

2021 Division I Sectional Tournament

HIGH SCHOOL BASKETBALL

Baptista caps home career with four 3s; Ross takes crown

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Fremont Ross senior Brooklyn Baptista was trying to dribble from hand to hand between her legs.

Her father made her cry in the process of instructing her. Baptista was in the third grade and her father is Little Giants assistant coach Eddie Baptista.

"I got so frustrated," she said. "Just because you can't, don't stop. That was my first coaching moment. I stuck with it."

Baptista put a basketball in his daughter's hands from the time she could walk.

"He always pushes to my potential and past it," she said. "He knows what I'm capable of."

Baptista reached 1,000 points for her career this month. She drove and pulled up for a mid-range jumper in the first quarter against Toledo Notre Dame.

She knew she needed two points to reach the milestone entering the game. "I wasn't nervous," she said. "I let the game come to me. I didn't want to force

it and affect the game if I was pushing to get it."

Two players have scored 1,000 points for Ross.

"Being the second in Ross history means a lot," she said. "The TRAC is a tough league. To be up there with Dawn Zerman is an honor."

Little Giants coach Juan Vela watched Baptista work to improve.

"The amount of time she put into her shot," he said. "In the offseason. After practice. Shooting with her dad. She put in the time to get better and she did it for

four years. When you do that, good things happen.

"When you have a kid that's a threat on the court, it helps you win. When you have a kid who wants to work, it makes her a bigger threat. That's what Brooklyn's done."

Baptista has 175 3-pointers in her career, including 49 this season. Every 3 she made this season built on her record after she passed the program's career mark of 125 as a junior.

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"I didn't think of it that way," she said. "I knew I had the record. It gives younger girls something to work for to break records. We have people with [the] potential to break records."

Baptista concentrated on shooting as a freshman. Nothing more.

"I'd just stand in the corner and shoot," she said. "Little old me. Jazmine [Bulger] would drive and I waited to shoot."

She plays defense now.

"She was catch and shoot," Vela said. "She's evolved into a true wing, even a point guard at times. Getting in the lane and finishing or posting up. Her game evolved quite a bit. You can put her in the post. On the wing. At point guard."

"She enjoys playing defense now. As she matured, she improved playing defense. You win more games playing defense."

Sharing is also good.

"She's a passer first, especially in transition or off the dribble," Vela said. "She can find the post."

Ross won a sectional crown Baptista's freshman year as well. Alia Sims, Braelyn Horn and Breyari Nason cried.

"Everyone was," Baptista said.

"That's one of my best memories. Fremont hadn't won a sectional game in a long time. We were definitely the underdog. After that, we earned a lot of respect. Fremont does not see many sectional champs or cutting down nets."

"Beating Whitmer as a freshman and [Thursday] to cut nets means a lot to the program. I'm proud of the team. We put in the work to get where we are and it's just going to continue. When I graduate, they'll keep pushing."

Seventeen wins established a single-season best in 12 years at the helm for Vela.

Destiny Robinson, Carma Johnson



Ross' Brooklyn Baptista MATTHEW HORN

and Abby Cahill are freshman starters. Sophomore Mylah Williams is a starter and classmate Jannah Holmes has starting experience.

Jannah and Brooklyn did a lot of scoring," Vela said of Whitmer. "It was fun to see Abby play tough defense, go after rebounds and get on the floor. She was blue-collar. Carma and her did a great job on defense and did the dirty work."

"They allowed us to get into rhythm offensively, because we were getting stops."

Robinson is a smooth, if slick, ball-handler.

"Every time down the court, she puts

us in a situation to score," Vela said. "In high school basketball, that's one of the most important things a coach has to have. That's what she gives us."

Vela is excited about the youth that hasn't reached high school.

"Any time you win in the tournament, it's a good day," he said. "There's more than that. We have junior high kids winning and loving ball. We have good things going. It shows the younger kids, if you do things right, there are fun things ahead."

It was melancholy, therefore, for Baptista to play her final home game Thursday.

"It's crazy it's my last game in the Pit," she said. "I'm going to miss the atmosphere — I miss that already with COVID — when it's packed, it's packed. Freshman year to now, the improvements in my game, all that work in this gym."

"Playing with my sister [Olivia] in this gym. I would go back in time just to play with her again. I have a lot of memories in this gym."

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