

2000 State...

Scranton fulfills prophecy

Ross senior makes first state tournament appearance

By MICHAEL PIDANICK
Staff writer

In 1997, Fremont Ross assistant coach Alex Ripple made a promise to Pete Scranton.

"When I was a freshman," Scranton said, "he told me, 'You're going to make it to state.' I didn't believe him; I didn't believe I'd make it. He said, 'You're going to make it next year,' and I almost did."

Four years later, Ripple has been proven correct. After coming up short in his first three district tournament appearances, Scranton finally secured a trip to Columbus when he beat Toledo St. John's player Brian Donaldson 6-2, 6-2 in a district semifinal Saturday morning at Bowling Green State University.

"It was a strange feeling," Scranton said. "I didn't feel as excited as I thought I would. Obviously, I had a good draw. It's nice to have that good draw as a senior when it's your last chance to finally go. If anything I feel relieved that I made it."

"I think I would have been more disappointed that I didn't go than I am excited that I did go."

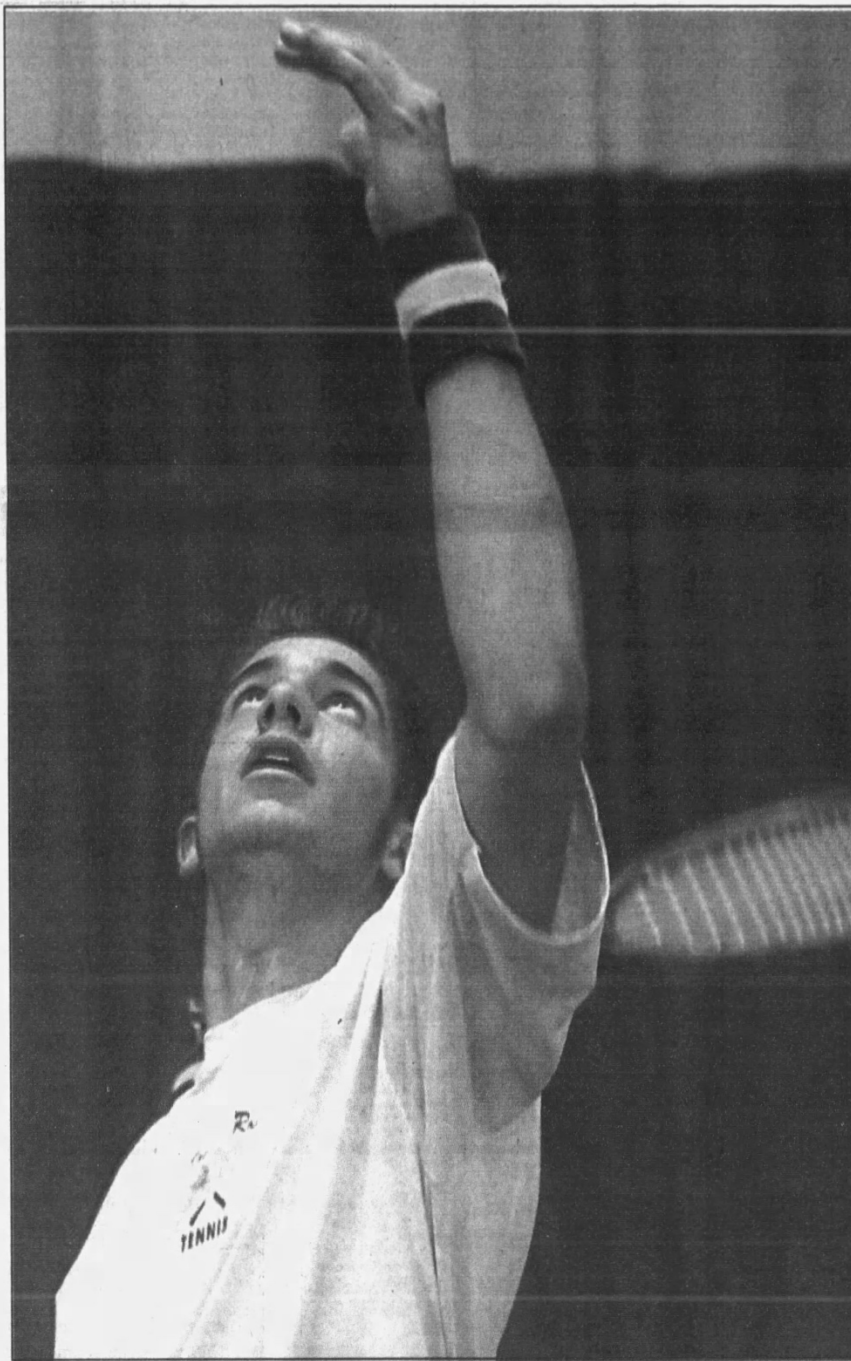
Scranton will open at 9 a.m. Friday at Ohio State University against Dublin Coffman junior Billy Pfaffinger, who took third at the Hilliard Davidson District. Scranton said he knows nothing about Pfaffinger, and he isn't sure if that's a good or bad thing.

