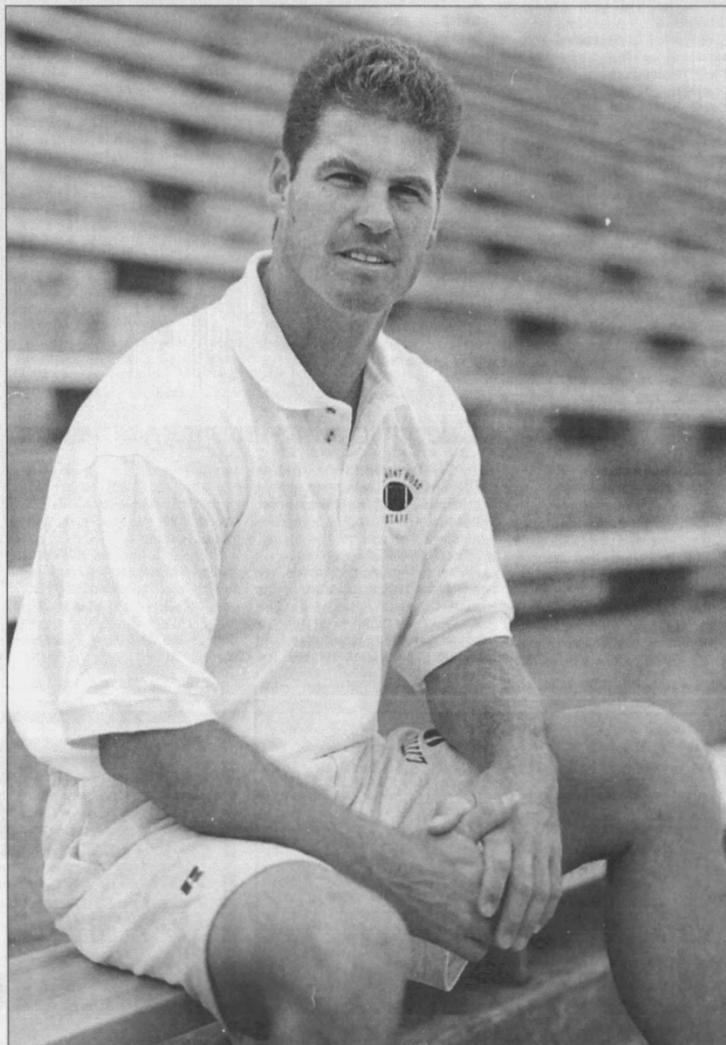
Some of the formations that the

Wing-T uses we'll get into. But I

think you've got to have balance.

N-M: Are we looking at three backs or two?

Eicher: Two. I call myself an I-Wing coach. We'll have a player



News-Messenger/Liz Margerum

MIKE EICHER takes over the Ross head job this year after 12 years of head coaching experience at three schools.

that will be like a tailback, we call him our H-Back. One of our guys will be like a flanker, but if we were in our tight wing set, we would call him a Z. The other guy is an H-Back. You'll see real quick that he's the guy that carries the ball. We'll put him in the I, put him in different spots, put him just about

anywhere. **N-M:** What will passing plays look like, dropback, sprint outs ... ?

Eicher: We're going to try to utilize David (Rhodes)'s strengths.

Right now he's probably a better

passer on the run, so we're going to

try to move the pocket, but a lot of

times when you do that, you cut

down half the field as far as being

able to throw the ball.

N-M: What about defensively? Do you have a base alignment you prefer, or are you leaving that all to (coordinator) Chuck (Lindsey)?

Eicher: Chuck's pretty much going to run the defense. We're going to be a 4-4 front, and we're going to bring pressure. Those are two things I told him I thought were important.

N-M: You said that you didn't

want to get into a rebuilding pro-

ject, but here you've got only two

starters back. Do you think some

of the guys starting against Central

might not be starting halfway

through the season?

Eicher: Right now, we're very inexperienced. Not that I don't think we have talented kids, but we have a very limited amount of lettermen coming back. The evaluation process will be ongoing.

I'm going to try to be as two-platoon as we can. I realize we have some kids that condition-wise can play both ways, but I don't think playing both ways full-time is the way to do it.

N-M: How is Fremont different than Willoughby?

Eicher: The biggest difference is the suburban life (in Willoughby) as opposed to the country/city life we have here. There, I love the

**FREMONT ROSS vs.
TOLEDO CENTRAL CATHOLIC**

When: Friday, 7:30 p.m.

Where: Harmon Stadium

Last year: Ross 21, Central 13

Radio: WFRO AM-900 (Jerry Reiling play-by-play, Don King color, Rob Kerr sidelines)

Central players to watch: RB Webster Jackson

Injury update: Ross—LB/OL Jason Hull (calf), probable

You should know: Fremont football fans get their first taste of life with Mike Eicher, and his I-Wing offense. Junior David Rhodes makes his first start at quarterback for the Little Giants, but the guy who holds the key to the offense is running back Jose Simms. "Jose's got to be the man," said Ross running backs coach Les Hull, who returns to the varsity sidelines after two years away. Hull said Simms' size and quickness set him apart from his competitors for backfield playing time. Defensively, the Irish, coordinated by former Ross coach Mitch Curliss, play a 4-3, and do a lot of stunting on the defensive line, said Hull. On the other side of the ball, Central back Webster Jackson appears to be at full strength after suffering a basketball knee injury. "They've got some good skill kids," said defensive coordinator Chuck Lindsey, who added that they probably weren't as skilled as the Euclid players Ross scrimmaged on Saturday.

Rhodes runs wild



News-Messenger/Liz Margerum

DAVID RHODES, 11, rushed for three touchdowns and recovered a fumble for another score in Ross's 27-0 win Friday.

Ross shuts out Central in Eicher's return home

By SCOTT TAPPA
Sports editor

Maybe Fremont Ross football under Mike Eicher won't be that different, after all.

Using a smash-mouth running scheme that broke several big plays, and a stingy defense that limited Toledo Central Catholic to 2.1 yards per carry, the Little Giants beat the Irish 27-0 Friday at Harmon Stadium in the season opener for both teams.

"I was very proud of the team," said Eicher. "We talk to the kids about playing four quarters, and I thought the football team did that tonight. I was proud of the young kids when they got in the game."

David Rhodes scored four touchdowns, three rushing, one on a fumble recovery, and rushed for 105 yards on seven carries to lead Ross.

"It's a great feeling," said Rhodes, making his first varsity start at quarterback. "My offensive line did a heck of a job. I couldn't do anything without them."

Rhodes scored the Little Giants' first touchdown of the Eicher era on an odd play slightly more than three minutes into the game. On first-and-15 from the Central 48, Jamin Lozano turned a counter into a 44-yard gain. While fighting for the last few yards, Lozano fumbled, and after a scramble, the quarter-

Friday

Ross 27

Toledo Central Catholic 0

Next Friday

Toledo St. John's at Ross, 7:30 p.m.

back pounced on the ball in the end zone.

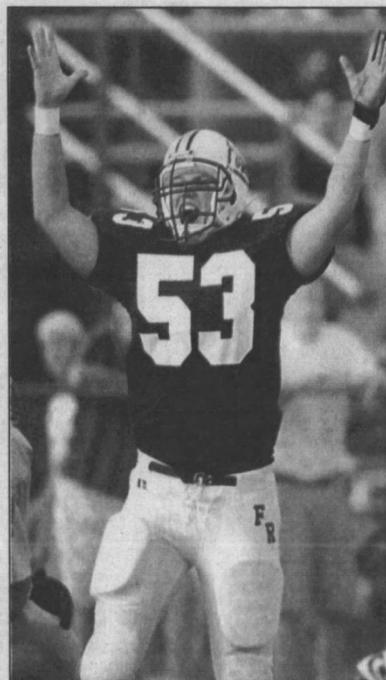
Lozano was a big-play player for Ross all night, rushing for 64 yards on three carries. "It's a big play, that's a play you've got to respect coming back," Eicher said of Lozano's run.

Ross caught another break on Central's next play from scrimmage. On first down, Irish quarterback Phil Carlisle attempted a backward pass to receiver Colin Brennan. Brennan muffed the lateral and Brooks Obermeyer recovered.

Two plays later, Rhodes executed a perfect option run left, faking out the Central defender and running 4 yards for the score.

"Dave had a great game tonight," Eicher said. "He showed some athletic ability that we knew he had. Dave's going to be a threat on that option, running the ball, pitching the ball."

Ross had a chance to virtually put the game away late in the first half, but could not capitalize.



News-Messenger/Liz Margerum

BROOKS OBERMEYER, a Ross co-captain, celebrates after one of the Little Giants' four touchdowns in Friday's win.

See ROSS, B3

Ross wins opener over Central

Continued from B1

The Little Giants took over at their own 24 with just over a minute remaining in the second quarter, and after an Irish offside penalty, Josh Lozano connected on a half-back pass to Joe Lopez that covered 46 yards, and set Ross up at the Central 25. The play stunned the Irish, and the visitors were forced to call timeout.

But a run and a clock-stopping pass later, Ross was hit with four straight penalties — three illegal procedures and a clip — taking the offense out of scoring position.

"We let up in the second quarter," said Ross guard/linebacker Rick Legg. "But in the third and fourth quarter we busted our butts."

Rhodes scored his third touchdown on the first Ross possession of the second half, scoring on a play that covered 58 yards — judging by north-south standards.

On second-and-14, following what appeared to be a botched play, Rhodes executed a play-action sprint-out to his right. After eluding a Central pass rusher, Rhodes took off down the right sideline.

About 10 yards into his run, Rhodes reversed his field, sprinting back toward the Ross bench. After briefly colliding with running back Jose Simms, Rhodes had a caravan of blockers in front of him, and ran into the end zone untouched.

"It seemed like an 80-yarder," Rhodes said, smiling. "I got a beautiful block by Joe Lopez, I cut back, and my linemen had a big, nice wall for me."

After the Ross defense forced a Central three-and-out on the next possession, Irish punter Josh Cole was unable to field a high snap, and Ross took over on the Irish 25. Four plays later, Rhodes went in for his fourth touchdown, this one a 4-yard option keeper to his right.

Ross dominated the running game, rushing 45 times for 309 yards. Central could only muster 73 yards on 34 carries.

For his efforts, Rhodes earned a



News-Messenger/Liz Margerum

MIKE EICHER won his first game as Ross head coach on Friday.

seat on the sidelines, as sophomore understudy Bo Martin directed the offense during the fourth quarter.

Martin had filled in for Rhodes earlier, when the starter left the game with a bruised right elbow.

In the fourth quarter, the only drama that remained was whether or not Ross could preserve its shutout. With a key fourth-down stop deep in Ross territory and a fumble recovery, the Little Giants did just that.

"I thought we played real well in spurts, but we got tired there for a little while, and had to make some adjustments," said Ross defensive coordinator Chuck Lindsey.

Ross held speedy Central tail-back Webster Jackson to 68 yards on 15 carries. Lindsey and the Ross coaches mixed up their defensive play-calling techniques, with former Ross assistant Mitch Curliss, now Central's defensive coordinator, standing on the other sidelines.

"I think the key was getting (Jackson) before he got to the line of scrimmage," Lindsey said. "I knew Mitch Curliss probably knew all my signals, because I haven't changed them, so we made all the calls in the formation."

Unofficially, tackle Kyle Myers led Ross with 7½ tackles, including half a sack, Aaron Hines had five tackles and a sack and Jason Hull and Jose Simms each had five tackles.

Lindsey also praised Josh Lozano for leading a team that has come of age.

"I can't say enough about Josh Lozano, he was all over the field," Lindsey said. "We talked to the kids, 'We don't want to hear anymore that you guys are inexperienced, you didn't get to play last year. Hey, it's your team now.'"

And though the night belonged to the kids, it also belonged to their coach, who made a triumphant return after 12 years head coaching at other high schools.

"It's a great feeling, to play in front of a crowd like that, and the support you get from the community," Eicher said. "It's something that we didn't have at Willoughby (South)."

Notes: Chopper 11 from Toledo's CBS television affiliate, WTOL, made an appearance during Friday's pregame. The chopper set up camp at the playground at Stamm Elementary.

Key play

The first touchdown of the season for Fremont Ross probably didn't go exactly like coach Mike Eicher drew it up.

On a counter, split end Jamin Lozano dashed 44 yards to the Toledo Central Catholic 4, but fumbled while straining for extra yardage. Ross fullback Aaron Hines appeared to have the ball at first, then a Central defender, but in the end it was Ross quarterback David Rhodes lying on the ball in the end zone.

"The fumble went out and I went 'Ball, ball,'" said Rhodes, who also ran for three touchdowns. "I saw Hines jump on the ball, then a guy from Central jumped on it, and it squirted out and I just hopped on it."

—SCOTT TAPPA

Football

High School

Ross 27, Toledo Cen. Cath. 0

Ross	14	0	13	0	—	27
Central	0	0	0	0	—	0

First quarter

R—David Rhodes fumble recovery in end zone (Brian McCord kick), 8:50

R—Rhodes 4 run (McCord kick), 7:52

Third quarter

R—Rhodes 58 run (McCord kick), 5:50

R—Rhodes 4 run (conversion failed), 1:40

	R	TC
First downs	10	10
Rushes	45-309	34-73
Passing yards	46	54
Passes-Comp.-Int.	5-1-0	13-7-0
Punts-Avg.	3-31.7	4-25.5
Fumbles-lost	4-2	4-3
Penalties-yards	12-80	7-50

INDIVIDUAL STATISTICS

RUSHING: Ross—David Rhodes 7-105, Jamin Lozano 3-64, Jose Simms 9-62, Kendrid Nason 9-32, Tyrus Hamilton 3-20, Matt Thiessen 2-1, Bo Martin 4-12, Ryan Wilhelm 4-9, Aaron Hines 3-4; Central—Webster Jackson 15-68, Mike Schrader 6-11, Phil Carlisle 1-5, Bruce Cook 4-11, John Amato 6-(-14), Josh Cole 1-(-12), Josh Polzin 1-4.

PASSING: Ross—David Rhodes 0-4-0-0, Josh Lozano 1-1-0-46; Central—John Amato 7-10-0-49, Phil Carlisle 1-3-0-5.

RECEIVING: Ross—Joe Lopez 1-46; Central—Bruce Cook 1-15, Webster Jackson 2-5, Colin Brennan 2-10, Chad Hunterbrinker 1-14.

Records: Ross 1-0, Central 0-1

After an opening week full of rivalry and intrigue, this week's docket seems pretty mundane.

The top game appears to be Clyde at Tiffin Columbian; the two figure to exceed the combined total of seven points they scored in last year's meeting. St. Joe, the only area team to lose last week, should get well against St. Mary's, and Mike Eicher looks to stay undefeated at Ross.

