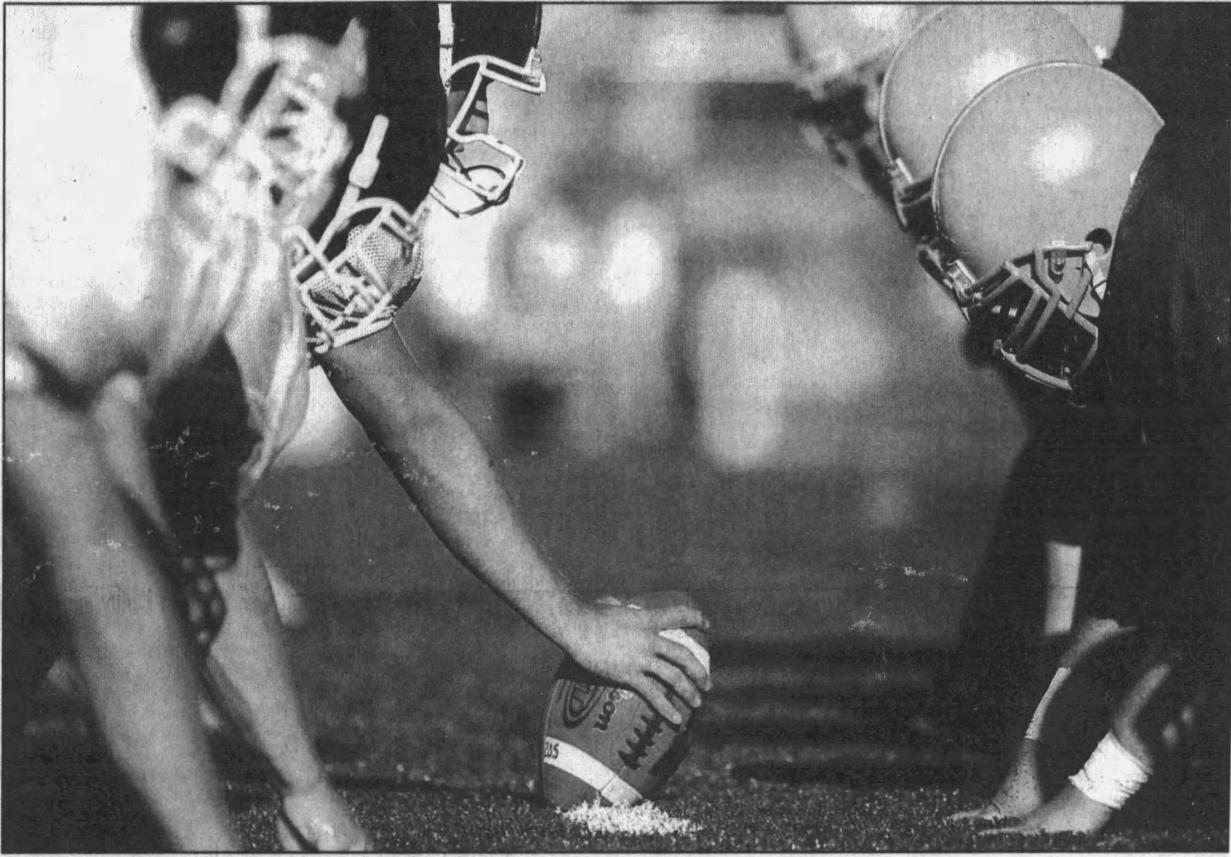


2005 Season Review



News-Messenger/Diane Cebula

Fremont Ross football players line up against Clyde during a scrimmage Tuesday at Don Paul Stadium in Fremont.

Scrimmage reveals strengths, weaknesses

Four-way match between Ross, Clyde, Mansfield and Toledo St. John's

By VINCE GUERRIERI
Sports editor

Coaches for Fremont Ross, Clyde, Mansfield and Toledo St. John's said the best thing about Tuesday's four-way scrimmage is that everyone came out healthy.

Of course, it was kind of nice to hear the pounding of pads.

Nine days before the beginning of the season, all the coaches and teams got

a better sense of their strengths and weaknesses.

Ross coach Derek Kidwell said his team looked good physically, and that the off-season training regimen started to pay off.

Still, the game — which featured three 55-minute periods, allowing all four teams to play each other — showed that the Little Giants need more conditioning, even though at three hours straight, it wasn't comparable to a football game.

"Usually in a game, you get a little more break," Kidwell said.

Kidwell said quarterback Aaron Opelt looked good, throwing several long passes, but had some happy feet

early on. He said the offensive line improved throughout the game, particularly distinguishing themselves on the last series, against Toledo St. John's.

"They ended on a positive note," he said.

Fliers coach Mark Gibson said the game was a confidence booster for his team, the smallest on the field in terms of numbers. Clyde is a Division III school. The other three schools are Division I.

"Our kids know they can stand toe to toe with some big schools," he said.

The Fliers were playing with new offensive and defensive schemes, and Gibson noted that they re-

sponded well, but said tackling needed improvement.

St. John's also needed to improve tackles, said coach Doug Pearson.

"Lot of missed tackles tonight," he said. "We can't live with that."

If Clyde was the smallest school, Mansfield was the school with the smallest players. But what it lacks in size, it makes up for in speed, said coach Leroy Smith.

"If you're not big, you need to be fast," Smith said.

Smith said the team needs to be more physical and stronger, but their offense threw well and the defense attacked the ball.

Pearson and Smith gave high marks to Kidwell, entering his second year as Little Giants coach. Ross went 0-10 in 2002 and 1-9 in 2003, before Kidwell came. Last year, the team went 4-6, and more improvement is expected.

"Derek's doing a great job," Pearson said.

"They're going to be tough," Smith said.

Both also found Clyde to be a physical opponent.

The game also marked the debut for Don Paul Stadium's new surface. The grass was replaced by FieldTurf.

"I love it," Pearson said.

HIGH SCHOOL FOOTBALL: FREMONT ROSS 35, PERRYSBURG 17

Little Giants win in the trenches

Offensive line gets Opelt untouched, four ground TDs

By VINCE GUERRIERI
Sports Editor

PERRYSBURG — In a game that might have shown the strength of the offensive line above all else, the Little Giants won their opener for the first time in years, beating the Perrysburg Yellow Jackets 35-17.

Senior running back Bryan Burel scored two touchdowns and ran for a total of 149 yards.

"It's been a long time since we were 1-0," said coach Derek Kidwell. Last year, the team went 4-6, and won just one game in the previous two years before Kidwell took over.

Kidwell said the strong running game could be attributed to the strength and size of the offensive line. Ross players hit the weight room hard after last season.

"We knew we could pound these guys," Kidwell said.

Quarterback Aaron Opelt threw for 95 yards and three interceptions, but noted that he wasn't sacked.

"I didn't get touched the whole game," he said.

Burel said that his plan was to not get bigheaded, and was more than willing to share credit.

"We got some of the best blockers in the Greater Buckeye Conference," he said. "Our line can take anybody."

Perrysburg running back Ronnie Tisdale ran 49 yards for the first play from scrimmage, but Chase Muir missed a field goal.

There were three penalties on the Little Giants during their first drive, and ultimately, two touchdowns were called back on penalties. Kidwell said the team

worked a lot of the kinks out in the second half, when there was just one penalty against Ross.

Opelt said the team adjusted to Perrysburg's defensive, which was dropping eight and rushing three in anticipation of a passing game. But the rushing game turned a 20-14 halftime lead into a 35-17 win.

Senior Kyle Cook, who scored two touchdowns on two yards rushing and four carries, said the team has to work on special teams coverage. Kyle Sell had a 52-yard kickoff return that would have gone for a touchdown had he not been brought down by kicker Blair Ellenberger.

"That's what cost us a lot last year," Cook said.

Yellow Jackets coach Roger Frank said the team kept it competitive for the first three quarters amid thoughts that Ross would blow them out, but began to wilt in the fourth quarter.

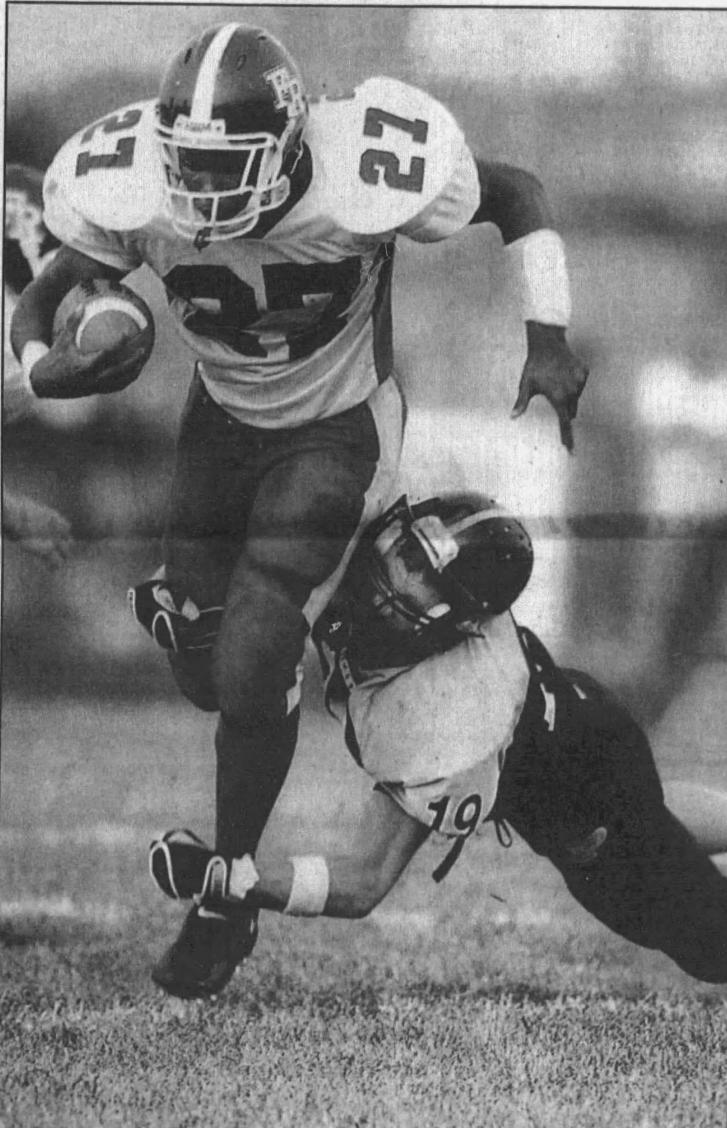
"We got wore down," Frank said. "I don't think it was an Xs and Os factor. It was a personnel factor."

The Little Giants are on the road again next week against Toledo Central Catholic. Kidwell said the biggest adjustments are made from Week 1 to Week 2. The Giants will have something to work with, but it won't get any easier.

"They were a playoff team last year, and they're going to be tough again," Kidwell said.

The Little Giants wore purple helmets for the first time in at least 30 years.

"We want to bring the purple pride back," he said.



News-Messenger/Diane Cebula

ROSS SENIOR BRYAN Burel gets tripped up by a Perrysburg defender during Friday's game. Burel ran for 149 yards and scored two touchdowns as the Little Giants beat the Yellow Jackets 35-17.

Football

High School

Ross 35, Perrysburg 17

Ross	7	13	7	8	—	35
Perrysburg	0	14	3	0	—	17

Scoring summary

Ross — C. Decker interception, 1:57
1st (Blair Ellenberger kick)
Ross — Kyle Cook 1-yard run, 10:42
2nd (Ellenberger kick)
Perrysburg — Futinikin 7-yard run, 9:30
2nd (Chase Muir kick)
Ross — Burel 1-yard run, 2:38 2nd (Ellenberger kick no good)
Perrysburg — Muir field goal
Ross — Cook 1-yard run (Opelt runs in 2-point conversion)
Ross — Burel run (Ellenberger kick good).

COMMENTARY

New era is off, throwing in Fremont

By MATTHEW HORN

Sports Writer

New field surface.
New uniforms.
New aura.

The football season has begun in Fremont — with wins for both the Little Giants and Crimson Streaks for the first time since 1998 in each case — and things certainly are looking up in Fremont.

Fremont Ross Superintendent Don King likes to say that if you apply a new coat of paint, put new finish on the floor or install new desks a single classroom can make it feel as though an entire school has evolved.

Derek Kidwell has only been the Little Giants' coach for one complete season, but after seeing his vision, the football program has undergone just such a transformation. Everything is not new — but it undoubtedly seems that way.

"Fremont is a town that's always loved football," Ross Athlete Director Art Bucci said. "We've seen a lot of things happening right now with the new stadium renovation, field and scoreboard. There's a new feel in the air and people are talking about Derek Kidwell and the state playoffs. The community feels a new energy starting. We started a new tradition and with all the new changes the interest is back."

"We have a lot of kids back out. Derek has done everything he said he'd do. He got the kids in the weight room and this is his home now. He's moved here — this is his home. His love for the kids shows. Derek is a great coach," Bucci said.

Senior Kyle Cook, who did not go out for football as a sophomore, agrees.

"People are coming out to see us win and see the spread offense," said Cook, who scored two touchdowns in the Little Giants' season-opening win over Perryburg Friday. "Everybody knows how good the coaches are and everybody is back into it. We've had high expectations established after beating Marion Harding and being there with Cleveland Benedictine (last year) in people's eye and they're out to check us out."

