

2011-2012 season review

Hasselbach gets the point

By Kevin Shields
Sports writer

FREMONT — Abbi Hasselbach is relishing her role as the spark plug of the Fremont Ross girls basketball team.

Last year as a freshman, she provided instant energy off the bench.

This time around, she's bringing that same effort throughout the game, and it's already paying off for the Little Giants.

Hasselbach had a game-high seven assists, all coming in the first half, helping Ross to a 68-31 victory over Lakota on opening night at the Purple Pit.

"This was my first game starting as point guard, I was nervous," she said. "We all have worked really hard and I was just hoping it would pay off. But everyone did so good and we all put up points."

Hasselbach added 11 points and five steals as the Little Giants (1-0) had three starters finish in double figures.

Sam Michael led the way with 17 points and pulled down eight boards. Mckenzie Schneider contributed 12 points and four steals, while Keira Hall had a game-high 10 rebounds.

"Game one is always scary; you never know what to expect," Ross coach Juan Vela said. "The girls were ready to play, they were excited. We had a nice crowd and the energy just kept growing as the game went along."

Jessica Hoffman scored a bucket on a drive to the hoop to give the Raiders (0-1) an early 5-0 lead just 1:28 in, before Ross fought back with eight straight points.

Michael had six points during the run, giving the Little Giants a lead they'd never relinquish. The junior had 11 points in the opening 16 minutes, including nine in the opening quarter.

Michael's 3-pointer from the top of the key opened an 11-7 lead as Ross went on an 18-2 run for an 11-point first-quarter lead.

"Sam has experience now and she feels comfortable out there," Vela said. "That tonight, was just her being comfortable on the floor and playing to the best of her ability."

"It was good to see her catch on fire there for a little bit."

Ross continued to dominate the play in the second quarter. Back-to-back baskets inside by Shania Kiser were the first of 12 straight points by the Little Giants to open the quarter.

Hasselbach finished the run with three straight assists, the final on a nice give-and-go with Schneider.

"I feel like the assists are just as important as making the shot, and I love to pass the ball around," Hasselbach said.

Vela appreciates all the little things Hasselbach does on the floor, and she's one player he knows he can count on to fight



Fremont Ross' Sam Michael drives to the hoop Monday during the first half against Lakota. JONATHAN BIRD/NEWS-MESSENGER

hard for four quarters.

"She's a point guard and her job is to distribute the ball, play tough defense and play hard," Vela said. "She's playing extremely hard and that's what I expect out of her. But I still think she can become a better player with time."

The Little Giants built a 38-13 lead at halftime. It grew to 56-25 entering the final eight minutes.

"I wasn't expecting that," Raiders first-year coach Mike Miller said. "We didn't run our sets. We just freelaunched. I counted about five times out there where we ran our offense."

"They got on a little bit of a run there and it just snowballed on us.

Then our girls got to playing individual ball instead of team ball. We've got to play as a team if we're going to do anything."

When Lakota got open shots, they usually hit them. But too many times, they weren't knocking down contested shots and it was resulting in runs for the other way for Ross.

"We're not a real fast team," Miller said. "We've got to control the tempo and in order to do that, we have to hit our shots."

Hoffman led Lakota with 10 points, adding six rebounds and a pair of blocks.

"She always plays hard and plays well for us," Miller said.

"We've got to get her the ball more."

Kaela Wiseman and Sierra Ray each finished with six points for the Raiders.

Ross had nine players fill the score sheet, including seven players with six points or more.

Good signs for a team that has just two games each of the past two seasons.

"It definitely gives us confidence," Hasselbach said. "We're in a tough league, so any boost of confidence we can get, we'll take it."

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Made for TV victory

Little Giants top reality show stars in overtime

By Kevin Shields
Sports writer

OREGON — The Clay basketball team wants to be made this winter.

And after three quarters of Thursday night's Three Rivers Athletic Conference contest with Fremont Ross, the Eagles who are starring in the MTV reality show "Made," after winning a single game a year ago, looked like they might make a good first impression on the cameras and extra followers they were getting — ones who were trying to help a once mighty program with a first-year coach get back on top.

