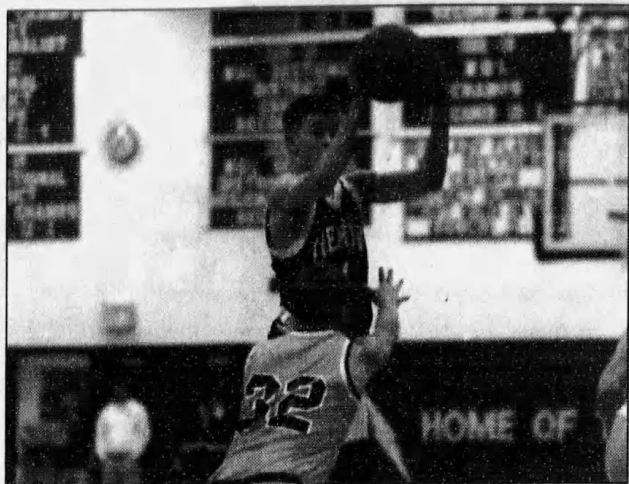


Division I District Tournament



News-Messenger/Andrew Morrison

SAM ROOT of Ross takes a shot in the Little Giants' sectional final victory over Tiffin Columbian last Friday. Ross plays in the district semifinals Thursday night.

Ross faces big floor, opponent

Continued from B1

Thursday's Div. I semifinal between Fremont Ross and Findlay at Bowling Green State University (8:30 p.m.) will be a "chess match," Ross coach Mark Gedeon said, because the teams have played each other twice this season.

The pawn that worries Gedeon most is 6-foot-6 post player Mark Wilson.

"Wilson was very effective in the last meeting ... We have to find a way to limit his easy touches," Gedeon said, referring to Ross's 62-47 win at Findlay on Feb. 7. Wilson scored 14 as the Trojans played Ross within two points before surrendering to the Little Giants' defensive pressure.

Ross also defeated Findlay, 63-50, on Dec. 20 at the Purple Pit.

"It's an advantage to both teams because both are very familiar with each other," Gedeon said. "It's a game of chess. You make some adjustments, and see who makes a better move."

This time the team will be playing on Anderson Arena's 94-foot floor, a 10-foot increase from Ross's home gym.

The increased length can work in both teams' favor, Gedeon said. On one hand, Ross can gamble more on defense, but the Trojans can spread the floor more once they cross half court. Ross and Findlay play the 8:30 p.m. game.

Awards

Northwest All-District Boys

COLUMBUS (AP) — The 1996-97 Associated Press Northwest All-District high school boys basketball team as selected by a media panel from the district, with high school, height, grade and scoring average):

DIVISION I

FIRST TEAM: Robierre Cullars, Tol. St. Francis, 6-foot-5, Senior, 23.0 points per game; Floyd Campbell, Tol. Whitmer, 6-4, Jr., 22.0; Desmond Harrison, Tol. Start, 6-5, Sr., 16.7; Kyle Hunt, Tol. Cent. Cath., 6-6, Sr., 17.1; Justin Larrick, Mansfield Madison, 6-4, Jr., 18.9.

SECOND TEAM: Juston Fisher, Tol. Bowsher, 5-10, Sr., 21.5; Jeremy King, Tol. Scott, 6-6, Jr., 15.6; Rick Fox, Tol. St. Francis, 6-7, Sr., 17.9; **Derrick Hershey, Fremont Ross, 6-3, Sr., 18.1;** Dubrey Black, Mansfield Senior, 6-3, Sr., 18.0.

THIRD TEAM: Matt Doyle, Holland Springfield, 6-2, Sr., 17.5; Dante Mays, Tol. Libbey, 5-6, Jr., 11.1; Ryan Skiver, Perrysburg, 5-10, Sr., 13.4; Chris Hill, Tiffin Columbian, 6-3, Sr., 13.2; Bobby Crabb, Sandusky, 6-1, Sr., 15.0.

Player of the year: Robierre Cullars, Tol. St. Francis.

Coaches of the year: **Mark Gedeon,** Fremont Ross; Gil Guerrero, Tol. Start.

AREA SPECIAL MENTION

Sam Root, Fremont Ross

Englund picked among Northwest's best

By BRIAN SPIESS
Sports editor

Bellevue's Erika Englund spent her summer in weight rooms and on basketball courts, trying to improve her game. Today she was rewarded for her effort.

Englund, a 5-foot-11 senior forward, was named to the Associated Press All-Northwest Ohio Division II first team, which was released today.

