

Ross, Findlay meet again

By BOB MARKER
Staff writer

Many basketball coaches shudder at the thought of playing a team three times in one season. It can be treacherous, especially if your team has won the first two.

Fremont Ross girls coach Sue Wolf and the Little Giants are in that spot. Although concerned, Wolf does not fear playing Findlay for the third time tonight at Hopewell-Loudon High School in Bascom.

The Division I District Tournament semifinal game begins at 6:30 p.m.

In the most recent meeting with the Trojans Feb. 20, Ross earned a 50-47 win in the Purple Pit. On Dec. 12, the Little Giants prevailed 49-40 at Findlay.

Wolf has a theory that she feels will dispel the "third-game jinx."

The road to Bascom

Here's how to get to Hopewell-Loudon High School, where Fremont Ross will meet Findlay in a Division I high school girls district tournament game tonight:

Take Ohio 12 west from Fremont to Ohio 635 and turn south. The high school is located on 635, approximately a quarter-mile past the center of Bascom.

"I think we have worked hard in practice and the kids are ready," she said. "We have been in this situation where someone has beaten us twice and, usually, the team that won twice is under pressure, but I think we are responding to that pressure."

How hard is Wolf's team working?

"I told them to think this is the beginning of the season and they

are trying to make the team and they have been working that hard," Wolf said.

Wolf said she expects Findlay to change little, just as she plans.

"You don't change in the middle of the road," she echoed an old cliché.

Wolf is concerned with Amy Jauret, a 5-foot-9 junior who scored 19 of her 21 points in the second half of the last game with the Little Giants.

"She will get her points," Wolf said, "but we have to hold the others down. We hope to keep a lot of pressure on Jauret and make her work hard."

Ross, 16-5, has won three straight including a 65-57 overtime win over Mansfield Senior in the sectional championship game Saturday.

Wolf will start seniors Cortney Cominsky, who is rounding back

into shape after missing three late-season games because of a knee injury, Kasey Manette and Kim Crawford along with junior Natalie Robbins and freshman Dawn Zerman.

Tami Reinbolt has come off the Ross bench in the last two games to score 14 points against Findlay and 11 against Mansfield.

"She had been shooting well," Wolf said of the 5-6 junior, "and when she gets into the game, we want her to look for her shot and take it."

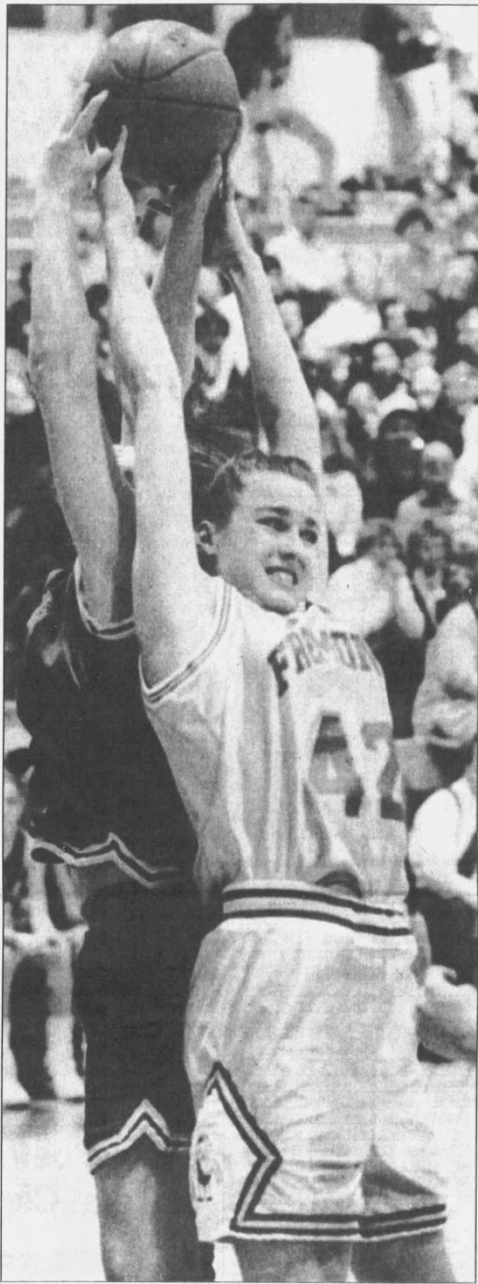
Reinbolt is one of several players, Wolf pointed out, who have been playing well coming off the bench.

"That is big plus," Wolf said, "and that makes everyone work harder in practice."

An ethic that she hopes will crush the "third-game jinx."

Tournament trail tough

Little Giants come up short as Findlay moves on 55-51



By BOB MARKER
Staff writer

BASCOM — Findlay withstood a frantic Ross rally in a 55-51 victory in the Division I girls district basketball semifinals Friday night at Hopewell-Loudon High School.

The Trojans, 16-7, avenged two regular season losses to the Little Giants, 16-6. Findlay will play Defiance at 7:30 p.m. this evening in the finals. Defiance beat Sandusky 54-30 in the other semifinal.

"It's hard to beat a team three times in one season," Findlay coach Bill Lobb agreed. "It's one of those things where when you beat a team twice... it's in the back of your mind 'Can we do it three times?'"