In the SLL, Gibsonburg looks to go 1-0 against improved Lake, Woodmore faces an enigmatic Northwood squad and Lakota tries to put together a winning streak against Lake. Margaretta and Willard appear evenly matched, unlike Bellevue and Cincinnati Woodward.

TOLEDO ST. JOHN'S (0-1) at FREMONT ROSS (1-0)

When: Friday, 7:30 p.m.

Where: Harmon Stadium

Last week: Ross 27, Toledo Central Catholic 0; Columbus DeSales 26, St. John's 18

Radio: WFRO AM-900 (Jerry Reiling play-by-play, Don King color, Rob Kerr sidelines; pregame at 6:45 p.m.)

St. John's players to watch: TE/LB Dan Spenthoff, DB B.J. Schlageter, RB/DB Justin Ochmanek, RB/DB Greg Owens, OL/DL Blair Kramer, OL/DL Jordan Brady

You should know: Ross was impressive in its opening win against Toledo Central Catholic, but positives were offset by some negatives. The Little Giants rushed for 309 yards, but accumulated 12 penalties for 80 yards. The Irish mustered just 127 yards in total offense, but appeared overmatched at times. After dominating the first and third quarters, Ross appeared to let down in the second and fourth. "I think we could have done better," lineman Rick Legg said after the game. "We got a little hesitant on the line, and the backs were a little hesitant about going through the holes. After that, we got in a groove." Quarterback David Rhodes, a demon running in the open field, never got in a passing groove, primarily because his throwing elbow was bruised. How much that injury affected coach Mike Eicher's game plan remains to be seen. St. John's dropped a tough opener 26-18 to perennial Division II power Columbus DeSales in Columbus last week. The Titans were also hurt by penalties, racking up 50 yards on one series, taking them out of scoring position. Greg Owens, a 5-foot-9 senior, led St. John's with 81 yards rushing against DeSales. Linebacker Dan Spenthoff and defensive back B.J. Schlageter lead coach Matt Dzierwa's defense.

Titans thump Ross



News-Messenger/Liz Margerum

JOSH LOZANO is dragged down by Toledo St. John's linebacker Creighton Call in the Titans' 33-0 win over Ross on Friday.

St. John's shuts out Little Giants at Harmon

By SCOTT TAPPA
Sports editor

It was a combination that could only lead to bad results.

Poor field position, an ineffective running game and a devastating injury ganged up on Fremont Ross Friday night, as the Little Giants dropped a 33-0 decision to Toledo St. John's at Harmon Stadium.

"It's tough, it's always tough, and when you lose and you don't play well, it's even tougher," said Ross coach Mike Eicher, whose team fell to 1-1.

The disparity in average field position began early in the first quarter, and the playing field continued to be unbalanced for the remainder of the game. Of 96 plays contested from scrimmage, a staggering 73 of them started in Ross territory (76 percent).

On the ground, Ross mustered just 59 yards on 31 carries, or 1.9 yards per carry. The stingy Titans run defense became even stingier once the Little Giants' starting quarterback, David

Friday
Toledo St. John's 33
Ross 0

Next

Ross at Toledo St. Francis, at Perrysburg, Friday, 7:30 p.m.

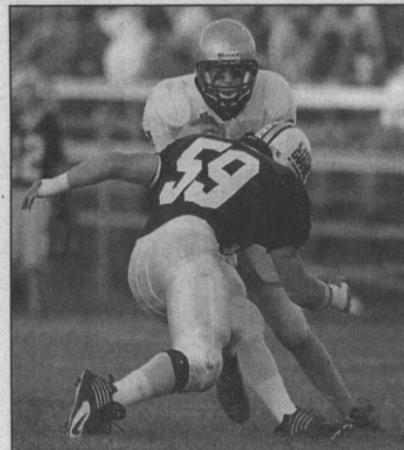
Rhodes, left the game with an injury after just two plays.

That left the signal calling to sophomore backup Bo Martin, who saw his first extended varsity playing time at quarterback. Under siege from St. John's pass rushers, Martin completed 3-of-12 passes for 30 yards, but was intercepted twice.

After staving off several Titans' offensive chances, the Ross defense finally allowed its guests to pull away behind the strong arm of quarterback Andrew Rhonehouse and the power running of Justin Ochmanek.

"We definitely didn't do very well offensively tonight," Eicher said. "The defense did some good things, we just couldn't gel offensively."

The game started on an



News-Messenger/Liz Margerum
RICK LEGG bears down on Toledo St. John's quarterback Andrew Rhonehouse for one of his eight tackles Friday.

Eicher said the scaled-down offense Martin was asked to run played right into the strength of the St. John's defense.

Rhodes was replaced immediately by Martin.

See ROSS, B3

Ross suffers first loss, loses starting quarterback

Continued from B1

"In the first half, we were just trying to do some of our base run things, and obviously, with the way they were playing defense, they put 10 in the box and we had our hands tied," Eicher said. "You're banging your head against the wall trying to run against the fronts they were giving us."

Conversely, St. John's coach Matt Dzierwa said his defense didn't change at all with Martin in the game.

"We kept with our same stuff," Dzierwa said.

Still, even with the knowledge that Rhodes was injured in Ross's opening win over Toledo Central Catholic, the Titans prepared to see the junior on Friday.

"Our scouts said (Rhodes) got hurt, and went out of the game in the first game, but we were preparing for him the whole time," Dzierwa said. "He's very, very good, and we didn't think he'd be out."

But Eicher and his team, knowing that Rhodes' injured elbow might limit his abilities in Friday's game, were not shocked to see Martin in the game. They just weren't counting on Rhodes to leave with a foot injury.

"All week we talked about the possibility of Bo running the team, so it wasn't like when that happened we hadn't talked about it," Eicher said. "We were kind of utilizing Dave's skills within the offense coming in, so we're really going to have to look hard at what we want to do with the offense."

Eicher said that Rhodes, who stood on the Ross sideline with crutches and tape and an ice wrap on his right foot in the first half, had been initially diagnosed by Ross trainer Joe Hershey as having a fractured ankle. Eicher said Rhodes was taken to the hospital by his father, Jack, for more analysis.

After the quick interception to open the game, the Little Giants dodged a bullet momentarily, as Rhonehouse fumbled on his own 6-yard-line, with Bryan Root recovering for Ross.

After a Ross three-and-out, St. John's took over in prime field position, starting at the Ross 30. But Alfonso Vann snuffed out the fire, first sacking Rhonehouse, then making a nice interception.

The poor field position finally caught up with Ross on the next drive, though. After another three-and-out, Kyle Myers' punt was blocked by Austin Brady, and car-



News-Messenger/Liz Margerum

BO MARTIN, 19, replaced the injured David Rhodes at quarterback for Fremont Ross on Friday, and passed for 30 yards.

ried out the back of the end zone for a safety.

After several more short possessions by each team, St. John's scored the game's first offensive touchdown, with Rhonehouse tossing a 12-yard touchdown pass to Benny Marroquin.

The Titans struck again two plays later with a defensive touchdown. On a misdirection running play, Simms collided with another Ross back and fumbled. Brady scooped up the fumble and runned 16 yards for the touchdown.

"The turnover right before the half really hurt," Eicher said.

Yards were hard to come by for Ross in the first half, as the Little Giants gained just 21 net yards and picked up just one first down.

St. John's gave itself some breathing room on its first drive of the half, grinding out a 12-play, 58-yard drive that culminated in Jared Parseghian's 23-yard field goal. Justin Ochmanek rushed for 36 yards in the drive, pounding through a tiring Little Giants defense. St. John's held the ball for nearly nine minutes in the quarter.

Eicher said Parseghian's field goal was the point that unfavorable field position finally caught up with Ross.

"I thought the point that changed the whole focus of the game was when they got that field goal in the third quarter," Eicher said. "That put them up by three scores."

Dzierwa said Parseghian was responsible for much of the Titans'

advantageous field position. The senior punted four times for an average of 39.8 yards, and booted three kickoffs for touchbacks in the second half.

"When it comes down to it, Jared Parseghian helps tremendously," Dzierwa said. "We stress our special teams, and I think that helped the field position quite a bit."

On the first play of the fourth quarter, Ochmanek smashed his way into the end zone from 2 yards out to give the Titans an insurmountable 26-0 lead.

Martin completed three passes in the second half — one on a nice catch by Jordan Mackey — for 30 yards.

"I thought Bo did a good job once he got in there and settled down," Eicher said. "Again tonight, we're not in a situation where we could really open things up. Then we got behind, and you've got to try to do what you can do to move the football."

Defensively, Josh Lozano unofficially led Ross with 10 tackles, and Rick Legg had eight. Vann and Myers each had sacks.

Ross finishes its tour of the Toledo City League's elite teams next week, when the Little Giants travel to Perrysburg to take on Toledo St. Francis.



Football

High School

St. John's 33, Ross 0

St. John's	2	14	3	14	—	33
Ross	0	0	0	0	—	0

First quarter

SJ—Safety, punt blocked out of end zone, 3:30

Second quarter

SJ—Benny Marroquin 12 pass from Andrew Rhonehouse (Jared Parseghian kick), 2:57

SJ—Austin Brady 16 fumble return (Parseghian kick), 2:19

Third quarter

SJ—Parseghian 23 field goal, 4:09

Fourth quarter

SJ—Justin Ochmanek 2 run (Parseghian kick), 11:57

SJ—Marroquin 20 pass from Rhonehouse (Parseghian kick), 2:32

	R	SJ
First downs	4	17
Rushes-yards	31-59	42-150
Passing yards	30	152
Comp-Att.-Int.	3-13-3	11-22-1
Punts-Avg.	7-36	4-39.8
Penalties	3-30	4-25
Fumbles-lost	5-2	2-1
Time of possession	20:05	27:55

INDIVIDUAL STATISTICS

RUSHING: Ross — Jose Simms 14-31, Tyrus Hamilton 3-10, Bo Martin 1-(-2), Jose DeLeon 1-9, Josh Lozano 3-1, Joe Lopez 1-7, Matt Thiessen 1-3, Kendrid Nason 6-14, Kyle Myers 1-(-14); St. John's — Justin Ochmanek 22-95, Andrew Rhonehouse 9-5, Aaron Churchill 1-3, Nick Butler 3-3, Will Trumbull 4-19, Greg Owens 3-25.

PASSING: Ross — Bo Martin 3-12-2-30, David Rhodes 0-1-1-0; St. John's — Andrew Rhonehouse 10-21-1-130; Benny Marroquin 1-1-0-22.

RECEIVING: Ross — Jordan Mackey 1-16, Jose Simms 1-6, Bryan Root 1-8; St. John's — Benny Marroquin 7-93, Dan Spenthoff 1-9, Jamal Jarrett 1-22, Brian Schloss 1-4, Sam Anderson 1-24.

TACKLES: Ross — Josh Lozano 10, Rick Legg 6; St. John's — Dan Spenthoff 8, Jamal Jarrett 5.

Records: Ross 1-1, St. John's 1-1

ROSS (1-1) at TOLEDO ST. FRANCIS (0-2)

When: Friday, 7:30 p.m.

Where: Perrysburg High School

Last week: St. John's 33, Ross 0; Whitmer 21, St. Francis 0

Radio: WFRO AM-900 (Jerry Reidling play-by-play, Don King color, Rob Kerr sidelines; pregame at 6:45 p.m.)

St. Francis players to watch: FB Ryan Pudlowski, WR John Skeldon, OL Matt Taylor, DL Jason Mercurio, LB Kevin Geha

Injury update: Ross — QB David Rhodes (broken tibia) out; St. Francis — QB Bill Bingle, out

You should know: The Little Giants may have lost starting quarterback David Rhodes for an extended period of time, but don't expect the Knights to shed any tears for Ross. St. Francis has already seen its top two quarterbacks sidelined by injuries. The Knights are still looking for their first points of the season, after being outscored by a combined 56-0 in the first two weeks. But Ross coach Mike Eicher said he expects the No. 2 man to return this week, which would allow a more balanced attack. Rhodes suffered a broken right tibia, a non-weight bearing bone in the leg. "That's part of the game," said Eicher. "Obviously, we're disappointed that we lost Dave and the things he did for our offense." With Rhodes out, the Little Giants will turn to sophomore Bo Martin, who threw for 30 yards last week. The Little Giants will do some different things to accommodate Martin's style. "Definitely with Bo, we tried to do some things that he can do well," Eicher said. "We'll utilize two backs in the offense to try to get Bo comfortable in there." St. Francis will pose a physical test for Ross. "I think as a team, this is the biggest physical challenge for us," said Eicher. "Our kids are going to have to step it up physically, because they'll come at you. We haven't faced that type of football this year. Central Catholic is more of a finesse team and St. John's runs a lot of stunts. But St. Francis is a physical team."

Little Giants go for two, come out 1-2

Ross drops second straight

By SCOTT TAPPA
Sports editor

PERRYSBURG — It was a cruel ending for Fremont Ross, after such a great game.

After Ross and Toledo St. Francis battled to a draw after 48 minutes of regulation

and one overtime period, a failed two-point conversion attempt sent the Little Giants to a 21-20 loss at Perrysburg High School.

"I'm proud of the kids," said Ross coach Mike Eicher, whose team fell to 1-2. "They played hard until the end, and as a coach that's all you can ask for from your kids."

After quarterback Bo Martin tossed a 14-yard

touchdown pass to tight end Alfonso Vann to bring the Little Giants within 21-20, Ross lined up in a kicking formation. The snap was too low for holder Jordan Mackey to handle, and Mackey was thrown for a loss on the game's final play.

Eicher said the play was a fake designed to score the two-point conversion.

"We were going for the win, it was a fake run," he

Friday
St. Francis 21
Ross 20

Next Friday

Findlay at Ross, 7:30 p.m.

said.

The coach said the type of snap the play called for was no different than a snap for a regular kick.

"It's a normal snap, the (type of) snap had nothing to

do with it," Eicher said.

The failed conversion ended a game that was just about as even as possible.

Ross scored on the second play of the game when Kyle Myers returned an interception 34 yards for a touchdown. St. Francis running back Tony Schrader scored on a 1-yard plunge in the second quarter, and though both teams threatened several times in the second half, the

game was knotted at 7-7 after regulation.

Going south, Ross took the ball first and scored quickly. Kendrid Nason ran for 8 and 6 yards on his first two carries, and Martin's fake hand-off left the Knights' defense going in the wrong direction, allowing the sophomore to waltz into the end zone from 6 yards out.

See ROSS, B3

Ross falls in double OT

Continued from B1

But St. Francis answered in four plays. After three Schrader runs, Ryan Szenderski tossed an 11-yard touchdown pass to tight end Casey Wieck on fourth-and-1.