Twenty-six boys and girls players from The News-Messenger coverage area were named to the team, but Englund was the only first-team selection. Fremont Ross and Clyde had the most

Coach Gedeon is tops

Fremont Ross coach Mark Gedeon was named Division I co-coach of the year today after guiding the Little Giants to their first sectional title since 1987. His story, B3.

players selected, four each, by a panel of media representatives.

"Erika's biggest strength is her dedication to make herself better," Bellevue assistant coach Dave Meadows said. "She went from 8 points per game to 18 largely due the work she put into it."

In addition to lifting weights to become stronger, Englund

played open gym with boys players in the summer.

Englund averaged 18.7 ppg in the regular season and led the Redmen to the district finals, where they lost to Lexington. She had 10 games in which she reached double figures in both scoring and rebounding, including a 29-point, 21-rebound performance against Clyde on Jan. 14.

Second-team picks from area schools include Derrick Hershey of Fremont Ross, David Falknor of Bellevue, Brent Weyant of Bettsville and Jenny Magers of Old Fort.

Michele Smith of Fremont Ross and Erin Howe of Lakota

Best of the best

Bellevue's Erika Englund was the area's only girls or boys basketball player to make first team All-Northwest Ohio. The following players joined Englund as first-, second- or third-team players. The entire list appears on page B2.

Division I Boys

Derrick Hershey, Fremont Ross (2nd team)

Division I Girls

Michele Smith, Ross (3rd team)

Division II Boys

David Falknor, Bellevue

(2nd team)

Division II Girls

Erika Englund, Bellevue

(1st team)

Division III Girls

Erin Howe, Lakota (3rd team)

Division IV Boys

Brent Weyant, Bettsville

(2nd team)

Division IV Girls

Jenny Magers, Old Fort

(2nd team)

were each named to third teams in their respective divisions. There are four division for boys

and girls teams.

Seventeen area players received special mention.

Ross sailing along under Gedeon

Second-year coach picked as best in Northwest Ohio

By MICHAEL BOSI
Staff writer

When Mark Gedeon took the Fremont Ross boys basketball varsity coaching job in 1995, he didn't profess he was going to save the world, save the whales or even save the school's athletic directorship.

His task was to salvage a sinking ship.

Captain Gedeon had to skipper a vessel whose win tallies in the previous three years read: six ... five ... four.

Like the countdown to oblivion.

If the same futility had plagued the football team, Fremont wouldn't be, as the signs proclaim, such "a great place to live."

"They would storm the Bastille," joked Ross athletic director Art Bucci, a Fremont resident of 23 years. "This has been football haven. Fremont's been noted for football and noteworthy; wise they haven't had very many losing seasons."

But basketball? Whatever. Not many cared. Not many noticed. And not many cared to notice.

Maybe you haven't noticed, but Gedeon prevented this team from sinking out of high school respectability.

His team has earned respect: It's in tonight's Northwest Division I district semifinals.

And now Gedeon, himself, has earned some of that respect: He was named Associated Press Northwest Division I co-coach of the Year today.

The man with the plan

In his first year at the helm, Gedeon didn't exactly turn the Little Giants into the amazing New York Mets of 1969, but he taught them that paddling with both oars going in the same direction can yield amazing results.

Like wins.

Ross won nine games last season. Not bad.

Let it be known that Fremont Ross's berth in tonight's district semifinals was not by chance, there was a master plan.

It started at the tender age of 18 — that's when Gedeon got his first coaching job, as a freshman coach in his native town of Bowling Green. A year as a freshman coach at BG and five more as Ross's junior varsity coach primed Gedeon for the top job.

"In my two years as head coach, last year my main goal was to make basketball fun, focus in on the fundamentals and instill in my players a desire to work and a desire to compete," Gedeon said after beating Tiffin Columbian in last Friday's sectional final at Willard High School.

"This year," Gedeon continued, "we wanted to take it to the next level, to say, 'Let's go through and accomplish some things on the floor as well.' We set the goals for wins, finished third in the league, got the sectional championship, and now we're starting to be a respected little bit, not only in our league but in the surrounding areas as well."

Since the dawn of sport, there have been some mighty fine coaches: football's Vince Lombardi, hockey's Scotty Bowman, basketball's Casey Stengel and basketball's Red Auerbach.

This isn't the start of the crusade to ship Gedeon to the National Basketball Hall of Fame here, but he has at least one thing in common with the aforementioned greats: communication and camaraderie.

"He coaches at our level and it doesn't scare anybody," said senior Rob Liggins. "Other coaches haven't been with us for a while, but he's been with us since JV years and he knows how we work."

