

2019 Season Review...



Carson Brandon is among returning starters for Fremont Ross on defense. MOLLY CORFMAN/THE NEWS-MESSANGER

Holmes takes helm as Ross quarterback

Matthew Horn
Fremont News-Messenger
USA TODAY NETWORK

Fremont Ross has one returning starter on offense, and he played a different position last season.

The Little Giants' defense brings back only four, but a menacing quartet it is. They will do everything they can to help their offense get back on the field or provide it with field position.

Senior defensive linemen Dontrez Brown, Jason Burling and Carson Brandon are back, along with senior linebacker Nick Mayle.

"The whole defensive line and Mayle walking up have been together three years," Ross coach Chad Long said. "It's the second year under my brother (defensive coordinator Ray Long). They cause fits. Dontrez is going to Bowling Green on a full scholarship and Jason on the interior could go Division I."

"You have a little Tasmanian maniac on the other edge with Brandon. They'll cause fits if you don't have a great offensive line. You can't double team Dontrez or Burling will have a heyday."

Coaches will brainstorm to help them apply pressure. Long would love to see

the defense contribute on the scoreboard on occasion.

"We'll scheme for a plan for a young secondary to exploit bad passes," Long said. "We've put an emphasis on turnovers. We're demanding four turnovers per practice. We want them to believe in turnovers."

"Our defense will carry us. The offense has to minimize turnovers and get better each week."

Senior Josh Adkins, junior Carson Clark and Rusher are linebackers. Three-year starters Caleb Wood and Garrett Schneider graduated.

"Those two were first-team all-conference," Long said. "You can't replace them, but you hope the new guys respect that legacy for linebackers. The front four can cover up some mistakes. We'll hope (the linebackers) grow and get better as the season goes on."

Senior Andrew Born and junior Kalijah Alejandro are corners. Junior Dion Bradley and junior Spencer Price are



Born



Brown



Burling



Long

safeties.

Born, the only returning starter, and senior Daniel Rusher shift from receiver to running back on offense.

"We had a good mix last year," Long said of Deryante Hardin and Ethan Chumley. "These two are quicker."

Freshman Kaden Holmes takes the quarterback helm from Hayden Lehmann. Lehmann and receivers Bryce McKinstry and Noah Hotz helped comprise an offense that established program passing records.

Holmes is more of a dual threat than Lehmann.

"He's good," Long said. "He makes good choices. We'll take our time giving him more and more. He's young. We'll have him doing more running. He's savvy. He puts us in the best position to win now and the great thing is we'll have him four years."

See ROSS, Page 2B

ROSS

Continued from Page 1B

Bradley, Alejandro and Price are the receivers.

The right tackle and right guard are Burling (6-2, 260) and Brown (6-2, 265), respectively. Sophomore Ethan Green (6-6, 245) is the left tackle and classmate London Johnson (6-2, 315) the left guard.

Junior Ethan Druckenmiller (5-11, 230) is the center.

“A lot of zone blocking,” Long said. “It’s a big group. We’re athletic. They have to get in the trenches and move guys out of the way. Depth will be a key. We have a lot of kids playing both ways. We have to stay healthy.

“We lack depth at the skill positions, so young kids will have to step up.”

Eric Slosser is Long’s offensive coordinator this season. Slosser occupied the same position when Long was on staff at Tiffin Columbian.

Slosser worked with Little Giants offensive coaches two years ago.

“He knows the game,” Long said. “He sees what many coordinators don’t see. He has a great offensive IQ. He brings blocking schemes. We’ll run the ball. That’s a promise, because that’s his mindset.

“We have to run the ball to help a young quarterback develop.”

Ross finished 5-5 the last two years. Toledo Central Catholic, Toledo Whitmer and Toledo St. John’s remain favorites in the Three Rivers Athletic Conference.

“Our kids talk about it,” Long said. “They want to prove everybody wrong when they talk about our team. People are saying we’ll be 2-8. They want to prove we’re better than last year’s team. We don’t have individuals.

“We have kids who want to play as a team chasing wins. Our players pride themselves on the naysaying stuff. We have one returner on offense and four on defense. It’s their turn to step up and play.”

Long’s been on staff for seven years, including four as head coach.