St. Francis took the ball first in the second overtime, going north. Ross jumped offside on third-and-1, giving St. Francis the ball first-and-goal from the 6. Three plays later, Schrader scored from 3 yards out.

"It's no different than regulation," St. Francis coach Dick Cromwell said of the overtime play-calling. "We'd been running the power all night, and we just stuck with it."

Ross went next, and two Nason runs left Ross with third-and-4 from the St. Francis 14. Martin dropped back, slipped, regained his balance, and threw to a diving Vann in the end zone.

At first the referees on the scene debated whether it was a catch or not. After they ruled it was a catch, one referee signaled first down, before another pointed out that Vann was lying in the end zone.

"It was a play-action pass," Eicher said. "That's (Martin's) third option, so he did a nice job going through his progressions, and found the tight end on the back side."

The failed Ross conversion attempt came next, setting off a wild celebration on the St. Francis sidelines and leaving several Little Giants sprawled out on the field in despair.

Myers got Ross on the board early with a defensive touchdown. On the Knights' second play from scrimmage, the senior defensive tackle gathered in a tipped Szenderski pass and rumbled 34 yards for the score.

"I thought he did a nice job. He made some plays for us, moved the offense for us, had a couple nice runs."

—Ross coach Mike Eicher, on quarterback Bo Martin

A Jason Hull interception ended the second St. Francis possession, as Ross began to take control of the field position battle.

"Our kids hung in there after the first big break we gave them, that interception," Cromwell said.

St. Francis evened the score with an 80-yard, 17-play scoring drive that spanned the first and second quarters. After three plays, Ross forced a Knights punt, but the Little Giants jumped offside on fourth-and-2.

From there, Schrader took over. The senior running back had 13 of his 20 first-half carries and 60 of his 80 first-half yards on the drive, capping the possession with a 1-yard touchdown plunge.

For the game, Schrader rushed a staggering 46 times for 145 yards.

"He's our workhorse, and that's our offense until we find somebody to help him do it," Cromwell said.

Ross answered with a 12-play drive of its own at the end of the first half, but on third-and-11 from the St. Francis 16, Martin was intercepted in the end zone by St. Francis safety Bill Bingle.

On its first drive of the second half, St. Francis methodically marched down the field. Converting on three straight fourth down attempts, the Knights drove to the Ross 25, but stalled on the 16th play of the drive, when Ross safety Josh Lozano tipped Szenderski's pass to Andrew Daly.

Ross's best second half scoring

attempt came on a drive that spanned the third and fourth quarters. After Martin's 30-yard scramble moved the Little Giants into scoring position, the drive stalled on the St. Francis 21.

Making his first varsity start, Martin fared well, completing 4-of-6 passes for one touchdown and rushing six times for 56 yards and one touchdown.

"I thought he did a nice job," Eicher said. "He made some plays for us, moved the offense for us, had a couple nice runs. I thought he really settled in and did a nice job running the team today."

The Ross offense showed vast improvement from last Friday's shutout loss against Toledo St. John's. Against a physical Knights defense, the Little Giants rushed 42 times for 186 yards (4.4 yards per carry), and passed for 51 yards.

"I thought we improved over last week," Eicher said. "Last week we struggled in both aspects, running and passing. This week we did a good job running the football and controlling the clock, we just caught a couple bad breaks in the red zone."

Defensively, Myers and Jared Kingsborough led Ross with eight tackles apiece. Cornerback Jose Simms had seven, Josh Lozano had six and Jamin Lozano had five.

With its second non-conference loss, Eicher said his team must now focus on its Great Lakes League schedule, which begins Friday with a tough home game against Findlay.

"We turn our focus totally to the league now, there's no doubt about it," Eicher said. "There's no hanging our heads. How can you fault the kids after the game tonight? They played hard, and the breaks went the other team's way."

Football

High School

St. Francis 21, Ross 20, 2OT

at Perrysburg

Ross	7	0	0	0	7	6	—	20
St. Francis	0	7	0	0	7	7	—	21

First Quarter

R — Kyle Myers 34 interception return
(Brian McCord kick), 11:07

Second Quarter

S — Tony Schrader 1 run (David Kramp
kick), 5:23

Third Quarter

No Scoring

Fourth Quarter

No Scoring

First Overtime

R — Bo Martin 6 run (McCord kick)
S — Casey Wieck 11 pass from Ryan
Szenderski (Kramp kick)

Second Overtime

S — Schrader 3 run (Kramp kick)
R — Alfonso Vann 14 pass from Martin
(conversion failed)

	R	S
First Downs	8	13
Rushes-Yards	42-186	56-174
Passing yards	51	11
Comp-Att-Int	4-7-1	1-7-2
Punts-Avg.	5-31.6	3-43
Penalties	7-45	0-0
Fumbles-Lost	1-0	2-1

INDIVIDUAL STATISTICS

RUSHING — Ross: Kendrid Nason 13-
55, Martin 6-56, Ryan Wilhelm 9-36, Josh
Lozano 10-31, Jose Simms 2-9, Jeremy
Jones 1-1, Joe Lopez 1-(-3); St. Francis:
Schrader 46-145, Ryan Pudlowski 8-26,
Szenderski 1-2, Curt McQueary 1-1.

PASSING — Ross: Martin 4-6-51-1, Jo
Lozano 0-1-0-0; St. Francis: Szenderski
1-7-11-1.

RECEIVING — Ross: Alfonso Vann 2-
31, Nason 1-10, Jordan Mackey 1-5; St.
Francis: Casey Wieck 1-11.

Records: Ross 1-2, St. Francis 1-2

**FINDLAY (2-1) at
FREMONT ROSS (1-2)**

When: Friday, 7:30 p.m.

Where: Harmon Stadium

Last week: St. Francis 21, Ross 20 (2OT); Findlay 38, Marion Harding 14

Last year: Findlay 45, Ross 8

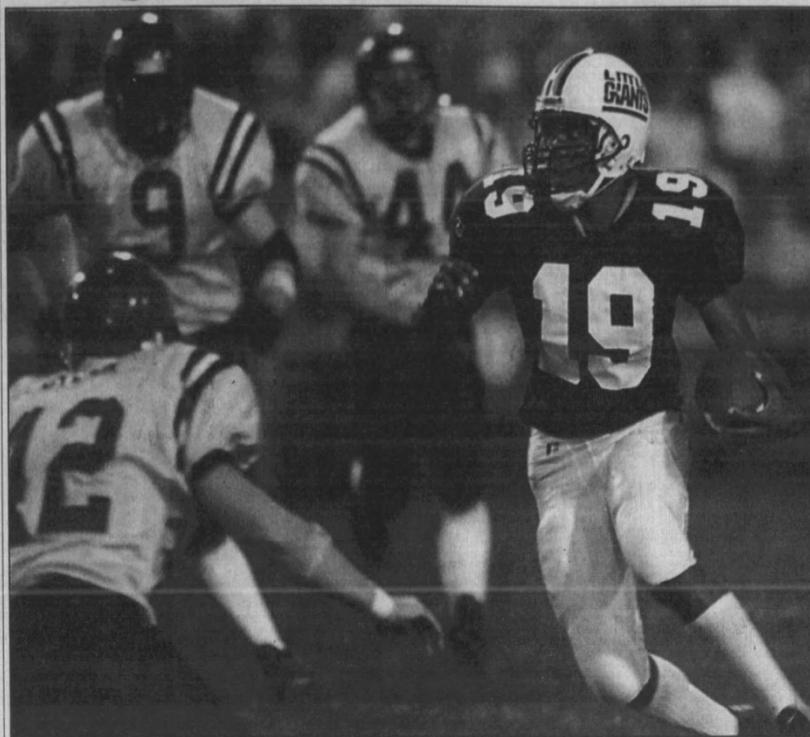
Radio: WFRO AM-900 (Jerry Reiling play-by-play, Don King color, Rob Kerr sidelines; pregame at 6:45 p.m.)

Findlay players to watch: QB Ben Roethlisberger, WR/DB Mike Iriti, DB Mick Bloomfield, WR Chaz Hatfield

Injury update: Ross — LB Jason Hull (spine), out

You should know: Findlay's offense is unlike any Northwest Ohio football fans will see this season. Led by a talented quarterback and a nice group of receivers, coach Cliff Hite's attack has generated more than twice as many passes (133) as rushes (57) this year. Ross coach Mike Eicher said Findlay will line up in the shotgun approximately 80 percent of the time. Ben Roethlisberger is the quarterback, one of the top signal callers in Ohio, and he has a fan in Eicher. "The thing that impresses me most about him is the times he gets pushed out of the pocket, he's able to stay on his receivers," said Eicher, a former quarterback himself. "Most high school quarterbacks, they get rushed and they want to run. He keeps his eyes down the field, finds his receiver, and if his No. 1 and No. 2 guy are covered, he goes to No. 3 and is able to hit that guy." Roethlisberger threw for 425 yards and four touchdowns last week in a win over Marion Harding bringing his season totals in those categories to 964 and 10, respectively. Findlay has the top three receivers in the GLL, Mike Iriti (27 catches), Chaz Hatfield (19) and Chad Baxter (17). How to counter this explosiveness? "Offensively, you have to keep the ball out of their hands," said Eicher. "Defensively, you've got to disrupt routes." Eicher said defensive personnel won't be much different for Ross, but the schemes will be. "We're going to mix it up," he said. "If they just see zone coverage, they have an attack they want to use. We want to mix it up zone and man-to-man, some half-man and half-zone coverages. Hopefully we'll get some misreads." The Ross defense will be without starting linebacker Jason Hull, lost for the year with a compressed fracture in his spine. Sophomore Jered Kingsborough steps in for Hull. "Jered has potential to be a good football player," Eicher said. "He was in the mix on defense and offense last week, but as a sophomore, we're going to emphasize him on one side."

Trojans win shootout



News-Messenger/Liz Margerum

Findlay QB throws eight TDs in GLL opener

By SCOTT TAPPA
Sports editor

The video game market nowadays is flooded with good football games: NFL GameDay, NFL Blitz, Madden, and for the older kids, Tecmo Super Bowl.

In these games, it's not unheard of for quarterbacks to throw for eight touchdowns, or 400-plus yards, or for teams to rush for 400-plus yards.

Real life, now that's supposed to be a different story.

Yet there were Fremont Ross and Findlay on Friday, trading yardage and scores as if there were two big kids sitting atop the Harmon Stadium press box controlling the players with a joystick.

The kid controlling the Trojans came out on top, as Findlay won 59-26 in both teams' Great Lakes League opener.

To say that there was no shortage of offense in this game would be an understatement. For starters, the teams combined for 85 points, a new GLL record.

Ross, which lost back-to-back games to Findlay for the first time in 21 years, racked up 425 yards rushing, 476 yards overall, and scored on plays of 80, 60 and 20 yards. The Little Giants were hurt by three lost fumbles and an interception.

Findlay's Suga offense was

	Friday
Findlay	59
Ross	26

Ross at Oregon Clay, 7:30 p.m.

more potent, by far. Quarterback Ben Roethlisberger, the dream of any nutcase who happens to play high school fantasy football, completed 34-of-46 passes for a GLL record 408 yards.

And eight touchdowns. That's right, eight touchdowns.

"An eighth grader could stand in the pocket and throw like I did," Roethlisberger, whose touchdown total was a GLL record.

Roethlisberger, who has thrown 12 touchdown passes in his last two games, connected with seven different receivers, and tossed touchdown passes to five different teammates. He also caught a 12-yard pass.

"We expected (Ross) coach (Chuck) Lindsey's defense to come at us with a whole bunch of different things, and we just felt we had to be patient," said Findlay coach Cliff Hite. "When they blitzed us, (Roethlisberger) dumped it off well, he scrambled well, we just never lost our head."

After the game, an exhausted-looking Ross coach

Mike Eicher said Findlay is the team to beat in the league.

"They're the favorite, without a doubt," Eicher said. "With that offense, they have a chance to move the football at any point in the game, whether they're behind or ahead."

Findlay got on the board quickly, as Roethlisberger led the Trojans 65 yards in nine plays. Roethlisberger completed seven passes on the drive, which lasted two minutes, 36 seconds, and capped the drive with a 4-yard strike to tight end Ryan Imke.

After Ross punted on its next possession, Mick Bloomfield returned the kick 76 yards to the Ross 4. After a Findlay timeout, Roethlisberger hit Chad Baxter in the corner of the end zone for his second touchdown.

"That punt return gave them momentum right away," Eicher said. "We didn't move the ball like we had wanted to, and that put them right back in scoring position."

The ball-control Ross offense did what it could do in the first quarter, holding the ball for nine of 12 minutes. The Little Giants racked up six first downs, converting 4-of-5 third down opportunities.

Early in the second quarter, Ross quarterback Bo Martin capped a 13-play, 80-yard dri-



News-Messenger/Liz Margerum
BEN ROETHLISBERGER passed for 408 yards and eight touchdowns in Findlay's win.

ve with a nice 20-yard touchdown run. On a straight bootleg to the right, Martin dashed down the sidelines, cut back inside at the Findlay 5 and ran to the end zone barely touched.

Findlay answered right back, going 73 yards in 11 plays. Roethlisberger completed 5-of-7 passes on the drive, the last one going 2 yards to Ryan Truax for a touchdown.

After Findlay recovered a Ross fumble, the Trojans sped 61 yards downfield for their fourth touchdown. With a 15-yard late hit penalty moving

See ROSS, B3

Ross drops third straight as Roethlisberger throws eight TDs

Continued from B1

Findlay close, Roethlisberger connected with Truax for a 5-yard touchdown.

Though it wasn't reflected on the scoreboard, Ross out-gained Findlay in the first half 210-182, and held the ball for 14:29, compared to the Trojans' 9:31. Ross was hurt by 52 penalty yards in the half.

Ross needed just over two minutes to score the first touchdown of the second half. After Jose Simms returned Josh Huston's opening kickoff to the Findlay 31, the Little Giants used just five plays to score, with Aaron Hines barreling in from the 1.

Findlay pushed its lead to 31-12 on a 42-yard Huston field goal. Baxter's 52-yard reception put the Trojans in scoring position.

"When we scored right at the beginning of the second half, we

thought that would fire up our defense, and on the next series, we had them in a long situation and Roethlisberger came up with another big play," Eicher said.

Roethlisberger threw his fifth touchdown pass of the night slightly more than a minute later. After Findlay recovered a Ross fumble at the Little Giants' 28, the Trojans needed just four plays to find the end zone, with Chaz Hatfield, making a fine grab in the corner.

Hines answered three plays into the next Ross possession, breaking a 60-yard touchdown run. On an off tackle play, Hines burst through the line untouched, fought off a diving Trojans defender at the 15 and found pay-dirt.

Martin found Ryan Wilhelm in the end zone for the two-point conversion.

But Roethlisberger was not slowing down, marching Findlay

63 yards in seven plays.