In five years as junior varsity coach, mostly under Frank Giofre, Gedeon laid the groundwork to this exciting season. As a varsity coach, Gedeon has made sure basketball has become a year-round passion, getting his troops to perform at high levels during summer tournaments long before the regular season's first tipoff.

"Coach Gedeon's done a wonderful job," said senior Derrick Hershey. "He turned the program around from 4-16 to 9-12 and now our record's 14-7. He's just done a wonderful job."

The father/husband/coach/friend

So what's the secret? He's a 28-year-old, married-with-children man in a job that no coach has held for more than six years in the post-World War II era. Why in the world would he want to associate so much with a bunch of hormone-driven teen-agers?

"We have a mutual respect for each other," Gedeon said. "I respect the players and respect their needs as well. And they see that and they see the system does work, so it's easy for them to buy in and commit themselves to that."

"There's no question I love



MARK GEDEON during a season-opening win against Bowling Green.

coaching this group — I don't think that's a secret either — and when you've got everybody working together — coaches and players — good things happen." Using all 10 players on his roster seems to be Gedeon's coaching forte.

"What he's done is taken the mixture of seniors, sophomores,

juniors and even a freshman this year and I think he gave every kid an opportunity to contribute to the team," pointed out rival coach Bruce Brown of Toledo Whitmer. "He gave minutes to a lot of different guys and he did a masterful job of utilizing the two or three or four skills of each kid and giving them an opportunity

to contribute."

Gedeon's teams have not only contributed, they've produced. At the season's outset, the coach proclaimed, "We think we can be an exciting team by putting a lot of points on the board."

They darn near short-circuited most scoreboards.

The Little Giants made Gedeon a man of his word by scoring an unprecedented 1,461 points in 20 regular-season games.

They could pass. They could dribble. They could shoot. They could chew gum and run at the same time. And they could score.

They were overcoming historic challenges for Ross basketball.

"Nobody has ever given basketball a real chance," Bucci said.

Until last Friday night, some of the most exciting moments in Ross's season happened to be losses (against then No. 1-ranked St. Francis and in the Great Lakes League showdown against Toledo Whitmer).

But those thrillers will pale in comparison to any victories that come after tonight.

Thou shalt not have pity

What's yet to come is unknown waters. This is a do-or-die year for the Little Giants' eight seniors.

But you can bet Gedeon will find a way to restructure his team in a way that will make it still appear the same.

"The future of this team is going to be really great," said sophomore Joell Heidelberg. "We've got really good talent and some good young players."

Judging by the enthusiasm of the crowd at Willard Friday, Gedeon knows a thing or two about successful marketing. His players have bought his system and Fremont fans have bought

Fremont Ross coaching history

Records of Fremont head coaches since 1954, the last year Ross won a league championship:

COACH (TENURE) ...	RECORD
Al Ziemke (1954-58)	25-48
Cot Marquette (58-61)	13-45
Richard Norman (61-67)	60-67
Don Purvis (68-70)	7-32
Alex Clark (69-72)	15-44
Ken Miller (72-77)	33-64
Norm Paeth (77-80)	24-58
John Sawyer (81-86)	47-61
Pat McGhee (86-90)	43-44
Frank Goffe (90-94)	34-52
Bruce Brown (94-95)	4-17
Mark Gedeon (95-)	23-19

* — Ziemke's record prior to 1954 not available

his product, thus taking the pity out of Ross's Purple Pit. (Gedeon usually spends a good chunk of time praising the fan support after most games, win or lose.)

"We have people saying, 'Fremont is taking a basketball school,'" Gedeon said. "I've said all along I want Fremont to be a football school as well, and people said, 'You can't win in a town that's a football school.'"

"I think it can be both. With the kids that we have — the quality of the kids we have — we can do some quality things on the basketball floor, too, and this season we're proving that."

When the basketball gods are smiling on the Fremont Ross basketball team, the bean counters are smiling at the school, too. Bucci estimates the team averaged 1,100 fans in the 1,300-seat Purple Pit this season.

"Before, basketball wasn't interesting to the student body," he said. "When we had basketball games going on and kids would be playing euchre in the stands or reading newspapers. That's how things have changed. The program has done a 360-degree turn and it's just tremendous because of the commitment from our coaching staff and the kids, too."