But the Little Giants, playing their third game in four nights, had other plans.

Ross fought through tired legs and sloppy play to erase a 10-point deficit and pull out a 50-44 road victory in front of a boisterous crowd, looking for some possible national camera time.

"We were all excited to play," Little Giants senior McKenzie Schneider said. "We knew we couldn't make big mistakes and embarrass ourselves on TV."

"It felt really good to beat them, especially since they're being made."

Schneider scored five of her team-high 13 points in the fourth quarter and the four-minute extra-session.

Her steal and ensuing layup gave the Little Giants (2-1, 1-0) a 32-31 lead with 4:54 to go in the fourth quarter.

Clay (0-1, 0-1) had held a 31-21 lead after two foul shots from Brooke Thompson with 21 seconds remaining in the third quarter. The Eagles led 18-15 at halftime and forced Ross into 10 third-quarter turnovers.

"We always have trouble with the third quarter," Schneider said. "We always seem to come out after halftime and hit a slump. And tonight we started to fall a little bit, but we came back together and bounced back from it."

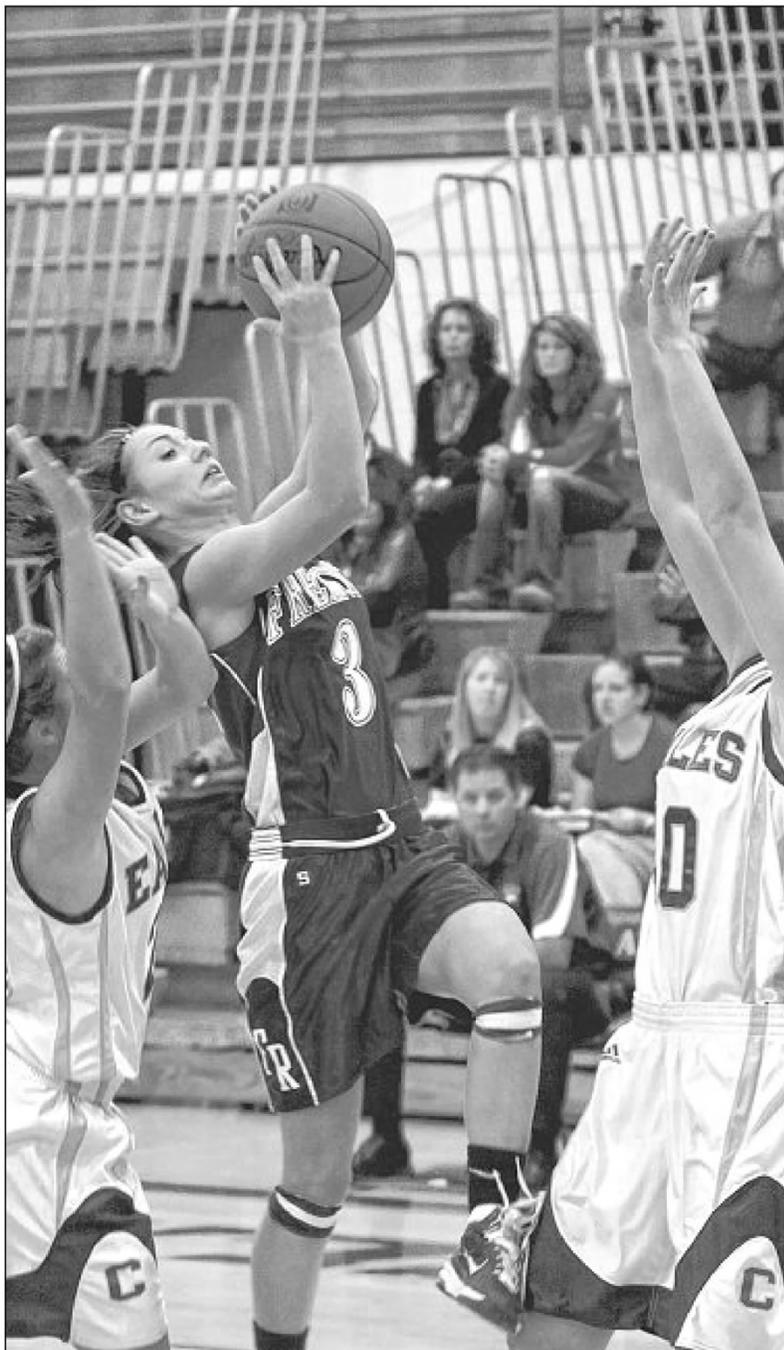
Bria Simms tallied the final basket of the third quarter and made the first basket of the fourth to cut the Little Giants' deficit to 31-25.