“Since I took over, we don’t have individuals,” Long said. “They have to play together and we’re getting to that point. They’re playing for each other. That’s what we need. The coaching staff feels this is the best team we’ve had.”

By team, Long means “they don’t care who gets the ball or who makes the plays. They care about winning.”

Long wants to see the program’s culture benefit from shared belief. A young group wants to be part of something together.

“Fremont football isn’t going anywhere,” Long said. “I pride myself on history and pay respect to Fremont history. When they put on the uniform, it means something. Football is bigger than just them.”

“It’s the town and community they play for and these young kids get it. That’s the consistency. I’m there for the long haul. I’m there for them.”

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Fremont Ross falls apart late in opener

RB Born scores Little Giants' lone touchdown

Josh Morget
Special to Fremont News-Messenger
USA TODAY NETWORK

Fremont Ross was within striking distance, down one touchdown early in the third quarter.

Visiting Tiffin Columbian, however, scored three unanswered touchdowns to run by the Little Giants 35-7 in a nonleague matchup Friday.

"We knew we were young," Ross coach Chad Long said. "We didn't know how the kids were going to handle a Friday night. We had so many miscues."

Dontrez Brown blocked a punt late in the first half, setting Ross up at Columbian's 21-yard line. The Little Giants failed to capitalize with points.

Jaxon Harris helped set up the Tornadoes with one of several good punt returns. Nick Koerper capped the ensuing possession with a score from one yard out for a 21-7 advantage.

Born "We had a couple adjustments at halftime," Columbian coach Judd Lutz said. "They did a great job responding in the second half and executing."

Columbian's Hunter Richardson intercepted a pass from Ross freshman quarterback Kaden Holmes. Holmes completed 9 of 21 passes for 65 of the Little Giants' 75 yards of offense.

"Kaden got better as the game went on," Long said. "He started to throw more confident. We have to break a play or do something."

Koerper later connected with Gunther Kissell for a 37-yard touchdown late in the third quarter.

"We knew for us to have success on the offensive side, we needed to dominate the line and we did not do that at all the entire game," Long said. "We actually did a really good job pressuring."

Columbian scored an early touchdown, Harris recovered a fumble and Koerper scored from eight yards out in the first quarter.

"The Koerper kid is a great athlete," Long said. "We were trying to arm tackle and swing him down instead of just knocking him down."

Ross' Andrew Born bounced his way through defenders for a 42-yard touchdown run in the second quarter.

"There was no expectations because we didn't know how the kids were going to react," Long said. "It's only going to get worse moving forward in our conference."



Fremont Ross 41, Toledo Start 23

Freshman Kaden Holmes and Andrew Born each rushed for a touchdown in the fourth quarter Friday to extend a five-point lead in Ross' nonconference victory.

Holmes connected with Cyrus Lagrou (30 yards) and Spencer Price (18) as the Little Giants (1-1) led 28-7 in the third quarter.

Born rushed for 130 yards on 10 tries, including two touchdowns in the first half. He added two catches for 40 yards.

Holmes completed 13 of 17 passes for 136 yards. Daniel Rusher carried 15 times for 66 yards.

Ross had 368 yards of offense, including 232 on 42 carries.

The Little Giants allowed minus-54 yards on 19 tries and had 10 tackles for a loss. Marcus Peters had 2.5 tackles for a loss and one sack and Jason Burling had two tackles for a loss and one sack for Ross.

Carson Brandon had a tackle for a safety on defense and four catches on offense.

ROSS

Continued from Page 5A

Having a game under his belt. His maturity, that was the big difference. We were at home in front of his family and friends and everyone he goes to school with.

"For a young kid, that's a lot. We can tell if it's a lot for him with how he's acting and he was comfortable as can be."

Holmes had 136 yards passing. He added a touchdown on the ground.

"He can run and throw," Long said. "What we saw against Start is what we know he can do. He had two touchdown runs, one got called back. For a freshman 14 or 15 years old, he's done well."

Cyrus Lagrou and Spencer Price caught touchdown passes in Week 2.

"Cyrus came up with a beautiful pass in the back of the end zone," Long said. "Cyrus is 6-4. Dion Bradley is 6-3. Price is quick. Kaden's doing a good job spreading the ball and going through his progressions.

