

2014 Division II State Playoffs



JONATHAN BIRD/STAFF PHOTO

Fremont Ross head football coach Craig Yeast addresses his football players during a pep rally celebrating the football team's playoff game.

LITTLE GIANTS HEAD TO PLAYOFFS

Staff report

FREMONT — Fremont Ross High School's head football coach told pep rally attendees Thursday he needed each and every one of them to support the Little Giants as they head to the playoffs.

"We will need every single one of you in the stands, cheering us on," said Craig Yeast, who introduced the football team to the gatherers.

The opening round of the Division II, Region 4 playoffs starts 7:30 p.m. Friday at Nordon High School in Nordon.

It's Ross's first playoff appearance since 2010.

Follow live updates at www.thenews-messenger.com.



JONATHAN BIRD/STAFF PHOTO

Members of the Fremont Ross band perform during a pep rally celebrating the football team's playoff game.



JONATHAN BIRD/STAFF PHOTO

Nordonia's Chase Ryba breaks up a pass intended for Fremont Ross' Jeffery Barnett during the first half Friday. The Little Giants ended their season with a 7-4 record.

NORDONIA 58, FREMONT ROSS 26

END OF THE ROAD

Knights' passing game too much as Little Giants' season ends

By Rich McGowan
Asst. editor/sports reporter

MACEDONIA — Big plays against its secondary have been an all-too familiar sight for the Fremont Ross football team this season.

While Ross' defense had done a better job of limiting those downfield bombs during its five-game winning streak en route to the Little Giants' first postseason game since 2010, the long pass — and Ross' struggles to defend it — returned Friday night.

Nordonia (11-0 overall, the No. 2 seed of Division II, Region 4) used the strong arm of quarterback David Murray and the big play capability of its receivers to hit Ross repeatedly with long touchdown passes, ending Ross' season 58-26.

Ross' season ends with a 7-4 record and with a newfound self-respect in the region and the Three Rivers Athletic Conference.

"They're one of a very small company of teams that worn this uniform and had an opportunity to play in the playoffs," said first-year coach Craig Yeast. "That means something. More than anything, I'm proud of them."

Ross' offense jumped out of the gate on fire. The Little Giants scored on the game's opening possession and then drove inside the Knights' red zone before stalling and turning the ball over on downs.

Soon thereafter, Nordonia



JONATHAN BIRD/STAFF PHOTO

Fremont Ross players look on in the closing minutes of their postseason game against Nordonia.

hit Ross with its first long bomb of the night. Murray found Dylan Mabin wide open down the Ross sideline for a 78-yard touchdown and a 7-6 lead. Ross' ensuing possession ended in a Jalen Slick pass being intercepted by Nordonia's Alex Alders. Alders broke a tackle and returned the pick 65 yards for a touchdown and a 14-6 lead.

Ross answered back from the pick-six with a nice, 14-play drive capped by a 3-yard Slick touchdown pass to Russ Yeast, trimming the deficit to 14-12.

Then the Nordonia offense came to life.

The Knights responded to Ross' touchdown in just 42 seconds. Murray and Mabin connected again on another bomb, a 73-yarder, for a 21-12 lead.

Following a Ross three-and-out on the ensuing posses-

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Fremont Ross

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sion, the Knight struck again. Nordonia moved the ball 74 yards in just five plays, capped by another Murray to Mabin touchdown pass.

"One of the highlights we have to work on for next year is our defense," junior linebacker Tyler Schell said. "We let the offense down tonight and I feel terrible about it and I know the other guys on defense do too."

But Nordonia wasn't finished. The Knights got the ball back with 2:07 to play in the half and marched down the field in 10 plays. Murray found Alders in the corner of the end zone for 13-yard touchdown and a 34-12 lead with 39 seconds to play before halftime.

Murray had 300 passing yards at halftime, more than 200 of which were caught by Mabin.

"They're good," Yeast said. "When you play against a really good football team like Nordonia you have to play your best game and you can't make mistakes. Tonight we made one too many mistakes. To be honest, they just beat us."

Ross, however, picked up a little momentum going into halftime. Slick found Jarren Hampton over the middle. Hampton, who made a terrific catch, broke away from the Nordonia secondary for a 55-yard touchdown on the last play of the first half as Ross went into halftime still alive, 34-20.

Nordonia, however, answered. The Knights scored on the opening drive of the third quarter as Murray took a quarterback keeper for a 42-yard touchdown.

Nordonia effectively put the game



JONATHAN BIRD/STAFF PHOTO

Nordonia's Denzel Ward blocks a punt by Fremont Ross' Patrick Rusher during the second half on Friday.

away on Ross' next possession. With the Little Giants punting from the 50, Nordonia's Denzel Ward blocked the kick. The force of Ward's block sent the ball bouncing and rolling back into the Ross end zone where Tyler Soltis fell on the ball for a Nordonia touchdown and a 48-20 lead midway through the third quarter.

Uriah Haun scored the final touchdown of Ross' season, scoring from 15 yards out with eight minutes to play.

Slick finished the night 22-for-33 passing for 278 yards and three touchdowns. Haun led Ross with 56 yards rushing.

Though disappointed by the season's closure, Yeast said Ross' success this season raised the bar for Little Giant teams to come.

"It's a taste of the playoffs," Yeast said. "The bar has been set to where we want to be and now the next step is to take some time off, get healthy and get in the weight room and start working toward getting back here and trying to take the next step."

Nordonia 58, Ross 26

Ross	6	14	0	6	—	26
Nordonia	14	20	24	0	—	58

First quarter

FR -- James Wright 14 pass from Jalen Slick (kick fail), 8:56

NHS -- Dylan Mabin 78 pass from David Murray (Jimmy Embrescia kick), 2:05

NHS -- Alex Alders 65 interception return (Embrescia kick), 0:24

Second quarter

FR -- Russ Yeast 3 pass from Slick (pass fail), 7:48

NHS -- Mabin 73 pass from Murray (Embrascia kick), 7:06

NHS -- Mabin 27 pass from Murray (Embrascia kick), 4:10

FR -- Jarren Hampton 55 pass from Slick (Slick run), 0:00

Third quarter

NHS -- Murray 42 run (Embrascia kick good), 10:05

NHS -- Tyler Soltis punt blocked revcover in end zone (Embrascia kick), 6:49

NHS -- Mabin 10 pass from Murray (Embrascia kick), 5:09

NHS -- Embrascia 21 field goal, 0:43

Fourth quarter

FR -- Uriah Haun 15 run (pass fail), 8:02

	R	N
First downs	17	11
Total Net Yards	396	406
Rushes-Yards	35-118	17-41
Passing	278	365
Comp-Att-Int	22-33-1	15-24-0
Punts-Average	0-0	0-0