Sam Michael then split a pair at the line, missing the second, before Simms grabbed the loose board and recorded a putback. Suddenly the Eagles' lead was just three with 6:20 still showing on the game clock.

"In our loss at Tiffin (Tuesday), the crowd effected the girls and they lost focus in the third quarter," Little Giants coach Juan Vela said. "This game, I could really tell that they were trying to stay focused. There were times where they just wanted to give up, but they never did."

"They just kept battling, and it all came together in overtime and in the fourth quarter."

A nice back-door cut and lay-in by Alyssa Heintschel gave Clay a 35-32 advantage with 3:25 left. Ross answered with another split trip



Ross guard Abbi Hasselbach drives between a pair of Oregon Clay defenders during Thursday's game at Clay. The Little Giants won in overtime. LEE WELCH/NEWS-MESSENGER CORRESPONDENT

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Giants

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at the line from Michael and a high shot off glass from Abbi Hasselbach to even the game back up with 2:46 remaining.

Schneider's two fouls shots gave the Little Giants a 37-35 edge, while 20 seconds later, Thompson's jumper tied it at 37.

Both had opportunities to go ahead in the final minute. Ross's Alyssa Palmer had a desperation 3-point heave miss as the buzzer sounded.

And just like that, Clay was in a dogfight.

The Eagles had forced Ross into 32 turnovers for the game. But a move defensively, allowed the Little Giants to get their share of turnovers in the final minutes.

"We had tired legs and we stopped playing our up-and-down style in the first half," Vela said. "Once we got in a 2-3 zone then, it really helped the kids legs. They were able to be a little more aggressive and they got some steals from it."

The switch had Clay, which ended the game with 29 turnovers, confused and scrambling to find points.

"Coach Vela switched to a 2-3 zone in the fourth quarter and we

really struggled against it," Eagles coach Kevin Crosson said. "We weren't patient. We couldn't get Fremont moving enough defensively to attack the seams and gaps in the zone.

"We just started forcing the issue, but some of that credit goes to Fremont too. They forced us to panic and forced turnovers."

Ross scored eight of the first nine points in the overtime, leaving little doubt as to the game's outcome.

"We don't get that many games where we get to go into overtime, so we really wanted to take advantage of it," said Schneider, who finished with five steals. "We knew we were more conditioned and that we could keep running, where as they were getting tired."

Ariana Spencer provided a nice lift for Vela off the bench, scoring 10 points. Michael finished with eight points and a game-high 14 rebounds. Bria Simms had six points and eight boards.

Hasselbach tallied nine steals and five assists.

"This is a team where anyone can be hot on a given night," Vela said. "And tonight, everyone had their part in the win."

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GIRLS BASKETBALL:
LIMA SENIOR 55,
FREMONT ROSS 44

Missed chances foil Ross

By Kevin Shields
Sports writer

LIMA — If only they awarded points in basketball for rebounds and for playing shut-down defense.

If so, Fremont Ross would've been tough to beat in Monday night's Three Rivers Athletic Conference contest at Lima Senior. The Little Giants were grabbing loose rebounds left and right and kept the unbeaten and much larger Spartans' offense at bay.

But Ross's inability to finish second-chance opportunities for points, or to stop Lima's spurs, was the difference in a 55-44 setback.

"We had a lot of opportunities... we just didn't finish, and that is the most disappointing thing to me about this game," Little Giants coach Juan Vela said.

Ross was 16-of-48 from the floor (33 percent) and had plenty of second-chance opportunities, collecting 14 offensive rebounds.