Ross couldn't, but the Little Giants did not go easily.

Findlay, after leading 26-23 at halftime, sank 9 of 12 third-quarter shots to open up a 45-35 advantage. With 2½ minutes remaining in the game, Findlay held a 52-42 lead before Ross mounted its charge.

Natalie Robbins hit a bucket and a free throw for Ross before Julie Niekamp made 1 of 2 foul shots for Findlay. Tami Reinbolt came back with bucket for Ross and a steal and basket by Christy Holland cut the Findlay

lead to 53-49 with a minute to play.

Robbins converted on a Trojan turnover and Ross was within two — 53-51 — with 35 seconds left, but Findlay's Amy Jauert stepped up, hit two free throws with 23 seconds left and Findlay was able to hang on.

"Ross plays so doggone hard — I guess we are talking about both teams here," Lobb said. "Sue does a good job with them but I thought if we tried to do something a little different at the beginning that they had not seen from us, it would hurt them."

Lobb used a "3-2" defense at the beginning, spiced it with a "triangle and two" and "1-3-1" defenses at various stages. The "two" man-to-man defenders in the triangle and two were first on Courtney Cominsky and Robbins and then on Cominsky and Reinbolt.

Cominsky had a season-low four points but six of her seven first-half misses, rimmed the bucket and rolled off.

"We've seen the triangle and two before," Wolf said. "Our offense works against it most of the time, but we missed a lot of shots we should have been making."

Jauert scored 20 points, seven

in the final quarter. Jauert scored 10 points in the first quarter but was held to three points in the middle two periods.

"Jauert's a player," Wolf said, "no question about that."

Niekamp, a 6-foot freshman, and 5-10 senior Becky Earlie picked up the scoring slack for the Trojans while the Ross defense silenced Jauert. Niekamp scored 13 and Earlie 12.

"Niekamp came in a really gave us a spark offensively," Lobb pointed out, "which we sorely needed."

Dawn Zerman and Reinbolt led Ross with 13 points apiece. Robbins added 12.

Ross made 16 of 48 shots and Findlay 23 of 41. Ross was 17-of-27 at the foul line and the Trojans 9-of-14. Findlay had 22 turnovers, Ross 15. Findlay held a 33-25 rebounding edge.

Wolf could smile after the loss, made a little easier by the effort of her team.

"It was a great effort," she said. "They never gave up. I can't fault the kids for the way they played."

"Our kids wanted the game bad; their kids wanted the game bad."

In this case, the third time was Findlay's charm.

St. Joe can't come back either as St. Peter's advances 51-42

By TIM HARMON
Staff writer

NORTH ROBINSON — There were several cracks in Mansfield St. Peter's game-long lead here Friday night.

The Fremont St. Joseph Central Catholic girls basketball team never slipped through them, though, and fell from the Division IV district tournament 51-42 at Colonel Crawford High School.

"We made so many runs at them," St. Joe coach Gary Geller said.

After the Spartans scored the first 11 points of the game, St. Joe pulled within 14-10. St. Peter's, which will play Buckeye Central for the district championship tonight, answered with 12 straight points.

St. Joe, 16-7, made it 28-17 before the Spartans closed the first half with an 8-2 run.

"We shot the ball exceptionally well," St. Peter's coach Jeff Strang said. "This was one of

our better games."

The Spartans made 12 of their 17 field goals in the first half, including five by Laura Uhde. "That surprised me," Geller said.

Uhde backed Darcy Foor's 15 points with 12, and Teresa Alt added 10 for the Spartans.

Kris Gonya led St. Joe with 10, and her only two field goals came in the third quarter when the Crimson Streaks sliced a 39-24 deficit to 39-29 at one point.

Late in the third quarter and early in the fourth, St. Peter's missed several shots and the Streaks — led by Patti Hossler and Amy Szymanowski who had 10 rebounds apiece — cleared the defensive rebound every time.

"We couldn't score at the other end," Geller said.

While shooting 34 percent (13 of 38), the Streaks committed 31 turnovers.

"I thought we would handle the press better," Geller said. "We made a lot of little mis-

takes. We either threw it right to them or we didn't step to the basketball. A lot of unintelligent turnovers, things that we hadn't done in awhile. We haven't had those turnovers in five ball-games."

St. Joe made its 41-31 when Emily Wilhelm opened the fourth quarter with a basket, but Uhde and Foor scored for St. Peter's and the Spartans lead was back to 14 points with five minutes remaining to be played.

According to Strang, in the 18 years of girls basketball in Ohio, either St. Peter's or Buckeye Central have advanced from this district. Buckeye Central, which defeated New Riegel 56-54 in the other semifinal, has eight district titles and the Spartans nine.

"Now that St. Joe and New Riegel are over here, it's getting tougher," Strang said.

St. Joe missed its chance to end the string.

"It's frustrating," Geller said. "We had the opportunities."

EMILI KREILICK (42) of Fremont Ross battles for a rebound Friday during the Little Giants' Division I district tournament loss to Findlay at Hopewell-Loudon High School.

News-Messenger/Jeremy Wadsworth