

No. 3 Titans tackle Giants

Ross boys finish 12-5

By **MICHAEL PIDANICK**
Staff writer

PERRYSBURG — Fremont Ross boys soccer coach Jeff Pendry needed only five words to sum up the Toledo St. John's team.

"Boy, those guys are good," Pendry said Tuesday night after the Titans handed his Little Giants a convincing 6-0 loss in a Division I sectional semifinal game at Steinecker Stadium.

St. John's — ranked third in the latest coaches poll, highest among northwest Ohio teams, and considered a legitimate threat to win the state championship — improved to 12-0-3. The Titans tied No. 1 Cleveland St. Ignatius earlier this season.

St. John's will play for the sectional title at 6:30 p.m. Monday at Perrysburg against Sylvania Southview, a 6-1 winner over Toledo Whitmer in Tuesday's first semifinal game.

The Little Giants were ousted from last year's sectional tournament with an 8-0 semifinal loss to St. John's.

"We knew we had to play a different type of game against them," said Pendry, whose team finished the year 12-5 and tied for the most wins in school history. "They're always one of the best teams in northwest Ohio. They have a large talent pool to select from; we have 30 players to choose from, whereas they have 60 to 70.

"So it's hard to get St. John's on a down year."

Ross was without the services of senior forward Derek Dalton, who was serving the second game of his two-game suspension resulting from his role in a fight last Tuesday against Sandusky.

"It was hard to play the game without Derek," Pendry said. "We hoped we'd be able to use him. We tried some things, but he had to sit this one out."

Junior forward Ryan Ehle scored two goals for the Titans. St. John's outshot Ross 21-1 and put the game out of reach with a four-goal outburst in a 10-minute span early in the second half. Alex Damschroeder recorded Ross's lone shot late in the second half.

Ross junior goalkeeper Rob Straight was stellar in defeat, recording 15 saves. He stopped Nick Burtscher three times from point-blank range in the opening minutes.

The game remained scoreless until 12:50 remained in the first half, when Ehle scored off a feed from Troy Botha. The killer for the Little Giants came nine minutes later, when Burtscher's long drive went in off Straight's hands to extend the lead.

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The floodgates opened shortly after halftime. Schira began the onslaught when he scored off a Botha rebound with 34:32 left. Ehle cashed in a rebound for his second of the contest with 31:54 left, and, 56 seconds later, Botha scored on a pass from Kyle Yoder. Robert Houard scored on a

dish from John Ballay with 26:20 to play to close the scoring.

"We played them pretty well except for the first 10 minutes of the second half," Pendry said. "The guys really wanted to give them a battle, and they did.

"Our program is getting better. We want to get to a level where we can compete with St. John's."

The loss ended one of the most successful seasons for the Little

Giants, who won the Great Lakes League title for the first time. The game was the last in the high school careers of Kyle Myers, Zach White, Mike Salas, Brian Baacke and Dalton.

"It was a tremendous season," Pendry said.

"I feel kind of bad that our seniors had to go out with a game like this. But they had a tremendous career."