The Little Giants (2-2, 1-1) controlled most of the play in the opening eight minutes. Abbi Hasselbach found Sam Michael for a lay-up with a long pass down the floor late in the quarter that gave Ross a 10-5 lead.

Lima (4-0, 3-0) had speed, size and athleticism on the Little Giants, but Ross attacked the point with a fury. It grabbed 20 rebounds in the first quarter and nine of its 10 points came in the paint.

However, the Little Giants shot just 4-of-16, nearly matching the Spartans' effort of 3-for-15.

And when Jazmine Thomas hit a 3-pointer following the rebound of Mercedes Carter's missed foul shot with just 10 seconds left, the Spartans had quickly cut their deficit to 10-9.

"Luckily for us, they could never expand their lead and we scored the final four points of that quarter," Lima coach Vince Halliday said. "That three from Jazmine really picked us up."

The game's momentum stayed with the Spartans. They put on the full-court press and scored six points off turnovers in the opening two minutes of the second quarter to take a 15-10 lead.

Lima's edge grew to as much as 10 on Imara Haynes' second-chance bucket inside during the half's final minute.

Ross trailed 29-21 at halftime and trailed 42-25 entering the final quarter, as it could never regain its focus following what was a 14-2 run by Lima to seize control.

"Our game plan worked and our girls executed," Vela said. "But when Lima had a run, we're still a young team and we don't know how to control a run. And when they had that big run that's what hurt us in the first half."

The Spartans lead grew to as much as 21 points in the final quarter.

Turnovers didn't help the cause. Ross turned it over 12 times in the final half and 26 times for the game, generating 18 points off mistakes for Lima.

"I thought Fremont did a nice job of its half-court defense," Halliday said. "Sometimes we struggle with that. But when we can get out in front of a team, turn them over and get easy lay-ups, it really helps us get going."

Indiya Benjamin also sparked the Spartans, as she tallied a game-high 17 points and tallied five steals. Mi'Chaen Williamson added six more steals.

"Overall, I thought we played good for three quarters," Vela said. "For most of the game, we executed our plan defensively. We just didn't finish on offense and we need to work on that."

Michael led the Little Giants with 15 points. She added seven rebounds.

Hasselbach had 12 points, five assists and three steals. Alyssa Palmer pulled down a team-high eight boards.

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Girls Basketball

Bowling Green 59, Fremont Ross 32

Ariana Spencer tallied a team-high 10 points for Fremont Ross on Tuesday, but the Little Giants lost a 59-32 non-conference decision at Bowling Green on Tuesday.

The Bobcats outscored Ross, 22-6, in the second quarter.

Hayley Williford led BG with 12 points while Marissa Milligan and Chelsey Morlock each added 10.

Sam Michael had eight points for Ross.

Good start fizzles away

Toledo Central Catholic finds offensive flow, tops Ross

By Kevin Shields
Sports writer

FREMONT — Abbi Hasselbach followed her own shot to beat the first-quarter buzzer with a layup to help cut Fremont Ross' deficit to just two points entering the second quarter Thursday against Toledo Central Catholic.

But, unfortunately for the Little Giants, it was the Fighting Irish doing most of the clean-up work on the offensive end. Central pulled down 44 rebounds, including 28 of the offensive variety, en route to handing Ross a 58-38 Three Rivers Athletic Conference defeat at The Purple Pit.

The Irish (4-2, 3-1) turned those extra chances into 20 second-chance points.

Central led 12-10 after one period and used an 11-0 run in the second quarter to take a 26-16 halftime advantage.

"We had a nice little run there," Irish coach Marty McGurk said. "We were a little disappointed with the girls after the first quarter after (Hasselbach) got her own rebound and put it back in. We had a little talk."

