

Division I Sectional Tournament

FREMONT ROSS 71, TOLEDO START 68

FREMONT ROSS WINS THRILLER OVER START



Ross' TJ Mason, right, and Toledo Start's Keishawn Syph go after a rebound.

MOLLY CORFMAN/THE NEWS-MESSENGER

Little Giants rally from down 5 with 11 seconds left to top Toledo Start

JOSH MORCRET
CORRESPONDENT

TOLEDO - Fremont Ross could see its season coming to an end. The Little Giants trailed by five points with 11 seconds left. Then, with a pair of timely buckets aided by quick thinking, Ross found new life.

Brandon Trolie nailed a bucket with a toe on the line, and after a steal and assist from Jarren Hampton, Brody Chudzinski hit the game-tying 3-pointer.

Trolie and Chudzinski each hit a key shot in overtime as Ross escaped with a 71-68 win over Toledo Start in a Division I sectional game at Toledo Central Catholic High school on Monday.

"We found a way to win," Chudzinski said. "A lot of people thought we were going to lose after we lost to them the first time, but I thought we played a lot better tonight."

The Little Giants improve to 8-15 and advance to a sectional semifinal matchup with second-ranked Lima

Senior (22-0) on Wednesday back at Toledo Central Catholic. The Spartans end their season at 3-18.

"We got down seven points and we took a timeout and told the kids they had to be aggressive," Ross coach Mark Gedeon said. "Start made free throws down the stretch to really force us to make shots. We hit some 3s. Jarren Hampton make a big play defensively, knowing where to be and making a smart play by kicking it out to Brody."

Chudzinski's 3-pointer sent the Ross crowd into a frenzy, as many thought Trolie's shot was also a 3-pointer, as was announced by the announcer. The officials talked it over and correctly ruled the game to be tied with one second left on the clock. Start inbounded, but a 3-point heave was well short, sending the game to overtime.

"We had some careless turnovers in the fourth quarter," Gedeon said. "Thankfully, the 3-point line was our friend in the end."

Keishawn Syph, who had hit four straight free throws in the final 45 seconds of regulation, hit two more and Jacoby Myers scored to put Start ahead, 68-64, with 2:28 left in overtime. Trolie, who had struggled with his shot for the first three-plus quarters, drilled a 3-pointer to draw the Little Gi-

ants within a point. After Start committed one of its 21 turnovers on the night, Chudzinski airballed a 3-pointer, but the Spartans missed on an opportunity to extend the lead on the other end.

As all good shooters do, Chudzinski used his best short-term memory loss. He hit his seventh 3-pointer on the night to put Ross ahead, 70-68.

"We did a nice job reversing the ball on that play with Brody," said Gedeon. "We made an extra pass to get it to him in the corner and he made it."

The teams exchanged turnovers before a jump ball gave the Little Giants possession. Taylor Druckenmiller was fouled and made the second of the two free throws. After a Start timeout, a 3-pointer by Deonte Henderson, who had made two 3s earlier, was short, sending the Ross crowd into a frenzy, for real this time.

"Early on, I thought our game plan to get it inside was good," said Gedeon. "Steven Blodgett did a nice job for us early and we got them in the double bonus quickly and we were aggressive. All of a sudden, we wanted to be an outside team and that didn't work. I wanted to see us attack and frustrate them."

Ross took a 45-43 lead when Blodgett made a pair of free throws to fin-

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Ross

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ish off a 8-0 run by the Little Giants in the third quarter. Start responded with 11 of the next 13 points to build a 54-47 margin with 4:32 left.

Chudzinski hit a 3-pointer, but a bucket by Jahneil Douglas pushed the Start lead back to 56-50 with 1:46 left.

Hampton sliced the lead in half with a 3-pointer but later, two free throws by Syph gave Start a 62-56 lead with 31 seconds left.

Hampton made a 3-pointer and Gedeon called timeout. Myers made two free throws for a 64-59 lead, setting up the improbable finish for Ross.

Start defeated Ross earlier in the season, 69-50, in Fremont.

"Xavier is great and we have to stop him."

BRODY CHUDZINSKI

FREMONT ROSS

"We were extremely selfish that night and tonight, we played much better and made good passes," Gedeon said. "We played poorly defensively the first time. They hit some shots because we weren't aggressive defensively."

Chudzinski topped the Little Giants with 21 points, while Blodgett had 13 points. Hampton tallied 10 points and Tavarius Simms had nine rebounds.

Ross advances to meet fellow Three Riv-

ers Athletic Conference member in Lima Senior, who blasted Ross, 103-57 in Fremont on Dec. 15, and 103-54 in Lima on Feb. 2.

