

Giants earn tourney date with Findlay

Ross squeaks past Lima Sr.

By TIMOTHY R. WOLFRUM
Sports editor

FINDLAY — The Fremont Ross boys soccer team has been waiting two years to earn a shot at Great Lakes League defector Findlay.

So the Little Giants had no trouble summoning the patience to endure two extra hours of suspense Monday at the Division I sectional tournament.

Inside: Soccer tourney roundup. **Page B2**

Ross got through an hour delay at the outset of the match thanks to an overlong opener, then waded through 55 minutes of scoreless soccer before senior Adam Swope notched in the only goal in a 1-0 victory over Lima Senior at Graham Memorial Soccer Stadium.

The triumph sends the Little Giants to the Findlay Sectional final at 5 p.m. Tuesday, Oct. 23. Ross will face either Findlay or Celina, which meet Wednesday.

Celina earned a 3-2 victory over Bowling Green on Monday in a match that needed an overtime period, a shootout and a sudden-death shootout and took an hour longer than scheduled.

Findlay will be a prohibitive favorite to get past Celina, and that's fine with Ross. The Trojans took their top varsity team out of the GLL two years ago in an effort to toughen their schedule. Ross has won the last two league titles by beating Findlay's B team.

"It's been what they've been looking forward to the last few years since they (the Trojans) left the league and played the independent schedule," Ross coach Jeff Pendry said of facing Findlay. "They'll have their opportunity, assuming Findlay takes care of business on Wednesday."

Ross girls fall 6-0 to Madison

LEXINGTON — Mansfield Madison ended the Fremont Ross girls soccer team's season with a 6-0 victory Monday in a Division I sectional match.

The Rams led 2-0 at halftime before putting the match away with a flurry of goals late in the second half. Madison outshot the Little Giants 13-7.

"The first half, we played well," Ross coach Scott McVeigh said. "It was probably the quickest team we saw all year. We had a couple of letdowns, and they took over."

Christina Szymanowski had 17 saves for Ross, which finishes its season 9-7-1. Angela Hoelzle added four takeaways.

— *News-Messenger reports*



SWOPE



STRAIGHT

Said Swope, "We're looking forward to it. Hopefully, we'll prove a point to them. It'd be nice to end our senior year with a win against them."

Ross (10-4-1) struggled to put the Spartans (7-9-1) away Monday despite getting 12 shots to Lima Senior's three.

The Little Giants controlled a scoreless first half but had nothing to show for it.

Almost 16 minutes into the second half, senior midfielder Jarred Stull found Swope with a pass in front of the goal. Swope swiped at the ball in the air and got off a wobbly shot that sneaked through the mitts of Lima Senior goalkeeper Bill Newman and trickled into the right side of the goal.

See ROSS, B2

Ross blanks Lima Senior 1-0, advances to sectional final

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"Jarred had a nice move on the guy that was marking him, hit it right to the middle and Adam just made a beautiful run and put it away where the goalie couldn't stop it," Pendry said.

Swope was surprised the shot found the net.

"It was a mishit; it still went in though," he said.

The goal came at an opportune time for the Little Giants, who were getting frustrated at their lack of scoring punch. Stull and freshman Tyrone George each rifled first-half shots that got

through Newman's hands but failed to cross the goal line.

The inability to finish has plagued Ross all season.

"Collectively, we did not play bad at all," Pendry said. "Our problem was when we got 30 yards and in, we just did not finish and generate enough goal-scoring opportunities."

"That was the frustration at halftime. The defense and midfield were playing well, but we couldn't generate enough opportunities up front on offense."

Lima Senior's best chance to score came in a flurry eight minutes into the second half and nearly gave the Spartans the lead. Matt Miracle and Tony Briggs each had close shots

that Ross goalkeeper Rob Straight dived to turn away. Luke Jones rocketed a third shot that hit the left side of the net outside of the goal.

"It was extremely gratifying to see that the ball did not go in the net after that whole ordeal," Pendry said. "It was a little bit scary. ... It was a case where we screwed up and gave them a couple too many opportunities and didn't get it out of there when we should have."

