

2010-2011 Season Review



Jonathon Bird | News-Messenger, file
 Fremont SJCC's Kayla Yeckley and Fremont Ross' Sam Michael collide while going for a loose ball during the OHSAA Foundation game at Fremont Ross High School last year.

Scrimmage more than practice

Ross, SJCC play exhibition to benefit community

BY KEVIN SHIELDS
 Sports writer

FREMONT — For Fremont Ross boys basketball coach Mark Gedeon, the second annual foundation game isn't going to be about beating the cross-town school.

"We want our kids and the community to just have a good time with it," Gedeon said, now in his 16th season as bench boss for the Little Giants. "It won't be the score that matters. Both teams haven't practiced much, so it'll mostly be about getting game-time experience for our players and raising money for good causes."

Gedeon's team will meet Jonathan Will's St. Joseph Central Catholic squad Friday at the "Thunderdome" at SJCC as part of a boys-girls exhibition double-header. The girls game will tip off at 6 p.m.

with the boys following after. All proceeds will benefit the Liberty Center, Parker's Purpose and the United Way of Sandusky County.

Last season, UGive and the OHSAA Foundation teamed up to help Ohio schools make a difference in their communities through the Foundation Service Week in basketball. That week, Ross and SJCC met on the court in a boys game for the first time since the 1930s with the Little Giants posting a 62-32 victory inside the Purple Pit.

The Crimson Streak girls earned a 38-31 win.

Gedeon said several ideas were used to raise money. The bleachers at the Purple Pit were filled to capacity by fans of the Little Giants and Crimson Streaks. Even the bands of both schools took turns playing musical selections.

Included in the money raising efforts

were a 50/50 drawing, a halfcourt challenge as well as donation boxes that were set up in the lobby.

"Last year we were able to raise almost \$4,200, which was outstanding," Gedeon said. "We got a lot of positive feedback about it and we're hoping to have the same experience this year."

The same will be true at SJCC where they'll be hosting a spaghetti dinner before the game for a price of \$8.

"I think it's a perfect opportunity for the kids of both schools to get involved in the community," SJCC girls coach and athletic director Gary Geller said. "Especially since all the money will stay here in the community."

Admission for Friday's games is \$6, or \$5 with a canned good. T-shirts are on sale for \$12, which includes free admission.

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Shirts can be bought at Ross, SJCC and at Fremont Athletic Supply.

“Our saying for this event has been one town, one cause,” Gedeon said. “It’s all about Fremont. And I think the town sees what can happen when we all come together, and it’s exciting for all of us.”

Geller feels the same way.

“I think that it’s great the two schools can work together for a common cause,” he said.

For the Crimson Streaks’ coach, now in his 30th season, the event also gives him a chance to keep a long lasting relationship with the Ross girls’ program. SJCC and the Little Giants have regularly scrimmaged each other.

“Me and Sue Wolf had a great relationship, and Juan (Vela) and I have started a similar situation,” Geller said. “To be able to scrimmage each other, and still be friendly is great. There’s no real winner or loser, just two teams helping each other improve.”

UGive is a non-profit organization on a mission to catalyze, excite and empower the next generation of volunteers. The organization makes philanthropy relevant to students, guiding them to give their time and talents to build communities. Their goal is to create life-long givers. UGive is 100 percent free for students, schools and charities.

To learn more, visit UGive.org.

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Lakota holds off Ross rally, wins its season opener

BY KYLE SCHIMMING

News-Messenger correspondent

KANSAS — The Lakota Raiders held off a late fourth quarter rally from Fremont Ross to win their season opener 47-44.

The Little Giants came back from an 11-point third quarter deficit to tie the game at 44 apiece with two minutes remaining. But the Raiders would go ahead for good when Kaela Wiseman made a free throw then followed up her own miss with a put back layup with 23 seconds left.

“Kaela has kind of become my field general,” Raiders coach Sam Meek said. “She is a coach and understands the game and what needs to be done when.”

The Raiders (1-0) built their early lead behind the post play of Jessica Hoffman, who finished with 13 points and 13 rebounds. Most of Hoffmam’s points came after each of her seven offensive rebounds.

“Jessica is a solid athlete no matter what sport she’s playing,” Meek said. “She knows where to be and when. She doesn’t get over excited, she plays within herself and we’re not as good a team without her.”

Lakota came out on fire, building an 8-2 run to start the game.

After Fremont Ross (0-1) cut it to 10-8, the Raiders’ Stephanie Miller and Miranda Guerra connected on back-to-back three-

GIRLS BASKETBALL

LAKOTA	47
FREMONT ROSS	44

pointers to go up 16-8.

Mackenzie Schneider kept the Little Giants in the game in the first half, scoring 12 of her team-high 13 points.

Both teams struggled with turnovers, having 29 apiece. The Raiders stretched the lead to 11 points in the third quarter and took a 42-33 lead into the final quarter.

That’s when the Little Giants turned up their defensive pressure to go on a 11-2 run. They then tied it up with a Schneider free throw before Wiseman gave the Raiders the lead for good.

“We tried to battle back and force some turnovers and kind of rattle them up a little bit,” Ross coach Juan Vela said. “We just couldn’t make some easy layups and some free throws and I think that’s what hurt us.”

Despite, the loss, Vela sees the close game as a good learning experience for the rest of the season.

“I told the girls, it’s the first game of the season and this is what basketballs all about,” Vela said. “You’ve got to adjust on the fly and try to win the game and we’ll get better at that.”

GIRLS BASKETBALL



Bill Sinden | special to the News-Messenger

Fremont's McKenzie Schneider defends against Marion's Brenae Harris during Friday's game at Marion Harding.