On a pass from the Ross 9, Roethlisberger's pass was tipped by a Findlay receiver, but Baxter was in position to grab the tip in the back of the end zone.

Ross wasn't down for long, as Simms broke an 80-yard touchdown run on the next play from scrimmage. Simms' run was nearly identical to Hines' run, only to the right side of the line. Kendrin Nason was stopped just short of the goal line on the conversion attempt. Roethlisberger threw his seventh touchdown pass on Findlay's next drive, a 12-yard strike to Iriti in the front corner of the end zone.

His eighth came on his next drive, a 7-yard pass to Hatfield.

Hite said Roethlisberger audibled at the line on approximately 15-20 percent of Findlay's offensive plays.

"That's very high for me, but that's how much I trust him," Hite

"At halftime, I asked them to give everything they had, and they did. (Findlay's) just got a good offense."

— Mike Eicher
Ross coach

said. "The receivers did an excellent job of breaking their routes and getting open."

Said Roethlisberger: "Coach just gives me a lot of range to call what I want out there, but I don't do it a lot because he calls a lot of good plays. We could do whatever we wanted out there."

Ross had five players rush for over 55 yards, led by Simms with 135. Hines gained 77 on four carries, Joe Lopez gained 67 yards on four carries, Martin gained 56 on eight carries and Nason had 55 yards on 16 carries.

"The offensive line, the last two games, has improved immensely,"

ly," Eicher said.

Iriti led Findlay with nine catches for 131 yards, while Baxter caught seven for 131. One of the most impressive Findlay statistics came from Huston, whose nine kickoffs for touchbacks limited what Ross could do in its return game.

"Every kick's in the end zone," Hite said. "There's a tree down there (pointing at south Clinton Street) with one of our footballs in it. He's a big-time college kicker."

Ross, which has now lost three consecutive games since an opening win over Toledo Central Catholic, must now regroup for next week's game against surprising Oregon Clay, which improved to 3-1 with a 26-12 win over Bedford on Friday.

"I was proud of the team," Eicher said. "At halftime I asked them to give everything they had, and they did. They've just got a good offense."

Football

High School

Findlay 59, Ross 26

Findlay	14	14	17	14	—	59
Ross	0	6	20	0	—	26

First quarter

F—Ryan Imke 4 pass from Ben Roethlisberger (Josh Huston kick), 9:24

F—Chad Baxter 4 pass from Roethlisberger (Huston kick), 5:31

Second quarter

R—Bo Martin 20 run (kick blocked), 11:21

F—Ryan Truax 2 pass from Roethlisberger (Huston kick), 8:41

F—Truax 5 pass from Roethlisberger (Huston kick), 5:34

Third quarter

R—Aaron Hines 1 run (conversion failed), 9:59

F—Huston 42 field goal, 6:56

F—Chaz Hatfield 5 pass from Roethlisberger (Huston kick), 5:28

R—Hines 60 run (Ryan Wilhelm pass from Martin), 4:27

F—Baxter 9 pass from Roethlisberger (Huston kick), 2:31

R—Jose Simms 80 run (conversion failed), 2:19

Fourth quarter

F—Mike Iriti 12 pass from Roethlisberger (Huston kick), 11:04

F—Hatfield 7 pass from Roethlisberger (Huston kick), 6:34

	R	F
First downs	20	23
Rushes-yards	53-425	18-31
Passing yards	52	420
Passes-Comp.-Int.	15-5-1	48-35-0
Punts-Avg.	2-33.5	2-41.5
Fumbles-lost	4-3	1-0
Penalties	11-87	8-85

INDIVIDUAL STATISTICS

RUSHING: Ross—Ryan Wilhelm 6-27, Kendrid Nason 16-55, Bo Martin 8-56, Jose Simms 10-135, Aaron Hines 4-77, Joe Lopez 4-67, Tyrus Hamilton 4-3, Jose DeLeon 1-5. Findlay—Justin Benedict 7-22, Mike Iriti 3-23, Ben Roethlisberger 4-(22), Josh DiBenedetto 1-7, B.J. Davis 1-(2), Gregg Olague 2-9, Wes Van Wormer 1-(6).

PASSING: Ross—Bo Martin 5-15-1-52. Findlay—Ben Roethlisberger 34-47-0-408; Mike Iriti 1-1-0-12.

RECEIVING: Ross—Bryan Root 1-12, Kyle Myers 1-(3), Ryan Wilhelm 1-22, Jordan Mackey 1-19, Aaron Hines 1-2. Findlay—Mike Iriti 9-131, Chaz Hatfield 6-66, Ryan Imke 3-29, Richie Van Hoose 1-(1), Ryan Truax 4-21, Chad Baxter 7-131, Justin Benedict 4-31, Ben Roethlisberger 1-12.

Records: Ross 1-3 (0-1), Findlay 3-1 (1-0)

ROSS (1-3) at CLAY (3-1)

When: Friday, 7:30 p.m.

Where: Oregon Clay High School

Last week: Findlay 59, Ross 26;
Clay 26, Bedford 12

Last year: Ross 34, Clay 14

Radio: WFRO AM-900 (Jerry Reiling play-by-play, Don King color, Rob Kerr sidelines; pregame at 6:45 p.m.)

Clay players to watch: QB Derek Besgrove, RB Ryan Donley, RB/DE Tony Katschke, LB Eric Hugeley, RB Jim Phillips

You should know: After allowing 408 yards and eight touchdowns of passing to Findlay quarterback Ben Roethlisberger, the Little Giants now get the contrasting task of facing an Oregon Clay team that has three players with over 150 yards rushing. Besgrove is the leading rusher with 412 yards, good for second in the Great Lakes League. Donley has 169 yards on 32 carries and Phillips has 167 yards on 55 attempts. "Those guys run the veer option real well," said Ross coach Mike Eicher. "We're going against a totally different attack this week." As for the Little Giants' offense, the cast on the injured leg of quarterback David Rhodes has been removed, and the junior has been practicing and jogging. His return is still a "day-to-day evaluation." So for now, the quarterback job still belongs to sophomore Bo Martin, who has done a "nice job," said Eicher. "We're trying to give him a little more each week," said Eicher. RB/DB Jose Simms rolled his ankle in the Findlay game and is listed as questionable. If he can't go, Jeremy Jones will play.

Ross drops fourth straight

Clay beats Giants in overtime

By SCOTT TAPPA

Sports editor

OREGON — In a Fremont Ross football season full of frustration, another chapter was written Friday night, as the banged-up Little Giants dropped a 14-7 Great Lakes League overtime decision to Oregon Clay.

It was the second overtime loss in three weeks for Ross (1-4 overall, 0-2 GLL), and the first loss to Clay since 1992.

A week after rolling up more than 400 yards in total offense against Findlay, Ross gained just 93 yards in Friday's loss, and while the defense was up to the task, it allowed Derek Besgrove to run 70 yards for a game-tying touchdown early in the second half.

After neither team generated a scoring chance in the waning moments of regulation, Clay took the ball first in overtime. Besgrove ran for seven yards on first down, but was stuffed in the backfield on second down, setting up third-and-six from the 16.

Clay quarterback Ryan Donley dumped a pass to Besgrove in the flat, and the workhorse back rumbled 16 yards for the score.

"Derek was open, so (Donley) just got him the ball, and Derek did the rest himself," said Clay coach Jeff Lee,

Friday

Clay	14
Ross	7

Next Friday

Fostoria at Ross, 7:30 p.m.

whose surprising team improved to 4-1 overall, 2-0 in the GLL. "I thought Fremont played it very well, Derek just made it happen."

After Ross took over, Bo Martin threw an incomplete pass, then completed a pass to Bryan Root for a loss of 2 yards. Ryan Wilhelm carried for a 1-yard loss on third down, and Martin's fourth down attempt was tipped by a Clay defender.

In addition to missing quarterback David Rhodes, who despite practicing this week sat out Friday's game in street clothes, Ross was without receiver/defensive back Jordan Mackey, out with a shoulder injury, and running back/defensive back Jose Simms, sidelined by an ankle injury.

The first quarter started slowly, a polar opposite of last Friday's Harmon Stadium fireworks show.

Ross had nine total yards of offense in the quarter, and failed to gain a first down. Clay had 55 yards and two first downs.

See ROSS, B3

Ross drops fourth straight game

Continued from B1

The teams combined for five punts in the quarter, more than Ross and Findlay combined for in an entire game last week.

Safety Josh Lozano gave the Little Giants their only points of the game, returning an interception 27 yards for a touchdown with slightly more than four minutes remaining in the second quarter. On third-and-12 from the Clay 8, Ryan Donley floated a pass down the sidelines, allowing Lozano to run underneath it, and the senior made his way across the field to the end zone.

Ross effectively bottled up the Eagles rushing attack in the half, limiting Clay to 45 yards on the ground. Ross wasn't any better, piling up 53 rushing yards.

Neither team developed any kind of offensive continuity in the first 24 minutes.

Of 14 offensive series in the half, nine lasted four plays, including punts. The average drive in the half lasted just 4.9 plays.

Besgrove reversed Clay's offen-

sive fortunes on the first play of the second half, bouncing outside and sprinting 70 yards for a touchdown. Besgrove ran hard in the second half, and ended with 175 yards on 27 carries.

"I challenged Derek at halftime, I said, 'Derek, if you are legitimate, you're going to get out here and get it done in the second half,'" Lee said. "Derek Besgrove's the man."

Meanwhile, Ross was still unable to get untracked offensively in the second half. The Little Giants put together just one drive of more than four plays, and earned a total of one first down.

Ross punter Kyle Myers punted 10 times for a 39.3-yard average, while Donley kicked seven punts himself.

The loss was just the third all-time for Ross against Clay, in 16 meetings. It was also the Little Giants' fourth consecutive loss, the longest skid since 1991.

Ross hosts Fostoria next Friday. The Redmen dropped a 47-42 GLL shootout to Toledo Whitmer on Friday.

Football

High School

Clay 14, Ross 7

Ross	0	7	0	0	0	—	7
Clay	0	0	7	0	7	—	14

First quarter

No scoring

Second quarter

R — Josh Lozano 27 interception return
(Brian McCord kick), 4:18

Third quarter

C — Derek Besgrove 70 run (Steve
Swartz kick), 11:39

Fourth quarter

No scoring

Overtime

C — Besgrove 16 pass from Ryan Don-
ley (Swartz kick)

	R	C
First downs	3	11
Rushes-yards	39-95	51-217
Passing yards	2	106
Comp -Att.-Int.	1-8-0	8-23-1
Punts-Avg	10-39.3	7-32.3
Penalties	4-35	5-26
Fumbles-lost	3-1	3-1

INDIVIDUAL STATISTICS

RUSHING: Ross — Aaron Hines 7-23,
Joe Lopez 1-5, Ryan Wilhelm 10-11, Bo
Martin 12-23, Kendrid Nason 7-24, Jamin
Lozano 2-9. Clay — Derek Besgrove 27-
175, Bill Fisher 1-7, Jim Phillips 10-19,
Ryan Donley 11-13, Shaun McGrady 1-1,
Eric Huguely 1-2.

PASSING: Ross — Bo Martin 1-8-0—
(-2). Clay — Ryan Donley 8-22-1—90, Bill
Fisher 0-1-0—0.

RECEIVING: Ross — Bryan Root 1-(-
2). Clay — Bill Fisher 3-42, Shaun Mc-
Grady 1-23, Josh Johnston 2-15, Derek
Besgrove 2-26.

Records: Ross 1-4 (0-2), Clay 4-1 (2-0).

Domination, relief

Ross rolls over Red

By SCOTT TAPPA
Sports editor

The air was fairly calm Friday night, but there was a big gust of air coming from Harmon Stadium that could have been mistaken for wind.

The gust was actually a collective sigh of relief coming from Fremont Ross players, fans and coaches as the Little Giants snapped a four-game losing streak with a 34-8 Great Lakes League win over rival Fostoria.

"We needed this win so bad, it feels good," said Ross lineman Kyle Myers, who had a huge night with two sacks, two fumble recoveries, a blocked punt and subsequent recovery for a touchdown.

"The kids have been improving and working hard, but the number one measuring stick is the scoreboard," said Ross coach Mike Eicher. "The kids needed it, and our fans needed it too, as much as our coaches and the team."

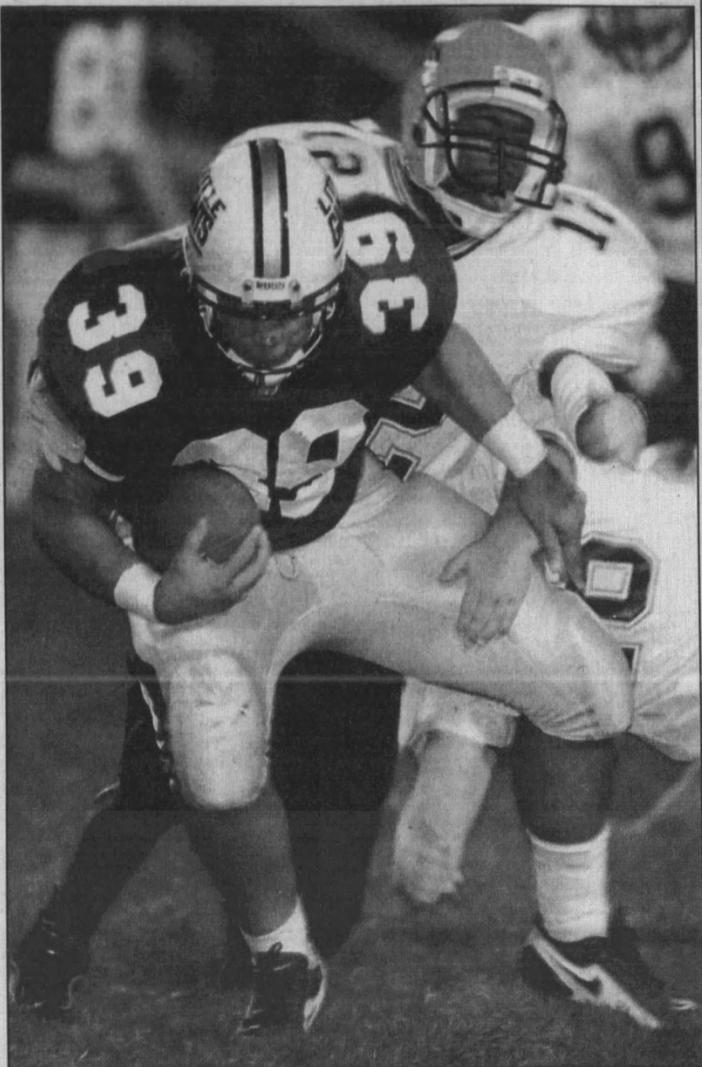
Ross dominated on defense, holding Fostoria to 76 total yards and forcing six fumbles, rushed for 232 yards and four touchdowns and, after an early letdown, used solid special teams to gain a decided field-position advantage.