"That's what we like. He reads the defense and makes plays according to what the defense gives. He gets rid of the ball."

Ross had 368 yards of offense, including 232 yards on 42 carries.

"We're all new," Long said. "Only one kid really returns from last year on the offensive side. We have to adapt and put kids in the best situation. We found something with Nick and Carson on the field to help an inexperienced offensive line."

Andrew Born is back for Ross, although even he slides from receiver to running back. He has 185 yards and four touchdowns on 20 carries in two games.

Long likes the combination with Daniel Rusher in the backfield.

"Andrew's doing a great job doing everything we expect," Long said. "We expected he'd use his athletic ability to run the ball. There's a reason he was first-team all-conference on special teams. He can break it on any play."

Ross (1-1) is trying to figure out what works best with this group and who is ready to do it. Holmes and Peters took big steps.

"These rivalry games ... we're young and when we're young, we're also dangerous when our kids start to believe," Long said. "Last week, the kids gained confidence and we ran the ball non-stop."

ua Franciscan last week. He has 142 yards on 14 carries in two games as he's nursed an ankle injury.

Brown was also first-team all-Ohio with 15.5 sacks as a junior. He has three tackles for a loss and 1.5 sacks through two games.

Here's a look at Friday's games for Week 3:

Sandusky (2-0) at Ross (1-1)

Ross lost the last three games in the second longest running series in Ohio. The first game was played in 1895 and the Little Giants trail the series 56-49-8 overall. A few Little Giants remember a heartbreaking 16-15 loss two years ago. The Blue Streaks won one game in the Sandusky Bay Conference Lake Division, but two games in the postseason last year. Andrew Born rushed for 130 yards and three touchdowns on 10 car-

See FOOTBALL, Page 3B



Fremont Ross lineman Donztrez Brown, middle, looks on as a teammate takes down Sandusky running back Terion Stewart. Brown and Stewart are headed to Bowling Green State University. MOLLY CORFMAN/THE NEWS-MESSENGER

Football

Continued from Page 1B

ries and added two catches in Ross' 41-23 victory over Toledo Start last week. Freshman quarterback Kaden Holmes ran for one score and tossed touch-downs to Cyrus Lagrou and Spencer



Lagrou

Price. Holmes completed 13 of 17 passes. Ross held Start to minus-54 yards on the ground on 19 tries, with 10 tackles for a loss and three sacks. Marcus Peters had 2.5 tackles for a loss and Jason Burling two.

The Little Giants had 232 yards on the ground. Sandusky quarterback Shon-sai Aaron rushed for 245 yards and three touchdowns, including from 80 and 47 yards on only 17 carries in a 55-27 victory over Holland Springfield last week. The Blue Streaks led 48-6 at the half. Noah Caston caught a touchdown pass and returned an interception for a score. Springfield had 24 yards on the ground. Ross plays the first of two straight at home.



Ross' Kalijah Alejandro makes the stop.
DOUG HISE

Little Giants fall to rival Blue Streaks

Matthew Horn
Fremont News-Messenger
USA TODAY NETWORK

Fremont Ross allowed 21 points with its special teams on the field Saturday in a 42-7 setback to visiting Sandusky.

The Blue Streaks won the last four games between the rivals. Lightning pushed the game back a day.

Sandusky took the ensuing kickoff after a safety 75 yards for a 9-0 advantage. The Blue Streaks' returner was knocked off balance on his side of the field but was able to accelerate again and outrun pursuit.

Sandusky picked up a botched punt snap from the Little Giants' 26 and returned it for a 16-7 lead early in the second quarter.

Sandusky then scored with a 98-yard return of a blocked field goal for a 23-7

margin. The Blue Streak broke a half-hearted tackle inside the five and found room to run.

A poor punt set Sandusky up with a short field and Terion Stewart added a 1-yard touchdown run early in the third quarter. Stewart scored from 80 yards out for a 36-7 lead late in the third.

Sandusky returned a punt 60 yards for a score in the second quarter, but it was erased by a penalty. It blocked a punt late in the first half.

"Obviously, that's a huge work in progress and there are things we have to look at for the weeks to come," Long said of special teams. "That was the biggest disappointment we had. We gave up (21) points.