Second half a bummer for Ross

BY BOB PUTMAN

Special to the News-Messenger

MARION — Harding did mostly the same thing offensively in the second half as it did in the first half Friday in its Greater Buckeye Conference opener against Fremont Ross.

Except for one thing.

Limited to just 19 points in the first half, the Lady Presidents dropped in 34 second-half points in defeating the Little Giants 53-28.

"We simply started making shots in the second half," Harding coach Greg Noftz said. "We have one starter back from last year so we are still searching for the right combina-

MARION HARDING	53
FREMONT ROSS	28

tions."

Harding (2-1 overall, 1-0 GBC) was just seven-of-25 from the field in the first half but turned it around in the second half, going 13-of-31.

Getting the ball to go into the basket proved to be difficult for Fremont Ross (0-2, 0-1) in both halves of plays.

Fremont coach Juan Vela was pleased with how the Little Giants found ways to get their shot

attempts, but wished the end result could have been better.

Fremont went eight-of-55 from the field.

"We were getting the shots, but we couldn't finish the play," Vela said. "We were ready to go as a team, but we've got to knock down shots and put points on the board."

Both teams started off slow as neither team scored until a layup by Fremont's Sam Michael went through the net at the 4:02 mark of the first quarter.

The Little Giants added another field goal, a foul line jumper by

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Michael, before the Lady Presidents scored their first basket with 2:34 left on a layup by Kura Hairston.

Harding was able to take a 7-5 lead at the end of the first eight minutes as Brenae Harris beat the buzzer with a three-point field goal.

A 10-point run to start the second quarter pushed the Lady Presidents to a 17-5 lead.

Nikki Jackson hit for a trey while Harris scored two field goals and Loren Bollinger hit for two from the left baseline.

But Fremont Ross battled back, cutting the lead to 17-11 following a rebound basket by Bria Simms with 2:30 remaining.

A layup by Bollinger concluded the first-half scoring with Harding holding a 19-11 lead.

Fremont got off to a good start in the third quarter, closing to within 23-18 following a three-point play by Michael with 4:45 left.

But Harris answered back with a three-point field goal from the top of the key, starting Harding on a 14-3 run that closed out the frame for a 37-21 lead.

Harris scored 10 points during the run while Bollinger and Kortni Backensto each notched two points.

Micheal scored on a drive to the basket to start the fourth quarter for Fremont, but the Little Giants did not hit another field goal the rest of the way.

Harding held a 16-7 advantage in the fourth quarter. Harris and Backensto each scored four points for the Lady Presidents.

Fremont was able to get several second-chance opportunities and Noftz will have his team working on doing a better job on the boards.

“We played pretty good defense, but we didn’t rebound very well,” he said. “If we can find consistency and shoot the ball better we will be OK.”

“We will keep learning as a team,” Vela said. “We played pretty well defensively but we have to play at the other end and make baskets.”

Harris led all scorers with 21 points while Bollinger finished with nine and Backensto and Hairston each had six.

Christy Meggitt paced Fremont Ross with 11 points and Michael tallied 10 points.

Fremont won the jayvee game 45-27.

Abbi Hasselbach led Fremont with 11 points and Elizabeth Scott had 19 points for Harding.



**HIGH SCHOOL
GIRLS BASKETBALL**

SANDUSKY 55,
FREMONT ROSS 44

Streaks pick up first win over Giants

BY SEAN SHAPIRO

News-Messenger correspondent

FREMONT — Sandusky's Cara Croom had a game-high 16 points, and three other players scored at least eight as Fremont Ross fell 55-44 in a Greater Buckeye Conference girls basketball game Thursday.

Sandusky (1-2, 1-1) picked up its first win of the season while the Little Giants (0-4, 0-2) are still looking for their first victory.

Hitting a pair of 3-pointers and converting on all four trips to the foul line, Croom's offensive effort helped spark her team to a 19-point third quarter, turning an eight-point halftime lead into a 20-point margin before the start of the fourth quarter.

"We fell apart again in the third quarter, but our girls still played till the end," Little Giants coach Juan Vela said. "We have to learn how to win games by fighting 'til the end, before we actually do so."

Bria Simms did all she could to keep the game close for Ross in the first half, scoring eight points and grabbing four rebounds. Simms, who battled foul trouble, finished with nine points and five rebounds, including three at the offensive end.

"She can be a real good player for this program. She has to believe that ... I thought she did a good job of staying aggressive despite the fouls," Vela said.

With Ross using a zone defense for much of the third quarter, Sandusky was content with patiently passing the ball around the perimeter until it could find an open jump shot or go inside to Sam Mayfield, who had six of her nine points in the third quarter.

"Our zone offense was particularly good (Thursday)," Sandusky coach Nic Venerucci said. "Hats off to our girls this week, they played hard and took good shots. ... We were able to finish a game, and this is a tough place to play."

Ross outscored Sandusky 14-5 in the fourth quarter to shave into the final margin.

While Sandusky's offense had a breakout display in the third quarter, its defense was superb all evening, forcing Ross into 27 turnovers and limiting it to a 16-for-53 effort from the field. The Blue Streaks also won the rebound battle 30-21.

Sandusky led 15-10 after forcing several turnovers in the first quarter. The Blue Streaks pushed their lead to 31-23 at the half as Morgan Newell and Croom were able to get to the free throw line in the second quarter.

Christy Meggitt and McKenzie Schneider had 11 and 13 points, respectively, for Ross.

**GIRLS HIGH SCHOOL
BASKETBALL**

FREMONT ROSS 50,
OREGON CLAY 43, OT

Giants force 12 turnovers in overtime win

BY MATT MILLS

News-Messenger correspondent

Junior Bria Simms had a double-double and Fremont Ross played strong defense to topple Oregon Clay 50-43 in overtime for its first victory of the season Tuesday.

