

2001 DISTRICT TOURNAMENT

Ross rides to final

Cobb leads Little Giants past Streaks

By ALEXIUS TOMASZEWSKI
Staff writer

TIFFIN — Playing the same team four times in a season can get mundane.

However, Tuesday's repetitiveness propelled the Fremont Ross volleyball team to unfamiliar territory.

The No. 1-seeded Little Giants defeated Sandusky 15-6, 15-2 to advance to the Division I district final for the first time since 1997.

Division I

"For these guys, they've never made it out of sectionals before," Ross head coach Karrie Gardner said. "This is the first time we've come back on Monday and practiced. So, to still be around for Saturday is a great feeling."

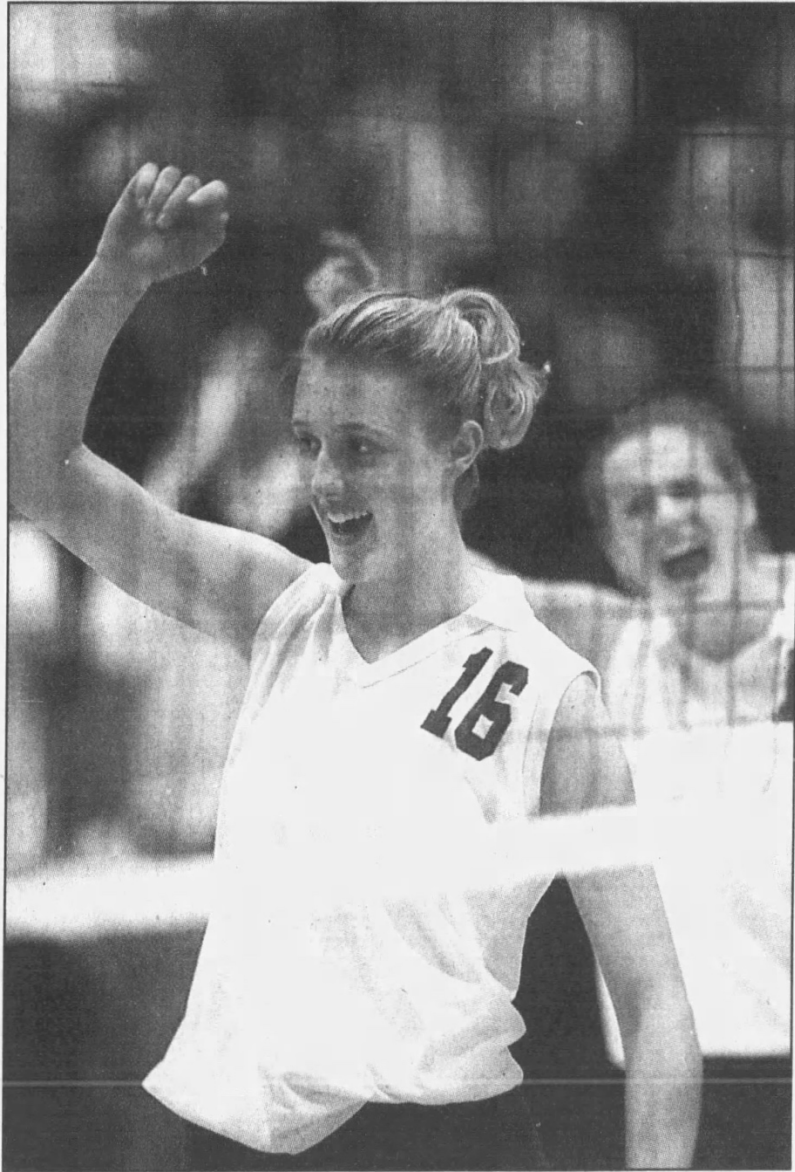
Gardner and the Little Giants advance to the district final to play ninth-ranked Anthony Wayne at 2 p.m. Saturday at Liberty-Benton.

Defeating any team four times is a tough task. Sandusky made things easier for Ross by playing with a weakened lineup. Senior middle hitter Jill Sullivan suffered a broken leg on Saturday, forcing an undersized Streaks team to hustle to cover the court.

"We had to rearrange everything on Monday," Sandusky head coach Diane Ma-joy said. "So, we just wanted to come out and have fun and compete and just do everything we could to hang, and we did. We played a lot of positions differently, and we had two defensive specialists playing all the way round. We just couldn't hang long enough."