"Our defense was doing an excellent job stuffing their high-powered offense. In the second half, they were able to run the ball down the field. We didn't tack-

le."

Stewart, a Bowling Green State University commit who was first-team all-Ohio after rushing for 2,731 yards as a junior, had 190 yards on 23 carries. Ross' effort and intensity were depleted in the second half.

Sandusky had 278 yards of offense, including 265 yards on 30 carries. It had nine first downs while averaging 7.7 yards on 36 plays.

Ross' defensive lineman Dontrez Brown, who will play with Stewart at BGSU, had two tackles for a loss and one sack.

Andrew Born scored from 35 yards out for a 9-7 deficit late in the first quarter. He added a 64-yard catch-and-run from freshman Kaden Holmes before the blocked field goal.

See LITTLE GIANTS, Page 8A

Little Giants

Continued from Page 7A

“It was hit or miss,” Long said of Ross’ offense. “We were able to run the ball and we had the swing pass in the game plan. Andrew hurt his hip and we didn’t see much of him in the second half.

“Overall, offensively we were able to move the ball, but Kaden got rushed quite a bit. We’re dropping passes.”

Born rushed eight times for 68 yards. Holmes completed 9 of 25 passes for 118 of the Little Giants’ 267 yards of offense.

“Kaden did a great job running the option,” Long said. “He’s developing. His composure is unreal for a kid his age. We’ll continue to grow with him. This year is a huge learning curve. The interception was a great play by the DB. He made some great decisions.”

Spencer Price played a couple series at quarterback for the Little Giants.

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Ross' Dontrez Brown breaks through the line to block a second quarter punt. PHOTOS BY DOUG HISE

Smith leads Bears to win

From Staff Reports
Fremont News-Messenger
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Toledo St. Francis 39, Fremont Ross 7

Andrew Born scored Ross' touchdown in the second quarter Friday in the Three Rivers Athletic Conference setback.

Born rushed 11 times for 47 yards and Kaden Holmes completed 8 of 19 passes for 32 yards for the Little Giants (1-3). Ross had 128 yards of offense, including 92 on the ground.

It allowed 255 yards and four touchdowns passing, although St. Francis failed to convert on third down in 7 of 10 tries. It rushed 28 times for 37 yards.

Ross' Marcus Peters had 2.5 tackles for a loss and one sack.

The Little Giants trailed 22-0 after one quarter and 25-7 at the half.

Gibsonburg 31, Tiffin Calvert 14

Hunter Smith rushed for three



Ross' Spencer Price returns a punt.

Findlay 34, Fremont Ross 0

Visiting Ross lost the Three Rivers Athletic Conference matchup.

The Little Giants trailed 14-0 at the half.

Fremont Ross (1-4, 0-2) at Toledo St. John's (2-3, 0-2)

Spencer Price had four catches for 98 yards, rushed nine times and intercepted two passes on defense in Ross' 34-0 setback to Findlay last week. Andrew Born didn't play. Kaden Holmes completed 9 of 19 passes for 119 yards with three interceptions and Cyrus Lagrou completed 4 of 10 passes for 66 yards with one pick. Dion Bradley had two catches for 40 yards. Ross rushed 23 times for one yard and lost five turnovers. Dontrez Brown had one sack and Jason Burling had 3.5 tackles for a loss. Findlay completed only 9 of 24 passes, but for 209 yards and two scores. It had 83 yards on 36 carries. Jack Ryder caught a touchdown pass from Brady Lichtenberg as St. John's fell 35-20 to sixth-ranked Toledo Whitmer. Lichtenberg completed 12 of 28 passes for 98 yards and rushed for a score and Ryder threw a touchdown pass to Spencer Tyo on a gadget play. The game was tied 14-14 at the half. Ross fell 31-28 in overtime last season.

Lima Senior 20, Fremont Ross 7

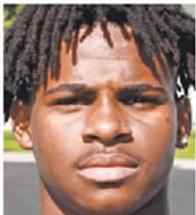
Spencer Price caught a 37-yard scoring pass from Cyrus Lagrou in Ross' Three Rivers Athletic Conference setback.