Little Giants freshman Abbi Haselbach made two free throws with 1 minute, 30 seconds left in overtime for a 43-41 advantage. Simms followed with a putback on the next possession before the Eagles sank two free throws.

Sophomore Sam Michaels, who scored 10 points in the game, hit a basket for a 47-43 margin as Ross outscored Clay 9-2 in overtime.

The Eagles forced overtime with a 13-7 fourth quarter.

The Little Giants allowed 14 points in the second and third quarters, and overtime combined. The Eagles connected on only one field goal in the second quarter.

"(Tuesday) was a total team effort," Ross coach Juan Vela said. "Everyone who played (Tuesday) gave us something that contributed to the win. That's a good thing for us going forward."

Ross was outscored 16-10 in the first quarter before turning up the defensive pressure and holding the Eagles to just six points in the second quarter for a 26-22 advantage.

The Little Giants forced 12 turnovers in the middle two quarters. Clay also scored only six points in the third quarter as Ross established a 34-28 lead.

Vela has been preaching the importance of rebounding and the Little Giants held a 40-22 advantage on the boards. Simms had 14 points and 14 rebounds for Ross.

"Phil (Blasko) and I have been stressing rebounds since Day 1," Vela said. "That's the No. 1 key to every-

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thing we do. We did a fantastic job of executing that (Tuesday)."

Ross outscored the Eagles 16-6 to close the first half. Hasselbach, who scored 10 points in the game, sparked the Little Giants in the second quarter.

Hasselbach added a three-pointer for the margin entering

the fourth.

"We've got some young girls that we can bring off the bench and give us some excitement, and Abbi is certainly one of them," Vela said. "At the same time, they're still young, and need to get their emotions in check at times. We rely on our upperclassmen to sort of keep them in line."

Little Giants misfire late in loss

BY KEVIN SHIELDS
Sports writer

FREMONT — Fremont Ross coach Juan Vela is still looking for someone on his team that can take over the game at a critical juncture.

And in Tuesday night's non-conference tilt with Bowling Green he kept waiting for it, but it never came.

Instead, the Bobcats walked out of the Purple Pit with a 42-29 victory. And the Little Giants, who had cut the lead down to four once in the third quarter and to five twice in the fourth, let an opportunity to get a big win slip away.

"We're still looking for that one player to make the decision to turn the game our way in a critical moment," said Vela. "Instead we're almost getting there and just letting it go."

A big reason Ross was almost there was the fact it held the Bobcats to 25 percent shooting (17-of-68). The difference however, was the 41-27 edge for Bowling Green (5-2) in rebounding. That included an 18-1 edge in offensive boards.

Bowling Green came into Tuesday fresh off a hard fought 61-54 victory Monday over 7-2 Archbold.

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"It's not an excuse, but I think our shooting was the result of us having some tired legs," said Bobcats coach Jeff Nichols. "We pressed throughout Monday's game and it was just a lot of play."

Hayley Williford scored 26 points Monday in the win and had a game-high 17 against the Little Giants. She finished 7-of-20 from the field.

"She didn't have her best night, but she hit some key shots when she had to," Nichols said. "When she gets her shoulders square and gets good opportunities, she's going to make more than she misses."

Bowling Green led wire to wire, jumping out to an early 9-2 lead on one of Williford's three 3-pointers.

Ross closed the gap to 9-6 after one quarter, but two threes, one from Williford and the other from Marissa Milligan shot the Bobcat lead up to 17-8.

Trailing 21-12 after 16 minutes, the Little Giants scored the first five points

of the third quarter to close within 21-17. Christy Meggitt hit a three and Sam Michael got a lay in inside for two of her six points.

But another Williford 3-pointer and a second-chance bucket by Alyssa Kopp had the Bobcat edge back to nine.

"I don't think our girls played with enough heart to beat a good team like that," Vela said. "Did we show heart at times? Yes. But when we were down by four in the third quarter and five in the fourth quarter, we didn't show enough and I think had we done so, it would've given us some confidence and we might've won."

A McKenzie Schneider trey cut the Bobcats lead to 32-27 just two minutes into the final quarter. Ross got it back to five then with 3:50 left on a lay in by Abbi Hasselbach.

It was the Little Giants' final points of the contest as Bowling Green closed the game on an 8-0 run. And rebounding again was a big part.

"I think we had a little bit of a size advantage and those second-chance points worked to our advantage," Nichols said. "We weren't making our first shots, but we were getting the



Greg Burr | Submitted Photo

Fremont's Abbi Hasselbach attacks the basket during Tuesday's game against Bowling Green. The Bobcats won the game, 42-29.

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rebound and getting a second opportunity."

Ross (1-6) also struggled with first shots, finishing the game 12-of-34 (35 percent) from the field.

"When we're struggling like that, we have to get the offensive rebounds and putbacks," Vela said. "We're missing too many layups for us to go to the next level."

"And the girls inside the locker room need to decide what they want to do about that."

One Little Giant with a solid game was Hasselbach. The freshman led Ross with eight points, contributing four rebounds, two

assists and two steals. Schneider and Michael each grabbed six boards.

"She knows how to compete, she just needs to learn the game more," Vela said of Hasselbach. "But she's one of the players we have that can help us this season and in the future."

In the jayvee game the Bobcats held on for a 50-47 victory. Hanna Williford led Bowling Green with a game-high 22 points. Ariana Spencer led the Little Giants with 19, while Kiera Hall and Shania Kiser had eight and seven points respectively.

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Little Giants struggle in loss to Toledo Central Catholic

BY MATT MILLS

News-Messenger correspondent

TOLEDO — The Fremont Ross girls basketball team suffered a lopsided defeat by Toledo Central Catholic 62-36 at the Huntington Center on Monday.

