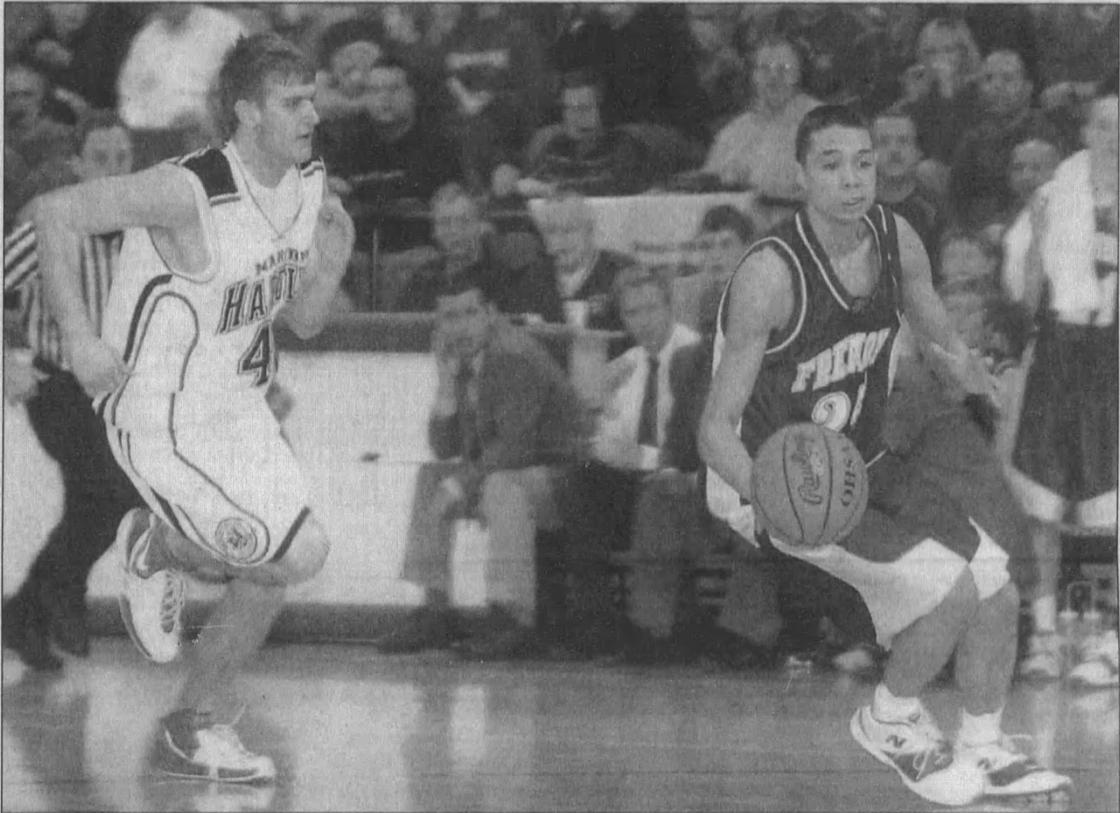


2007 Division I Sectional Tournament

Croudup carries Ross



Charlie Longton/News-Messenger

FREMONT ROSS' Ryan Croudup steals the ball from a Marion Harding player at Willard on Tuesday.

By VINCE GUERRIERI
Sports Editor

WILLARD - For the second time in a week, the Ross boys' basketball team beat Marion Harding by a score of 77-56.

But this time, in a Division I sectional semifinal Tuesday, the Presidents made it a lot more interesting.

After being down eight at the half, Harding tied the game in the third period, but behind the shooting of Ryan Croudup and Cory Clayton, the Little Giants pulled away to advance to the sectional finals Friday, when they'll play Mansfield Senior at 6:15 p.m., also at Willard.

"At our place, we were able to maintain the double-digit lead," said Ross coach Mark Gedeon.

At the beginning of the second half, baskets by Isiah Twine and Kyle Oney closed the gap to 34-30. The Presidents (4-17) had gone on a six-point spurt at the end of the first half to close the

gap to 34-26, as the teams headed into the locker room.

"I'm real proud of the kids' ability to come back," Jury said. "We got down early and it would have been very easy to pack it in for the year."

Clayton hit a jumper to extend the lead back to six, and Kirt Munson stole the ball, but the Little Giants (8-13) promptly turned it over, and a Cody Hecker three closed the gap to 36-33. On the ensuing Harding possession, Hecker was fouled, making the first of his two foul shots and Twine, who went to have a game-high 18 points and 10 rebounds, hit a shot to tie the game.

"Our defense lapsed," Gedeon said. "They were able to attack the paint, and at the same time, we got impatient on shots."