"It's the old adage that defense can make mistakes and it shows up on the scoreboard, and offense can make mistakes and it never shows up. The few mistakes we did have back there, Robby was able to mop them up and make sure it didn't get in the net."

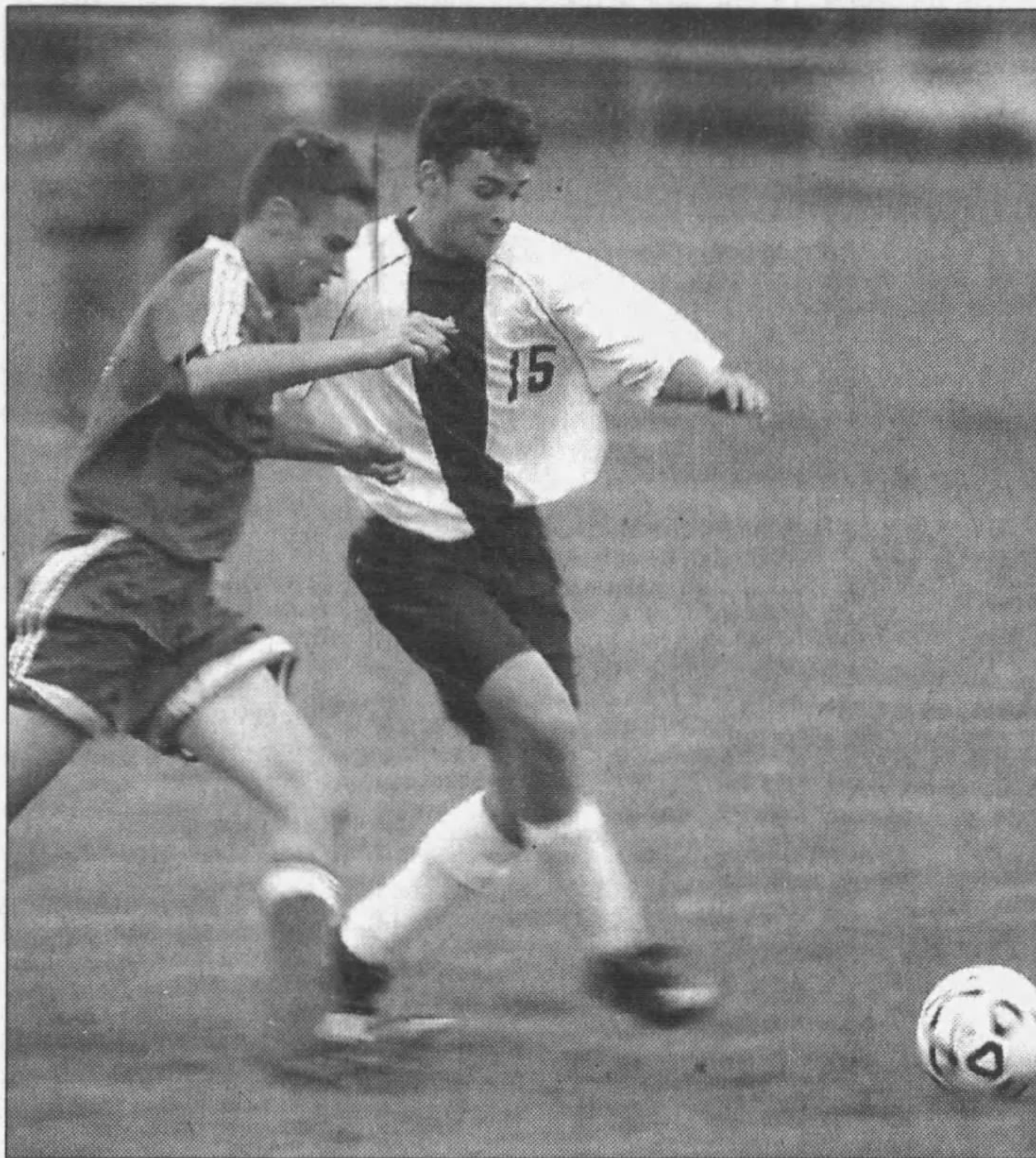
Senior Craig Hickey led the defensive effort with 16 intercepts. Classmates Brian McCord and Alex Damschroder had 10 apiece.



