

GIRLS BASKETBALL



News-Messenger/Andrew Morrison

CARI RITZMAN of the Fremont Ross Little Giants moves inside of Oregon Clay's Beth Koehler during the

second quarter Thursday night at the Purple Pit. Ross closed out the regular season with a 66-45 victory.

Ross claims GLL title

By **BOB MARKER**
Sports Editor

Fremont Ross claimed its first outright Great Lakes League girls basketball championship, defeating Oregon Clay 66-45 in the Purple Pit Thursday night.

The Little Giants shared the crown two seasons ago, and the league championships are the only basketball titles, boys or girls, for Ross in the last 46 years.

Ross finished the regular season 19-1 and 11-1. Clay finished 9-11 and 4-8.

Despite battling colds and recovering from flu, the Little Giants never trailed. Several Ross players missed practices this week with the varsity never practicing intact.

"We had to use everyone on the bench to give people time to rest," Ross coach Sue Wolf said.

Emily Dowell and Dawn Zerman scored 18 points each to lead Ross.

"It's nice that Emily is turning it on going into the tournament," Wolf said.

"Then, when we needed a few points, Dawn knew it and got the points."

"There was no doubt she (Dowell) stepped up and hurt us," Clay coach Roger Achter said. "But for some reason tonight, we were really confused every time they subbed...we left a girl wide open each time."

Jami Toeppke backed up Dowell and Zerman with her high school high of 12 points.

After bolting to an 11-2 lead, Clay cut the Ross lead to 13-12 before Dowell and Toeppke closed the first quarter with baskets. The Ross lead climbed to 27-14, but Stacy Cousino helped the Eagles close to 28-20 with 2:35 remaining in the first half.

But the Little Giants cut the rally short.

Michele Smith's putback, Dowell's basket off Zerman's pass, Toeppke's steal and layup and Dowell's jumper gave Ross a 36-23 halftime lead.

Ross dominated the boards throughout the game, holding a 47-28 edge.

After Clay closed to 38-27 at the 5:45 mark of the third period, Ross ran off 11 straight points.

All that remained was the championship celebration.