Anthony Rusher had 89 yards on 22 carries for the Little Giants (1-6, 0-4).

Lima Senior scored off a blocked punt.

Toledo Central Catholic (7-0, 4-0) at Fremont Ross (1-6, 0-4)

Central Catholic is ranked third in Division II. Spencer Price caught a touchdown pass from Cyrus Lagrou in Ross' 20-7 setback to Lima Senior. Daniel Rusher had 97 yards on 21 carries. Jason Burling had 3.5 tackles for a



Price

See FOOTBALL, Page 4B

Football

Continued from Page 1B

loss and Dontrez Brown added a sack. Labronze Barnett intercepted a pass. Jonzell Norrils had 256 yards and four touchdowns on 31 carries in Central Catholic's 42-14 victory over Toledo Whitmer, which was ranked seventh. Tae'Shaun Johnson caught two touchdown passes from Bishop Vargas. J'Shun Rushing is another weapon. Vargas had 95 yards on 11 carries. Ross lost 49-0 last season.

Busy roundup of football



Ross' Daniel Rusher carries the ball. MATTHEW HORN

From Staff Reports
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Toledo Central Catholic 50, Fremont Ross 6

Spencer Price caught a 24-yard touchdown pass from Kaden Holmes in Ross' Three Rivers Athletic Conference setback.

Ross (1-7, 0-5) allowed 313 yards on the ground. It had minus-37 yards on 32 carries as Central Catholic's defensive line dominated.



Ross' Jason Burling applies defensive pressure against Sandusky. PHOTOS BY DOUG HISE

Ross' Burling turns heads with quickness

Efficient lineman plays with diverse set of skills

Matthew Horn
Fremont News-Messenger
USA TODAY NETWORK

For a portion of every practice, it looks as though Fremont Ross linemen are playing patty-cake, like toddlers.

At 6-foot-2, 260 pounds, only children think Little Giants burly senior defensive tackle Jason Burling is child-like. It might look silly, but Burling's developed the use of his hands to an elite level by going through the motions, literally.

If a defensive lineman lets an offensive lineman into their body, they lose control.

"It's like a steering wheel," Little Giants' defensive line coach Bill Schell said. "Using his hands, he keeps linemen away from his body. He avoids and counteracts their hands. We work on it every day and he's excellent."

"It's for muscle memory for your hands to do what you want without thinking. His hands are his biggest asset. He gives everything he has. It would be awesome for him to reach that pot of gold at the end of the rainbow in college.

"As hard as he's worked the last two



Ross' Jason Burling throws the shot put at state. He finished fourth.

years, he deserves it. He's genuine and he appreciates everybody doing what they're doing. He'll never not say thank you."

Burling has Division I potential to continue his career in football or track. He's spent the last year and a half trying to improve his grades and gain clearing-house approval to become NCAA eligible by the end of this school year.

"Every teacher and coach at Fremont

City Schools is 100% behind Jason succeeding and living out his dream," Ross football coach Chad Long said. "He's that good of a kid. Guidance counselors, everybody is doing whatever they can to help."

"This is a unique kid. He's loved by many. He's a gentle giant. He's polite. He's respected by coaches for his sportsmanship. It's a unique situation. He's special the way he warms everybody's heart."

If he can't get approval, he'd have to first attend a junior college. He's had at least a 3.3 GPA since junior year. He's retaking a few classes and he's working to improve his ACT score.

"The kids that overcome, that's what I love to see more than anything," Little Giants' throws coach Travis Bates said. "If he keeps going, he can get where he wants."

Robert Morris and Tiffin University are interested in Burling for football, and Tiffin, Kentucky and Akron for track.

Alysha Nye taught Burling for English as a junior.

"He'd tell you he slacked off," she said. "He realized what he wanted to do and that he had a timeline. With that goal in mind, it changed. He has so

See BURLING, Page 3B

Burling

Continued from Page 1B

much potential. I saw it every day.

"He sticks out because I know how far he can go in life and in sports and in the classroom. As an educator, it would probably be one of my most memorable moments to watch Jason sign with a college."

He stayed after class, after school and spent study hall with Nye last year. "I watched him grow and he really kicked it into gear," she said. "It doesn't matter who you are, he talks to you. His character comes from his work ethic. He knows it won't come easy. His coaches and teachers think the world of him."