Sandusky scored the opening point of the first game but trailed rest of the way. With a 7-6 lead, Little Giants sophomore Nicole Marroquin served six straight points. Both teams exchanged side-outs before Erin Barr and Jessica Fick served the winning points.

Ross senior middle hitter Lindsay Cobb dominated net play with a game-high nine kills and six blocks.



News-Messenger/Ben French

LINDSAY COBB of Fremont Ross contemplates a point during Tuesday's Division I district semifinal victory over Sandusky at Tiffin Columbian High School while teammate Sara Steinle celebrates

See ROSS, B3

Ross girls meet AW in district

Continued From B1

"Lindsay, the last couple weeks of the season, was getting pretty frustrated with herself," Gardner said. "We took some time and talked to her last week. I've been teasing her lately. She's been hitting so well, I keep saying, 'She's back,'" Gardner said. "She was definitely back tonight."

Her upfront play gave the Streaks little opportunity to return the ball. Ross, however, got to return a favor of sorts.

"This is the greatest win we could ever have," Cobb said. "Last year, Sandusky beat us twice in the conference and they knocked us out of sectional finals."

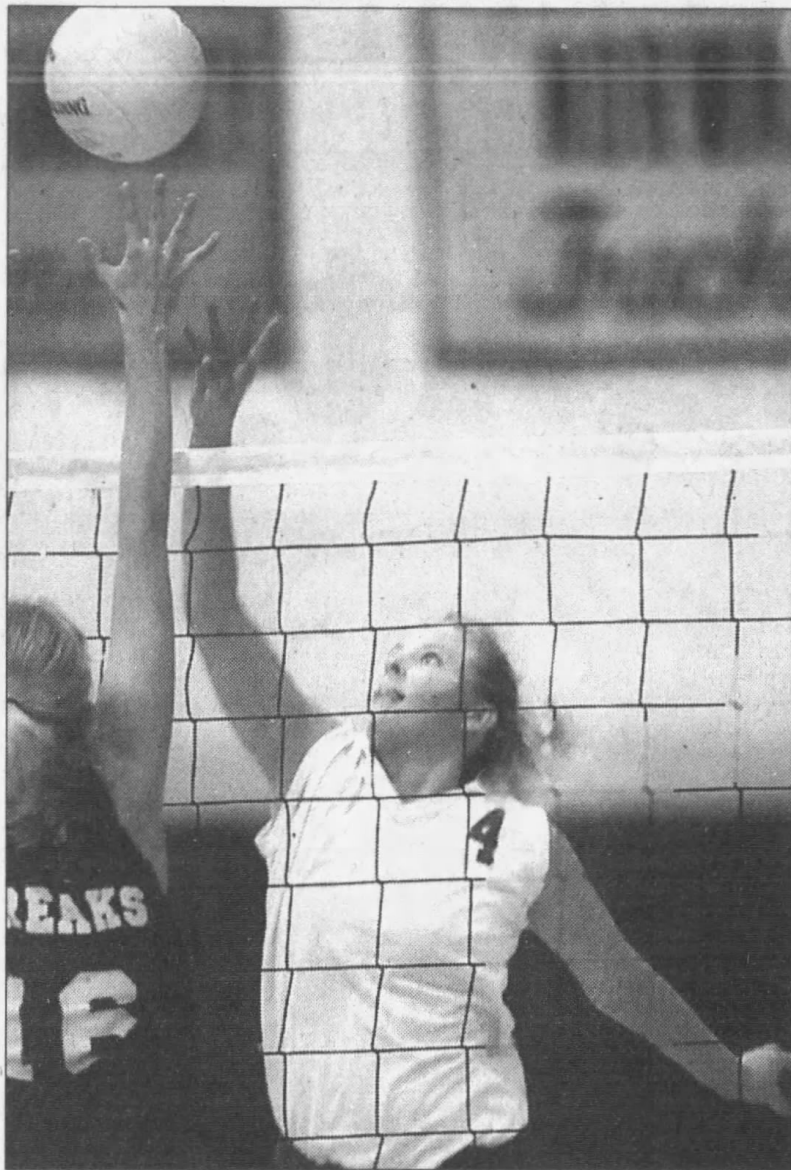
Although Gardner envisioned a tough match, her team played the match as she had predicted: a tough first game and an easier second. Once the Ross tempo was set, it rolled.