The game was the first of five in an all-day event, The Blade High School Basketball Classic.

"Right now, we just need to learn to play ball as much as possible," said Fremont Ross coach Juan Vela. "Central Catholic made a ton of plays

CENT. CATHOLIC 62
FREMONT ROSS 36

today that you learn to make playing in the offseasons. We need to get to that point, that's a big part of it."

The Irish started the game on an 8-0 run, forcing Vela to take an early timeout. Ross was unable to make the proper adjustments and as a result went down 21-12 after the first period.

Central Catholic forced eight turnovers, which led to a lot of fast break opportunities for the Irish.

"This was a neat and very cool atmosphere," said Central Catholic coach Marty McGuri. "Our kids were excited to play in this tournament and our coaching staff was excited for them. We had some time off for Christmas, so we were a little rusty and lackadaisical at times, but at times we did some nice things out there."

The second period was low-

scoring as a result of the tempo being slowed down, but Ross was unable to do anything to cut in to the lead and trailed 31-18 at the half.

"We had an all right game today," said Jalyn Lathon. "We could have played a lot better, but coming out here and playing under all these bright lights was really fun. We got out and set the tempo, and no matter what tempo we set, we executed well most of the time. Lathon led the Irish in scoring and rebounding with 16 and 8.

Ross came out of halftime with some intensity, but unfortunately for the Little Giants, they were never able to make a dent in Toledo's lead. Ross was outscored 13-10 in the third period and 18-8 in the final period. Bria Simms led the Little Giants with 10 points and 8 boards and Sam Michael scored 10 points of her own.

"We've just got to keep playing," said Vela. "We've got to get better and were going to get back to practice and try and improve."

Ross better, not good enough

BY KEVIN SHIELDS
Sports writer

FREMONT — Coming into Friday's Greater Buckeye Conference tilt with Lima Senior, coach Juan Vela anticipated his Fremont Ross girls would play at a fast pace.

What he didn't foresee was how well his Little Giants would shoot.

Ross shot 41 percent (24-of-58) for the game and 50 percent in the first half (12-of-24). And that's the kind of improvement the second-year coach is looking for, even in a 71-58 defeat.

"We've never shot 50 percent," said Vela. "If I'm going to take something out of this game, that's one thing for sure. A lot of the girls are starting to get comfortable shooting the ball and I've been waiting for it out of them all year."

Sophomore Sam Michael was the least bashful Ross shooter. She poured in a game-high 22 points, 13 in the opening half.

"It was nice to see her play to her potential like that," Vela said. "That's the kind of player she can be for us, and we expect many more games like that from her in the future."

Michael chipped in a game-best eight rebounds and had three assists. Tying her with eight boards was Bria Simms, who added 11 points.

Michael had a layup in transition off a pass from McKenzie Schneider to gave the Little Giants their lone lead of the game, 6-4, early in the first quarter.

Ross might have looked smooth at the up-tempo pace, but that's Lima Senior's trademark. And the Spartans showed it, knocking down fast-break layups, runners and hit-

ting open shooters.

Back-to-back 3-point shots by Kalese Carpenter from the right corner gave the Spartans (5-5, 2-2), a 19-10 lead with 1:49 remaining in the opening quarter. Lima Senior led 21-15 after one quarter and 44-29 at halftime.

"We're always trying to play fast," Spartans coach Vince Halliday said. "Indiya Benjamin does a nice job at sharing the basketball for a freshman. We want to make sure we always have her keeping everyone else involved."

Benjamin dished out seven assists and added 12 points and five steals. Her ability to find Dionna Hurley and Airika Callahan on the perimeter was key. Hurley led the Spartans with 17 points. Callahan poured in 10. The two helped Lima Senior knock down eight shots (8-of-20) from beyond the arc.

All came from the same spot — the right corner. Hurley had three treys, Callahan and Carpenter had two.

"Dionna shoots it really well from over there," Halliday said. "Airika typically doesn't, but after she made that first one she went right back to it and hit that second one."

Callahan knocked down two triples from the magical corner on two straight possessions in the third quarter. Lima built the lead to 25 (62-39) early in the fourth quarter.

"We couldn't stop their runs in the third," Vela said. "They had a couple of runs during that stretch and we just didn't respond offensively or defensively."

But Ross (1-9, 0-4) never quit, cutting the Spartans lead in the



DOUG HISE/NEWS MESSENGER

Sam Michael puts up a shot Friday night against Lima Senior's Shaqualla Hurley.

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fourth thanks to nine points from Simms. Three of her buckets came on second-chance efforts.

“I thought they did a very nice job of handling our pressure all night,” Halliday said. “They got the ball to the middle of the floor. They attacked a lot. And they shot the ball real well, especially in the first half.”

Still, it wasn't enough for the Little Giants, who turned the ball over 25 times and gave up too many high-percentage chances. Lima Senior finished the game 28-of-60 from the field (46 percent) with seven misses coming in the final eight minutes with its starters on the bench.

For Vela, though, the effort was much better than the previous two games.

“It was good to see us take a step forward from the games against (Toledo) Central Catholic and Perysburg,” Vela said. “Our girls really responded to the full-court pressure they gave us. And we had some really good plays tonight.”

Slow start dooms Little Giants in loss to Napoleon

BY SEAN SHAPIRO

News-Messenger correspondent

FREMONT — The Ross girls basketball team wasn't ready to play but Napoleon came out firing in a 55-30 Greater Buckeye Conference shellacking of the Little Giants on Thursday night.

Winning the opening tip, the Wildcats sped down the court and opened the scoring eight seconds into the game. That set the tone for dominant first half.

Relying on a full-court press, Napoleon (9-2, 5-0 GBC) lead 17-

0 after the first quarter and didn't allow a basket until half way through the second quarter.