"Everybody is talking around the city. Everybody wants to be a part of it. I enjoy that. It makes you feel important. The whole team gets along and we're just out there having fun. We work hard because we want to be the best. Coach has been on championship teams and we all want what he had."

Kidwell, however, takes none of the credit for the program's resurgence. And he is quick to point out that the cameras and reporters is only here now to see the shape as he has yet to reach the postseason with Ross.

"I'm not one to take credit," he said. "We as a staff brought in a system, implemented it and the kids bought in. It's the kids that deserve the credit. It's not easy lifting the helmet. In October when you don't see the benefits until September. The kids understand that and hopefully they'll reap the benefits."

Quarterback Aaron Opell already has. The senior has worked his way onto several preseason recruiting watch lists and is considered a threat. Bucci said the initial pressure Friday could prove to be the team's primary strength this season.

Not to mention a running game in Bryan Bucci that could have the opposition right where Kidwell wants it in terms of ball control.

As a reward of sorts for their commitment, Kidwell allowed the kids to don purple helmets Friday for the first time in approximately 30 years as signs of solidarity and passion.

"There's a rebirth of football in Fremont," Bucci said. "It was something new and different. Gradual changes lead to success."

Bucci said Kidwell arrived to a program in limbo.

And following two offseasons Kidwell has been realistically thinking playoffs after his team almost snuck in the back door his first year.

"We're going in the right direction," Bucci said. "Everybody felt pretty comfortable that when we hired Derek success would follow. There's a great feeling that he can take it to the next level and the kids believe him."

Senior Kory Decker, who did play as a sophomore and returned an interception for a score Friday, said Kidwell and his assistants are a positive attitude.

"It's a positive attitude overall," he said. "We go into each game knowing we can win. We all play as a team, we all want to play and we are all prepared to play. We have more confidence. We like football. Football isn't fun unless you win."

Kidwell and his team have even started to demonstrate a collective swagger.

"There's a little edge expecting to win and feeling like they'll be in position to win most games," Kidwell said. "We want to win a whole lot of football games, bring some championship back to Fremont in respect to the league and make some plays off runs."

"We've really only started. It was nice to get off to a good start but there's a lot of work to do. It won't get easier on Friday."

But the foundation has been erected.

"The kids were a little bit scared and physically but still had pride in Fremont," Kidwell said of his arrival. "There's a rich tradition and they were still trying to carry it. They hit some bumps and hopefully we're over those bumps."

Fremont Ross (1-0) at Toledo Central Catholic (1-0)

Last week: Ross 35, Perrysburg 17; Toledo Central Catholic 10, Detroit Catholic Central 7.

Game notes: Ross allowed 14 second-quarter points but only three the rest of last week's contest. Running back Bryan Burel provided coach Derek Kidwell with a supplement to his passing game, rushing for two scores. The Little Giant offensive line kept quarterback Aaron Opelt's jersey clean and could prove to be the team's biggest strength this year. Kory Decker scored a defensive touchdown for Ross. TCC defeated Ross 23-0 in the Little Giants' first game last season.

HIGH SCHOOL FOOTBALL: FREMONT ROSS 20, TOLEDO CENTRAL CATHOLIC 14

Big plays give Little Giants win

Ross, now 2-0, beat Central for first time in four years

By VINCE GUERRIERI
Sports Editor

TOLEDO — In the last four minutes of the fourth quarter, it was Ross quarterback Aaron Opelt who came up with two big plays, one which ultimately put the Little Giants ahead of Toledo Central Catholic and one that preserved the win.

The Little Giants start the season 2-0 by beating the Irish, 20-14,

for the first time in four years in a hard-fought game where Ross didn't take the lead until the last 35 seconds of the game.

"It's a sad thing someone has to lose a game like this," said Ross coach Derek Kidwell. "Fremont Ross was down for a while, and now it's our turn to be up."

It was third-and-12 for the Little Giants, pinned back in their own territory with 3:45 left. A swarm of Irish defenders were taking down Opelt when he spotted Ryan Ottney downfield and threw the ball to him in triple coverage for the first down.

"We can't think we have him sacked," said Central coach Greg Dempsey. "We have to play the whole play."

The first down set up a touchdown by Bryan Burel to put Ross

up 20-14. Blair Ellenberger missed the extra point on a bad hold by Ottney.

The Irish got the ball back with 30 seconds left and started moving downfield. Quarterback Dane Sanzenbacher handed the ball off to Xavier Graciani, who lateralized it back to Sanzenbacher. Opelt was in on defense for that play.

"He's our best athlete," Kidwell said. "We wanted him on the field."

Opelt tackled Sanzenbacher and threw him out of bounds at the 10 yard line.

"It was my first hit in a couple of years, and I loved it," Opelt said.

The tackle saved a score but Central had a first down with 20 seconds to play.

"God, I wished we had three

more feet of sidelines," Dempsey said.

Ottney's muffed hold loomed large.

"If we lose the game, it's my fault," he said he thought to himself.

A pass fell incomplete, and Sanzenbacher tucked the ball under his arm and gained five yards. The Irish couldn't line up for another play and time expired, leaving thousands of Central fans in stunned silence as Ross players stormed the field.

The victory was the first one against the Irish for this year's senior class. Overall, Ross is now 12-7 in the series, started in 1977.

Kidwell said Opelt made good decisions in last week's 35-17 victory over Perrysburg, but had to improve his footwork, which he

did this week. Last week's victory relied more on the Little Giants' running game, and Burel was once again Ross's leading scorer, with two touchdowns.

Kidwell also commended his team for its never-say-die attitude.

"One thing we don't have to work on is our heart," he said.

Opelt said the team is on the way to meeting one of its goals; Ross is now one game away from winning its first three games.

Next week is the Little Giants' home opener, against Tiffin Columbian on Friday. Clyde beat Columbian 7-0.

At the end of the game, some players tried to douse Kidwell with a cooler full of water.

"Don't do that," he said. "We're supposed to win from now on."

Football

High School

Ross 20, Toledo C.C. 14

Ross	0	0	7	13	— 20
Toledo C.C.	0	7	0	7	— 14

SCORING SUMMARY

Second Quarter

CC Chris Willis, 6 yard run (Brodie Wagoner PAT good)

Third Quarter

FR Bryan Burel, 5 yard run (Blair Ellenger PAT good)

Fourth Quarter

CC Kevin Jansen 41-yard pass to Willis (Wagoner PAT good)

FR Aaron Opelt 66-yard run (Ellenger PAT good)

FR Bryan Burel 2-yard run (Ellenger PAT no good)

Records:

Ross 2-0, Central 1-1

HIGH SCHOOL FOOTBALL: TIFFIN COLUMBIAN 21, FREMONT ROSS 7

Columbian makes big plays, Ross doesn't

Touchdown off fumble recovery to start second half proves costly

By VINCE GUERRIERI
Sports Editor

The opening kickoff by Fremont Ross of Friday night's game against Tiffin Columbian sailed out of bounds, giving the Tornadoes the ball on their own 35-yard line.

The kickoff that opened the second half was even worse for the Little Giants.

Cori Clayton fumbled the kickoff, allowing Columbian's Joe Irving to recover on Ross's 24-yard line and run it in for a touchdown.

The score put the Tornadoes up 21-7, the final score of a game that saw the public address system break and wide receiver/punter Paul Hershey leave the game with an air cast on his right wrist.

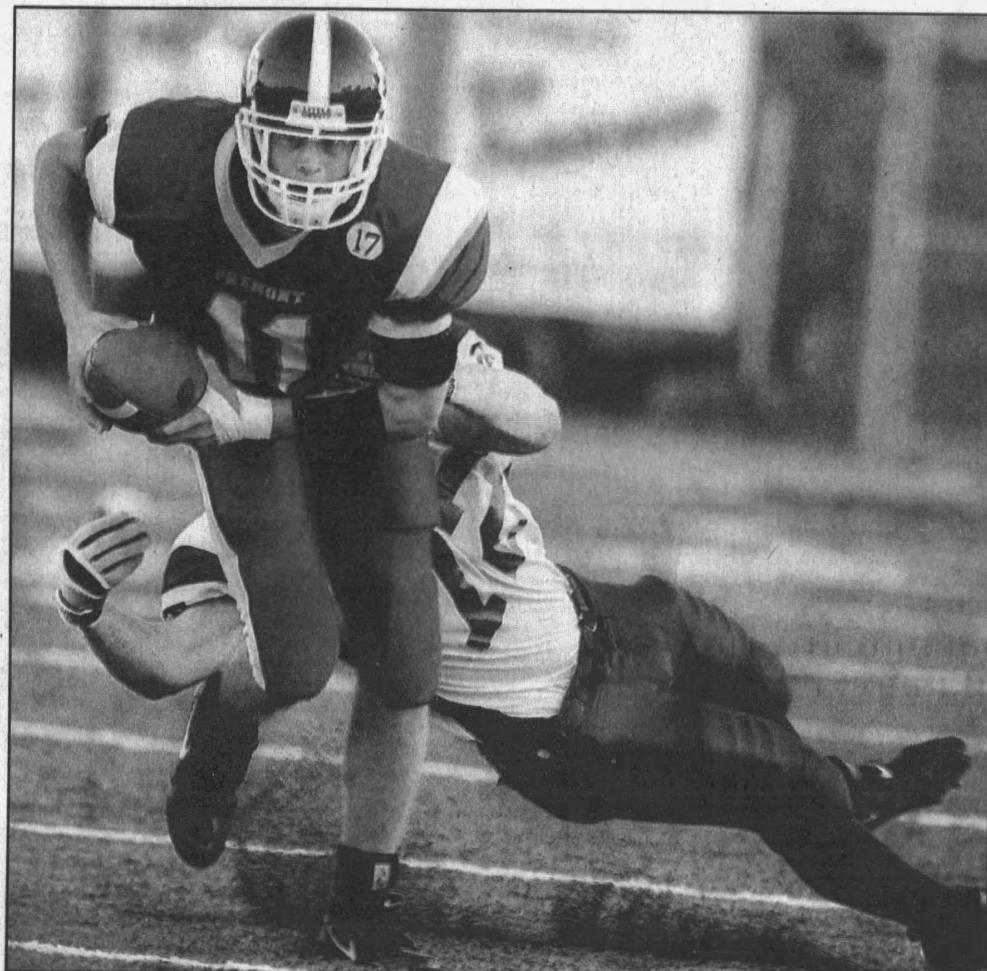
"They outplayed you tonight," Little Giants coach Derek Kidwell told his team after the game. "They wanted it more."

Ross fell to 2-1 on the season, while Tiffin Columbian improved to 2-1. Although the Little Giants hold the series edge, 32-16, this is the Tornadoes' sixth straight win dating back to 1994.

Ross had twice the number of first downs Columbian had (18-8), and more total yards (332-273), but big plays like Irving's fumble recovery for a touchdown happened for the Tornadoes and not for the Little Giants.

"We moved the ball up and down the field," Kidwell said. "We just couldn't put it in the end zone."

Sophomore Jake Peacock started at quarterback for Columbian, replacing Drew Ardner, who was injured in last week's 7-0 loss against Clyde. Peacock threw for 143 yards and two touchdowns.



ROSS QUARTERBACK AARON OPELT breaks through an attempted tackle by Columbian senior Mike Johnson in the first quarter of Friday's game. Ross got its first loss of the season, 21-7.

"They rallied behind Jake," said Columbian coach Steve Gilbert.

In last week's game, Clyde's Matt Guhn scored the only touchdown against Columbian, and the Tornadoes were hit with a cold dose of reality after drubbing Toledo Whitmer the week before.

"We knew coming in we were a good football team," Gilbert said. "We just had to regroup."

Ross went into halftime down 14-7. They faced a similar situation against

Toledo Central Catholic last week, down 7-0 at the half. The Little Giants came back at the end of that game to win, but the touch-down Columbian scored to begin the second half shifted momentum, and set the tone for the rest of the game, Kidwell said.

The crowd, raucous for the undefeated Little Giants' home opener, stilled after Irving's touchdown.

"We wanted to take the crowd out of the game and that third touchdown did it," Gilbert said.

The third quarter saw Ross's mistakes get worse. Kidwell said the young defensive backs didn't believe in the system and started to stiffen.

"It's easier to play defense when you're one touchdown down," he said.

Starting running back Bryan Burel was called for a personal foul and thrown out of the game. According to Ohio High School Athletic Association rules, he will also sit out next week's game against two-time defending state champions

Cleveland Benedictine, a team that has had Ross's number. In 11 matchups, the Little Giants have won just one.

"It ain't gonna get any easier," Kidwell said.

Quarterback Aaron Opelet passed for 146 yards and ran for another 83.

Kyle Cook had three rushes for 52 yards.

"Kyle's one of our better football players," Kidwell said. "We've got to get him the ball more."