Solid Little Giant serving in the second game systematically pushed Sandusky to elimination. Ross jumped to a 9-1 lead before the Streaks got their second and final point. Ross moved to 12-2, when Sara Steinle's three service points closed the game.

Even before a Cobb kill sealed the victory, the Little Giant seniors reveled in the thought of advancing to the district final.

"It's really exciting. We've worked so hard and it's all starting to pay off. Now we don't mind practices because we know we're working towards a common goal," Jessica Fick said.

Fick finished with five kills and five points, while Erin Barr added eight points and three kills. Sara Steinle also had eight points, along



News-Messenger/Ben French

ERIN BARR of Fremont Ross tips over the block of Sandusky's Ashley Jenkins on Tuesday at Tiffin Columbian High School.

with two kills and two digs.

Sandusky should provide more than a fair appraisal of Ross after four meetings. Majoy expects the Little Giants to fare well behind their solid offensive and aggressive serving.

"That team's got a lot of composure. They don't get razzled. That's a good team — that's a winning team," she said.

One of Gardner's jayvee coaches

scouted the Anthony Wayne-Celina semifinal, but she doesn't foresee drastic changes for her team for the final, despite playing the Lady Generals twice during the summer.

"I don't want to overprepare because we still have to go out and play our game," she said. "I don't believe in scouting the other team and then designing your whole game around them. We've gotten to be 22-2 playing our game."

Ross brunettes face AW

Little Giants hunting program's 1st regional berth

By TIMOTHY R. WOLFRUM
Sports editor

Its next opponent is state-ranked, but the Fremont Ross volleyball team has an intimidation factor of its own heading into Saturday's Division I district final.

The Little Giants and coaches dyed their hair jet black Wednesday in preparation for the match against ninth-ranked Whitehouse Anthony Wayne.

The players colored each others' hair, and middle hitters Lindsay Cobb and Seanna Steinle took turns on the coaches.

"They seem to think black hair will make us look tough," Ross coach Karrie Gardner said Thursday.

"Part of the reason we've had such a



Saturday

Fremont
Ross (22-2)
vs. Anthony
Wayne (22-2),
2 p.m., Liberty-
Benton H.S.

good year is because we've had fun. This gave the girls a chance to laugh at themselves and at the coaches."

Ross (22-2) faces Anthony Wayne (22-2) at 2 p.m. Saturday at Liberty-Benton High School.

The Little Giants will be chasing the program's first regional tournament berth. A victory would

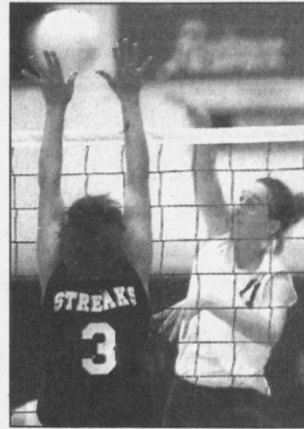
also break the school win record set by the 1996 team, which finished its season 22-2 and was the only other Ross squad to play in a district final.

Ross defeated Anthony Wayne in two preseason meetings, once at a Northwood summer tournament and again at a Toledo St. Ursula scrimmage.

But Gardner said the victories mean little because Anthony Wayne was missing key players in the summer and both teams were tinkering with their lineups during the scrimmage.

Anthony Wayne is tall and experienced. Five players stand 5 feet, 10 inches or taller, and five starters returned from last season's 23-2 club.

"We're usually taller than other teams at middle hitter, but they'll be one of the few teams that are taller than us at the other spots," Gardner said.



SEANNA STEINLE of Ross spikes past a Sandusky blocker during Tuesday's district semifinal at Tiffin Columbian.

The Little Giants square off against Anthony Wayne for a trip to regional at 2 p.m. Saturday at Liberty-Benton High School.

See ROSS, B3

News-Messenger file photo/Ben French

Anthony Wayne serves frustration to Ross in district

Little Giants end season at 22-3

By **TIMOTHY R. WOLFRUM**
Sports editor

FINDLAY — Fremont Ross picked the wrong day to tangle with Anthony Wayne.