"I've never heard of him," Scranton said. "I guess there's two sides of the coin. If you play someone like D.J. Spice (of Grafton Midview) that's favored to win, then you can say, 'Well I played the person that won state, and claim you're the second best person in your draw, even though you lost in the first round. But I guess it's better to play someone that I don't know and maybe I do have a chance of beating.'"

Ross coach Rick LaFountain, who will make his state coaching

Serving up state

■ **First match:** Pete Scranton (Ross) vs. Billy Pfaffinger (Dublin Coffman), 9 a.m. Friday, at Ohio State University.



PETE SCRANTON of Ross High School practices his serve at the Sandusky County YMCA on Tuesday. Scranton is preparing for his first state singles appearance Friday at Ohio State University.

News-Messenger/Ben French

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Scranton wants at least one victory at the state tournament

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debut, said there isn't going to be much difference between playing at OSU or at Rodger Young Park — except the player on the other side of the net.

"The only difference is the level of competition," LaFountain said. "I don't think there's a difference with anything else, courts are courts. They have hard courts just like we do here.

"He'll go in real relaxed, and whatever happens is a bonus for us."

Scranton's accomplishment put a cap on a successful season for the Little Giants. Ross won the Pete Michaels and Port Clinton Doubles tournaments and sent a school-record seven players to the district tournament.

"It's nice for Pete to make it down there," said LaFountain. "Every year you strive for a couple things: You try to win your league (Ross finished second to Findlay), you want to win your tournaments, you want to send kids to the districts — our goal was to send five and we sent

seven — and you want to send one kid to state. That's a goal every year and we never get it. This year, we got one."

Scranton said he started thinking of himself as a state-caliber player as a sophomore. That year, he and senior Ryan Newman teamed up to qualify for the district tournament as a doubles team.

"That year I realized I had a chance," Scranton said. "I thought 'All these guys are older and I'm playing with them now. I might be the only one around.' And that's when (Toledo St. Francis phenom) Ross Wilson pops up and wins districts as a freshman.

"But a couple of foreign exchange students and freshmen later, I did make it. I feel I deserve to go, even if I'm not the second-best person in our district, I could be."

Scranton was beaten in the semifinals last season by Pat Amato. Since the Northwest District only advanced two to state last year, Scranton's season was done.

"I would been second best if Ross wasn't there," Scranton said. "And if we would have sent three, I would have

been the third."

As for his state goals, Scranton is simply looking for one win. If he beats Pfaffinger, he would earn second-team all state honors. If he wins his second match against the winner of the match between Borko Tesic of Shaker Heights and Eric Thomas of Cincinnati Walnut Hills he would make the first team.

"To be even a second team honoree would be great," Scranton said. "If I lose, just to go is a great feeling."

Scranton still had a little bit to prove. His girlfriend, Port Clinton junior Laura Kokinda, is a two-time state qualifier. She has 89 career wins, and Scranton wants his career win total (currently 105) to beat hers when it is all said and done.

"She made it to state twice and now she finally realized that I made it too," Scranton said. "She'll be there rooting for me, and hopefully Ainsley (Watkins, a Ross senior who qualified for state last fall) will be there too. I'm proud of how they play tennis."

Scranton fights, but falls

News-Messenger reports

COLUMBUS — Fremont Ross senior Pete Scranton put up a fight but bowed out of the state tennis tournament in the first round Friday afternoon at Ohio State University.

Scranton lost a hard-fought 6-4, 4-6, 6-3 decision to junior Billy Pfaffinger of Dublin Coffman.

"He definitely had a chance," said Ross coach Rick LaFountain. "A point here, a point there, it could have gone either way."



SCRANTON

State tennis

After the two players traded 6-4 wins, Pfaffinger took a 4-1 lead on a controversial line call. According to LaFountain, both he and Scranton thought Scranton landed a shot in the corner, but Pfaffinger called it out and the line judge didn't see it.

Scranton battled back to cut the gap to 4-3 and then 5-4, but Pfaffinger took the last game and the match.

"He's a good player," LaFountain said of Pfaffinger. "He's a big hitter, with a monster forehand, a good serve, a good backhand. Not many weaknesses. Good player.

big hitter, monster for, good serve, good backhand, many weakness."

Pfaffinger was beaten in the quarterfinal round by freshman Eric Thomas of Cincinnati Walnut Hills, 6-0, 6-0.

Scranton finished his career with 104 wins and was the first Ross boy since 1980 to make it to state.

"We were real happy," said LaFountain. "Pete had fun, he would have liked to play another match. But I suppose down in Columbus one guy is going to be the winner, everyone else ends with a loss.

"Pete had four great years. We're real proud of him."