Football

High School

Columbian 21, Ross 7

Columbian	7	7	7	0	—	21
Ross	0	7	0	0	—	7

SCORING SUMMARY

First quarter

Columbian — Moore (Peacock pass),
93 yards (PAT good)

Second quarter

Ross — Boukissen (Opelt pass), 5
yards (Ellenberger PAT good)

Columbian — Moore (Peacock pass),
5 yards (PAT good)

Third quarter

Columbian — Joe Irving recovery of
Ross fumble, 26 yards (PAT good)

TEAM STATISTICS

	R	C
First downs.....	18	8
Rushes-yards.....	38-189	30-127
Passing-yards.....	13-143	5-146
Total yards.....	332	273
Comp-att-int....	13-23-143	5-13-146
Fumbles-lost.....	2-2	2-0
Penalties-yards.....	5-40	4-30

INDIVIDUAL STATISTICS

PASSING: R — Opelt, 5-146, C —
Peacock, 5-146

Rushing: R — Burel, 14-58; Cook, 3-52;
Johnson -4-1; Opelt, 20-83. C — Moore,
7-36; Perkins, 1-2; Bishop, 1-5; Bentz 1-(-
3); Lutz, 3-10

Receiving: R — Clayton 3-30; Hershey
1-21; Boukissen, 1-5 (TD); Abbott, 4-41;
Cook 1-20; Miller 1-15; Hall 2-17. C —
Moore, 2-103; Krupp, 1-3; Kagy, 2-40

HIGH SCHOOL FOOTBALL: CLEVELAND BENEDICTINE 31, FREMONT ROSS 0

No positives in drubbing

Offense stalls,
defense wilts
and Kidwell
said he got
outcoached

By VINCE GUERRIERI
Sports Editor

Nothing went right for Fremont Ross in its game against Cleveland Benedictine.

The offense was anemic, the defense was exhausted and the team was unprepared in their 31-0 home shutout against the Bengals, said Little Giants coach Derek Kidwell.

"I take total blame for this loss," Kidwell said. "We've got to prepare better. We'll have to go back to the drawing board."

It's Benedictine's seventh straight win against Ross. The Bengals are now 12-1 all-time against the Little Giants.

Benedictine came into the game 1-2, with their secondary breaking down in losses to (Pittsburgh) Gateway and Mentor Lake Catholic, and letting up in last week's win against Euclid.

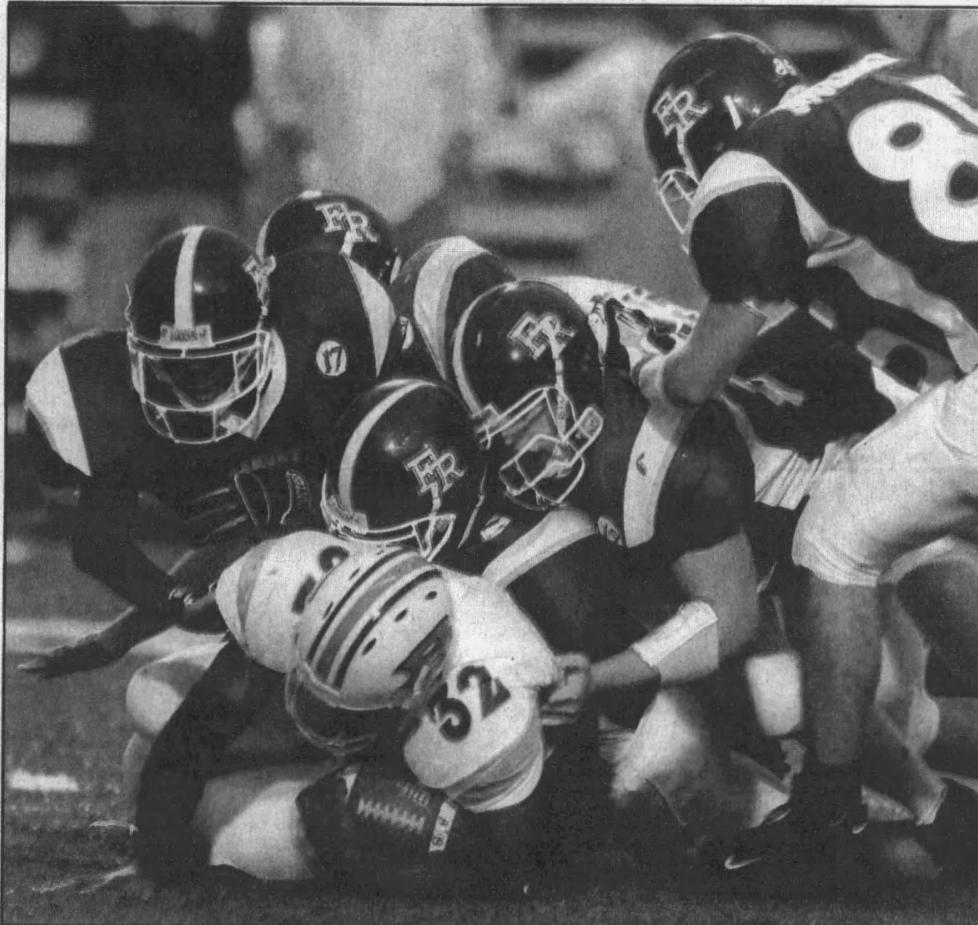
But the Bengals also had running back Jahmal Brown, who had 58 carries, 455 yards and eight touchdowns coming into this game.

Kidwell said Ross knew Benedictine's offensive plan: give it to Brown. And the Giants still couldn't stop him. Brown gained 160 yards and scored two touchdowns.

Tailback Troy Huddleston started as quarterback. He threw for 27 yards on three completions and ran for another 84, including one touchdown.

"We're making a lot of quarterbacks look good in their first start," Kidwell said sardonically.

Last week, sophomore Jake Peacock, making his first start under center for Tiffin Columbian, threw for



News-Messenger/Diane Cebula

FREMONT ROSS DEFENDERS pile on Cleveland Benedictine running back Jahmal Brown during the first half of Friday's game. Brown pounded the Little Giants defense for 160 yards and two touchdowns in a 31-0 whitewashing.

143 yards and two touchdowns in a 21-7 win.

The Benedictine offense ran a total of 79 plays, all but five rushing, and controlled the ball and the clock. Kidwell said when the defense was out on the field that much, they couldn't hold down Benedictine's running game.

Brown broke off a 39-yard run to score at the end of the first half, and scored again at the end of the second half to go into the locker room with a 14-0 lead. Chris Austin ran in another touchdown midway through the third quarter to put the

Bengals up 21-0.

"That's definitely our strength," said Benedictine coach Art Bortnick of the team's ground game. On a first-and-22 play in the fourth quarter, Huddleston ran 54 yards for a touchdown, putting the Bengals up 28-0 and starting the exodus of Ross fans.

Bortnick said even with a lead that big, it didn't feel like a decisive win.

"Fremont is such an explosive team, you never have much security," he said. "I didn't feel confident until the clock ran down."

Alex Steigerwald kicked

a field goal with 1:07 left to put the Bengals up 31-0. In the last series of the game, Ryan Ottney took some snaps. Kidwell said it didn't reflect any change, and Aaron Opelt will play quarterback next week at home against Reynoldsburg.

The offense managed 274 yards, but Opelt threw two interceptions and fumbled once. That fumble was recovered, but another fumble by Kyle Cook was recovered by the Bengals, setting up their third score of the game.

Kidwell said the offense couldn't get in any rhythm,

and seemed to break down at various points throughout the game, blocking and running routes.

"Offensively, we laid a big fat egg," Kidwell said.

Cook started as running back in place of Bryan Burel, who had to sit out this game after getting ejected from last week's game. Kidwell said Burel will be play next week.

Wide receiver/defensive back Paul Hershey as also absent from this game, due to a broken wrist. Kidwell said he'd be out another 3-4 weeks.

**Cleveland Benedictine 31,
Fremont Ross 0**

Benedictine	7	7	7	10	—	31
Ross	0	0	0	0	—	0

SCORING SUMMARY

First quarter

B — Jahmal Brown 39-yard run (Alex Steigerwald PAT good), 0:55.

Second quarter

B — Brown 7-yard run (Steigerwald PAT good), 0:24

Third quarter

B — Chris Austin 4-yard run (Steigerwald PAT good), 6:01

Fourth quarter

B — Troy Huddleston 54-yard run (Steigerwald PAT good), 5:27

B — Steigerwald field goal, 1:07

TEAM STATISTICS

	Ben	Ross
First downs.....	20	8
Rushes-yards.....	67-339	19-71
Passes-yards.....	3-27	10-134
Total yards.....	366	205
Comp-Att-Int	3-5-1	10-29-2
Fumbles-lost	2-1	1-1
Punts-Avg.	4-47	4-41.8
Penalties-yards	4-45	1-5

INDIVIDUAL STATISTICS

Rushing: B — Brown 33-160 (2 TDs), Austin, 17-75 (1 TD), Valentineo 5-17, Harris 1-3; Huddleston 11-84 (1 TD); Ross — Cook 9-20, Brindley 1-(-4), Johnson 1-0, Ottney 1-24, Opelt 7-31

Passing: B — Huddleston 3-5 (1 INT), 27; Ross — Opelt 9-25 (2 INTs) 112, Ottney 1-4, 21

Receiving: B — Amidon 2-22, Prince 1-5; Ross — Cook 1-2, Abbot 3-23, Clayton 1-35, Boukissen 1-4; Spencer 1-21, Ottney 3-48

Reynoldsburg at Fremont Ross (2-2)

Overview: The Little Giants have nothing to be ashamed of with a loss to vaunted Cleveland Benedictine last week but would like to return to the strong play that enabled them to jump to a 2-0 start. Ross struggled to get anything going offensively and failed to put any points on the board against Benedictine after having the Bengals on the ropes in the fourth quarter last season. Ross and Reynoldsburg have never met on the gridiron. Ross allowed 20 first downs while managing only eight of its own last week. It also allowed 339 rushing yards but won't have to contend with a tailback the likes of Jahmal Brown this week. That means the Little Giants defense ought to have more luck getting the opposition offense off the field and its own offense led by versatile quarterback Aaron Opelt on it.

Offense continues to falter

Kidwell baffled, frustrated by lack of heart from players

By VINCE GUERRIERI
Sports Editor

Fremont Ross went into the fourth quarter with a one-point lead over Reynoldsburg.

Neither offense had produced much. Penalties were costly for the Raiders, costing them a touchdown, while the Little Giants failed to convert on two occasions at fourth-and-1. In the third quarter, Ross couldn't punch the ball in with four chances from the three-yard line.

In the fourth quarter, one team finally exploded, scoring three touchdowns to turn a tight game into a blowout.

It wasn't Ross.

The Little Giants' offense sputtered once again before a home crowd, while Reynoldsburg ran roughshod over Ross on the way to a 27-7 victory.

"I've never been as frustrated or baffled as I am with this football team," said Little Giants coach Derek Kidwell.

After a strong 2-0 start on the road, including the first win over Toledo Central Catholic in four years, Ross has lost its last three games, all at home. The offense, which put up 55 points in wins over Perrysburg and Central, has managed just two touchdowns over this homestand.

Kidwell said the team had the talent to win, but not the heart.

"We seem to keep shooting ourselves in the foot," he said.

The first quarter began with four straight three-

and-outs by Ross and Reynoldsburg. Then Ross got three straight first downs to start a seven-play drive culminating in Aaron Opelt's touchdown pass to Kyle Cook. Kirt Munson's extra point made it 7-0 Ross.

In the second quarter, Cori Clayton intercepted Raiders quarterback Lance Lasker, setting up first-and-10 for the Little Giants at the Reynoldsburg 33. But at fourth-and-one on the Raiders' 14-yard line, Ross couldn't convert.

After Reynoldsburg went three-and-out, Ross got the ball back. Again, on fourth-and-one, the Little Giants failed to convert, and turned the ball over on downs. The Raiders then drove and scored, but missed the extra point.

In the third quarter, a 33-yard Opelt pass to Bill Boukissen set up first-and-goal on the 3-yard line, but the Little Giants got no points. The score stayed 7-6 until the fourth quarter, when Austin Wallace ran 55 yards to set up an Armand Robinson touchdown. Quarterback Lance Lasker ran in the two-point conversion.

Ross was set to go three-and-out, but a roughing the kicker call against Reynoldsburg gave the Little Giants a new set of downs. Ross lost nine yards on the new set of downs and punted. On the first play from scrimmage, Lasker ran 79 yards for a touchdown. Lasker ran in another touchdown less than three minutes later, diving over the goal line and earning an unsportsmanlike conduct penalty.

"In the second half, we were able to get our offense rolling," said Reynoldsburg coach Woody Underwood.



News-Messenger/Ken Dumminger

FREMONT ROSS RUNNING back Bryan Burel runs against Reynoldsburg during Friday's game. Burel finished with 10 carries and 44 yards in the Little Giants loss.

See OFFENSE, B2

Offense continues to falter for Ross

Continued From B1

Underwood was particularly proud of his short-yard defense.

"That kept us in the ballgame," he said.

He also had praise for his offensive line, and said runners found cut-back lanes more in the second half.

Kidwell had no praise for his team.

"We're a team searching for identity," he said. "Searching for leadership. I don't know when we'll find it or if we will."

But Kidwell did say that he wasn't giving up on a season that started with so much promise. He noted that conference play starts next week at home against Napoleon, giving somewhat of a fresh start.

Kidwell noted that team, for all intents and purposes, has had no home-field advantage. With only two touchdowns scored in the past three weeks, fans haven't had a lot of things to cheer about.

"We don't allow our fans to get into the game," he said.