The hot-and-cold Lady Generals turned their serves into heat-seeking missiles and blasted past Ross 15-10, 15-9 Saturday in the Division I district volleyball final at Liberty-Benton High School.

Anthony Wayne, ranked ninth in the final Associated Press state poll, recorded a remarkable 17 aces, befuddling the Little Giants' receivers on the way to the school's first regional tournament berth.

"We either have really good serving, where we have a lot of aces, or we can miss up to 18 serves a game. It's either on or it's off. Today, thank God, it was on," Anthony Wayne coach Megan Morr said.



COBB



C. BARR

"Serving's been a huge part of our game all year. We have several players who serve extremely well. Without that, I don't think we would have had the near the season that we've had."

Sophomore Mindi Meier and senior Kara McCourt led the barrage with seven and six aces, respectively. The Lady Generals laced 10 aces in the first game alone. Of the first nine Anthony Wayne points, seven came from diving, twisting serves that Ross failed to corral.

The serve discrepancy — Ross managed five aces — nullified the Little Giants' heralded hitting game.

See GIANTS, B3

Giants finish season with 22 victories

Continued From B1

"Today, they were definitely on," Ross, coach Karrie Gardner said. "Obviously, we haven't had anybody serve at us like that. Teams will usually have one or two good servers, but they had one every rotation.

"I felt like that was really the only thing they did to us. If we would have just passed the serve, the game was a whole different story."

Anthony Wayne (23-2) advances to the Willard Regional and will meet Rocky River Magnificat at 8 p.m. Wednesday.

Ross finished 22-3 and fell one victory short of a pair of school bests. The Little Giants have never been to a regional, and the 1996 team, the only other squad to reach a district final, set the program's victory record by finishing 22-2.

But Ross met its preseason goals of winning its first Great Lakes League championship since 1997 and advancing out of the sectional tournament.

"It would have been nice to get the wins record and to be the first team to go to the regional. But, you know, we still had a great season," Gardner said. "I told the kids, 'What we did this season, nobody but we thought we were going to do it.' ... It hurts now, but they have nothing to hang their heads about."

Middle hitter Lindsay Cobb paced the Little Giants with eight kills and a block in her final varsity match. Cobb was one of four tal-

ented seniors — Jessica Fick, Erin Barr and Sara Steinle were the others — who led the Ross resurgence this season.

"The seniors are unbelievable," Gardner said. "They live and breathe volleyball. They play all year round. It showed by the time they were seniors. We had a great team, and they carried us all season. They're great kids, great students, fun to be around. Even if I wasn't their volleyball coach, I'd want to know them, anyway."

Ross started well in each game Saturday, leading 3-2 in the opener and 3-1 in the second game. But the Lady Generals responded decisively to each deficit.

In the first game, McCourt fired three consecutive aces, then Meier followed with three aces during a four-point run. All of a sudden, the 3-2 deficit became a 9-3 lead.

Ross got back to within 10-6, but Chrissy Gothke served up an ace, followed by two more from McCourt. Anthony Wayne put the game away with a kill from Meier and another from McCourt.

Meier served up six points, including three aces, to bring the Lady Generals back from the second game. Gothke had a kill and block, and leading hitter Jessica Hohl had a block during the run.

The Anthony Wayne lead grew to 11-3 and 14-5 before Ross mounted a last-ditch charge. Sophomore setter Ceara Barr launched four consecutive aces of her own to get the Little Giants back within 14-9.

But after a Lady General timeout, Barr served long, and Anthony Wayne closed out the match.

Morr said her team made its job a lot easier with the serving prowess.

"We knew they were extremely good defensively and had a couple of good hitters in the front row," she said. "We were worried about what we were going to have to do

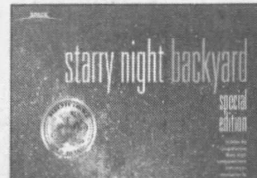
offensively to put holes in their defense. I think it worked pretty well."

Hohl led Anthony Wayne with five kills and two blocks. Gothke contributed 10 assists.

Ceara Barr had nine assists and six service points for the Little Giants. Fick added four kills and five assists. Sophomore Seanna Steinle had three kills and two blocks.

You Know It's Your Kids Know

Give Your Family a Gold Award Software



starry night beginner™

If you own a telescope, Starry Night is an ideal way to enrich your family's stargazing experience. If you don't own a telescope, explore the wonders of the night