"It's our players not wanting to play the first half," Ross coach Juan Vela said. "They came out ready to play and our girls didn't, and it got worse and worse and worse and worse."

Ross (1-11, 0-4) was limited to only five shots in the first quarter and by halftime — at which time Napoleon lead 35-4 — four of the Napoleon starters had outscored the Little Giants themselves.

"It's nice to get off to that kind

GIRLS BASKETBALL

NAPOLEON	55
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of start, they struggled and we did some things well," Napoleon coach Rod Hersha said. "Obviously the first half was the difference maker, not often can you say the first half pretty much takes the other team out."

Even though the first half made a Napoleon victory a foregone conclusion, Ross started to

fix its errors in the second half and outscored the Wildcats in both the third and fourth quarters.

"I went in there at halftime and they said everything I was going to say. It's not them knowing what problems to fix, it's them wanting to," Vela said.

That message seemed to finally click in with 5:51 left in the third quarter. With Napoleon protecting its largest lead of the game — 37 points — Ross went on spurts of 5-0 and 4-0 to hit double digits on the scoreboard.

"I've been in games were it's a rough first half and there are teams I've coached in the past who just bag it," Vela said. "This group didn't want to do that, so it shows a little bit of the kind of attitude we have on this team, hopefully we can grow up from this."

That continued into the fourth quarter as Ross's Bria Simms scored nine of her team-high 11 points and the Little Giants outscored the Wildcats 11-8.

Katelyn Hesterman and Erica Monin lead Napoleon in scoring, with 11 points apiece.

Ross girls finally figure it out

Little Giants beat Panthers for 2nd win of season

BY SEAN SHAPIRO
News-Messenger correspondent

Fremont Ross girls basketball coach Juan Vela has discovered the key to coaching success may in fact be letting the players figure things out on their own.

At 2-11 and winless in conference play, it's been a tough season for the Little Giants, but after a 65-48 victory against Whitmer on Saturday, Vela's team may be turning it around.

Two nights earlier, in a 25-point loss to Napoleon, Vela went into the locker room and had his players' self-diagnosis what was wrong after one of its worst halves of the season. The players' prognosis worked and the Little Giants responded by outscoring Napoleon in the second half.

"In practice now it seems talk less and have them do more, in practice I make them get together and talk among themselves," Vela said. "I can't play for them, they need to solve the problems out there by themselves."

Saturday, the Little Giants were able to solve their own problems, and any challenges issued by Whitmer, and they were competitive from the opening tip and took control of the game in the second quarter.

Sophomore Sam Michael led a balanced scoring effort with a team-high 15 points, but all eight players who stepped on the floor scored at least three points and helped run an offense that Whitmer couldn't contain.

"We had a difficult time containing the ball on the perimeter, all night they constantly beat us on penetration and when that happens your defense breaks down," Whitmer coach Rhett Boyd said. "We needed to do a better job outside to keep our defense in line, but to their credit they did a great job of breaking us down."



Fremont Ross's Tera McDonald drives the lane during Saturday night's game at the Purple Pit against Whitmer.

SUBMITTED PHOTO BY GREG BURR

In the second and fourth quarters in particular, Ross seemed to have paved a path to a basket, easily working the ball around to open shooters underneath and opening up the passing lanes by draining four shots from beyond the 3-point arc.

Even when they slightly faltered and Whitmer went on an

11-0 run in the third quarter, the Little Giants were able to respond and string together seven straight points with baskets from three different players.

"Everybody gave us spark and that's what team basketball is," Vela said.

While six straight quarters of solid basketball don't improve

upon the fact Ross is still nine games under .500, it was nice for the Little Giants to have an off day Sunday before resuming play Tuesday at Woodmore.

"I'm not gonna lie, it feels good, losing never feels good, and they can celebrate (Sunday), and (today) we can get back to work on Woodmore," Vela said.

Wildcats win on last-second bucket

BY SEAN SHAPIRO
News-Messenger sports
correspondent

FREMONT — Down by a point to Fremont Ross with less than 20 seconds left in the game, the play was supposed to be a high pick and roll leading to an easy game-winning shot for Woodmore's Audrey Thorbain.

However, while Thorbain did have a game-high 17 points for Woodmore, the ball ended up in the hands of Taylor Avers.

Avers along the baseline, threw up a shot with five seconds remaining and sank it with 3.8 seconds showing on the clock for the go-ahead basket as the Wildcats topped the Little Giants 43-42 in Tuesday non-league play.

"It ended up where we got Taylor in a good attack position for her," said Woodmore coach Kyle Clair. "She's a good player with a quick first step and worked out well for us."

While her coach had confidence she would hit the shot, Avers was nervous the layup wouldn't drop after she let the shot go.

"At first I didn't think it was going to go in, because I just went up and threw it, hoping it was going to go in," said Avers.

The basket won Woodmore (7-6) the game, rescuing a victory from a comeback-minded Ross (2-12) team that had scored the potential game-winning 3-pointer by Alyssa Palmer with 1:08 remaining.

Trailing 38-31 entering the fourth quarter, the Little Giants climbed back into the game as they stopped relying on Sam Michael — who had a team-high 16 points — and started running a more team-oriented offense.

"It always helps when the other kids step up in attacking the middle and grabbing offensive rebounds," said Ross coach Juan Vela. "Basketball takes all five. You might have one player who's offensively good, but it takes all five to play good basketball."



JONATHAN BIRD/NEWS-MESSENGER

Woodmore's Taylor Avers battles for the ball as she is pressured by the Fremont Ross defense during the second half on Tuesday.

Michael started the comeback, scoring a basket in traffic and converting on an ensuing foul shot to

cut the deficit to four. Then Christy Meggitt pulled the Little Giants within a basket on 3-pointer from

the right corner.