Numbers say Fremont is a football town

Records comparisons of the Fremont Ross football and basketball teams in the last 10 years:

	FOOTBALL			BASKETBALL		
YEAR	W-L	PCT.		W-L	PCT.	
1997	7-3	.700		14-7	.667	
1996	7-3	.700		9-12	.429	
1995	7-3	.700		4-17	.190	
1994	8-3	.727		6-16	.273	
1993	9-1	.900		7-15	.318	
1992	6-4	.600		11-10	.524	
1991	5-5	.500		10-11	.476	
1990	8-3	.727		13-9	.591	
1989	8-3	.727		11-10	.524	
1988	5-5	.500		8-13	.381	
1987	4-6	.400		11-12	.478	
TOTAL	67-36	.650		104-132	.441	

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A.K. Basu, M.D.
Clinical Assistant Professor
Division of Cardiology - Medical College of Ohio Hospitals

SLAM: Ross beats Findlay

Little Giants advance to district final

By BRIAN SPIESS
Sports editor

BOWLING GREEN — Fremont Ross guard Sam Root plays basketball a lot like the slogan in those BASF commercials.

He doesn't make the dunk, he makes the play that makes the dunk better. And possible.

Root, a 6-foot senior, stole a pass during the first quarter

Thursday
Ross60
Findlay40

Saturday
Fremont Ross
vs. Mansfield
Senior at
Bowling Green
State University
in Division I
district final
6 p.m.

Thursday
against Findlay, then lofted a perfect outlet toss to Joell Heidelberg, who finished the play with a climbing, two-handed dunk.

The play ignited the crowd and

came as part of a decisive 21-2 run during a 60-40 win in the Division I district semifinal at Anderson Arena.

Ross (15-7) now needs to beat Mansfield Senior at 6 p.m. Saturday for its first district championship since 1965.

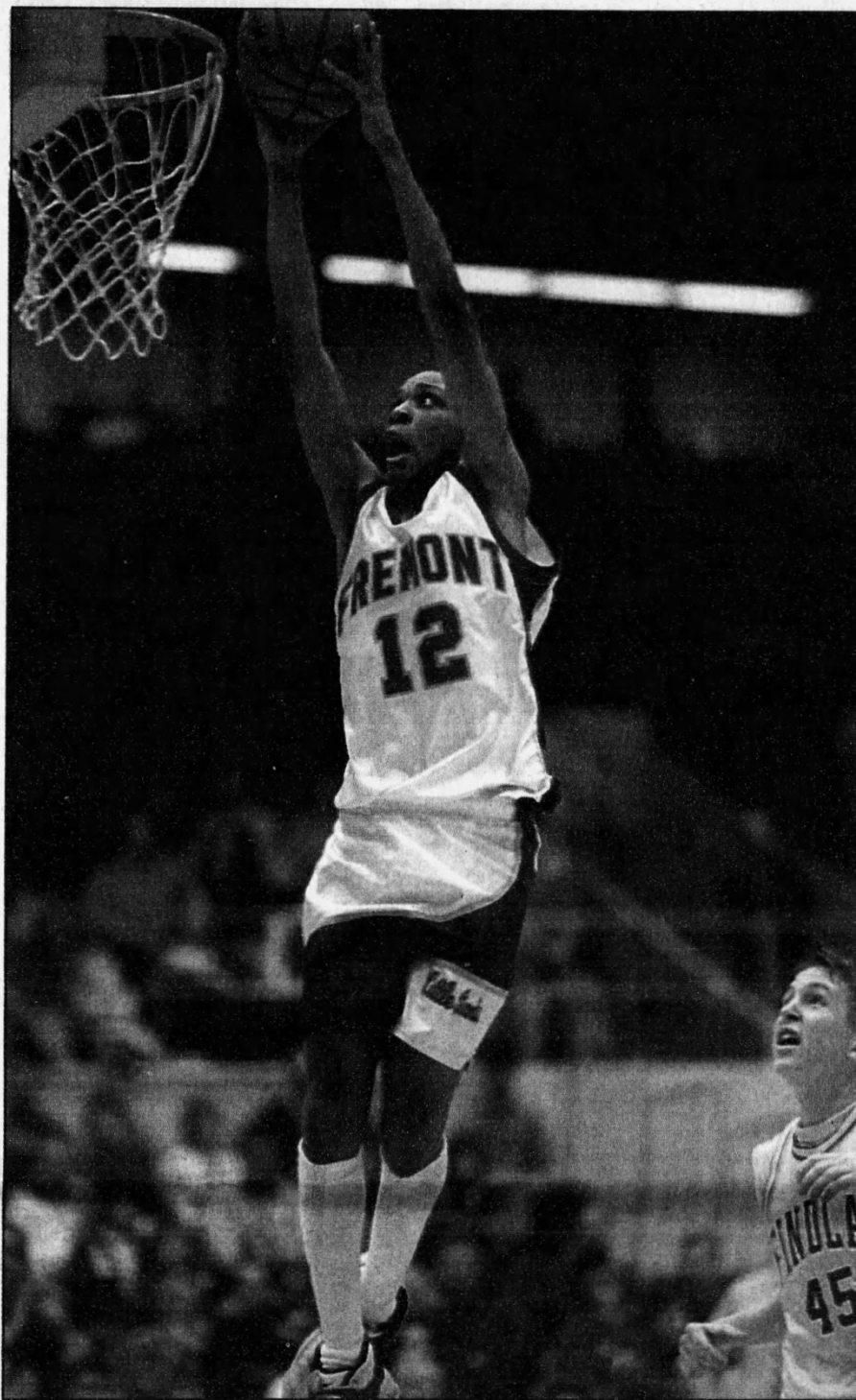
Findlay finishes at 10-12.