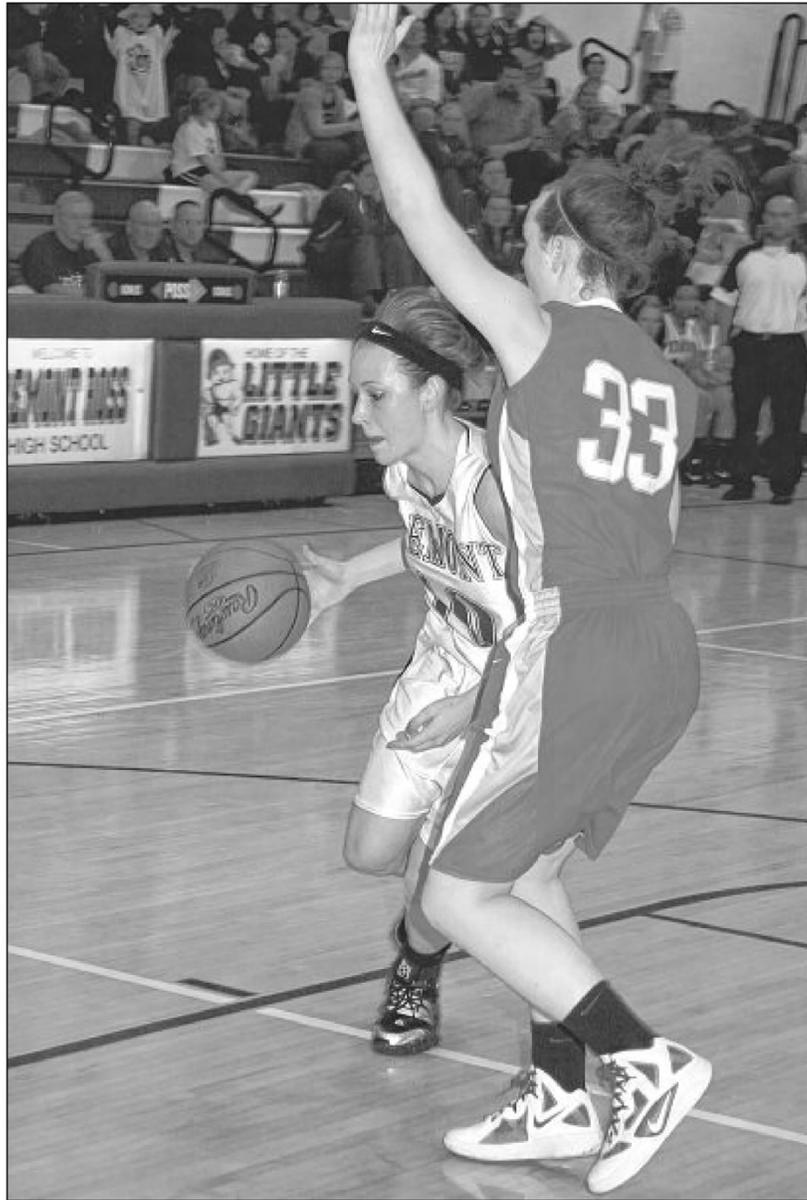
Ross's Alyssa Palmer had tied the game at 12 with a jumper to start the quarter then Sam Michael gave the Little Giants (2-4, 1-3) a 14-13 lead after Hasselbach intercepted a pass and found her in transition for lay-up with around six and a half minutes remaining in the period.

But, two straight buckets inside by Central's Deonna Murdock, the first being a second-chance basket, gave the Irish a 17-14 lead. The run ended with Ginae Bluitt at the line after Hasselbach was whistled for her fourth foul with 1:04 left until halftime.

"Central is tough as it is and when you get into foul trouble it makes the game even tougher," Little Giants coach Juan Vela said. "We like to be aggressive, but when you're playing with that many fouls, it kind of takes the style away that we try to play."

Central started the second half with back-to-back second-opportunity baskets from Sydney Shaffer and Jamie Sobczak.

A steal and basket in transition from Ariana Spencer gave Ross a 30-22 deficit with 6:01 remaining. The Irish responded with a 9-0 run to take a commanding 39-22 lead, as the Little Giants were forced to play tentatively with Hasselbach, Michael and Bria Simms all with



Sam Michael of Fremont Ross drives against Michelle Murmen of Toledo Central Catholic during Thursday's game at The Purple Pit. DOUG HISE/NEWS-MESSENGER CORRESPONDENT

three fouls or more.

"I think a lot of it was our girls were just scared to foul in those situations," Vela said. "And it's not the referees' fault, it was just us not being in position."