Football

High School

Reynoldsburg 27, Ross 7

Reynoldsburg	0	6	0	21	—27
Ross		7	0	0	0 — 7

SCORING SUMMARY

First Quarter

Fremont Ross — Kyle Cook, 25 yards (Aaron Opelt pass), Kirt Munson PAT good

Second Quarter

Reynoldsburg — Lance Lasker, 4-yard run, John Simon PAT blocked

Fourth Quarter

R — Armand Robinson, 6 yards (Lasker pass), Lasker two-point conversion good

R — Lasker, 79-yard run, Simon PAT no good

R — Lasker, 46-yard run, Simon PAT good

TEAM STATISTICS

	Ross	Reynoldsburg
Passing yards.....	220	79
Comp-Att-Int	15-25-2	5-15-1
Rushing yards	105	331
Total yards.....	325	410
First downs.....	14	14
Fumbles-lost	4-0	2-1
Punt-avg.	6-43.3	5-42.4
Penalties-yards	4-40	7-60

INDIVIDUAL STATISTICS

PASSING: Reynoldsburg — Lasker, 5-15, 79 yards. Ross — Opelt, 11-19, 132 yards, 1 TD; Ryan Ottney 4-6, 88 yards, 1 INT.

RUSHING: Reynoldsburg — Lasker, 17-197, two TDs; Austin Wallace, 8-87; Christian Taylor, 1-6; Evan Crawford, 1-7. Ross — Kameron Allicock, 1-(-4); Kyle Cook, 2-15; Bryan Burel, 10-44; Opelt, 10-33; Durand Robertson, 3-11; Ottney, 1-5.

RECEIVING: Reynoldsburg — Evan Crawford, 4-73; Armand Robinson, 1-6 (1 TD). Ross — Ottney, 3-28; Cori Clayton, 3-65; Bill Boukissen, 4-75; Cook, 3-47 (1 TD); Ryan Croudup, 1-9; Robertson, 1-6; Burel, 1-9.

Napoleon (5-0) at Ross (2-3)

Overview: Napoleon is ranked first in the Division III Region 10 AP computer ratings this week. Napoleon marks the fourth of four consecutive home games for Fremont Ross. The Little Giants lost the first three by a combined score of 79-14 after winning their first two games on the road. Kyle Cook caught a 25-yard touchdown pass from Aaron Opelt in last week's 27-7 loss to Reynoldsburg. Cori Clayton had three catches for 65 yards and Billy Boukissen added four for 75 as Opelt amassed 220 yards through the air. The Little Giants scored first but failed to get on the board agains and Reynoldsburg scored 21 fourth-quarter points. Napoleon also marks the beginning of the Greater Buckeye Conference schedule for Ross. Napoleon is coming off a 38-14 victory over Hamilton Ross. The game marks the 1,000th for Fremont Ross in its history.

HIGH SCHOOL FOOTBALL: NAPOLEON 38, FREMONT ROSS 27



News-Messenger/Diane Cebula

ROSS'S KYLE COOK fumbles during the first quarter of Friday's game against Napoleon. The Wildcats recovered the ball and scored a touchdown on their way to a 38-27 win.

Getting better, but still a loss

Coach Derek Kidwell said he was proud of effort.

By VINCE GUERRIERI
Sports Editor

Ross football coach Derek Kidwell said he was pleased with his team's effort this week against Napoleon in the Greater Buckeye Conference opener for both teams.

The result left a little to be desired.

The Little Giants lost their fourth straight game, 38-27, due to some key errors and penalties, but the offense appeared rejuvenated and the team showed miles and miles of heart.

"The effort was there," he said.

Last week after Ross car-

ried a one-point lead into the fourth quarter, only to lose 27-7 to Reynoldsburg, Kidwell expressed his frustration by a team that has the talent to compete with anyone, but seemed to lack the intensity.

The Little Giants rose to the occasion this week.

Napoleon opened up an air game against Ross, as quarterback Brandon Cramer passed on the Wildcats' first four plays from scrimmage, gaining 49 yards and four straight first downs.

Running back Brad Weaver was taking it slow due to injury. Wildcats coach John Snoad said his game plan included passes for the first two plays.

"After that, we were going to see what we could do," he said.

The Little Giants' defense included a six-man front anticipating a run-

ning game, and Cramer seemed to pass at will, throwing for two touchdowns in 28 seconds at the end of the first quarter.

"We didn't think the quarterback would make the plays he made," Kidwell said.

But Ross battled back, despite Kyle Cook fumbling from the second play of scrimmage to begin the second quarter. Aaron Opelt connected with Ryan Ottney for a 51-yard touchdown pass in the second quarter. Blair Ellenberger's extra point was no good.

Three minutes later, Nick Wagner scored on a 24-yard pass from Cramer, putting the Wildcats up 21-6.

After a 23-yard kickoff return by Cook, he scored on a 30-yard pass from Opelt, who hit Kirt Munson for a two-point conversion.

Snoad said his game plan for Opelt wasn't to get into the backfield and pressure

him, but to contain him. He heard great things about the senior with a cannon arm, and in this game, it was more than hyperbole.

"Opelt lived up to it," Snoad said.

The Ross defense held Napoleon, who punted. On the first play from scrimmage, Opelt again found Ottney, this time for a 61-yard touchdown. Ellenberger's extra point was good.

Snoad said the Wildcats might have let up a little with a 14-point lead, and his thoughts were crystallized after Ross tied up the game.

"Uh-oh," he thought.

Napoleon went three and out, but the Ross punt return team couldn't hold on to the ball, giving Napoleon first and 10 from the Ross 25. Cramer hit Brian Hammer for an 11-yard touchdown pass, and once again,

Ross went into the locker room down a touchdown at halftime.

"It puts you behind the eight-ball," Kidwell said. "Once they score, it's tough to get the kids back emotionally."

In the second half, Napoleon switched gears and relied on the running game to eat up the clock.

"They had us right where they wanted us," Kidwell said.

Opelt hit Cook for a touchdown pass, but the extra point failed, pulling Ross within one point, 28-27.

Napoleon answered with a 10-yard touchdown run by Adam Miller, and ended the third quarter up 35-27.

The Wildcats ate up nearly eight minutes in the fourth quarter with a methodical 58-yard drive and kicked a field goal, putting away any chance for a Ross comeback.

High School

Napoleon 38, Fremont Ross 27

Napoleon	14	14	7	3	— 38
Ross	0	21	6	0	— 27

Scoring

First quarter

Napoleon — Elliot Vocke (Brandon Cramer 88-yard pass) Will Gilson PAT good, 1:36.

N — Brian Hummer (Cramer 19-yard pass) Gilson PAT good, 1:08

Second quarter

Ross — Ryan Ottney (Aaron Opelt 51-yard pass) Blair Ellenberger PAT no good, 9:59

N — Nick Wagner (Cramer 24-yard pass) Gilson PAT good, 6:53

R — Kyle Cook (Opelt 30-yard pass), Munson (Opelt pass) 2-point conversion, 4:31

R — Ottney (Opelt 61-yard pass), Ellenberger PAT good, 3:16

N — Hummer (Cramer 11-yard pass), Gilson PAT good, 0:07

Third quarter

R — Cook (Opelt 4-yard pass), Ellenberger PAT no good

N — Adam Miller 10-yard run, Gilson PAT good, 2:41.

Fourth quarter

N — Gilson field goal, 3:52

Team statistics

	R	N
Running yards.....	94	175
Passing yards.....	266	189
Total yards.....	360	364
Comp-att-int.....	14-33-0	13-23-0
Fumbles-lost.....	3-1	0
Punts-avg.....	2-36	4-42
First downs.....	7	10
Penalties-yds.....	6-45	5-45

Individual statistics

Ross

Receiving — Cook, 6-75, two touchdowns; Bill Boukissen, 3-13; Travis Miller, 1-5; Mike Abbott, 1-13; Rob Hall, 1-10; Ottney, 3-141, two touchdowns

Passing — Opelt, 14-33, 266 yards, 4 TDs

Rushing — Burel 10-40; Opelt, 5-53; Durand Robertson, 2-(-1); Cook, 1-2; Devin Johnson 1-2

Napoleon

Receiving — Matt Crandall, 1-11; Hummer, 3-38, 1 TD; Miller, 2-19; Vocke, 3-50, 1 TD; Eric Schwab, 1-11; Mark Vajen, 1-24; Andy Wolf, 2-22

Passing — Cramer, 13-23, 189 yards, 4 TDs

Rushing — Cramer, 12-44, Lucas Oberhaus, 1-3; Schwab, 2-5; Clayton Meyer, 2-10; Weaver, 25-11; Adam Miller, 1-10, TD

Fremont Ross (2-4, 0-1) at Lima Senior (1-5, 0-1)

Overview: Ross leads the all-time series 4-0. Ross quarterback Aaron Opelt had his best game of the season in a loss to Napoleon that opened Greater Buckeye Conference play last week. The Little Giants registered 21 second-quarter points but were outscored 28-21 in the first half. They allowed only 10 second-half points but were outscored 10-6. Opelt threw 51- and 61-yard scoring passes to Ryan Ottney, and 30- and 4-yard touchdowns to Kyle Cook, as part of a 266-yard game. Cook had six catches for 75 yards and Ottney had three for 141. Opelt also ran for 53 yards on five carries. Brad Weaver had 148 yards on the ground for Napoleon and Brandon Cramer matched Opelt with four scoring passes. Findlay defeated Lima Senior 49-6 last week.

HIGH SCHOOL FOOTBALL: FREMONT ROSS 42, LIMA SENIOR 12

Opelt unleashes win

By RYAN AUTULLO
News-Messenger correspondent

LIMA - The cold temperature Friday night had an apparent effect on the Fremont Ross receivers, who dropped several passes early against Lima Senior.

So it's quite ironic that the biggest play of the Little Giants' 42-12 victory came from a player making his first catch of the season.

Ross's Kory Decker pulled in a spectacular 17-yard pass from Aaron Opelt as time expired in the second quarter, capping an 80-yard drive to give the Little Giants a 14-12 lead entering halftime.

"It was a good freelance play," Ross coach Derek Kidwell said. "We had him going straight up the field on a seam route, it wasn't there, so he broke it off."

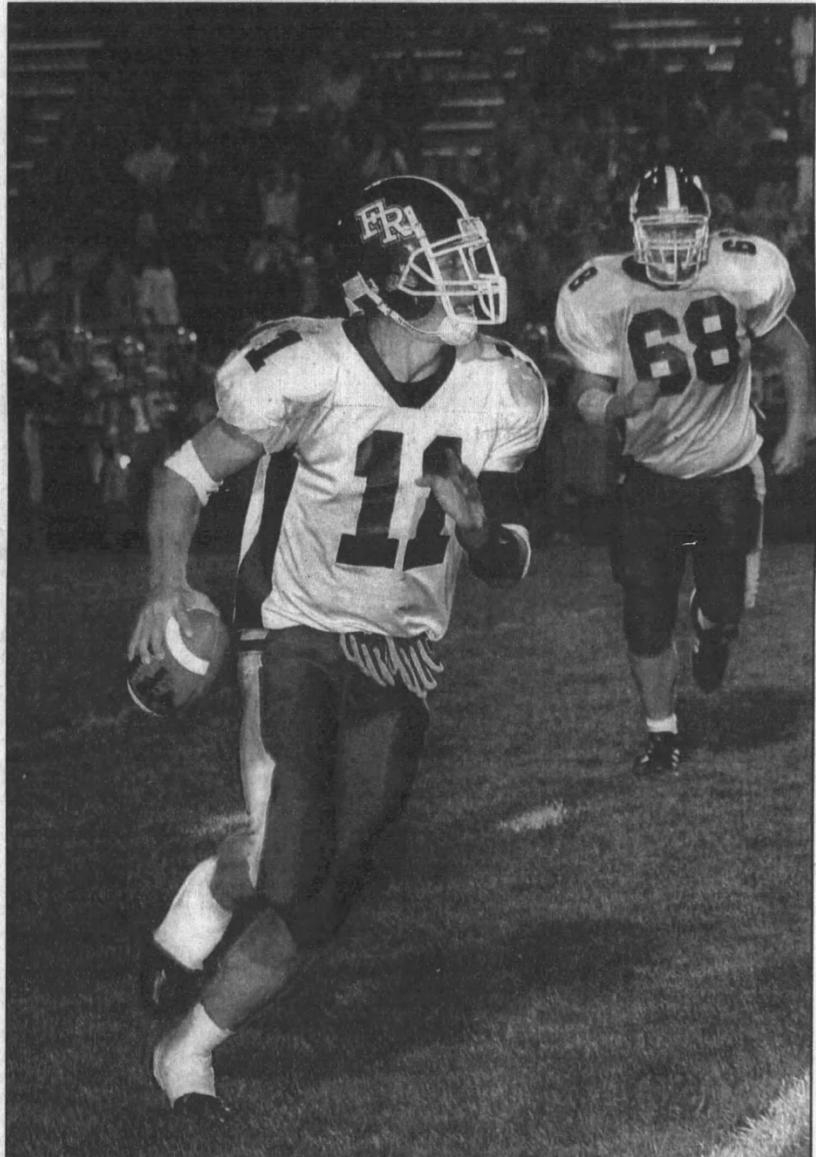
Ross, which improved to 2-5 overall and 1-1 in the Greater Buckeye Conference in snapping their four-game losing streak, has given up four touchdowns before the half this year, according to Kidwell. Decker's score was an obvious momentum booster as the Little Giants dominated the second half, scoring four times while shutting out the Spartans.

"They just sent me in the corner of the end zone and the guy kind of got off me a little bit," said Decker, who also scored a defensive touchdown in a season-opening win over Perrysburg. "It was a great pass, so I could go up and get it. I think it really helped because it put us on top going into half."

