

SOCCER PREVIEW

Ross set for postseason tests

By NICK MATHEWS
Sports Editor

For many years, Fremont Ross essentially feared Findlay.

The Little Giants hated playing the powerhouse Trojans. Their soccer matches were always one-sided in favor of Findlay.

But one game three years ago changed the Ross players' thoughts on the rivalry.

Findlay scored with just six second left to earn a 1-0 victory in the district semifinals.

"From that moment on, we clearly knew that we could play with them," said Ross coach Jeff Pendry, now in his eighth year at the helm. "(The Little Giants) are definitely more confident when they play them. We know we can beat them. It's not the case where we know we are in trouble anymore."

Last year, Ross edged Findlay 2-1 in the regular season.

This year, the Little Giants tied the Trojans 2-2 in Findlay. It was the only blemish on the Greater Buckeye Conference season for the Trojans.

Ross (6-8-2, 4-4-2 GBC) hopes to continue its progress against Findlay (9-0-1 GBC) today as the postseason begins.

The squads meet at 7 p.m. at Findlay.

"It has gotten to the point now that we feel that we are even with them if we play through to the final minutes," Pendry said.

The Ross girls soccer team, meanwhile, is hoping to make history on Wednesday.

The Little Giants, who face Celina at 5 p.m. in Findlay, are searching for their first postseason victory in their sixth year of existence.

"The seniors really want to win this game, so they can leave a little bit of a legacy," Ross coach Ron Huss said.

Offensive standouts Abby Werling and Rachael Daugherty and standout goalkeeper Stephanie White help lead that senior class.

But a freshman leads the offensive attack.

Suzanne Chudzinski has a team-high 12 goals.

"I wish we could clone her about 10 times," Huss said of Chudzinski.

The Little Giants finished tied for second in the GBC with Napoleon at 5-4-1. They dropped their last three games of the regular season to finish 5-10-1 overall.

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Freshmen help lead Little Giants

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At the seeding meeting, Huss talked briefly with Dean Liggett, whose Celina squad was 4-5-3 at that time.

Huss asked Liggett to characterize his team.

"We are very inconsistent this year," Liggett said.

"Ditto," Huss simply replied.

Ditto again, for the Ross boys.

"We have been a little bit inconsistent at times," senior captain Adam Shearn said,

"but I think it is starting to shape up."

Ross lost 6-2 at home against Findlay early in the season.

But Danny Chavez and Nao Nakamura scored goals in the tie at Findlay.

Busy Blair Ellenberger, who is also in the band and is the kicker on the Ross football team, leads the Little Giants' balanced scoring attack. Another freshman, goaltender Bobby Gipe, also shines for the boys.

"We are pretty confident," Shearn said. "We are looking for the win. I think we will be able to pull it off."

Finish foul for Giants

Findlay dominates late in sectional win

News-Messenger reports

The Fremont Ross boys soccer team had a foul finish to its season in Findlay.

A yellow-card offense — which knocked the Little Giants' top scorer out of the game — altered the tone of the game as Findlay routed Ross 6-1 in a Division I sectional matchup on Tuesday.

Tyrone George scored in the early moments to give Ross a 1-0 lead.

Soon after, Ross junior standout Blair Ellenberger had contact with a Findlay player.

"It was just a normal foul that occurs in the game of soccer," Ross coach Jeff Pendry said.

According to Pendry, the Trojan player intentionally retaliated, elbowing Ellenberger in the face.

The Findlay player was given a yellow card.

Ellenberger did not return and suffered a minor concussion on the play.

"We were outplaying them until that foul happened," Pendry said. "We were the better team the first 15 minutes of the game until that happened. After the foul and Blair came out, they scored two quick ones and we didn't recover."

On such a physical foul, a referee could have given the Trojan a red card, ejecting him from the game and leaving Findlay a man short the rest of the game.

With a yellow card, the player was able to soon return.

"The situation went from a 1-0 lead and Findlay playing a man down to us being out a starter and Findlay being at full strength," Pendry said.

Ross, which tied the Trojans 2-2 earlier in the season in Findlay, finished its year 6-8-3.

"All of the kids were extremely frustrated," Pendry said. "It was a crappy ending to a pretty decent season. It's very frustrating."