A banner for a sports memorabilia auction. The banner has a black background with a white border. Inside the border, there are several sports-related icons: a tennis racket, a baseball, a football, a basketball, a soccer ball, and a golf club. The text "FREMONT ROSS SPORTS MEMORABILIA AUCTION" is written in large, bold, white capital letters. Below the text, there is a smaller line of text that is partially obscured.

**FREMONT ROSS SPORTS
MEMORABILIA AUCTION**

Little Giants get their wish



News-Messenger file photo/Ben French

MATT SALAS (15) of Fremont Ross battles a Findlay B team player for a loose ball during a match earlier this season at Kelsey-Hayes Field.

Ross shoots for first victory over Findlay A

By **TIMOTHY R. WOLFRUM**
Sports editor

The Fremont Ross boys soccer team finally has Findlay — the real Findlay — within its sights.

Coach Jeff Pendry just hopes the excitement doesn't give his Little Giants that "deer in the headlights" look he's seen in past tournament matches.

Ross shoots for the program's first victory over Findlay's top team in a Division I district semifinal match today.

"The only thing I'm worried about is nerves, just a case where I hope nobody does something stupid early in the match because they're too excited," Pendry said.

The Little Giants have struggled early and dropped sectional openers against strong Toledo St. John's teams the past two seasons. Bad starts have doomed Ross teams in big matches, and Pendry said Findlay would capitalize on an opponent's slow start.



Today

Ross (10-4-1)
vs. Findlay (6-7-3), 5 p.m., at
Findlay.

Ross excited to play bona fide Findlay team in semifinal

Continued From B1

"The entire team has to show up and be ready to play from the very beginning," Pendry said. "Findlay is a team that comes out strong in the opening few minutes of the game and the first few minutes of the second half. We have to be ready to match that."

Findlay (6-7-3) meets Fremont Ross (10-4-1) at 5 p.m. today at Graham Memorial Soccer Stadium at Findlay High School. The winner advances to the district final at Findlay on Saturday.

The match holds double significance for Ross, which has a point to prove.

The Trojans' top varsity team has been playing outside the Great Lakes League for the past two seasons. Ross has won the two GLL crowns awarded since then, beating Findlay's second-level varsity squad along the way.

Findlay's top team, which had won every league title before the move, made the decision to leave the GLL because it wanted tougher competition to prepare for the post-season. The Trojans now play teams from the Toledo, Columbus and Cleveland areas, which explains their sub-.500 record.

Findlay doesn't regret the decision.

"It kind of takes a toll on your team," Findlay coach Albert Laux said. "You have to have a lot of depth to go against these teams all season. But I think, overall, it has made our players stronger. We hope that shows in the tournament."

Ross, though, plans to let the Trojans know they're not better than the GLL teams.

"It's an opportunity to prove they're really the GLL champs," Pendry said of his players.

The Little Giants have reason to believe they can win today. Ross de-

feated 2000 state champion North Olmsted on Sept. 1, just days after North Olmsted beat Findlay. Both Ross and Findlay have lost close matches to several other well-respected opponents.

"In terms of common opponents, there's nothing that shows they should come out and be a much better team than us," Pendry said.

Troy Sink, a junior forward, leads the Trojans with six goals and two assists. Senior captain Cory Elbin is the team's top defender, and Pendry rates senior captain Jon Runion the second-best in goalkeeper in northwest Ohio. Runion has posted seven shutouts this season.

Ross counters with a pair of four-year starters at midfield in Adam Swope, the school's all-time leading scorer, and Jarred Stull, the all-time leader in assists. Defender Craig Hickey is also a four-year starter and leads a strong unit.

Today's match may be a low-scoring battle of the midfields. Neither team has found much success putting the ball into the goal. Ross recorded a 1-0 victory over Lima Senior in the sectional opener; Findlay downed Celina 3-0 in its opener.

"Their weakness is the same as ours, inconsistency at the forward position," Pendry said.

Said Laux, "It has been one of our weaknesses because we don't have a typical forward with experience."

