

## 2015 Division I Sectional Tournament

FREMONT ROSS 62, BOWLING GREEN 61 (OT)

# EVERY POINT MATTERS

Little Giants survive rough night at free-throw line in sectional opener

By Rich McGowan  
Assistant editor/sports reporter

TONTOGANY — As Fremont Ross continued to make one unsuccessful trip after another to the free-throw line Wednesday night, Little Giants coach Mark Gedeon could have been tempted to open his wallet to and buy his team a free throw, if he could.

Surely those wearing purple and white in the stands could have been convinced to start a collection plate. The Little Giants needed every point they could muster in their sectional tournament opener against Bowling Green.

Finally, after a torturous fourth quarter and overtime period that saw Ross make just 42 percent of its foul shots, Jarren Hampton made a pair of free throws to give his team a four-point cushion with under a second to play. Good thing he made both shots, because Bowling Green's Trent Hinton drained a half-court desperation heave bringing the Bobcats within one, 62-61, as the final horn sounded, sending Ross on to the sectional championship.

"We just couldn't buy one," senior Grant McConnell said. "I don't know what it was but we could not make a free throw. I don't even know how to describe it. It was crazy.

"We finally found a way to make two of them, then the kid hits a half-court shot. Thank God Jarren made both of them."

Ross (8-15 overall) advances to play Three Rivers Athletic Conference rival Lima Senior (19-3), a team that defeated the Little Giants twice this season, Friday night at 6:15 at Otsego High School.

"We play Lima, we've seen them twice already but we're confident," Hampton said. "We have to execute. It's all about execution and defense."

Though Ross entered its game against Bowling Green as the favorite with nearly twice as many wins as the Bobcats, the Little Giants struggled to find an offensive rhythm. Despite shooting just 33 percent from the field, Ross led by as



ROSS' Jarren Hampton puts up a shot against the Bowling Green defense. DOUG HISE/NEWS-MESSENGER CORRESPONDENT

many as seven points in the fourth quarter. Bowling Green however (47 percent shooting) came back to tie the game at 46 with under two minutes to play.

Then Ross' free-throw trou-

bles began. The Little Giants held a two-point lead with 29 seconds to play. Hampton made 1-of-2 charity shots to put his team up three points but still within one possession of Bowl-

ing Green. After the Bobcats missed a 3-pointer to tie, Grant McConnell missed two foul shots, keeping the lead at three.

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# Ross

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Hampton was soon fouled, only he too missed both of his shots. Ross' Chris Liggins grabbed the rebound, but fell to the floor with the ball and was called for traveling, giving the Bobcats new life and the ball with 9.4 seconds to play.

Bowling Green rushed up-court and Aiden Mackey hit a 3-pointer at the top of the key as the buzzer sounded to send the game into overtime.

Ross entered the game shooting 67 percent from the line as a team. Wednesday night the Little Giants made just 23-of-45 (51 percent), and just 11-of-26 in the fourth quarter and overtime.

"I think any coach there would go through and (want to) put out some dollars there," said Gedeon, a 1986 graduate of Bowling Green. "This is one of the best free-throw shooting teams I've had in 20 years here in Fremont. You get this type of situation, March Madness, we could made things a lot easier on ourselves and knocked down some free throws."

While Bowling Green ended regulation on the high note, Ross came out of the gate in overtime and seized the momentum back. McConnell opened the extra session with a 3-pointer, followed shortly by a pair of free throws by Hampton and then a Hampton out-back of his own offensive rebound. Ross took a 56-49 lead midway through the overtime period.

Then the bricks at the foul line returned. The Little Giants made just

four of their next 12 shots from the line over the next 1:18 as Bowling Green whittled the Ross lead down to 59-58 with 7.9 seconds to play.

Finally, it was Ross' turn to benefit from missed free throws. Trailing by two points with 2.8 seconds to play, Bowling Green's Mitchell Gardner had a chance to tie the game at the line but missed his two foul shots.

Hampton was fouled with less than a second to play and made both shots to secure the victory even after the Bobcats buzzer-beating half-court shot.

"It was real tough knowing we could have put the game away a lot earlier than we did," Hampton said. "We just couldn't finish our free throws. We practice that every day. I think at a point it got to be mental."

Despite not making a field goal in the first half, McConnell rebounded, scoring 14 of his team-high 16 points after halftime, including a 3-for-3 mark from 3-point range. Hampton and Brody Chudzinski each added 11 points while Tavarious Simms added seven points with eight rebounds playing a sound game on both ends of the court.

Ross now is faced with the task of upsetting Lima Sr. on Friday. The Spartans defeated the Little Giants by scores of 76-63 on Dec. 23 in Lima and 76-54 in Fremont on Feb. 6.

"It's a tough match-up," Gedeon said of Lima. "We've got to make sure we value the basketball. That was one of the things at our place we did not do as good a job as we did down there. We had a lot of unforced turnovers."