"It feels good, we've been waiting for this for awhile," said running back Aaron Hines, who led Ross with 86 yards and two touchdowns rushing.

One week after getting soundly beaten on the line against Oregon Clay, Ross controlled the trenches, opening big holes for its running backs and plugging them just as quickly on defense. A big reason hinged on the decision to play Josh Bower at offensive tackle and let Myers concentrate on his play at defensive tackle.

"We sat down last weekend and decided that we wanted to rest some kids," Eicher said. "Our focus was to get better up front. We lost the battle on the line of scrimmage last week, that's where we lost the game."

"I definitely think that resting Kyle Myers made us better up front defensively, and then Josh Bower offensively was fresh."



News-Messenger/Liz Margerum

AARON HINES rushed for 86 yards and two touchdowns in Ross's 34-8 win over Fostoria Friday.

Ross also welcomed back quarterback David Rhodes, missing since the second play of the Toledo St. John's game with a broken tibia. Rhodes started the game at tailback, moved to quarterback on the second series and stayed at that position for most of the remainder of the game.

"I liked that when Dave came back," Hines said. "Bo (Martin) was doing a good job, but when Dave came back, that inspired the team a lot."

Eicher said his quarterbacks had split time in practice this week, but uncertainty about Rhodes' health prevented the formation of a set

Friday

Ross 34

Fostoria 8

Next Friday

Ross at Whitmer 7:30 p.m.

rotation.

"He got the clearance on Thursday, and even though he practiced all week, I didn't know how much mobility he was going to have and how much his elbow was going to bother him," Eicher said of Rhodes. "They had split the snaps all the way through the week, and going into tonight, I let Bo know that he was going to be the starter. We wanted to try some things with

Dave at tailback, we wanted to test his leg with the sweep, running the halfback pass."

Bryce Moore got Fostoria on the board as soon as he could, returning the opening kickoff 95 yards for a touchdown.

Ryan Wilhelm got Ross on the board with a 35-yard touchdown run near the end of the first quarter. On a counter, Wilhelm broke two tackles inside the Fostoria 10 for the score.

Ross took the lead at the end of the first half. After Rick Legg recovered a Fostoria fumble on the Redmen 16,

See ROSS, B3

Ross crushes Fostoria to snap skid

Continued from B1

Ross needed just four plays to reach the end zone, with Hines barreling in from 1 yard out. Rhodes ran around right end for the two-point conversion.

Hines said he dedicated the touchdown to fellow fullback Kendrik Nason, his cousin, who missed much of the first half with a sprained ankle.

"The first one, that was for him," Hines said. "I told him I was going to get him one, and he got himself one, too. That felt good."

The Ross defense was stifling in the first half, allowing Fostoria just 36 yards of total offense.

"They played hard-nosed defense," said Fostoria coach Tom Grine. "We had some success with the unbalanced formation early, and they did a nice job adjusting to it. They just outplayed us."

On the other side of the ball, Ross showed signs of coming out of its offensive funk, gaining 122 yards, 115 on the ground. Just as significantly, the Little Giants were not called for a single penalty in the half.

Ross took control of the game on its first drive of the second half. A delay of game penalty forced Fostoria to kick off from its own 25, and the Little Giants got the ball at the Redmen 46. Six plays later, Hines ran in from 6 yards out to give Ross 20-8 lead, and Brian McCord added the extra point.

"Like coach says, one-on-one equals none," Hines said. "One person isn't going to bring me down."

Fostoria never stopped the Ross power rushing game, as Hines and Nason took turns pun-

ishing the Redmen front. Nason extended the Ross lead at the end of the third quarter on a 9-yard run, set up by a 15-yard run by Hines in which the junior dragged defenders 5-10 yards before going down.

Hines and Nason often lined up in the backfield simultaneously, forming a 453-pound tandem that was tough to stop.

"It feels like we're unstoppable when we're both in the backfield," Hines said. "He can depend on me, I can depend on him."

Said Eicher: "Those two guys are definitely weapons at fullback, and we're trying to get them in the backfield together."

Ross also controlled the field position battle in the quarter: Every single play from scrimmage in the third quarter originated in Fostoria territory. The

furthest Fostoria got in the second half was the Little Giants' 47.

Myers capped the scoring with his second touchdown of the season midway through the fourth quarter, blocking Josh Dawson's low-flying punt, then shoving the punter out of his way in the end zone before pouncing on the ball.

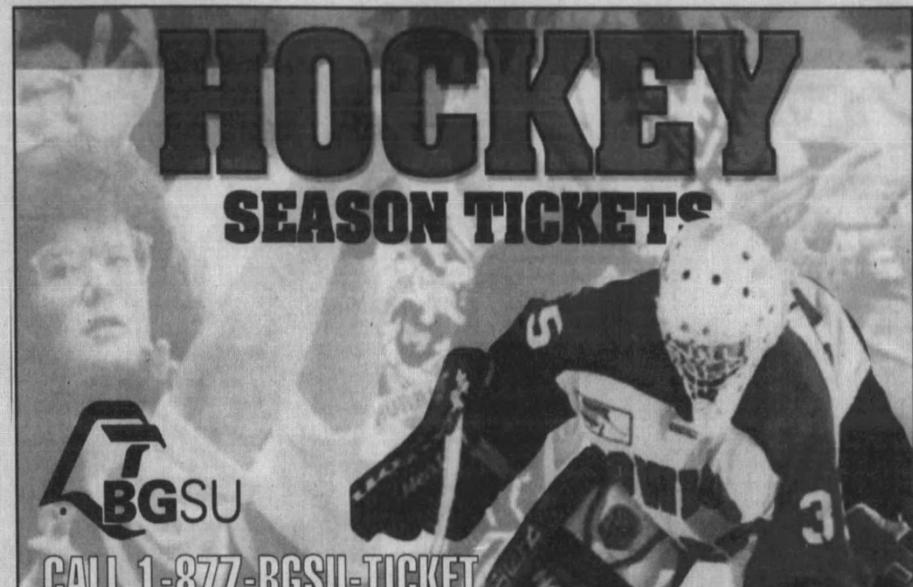
"It's still a shock to me," Myers said. "I just went all out and hustled for it. Coach always talks about making big plays on special teams, so you've just got to do it."

Said Eicher: "He looked like he was going for the last cookie on the table."

Ross plays at Toledo Whitmer next Friday. Whitmer beat Fostoria 47-42 last week. The Panthers beat Bedford 42-8 Friday night.

Notes: In a year full of nostal-

gic uniform moves, Ross brought back another old standard Friday night: vertical purple stripes on the pants. ... McCord assumed kickoff duties from Hines. McCord's first effort sailed to the Fostoria 5, but Moore returned it for a touchdown. ... Bower wasn't the only Ross player to see his first extensive action. Also playing significant roles were linebacker Matt Thiessen, defensive back Mike Ziemke and receivers Nate Frasure and Derek Carnicom ... Fostoria was flagged for delay of game at the start of both halves, failing to take the field in time for the opening kickoffs. ... Friday was Alumni Cheerleader Night at the stadium, and about 20 former Ross cheerleaders turned out to aid the present crew with its duties.



Football

High School

Ross 34, Fostoria 8

Fostoria	8	0	0	0	—	8
Ross	6	8	14	6	—	34

First quarter

F—Bryce Moore 95 kickoff return (conversion pass), 11:46

R—Ryan Wilhelm 35 run (conversion failed), 3:33

Second quarter

R—Aaron Hines 1 run (David Rhodes run), 11:37

Third quarter

R—Hines 6 run (Brian McCord kick), 8:58

R—Kendrid Nason 9 run (McCord kick), 6:09

Fourth quarter

R—Kyle Myers recovered blocked punt in end zone (kick failed), 7:32

	R	F
First downs	14	5
Rushes-yards	46-232	38-43
Passing yards	22	33
Comp.-Att.-Int.	3-11-1	3-9-1
Punts-Avg.	3-31.3	5-27.4
Penalties	2-20	5-48
Fumbles-lost	4-2	6-4

INDIVIDUAL STATISTICS

RUSHING: Ross—David Rhodes 8-6, Kendrid Nason 7-40, Aaron Hines 13-86, Ryan Wilhelm 5-54, Bo Martin 1-0, Xavier Darden 4-10, Jose Simms 3-11, Jamin Lozano 1-18, Joe Lopez 2-9, Jose DeLeon 1-7, Matt Thiessen 1-3. Fostoria— Bryce Moore 16-21, Jeremy Smith 2-(-5), Luke Pixley 2-4, Pedro Campos 6-9, Josh Dawson 10-17, Micheaux Robinson 1-(-5), Mike Gerritsen 1-2.

PASSING: Ross—David Rhodes 3-11-1-0—22. Fostoria— Josh Dawson 3-9-1-0—33.

RECEIVING: Ross— Bryan Root 1-7, Nate Frasure 1-6, Aaron Hines 1-9. Fostoria— Jeremy Smith 1-7, Dane Bringman 1-15, Scott McElwain 1-11.

Records: Ross 2-4 (1-2), Fostoria 0-6 (0-3)

ROSS (2-4) at WHITMER (6-0)

When: Friday, 7:30 p.m.

Where: Panther Stadium

Last week: Ross 34, Fostoria 8;
Whitmer 42, Bedford 8

Last year: Ross 38, Whitmer 14

Radio: WFRO AM-900 (Jerry Reiling play-by-play, Don King color, Rob Kerr sidelines; pregame at 6:45 p.m.)

Whitmer players to watch:
RB/DB/KR B.J. Barre

You should know: It won't be too hard for Fremont Ross fans to figure out why the Panthers are 6-0 this season. Barre, a senior running back/defensive back/kickoff returner, is Whitmer's leader on offense, defense and special teams. "B.J. Barre is an outstanding high school football player," said Ross coach Mike Eicher. "The games I've seen on film, he is able to take the game over early. He can do it on offense, he can come at you on defense and special teams, so he can get you a lot of different ways." Barre, an Ohio State recruit, has run for a Great Lakes League-leading 847 yards on 85 carries. He has made 27 tackles and is averaging 34.4 yards per kickoff return. Eicher said the Little Giants won't stop Barre, but they hope to keep him from breaking the big play. "No. 1 we need to contain the big play," he said. "We've been getting better every week defensively, and we really have to not let the big play go all the way." The Little Giants got one of their offensive leaders back last week, as quarterback David Rhodes returned from a leg injury. Although Bo Martin did a commendable job filling in, Eicher said it's good to have his starter back. "Bo had done a good job with the offense, stepping into that role," Eicher said. "Dave is a leader on the offense, and we're able to utilize the passing game a little more with Dave in there." Not only did Friday bring the end of Ross's four-game losing streak, but for the moment the rash of injuries came to a halt. "Knock on some wood, but we're fairly healthy," said Eicher. "The last few weeks, I couldn't say that." A side note for Ross fans: Dan Fought, a Ross assistant under Rex Radeloff, is the Panthers' offensive line coach.

Ross pulls upset over No. 13 Whitmer

By MICHAEL MOHR
Staff writer

TOLEDO — Fremont Ross forced five first-half turnovers and used Aaron Hines' legs to upset No. 13 Toledo Whitmer 6-0 in a Great Lakes League contest at a soggy Whitmer Memorial Field Friday night.

At times it appeared the weather and field conditions were playing right into the Little Giants' hands offensively as they ran the ball

straight ahead picking up the yardage in small chunks, while Whitmer's B.J. Barre tried to use his quickness to make cuts that can't be made in such poor field conditions.

Whitmer had good field position for all of the first quarter but could not capitalize as quarterback Nick Gallup threw three first quarter interceptions.

"Right now our defense is playing great," said Ross coach Mike Eicher. "The last

Friday
Ross 6
Whitmer 0

Next Friday
Massillon at Ross, 7:30 p.m.

two weeks our defense has really stepped it up and stopped a couple of nice offenses.

"We have to do a little better job of taking advantage of those turnovers and the game would definitely be a

little different. Those turnovers were the difference though, no doubt."

Things weren't looking good on Ross's first two possessions, with a pair of three-and-outs. But cornerback Jeremy Jones made the first of two interceptions, returning it to the Ross 48, setting up a 15-play, 52-yard scoring drive.

The drive was capped by Hines' 1-yard touchdown run. Hines carried the ball eight times for 25 yards on the dri-

ve and ended the game with 19 carries for 52 yards.

"We started out the year using Aaron just as a defensive tackle, but the last three games we wanted to beef up our backfield so we brought him over to the offense and he's a workhorse, he's a load," said Eicher.

In the first quarter it looked like Barre was going to run all over Ross, as he carried the ball eight times for 52 yards. But the Ohio

State recruit finished the game with 74 yards on 16 carries as he spent quite a bit of time on the sidelines during the second and third quarters with an ankle injury.

The key defensive stand for Ross came near the end of the first half, when Whitmer started at the Ross 44, but Gallup was intercepted by Rick Legg to snuff out the scoring threat.

See ROSS, B5

Football

High School

Ross 6, Whitmer 0

Ross	0	6	0	0	—	6
Whitmer	0	0	0	0	—	0

Second quarter

R—Aaron Hines 1 run (kick failed), 6:48

	R	W
First downs	8	12
Rushes-yards	49-147	38-136
Passing yards	10	40
Comp.-Att.-Int.	1-4-0	3-19-5
Punts-Avg.	6-34.1	2-40
Penalties	7-58	6-32
Fumbles-lost	0-0	2-2

INDIVIDUAL STATISTICS

RUSHING: Ross — Aaron Hines 19-53, Ryan Wilhelm 13-43, David Rhodes 9-24. Joe Lopez 3-13, Kendrid Nason 4-13, Derek Carnicom 1-3. Whitmer — B.J. Barre 16-74, Irshad Bannister 13-49, Jeremy Roberts 3-2. Nick Gallup 3-4, Justin Dusseau 3-9.

PASSING: Ross — David Rhodes 1-4-0-10. Whitmer — Nick Gallup 3-19-5-0-40.

RECEIVING: Ross — Ryan Wilhelm 1-10. Whitmer — B.J. Barre 1-19, Emie Jones 1-12, Fester Hagan 1-9.

Records: Ross 3-4 (2-2), Whitmer 6-1 (2-1)

Ross looks to upset Massillon

Continued from B1

close, including Aaron Hines (244), Kendrid Nason (228), Ryan Wilhelm (181), Bo Martin (145) and Rhodes (125).

Massillon is allowing opponents an average of 168.3 rushing yards per game, and has allowed several individual rushers to top the 100-yard barrier. Included are Akron Buchtel's Steve Reynolds (six carries, 103 yards), Akron Garfield's Chris Guthrie (17 carries, 153 yards), Youngstown Chaney's Marcus Patton (23 carries, 105 yards) and Massillon Perry's Jordan Henning (19 carries, 102 yards).