See WOODMORE, page 7

WOODMORE FROM 6

Palmer would add her potential game winning 3-pointer three minutes later, forcing Woodmore to play from behind to get the game-winner.

"I think we got a little lackadaisical for awhile," Clair said. "A lot of defensive breakdowns by us. They were feisty and got on the offensive glass."

"That's what got them back in the game."

In addition to attacking the offensive glass and getting second-

chance shots, Ross' defense helped fuel the comeback as they limited Woodmore to four points in the final quarter.

However, while they played strong defense for the majority of the fourth quarter, the defensive effort didn't hold as Avers found a hole on the baseline for her game-winning basket.

"What hurt us was when they got that two, we didn't defend the baseline," Vela said. "I told them all we've got to do is play defense for 10 seconds, and we only played defense for five."

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Sophomore leads Napoleon past struggling Ross

BY SEAN SHAPIRO

News-Messenger correspondent

NAPOLEON — Napoleon's Jordan Lauf nearly outscored Fremont Ross himself, leading his team to a 59-28 Greater Buckeye Conference victory Thursday night.

Lauf — the GBC's leading scorer — scored 21 of his game-high 25 points in the first half. In doing so, he erased any positive feelings Ross developed during an opening three minutes that were fast paced.

"We were going against a tal-

GIRLS BASKETBALL
NAPOLEON 59
FREMONT ROSS 28

ented Napoleon team, but I thought for the first three minutes we did pretty well," said Ross coach Mark Gedeon. "But you have to play for 32 minutes. They didn't do anything that didn't surprise us. We have to get the answer from our players as to why they let them do what we knew they were going to do."

One constant for Napoleon (8-5, 2-3) was working the ball inside to Lauf, who constantly found open space in the paint, and had an easy time beating his defender in one-on-one situations.

"We ran a man-to-man offense to get Jordan some looks, and the guys have recognized Jordan does a good job of getting the ball on the block and he can score," said Napoleon coach Tim Badenhop.

By the time the 6-foot-4 sophomore was taken out of the game — to a standing ovation with 3:26 remaining — he had outscored Ross (3-8, 1-4) by himself, 25-24.

However, while Lauf led Napoleon in scoring and was the go-to guy when the Wildcats blew the game open in the second quarter, his teammates pitched in and lead the way in the second half.

Three of his teammates had at least five points in the second half, allowing the lead to hover around 30 points for most of the fourth quarter. It was such a dominant performance, much of the crowd had already made their way to the exits before the Wildcat starters made their final trip to the bench.

Napoleon's offensive execution wasn't the only issue for

Ross, as its offense struggled to establish any rhythm and had 28 turnovers.

"Most of them were unforced, I think maybe 10 of them were traveling calls, especially when they made their run in the second quarter," Gedeon said. "We had a stretch from the end of the first quarter into the second where we only scored on one of 13 possessions, and I bet you half of those were traveling calls."

"Last I knew, you have to shoot to score, and if you don't get the opportunity to shoot, you're not going to win to many ball games."

Big fourth quarter, propels Findlay over Fremont Ross



GREG BURR/SUBMITTED PHOTO

Fremont Ross' McKenzie Schneider drives the lane during Thursday's game at home against Findlay. Findlay won 46-32.

BY MATT MILLS

News-Messenger correspondent

FREMONT — A big fourth quarter helped Findlay close out Fremont Ross, 46-32, Thursday evening in the Purple Pit.

After the Little Giants won the third quarter 13-4, cutting the Trojans' lead to 29-27, Findlay outscored Ross 17-5 to take control.

Holly Barton and Danielle Salisbury led the charge for the Trojans (10-6, 6-2) with 12 points each.

"We had our chances to win tonight," said Ross coach Juan Vela. "There were just a couple different situations where we didn't come up with some big plays when we needed them the most."

Findlay jumped out to a quick start on the Little Giants (2-13), leading 13-4 after the first period.

Ross was able to hold its own in the second period, but was unable to cut into the lead. Findlay led 25-16 at halftime.

However, the Little Giants came out of the locker room after

the half determined to get back in the basketball game. They started that task by turning a few timely turnovers in to immediate points on the offensive end.

Sam Michael got to the line six times for the Little Giants and connected on all six attempts during the quarter (9-of-9 from the line for the game). Alyssa Palmer cleaned up the glass then, grabbing five rebounds.

The only thing that didn't go Ross' way in the third stanza came with three minutes left in the period when McKenzie Schneider picked up her fourth foul.

Unfortunately for the Little Giants, they were unable to maintain their momentum.

"We had a good run there in the third quarter," Vela said. "Our girls were playing extremely hard, and we were playing our game."

"We were down three in the fourth quarter, and they went on a run," he continued. "Basketball has always been a game of runs, and there's couldn't have come at a worse time for us."



Abbi Hasselbach of Fremont Ross is trapped by Port Clinton's Alex Stephenson and Kenzie Payne during Tuesday's non-league game at Port Clinton. The Redskins won 60-30. See more photos at thenews-messenger.com.

JONATHAN BIRD/NEWS-MESSENGER

Little Giants go cold in loss

BY KEVIN SHIELDS
Sports writer

PORT CLINTON — The temperature outside the gym at Port Clinton on Tuesday was frigid as could be, but inside it wasn't much warmer for the Fremont Ross offense.

The Little Giants played hard on defense, forcing Port Clinton into 29 turnovers on the defensive end. But when it came to shooting at the other end of the floor, Ross went cold.



Vela

In fact, the air temperature outside might have been warmer than their 17 percent shooting percentage.

Ross shot 9-of-51 from the floor, including 4-of-30 in the second half en route to a 60-30 non-conference loss to the Redskins.

