

Ross fielding a team with experience this year

News-Messenger report

FREMONT ROSS

Coach: Lisa Wolfe, 6th year

Last year: 8-9 overall, 3-2 GBC (third)

Key Departures: Tim Cheek, David Gipe and Michael Pick-erel.

Key Returners: Seniors Malcolm Leake, Erik Paulson, Curtis Hinsch and Josh Woughter; junior Jonathan Alexander.

Key Newcomers: Junior Taran Rodriguez; sophomores Lukas Green and Casey Wright; freshmen Nick Hoffman, Robert Joerg, Connor Martin, Joe Meyer, Nate Rellinger and Dylan Willey.

Outlook: A group of four seniors, headlined by Leake — a two-time first-team selection in the Greater Buckeye Conference and three-time district qualifier — has Wolfe excited about the Little Giants prospects as they embark on their first spring season in the Three Rivers Athletic Conference. “I have great leadership with the four seniors,” she said. “They all contribute in their roles differently. It’s a great combination.” Leake, who was 24-5 a year ago, has a 65-23 career record. “He’s worked very hard in the off-season,” Wolfe said. “He hopes to take it to the next level. As a coach, my hope for Malcolm is to reach 100 wins.” Paulson earned second-team GBC honors in 2011 and

will be Ross’ No. 2 singles player. Woughter, a second-year varsity player, will be a doubles player. “He is a threat at the net with his height,” Wolfe said. Hinsch the fourth senior, will flip-flop throughout the season at No. 3 singles and doubles. “Curtis is an extremely positive member of this team,” Wolfe said. “His presence makes a difference for us.” Alexander, the final returner, has greatly improved and will also see varsity time. “We are in an extremely difficult league now,” Wolfe said. “I’m confident my boys will tackle each match and play to the best of their ability. They are a very dedicated group.”

SJCC

Coach: Scott Knisely, 8th year

Last year: 4-11

Key Departures: Paul Wendt, Nick Wickline, Kyle Ochs, Gabe Arreola, James Oddo and David Dixon.

Key Returners: Grant Cleveland, Aaron Burns and Hunter Harrison.

Key Newcomers: Chris Wickline and Kaleb Reineck.

Outlook: SJCC won’t be high on experience this spring. But what the Crimson Streaks will show is great effort and passion for the game. “This is a great group of kids that have been working very hard,” Knisely said. “Most of them are

new to tennis, but they seem to be learning at a faster pace than in years past.” Cleveland is the lone returner for Knisely with singles experience — serving as SJCC’s No. 1 singles player a year ago. He and Wendt came a win away from advancing to districts as a doubles pair, making it to the sectional quarterfinals. “He’s worked very hard to get back into playing shape,” Knisely said. “He suffered a knee injury in football in the fall that set him back.” Burns and Harrison, doubles partners a year ago, will be counted on to fill the second and third singles spots.

BELLEVUE

Coach: James Picciuto, 3rd year

Last year: 3-15

Key Departures: Jake Eastman

Key Returners: Blake Kryling, Brendan Adkinson, Tony Harper, Luke Hackenburg, Cody Henderson and Jared Poock.

Key Newcomers: Collin Covella, Brent Runion and Cory Schindley.

Outlook: Picciuto’s team has gone 3-15 in each of the last two seasons. But with interest growing in tennis, he feels the Redmen are ready to make a run at a Northern Ohio League

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Foe's name doesn't matter to Ross standout

By Kevin Shields

Sports writer

FREMONT — Malcolm Leake doesn't worry about who is across from him on the tennis court.

The Ross senior instead is fixated on something else. Something smaller, a little more round and green.

"I've been realizing the person that's hitting the ball really isn't as important as the ball itself," Leake said. "A lot of people don't know this, but it's the ball that's your biggest opponent."

Leake, the Little Giants' No. 1 singles player, opened up his season with a 6-1, 6-0 victory over Tiffin Columbian's Victor Keller on Monday. Ross lost to the Tornadoes by a 3-2 count in the season-opener for both squads.

Leake headlines a group of four seniors for sixth-year coach Lisa Wolfe. Last year he earned first-

team all-Greater Buckeye Conference honors for the second time in as many years, going 24-5. He is 65-23 in his high school career.

But with Ross joining the Three Rivers Athletic Conference, Leake knew this off-season had to be different.

St. John's Jesuit, one of the Little Giants' new conference mates, won the Division I state team title a year ago.