Buchtel and Perry run attacks similar to the Wing-T look that Ross has used lately. The Tigers to watch defensively are nose tackle Ellery Moore, a Penn State recruit, and linebacker Dan Studer.

Last Friday's win over Whitmer, which was ranked 13th in the state at the time, gives the Little Giants a much-needed confidence boost going into tonight's game, which figures to be a circus-type atmosphere, with the Massillon hoopla and sesquicentennial celebrations.

"Even though these guys were associated with two winning seasons, they weren't totally involved, they didn't know what it took to win," Eicher said. "Friday, we played some Little Giants football."

Tonight's game is the first in a three-game contract between Ross and Massillon. Next year's game will be played at Massillon, as will the third game, and there is an option for a fourth game in the series, which would be played in Fremont.

Ross athletic director Art Bucci said, however, that the third game is unlikely to take place, because of the changes taking place in the GLL. With Bedford leaving and Lorain Admiral King and

Massillon vs. Ross

Ross (3-4)

Ross 27, Toledo CC 0

St. John's 33, Ross 0

St. Francis 21, Ross 0

Findlay 59, Ross 26

Clay 14, Ross 7

Ross 34, Fostoria 8

Ross 6, Whitmer 0

*Boys enrolled at school: 663

Coach: Mike Eicher

Massillon (7-0)

Massillon 35, Akron Buchtel 25

Massillon 33, Lima Senior 19

Massillon 28, Akron Garfield 20

Massillon 24, Mansfield Senior 7

Massillon 41, Austintown Fitch 7

Massillon 23, Youngs. Chaney 14

Massillon 35, Massillon Perry 14

*Boys enrolled at school: 645

Coach: Rick Shepas

*According to OHSAA statistics

Previous meetings

**1994 — Massillon 35, Ross 28

1962 — Ross 8, Massillon 7

1953 — Massillon 40, Ross 7

**State playoffs

Massillon facts

■ Chuck Shuff, who coached Ross from 1968-1973 (35-23-2), left to coach Massillon in 1974

■ Since the AP poll began in 1947, Massillon finished atop the poll 13 times, in 1948, 1949, 1950, 1951, 1952, 1953, 1954, 1959, 1960, 1964, 1965, 1970 and 1972.

The team finished second seven times (1955, 1957, 1961, 1963, 1967, 1979, 1982), fourth once (1958), fifth three times (1978, 1994, 1996), sixth four times (1971, 1977, 1980, 1983), seventh once (1993), eighth twice (1956, 1991) and 10th twice (1973, 1989).

Southview, Ross would play one more league game than it doesn't currently, and one non-league game would have to be dropped, most likely the Massillon game.

Ross-Massillon through the years

Fremont Ross has a 1-2 record all-time against the storied Massillon football program. The teams have met three times over the years, in 1953, 1962 and 1994, with the Little Giants winning the second meeting.

Here is a quick look back on these meetings (none of which, incidentally, were held in Fremont):

Nov. 14, 1953

Massillon 40, Ross 7

For most of the season, Ross wasn't challenged, outscoring opponents by an average of 53 points in its nine wins. The Little Giants, finished 9-1, good enough for a sixth-place finish in the final AP poll and a Buckeye League title.

The one loss was to Massillon, which finished first.

News-Messenger sports editor Al Coxon sized up the situation perfectly in a mid-season column. "The inclusion of Massillon on the 1953 slate has added excitement and anticipation never heretofore experienced in Fremont football. Everywhere one goes these days he hears the game mentioned."

It was a game Fremont would like to forget. After outscoring its foes by an average score of 40-7 in those nine wins, Ross lost by the same score to Massillon. About 3,500 people traveled to Massillon for the game, and the Tigers turn two blocked kicks and a fumble into three touchdowns and an easy win.

Trailing just 13-7 at the half, the roof caved in during the fourth quarter.

Sept. 7, 1962

Ross 8, Massillon 7

Massillon entered the 1962 game having not lost a home opener since 1946. But the Tigers were rebuilding, returning just five lettermen from the year before.

Still, the home team (no game in this series has been played in Fremont) was a prohibitive favorite heading in, making Ross's 8-7 win the biggest victory in the history of the program at

that time — some would argue it still is the biggest victory of all-time.

Fulback Jack Ziemke capped a 16-play, 55-yard Ross drive with 2:22 remaining in the third quarter for the lone Ross touchdown. Quarterback John Prosser pushed over right end on a keeper for the two-point conversion.

The win propelled Ross to the No. 1 spot in the AP poll for the first time ever, and the Little Giants finished 8-2.

Nov. 12, 1994

Massillon 35, Ross 28

Going into the Division I regional semifinal playoff game at Parma's Byers Field, Ross coach Rex Radloff did his best to minimize the effects of the "Massillon mystique."

"They have all the mythical state championships, but there is no substance to it, to be honest with you," he said, pointing out that since the state playoffs began in 1972, the Tigers have not won the tournament.

The Tigers were pretty tough, though, led by quarterback Willie Spencer, and scored 35 points against Ross. The Little Giants countered with Charles Woodson, who was unstoppable, rushing for 231 yards on 28 carries, scoring 26 points, and breaking Jim Tiller's 36-year-old school rushing record.

But Massillon linebacker Matt Robinson intercepted a Ross pass in the end zone as time expired, and Massillon moved on. The Tigers were knocked out in the next round by Canton McKinley, 27-20.

—SCOTT TAPPA

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Ross searching for balance on offense

By SCOTT TAPPA
Sports editor

The Fremont Ross offensive attack coach Mike Eicher envisioned at the start of the season may be closer to a reality.

As the Little Giants head into tonight's much-anticipated showdown with Massillon at Harmon Stadium, quarterback David Rhodes' health continues to inch toward 100 percent. A healthy Rhodes would allow Eicher to realize the balance he hopes for.

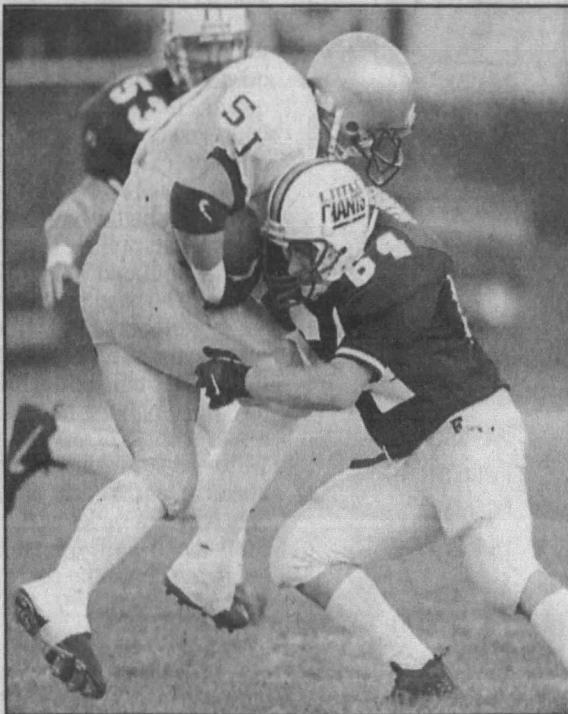
"As far as an offensive standpoint, we try to go in balanced as far as the run and the pass," Eicher said. "We've been limited with (injuries to) Dave's arm

and leg, we haven't been able to exploit things we'd like to with the passing game. But he's getting better and better, we'll try to air the ball out a little bit more."

Through seven games, Ross ranks last in the Great Lakes League in passing, averaging just 30.1 yards per game. Bryan Root is the Little Giants' leading receiver, with four receptions.

Conversely, Ross is second in the GLL in rushing with 214 yards per game. Jose Simms leads the team with 250 yards rushing, but a number of backs are

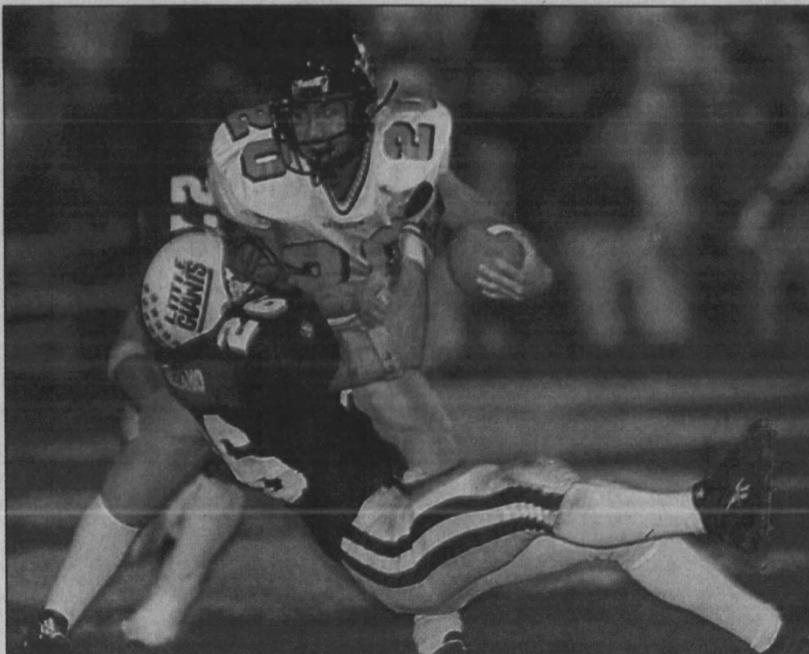
See ROSS, B5



News-Messenger file photo

ANDREW HANSEN and Ross will have their hands full with Massillon in tonight's 7:30 p.m. game at Harmon Stadium.

Ross falls short



JOSH LOZANO hauls down Massillon running back Perry James during the Tigers' 20-14 win over Ross on Friday. News-Messenger/Liz Margerum

Massillon fends off challenge in fourth quarter

By SCOTT TAPPA
Sports editor

If Massillon is the third-best Division I team in Ohio, as Associated Press pollsters seem to think, then this much is clear:

Friday night at Harmon Stadium, Fremont Ross was the fourth-best team in the state.

In an evenly-matched game, Massillon lived up to its reputation as a fourth quarter team, and came from behind to top the Little Giants 20-14.

"They've won every game that way," said Ross coach Mike Eicher. "The two-platoon wore us down, and that was the difference in the game."

Ross ran just seven offensive plays in the fourth quarter, not including punts, while Massillon ran 27, and Dave Irwin threw a 5-yard touchdown pass to Jeremiah Drobney with 9:04 remaining to give the Tigers the win.

"We're definitely a second half team, a come-from-behind team," said Massillon coach Rich Shepas. "We played exactly the kind of Fremont team that we expected to play, very good, solid athletic ability, very spirited. We got exactly what we expected."

So did Eicher, almost.

"We want to win, but at the same time, I ask my players to give me everything

Friday
Massillon 20
Ross 14

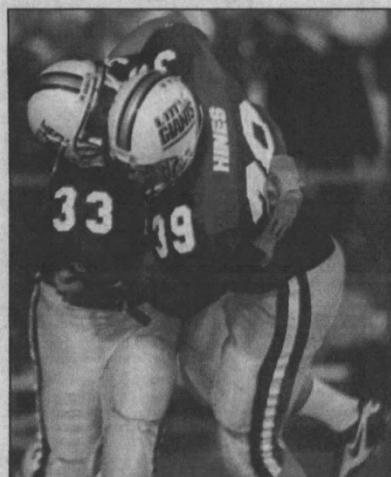
Next Friday
Bedford at Ross, 7:30 p.m.

they've got, and I'll be proud of them," Eicher said. "They gave everything they had, there's 35 exhausted football players down in that locker room."

Ross (3-5) scored on its first drive, with Aaron Hines capping an 11-play drive with a 6-yard touchdown run.

The Little Giants converted two third down opportunities and a fourth down chance on the drive, which ended with Hines bouncing off congestion in the middle of the line and scoring over left end. The touchdown was set up by a 27-yard pass from David Rhodes to Joe Lopez on fourth-and-5.

Ross extended its lead to 14-0 at the end of the first quarter, as Rhodes hit Bryan Root for a 15-yard touchdown pass with 23 seconds remaining.



AARON HINES and Kendrik Nason, cousins, celebrate after Hines' 6-yard first quarter touchdown run. News-Messenger/Liz Margerum

gained 101 yards on five receptions, including several of the spectacular variety.

"Bryan works hard in practice, he's a nice, big target, and I thought he did a nice job going after the football," Eicher said. "He's going to be a weapon for us."

Rhodes' return to health played a large part in the newfound passing attack.

"We're definitely a different offense," Eicher said. "It

just opens up so many things we can do down the road in the future."

Ross dominated the first quarter both on the scoreboard and in the stat book. The Little Giants gained 148 yards and held the ball for 8:01. Massillon gained just 46 yards in the quarter, 15 of which came on the quarter's final play.

See ROSS, B3

Ross loses tight game to Massillon

Continued from B1

Shepas said much of Ross's ability to control the ball in the first half came from his defense's tendency to overreact.

"We just wanted to stay at home," he said. "We got caught overpursuing against that Wing-T again, and they did a nice job running the little wing reverse."

Massillon demonstrated its quick-strike ability at the start of the second quarter, scoring 11 seconds in on an 8-yard run by Jessie Scott. Massillon botched the point-after attempt.

The Tigers scored with 1:02 left in the second quarter, driving 89 yards in 11 plays. Perry James rumbled 15 yards to the Ross 1, and capped the drive with a 1-yard plunge.

Ross held the lead, however, stopping Scott on the conversion attempt. When Scott broke toward the right sideline, Josh Lozano met him at the 1-yard-line, and sent the running back airborne, preserving the Ross lead as the teams headed to the locker room.

Though Ross held the lead, Irwin began to utilize his weapons as the game unfolded. In addition to the hard running of Scott (153 yards on 20 carries), Dave Bumgarner (52 yards) and Perry James (30 yards), Irwin completed passes to 10 different receivers.

"We've got a lot of talented guys to get the ball to," Shepas said.

Massillon had two scoring chances in the third quarter, and both were thwarted by Ross interceptions. On their first drive of the second half, the Tigers drove to the Ross 16, but Lozano intercepted Irwin on the 1.

On Massillon's next possession, Jose Simms picked off an Irwin pass deep down the sideline.