"Take Sam Root out of there, and a lot of those opportunities don't happen," Findlay coach Jerry Snodgrass said after watching the Little Giants defeat his Trojans for the third time this season. "I still say that Sam Root makes all of those players better."

Both teams appeared tentative for the first minute on the 94-foot home floor of the Bowling Green State University Falcons, before Root broke the ice with a 3-pointer.

Findlay took its first and only lead of the game with 6:28 left in the first quarter when Nick Patterson slipped a pass by the Ross defense to center Mark Wilson, who layed it in for a 4-3 advantage.

But 18 seconds later it was Ross senior Ed Peters doing the



See LITTLE GIANTS, B2

JOELL HEIDELBURG of Fremont Ross dunks in two of his team-high 12 points Thursday against Findlay.

News-Messenger/Steven Garner

Little Giants make finals

Continued from B1

scoring on a turnaround from four feet away. It would be the start of 16 straight points for the Little Giants.

The teams played virtually even after that.

"In the two times we played this year, we played with them for six of the eight quarters," Snodgrass said. "We were hell-bent that (a Ross-dominated quarter) was not going to happen. The bad one tonight was the first one. We couldn't play catch up against them."

One possession after Peters' basket, Root was fouled and made one of two free throws. Following Kurt Snyder's 3-point shot with 4:19 left in the opening quarter, Root flew through the lane and tipped in a Derrick Hershey miss to give his team an 11-4 edge.

"The last thing I remember before that run was that Sam Root gets an offensive rebound tap in," Gedeon said. "That's a play that starts us."

Hershey gave Ross its next two points by converting foul shots after being decked on a putback attempt.

Then Heidelberg added the oomph.

The sophomore, who had checked in off the bench along with freshman Reggie Jones, sank a 15-foot jump shot from the left wing.

Then Root got the game's biggest steal.

"Anticipation, I guess," Root said of his knack to grab steals. "Knowing what they're going to do."

From previous meetings with the Trojans, Root knew the player who

caught the ball in the center of the floor was going to make a pass to the sideline. He stepped in and grabbed the ball, then threw the pass so that only Heidelberg could catch up, elevate and dunk for a 17-4 lead.

Heidelberg settled for a reverse lay in on his next fast break basket, which again came from a Root steal.

"Sam Root's so tough because of his rotation," Gedeon said. "It's almost like watching a dancer ... he moves with such rhythm."

Root finished with eight points and four steals, while Heidelberg led the Little Giants with 12 points and four steals.

Ten of the 12 Little Giants who played scored.

"We're still getting contributions from every player," said Gedeon, who said 10 of his players average at least 11 minutes of playing time per game.

Most of Findlay's offense went through 6-foot-6 center Mark Wilson, who finished with five field goals and 12 points. Junior Benji Ballmer hit two 3-pointers in the closing minutes to finish with a game-high 13 points.

LITTLE GIANTS NOTES: Ross made seven 3-point shots Thursday, including two each from Snyder and John Overberg. ... Jones led the Little Giants with seven rebounds. ... Ross's 1963-64 and 1964-65 teams under coach Richard Norman each won four tournament games. Ross has a bye and two wins so far this year. ... Mansfield Senior beat Wapakoneta 75-55 in the 6:30 p.m. game Thursday.

Basketball resumes tonight

News-Messenger reports

Fremont Ross and Bellevue each play for district boys basketball championships tonight, while the Margaretta girls play for a regional title earlier in the day.

Ross (15-7) faces Mansfield Senior at 6 p.m. in a Division I matchup at Bowling Green State University. The Little Giants have not won a district title since 1965.

"We just have to take care of our game," said Ross coach Mark Gedeon.