Opelt was 23-of-36 for — wait for it — 350 yards, including five touchdowns. He ran nine times for 54 yards. Kyle Cook was Opelt's main target, catching 10 passes for 144 yards and a score. Running back Bryan Burel had 106 yards and a score on 20 carries.

Ross got the ball to start the third quarter and immediately went to work. Opelt scrambled for 18 yards to put the Little Giants at Lima's 29-yard line. Six plays later, Opelt eluded defenders and connected with Cook, who broke off his intended route, to put Ross up 21-12.

"In the second half we just came out and all kicked it into third gear," Opelt said. "We came in here, talked about



News Messenger/Ken Dumminger

AARON OPELT looks up field as he scrambles with the ball. Opelt's arm, however, was most impressive in a victory over Lima Senior on Friday. Opelt threw for 350 yards and five touchdowns.

what we had to do and we went out the second half and got it done."

Lima caught a break on Ross's next drive when Cook fumbled and Matt Elston recovered. But they failed to capitalize when Shawn Eisenman missed a 30-yard field goal try. The Little Giants took over possession, eventually scoring on a 1-yard run by Burel. Opelt extended the drive on third-and-8

when he raced to his right before throwing across the field to a flat-footed Cook for a 42 yard gain.

"You can't defend him with some of the things he does," Kidwell said. "You can blitz, you can have people spying him, but he's so athletic."

The Spartans, who fell to 1-6, put constant pressure on Opelt but only registered one sack because of excellent blocking

by the Ross line and Opelt's uncanny elusiveness.

"He's a great player," said Lima coach Rick Vaughn. "We didn't do anything wrong, but he made some nice plays and a few lucky plays. We can't cover guys for a long period of time. We just didn't really get there, but that's because of his mobility."

See OPELT, B2

Opelt posts remarkable day

Continued from B1

Opelt and Ryan Ottney put Ross up 35-12 when they hooked up for a 66-yard strike with 6:15 left in the game. Ross's Jared King recovered the ensuing kickoff and Opelt hit Cori Clayton four plays later for a 30-yard score. Clayton, who also scored the Little Giants' first touchdown of the game, was hit hard at about the 10-yard line but stayed on his feet.

Opelt did much of the same Friday, breaking several tackles and making defenders who attempted to wrap him up look foolish:

"He can do just about anything," Decker said. "So many times he looked like he was going down, then he just made a play. He probably could have thrown for more if our receivers could have caught a couple balls, but I think he'll live with what he had."

High School Boys

Ross 42, Lima Senior 12

Ross	0	14	7	21	—	42
Lima Senior	6	6	0	0	—	12

Team Statistics

	R	L
First downs.....	22	10
Rushes-yards	36-185	41-133
Passing yards.....	350	58
Passes Att-comp-Int ..	37-23-0	5-1-0
Total off. plays-yards	73-535	46-191
Punts.....	2-33	4-38
Fumbles-lost	2-1	3-1
Penalties-yards	8-88	1-5
Possession Time	26:03	21:57

Individual Statistics

Passing: Ross — Opelt 23-36-350, Cook 0-1-0; Lima — Williams 1-5-58

Rushing: Ross — Burel 20-106, Opelt 9-54, Johnson 3-11, Cook 2-9; Lima — Allen 18-73, Williams 7-25, Allison 7-22, Keith 3-9

Receiving: Ross — Cook 10-144, Clayton 5-71, Ottney 3-75, Abbott 2-36; Lima — Irons 1-58

Records: Ross 2-5; Lima 1-6

Findlay (6-1, 2-0) at Fremont Ross (3-4, 1-1)

Overview: Ross leads the all-time series 50-29-3. Findlay amassed 23 first downs and gained 241 yards on the ground in a win over Marion Harding last week. It had 412 yards of total offense. Quarterback Aaron Opelt helped the Little Giants even their Greater Buckeye Conference record with his best game of the season in a victory over Lima Senior. Opelt threw for 350 yards and five touchdowns and added 54 rushing yards on nine carries. He completed 23-of-37 passes with no interceptions. Ross lost one fumble and punted only twice, scoring 14 points in the second quarter and 21 in the fourth. Ross scored just before the half, something the opposition had made a habit of earlier in the season, and shut Lima out in the second half. The Little Giants accumulated 22 first downs while allowing 10. They had 535 yards of total offense. Bryan Burel had 106 of Ross's 185 rushing yards. Kyle Cook had 10 catches for 144 yards, Cori Clayton had five for 71, Ryan Ottney had three for 75 and Mike Abbott two for 36.

HIGH SCHOOL FOOTBALL: FINDLAY 34, FREMONT ROSS 27

Home tough on Ross

By MATTHEW HORN
Sports Writer

Aaron Opelt of Fremont Ross remained on the turf following a punishing hit from Findlay's Luke Wiler with the Little Giants trailing by 21 in the second quarter Friday.

The Trojans obviously had momentum and only 14 seconds remained before the half.

But Ryan Ottney is not your average backup quarterback. The junior took one snap behind center and hooked up with Kirt Munson for a 45-yard touchdown strike. The Little Giants proceeded to outscore Findlay in the second half but couldn't come all the way back in a 34-27 Greater Buckeye Conference setback.

"He'd start anywhere else in Northwest Ohio," Little Giant coach Derek Kidwell said of Ottney. "He has a lot of poise. I have all the confidence in the world in Ryan Ottney."

Ottney said he was ready for the call.

"Coach just said go out and finish the job," he said. "I just followed my guy and he caught it."

Ottney, who added a rushing touchdown in the third quarter, hit Munson over the shoulder in stride streaking into the end zone to cut the deficit to 27-12 at the half.

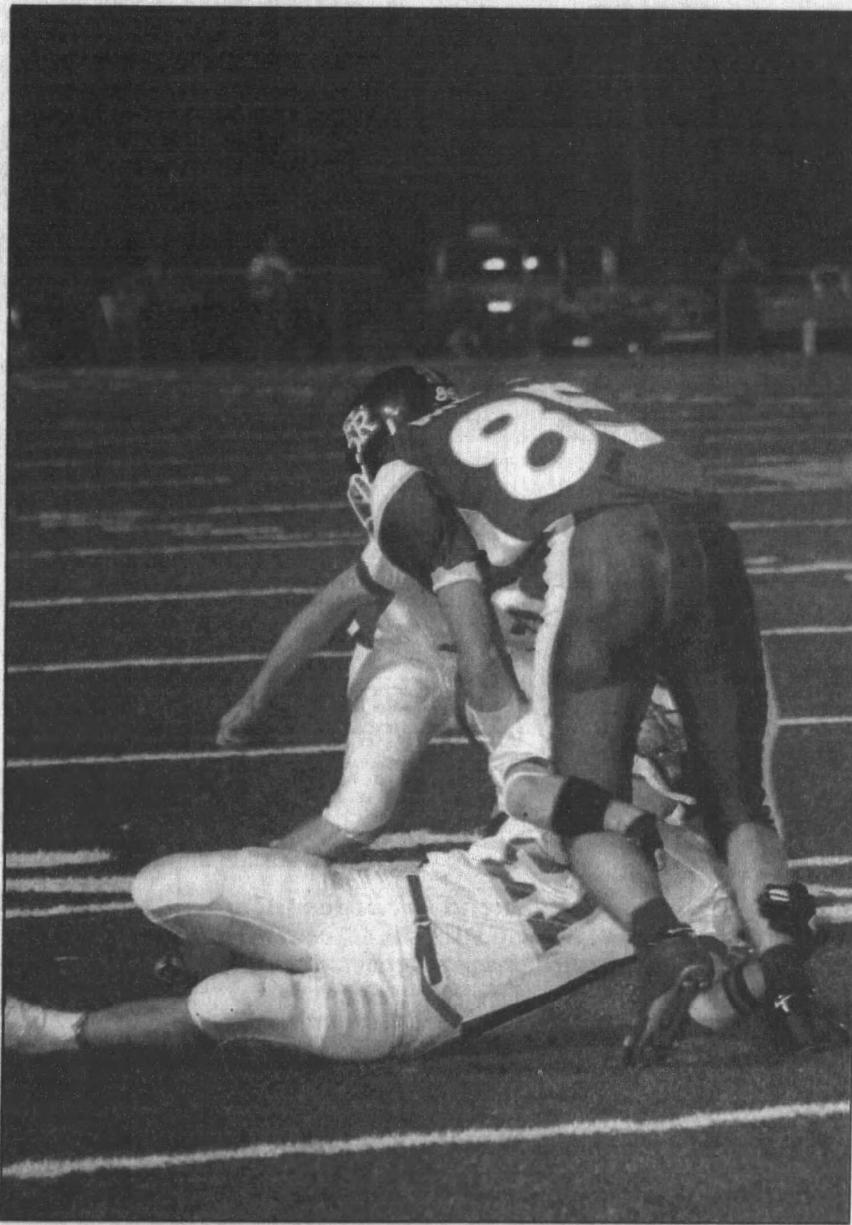
Kidwell said that when trainers tried to help Opelt off with his pads at the half, he gave a quizzical look, as if to suggest he would be finishing his final home game on the field. He returned and completed 23-of-36 passes to eight different receivers for 311 yards.

"He is a premier quarterback," said Findlay coach Cliff Hite. "He didn't let anybody down in this stadium. He's the real deal. We'll see him playing on Saturdays. I'd rank him up with the best we've had in this league. I'm glad he's a senior."

Hite coached Ben Roethlisberger of the Steelers in high school. Findlay is 7-1 and 3-0 in the GBC.

The loss means Ross failed to win a game at home in Don Paul Stadium's inaugural season.

"I'm sorry the seniors didn't win a football game at home," Kidwell said. "We were 0-5. I



THE LITTLE GIANTS' Billy Boukissen takes on two Findlay defenders Friday. Boukissen had two catches for 24 yards but the Trojans defeated Fremont Ross in the GBC.

don't have the answer. It's baffling to me. You don't doubt the effort. It's the mental lapses and turnovers at critical points. It's a shame we couldn't pull one out at home."

Hite was impressed with the stadium.

"When they're done it will be the best football facility in Northern Ohio," Hite said. "It's something we ought to consider."

On two occasions the Little Giants (3-5, 1-2) recovered a fumble and then turned the ball over on the very next play. Findlay also recovered an onside

kick and scored on the ensuing possession for a 20-6 advantage.

"We haven't held the momentum all season," Kidwell said. "Any time we get a hold of the momentum, we seem to give it right back."

See OTTNEY, B2

Ottney helps keep it close

Continued from B1

Findlay outgained Ross 243 yards to 16 on the ground on 27 more attempts. The Little Giants threw 37 times to the Trojans' 18.

"They came off the corners hard," Kidwell said. "They didn't confuse us. We knew

we could throw the ball."

Kyle Cook had five catches for 108 yards, Munson had four for 76, Ottney had four for 60 and Mike Abbott added five for 61. Opelt thought about tucking the ball before zipping a 9-yard scoring pass to Abbott in the first quarter and Bryan Burel scored on the ground from a yard out in the fourth.

High School

Findlay 34, Ross 27

Scoring Summary

First quarter

F — Brandon Walker 32 field goal
9:39

R — Aaron Opelt to Mike Abbott 9 (kick failed) 6:20

F — Walker 41 field goal 1:01

Second quarter

F — Caleb Enright 1 run (Walker kick) 9:10

F — Chris Schneider to Zack Kraus 35 (Walker kick) 8:18

F — Enright 1 run (Walker kick) :48

R — Ryan Ottney to Kirt Munson 45 (kick failed) :14

Third quarter

R — Ottney 1 run (Opelt to Abbott conversion) 7:57

Fourth quarter

F — Schneider 3 run (Walker kick) 9:00

R — Bryan Burel 1 run (Blair Ellenberger kick) 6:11

Team Statistics

	F	R
First downs.....	21	16
Rushes-yards.....	48-243	21-15
Passing yards.....	191	311
Att.-Comp.-Int.	18-11-1	37-24-1
Total yards.....	434	327
Penalties-yards	7-78	5-40
Fumbles-lost	5-2	0-0

Individual Statistics

RUSHING: Findlay — Caleb Enright 21-126, Chris Schneider 17-79, Matt Alexander 10-38. Ross — Bryan Burel 14-29, Aaron Opelt 6-(-14), Ryan Ottney 1-1.

PASSING: Findlay — Chris Schneider 17-11-1 — 191. Ross — Opelt 36-23-1 — 282; Ryan Ottney 1-1-0 — 45.

RECEIVING: Findlay — Ryan Sotoway 4-74, Zack Kraus 5-70, Andrew Leddy 2-47. Ross — Kyle Cook 5-108, Kirt Munson 4-76, Ryan Ottney 4-60, Mike Abbott 5-61, Cori Clayton 2-11, Paul Hershey 1-9, Bryan Burel 1-7.

Fremont Ross (3-5, 1-2) at Marion Harding (4-4, 2-1)

Overview: Ryan Ottney replaced quarterback Aaron Opelt at the end of the first half of Friday's game and threw a 45-yard touchdown pass to Kirt Munson with 14 seconds remaining in the second quarter but Ross lost 34-27. Opelt returned for the second half and completed 23-of-36 passes for 311 yards. Mike Abbott caught a touchdown pass from Opelt in the first quarter. Ottney scored on a 1-yard run from behind center with Opelt spread wide in the third and Bryan Burel added a 1-yard scoring run in the fourth. The Little Giants trailed 27-12 at the half before outscoring Findlay 15-7 in the second half. Ross allowed 243 yards on the ground and gained only 16 of its own on 21 carries. Kyle Cook had five catches for 108 yards, Munson had four for 76, Ottney had four for 60 and Abbott added five for 61. Bryson Faggs rushed 20 times for 192 yards and three touchdowns as Marion Harding defeated previously unbeaten Napoleon last week. He also added a touchdown reception. Marion Harding gained 296 yards on the ground and 243 through the air. Ross leads the all-time series 34-10.