"This is going to be one of the most competitive conferences in the state, which makes me really excited to play," he said. "I worked really hard in the off-season. I got a new coach. And I was training to play tournaments."

Unlike the previous week in practice, Leake and his teammates had to battle a brisk wind and cool temperatures on Monday.

"You really have to stay on your feet in these conditions," Leake said. "You have to be ready for

everything."

Leake is a solid all-around player who can play up at the net or stay in the backcourt and make his opponents scramble. He thinks he has a good grasp on what he's best at.

Or maybe not?

"My dad says it's my forehand," Leake said. "And he's been my coach since the beginning and knows me better as a player than I know myself. But I personally believe my serve is really good. That's been improving, and I've gotten a lot of easy points off of that by tweaking it."

Leake has been knocked out of the district tournament the last three years. His first real test of the season will come April 3 when Ross hosts Findlay.

"That match should tell me where I'm at right now," Leake said.

Right now, Leake isn't the problem for Fremont Ross.

"Losing to Tiffin tonight shows

we've got a lot of work to do," Wolfe said. "The groups we had for doubles were so in-sync at practice yesterday and I thought they were ready to go. Obviously, we need to work on a few things. Although both doubles teams had a little fight to them in the second set."

Ross Senior Erik Paulson was a 6-4, 6-4 winner at second singles over Columbian's Nick Gaietto.

But in the final and deciding match, Ross No. 3 man, senior Curtis Hinsch, was taken down 6-0, 6-7 (2), 1-6. Hinsch was making his varsity debut after playing junior varsity last season.

"Curtis is pretty unfamiliar with the singles lineup, but also with playing at the varsity level," Wolfe said. "He will find himself seeing some doubles action, also."

Wolfe has a bunch of newbies in doubles where her lone re-

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Ross

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turnee, senior Josh Woughter, teamed with freshman Robert Jaerg and lost 4-6, 5-7 at No. 1 doubles. Junior Taran Rodriguez and freshman Nate Rellinger fell 2-6, 4-6 on the second doubles court.

“They come out every day and work so hard,” Leake said of his teammates. “They’re one of the best groups of kids we’ve had since I’ve been here. They don’t complain. They do what they’re suppose to do and pump each other up.”

It hasn’t hurt that the group has been able to practice outside so much this season.

“We have never had such a great beginning to the season,” Wolfe said. “I think we spent only one day inside in the past three weeks. All the other days have been outside. So we’ve actually gotten a lot accomplished.”

TENNIS

Bowling Green 4, Ross 1

Malcolm Leake was the Little Giants only winner, at No. 1 singles, as Ross dropped a home match to Bowling Green. Leake topped Mike Mota of the Bobcats 6-2, 6-0.

Tennis

Maumee 3, Fremont Ross 2

Malcolm Leake won in straight

sets at No. 1 singles but Ross fell as a team.

Robert Joerg lost the first set but won in three at No. 3 singles for the Little Giants (0-3).

“So far we have not played with a complete varsity roster,” Ross coach Lisa Wolfe said. “Hopefully, (Thursday) we will have a complete roster and can win our first match. I saw a lot of improvement in our third match in three days (Wednesday).

“Robert did an outstanding job fighting his way to a win. That showed me he has a lot of court composure and great determination as a freshman.”

Jonathan Alexander missed the first two matches while Erik Paulson (No. 2 singles) did not compete Wednesday.

Tennis

Ross 4, Lima Senior 1

Malcolm Leake (No. 1 singles) and Erik Paulson (No. 2 singles) each won 6-0, 6-0 as the Little Giants topped the Spartans at home in their Three Rivers Athletic Conference opener.

Josh Woughter and Nate Rellinger won their second doubles match 6-1, 4-6, 6-3 for Ross (1-4, 1-0). Jonathan Alexander won at third singles by forfeit.

Tennis

Findlay 5, Ross 0

Malcolm Leake suffered his first loss of the season for Ross, dropping a 6-2, 6-4 No. 1 singles match to the Trojans' Luke Shaible in the Three Rivers Athletic Conference setback.

Nate Rellinger and Taran Rodriguez nearly stole a set in a 7-5, 6-2 setback in second doubles.

Tennis

Fremont Ross 3, Oak Harbor 2

Malcolm Leake (No. 1 singles), Josh Woughter and Jonathan Alexander (No. 1 doubles), and Taran Rodriguez and Nate Rellinger (No. 2 doubles) each won in straight sets as Ross won the non-conference^N matchup.