The Tygers (15-8) feature Associated Press All-Northwest Ohio first-teamer Dubrey Black, a 6-foot-3 senior guard who averaged 18 points per game in the regular season.



HERSHEY

Mansfield is also a strong rebounding team, Gedeon said.

Ross's Derrick Hershey was a second-team selection on the Northwest Ohio listing.

The game will be broadcast on WFRO AM and FM.

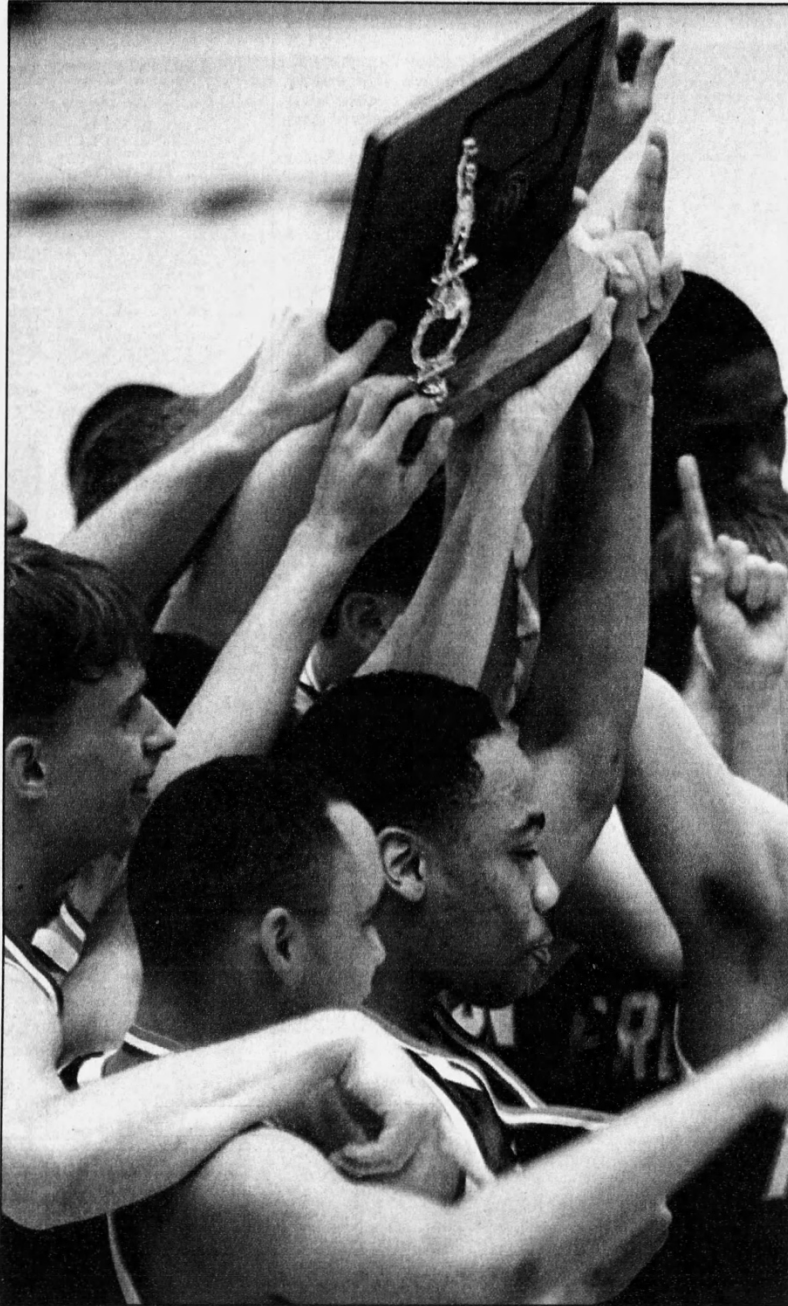
Bellevue will try to avenge a 66-50 loss to Lexington when it plays the Minutemen at 7:30 p.m. in a Division II district final at Ashland University.

"I'd say the key is going to be we have to do a good job defensively," Bellevue coach Lyle Falknor said, noting that Chad Cramer and B.J. Brown have been his key defenders this season.

Lexington's John Sanderson was the Division II Player of the Year for Northwest Ohio.

Margaretta plays Wauseon in Division III regional final at 1:30 p.m. at Bucyrus, with the winner advancing to next week's state semifinals.

Little Giants are district champions



FREMONT ROSS players celebrate the team's district championship Saturday at Bowling Green State University.