Croudup was sent to the line, making a pair of foul shots to give the lead back to Ross, 38-36, but the third period belonged to Clayton, who scored 10 of his 14 points in the stanza.

Gedeon said Ross switched to more of a trap game early in the second half, freeing up guards Clayton and Croudup to shoot more.

"We started getting out in transition," Croudup said. "We started to beat them in transition. That put the nail in the coffin."

The Little Giants ended the quarter on a seven-point run, and Croudup scored the opening basket of the fourth to make it 53-40. The Little Giants' lead never dipped below 10 points after that.

Croudup, held scoreless from the floor in the middle two quarters, ended up leading the Little Giants with 17 points - 13 coming in the second half. Croudup said he had a slow start due to events at home - his grandmother, Paulina Levario, died Monday.

"I want to dedicate this game to her," Croudup said.

Although the Presidents tied the game in the third, they prob-

ably lost it in the first half. Harding turned over the ball on its first four possessions of the game, on the way to a total of 24 turnovers. Jury also noted that they missed a few easy layups.

"We cut our turnovers in half and make a few easy ones, it's a whole different ballgame," he said.

The Little Giants went on a 10-2 run early in the second period, thanks in large part to Devin Johnson, who scored 11 of his 15 points in the second.

"We made a conscious effort to get the ball to Devin early," Gedeon said.

Johnson was relatively silent in the second half, making just one basket from the floor and missing a pair of foul shots - but by then, it was Clayton's time to shine, and then Croudup's.

"They have three or four kids who can score," Jury said.

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High School Boys

Division I Sectionals

Ross 77, Marion Harding 56

ROSS — Kirt Munson 1-2-5; Phillip Miller 1-2; Cory Clayton 6-14; Ryan Croudup 5-7-17; Devin Johnson 5-5-15; Ryan Damman 4-1-9; Paul Hershey 2-2-6; Phillip Weicker 2-4; Andrew House 1-2; Dontaviyon Fleming 0-3-3.

MARION HARDING — Cory White 1-2-6; Tyler Winger 1-3; Nacara Robinson 0-1-1; Kyle Oney 2-2-6; Pat Jones 6-1-13; Isiah Twine 8-1-18; Cody Hecker 2-1-6; Kory Kirkpatrick 2-1-6.

Ross	15	19	17	26	—	77
Harding	9	17	14	16	—	56

3-point goals: Ross 3 (Munson, Clayton 2); Harding 5 (White, Winger, Twine, Hecker, Kirkpatrick)

Rebounds: Ross 32 (Clayton, Johnson 7); Harding 23 (Twine 10)

Turnovers: Ross 14, Harding 24

Records: Ross 8-13, Harding 4-17

Next game: Ross vs. Mansfield Senior, Friday, 6:15 p.m. at Willard

Little Giants sent home

By VINCE GUERRIERI
Sports Editor

WILLARD - Early in Friday's sectional final, the Ross boys' basketball team held a lead over Mansfield Senior. The student sections for both schools jockeyed back and forth, but the Ross faithful shouted the ultimate comeback.

"Scoreboard! Scoreboard," they yelled.

It was fun while it lasted.

The Ross boys' basketball team led for much of the first half, but Mansfield Senior ended Ross's season - again - with a 72-61 loss at Willard.

The Tygers (19-2) now hold a 6-2 postseason record over Ross, its former rival in the old Buckeye Conference.

"Anytime these two schools get together, they just battle," said Senior coach Gregg Collins. "The effort was there by both teams. You have to give Fremont credit."

Little Giant coach Mark Gedeon was pleased with the team's performance.

"I'm so proud of these guys," he said. "To compete at such a high level with one of the greatest teams in Northwest Ohio shows a lot of heart."

Cory Clayton, in his final basketball game as a Little Giant, led all scorers with 29 points. Clayton's prominence in the game plan was by design, Gedeon said.

"Cory's a three-year starter and he's been in those battles," Gedeon said. "He can take the pressure."