"They weren't falling at all," Ross coach Juan Vela said of his team's shots. "One of my players actually asked me if the rims were the right size, because there was one shot she had where half the ball was inside the rim and it came right back out on her."

Sam Michael was the lone Little Giant to reach double fig-

ures and tally more than two field goals, finishing with 11 points on 5-of-10 shooting. The rest of her teammates were a combined 4-of-41.

"We played Findlay the other day ... played really well and seemed pretty confident coming into tonight," Vela said. "But Port Clinton hit some big threes and we just couldn't buy a bucket."

Ross (2-16) trailed early, but tied the game twice in the first quarter on jumpers by Michael and Christy Meggitt.

Port Clinton (6-12) used a 16-4 run in the second and third quarters to increase on what had been an 18-13 advantage.

Ross was then outscored 23-8 in the final quarter as the Redskins inside game took over.

Hope Thorbahn had a double-double for Port Clinton finishing with game-highs in points (15) and rebounds (12). Alex Stephenson added 13 points for the Redskins.

"Our girls kept playing hard for me," Vela said. "And with it being this late in the season, it's easy for a team like this to bag it. But they keep playing hard for me."

Meggitt added eight points and five boards for the Little Giants. McKenzie Schneider finished with five steals.

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Roundup: SJCC girls fall late to St. Mary

News-Messenger reports

St. Joseph Central Catholic got 16 points from Brennan Reardon and 15 from Tori Smith, but the Crimson Streaks were unable to stop St. Mary Central Catholic's Lindsay Kaatz Tuesday, who poured in a game-high 27 points and led the Panthers to a 62-56 win in the non-conference tilt.



Reardon

Kaatz had 18 of her points in the opening half to keep SMCC (7-10) close as the Crimson Streaks led 31-28 at halftime.

"We shot it great from the floor, but we had no answer for Kaatz in the first half," SJCC coach Gary Geller said.

The Panthers outscored SJCC (5-12) 17-7 in the third

quarter to seize momentum and control of the game.

Chipping in 11 points for the Crimson Streaks was Cassidy Frank.

Clyde 75, Willard 38

Amanda Cahill scored a game-high 17 points as Clyde remained unbeaten with a non-conference victory.

Rachael Smetzler and Spencer Robles scored 13 points apiece, Kaylea Griffin had 12 and Breanne Michaels 10 as each of the Fliers' (16-0) starters scored in double figures.

"We came out with a lot of energy from the beginning," Clyde coach John Cahill said.

Lake 52, Gibsonburg 19

Fourth-ranked Lake proved too much for Gibsonburg in a

See **ROUNDUP**, page 8



JENNIFER YOUNG BOWER/NEWS-MESSANGER CORRESPONDENT

Clyde's Kaylea Griffin jumps for the basket during Thursday's game against Fremont Ross.

Flying high and unbeaten

Cahill notches 19 in Clyde win over Ross

BY MATT MILLS

News-Messenger correspondent

Amanda Cahill scored 19 points, including 15 in the first half as Clyde remained unbeaten with a 75-44 non-conference victory over Fremont Ross on Thursday.

Kaylea Griffin, who joined seven others in the Fliers' 1,000-point club, scored 16 points in the first half for Clyde (17-0). Griffin, who is also nearing 1,000 rebounds for her career, joins seven others in the milestone club including teammate Spencer Robles who reached the mark Saturday.

"I'm supposed to give all the credit to Kim Lawrence," Griffin said. "I also couldn't have done it without my teammates. They always get me the ball when I get to the spots I need to be at, and the rest is history."

The Fliers jumped out to a quick 6-0 lead before the Little Giants responded with a 7-0 run of their own. Unfortunately for Ross, that was the highlight of the contest.

Clyde led 19-14 after the first period as Griffin had nine points and Cahill eight.

"(Thursday) was about everything but the game," Clyde coach John Cahill said. "It was about our players getting 1,000 points, it was about the Lake game, it was about everything but the game we were playing."

Clyde really opened the floodgates in the second period, outscoring the Little Giants 27-5 and forcing 17 turnovers. The Fliers started the period with a 15-0 spurt over the first three minutes before

See CLYDE, page 9

CLYDE FROM 6

Ross's Christy Meggitt hit a 3-pointer.

Clyde led 46-19 at the half.

"We hung right with them in the first quarter," Ross coach Juan Vela said.

"We played hard, we shot the ball a lot better than we did against Port Clinton. It was in the second quarter when things really got away from us."

The Fliers' pressure forced eight turnovers in the third period and led to 19 points, while holding Ross to only seven points to put the game away.

"As a basketball fan, Clyde

*"As a basketball fan,
Clyde is a fun team to watch.
They're a very good team."*

JUAN VELA

Fremont Ross girls basketball coach

is a fun team to watch," Vela said. "They're a very good team."

The Fliers are ranked fourth in the state in Division II and host undefeated and fourth-ranked Lake (Division III) on Monday.

Lake has won 61 straight in the regular season.

"We haven't had a lot of letdown games this season," Cahill said of his

team's own unblemished record. "If we beat Edison on Saturday, we clinch the SBC and that's what we're focused on until Saturday's game is over.

"After that, we'll start worrying about Lake. We're practicing on Sunday to make sure we're ready to go. We know Lake's a good team. There's a reason they haven't lost in a long time."

HIGH SCHOOL GIRLS BASKETBALL ■ MARION HARDING 57, FREMONT ROSS 34

17-0 run dooms Little Giants

BY SEAN SHAPIRO

News-Messenger correspondent

FREMONT — Marion Harding point guard Brenae Harris sparked a big third-quarter run, leading the Presidents to a blowout 57-34 Greater Buckeye Conference win over Ross on Tuesday night.