Heidelberg hits key 3 in overtime

By BRIAN SPIESS
Sports editor

BOWLING GREEN — Mansfield Senior's Marquis Sykes threatened to tear the hearts out of Fremont Ross players and their fans Saturday when he hit a last-second 3-point shot to force overtime.

The Little Giants had a similar reply.

Joell Heidelberg, who like Sykes is a 5-foot-9 sophomore, nailed a 3-point shot with 1:55 left in overtime to give Ross the lead for good in a 73-68 Division I district championship game at Anderson Arena.

"That was a big shot for a sophomore to hit. He stepped up big time," said Ross senior Derrick Hershey, who led the Little Giants with 22 points.

"That was the one that put us over the hump," Ross coach Mark Gedeon said of Heidelberg's shot. "You can't call him a sophomore either. That's a veteran play."

Ross (16-7) will play the state's No. 2 team, Lakewood St. Edward (22-1), in the regional semifinals at 6:30 p.m. Wednesday at Savage Hall.

It wasn't just a sharp shot from Heidelberg that got Ross its ticket to Toledo. The Little Giants' defense limited Mansfield's leading scorer, Dubrey Black, to nine points. And the offense was able to handle the Tygers' pressure to earn the win.

"They held their composure, they were patient," Mansfield coach Gregg Collins said.



HEIDELBURG

Saturday

Ross (OT) ...73
Mansfield ...68

Wednesday

Fremont Ross
vs. Lakewood St. Edward in
Division I regional
semifinal at
Savage Hall
6:30 p.m.

See **ROSS OUTDUELS**, B2

News-Messenger/Steven Garner

Ross outduels Mansfield in OT

Continued from B1

"Seldom did we get real comfortable at the offensive end, which is a credit to their defense," Collins said.

Ross led by as many as six points in the first quarter, then built 5-point leads at five different times during the game en route to ending Mansfield's season at 15-9.

Ross appeared on its way to Savage Hall with a conventional, 32-minute win when Hershey hit two free throws with 48 seconds left in regulation to give Ross a 57-52 lead. But Mansfield's Rick Upchurch hit a jump shot and the Tygers called a timeout with :39.2 left as Ross clung to a 57-54 advantage.

When Ross was whistled for a 5-second call with 29 seconds left, the Tygers had an opportunity to tie. Sykes 3-point attempt with 16 seconds left rimmed out, but Mansfield's Antwyan Reynolds was fouled while going for the offensive rebound. He made both free throws with 13.7 seconds left to close the gap to one point.

Ross's Sam Root was fouled after catching the inbounds pass and, after a Mansfield timeout, hit two free throws to push the lead back to three points at 59-56.

Then Sykes hit the shot of the game.

Mansfield's point guard dribbled down floor and pulled up behind the 3-point line with several Ross defenders nearby. He hung in the air long enough to double-clutch and nail the shot with :0.4 left to tie the game.

"That was a great individual play ... we were manning him all the way down the floor," Gedeon said.

The Ross fans who made the 29-mile trip to Anderson Arena were visibly disappointed. But inside the huddle, Gedeon was preaching a different message.

"I told them, 'Yeah, that was a great individual play. But hey, now we get to play four more minutes of basketball on this floor against this type of competition.'"

And the Giants had an edge. Black, an all-Northwest Ohio first-team selection, had picked up his fifth and final foul when he reached in against Hershey to stop the clock with 48 seconds remaining.

Mansfield started the overtime scoring when Demario Butler made two free throws for a 61-59 lead.

On the ensuing possession, Root hit

a shot with his foot on the 3-point line to tie the game. Then Sykes, who would finish with a game-high 26 points, made a jump shot to put the Tygers back on top, 63-61.

Then Heidelberg hit the shot of the overtime.

Dribbling on the right side of the floor with room between he and his defender, Heidelberg threw in his first 3-pointer of the game to put Ross ahead 64-63. The Little Giants would not trail again.

"He was giving me room. He probably was concentrating on me driving," Heidelberg said of his defender, correctly guessing the Tygers strategy.

"We wanted to make sure the sophomore didn't drive," Collins said. "That was absolutely a big 3 for a young kid to hit like that."

Hershey took a charge from Butler to give the ball back to Ross, which got a jump shot from Hershey sandwiched between two Heidelberg free throws for a 68-65 lead.

When Heidelberg missed his second attempt with 42.2 seconds to play in the overtime, Ed Peters got enough of the ball to force a jump ball. The possession arrow sided with the Giants.

Ross threw the inbounds pass to Peters, who missed the layup. But Root, who at 6-0 had a key tip in during a run against Findlay in Thursday's semifinal, tapped it in for a 70-65 lead.