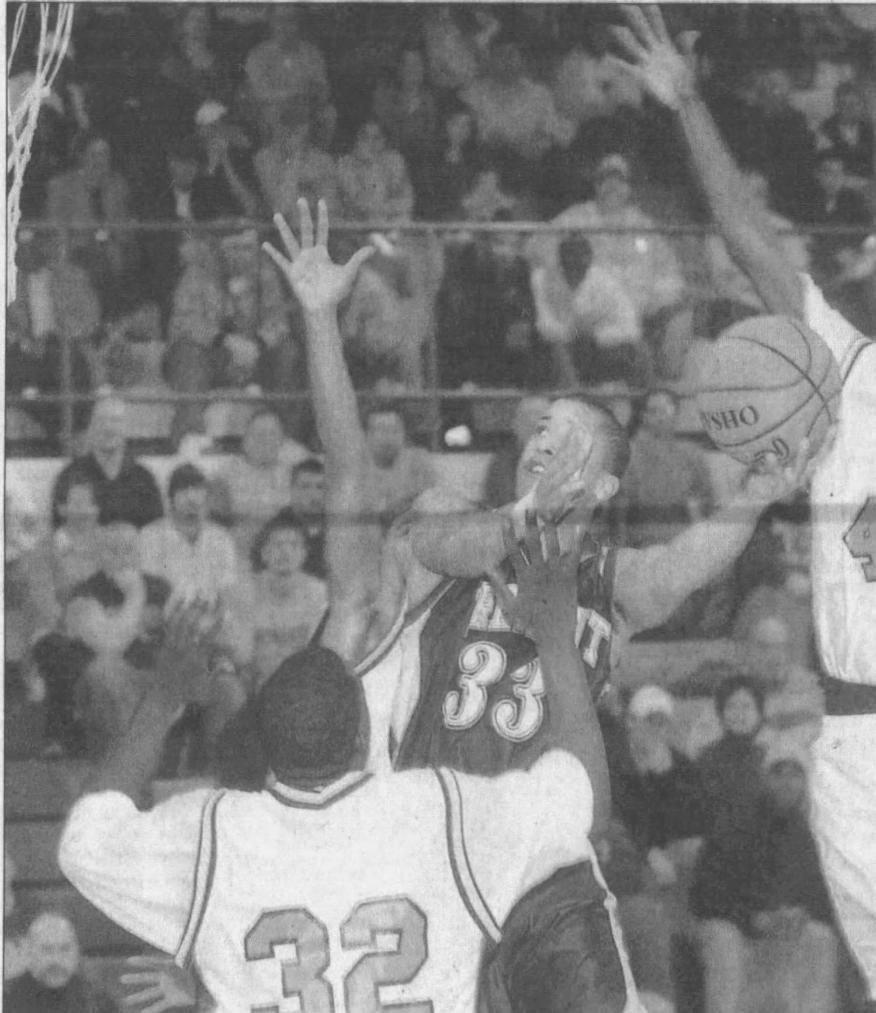
"What a great way to end his career, with a performance like that against tough competition."

Collins' game plan included lots of pressing, but it didn't have much of an effect on Clayton, who scored 12 of his 20 points from the floor in the first quarter.

"They were handling it," he said. "He got some open looks."

The Little Giants were using the long ball in the first half, with two threes by Clayton and one each from Kirt Munson - who finished with 14 points - and Paul Hershey.

"We wanted to force the perimeter shot," Collins said.



Charlie Longton/News-Messenger

LITTLE GIANTS Devin Johnson goes up for two and gets fouled on the way against Mansfield Senior at Willard High School on Friday night.

Senior took their first lead of the night on an Antwoine Smith three, 29-27. On the ensuing possession, the Little Giants turned the ball over. However, the Tygers gave it right back on a traveling call. Clayton hit one of two free throws to close the gap to 29-28 at halftime.

The Tygers widened their lead in the third period before Ryan Croudup - who missed school Friday to attend his

grandmother's funeral - hit a layup, his first points from the floor since he scored the game's opening basket. Croudup then pulled down a defensive board on the other side of the floor, got a fast break and slammed it home to pull the Little Giants within one, 35-34.

However, the Tygers widened their lead with threes, including three in the third by Markeith Johnson and one by Di'Nero

Ramseur just before the buzzer, widening the Senior lead to 48-39.

"You can't take everything away from them," Gedeon said. "They knocked them down, to their credit."

From then on, the Little Giants could get no closer than seven.

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High School Boys

Mansfield Senior 72, Ross 61

Division I Sectional Championships

ROSS – Kirt Munson 4-3-14; Cory Clayton 9-9-29; Ryan Croudup 3-5-11; Devin Johnson 1-2; Paul Hershey 2-5.

MANSFIELD SENIOR – Demetrius Newbern 0-2-2; Brandon Bonham 1-2; Di'Nero Ramseur 2-5; Trevonn Lucas 1-1-3; Antwoine Smith 9-7-26; Lonnie Eatman 2-0-4; Markeith Johnson 4-2-13; TJ Lindsay 4-8-16.

Ross	15	13	11	23	—	61
Senior	12	17	19	24	—	72

3-point goals: Ross – Munson 3, Clayton 2, Hershey; Senior – Ramseur, Smith, Johnson 3.

Rebounds: Ross 26 (Munson 7); Senior 35 (Smith 13)

Turnovers: Ross 20, Senior 14

Records: Ross 8-14; Senior 19-2.