HIGH SCHOOL FOOTBALL: ROSS 27, MARION HARDING 3

Harding falls hard

By MICHELLE LEPPERT
Gannett News Service

MARION — The Fremont Ross Little Giants continued their winning ways on the road, posting a 27-3 win over Greater Buckeye Conference foe Marion Harding at Harding Stadium on Friday.

The Presidents held Little Giants quarterback Aaron Opelt to just 6 of 17 passing in the first half. For the game, Opelt completed 14-of-33 for 217 yards and no touchdowns, well below his season averages.

"Our defense did exactly what we wanted to do. You cannot stop a player like Opelt," Harding head coach John Brady said. "You can only contain him. We definitely did that."

Ross dodged an early bullet when Harding had a kickoff return for a touchdown called back on a holding penalty on the first play of the game.

The Little Giants held the Presidents on fourth and one at the 6 to keep Harding out of the end zone on the opening drive.

"Our defense played outstanding," Ross coach Derek Kidwell said. "I think the key was our three short-yardage stops. I think that really set the tempo for us all night."

The Presidents faced

fourth and short three times in the first half and did not convert any of them.

"Fourth and one was horrible on our part," Brady said. "We had another fourth down opportunity and I kicked the field goal. If we had converted any of the other ones for a first down, I would have went for it there."

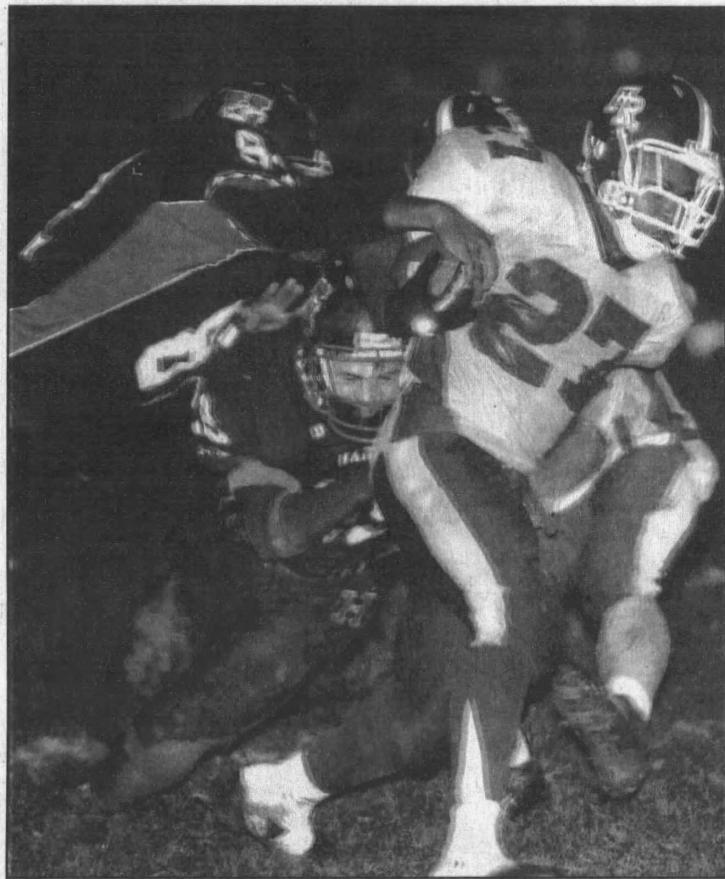
Both teams were hit with lots of penalties on the night. Ross was whistled for 13 infractions for 91 yards, while Harding was called for seven for 73 yards in sloppy conditions.

"The officiating was just terrible," Brady said.

Ross (4-5 overall, 2-2 GBC) put the first points on the board on a 34-yard field goal by Blair Ellenberger with just under 7 minutes left in the half.

Harding (4-5, 2-2) turned the ball over on downs on the next series, then caught a break on a questionable call by the officials. Opelt threw what appeared to be an incomplete pass, but the officials ruled it a lateral and Harding recovered the ball at the Ross 38. Kidwell argued the call and Ross was hit with back-to-back unsportsmanlike conduct penalties, giving Harding the ball at the Ross 7.

Faggs gained six yards on second down, but Hard-



Gannett News Service/James Miller
HARDING DEFENDERS Luke Severns (22) and Patrick Jones (87) drag down Fremont Ross's Bryan Burel (27) on Friday. Burel ran for 124 yards and two touchdowns.

ing was called for a false start on third down, moving the ball back to the five. Faggs was stuffed on third down and Brady elected to kick a field goal. Sophomore Tyler Winger converted the 21-yard try, tying the score going into the half.

"In the first half we had so many mental mistakes

and penalties, we were beating ourselves," Kidwell said. "I told them, I think we've taken one of their better punches and it's tied up 3-3, so let's go out in the second half and play Fremont style football, don't beat ourselves and let everything fall where it may. I'm happy with the results."

Ross shut down Hard-

ing's running game all night. The Presidents gained 38 net rushing yards on the night. Faggs, who played most of the game with a hand injury, managed just 73 yards on 23 carries, well below his season average as well.

"I'm really disappointed we couldn't run the ball on them," Brady said.

Football

High School

Fremont Ross 27, Harding 3

Ross	0	3	10	14	—	27
Harding	0	3	0	0	—	3

Scoring Summary

Second Quarter

FR — Blair Ellenberger 34-yard field goal 6:48

MH — Tyler Winger 21-yard field goal 1:04

Third Quarter

FR — Ellenberger 24-yard field goal 8:50

FR — Bryan Burel 2-yard run (Ellenberger kick) 3:39

Fourth Quarter

FR — Burel 9-yard run (Ellenberger kick) 9:45

FR — Arron Opelt 1-yard run (Ellenberger kick) :15

Team Statistics

	FR	MH
Yards rushing	231	38
Yards passing	217	118
Total yards	448	156
Passing	33-14-1	17-6-1
First downs	24	10
Fumbles	4	1
Fumbles lost	1	0

INDIVIDUAL LEADERS

Rushing — Fremont Ross, Burel 27-124, Opelt 11-95. Harding, Bryson Faggs 23-73

Passing — Fremont Ross, Opelt 14-33-1—217. Harding, C.J. Westler 6-17-1—118.

Receiving — Fremont Ross, Kyle Cook 6-131. Harding, Phillip Shepherd 3-58, Bryson Chambers 2-53

Fremont Ross (4-5, 2-2) at Sandusky (3-6, 1-3)

Overview: The Little Giants trail the all-time series 39-52-8 heading into the 100th matchup. Ross continued to play well on the road with its fourth win in four games in a 27-3 victory over Marion Harding last week. Strangely, the Little Giants were 0-5 at home. Harding managed only one field goal, and Ross outscored the Presidents 24-0 in the second half. Aaron Opelt completed 14-of-33 passes for 217 yards. Kyle Cook had six catches for 131 yards. Bryan Burel ran for two scores and Opelt added one touchdown on the ground. The Little Giants rushed for 231 yards as a team, including 124 from Burel and 95 from Opelt. Ross amassed 448 total yards to 156, and had 24 first downs to 10. Ross helped set the tone with an early stand on fourth-and-1 inside its 10-yard line. In fact, the Little Giants thwarted Harding on fourth-and-short three times in the first half. Harding gained only 38 rushing yards. Findlay narrowly topped Sandusky 24-21 last week. Former Ross athlete Jordan Edwards had 199 rushing yards and two touchdowns on 35 carries as Sandusky did well to control the clock. An interception halted Sandusky's final drive and the Blue Streaks held Findlay to only a first-half field goal.

HIGH SCHOOL FOOTBALL: FREMONT ROSS 42, SANDUSKY 20

Giants Cook Streaks

By VINCE GUERRIERI

Sports Editor

SANDUSKY — After Friday's game against Sandusky, the Fremont Ross locker room was a somber place.

It was as quiet as a funeral. Some players had tears in their eyes.

You'd never think that the Little Giants had just beaten the Blue Streaks for the first time since 2001, or that they had done so in a resounding fashion.

After the initial euphoria wore off for Ross's 42-20 win in the 100th meeting between the two teams, seniors looked around and realized their high school careers were over.

"They don't want it to end," said coach Derek Kidwell, who described his emotions as mixed. "Some of them don't want to take their pads off."

They had seen Ross go 1-19 in ninth and 10th grades, and saw Kidwell build up a sense of family among the players. Last year, the Little Giants lost to Sandusky in a heartbreaker that cost them a share of the Greater Buckeye Conference crown.

And this year, a 5-5 finish was less than they'd hoped for.

"I'd love to be in the playoffs right now," said quarterback Aaron Opelt. "But I don't regret anything that happened."

Ross went undefeated on the road, but winless at home. The Little Giants won three of their last four games, and Kidwell was pleased with the strong finish.

"We just kind of ran out of time," he said.

On the opening drive of the game, the Streaks engineered a 10-play drive culminating in Jordan Edwards diving in from a yard out, and Sandusky



News-Messenger/Ken Dumminger

LITTLE GIANT senior Kyle Cook looks for open field in Friday's 42-20 Greater Buckeye Conference victory over rival Sandusky. Cook scored three touchdowns in the contest.

See GIANTS, B2

Giants Cook Streaks

Continued From B1

drew first blood. Jeremy Strohm's kick failed.

Ross went up five minutes later when junior Aaron Hinkle recovered a fumble and ran it in 34 yards after no referee whistled the play dead. Blair Ellenberger's extra point was good to make it 7-6.

"I thought it would take off a big momentum change," Hinkle said.

The Little Giants exploded for 21 points in the second quarter, the first of which came when Aaron Opelt play-faked to Bryan Burel and ran 23 yards for a touchdown. After Sandusky's next drive stalled, Opelt, Burel and Kyle Cook marched the ball downfield before Opelt hit Cook for a 14-yard touchdown pass. Ellenberger had an extra 15 yards to kick the extra point due to a Ross taunting call, but made it.

The two teams combined for 17 penalties for 180 yards.

"I think it was the atmosphere, the emotion of the rivalry," Kidwell said.

Sandusky coach Jim Bollenbacher noted that a lot of it was just taunting.

"On the one hand, you want to keep that down," he said. "On the other, you've got to turn the other cheek."

Sandusky went three-and-out, allowing Ross to drive again and score with five seconds left in the half. Once again, it was an Opelt pass to Cook, this time from 13 yards out. Kidwell said it was huge.

"That happened to us so many times, we knew what it feels like in the locker room," he said.

Edwards scored midway through the third quarter, pulling Sandusky within 15, but after Cori Clayton returned the

ensuing kickoff 23 yards, Opelt drove the team downfield, running for 36 yards and passing for an addition five before hitting Ottney, who ran 23 yards for another touchdown to put Ross up 35-13.

Opelt threw a touchdown pass to Cook — who caught three of Opelt's four touchdown passes — in the fourth. Edwards returned the following kickoff down to the Little Giants' 37-yard line before Ellenberger brought him down. On the next play, quarterback Mark Feltner hit Terrance Churchwell, whose 37-yard touchdown pass was his only reception of the night.

Players waxed philosophical about their experiences after the game.

"We've got through the toughest times," Opelt said. "Twenty years from now, I'll still remember everyone on this team."

Bollenbacher tried to get his team to appreciate the history of the game.

"I know you feel like crap, but would any of you give up the experience," he asked his players, some teary-eyed and many long-faced. "They played a hell of a football game. They beat us. You didn't do anything wrong."

Cook said he was proud to have played for the greatest coaches in the state, and although he won't be playing football in the playoffs, he can't complain about his performance in his last game.

"This is the way I'd pick to end it," he said.

On the way out of the locker room, Kidwell stopped Hinkle.

"Next year, this game won't be our last," he said.

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A Giant win



News-Messenger/Ken Dumming

FREMONT ROSS QUARTERBACK Aaron Opelt hugs his father after the Little Giants beat Sandusky 42-20 in the 100th meeting in the storied rivalry. Opelt threw for three touchdown passes. **For complete game coverage, see story page B1.**

High School

Fremont Ross 42, Sandusky 20

Ross	7	21	7	7	—	42
Sandusky	6	0	7	7	—	20

Scoring summary

First quarter

Sandusky — Jordan Edwards 1-yard run, Jeremy Strohm kick failed, 7:20

Ross — Aaron Hinkle 34-yard fumble recovery, Blair Ellenberger PAT, 2:19

Second quarter

Ross — Aaron Opelt 23-yard run, Ellenberger kick, 10:14

Ross — Kyle Cook 14-yard run (Opelt pass), Ellenberger kick, 2:24

Ross — Kyle Cook 13-yard run (Opelt pass), Ellenberger kick, :05

Third quarter

S — Edwards 1-yard run, Strohm kick, 6:11

Ross — Ryan Ottney 23-yard run (Opelt pass), Ellenberger kick, 4:17

Fourth quarter

Ross — Cook 3-yard run (Opelt pass), Ellenberger kick, 7:13

S — Terrance Churchwell 37-yard run (Matt Feltner pass), Strohm kick, 6:50

Team statistics

	R	S
Passing yards	235	173
Rushing yards	243	105
Total yards	478	276
Comp-Att.-Int.	17-30-1	5-14-0
First downs	21	7
Penalties-yards	9-105	8-75
Fumbles-rec.	2-1	4-2
Punts-avg.	1-39	3-39.3

Individual statistics

PASSING: Sandusky — Feltner 5-14, TD. Ross — Cook 0-1; Opelt 17-29, 4 TDs, 1 INT

RUSHING: Sandusky — Edwards 21-81, 2 TDs; Feltner 4-4; Mark Wright 3-5; Josh Kaszonyi 1-2, Moore 3-11. Ross — Bryan Burel 16-42; Opelt 16-183, TD; Cook 1-18.