"He's humble. People want to see him succeed because we know how hard he's worked and what he's capable of. We know he can go a Division I or II college and how good he is in the classroom."

Burling is learning to look at the big picture in life.

"Alysha held him accountable," Bates said. "Beth McNutt. They really care and they tell kids what they have to do. If they want it, they'll do it. He wants to please people that care for him and pull through for him."

"They care about where he's going and what he's doing, and he respects that and wants to make them proud. As a freshman, I don't know that he saw that far into his future and he had to do the work to come back."

Burling draws extra attention in middle

Burling was a linebacker as a freshman, played defensive end and then started at nose guard as a sophomore. He was recognized most improved on defense last season, mostly because of how lethal he's become with his hands.

Burling added 30 pounds of muscle. He used to feel small for a lineman, but he's always been quick for his size.

He strikes quickly with his hands and then gets skinny, according to Schell, to rip through or spin over a blocker.

"He goes beast-mode once the ball is snapped," Schell said. "He takes on double-teams so our linebackers can make reads and plays. He does that better than any lineman I've coached."

"He eats up double-teams. The other team has to use two guys to take care of him or he'll make every play in the backfield. Once he sees the football, he's like

a dog after a steak. You can't stop him."

Most teams combat Burling with multiple blockers.

"I keep using my hands and fight off one dude," he said. "Push on down the line to make the tackle. They try to draw me offside or run the ball away from me and Dontrez (Brown)."

Burling had 12 tackles, 16 assists, nine tackles for a loss and 4.5 sacks after seven games this season with Ross in the Three Rivers Athletic Conference. He eluded three double teams for a tackle for loss on consecutive snaps in a setback to Lima Senior.

"He never gives up," Schell said. "We preach it, but it's uncommon. Kids let up. He doesn't slow down; he kicks into another gear. There's no stop until the whistle blows for him."

Burling doesn't stop after the whistle either. He matured into captain status.

"He doesn't say anything," Long said.

"He just continues working. He's turned a lot of that baby fat into man muscle. He doesn't complain. He broke out last year when he developed into a young man."

"He's the leader I expected him to be and more."

Burling is Ross' best offensive lineman this season. He played fullback against Toledo St. Francis last year.

"He's a great athlete," Long said. "Good vision. He's just a big kid. He accepted going from a running back/tight end, to putting his hand in the dirt. To go from the offensive line over to defense (in a game) takes a lot of courage."

"He sacrifices some of his play on the defensive side because he's tired. He does what's best for the team."

Burling's dealt with shoulder, knee, ankle and head discomfort at varying levels throughout the year.

"His body," Long said. "He's been banged up quite a bit. He's tough. He used to stop. Now, he plays through it. He's tough enough mentally and he's developed into a student-athlete. He doesn't miss practice."

"Those seniors don't take days off. He's a great example of what we want our athletes to be. It's not a scenario where he's not working. It's a fact that he's willing to put his body out there offensively and defensively every play."

Burling was second-team all-TRAC last season.

"Jason is a Division I kid," Long said. "He's more fundamentally sound than Dontrez. He uses his size and his hands. When he engages a lineman, he jolts him back and then he can continue on or push-pull."

"You see it on film. You see how technical he is."

Brown, who continues his career at Bowling Green State University, had 11 tackles for a loss and seven sacks in seven games.

"It's a compare-meter with those two," Long said. "They're both dominant. They complement one another. Double-team Dontrez and Jason makes all the sacks. They're an awesome dual threat."

"They work together well. They've been together. Go ahead, don't double-team Dontrez or run away from Dontrez, to Burling in the middle."

Burling fourth in shot put at state

Burling started telling Bates he'd win a shot put state crown when he was in the eighth grade.

"He's always been there and been reliable," Bates said. "He has a calm demeanor. Nothing seems to rattle him. He has high expectations and I want him to reach those."

Burling played three sports for Ross as a junior. He's going to concentrate on track after football this year.

"He attacks the weights like he attacks a double-team with the same attitude and effort trying to sack a quarterback," Schell said. "He keeps lifting. He works with Coach Bates in the off-season."