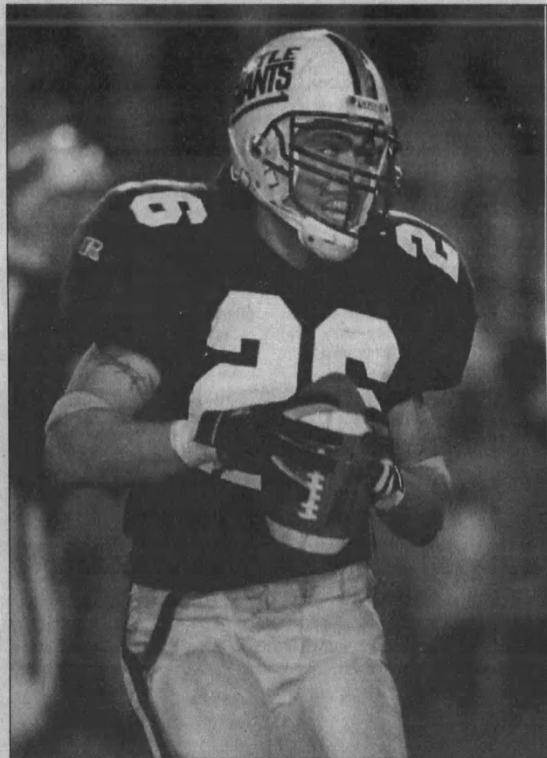
"I thought the defense played another great game, we've put together three or four great games in a row here now," Eicher said. "We're going to hang our hat on the defense, no doubt about it."

Ross countered with a drive to the Massillon 15, but on fourth-and-5, a Rhodes pass on a fake field goal attempt fell incomplete.

Massillon took the lead on its third drive of the second half, driving 85 yards in 10 plays. Irwin found Drobney in the end zone for a 5-yard touchdown reception, and hit Scott for the two-point conversion.

Ross had two more possessions, but they netted just five yards passing and five incompletions.

The Little Giants host Bedford



News-Messenger/Liz Margerum

JOSH LOZANO gave Ross a spark out of the backfield, rushing for 25 yards on seven carries, and made a key interception and big tackle on a conversion.

next Friday in a Great Lakes League game.

Notes: After almost two years of failed attempts, there was finally a winner in the halftime "Kick for Kids" promotion, sponsored by Tod Motors, Wolesslagel Moving and Bud's Tavern. Ross girls soccer coach Scott McVeigh nailed both the 30- and 40-yard field goal attempts, winning the \$45,000 prize. ... Ross linebacker/guard Rick Legg left the game with a rib injury. Matt Thiessen filled in at linebacker and Andy Hansen filled in at guard. "They're two young guys that got an opportunity to play.

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Football

High School

Massillon 20, Ross 14

Massillon	0	12	0	8	—	20
Ross		14	0	0	0	— 14

First Quarter

R—Aaron Hines 6 run (Brian McCord kick), 7:31

R—Bryan Root 15 pass from David Rhodes (McCord kick), 0:23

Second Quarter

M—Jessie Scott 8 run (conversion failed), 11:49

M—Perry James 1 run (conversion failed), 1:08

Third Quarter

No scoring

Fourth Quarter

M—Jeremiah Drobney 5 pass from Dave Irwin (Scott pass from Irwin), 9:04

	R	M
First downs	12	19
Rushes-yards	38-159	38-238
Passing yards	156	154
Comp.-Att.-Int.	7-18-0	12-21-2
Penalties	5-85	11-91
Punts-Avg.	5-37.2	4-35
Fumbles-lost	0-0	1-0

INDIVIDUAL STATISTICS

RUSHING — Ross: Xavier Darden 1-23, Josh Lozano 7-25, Kendrid Nason 3-3, Jose Simms 2-7, Ryan Wilhelm 4-29, Aaron Hines 8-29, Joe Lopez 2-4, David Rhodes 11-39. Massillon: Jessie Scott 20-153, Dave Bumgamer 6-52, Perry James 8-30, Dave Irwin 3-3, Fester Hagen 1-0.

PASSING — Ross: David Rhodes 6-17-0-1—125, Josh Lozano 1-1-0-0-31. Massillon: Dave Irwin 12-21-2-1—154.

RECEIVING: Ross: Bryan Root 5-101, Joe Lopez 1-27, Alfonso Vann 1-(-3). Massillon: Joe Price 1-13, Charles Hendricks 2-33, Anthony Battle 2-33, Rocky Dorsey 2-20, Jesse Robinson 1-9, Perry James 1-8, Steve Eyerman 1-16, Jessie Scott 1-5, Josh Herman 1-12, Jeremiah Drobney 1-5.

Records: Ross 3-5, Massillon 8-0



News-Messenger/Dan Foster
KENDRICK NASON follows Ryan Wilhelm's block for some of his 123 yards rushing in Ross's 27-14 win over Bedford on Friday.

Ross wins home finale

By SCOTT TAPPA
Sports editor

If ever a football coach needs visual evidence to convince his players that no opponent can be overlooked, he must look no further than the tape of Friday's Fremont Ross-Bedford game at Harmon Stadium.

After a listless first half, which found the Little Giants trailing 14-7 in their last home game of the season, Ross dominated the second half, scoring 20 unanswered points to post a 27-14 Great Lakes League win.

"The whole week in practice we weren't focused, and our coaches told us that's how we were going to play," said senior wideout Jordan Mackey, who caught the game-tying touchdown pass in the third quarter. "They were right. I didn't think they'd be right."

Kendrik Nason, whose hard running helped Ross control the ball in the second half, said last week's close game with Massillon might still have been on the Little Giants' minds.

"We were messing around

Friday
Ross 27
Bedford 14

Next Friday

Ross at Sandusky, 7:30 p.m.

in practice, thinking we could just come out here and walk all over them, but they came to play," said Nason, who rushed for a season-high 123 yards on 15 carries. "When we went to the locker room (at halftime), coach told us we had to play."

Senior safety Josh Lozano agreed.

"Everybody was still thinking about last week, about how we played well against Massillon," the three-year starter said. "You could tell this week that we really weren't into it, everybody was a little down, nobody was focused, and we played like it in the first half."

Lozano got Ross on the board at the 4:10 mark of the first quarter, scoring on a 2-yard fourth down run over left tackle on a play called 35 Smash. The drive spanned 85

SEE ROSS, B2

Ross tops Bedford in 1999 Harmon finale

Continued from B1

yards and 14 plays, and was aided by 50 yards in Bedford penalties.

"I'm starting to get back into playing offense, so it was good to get in there," Lozano said. "It was good to get a score on my last night, Senior Night."

The Kicking Mules committed mental error on top of mental error. Lined up for a fourth-and-2 play to start the second quarter, Bedford was flagged for illegal procedure, then called timeout when it didn't have enough players on the field for a field goal attempt, then saw Jeffrey Feldmann shank the field goal wide right.

On the night, Bedford committed 11 penalties — many of which were of the personal foul or unsportsmanlike conduct variety — for 110 yards.

Bedford's Jordan Stevens evened the score midway through the second quarter, returning a Ross fumble 44 yards for a touchdown.

Bedford took the lead with 10 seconds to play in the half, with Tim McKibben catching a 3-yard touchdown pass from Phil Peake.

"They didn't do anything that we didn't prepare for," said Ross coach

Mike Eicher. "We had turnovers that hurt ourselves, but I thought the kids did a nice job of coming out in the second half and playing Little Giant football."

"This game's a great lesson for this football team, there's no doubt about it. Emotionally, you've got to be ready to play every week."

Ross tied the game at 14-14 with a 27-yard David Rhodes-to-Mackey connection. The scoring drive took just one play, after Ryan Wilhelm's 21-yard punt return gave Ross excellent starting field position.

"It was a fade, the coaches upstairs saw that the defense had been shading over that way," said Mackey, who was told by doctors that he would not play again this season after he injured his shoulder in late September. "I knew I could do it."

Defensively, linemen Kyle Myers, Kurt Prosser and Brooks Obermeyer helped shut down the Bedford running game, as emerging star linebacker Jered Kingsborough racked up tackle after tackle, including several behind the line of scrimmage. Bedford mustered just 26 yards on 26 carries in the game.

Ross outgained Bedford 216-91 in the second half. Prosser and Tommy Wagner had second half interceptions, and Jeremy Jones had one

in the first half.

Rhodes iced the game with a pair of fourth quarter touchdown runs, covering 5 and 10 yards.

Nason was a workhorse on the ground, gaining 91 of his yards in the second half.

"I was mad, because I wasn't doing what I was supposed to be doing earlier," said Nason, who dedicated his performance to injured senior linebacker Jason Hull. "My cousin Aaron (Hines) was sick, so I had to do something for him, and do something for the seniors."

The game was the final home game for Ross seniors Xavier Darden, Joe Lopez, Mackey, Lozano, Jose Simms, Wilhelm, Obermeyer, Hull, Nathan Fassnacht, Myers, Victor Salinas, Mike Adams, David Cobb, Prosser and Billy Butler.

"I told them that they're going to be the foundation of whatever success we have here, because of the hard work they're putting in," Eicher said.

For Lozano, who played under three head coaches in his four years of high school, the ending was somewhat sudden.

"It feels good to get the win, but it's sad, knowing it's my last game here," Lozano said. "Three years went so fast, it just went so fast."

Football

High School

Ross 27, Bedford 14

Bedford	0	14	0	0	—	0
Ross	7	0	7	13	—	27

First Quarter

R—Josh Lozano 2 run (Brian McCord kick), 4:10

Second Quarter

B—Jordan Stevens 44 fumble return (Jeff Feldmann kick), 7:49

B—Tim McKibben 3 pass from Phil Peake (Feldmann kick), 0:10

Third Quarter

R—Jordan Mackey 27 pass from David Rhodes (McCord kick), 8:15

Fourth Quarter

R—Rhodes 5 run (McCord kick), 9:57

R—Rhodes 10 run (pass failed), 4:25

	R	B
First downs	20	11
Rushes-yards	48-303	26-26
Passing yards	34	165
Comp.-Att.-Int.	2-5-1	13-25-3
Punts-avg.	2-37	5-35.4
Penalties	3-30	11-110
Fumbles-lost	5-3	3-1

INDIVIDUAL STATISTICS

RUSHING: Ross — Aaron Hines 6-32, Ryan Wilhelm 8-27, Josh Lozano 3-2, Xavier 4-44, David Rhodes 9-51, Kendrid Nason 15-123, Joe Lopez 3-24. Bedford — Aaron Swick 5-3, Rodney Gamby 10-7, Jeffrey Feldmann 1-(-7), Ryan Ditty 5-30, Phil Peake 4-(-11), Chadd Johnston 1-3.

PASSING: Ross — David Rhodes 2-5-1-1-34, Bedford — Phil Peake 10-20-3-1-138, Jeffrey Feldmann 3-5-0-0-27.

RECEIVING: Ross — Jordan Mackey 1-27, Jamin Lozano 1-7. Bedford — Chadd Johnston 1-16, Matthew Noethen 2-30, Tim McKibben 2-12, Kirk Hubbard 4-27, Aaron Swick 2-14, Rodney Gamby 1-18.

Records: Ross 4-5 (3-2), Bedford 2-7 (1-5)

Football

Hello again, old friend



News-Messenger/Dan Foster

RYAN WILHELM, 37, Anthony Vann, 71, and Ross play Sandusky in their season finale Friday at Strobel Field.

Ross, Sandusky set for annual rivalry game

By SCOTT TAPPA
Sports editor

It's been almost two decades since Fremont Ross coach Mike Eicher participated in a Ross-Sandusky showdown, but the memories of the Little Giants' Halloween night win in 1980 remain vivid.

"It was a big game, not only for the Buckeye Conference but for playoff potential," said Eicher, whose team plays Sandusky in its season finale at 7:30 p.m. Friday at Strobel Field. "It was a big game, but the coaches, as far as getting us

Inside: Vote for all-time football teams. **Page B2**

ready for the game, didn't make it bigger than any other game we played."

Eicher's play was big, with his 43-yard second quarter scramble setting up Eric Bates' 6-yard touchdown run and Greg Bobay's extra point. It was the only score of the night, as Ross won 7-0 to finish 9-1.

"I know that as a player, it was a great feeling," he said.

See ROSS, B2

Ross-Sandusky memories

Some of the more memorable Ross-Sandusky moments from the last 30 years.

1969: Ross upsets Sandusky 28-27, in a game that many observers credit with the passage of a school levy.

1983: Ross wins back-to-back 7-0 games at the end of the regular season and first round of the state playoffs. In the regular season meeting at Strobel Field, Kevin Wilhelm's 1-yard touchdown run provided the only points Ross needed. Todd Beatty scored the only touchdown in the Little Giants' playoff win at Harmon Stadium.

1995: Tim Rakes kicks a field goal and Brandon Willer blocks a Sandusky field goal attempt in overtime to give Ross a 19-16 win.

1997: A 21-6 win at Strobel Field closes out Ross's first 10-0 regular season since 1956.

And those were just some of the Ross wins.

Interesting fact: Although there have been many high-scoring Ross-Sandusky games — including last year's contest, where the teams combined for a series-high 77 points in the Little Giants' win — there have been 41 shutouts in 93 games, including three 0-0 ties, and a 1-0 Sandusky win in 1908.

—Scott Tappa, with help from "100 Years of Fremont Ross High School Football" and "The Pride Years"

Ross, Sandusky set to meet for 94th time in GLL showdown Friday at Strobel Field

Continued from B1

"There's no doubt about it, it was our biggest crowd of the year that supported us. I really appreciated it as a player I told the team that, that the community's going to come out and support you. That's the main thing I remember about that game."

Of course, Ross and Sandusky have shared many memorable games over the years. The teams have met 93 times, with Sandusky winning 49, Ross winning 36, and the teams battling to the tie eight times.

It should be noted that 28 of Sandusky's wins in the series came before 1945, with the rivals to the

north going 13-0-1 against Ross from 1927-1940. Ross has gotten the better of the last three decades, with Ross going 18-9-1 against Sandusky since 1970.

"It's like Ohio State-Michigan," Eicher said. "The big thing about a rivalry game, in college, maybe it gets you into the Rose Bowl. In high school, especially with these two communities so mixed with people working in each town, it gives you bragging rights for a year. 'We kicked your tail!'

"When you're going against Sandusky, there's not much to say. It doesn't matter what the records are, we could both be 0-9 right now, or one team could be trying to make the playoffs or win the league, it doesn't matter. It means a lot."

Ross (4-5) has been out of playoff and league title contention for most of the season, with injuries and inexperience catching up to the Little Giants early. Late, though, Ross has come on strong, winning three of four games since a demoralizing loss to Oregon Clay.

"Here's what the game means to us: Halfway through the season, we were struggling, and we sat down as a team and said we wanted to have a winning season in the second half," Eicher said. "With this game we can be 4-1 if we win it."

On the other hand, Sandusky (4-4) started off quickly, and was 4-1 at the end of September, receiving state-wide recognition in the Associated Press poll. Since a Sept. 24 win over Bedford, the Blue Streaks

have gone 1-3, and though they have just a 5-4 record, are 10th in the Division I, Region 3 computer rankings, with an outside shot of sneaking into the playoffs.