RECEIVING: Sandusky — Ryan Rowe 2-72; Wright 1-7; Dave Ruff 1-3; Marvin Ritchie 1-34; Churchwell 1-37, TD. Ross

— Cook 7-95, 3 TDs; Bill Boukissen 1-(3); Cori Clayton 1-35; Paul Hershey 3-41; Traveyon Wolverton 1-15; Rob Hall 1-9; Ottney 3-43, TD.

RECORDS: Ross 5-5 (3-2 GBC); Sandusky 3-7

Opelt named GBC back of year

Four other Ross players named to first team

By MATTHEW HORN
Sports Writer

Aaron Opelt of Fremont Ross ended his high school football career with gusto — twice.

Opelt had the best game of his prep career in a season-closing victory over rival Sandusky, and Monday, he was recognized as the top offensive back in the Greater Buckeye Conference.

And he will continue his time behind center at the Division I level in college if he so chooses. Opelt, who is also one of the best outfielders in the

state of Ohio, has not yet determined his sport of higher learning.

Little Giant football coach Derek Kidwell said Opelt's selection as the top offensive player in the conference was a no-brainer. He said he has never had a more athletic player as a head coach.

"It was kind of obvious," Kidwell said. "He was the best offensive player in the league and the other coaches felt the same way. He posed a threat every Friday night. He averaged over 300 yards of total offense in the league. It's hard to account for that.

"He's very versatile and can hurt you with his arm or his legs. They all knew they had to prepare to stop

him and not too many teams really did."

Opelt completed 17-of-29 passes for 235 yards and four touchdowns in the 42-20 victory over Sandusky. He also added 183 yards and a score on 16 rushing attempts.

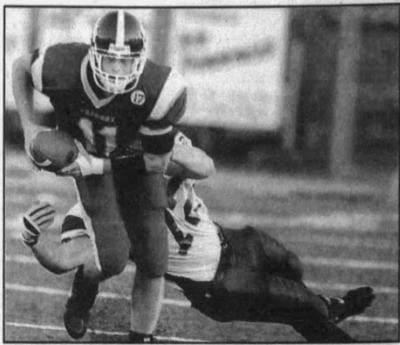
"It was fitting for Aaron as a person and with his athletic career to have the type of game he had against Sandusky," Kidwell said. "He put on a personal highlight film that night. We may never see one kid put on that type of show again. I'm glad his last high school football game was one of his best high school football games."

Kidwell knew Opelt had the makings of a Division I quarterback from the first

time he saw him throw a football.

"I knew that as soon as I got the job," Kidwell said. "I saw the potential and he developed into a very good quarterback. Whatever university he goes to will be pleased and I expect him to have a good career.

"He has athletic ability along with his arm strength. He has very good speed. He has the makeup to be a very good quarterback. He has not really yet learned coverages in the secondary. He was still learning our offense but once he gets with a quarterback coach and talks



News-Messenger File Photo

ROSS QUARTERBACK AARON Opelt breaks a tackle against Tiffin Columbian. Opelt was named the Greater Buckeye Conference offensive back of the year.

See EMS, B2

Ross well represented on GBC team

Continued From B1

coverages I expect him to really be good."

Three of Opelt's touchdown passes went to Kyle Cook in the Sandusky contest. Cook, who had 95 receiving yards in the game, was named first-team all-GBC offense.

"He's a very good athlete also," Kidwell said of Cook. "It's unfortunate we didn't move him strictly to receiver early in the year. He's a hard worker with very, very good hands. He never shies away from competition."

Jason Brindley, who helped protect Opelt and pave the way for the running game while giving Cook time to run his routes, was also designated first-team offense.

"Brindley was a quiet guy," Kidwell said. "He came to practice ready to work, never complained, never said much and just tried to get better every day."

Little Giants Jorge Perez, who saw constant double teams, and Kory Decker, who was a ball hawk in the secondary, were tabbed first-team all-GBC defense.

"For Jorge to have almost 100 tackles from a defensive tackle position is phenomenal," Kidwell said. "He was the most consistent player on defense all year. He always had a motor and was always going."

"Decker was really physical and took it personal. He enjoyed beating on the tight ends."

Kidwell was impressed with his first

teamers' maturity off the field as well.

"As good of football players as they've been I think they're better young men," Kidwell said. "That's a tribute to their parents and upbringing. They never complained and sticking with it when times weren't so good speaks to their character as well."

Kidwell said most people are unaware of just how much time Opelt puts into athletics.

"The thing people don't see is his work ethic," Kidwell said. "He's been very busy as a three-sport athlete (he also plays basketball) during his high school career."

Kidwell said he will miss Opelt for more than his rocket arm and elusiveness.

"A ton," he said. "Not as much from a football standpoint as getting to know him. I'll miss the daily conversations and small talk, but from a football standpoint it's hard to replace a kid of his caliber with everything he's done for us. He played a lot of varsity games and it's tough to replace that experience."

Little Giants Bryan Burel and Ryan Schwachow were second-team all-GBC offensive selections, and Tony Zimmerman and Josh Howey were second team on defense.

Ryan Ottney, Alex Fox, Durand Robertson, Cory Clayton and Billy Boukissen were honorable mention picks for the Little Giants.

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Football

Greater Buckeye Conference

League Champion: Findlay.
Coach of the Year: Cliff Hite (Findlay).
Offensive Lineman of the Year: Chris Miller (Sandusky).
Defensive Lineman of the Year: Adam Miller (Napoleon).
Offensive Back of the Year: Aaron Opelt (Ross).
Defensive Back of the Year: Phil Shepard (Marion Harding).
Kicker of the Year: Brandon Walker (Findlay).
Punter of the Year: Sean Eisenman (Lima Sr.).

First Team Offense

Caleb Enright	Findlay
Chris Schneider	Findlay
Kyle Cook	Ross
Jordan Archer	Lima Sr.
C.J. Westler	Marion Harding
Jordan Edward	Sandusky
Turner Acheson	Findlay
Ryan Sotoway	Findlay
Jason Brindley	Ross
Bryson Faggs	Marion Harding
Brad Weaver	Napoleon

First Team Defense

Zach Krauss	Findlay
Jorge Perez	Ross
Randy Summers	Marion Harding
Keil Miller	Napoleon
Brian Hummer	Napoleon
Hassan Moore	Sandusky
Kory Decker	Ross
Matt Beggin	Lima Sr.
Jeff Reese	Marion Harding
Eric Schwab	Napoleon
Anthony Watson	Sandusky

Second Team Offense

Elliot Volke	Napoleon
Chris Canden	Findlay
Andrew Leddy	Findlay
Bryan Burel	Ross
Brandon Carmier	Napoleon
Jon Friedmeyer	Findlay
Ryan Schwochow	Ross
Matt Bosch	Marion Harding
Matt Feltner	Sandusky

Second Team Defense

Ryan Kuhlman	Findlay
Brian Wingate	Findlay
Tony Zimmerman	Ross
Janihr Williams	Lima Sr.
DaVelle Winters	Marion Harding
Taylor Brown	Napoleon
Devon Taylor	Sandusky
Luke Witter	Findlay
Josh Howey	Ross
Cory Edwards	Lima Sr.
Nate Randle	Marion Harding
Kyle Jackson	Marion Harding
Matt Crandall	Napoleon

Honorable Mention

Ross: Ryan Ottney, Alex Fox, Durand Robinson, Cory Clayton, Bill Boukissen.

Guhn, Opelt named district players of year

Clyde's Marc Gibson named coach of year

By MATTHEW HORN
Sports Writer

Matt Guhn of Clyde and Aaron Opelt of Fremont Ross are two of the more prominent football names in the area.

So it should come as no surprise that Guhn was named Division III Northwest District defensive player of the year and Opelt received the same honor on the other side of the ball in Division I on Tuesday.

Each may be heard from again as the season accolades continue to roll in and surely has a bright future

ahead in the athletic realm — if not on the gridiron.

Guhn — a state and national champion as a junior — has signed to wrestle at Michigan. Opelt — one of the best outfielders in the state — has yet to decide on his college or sport for the next four years but will almost certainly be on somebody's Division I roster.

The Little Giants finished 5-5, and although they didn't advance to the post-season but Opelt impressed Northwest voters with impressive mobility and arm strength while leading his team to a remarkable undefeated road record.

Opelt holds just about every school record, passing for 2,148 yards this season, including four games of more than 250 yards. He completed 23 passes in

games against Lima and Findlay, and threw 16 touchdown passes this year. "I'm extremely excited for Aaron but I believe there are bigger and better things ahead," said Ross coach Derek Kidwell.

Guhn is hoping his Fliers can muster two more victories starting with Friday's state semifinal against Columbus St. Francis DeSales. And he'd trade any and all individual accomplishments for a title he could share with his brothers.

"I'd trade first-team on both sides of the ball on any list for a team state championship," he said. "Nothing could ever match a team state championship knowing it takes more than one person. I'd be willing to trade anything for that."

Seth Roach (offensive

line), Eric Schwartz (linebacker) and Robbie Michaels (defensive back) were also recognized first-team in Division III for the Fliers. First-year Clyde coach Marc Gibson was tabbed coach of the year.

Kyle Cook (offensive end) and Kory Decker (defensive back) were tabbed first team for the Little Giants, and Jorge Perez was second-team.

Caleb Balogh (defensive line) was second-team for the Fliers, and Seth Caudill and Eli Yasaki were honorable mention.

Bellevue's Eddie Hupp was a first-team Division III defensive lineman. Tyler Kubach (offensive line), Anthony Flores (defensive back) and Dave Foos (defensive back) made second team, and

Time Keegan was honorable mention.

Guhn, who knows a little about finding the end zone, with 22 touchdowns from his spot in the Fliers backfield this season, said a tackle or sack beats crossing the goal line.

"Getting a big sack is an unbelievable feeling," Guhn said. "You know you completely defeated the offensive line blocking you and the feeling of crushing the quarterback and killing the play dead is awesome."

Oak Harbor's Matt Moore was a second-team offensive lineman in Division IV.

Margaretta's Kent Edwards, Darren Kuns, Chris Scherer and Matt Zahel were honorable mention selections in Division V.

Gibsonburg's Jordan

Wolpert and Blake O'Neil were honorable mention picks in Division V.

Lakota's Mason Lowery, Nathan Sattler and Billy Sayre were also recognized honorable mention in Division V.

Guhn said his senior football season was at the forefront of his mind from the time he verbally committed to Michigan.

"I wanted to go out on a high note," he said. "One of my goals was to get something special. I was hoping to have something to remember the season by and I've been so fortunate to have so many memories individually and as a team."

Kidwell said Opelt did

See OPELT, B3

Opelt, Guhn receive district honors

Continued From B1

enough to have very well led the Little Giants to more than their five wins. It's not often that an offensive player of the year comes from a .500 squad.

"That speaks volumes of his ability and speaks highly of his success," Kidwell said. "Football's not like baseball, where you can dominate a game and win. You can be dominant but there are three phases to the game and a few times we didn't win all three."

Guhn said he would not have gained status as the best defensive player in Northwest Ohio without players such as Schwartz among the front seven with him.

"All these records and attention — none of this happens if not for the crew behind me," he said. "I don't think the rest of the line or the other running backs get recognized nearly enough. All of this

Matt Guhn stuff is not possible without the things they do. I think about the records and I think thank you guys. There's more to these achievements than just my name. They do so much, I wish their names were right there with it."

Guhn needs two sacks to tie the school season record of 16 and career record of 27. He also holds Flier records for yards in a season and career, touchdowns in a season and career, and points in a season and career.

"A lot of those touchdowns are from 3-1 yard out. Seventy-five percent I could walk into the end zone," he said of his offensive line. "Those guys get so much of a push that anybody could walk in."

Guhn said Michaels made the team for his ability to sniff out the ball and make an impact.

"He's everywhere," Guhn said. "He's all over the field. He'll come

out of nowhere to make a play."

Schwartz made first team despite missing three games because of injury. He said the time off not being able to help his teammates gave him an extra push.

"That was a goal after knowing I'd miss a few games," he said. "You have to have something to go after."

Schwartz said Gibson does more than teach the game.

"He tries to instill football skills and morals," he said. "He wants us not only to prosper at football but as young men. The way he acts is a tremendous model for us."

And his schemes obviously work.

"He showed his ability to coach and his knowledge of the game," Guhn said. "He's given us something to talk about for the rest of our lives. It's amazing he could do that."