On senior night, the Little Giants (2-18 overall, 0-9 GBC) hung with the Presidents (9-10, 4-5 until the third quarter. Ross led 29-28 on back-to-back 3-pointers by Sam Michael and McKenzie Schneider.

But that one-point lead would be Ross' last of the night, as Marion Harding went on a 17-0 run. The Presidents did it by forcing many Little Giants turnovers, and allowing Harris to execute her offense with ease.

"We told our kids at halftime, with it being senior night, that they'd come out with fire and play pretty well," Harding coach Greg Nofitz said. "We weren't going to panic at halftime. Once we used our press, which we usually go to in

the second half, they started turning the ball over and it gave them a lot of problems."

Adding to Ross' woes was Harris, who is University of Michigan-bound. The talented point guard scored a game-high 26 points, grabbed nine rebounds and dished out five assists.

"She's going to Michigan for a reason," Vela said. "She's a really good player and I was hoping we would just control her and not really make her mad or anything. She did a really good job, she stepped up in the second half and she looked like a Big Ten player. That's why she's going there, and I don't think there is much we could do."

Relying on her best shot, a 10-to-15 foot jumper off of the dribble, Harris had ten points in the third quarter. When she wasn't hitting open shots, she connected with an open teammate cutting under the basket.

By the time Ross did start double-teaming Harris in the fourth quarter, it was too late, as the Presidents kept building on their lead, eventually reaching the final margin of 23 points.

"She started catching on fire in the third quarter, and that's when we should have gone to the double-team," Vela said. "But, some of those other girls are known to hit big 3s when they're open ... it's just one of those things you try and it didn't work out tonight."

The offense didn't work out either for the Little Giants. Even when they did get past the aggressive Presidents' press, they failed to connect on several forced 3-pointers.

"They started pressing and the girls starting freaking out, turning the ball over a little bit," Vela said. "We were relying on the 3-pointer way too much, I think we were 2-for-12 or so, and I think that's what really killed us."

The two teams could meet again in the sectional tournament Feb. 26 in Bucyrus. Ross will play the winner of a game between Marion Harding and Ashland.

If the two teams do meet again, Vela and the Giants will have 12 days to figure out a way to deal with Harris.

GIRLS BASKETBALL

NAPOLEON 46,
FREMONT ROSS 13

Little Giants go 2nd straight year without a win in GBC

BY SEAN SHAPIRO

News-Messenger correspondent

NAPOLEON — The Napoleon girls basketball team capped off a perfect Greater Buckeye Conference Season with a dominant 46-13 victory against Fremont Ross on Thursday night.

In a game where the final result was never in question, the Wildcats (18-2, 10-0 GBC) capped one of the best regular seasons in school history, while Ross (2-18, 0-10) has now gone two straight seasons without a conference victory.

"I just told the girls they made some history," Napoleon coach Rod Hersa said. "There was another team that's won the league with an undefeated season, but there's never been a team that's won 18 games before. They've got another couple notches on their belt that no other team has ever had."

Picking up that unprecedented 18th regular season victory, the Wildcats were led by senior Katelyn Hesterman, who in her final game in Napoleon's "Grand Canyon" gym had a season-high 19 points on a perfect 8-for-8 effort from the field and converting on all three trips to the free-throw line.

"We wanted to go to her even more," Hersa said. "You look for matchups, and she had a matchup that was pretty good for her, and she was shooting the ball well. Katie did a great job inside, we tried to make her our feature person most of the night."

While Hesterman was the featured player on the Napoleon attack, the Ross offense struggled to even get shots off and would have been held without a field goal in the second half in not for a layup by Tera McDonald with 34.3 seconds remaining.

Turning the ball over 28 times, against a Napoleon full-court press and when the Wildcats dropped into half-court defense, Ross only got off 11 shots in the second half and often found themselves backpedaling, trying to slow a Napoleon

See GIANTS, page B4

High School Basketball

ALL-DISTRICT 6 GIRLS BASKETBALL

Division I

■ Players of the Year: Brenae Harris, Marion Harding; Racheal Mahan, Mansfield Senior.

■ First Team: Brenea Harris, Marion Harding; Racheal Mahan, Mansfield Senior; **Sam Michael, Fremont Ross**; Kortni Backensto, Marion Harding; Imani Vickers, Mansfield Senior; Cara Croom, Sandusky; MacKenzie McFarlin, Ashland.

■ Second Team: Dierra Bluester, Mansfield Senior; Loren Bollinger, Marion Harding; Bro Crowe, Sandusky; **Christy Meggitt, Fremont Ross**; Kelsey Litten, Ashland; **McKenzie Schneider, Fremont Ross**.

■ Honorable Mention: Caroline Estel, Sandusky; Kiara Bond, Mansfield Senior; Nikki Jackson, Marion Harding; **Bria Simms, Fremont Ross**; Shawntel Hawkins, Mansfield.

Local players on all-GBC team

News-Messenger reports

FREMONT — Little Giant Diante Pettiford was named to the all-Greater Buckeye Conference boys basketball second team.

Shunnar Gamble and Jake Hiestand were given honorable mention.

C.J. Gettys of Findlay was named league player of the year, and Trojans coach Jim Rucki was named coach of the year for the third time. He previously was honored in 2007 and 2009.

Ross's Christy Meggitt and Sam Michael were given honorable mention on the all-GBC girls basketball team.

Marion Harding senior Bre-nae Harris was named female player of the year, while Napoleon coach Rod Hersha was named coach of the year, guiding the Wildcats to a perfect conference record in the league's final year.

Napoleon will head to the Northern Lakes League, Sandusky will go to the Northern Ohio League, Marion Harding at this point will be independent and the rest of the league — Ross, Findlay and Lima Senior — will be part of the new Three Rivers Athletic Conference.