El Da'Sheon Nix is a big reason for Sandusky's success. The senior, who introduced himself to Fremont fans with a record-breaking performance at Harmon Stadium last November, has had a stellar second year of varsity football.

Despite inuring his hand in the Bedford game, Nix has caught 42 passes for 617 yards and six touchdowns, fourth-most in the Great Lakes League, but tops among receivers who don't wear Findlay uniforms. Also a defensive standout, Nix has seven interceptions as a defensive back.

"As far as their offense goes, he's their No. 1 big-play threat," Eicher said. "With him, his speed and athletic ability let him take one play and go all the way."

Quarterback Aaron Williamson, who was on the throwing end of Nix's 274 yards receiving against Ross last year, is back and is the leading non-Findlay passer in the league with 1,028 yards and seven touchdowns.

But coach Larry Cook's team is not strictly airborne. Tailback Mark Wooten has given Sandusky a ground presence this season, rushing for 624 yards and 10 touchdowns this season. Wooten started the season off with a bang, with gains of 48, 95 and 91 yards — all for touchdowns — on his first three carries,

in a 298-yard performance against Toledo Bowsher.

"He's definitely someone you can't fall asleep on," Eicher said. "They have a similar attack to what we saw against Massillon. You can't defend just one or the other (Nix or Wooten), but we definitely want to control both."

Defensively, linebacker Jimmie Cherry leads the Streaks with 87 tackles, and fellow linebacker John Rosekelly has 55. Nix and Ryan Taber (66 tackles) lead the secondary.

"They're very athletic," Eicher said. "As far as their linebacking crew and secondary go, they run to the football very well. Up front, they're big and physical, they do a good job getting into you."

Sandusky edges Ross

By SCOTT TAPPA
Sports editor

SANDUSKY — This loss hurt more than any of the other losses.

It showed in the eyes and faces of the Fremont Ross players after their 10-6 loss to Sandusky at Strobel Field on Friday, in the eyes and faces of the coaches, the trainers, the fans.

"You're disappointed to end the year with a loss, especially when you're playing your archrival," said Ross coach Mike Eicher. "It was a

big game, there's a lot of emotion in the game, it's one you want to get."

But the Little Giants fell just short, finishing 4-6 overall, 3-3 in the Great Lakes League.

After a one-sided first half in which Sandusky took a 10-0 lead, Ross turned up the defensive pressure and found its offense late in the fourth quarter — just a little too late.

"At halftime, I told the kids it would come down to a battle of wills," said Sandusky

coach Larry Cook. "We played with great unity, enthusiasm. Our kids didn't give in."

Kendrik Nason's 3-yard touchdown run with 2:51 to play pulled Ross to within 10-6, but Brian McCord's extra point attempt was blocked.

The Ross defense forced Sandusky into a three-and-out, and Josh Lozano's fair

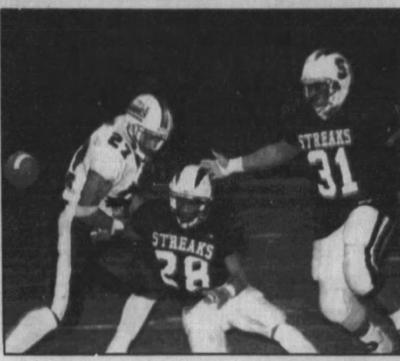
catch gave the Little Giants the ball at their own 20 with 1:32 remaining.

Nason's 26-yard run moved Ross to its own 46, but Bronta Prophet sacked Ross quarterback David Rhodes for an 8-yard loss.

Rhodes completed a 7-yard pass to Nason, but his final two attempts fell incomplete, sealing the win for the Blue Streaks.

"We were using our hurry-up offense there," Eicher said.

See ROSS, B2



News-Messenger/Dan Foster
JOSE SIMMS, 27, makes a play on the ball while Jermaine Cherry, 28, and Jimmie Cherry converge for Sandusky.

Ross rallies late, but can't catch Sandusky in season-ending loss

Continued from B1

"We're not going to use all big plays, we're going to mix it."

In the gloom surrounding the loss, two positives emerged for Ross. One was the emergence of Nason as a featured back. The junior followed up last week's 123-yard performance with 82 yards on 15 carries Friday.

The other was the emergence of the Ross defense in the second half as a dominant force. The Little Giants allowed just 27 yards in the second half.

"We went in thinking they had a little different attack than they had last year," said Ross defensive coordinator Chuck Lindsey. "Last year, they had to go through (wide receiver El Da'Sheon) Nix a little more because they didn't have a great running game. This year they

had a really good running game, so coming in we wanted to take the run away, and in passing situations we wanted to give Nix a different look every single time."

Not much happened in the first quarter, as Kyle Myers and Juan Romero took turns punting, kicking the ball away six times.

Running back Mark Wooten got the Blue Streaks (6-4, 4-2) on the board at the 9:29 mark of the second quarter. The score was set up by two big plays.

The first was a 48-yard Romero punt that pinned Ross back on its own 1 late in the second quarter. The play, in which a Sandusky player appeared to be lying in the end zone while he downed the ball, gave Sandusky favorable field position on its ensuing drive.

"In the first half I thought field position was crucial," Eicher said. "Their kicking game got us pinned

back in our territory a couple of times, and we couldn't get on track offensively. Our punting game wasn't as good as it's been in the last couple weeks, and that put them in position for the one score."

The second big play was a fourth down 22-yard pass from Aaron Williamson to Nix that put the Blue Streaks at the Ross 1, setting up Wooten's touchdown run.

Sandusky added a Romero field goal with seven seconds left in the half to take a 10-0 lead, but it could have been more.

Wooten rambled 53 yards to the Ross 32, and a facemask penalty moved the Streaks to the Ross 17. Two Williamson scrambles put Sandusky first-and-goal from the Ross 2.

But Sandusky was flagged for illegal motion, Brooks Obermeyer and Rick Legg sacked Williamson, and Ryan Wilhelm tackled Antoine

Stockett short of the goal line on third down, setting up Romero's 20-yard field goal.

Ross never got much offense going in the first half, generating 65 yards on 18 plays, for four first downs. Sandusky showed a balanced attack, gaining 79 yards rushing, 71 yards passing.

The second half was a different story. Sandusky ran just 20 plays from scrimmage in the half, including four punts. After Williamson spread the ball around to three different receivers in the second half, he was 0-for-5 in the second half, and Wooten gained just 16 yards.

Nix, who burned Ross for almost 300 yards receiving in last year's game, was held to just three catches for 36 yards.

"Jose (Simms) played man on him most of the time, sometimes we went over-under coverage

against him," Lindsey said. "We thought like that going earlier."

With the loss, Ross concluded with its first losing record since 1987, and just its second losing record in the last 30 years. But with the number of young players who gained experience, Eicher was optimistic that the team is closer to fulfilling the two-platoon system he believes is necessary.

"I'm proud of the seniors, they did a good job getting us through some tough times this year," he said. "We've got a lot of young kids that got experience this year. The only way we're going to get better is to get in that weight room and get stronger and get faster."

The two teams skirmished in the handshake line after the game, with several individual fights breaking out. Order was restored after several minutes, but extra police attention was given to the area surrounding the Ross locker room.

Football

High School

Sandusky 10, Ross 6

Ross	0	0	0	6	—	6
Sandusky	0	10	0	0	—	10

First Quarter

No scoring

Second Quarter

S—Mark Wooten 1 run (Juan Romero kick), 9:29

S—Romero 20 field goal, 0:07

Third Quarter

No scoring

Fourth Quarter

R—Kendrid Nason 3 run (kick blocked), 2:51

	R	S
First downs	14	6
Rushes-yards	44-206	29-106
Passing yards	26	71
Passes-Comp.-Int.	17-6-0	15-7-0
Penalties	5-75	2-15
Punts-Avg	6-33.2	7-37.1
Fumbles-lost	2-1	1-0

INDIVIDUAL STATISTICS

RUSHING: Ross — Aaron Hines 6-28, Kendrid Nason 15-82, David Rhodes 9-27, Ryan Wilhelm 5-22, Josh Lozano 1-1, Jose Simms 1-1, Xavier Darden 4-31, Jamin Lozano 3-14. Sandusky — Mark Wooten 18-86, Aaron Williamson 7-15, Brock Johnson 2-4, Jimmie Cherry 2-1.

PASSING: Ross — David Rhodes 6-17-0-0—26. Sandusky — Aaron Williamson 7-15-1-0—71.

RECEIVING: Jose Simms 1-2, Jordan Mackey 1-0, Jamin Lozano 2-1, Kendrid Nason 2-23. Sandusky — El Da'Sheon Nix 3-36, John Rosekelly 1-12, Antoine Stockett 3-23.

Records: Ross 4-6 (3-3), Sandusky 6-4 (4-2)

Area All-District selections

First team

OL Krofton Montgomery, Clyde; RB Dave Mason, Gibsonburg; DL Chad Conrad, Gibsonburg; LB Ben Miller, Gibsonburg; WR Kevin Slates, Woodmore; RB Jon Blechinger, Woodmore; OL Mick Beier, Oak Harbor; DL Nick Thorbahn; DB Isaac Martin, Oak Harbor; WR Pete Lepley, Bellevue; DL Cody Cramer, Bellevue; P Brad Snyder, Bellevue.

Second team

DL Kyle Myers, Fremont Ross; DB Josh Lozano, Fremont Ross; WR Ben Caudill, Clyde; LB Matt Mason, Clyde; TE Mike Mason, Gibsonburg; QB Scott Sorg, Woodmore; OL Matt Lawrence, Lakota; RB Kyle Minch, Lakota; DB John Sander, Lakota; DL Cory Krieger, Oak Harbor; RB Ryan Cramer, Bellevue; QB Justin Journay, Bellevue; OL Kurt Felder, Bellevue.

Honorable mention

Brooks Obermeyer, Fremont Ross; Wade Kuns, St. Joe; Joe Hoelzle, St. Joe; Chris Mayle, St. Joe; A.J. O'Neal, St. Joe; Brian Lenhart, St. Joe; Lyle Brown, Clyde; Jeff Sosa, Clyde; Nick Walby, Gibsonburg; Greg Gaines, Oak Harbor; Josh Meisler, Margaretta.

■ See complete list on page B3.

Myers, Lozano honored by GLL

News-Messenger reports

Fremont Ross seniors Kyle Myers and Josh Lozano were among the players honored, as the All-Great Lakes League teams were announced.

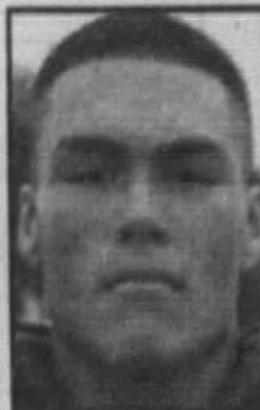
Myers was named the Defensive Lineman of the Year. He recorded five sacks and was also a solid run stuffer for the Little Giants.

Lozano, a three-year starter, was named the Defensive Back of the Year. He led the team with 36 tackles and two interceptions and earned All-GLL honors for the third time in his career.

Ross center Brooks Obermeyer was named to the first team offense. He led



MYERS



LOZANO

the Little Giants young offensive line.

Ross had three players make the second team: offensive lineman Rick Legg, defensive back Jose Simms and defensive tackle Aaron Hines.

Alfonso Vann, Kendrid Nason, David Rhodes, Jeremy Jones, Jered Kingsborough and Kurt Prosser were named honorable mention for the Little Giants.

All-Great Lakes League

FIRST TEAM OFFENSE

Jeremy Smith, Fostoria, Jr., El Da'Sheon Nix, Sandusky, Sr., Derek Besgrove, Clay, Sr., Mike Irli, Findlay, Sr., Jon Seng, Findlay, Sr., B.J. Barre, Whitmer, Sr., Brooks Obermeyer, Ross, Sr., Eric Gibson, Sandusky, Sr., Owen Merrill, Findlay, Sr., Ben Roethlisberger, Findlay, Sr., John Rosekelly, Sandusky, Sr.

Placekicker: Josh Huston, Findlay, Sr.

FIRST TEAM DEFENSE

Ryan Ditty, Bedford, Sr., Nick Dulik, Whitmer, Jr., Dane Whitted, Findlay, Sr., Alex Salwicz, Whitmer, Sr., Josh Lozano, Ross, Sr., Franklin Lewis, Whitmer, Jr., Jason Eiseman, Bedford, Sr., Ryan Donley, Clay, Sr., Jimmy Cherry, Sandusky, Sr., Eric Hugueley, Clay, Sr., Kyle Myers, Ross, Sr.

Punter: Nate Fry, Findlay, Jr.

SECOND TEAM OFFENSE

Jarrod Botimer, Fostoria, Sr., Mark Wooten, Sandusky, Sr., Ryan Truax, Findlay, Sr., Ryan Eldridge, Whitmer, Sr., Tony Peake, Bedford, Sr., Rick Legg, Ross, Sr., Aaron Williamson, Sandusky, Sr., Robert Radl, Findlay, Sr., Chad Baxter, Findlay, Sr., Jim Zilliox, Whitmer, Sr., Nick Gallup, Whitmer, Sr.

SECOND TEAM DEFENSE

Dave Bringman, Fostoria, Jr., Ryan Pfeiferle, Clay, Sr., Aaron Swick, Bedford, Sr., Mick Bloomfield, Findlay, Sr., Jose Simms, Ross, Sr., Kevin Smith, Sandusky, Sr., Tony Katschke, Clay, Sr., Tyler Zeto, Findlay, Sr., Aaron Hines, Ross, Jr., Gary Noel, Whitmer, Sr., Bronta' Prophet, Sandusky, Sr.

HONORABLE MENTION

Bedford: Fouad Eid, Jordan Stevens, Chris Morris, Rick St. Bernard, Kirk Hubbard, Brian Dobrzanski.

Clay: Jim Phillips, Kurt Baumgardner, Sharif Hindi, Casey Donley, Tom Menden, Bill Fisher.

Findlay: Nick Salyers, Justin Benedict, Adam Renard, Scott Andus, Sean Abbott, Chaz Hatfield

Fostoria: Jameson Botimer, Brandon Distel, Chris Brown

Ross: Alfonso Vann, Kendrid Nason, David Rhodes, Jeremy Jones, Jered Kingsburgh, Kurt Prosser

Sandusky: Matt Newton, Jeremy Haas, Ryan Taber, Patrick Grohe, Nick Faetanini, Jermaine Cherry

Whitmer: Cory Miller, Cory Bolles, Irshad Banister, Jeremy Roberts, Jeremy Evener.

Offensive Lineman of the Year: Mike Irli, Findlay

Defensive Lineman of the Year: Kyle Myers, Ross