"He played basketball. He works with coach (John) Cahill on footwork. He competes and he wants to be the best he can."

Burling reached 53-2 with his first throw in the shot put to finish fifth at regional last season. Bates didn't know Burling qualified for state at-large until he looked up the results from the other regionals.

He finished fourth in Columbus at 57-2.5.

"You can't build up to it," Bates said. "Don't hold back. His first throw was a PR by four feet. He kept hitting those marks I knew he could reach and he realized his potential, which hopefully his senior year is a state championship."

"The buildup to the whole thing was emotional. He surprised himself a little. He had that big-old goofy grin. He doesn't show much external emotion. He was happy inside."

Of his final 12 measured throws, only the aforementioned two meet-openers counted because of fouls. He narrowly missed staying in the ring on several throws that topped his mark.

"I was approached by five or six

coaches," Bates said, "with his size, skill level and where he is with his technique and what he can grow into. One of his fouls was just short of 60. He has the potential to throw 65. That would beat the school record by four feet."

"He's going to work on his strength and power to get to the level he wants. He works his butt off, he doesn't say a word and he smiles."

Bates tells recruiters the truth. After early struggles, Burling is on track to be eligible.

"He's a great kid," he said. "He's a great teammate. He appreciates people. He has his head on his shoulders with a vision. We didn't know if he was going to qualify. He's working hard. Freshman year academically set him back."

"We're staying on him. We think he's right there. It's a matter of taking care of things the rest of the year."

To know Burling is to love him

Burling, who wants to study law enforcement to be a police officer, is intimidating on the field. Only his size gives that impression off it.

"He's the kind of kid you like to be around," Bates said. "Ask him to do it and he'll give you a big old smile. I think of him like one of my own kids. He's a big teddy bear. Big hair. Big smile. You forget how big and strong he is until you see him next to you in a photo."

"I wouldn't want to make him mad."

It might be the eyes that invite or the smirk that lingers. Maybe they know Burling wants to be loved.

Regardless, children especially gravitate toward him immediately. He's patient, listens and participates.

He hopes his window hasn't closed to continue his athletic career at the next level and show all ages what can happen with determined focus when you don't give up.

"He attracts kids at youth camps like a magnet," Schell said. "He was carrying one on each leg and two on each arm. They love him and he loves them. That's who he is. He has a soft heart for kids."

"He's a beast on the field. He's not part of the normal dumb stuff teens do. He knows what he has to do (on the field) and he picks others up. He's recently become more vocal. That's hard at 1-7. If he tells you to turn it up, he's turned it up."

Burling's entire cake — football, track, school — is in the oven. It's rising. mhorn@gannett.com
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Toledo Whitmer 48, Fremont Ross 6

Ross lost the Three Rivers Athletic

Prep football: Rockets and Bears win 10 games

News-Messenger reports

Oregon Clay 43, Fremont Ross 7

Freshman Kaden Holmes scored from two yards out on fourth down in Ross' setback Friday in the Three Rivers Athletic Conference.

The Little Giants (1-9) led 7-3 in the second quarter.

An inexperienced group finished without a conference win. Dontrez Brown, Jason Burling, Andrew Born, Carson Brandon and Nick Mayle are among the seniors.

Clyde 28, Bellevue 20

Carson Rieman raced 62 yards with a pass from Ryan Lozier for a fourth-quarter touchdown and added an interception to seal Clyde's Sandusky Bay Conference Lake Division victory.

The Fliers (6-4, 2-3) climbed from 11th to eighth in Division IV's Region 14. They unofficially visits Keystone (9-1).

Bellevue (6-4, 2-3) dropped from fifth to seventh, and unofficially visits Waukon (8-2).

Lozier rushed for a score with 1:25 left for the final margin. Nick Webb (31 yards) and Gunner Golden each had a touchdown on the ground.

Caleb Marshall and Preston Ray each

caught a touchdown pass from Keegan Ray for Bellevue. Keegan added a score on the ground.

Oak Harbor 48, Port Clinton 8

Clay Schulte ran 70 yards with a short pass from Jac Alexander, bulled in to fin-



Ross' Dontrez Brown tries to shed a block to get to the ball. DOUG HISE