*rmcgowan@gannett.com*

*419-334-1043; Twitter: @RMcGowan1  
fb.me/RMcGowanSports*

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BOYS BASKETBALL: LIMA SENIOR 54, FREMONT ROSS 42

# Ross' Upset bid falls short

Fremont Ross takes lead into halftime, but Lima Senior comes back to end Little Giants' season

By Rich McGowan

Assistant editor/sports reporter

TONTOGANY — Though disappointed his team's season had reached its end Friday night, Fremont Ross boys basketball coach Mark Gedeon had no regrets about how his team went out.

The Little Giants scrapped and battled against the heavily favored Spartans of Lima Senior. A 3-pointer by Chris Liggins in the waning moments of the second quarter even gave Ross lead going into halftime.

In the second half, however, the bigger, stronger, faster Spartans began to pull away and Ross' season came to a close in a 54-42 sectional tournament loss.

"We competed, that's obviously what we wanted to do, to play to the best of our ability and see if we can compete with an incredibly talented team," Gedeon said. "We're disappointed with the result but anytime you're in the state tournament, you know only one team gets to win their last game."

The Little Giants close their season with an overall record of 8-16.

For more than a half Friday night, Ross put itself in position to come up with a major upset.

Though Lima Senior (20-3) used its aggressive press defense to force five Ross turnovers in the opening four minutes of the game en route to an 11-4 lead, the Little Giants weathered the Spartans' early storm.

Lima took a 20-11 lead with 5:10 to play in the half, but then its offense went dry. The Spartans made just two free throws the rest of the half as Ross' defense forced seven second-quarter turnovers and gradually cut into the deficit.



DOUG HISE/NEWS-MESSENGER CORRESPONDENT

Ross' Grant McConnell puts up a shot against Lima Senior's Jaylin Thomas.

Ross cut Lima's lead to one with under a minute to play, then Liggins hit a 3-pointer with 17.5 seconds to play in the half and Ross took a 24-22 lead into halftime.

"We were playing very well that second quarter," Gedeon said. "Assertive, was how we

played that second quarter which we did not do as assertive in the second half."

Lima Senior made just 8-of-30 shots in the first half, including a 1-11 mark from 3-point range.

The Spartans finally got going in the third quarter.

Lima held a 31-30 lead with three minutes to go in the third quarter following a Ross 3-pointer by Brody Chudzinski. Lima answered with a lay-in, followed moments later by an ally-oop slam dunk from

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# Fremont Ross

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Marquevious Wilson to Rico Stafford to send the Spartans' side of the gym into a frenzy.

Lima continued its momentum into the fourth quarter where the Spartans opened the period on a 9-0 run giving them a 44-30 lead with just five minutes remaining in the Little Giants' season.

"They got a couple to drop down, a couple in transition and a couple back-door lobs there," Gedeon said. "We got too extended there at the end of the third quarter and the beginning of the fourth quarter. That's one of the things we could not do. If you give them an inch, they'll take advantage of it."

Steven Blodgett led Ross with 12 points, James Wright scored seven and

Tavarius Simms added six.

"I'm very proud of them, they represented Fremont Ross very well. We showed a lot of improvement and what happens when a collection of guys focus on one goal," Gedeon said.

"Not a lot of people believed we could come in and compete with this team," he added. "We were able to prove we could go out and compete."

Seniors Grant McConnell, Wright, Liggins and Jalen Slick all played their final game for Gedeon.

"I told them I loved them, they're always going to be a part of Fremont Ross family," Gedeon said. "They're always going to be Little Giants. They're always going to be a part of my family too."

*rmcgowan@gannett.com*

*419-334-1043*

*Twitter: @RMcGowan1*

*Facebook: @RMcGowanSports*

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## BOYS BASKETBALL

**Lima 54, Ross 42**

<b>Ross</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>—</b>	<b>42</b>
<b>Lima</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>—</b>	<b>54</b>

### **Ross**

Steven Blodgett 3 6-6 12, Brody Chudzinski 1 1-3 4, JaVonte Garza 1 0-0 3, Jarren Hampton 1 2-4 4, Chris Liggins 1 0-0 3, Grant McConnell 0 3-4 3, Tavarious Simms 2 2-2 6, Jalen Slick 0 0-1 0, James Wright 3 0-0 7. Totals 12 14-20 42.

### **Lima**

RUBEN FLOWERS 4 0-2 8, Xavier Simpson 3 8-10 14, Rico Stafford 6 1-2 13, Jaylin Thomas 1 3-8 6, ILIAS WRIGHT 0 0-2 0, Mark Wilson 4 3-3 12. Totals 18 15-27 54.

3-Point Goals - Ross 4 (Brody Chudzinski 1, JaVonte Garza 1, Chris Liggins 1, James Wright 1), Lima 2 (Jaylin Thomas 1, Mark Wilson 1).