“I’m proud of my doubles,” Little Giants coach Lisa Wolfe said. “We had a pretty intense doubles practice for a couple of hours (Tuesday) and they understand their positioning better. It was very gratifying that they performed what Coach Cobb and I have preached. They stepped it up.”

Nik Shay (No. 2 singles) and Ian Rhoades (No. 3) won in straight sets for Oak Harbor.

Tennis

Whitmer 3, Ross 2

Malcolm Leake dropped a single game at first singles, winning 6-1, 6-0, but the Little Giants dropped a Three Rivers Athletic Conference match to the Panthers on Thursday.

Erik Paulson won for Ross (2-5, 1-2) at second singles by a 6-4, 6-2 count.

Tennis

Ross 3, Fostoria 2

Malcolm Leake didn't drop a game in a win at No. 1 singles as the Little Giants topped the Redmen in non-league play.

The win moved Leake to 7-1 on the year.

"Malcolm continues to play outstanding tennis," Little Giants coach Lisa Wolfe said.

Erik Paulson won in straight sets (6-1, 6-3) at No. 2 singles as did the second doubles team of Taran Rodriguez and Nate Rellinger (7-5, 6-1).

"That was an impressive win tonight for Taran and Nate," Wolfe said. "They're continuing to improve on their communication and placing of the ball."

Ross faces defending Division I state champion St. John's Jesuit today.

Tennis

St. John's 4, Fremont Ross 1

Malcolm Leake (No. 1 singles) won in three sets, but Ross lost in the Ohio Tennis Coaches Tournament.

Leake's match lasted nearly three hours.

"The team was so excited for him," Little Giants coach Lisa Wolfe said. "I was extremely proud. He played a smart match. Malcolm should be very proud."

"He changed the speed of the ball, his serves were working and he never tired throughout the match. Hopefully, he gets some rest (Tuesday), he will have another tough match (today)."

Boys Tennis

NORWALK 5, FREMONT ROSS 0

Site: Alumni Fields, Fremont.

No. 1 singles: Trevor Bowers (N) def. Malcolm Leake (R), 7-5, 7-5.

No. 2 singles: Harry Love (N) def. Erik Paulson (R), 6-1, 6-1.

No. 3 singles: Sid Beier (N) def. Robert Joerg (R), 6-1, 6-1.

No. 1 doubles: Karson Schaechter/Chase Meyers (N) def. Josh Woughter/Curtis Hinsch (R), 6-2, 6-4.

No. 2 doubles: Jordan Nickoli/Tim Lovato (N) def. Taran Rodriguez/Nate Rellinger (R), 6-1, 6-0.

Records: Ross 3-7; Norwalk 8-0.

Next: Ross at St. Joseph CC, today at Rodger Young Park.

Tennis

Ross 5, St. Joseph CC 0

Malcolm Leake (No. 1 singles) and Erik Paulson (No. 2 singles) each won 6-0, 6-0 as the Little Giants swept their cross-town rivals at Rodger Young Park.

Curtis Hinsch won 6-1, 6-0 at third singles. Taran Rodriguez and Jonathan Alexander won 6-2, 6-2 at first doubles, while Robert Joerg and Nate Rellinger were 6-3, 6-1 winners at second doubles.

Tennis

St. Francis 4, Ross 1

Malcolm Leake won in straight sets at No. 1 singles but Fremont Ross fell in the Three Rivers Athletic Conference.

Clay 4, Ross 1

Malcolm Leake won in straight sets (6-3, 6-4) for the Little Giants in the Three Rivers Athletic Conference loss to the Eagles.

Ross

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falling to Norwalk. Runion and Hackenburg topped Huron and Port Clinton before losing to Bowling Green in a tiebreaker set.

Brendan Adkinson and Blake Kryling lost to Norwalk, beat Oak Harbor and lost to Bowling Green at No. 1 while Jared Pooch and Collin Covella lost to Port Clinton and beat Ross at No. 2.

Robert Joerg and Jonathan Alexander lost to Norwalk and

Bellevue at No. 2 while Josh Woughter and Curtis Hinsch lost to Huron, beat Oak Harbor and fell to Central Catholic at No. 3 for the Little Giants. Taran Rodriguez and Nate Rellinger lost to Bowling Green, and topped Oak Harbor and Central Catholic.

“I can assure you every one of Fremont’s kids played to the best of their ability,” Wolfe said. “No. 4 doubles were outstanding in their final match. It’s always a highlight to watch Malcolm and Erik come together for doubles and Norwalk was an excellent

match in the finals.”