"It's a difficult situation because of the type of competition we play. We haven't scored as many goals as we usually have, but this team ranks as one of the best I've had."

Although today's match is not as emotionally charged for Findlay, Laux is not worried about his team finding motivation.

"When you got into the tournament, you need to be keyed up for every game," Laux said. "If you're not keyed up, you're going to lose."

Late Findlay goal stuns Giants

Ross 6 seconds shy of forcing OT

By TIMOTHY R. WOLFRUM
Sports editor

FINDLAY — Something unbelievable happened on the way to overtime Tuesday in the Division I boys soccer district.

Findlay's Colin Logan knifed through a previously impenetrable Fremont Ross defense and rolled in a breakaway goal with six seconds remaining in regulation to give the Trojans a 1-0 victory at Graham Memorial Soccer Stadium.

The late goal stunned the Little Giants, who had waited two years for a shot at Findlay's top varsity squad and held off the more physical Trojans for almost the entire match.

Almost.

The Ross team and its vocal fans figured the game was headed to overtime and

"Words can't really describe it. The guys are in shock; I'm in shock."

— Jeff Pendry,
Fremont Ross coach

possibly even a shootout before Logan's goal.

"Words can't really describe it," Ross coach Jeff Pendry said. "The guys are in shock; I'm in shock. To play that well for 79 minutes and 50-some seconds and lose like that, yeah, it's hard."

The Trojans (7-7-3) advance to Saturday's district final in Findlay. Ross wraps up its season at 10-5-1.

Findlay controlled the action for the majority of the match, outshooting the Little Giants 14-2.

But Ross senior defenders Craig Hickey and Brian McCord and junior goalkeeper Rob Straight led a defense that kept the Trojans at bay. Hickey marked Findlay's best player, junior midfielder Troy Sink, and Straight made 11 saves.

The match appeared destined for overtime when Ross freshman Tyrone George cleared the ball toward the Little Giants' end of the field with 30 seconds remaining.

But Findlay recovered and advanced the ball to midfield, where Jon Ammar punched a pass between two Ross defenders to Logan. Logan, the Trojans' third-leading scorer, moved past another Little Giant and was all alone as Straight came out to challenge him.

See **LITTLE GIANTS, B3**



News-Messenger/Ben French

FREMONT ROSS GOALKEEPER Rob Straight, left, slumps after Findlay scored the game-winning goal with six seconds remaining Tuesday at Graham Memorial Soccer Stadium. The Trojans, right, celebrate with Colin Logan (8), who scored the goal.

Little Giants fall in final seconds

Continued From B1

Logan's hard grounder got under a diving Straight's hands and rolled into the net as the Trojans celebrated.

"We almost call it a fluke," Pendry said of the goal. "The ball just kind of bounced one way, and the Findlay guy was in the right spot at the right time. We couldn't get to him."

Findlay coach Albert Laux said his team learned what can happen in the waning seconds when it lost the second match of the season on a last-second goal by North Olmsted.

"I instilled in the boys after that that the game is for 80 minutes," Findlay coach Albert Laux said. "You don't stop until the final whistle blows."

"It was an excellent game. I thought Fremont gave us a heckuva game. There was a little bit of luck on their side, but they were really fighting hard and hanging in there. I thought their keeper played an excellent game."

Although both coaches said they had not begun to prepare for overtime as time ran off the clock, evidence suggests otherwise, at least in Findlay's case.