"Our goal is to play better and we have to if we want to win," said Gedeon. "The nice part is we've played twice already. Their goal is to get to Columbus for the state semifinals. We have the mentality of what to expect, but we have to compete better and be aggressive."

Lima is led by University of Michigan verbal commit Xavier Simpson. He scored a school-record 59 points in the first meeting, only to top it with 64 points in the second meeting.

"Xavier is great and we have to stop him," said Chudzinski. "We know we have to execute if we want to beat them. We have to make shots like we did tonight."

ROSS SEASON ENDS IN LOSS

Early turnovers put Little Giants in hole early

RICH MCGOWAN
REPORTER

TOLEDO — For Fremont Ross to have a chance to pull off a shocking upset of undefeated Lima Senior in sectional tournament play Wednesday, the Little Giants needed to play nearly mistake-free basketball.

Instead, the Little Giants turned the ball over 13 times in the first quarter, leading to numerous points in transition and a large, early lead for the heavily-favored Spartans as Ross' season came to an end, 91-42.

"Lima has that ability, with that quickness, to speed you up and we can't do that and be successful," Ross coach Mark Gedeon said. "Unfortunately a lot of those turnovers were just going to too fast:

Passing the ball out of bounds, a high dribble, missing a pass. It's that composure. You can't simulate that speed in practice."

The onslaught began early as Ross turned the ball over on its opening two possessions and did so five times in the game's first 3 minutes and 30 seconds, during which time Lima jumped out to a 12-4 lead.

In its two previous meeting with Lima, Ross found itself torched by Lima senior Xavier Simpson, who scored school-record point totals of 59 and 65 points. Wednesday, the Spartans (23-0) showed the Little Giants how much depth they have.

In addition to Simpson scoring a game-high 21 points with six assists, Marquavious Wilson scored 18 with six assists and Rico Stafford (12) and Jarius Ward (10) also scored in double digits.

Lima led Ross 22-6 after the first quarter and expanded that lead to 50-21 at

halftime en route to ending the Little Giants' season.

"That got all three perimeter players shooting 50 percent from 3, over 60 percent from 2," Gedeon said. "They have tremendous talent, there is no question about that. It is a big task for anybody to go against the right now."

Ross ends its season with an 8-16 record. While the Little Giants struggled to play consistently this season, Gedeon wants his players to remember the good times, such as Monday's fourth-quarter comeback and overtime win against Toledo Start, but also learn from the tough ones as well.

"Anything in life you want, you have to work for, you got to compete," Gedeon said. "Whether it's your job or your girlfriend, nobody is going to give you anything. You got to do the right things in order to get those goals and I think that's

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RICH MCGOWAN/NEWS-MESSENGER
Fremont Ross' Tre Bulger and Jarren Hampton defend Lima Senior's Xavier Simpson Wednesday night.

Ross

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one of the great things athletics does."

Senior Jarren Hampton led Ross with eight points Wednesday and is one of eight seniors graduating from the roster. With so many openings available next year, Gedeon said the ball will be in the court of the program's youngsters to improve in the offseason.

"How these younger players see the challenges will dictate a lot of what's going to hap-

Stat book

Fremont Ross 6-15-10-12 — 42

Lima Senior 22-28-31-10 — 91

Ross: 15 10-18 42. 3FG, 2 (Druckenmiller, Chudzinski). Rebounds, 26 (Hampton, Simms 5), Turnovers, 31, Assists, 5, Steals, 0. Scoring: Druckenmiller 3 0-0 7, Hampton 1 6-9, 8, Homler 1 0-0 2, Simms 3 0-1 6, Blodgett 1 0-2 2, Trolie 1 0-0 2, Chudzinski 1 0-0 3, Young 2 0-0 4, Alridge 1 2-4 4, Bulger 1 0-0 2, Burling 0 2-2 2.

Lima: 34 12-19 91. 3FG, 5 (Wilson 4, Ward). Rebounds, 31 (Upshaw 8), Turnovers, 7, Assists, 19 (Simpson 6, Wilson 6), Steals, 7 (Stafford 3). Scoring: Wilson 6 2-2 18, Liles 0 1-2 1, Simpson 8 5-6 21, Flowers 4 0-0 8, Stafford 6 0-0 12, Ward 4 1-4 10, Upshaw 4 1-1 9, Thomas 1 0-0 2, Miller 0 2-4 2, Long 1 0-0 2.

pen over the next couple years," Gedeon said. "I think you're going to see a lot of youth that goes into our program next year. When you lose

eight seniors, the people who compete and do things right are going to get the opportunities."