DeShawn Luttrell raced down floor and hit a 3-pointer for Mansfield, which immediately called timeout at the :25.4 mark. Root was fouled on the inbounds, and made one of two free throws for his 15th point of the game to give Ross a 71-68 lead.

Sykes went for the tie again, but this time his 3-pointer was off the mark, and Hershey grabbed the defensive rebound. He was fouled with 5 seconds left and made both to give the Little Giants the final margin of victory, 73-68.

LITTLE GIANTS NOTES: Ross scored at least one point on each possession in overtime ... Kevin Mosser, Root and Hershey combined to shoot 11-of-12 from the free throw line in the fourth quarter as Ross did not make a field goal ... Ross coach Mark Gedeon was in familiar surroundings Saturday, having grown up with his father David Gedeon teaching at the university. David Gedeon will retire this year after 33 years at BGSU.

Ross didn't 'dream' of a regional berth

By BRIAN SPIESS
Sports editor

BOWLING GREEN — There were no laughs, no sneers and certainly no boos from Fremont Ross fans as they watched the boys basketball team win its first district title in 67 years Saturday.

Purple-clad fans cheered, wore bandanas and prayed for Ross in its 73-68 win against Mansfield Senior.

But finding fans wasn't always that easy.

"For the seniors, they played JV ball for me when this program was really down," said Ross coach Mark Gedeon, in his second year as varsity coach after a junior varsity coaching stint. "People were making fun of them at school for playing basketball."

The mediocrity runs deeper than that however. Since the 1954 team won the school's last league championship, Ross has won just 36 percent of its games.

The team won four tournament games in 1964 and in 1965, but with more teams playing in just two divisions, Ross did not win enough to claim a district title. In 1930 Ross made it out of districts and straight into the state final four.

This year's 16 wins is the second-most in school history and the berth in the regional tournament is more than

a dream.

"For me as a basketball coach, you might not even dream of making it," he said. "You want to be successful, but only 16 teams get to regionals — and we're one of them."

And when Ross travels to Toledo's Savage Hall for Wednesday's regional semifinal, a crowd surely will follow.

"This is the start of basketball history at Fremont Ross," said Marcie Reinbolt, one of several girls basketball players who supported the boys team.

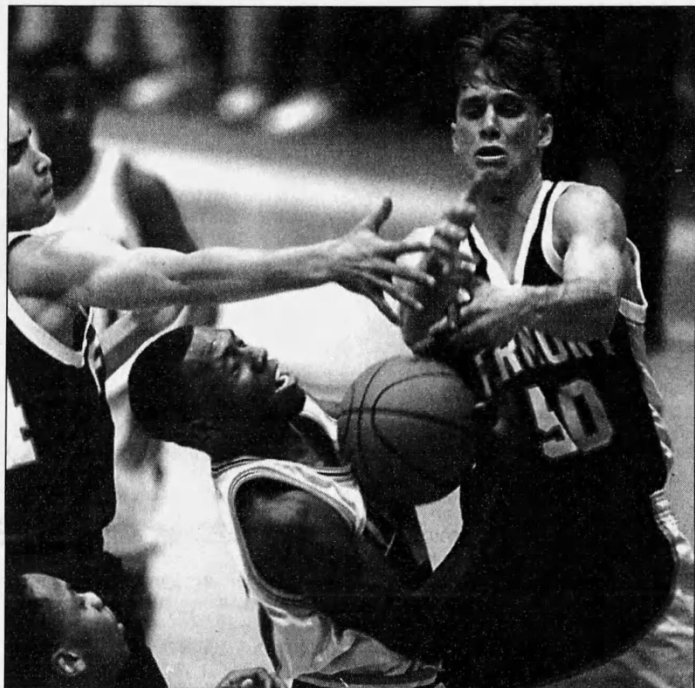
"We were thinking nothing but a win," Michele Smith said. "We prayed for them."

Said Art Bucci, the school's athletic director: "This is probably one of the greatest moments in Fremont Ross athletics in 30 years."

The win was particularly sweet for the eight seniors, who could barely imagine this kind of success when they started in the high school program.

"Unbelievable," Derrick Hershey said. "I always dreamed of coming to BG, but I never thought we would win the district championship."

"This is probably the best feeling I've had in any sport since I've been here," said Harry Liggins, who also quarterbacked the Little Giants for part of a 7-3 season.



News-Messenger/Steven Garner
DERRICK HERSHEY of Ross battles Mansfield's DeShawn Luttrell for a rebound Saturday.