The Rockets B team finished eighth. Norwalk won the tournament.

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Reunion helps Ross finish 2nd

Doubles partners
Leake and Paulson
also 2nd last year

By Matthew Horn

Sports writer

Malcolm Leake and Erik Paulson had no choice Saturday.

Used to playing as singles players, Leake and Paulson chase everything down while trying to take care of business themselves.

The two were reunited and executed a triple-double of sorts in finishing the Fremont Ross Doubles Tournament in second place for the second time in three years. They were also runners-up at the Port Clinton Doubles Tournament last season.

“The challenge is that we learn to cover the whole court by ourselves and we’re in shape, but doubles is so quick that you just have to stay focused,” Leake said. “We have a natural strategy (together) to be aggressive. He goes off what

I do and I go off what he does. We work well together.”

Leake and Paulson used aggressive play to top Port Clinton and Huron before falling to Norwalk’s Trevor Bowers and Harry Love 6-2, 6-3. The Little Giants were fifth as a team Saturday.

“They were tough,” Leake said. “They were very aggressive. We hung in there. I’m proud of Erik and the way he played.”

Leake and Paulson have played together as partners on occasion since they were young, and try to sneak in practice time during the season so chemistry is strong.

“The highlight for both of us was to play doubles,” Leake said. “It’s fun having a partner on the court to push you. I wanted to win for him and he wanted to win for me.”

Tony Harper and Cody Henderson (No. 3), and Brent Runion and Luke Hackenburg (No. 4) were runners-up as Bellevue finished third.

Harper and Henderson beat Oak Harbor and Huron before

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Perrysburg 4, Ross 1

Malcolm Leake (No. 1 singles)

won in straight sets but Ross lost
the non-conference matchup.

ST. JOHN'S JESUIT 5, FREMONT ROSS 0

Site: Ross Courts, Fremont.

No. 1 singles: Adusumilli def. Malcolm Leake (R), 4-6, 3-6.

No. 2 singles: K. Brown def. Curtis Hinsch (R), 6-0, 6-0.

No. 3 singles: Crawford def. Taran N Rodriguez (R), 6-0, 6-0.

No. 1 doubles: Menta/R. Brown def. Erik Paulson/Robert Joerg (R), 6-1, 6-1.

No. 2 doubles: Magdalani/Rectenwald def. Jonathan Alexander/Nate Rellinger (R), 6-0, 6-1.

Records: Ross 4-12 (1-6 TRAC).

Next: Ross vs. Sandusky, today.

Tennis

N Ashland 4, Fremont Ross 1

Malcolm Leake was honored before his team's match Monday, then went out and scored a 6-0, 6-4 win at No. 1 singles as the Little Giants dropped the non-league match.

Leake has a career Ross record of 86-29 and is 21-6 overall this year.

BOYS TENNIS

DIVISION I SECTIONALS

Site: Jermain/Ottawa Park, Toledo.

No. 1 singles: (2) Malcolm Leake (ROSS) bye; def. Zychowicz (St. John's), 6-0, 6-0; def. Burgess (Whitmer), 6-0, 6-0. Leake advances to District Qualifier at Jermain Park, Saturday.

No. 2 singles: Erik Paulson (ROSS) lost to Shah (Northview), 6-3, 4-6, 3-6.

No. 3 singles: Robert Joerg (ROSS) def. Sharma (Northview), 7-5, 6-3; lost to Mickler (St. John's), 0-6, 0-6.

No. 1 doubles: Taran Rodriguez/Nate Rellinger (ROSS) lost to Ibarra/Dugan (Whitmer), 1-6, 6-3, 2-6.

No. 2 doubles: Curtis Hinsch/Connor Martin (ROSS) lost to Caniglia/Brubaker (St. Francis), 4-6, 4-6.

Next: Sectional Final Four at Jermain Park, Saturday; Districts at Bowling Green, Thursday.

TENNIS HONORS — The Ohio Tennis Coaches' Association awarded the Gold Racquet Award to Malcolm Leake (Fremont Ross). To qualify for this award, the student-athlete must be a senior who has earned two varsity letters in tennis and maintained at least a 3.75 GPA for six semesters. Leake was also selected as a member of the Three Rivers Athletic Conference's First Team. Teammates Robert Joerg and Erik Paulson earned Honorable Mention. Leake plays Austin Hammet (Madison Comprehensive) in the first round of the Division-I District Tournament Thursday at BGSU's Keefe Courts at 10 a.m.