

Ashland dominates paint to defeat Ross

BY KEVIN SHIELDS
Sports writer

WILLARD — Before Tuesday night's sectional game with Ashland, Fremont Ross coach Mark Gedeon wrote on the board that his Little Giants "had to win the battle in the paint."

Unfortunately, it was the Arrows (7-14) who took that message to heart and dominated the paint and the glass on the way to

a 51-33 victory in the Division I sectional game played at Willard High School.

"Ashland just dominated that from the get go," Gedeon said. "Whether it was their 20-plus offensive rebounds or whether it was its post feeds inside, we just physically can't compete with that if we aren't going to be aggressive and rotate hard."

Ashland not only had the size edge, but a clear weight edge as

well, as the Little Giants (4-17) biggest player was a 175-pound freshman.

"They had 11 offensive rebounds in the first half alone and eight in the first quarter," Gedeon said. "And that just set the tempo and the style of the game throughout."

Ross trailed 7-4 after one quarter, surviving the barrage of offensive rebounds from the Arrows. The Little Giants then

trailed the Arrows by just one in the second quarter when Skylar Reffner stole a pass and went in for an uncontested layup with five minutes to go until halftime.

But three straight Ashland 3-pointers gave the Arrows a 19-10 lead with 3:03 left in the first half. The final came from Grant Fairhurst, who had three treys as part of his game-high 17 points.

Ashland went on to lead 24-14 at halftime as Ross was never

again in the game. Much of which was because of the Little Giants inability to get shots as they were 6-of-16 from the field in the first 16 minutes.

"A lot of it was our lack of execution," Gedeon said. "We didn't run our sets with the crispness that we'd like and we made it easier for them to defend."

Shunnar Gamble gave Ross its

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biggest highlight on its first defensive possession of the second half. He stole an Arrow entry pass inside, took it the length of floor and dunked it with two hands. It was part of his team-best 13 points.

Unlike his teammates jumping on the bench, Gamble's dunk didn't phase the Arrows, though, as they continued to win the battle in the paint. Ashland finished the third quarter on a 15-4 run, entering the final quarter with a decisive 39-20 edge.

Blake Delaney had six of his nine points in the third quarter for the Arrows. He was the main reason why the Arrows won the paint, chipping in a game-high 15 boards with nine coming on the offensive end. Ryan Carper added seven rebounds and Ashland finished with a 34-20 win in the battle for boards.

"Our post guys did a pretty good of rebounding," Ashland coach Rob Lavengood said. "And to be honest, we had a height advantage coming in, so we should've controlled the boards against a shorter team."

Reffner led the Little Giants with four boards. Greg Smith had three, along with Gamble and Nick Streacker. Gamble also added four steals.

The loss was far from the way the Little Giants wanted to end the season, entering the tournament playing, arguably, their

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MARK GEDEON
Fremont Ross coach

best basketball of the year.

"Definitely wasn't," Gedeon said. "We've improved so much over the last couple of weeks. We're a young bunch, though, and the development we showed was something you could see on the floor and in practice both."

"I'm really proud of how far they came this season because there were a lot of reasons to listen to all the negatives surrounding them and they didn't let that bother them."

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