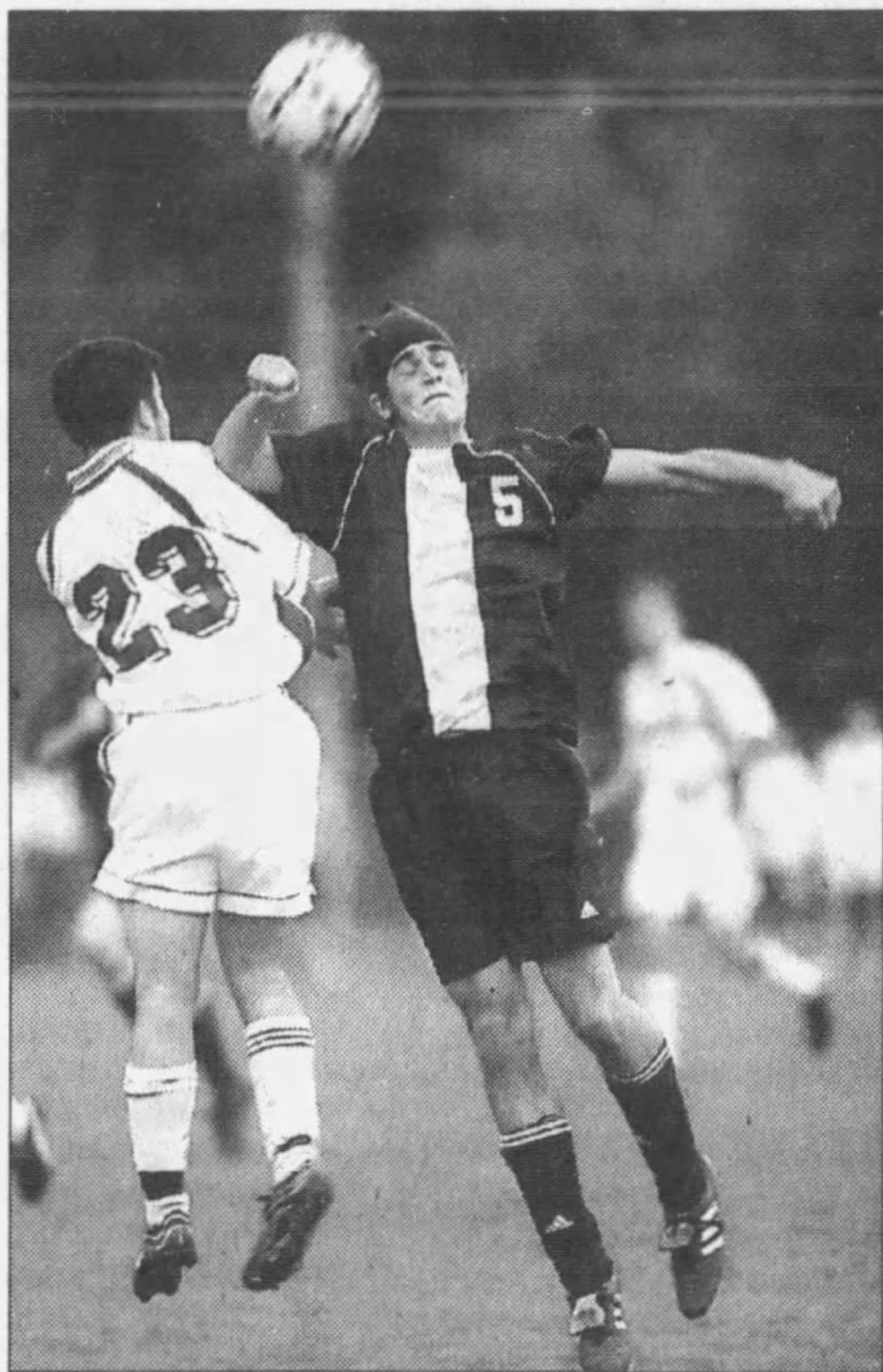
Laux pulled Sink, who had taken eight of the Findlay shots, with four minutes remaining in regulation. He was not on the field for the game-winning goal.

"He was not really happy with me," Laux said. "But I did it because I wanted to give him some extra rest. I noticed he was spent. I thought if we go into overtime, it would help him to have that extra rest."

Ross's best shot to score came with 3:30 remaining in the first half. Junior forward Luke McElfresh knocked in a breakaway goal, but it was called back because McElfresh was offside.

Hickey led the defense with 15 intercepts. McCord added 12, and Alex Damschroder had eight.

Pendry said the defense kept the Little Giants in the match.



News-Messenger/Ben French

LUKE McELFRESH (5) of Fremont Ross goes up for a header against Findlay's Mike Fry during Tuesday's match in Findlay.

"They played an excellent game," he said. "They started out very flat, but they stepped it up. In the second half, they played beautifully."

"A lot of the shots they had, except for a few scary moments, were deflections or ones where we forced them to the opposite foot."