Football

High School

Northwest Ohio All-District

COLUMBUS — The 2005 Northwest All-District football teams, as selected by a media panel from the district:

DIVISION I

First Team

Offense: Ends—Zack Kraus, Findlay, 6-0-1, 165 pounds, senior; **KYLE COOK, FREMONT ROSS, 6-0, 190, SR.** Linemen—Terner Acheson, Findlay, 6-2, 250, jr.; Steve Lintern, Mans. Senior, 6-1, 260, sr.; Ben Burkett, Tol. St. John's, 6-4, 257, jr.; Jon Templin, Sylvania Northview, 5-11, 215, sr.; Demecus Beach, Tol. Scott, 6-3, 230, sr. Backs—Caleb Enright, Findlay, 5-11, 240, sr.; Dante Davis, Mans. Senior, 6-0, 192, sr.; DeAndre Ware, Tol. St. John's, 5-8, 178, sr.

QUARTERBACK—AARON OPELT, FREMONT ROSS, 6-2, 198, SR. Place Kicker—Brandon Walker, Findlay, 6-1, 176, jr.

Defense: Linemen—Ryan Kuhlman, Findlay, 6-3, 217, jr.; Pete Reese, Tol. Scott, 6-4, 240, sr.; Matt Meridieth, Sylvania Northview, 5-8, 170, sr.; **KORY DECKER, FREMONT ROSS, 6-3, 215, SR.** Linebackers—Randy Summers, Marion Harding, 5-10, 200, jr.; Luke Wiler, Findlay, 5-11, 193, jr.; Vann Burden, Tol. Waite, 6-0, 190, sr.; Antoine Moore, Tol. Scott, 5-11, 215, sr. Backs—Ryan Sotoway, Findlay, 5-11, 161, sr.; Phil Shepherd, Marion Harding, 5-10, 195, sr.; Matt Beggin, Lima Senior, 5-10, 180, jr.; Eric Suttie, Sylvania Northview, 5-11, 190, sr. Punter—Bill Claus, Tol. St. John's, 6-0, 170, jr.

OFFENSIVE PLAYER OF THE YEAR: AARON OPELT, FREMONT ROSS.

Defensive players of the year: Ryan Sotoway, Findlay; Phil Shepherd, Marion Harding.

Coach of the year: Cliff Hite, Findlay.

Second Team

Offense: Ends—Mike Lucas, Tol. Start, 6-0, 165, sr.; Sherrod Thompson, Tol. Start, 5-11, 160, jr.; Matt Wade, Sylvania Northview, 6-2, 195, jr. Linemen—Chris Condeni, Findlay, 6-4, 277, sr.; Jordan Archer, Lima Senior, 6-1, 260, sr.; Dan Lashley, Mans. Senior, 5-11, 210, sr.; Kyle Hakius, Tol. St. John's, 6-3, 268, jr.; Scott Lewis, Sylvania Northview, 6-2, 305, jr. Backs—Bryson Faggs, Marion Harding, 5-11, 210, jr.; Casey Meridieth, Sylvania Northview, 5-7, 190, sr.; Antwone Ramsey, Tol. Scott, 6-0, 175, sr.; Eddie Toles, Tol. Bowsher, 5-8, 200, sr. Quarterback—Chris Schneider, Findlay, 6-3, 228, jr.; Justin Greene, Mans. Senior, 5-11, 180, sr.; Sean Patterson, Tol. St. John's, 6-2, 185, jr. Place Kicker—Jimmy Day, Mans. Senior, 6-1, 200, jr.

Defense: Linemen—Anthony Schultz, Tol. St. John's, 6-3, 230, sr.; Andy Mutchler, Sylvania Northview, 5-11, 246, sr.; Jon Konce, Tol. Waite, 5-8, 165, sr.; Roger McBride, Tol. Scott, 5-10, 253, sr. Linebackers—Tom Schoen, Tol. St. John's, 6-0, 196, sr.; Aaron McGurk, Tol. Bowsher, 6-1, 205, sr.; Mike Dewar, Perrysburg, 5-10, 185, sr.; **GEORGE PEREZ, FREMONT ROSS, 5-9, 245, SR.** Backs—Branden Stansley, Sylvania Northview, 5-7, 145, sr.; Bryan Burrell, Tol. Waite, 5-11, 183, sr.; Anderson Fletcher, Tol. Scott, 6-0, 175, sr.; Mike Falter, Perrysburg, 6-0, 160, jr.

Honorable Mention

Clay Chaffin, Perrysburg; Tyler Linthicum, Perrysburg; Adrien Hill, Tol. Scott; Dominic Bracey, Tol. Scott; Michael Duhart, Tol. Scott; Jake Bombrays, Tol. St. Johns; Josh Quinlan, Tol. St. Johns; Jalil Carter, Tol. St. Johns; Zach Reiner, Tol. St. Johns; Floyd Russell, Tol. Waite; Lucas Donnel, Tol. Waite; Chris Laser, Tol. Whitmer; Kevin Koger, Tol. Whitmer; Andrew Leddy, Findlay; Brian Wingate, Findlay; Jon Friedmeyer, Findlay; Cortey Edwards, Lima Senior; Mel Sutton, Mans. Senior; Demetrius Newbern, Mans. Senior; Greg Sazdanoff, Mans. Senior; Brad Leestma, Tol. Start; Ron Tisdale, Perrysburg; Ray Parker, Tol. Waite; Derek Bobo, Tol. Scott.

HIGH SCHOOL FOOTBALL

Opelt, Guhn thrive under new coaches

By MATTHEW HORN
Sports writer

Aaron Opelt was ecstatic when Derek Kidwell arrived at Fremont Ross with his new offense two years ago.

And Matt Guhn felt much the same way when Marc Gibson came to Clyde before this season.

Opelt capped his high school career being recognized Division I Northwest District player of the year. Guhn was named defensive player of the year in Division III in the midst of the team's playoff run.

Opelt said he was excited with the myriad of possibilities in Kidwell's offense from the first time they met.

"I couldn't have been happier," Opelt said. "From the first workout I knew there was so many things we could do. It's too bad we didn't have a little more time together."

Guhn was one of four Fliers tabbed first team as Gibson captured coach of the year honors.

Eric Schwartz — a first-team linebacker — said Gibson encouraged the team to break huddles with "state champs" during summer conditioning to get it in his players' minds, and the group obviously kept it going. The tactic certainly isn't unique to Gibson, but there are only four Division III coaches with teams continuing the practice.

Kyle Cook (offensive end) and Kory Decker (defensive back) were also tabbed first team for the Little Giants. Opelt said defensive coaches had to prepare for Decker.

"Offenses had to worry about him," Opelt said. "He'd make a play one way or another whether it was in pass coverage, pass rush or on a running back. He just had a nose for being by the ball."

Cook was first-team despite not playing wide receiver exclusively until late in the campaign.

"That speaks on his athletic ability and work ethic," Kidwell said. "He would have had an amazing season if we didn't have to play him on defense early. He's a team player and he gave up individual success to play defense. He didn't play as a sophomore. I still think he has a lot of football in him if he wants to pursue it at the next level."

"He's one of the most competitive players I've ever coached. He never shies away from competition and he wants the ball when the game's on the line."

Guhn, Opelt not hard to fit

Continued from B1

Cook said defense comes first and he wanted to help the team. He didn't move to wide receiver full time until the Napoleon game.

"I started at linebacker and rotated in at wide receiver every other play," he said. "The switch was made to make more plays. They didn't want to wear me down, and it worked well so we stuck with it."

Guhn and Schwartz each said that playing both ways is a challenge they enjoy. And with Gibson's ball-control offense and stout defense they don't get too tired.

"We only move the ball a few yards at a time," Schwartz said.

And the other team is fortunate to do the same.

Schwartz is adept at stopping the run and chasing the quarterback but said that an open field tackle or tackle for loss is more exciting than a sack.

"I'm more of a run stopper, but I try to do the best I can in both aspects," he said. "The purpose of the defense is to tackle the ball as fast as you can."

Schwartz had trouble choosing an individual achievement that stands out from the season thus far. He instead pointed to the team accomplishments of beating Bellevue and Huron and advancing to the state semis.

Opelt and Cook are very close off the football field and have spent countless hours working on routes and technique to build confidence and a comfort zone on their own.

"We just played catch," Opelt said. "He knew how to get open. It was like we were thinking the same thing on every play. It was nice to have somebody out there like that."

Kidwell said he will miss his seniors but knows they'll be back.

"Hopefully they'll be proud of what they started and they'll be part of the family forever," he said.

Opelt named first-team all-Ohio

Teammates Kyle Cook and Kory Decker given special mention.

By MATTHEW HORN
Sports Writer

First Aaron Opelt of Fremont Ross did the startling Monday.

Then he surprised himself.

He bagged a 10-point buck while deer hunting in Gallipolis early in the day.

Then he nabbed one of three quarterback spots on the first-team all-Ohio squad.

"My dad met me down here half an hour ago and

he told me (of the honor)," Opelt said. "I was more shocked than I was when I shot my deer. It's unbelievable."

"I'm very proud of it. It's an unbelievable honor to have. It's pretty neat. I really never expected anything like this playing as a sophomore, junior or even this year. It snuck up on me I guess."

Opelt's deer is the second largest he has ever shot and the largest he has seen taken out of the woods where he was hunting in the last eight years.

The all-state designation was the loftiest of his athletic career — although a scholarship will certainly usurp it in the future.

Little Giant coach Derek Kidwell did no campaigning

for his signal caller — who earned the recognition off a 5-5 season. Each of the Little Giants' wins came on the road and they topped a Toledo Central Catholic team that will play Canfield in the Division II state title game Friday.

In fact, Opelt shoved a scrambling TCC quarterback out of bounds to preserve a 20-14 victory in Week 2.

"I don't put people up for the heck of it," Kidwell said. "I put up players that can play for anybody in the state since we're Division I. I don't think there's any Division I coach that wouldn't want him on their team. If you can find a better Division I quarterback than Aaron I'd like to see him.

"I'm happy for the young

man. I think he's definitely deserving of any award he gets with how hard he worked in two years."

Kyle Cook and Kory Decker were special mention selections for Ross.

"It's a big honor for them to be considered among the better football players in the state," Kidwell said.

Findlay's Ryan Sottoway (defensive back), Caleb Enright (running back) and Brandon Walker (kicker) were also named to the first team from the Greater Buckeye Conference in Division I. Offensive lineman Terner Acheson was second-team, and Ryan Kuhlman, Luke Wiler and Zack Kraus were special mention for the Trojans.

Chris Miller (offensive lineman) and Jordan Ed-

wards (running back) were first-team for Sandusky in Division II. Hassan Moore was a special mention.

Phil Shepherd was a first-team defensive back for Marion Harding and Randy Summers was special mention.

Matt Beggin was special mention for Lima Senior.

Opelt threw for 2,148 yards this season, including four games of 250 or more. He twice completed 23 throws in a game and added 16 touchdown passes while rushing for nearly 600 yards.

Kidwell said his most notable statistic was an average of more than 300 passing yards per game in the GBC.

"All the league schools

had seen him and knew his

talent," Kidwell said. "And schemed to stop him and eliminate his big plays, and he still found ways to march us up and down the field."

Opelt said he began to consider playing quarterback at the Division I level after his junior year.

"We had an all-right year together and coach kept putting it in my ear that I could do it," he said. "I never really thought about it. I started getting calls and the schools started getting bigger. I started going to camps and when I knew that I really could do it, it started becoming a goal."

Now the only thing left is to make a decision on his destination.

See OPELT, B2

Opelt named to all-Ohio team

Continued From B1

"I'll make a decision on the school that fits me best and once I get there it's going to be all about sports," he said. "If you focus on one thing long enough and work hard at it you'll have success."

Opelt said the Little Giants had the makings of a playoff team.

"We had the right players in the right spots but we let a few games slip. I'd take those guys against any team we played against — I'd rather have my teammates. Every high school team has ups and downs. We didn't click early. There is no part of the team that killed us. We shot ourselves in the foot. We knew we could do it.

"I wouldn't take anything back. I'd do it again. There's nothing like Friday. People say it and say it but you really don't know what it is until you play your last game knowing you won't step out there again with those guys. It's a great feeling that a lot of people won't have again."

That list does not include Opelt, although the feelings will be pushed back a day to Saturday.

"He's not a kid of many words," Kidwell said. "The thing I like to remember is his competitiveness. It's got to be self-gratifying that he played his best football game in his last high school football game against our biggest rival. It wasn't easy for any of the seniors to take off their pads but after the game he played, it made it a little easier for him to take off his Fremont jersey and see what jersey is next."

"He never shied away from pressure. It's tough with a new coach in a new system and he never got flustered. He was patient and willing to learn, and kept working every day. His best football is still ahead of him."

Opelt, who is also a standout outfielder in the state and a versatile talent on the basketball court, completed 17-of-29 passes for 235 yards and four touchdowns against Sandusky to close his prep career. He added 183 yards and one score on 16 carries.

"Being a three-sport athlete he's been very busy," Kidwell said. "That's one of his biggest contributions — any coach would say he busted his butt for all of us. That's the type of kid he is. If you ask him to do something he'll do it and won't question it."

Opelt said he simply fits into a group.

"When coaches say I work extra hard, I just do what the whole team does," he said. "The linemen and everybody else are in the weight room. We worked as a team. Everybody lifted in the mornings. That really helped our success."

But Opelt was the one with the shotgun arm who needed the slightest of seams to cover large chunks of yardage by air or land.

"I wish I had him for four years," Kidwell said. "I told the seniors that if I'd have had them for four years we wouldn't be at a banquet. We'd be preparing for the playoffs."

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