The Irish needed all the second-chance opportunities they could get, finishing the game 22-of-61 (36 percent) from the floor.

"We shot the ball way too quick, which was really disappointing," McGurk said. "But it worked out. Our bigs played good inside and rebounded really well."

"Our perimeters have been carrying us and our people did a great job of keeping the ball alive and getting second and third shots."

Sobczak finished with a game-high 16 points for Central, which also got 11 each from Shaffer and Murdock. Sobczak added eight rebounds — six offensive boards. Bluitt led the Irish with 11 boards, including seven on offense.

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Ross

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Depth made it tough for Ross to keep pace at times. Injuries cost them two players in Thursday's game.

"We have six players I'm asking a lot out of right now," Vela said. "They need to play a full game for us and an intense game too."

Michael led the Little Giants with 10 points, while she pulled down nine rebounds. Hasselbach

finished with nine points and four steals. Spencer had seven points and six steals, while McKenzie Schneider had three assists.

Ross was 12-of-43 (27 percent) from the field and committed 29 turnovers, forcing 23 from Central.

"Overall, I think our program is still getting better," Vela said. "I saw a lot of good things out there."

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GIRLS BASKETBALL

Little Giants to play on big stage in Classic

News-Messenger reports

For the second straight year, the Fremont Ross girls basketball team will get a chance to play in a big-time sports venue.

The Little Giants will take on Notre Dame Academy — scheduled for a noon tipoff — in a Three Rivers Athletic Conference matchup at the Huntington Center in downtown Toledo in one of five games on Thursday as part of The Blade High School Basketball Classic.

It will be the first of two girls games that will conclude at 2 p.m. with Sylvania Northview taking on Toledo Start. Three boys games will follow, with Toledo Central Catholic facing Elida at 4 p.m., Cleveland John Hay playing Bowling Green at 6 p.m. and old City League rivals Toledo Scott and Toledo St. John's Jesuit squaring off at 8 p.m.

"The girls love it because it's a rare thing to be able to play in a gym that size, and it's a really good experience for them," Little Giants coach Juan Vela said. "That's why we love playing in it.

And Notre Dame is one of the top teams in the state, so from that standpoint, it's a good experience for us, too."

Ross faced Central Catholic in last year's Classic — a 62-36 win by the Fighting Irish.

"We had a great following there last year," Vela said. "Our parents are great. A lot of them went over for it. And I went back and watched the other games with a couple of my friends.

"It's a fun day with good basketball, good teams and good players."

This year's contest will be the first of two against the Eagles. The Little Giants will visit Notre Dame on Jan. 23.

"It's basically our home game in the series," Vela said.

Admission the day of the event is \$8, which will get attendees into all five games and allows for the ability to come and go by following re-entry procedures. Tickets can be purchased at all participating schools, at The Blade's office, 541 N. Superior St., or at the Huntington Center Box Office (419-321-5007). They can also be bought online by visiting www.ticketmaster.com.

Notre Dame Academy tops Ross

By Nick Marlow
News-Messenger correspondent

TOLEDO — Fremont Ross kicked off The Blade High School Basketball Classic on Thursday.

Unfortunately for the Little Giants, they faced a Notre Dame Academy team clicking on all cylinders. Ross fell 68-20 at the Huntington Center, which is the home arena of the Toledo Walleye hockey team.

Nonetheless, Ross coach Juan Vela, who gave up home-court advantage to compete in the classic, was glad to be a part of the event.

"It's a great opportunity for the girls," Vela said. "I know last year none of them played here. They were really excited. It's a big day for basketball for this area."

But that excitement was short-lived for the Little Giants (2-5), as a transition layup from Ashley Kynard after the Eagles won the tipoff, was the beginning of a long afternoon for Ross.

Aside from a 10-point second quarter effort, Ross scored two, three and five points in the first, third and fourth quarters, respectively. The Little Giants were 6-for-34 from the field. Point guard Abbi Hasselbach led the team with 10 points.

The Eagles' trifecta of Kayla McIntyre (6 foot, 2 inches), Tierra Floyd (6-1) and Michelle Holmes (6-1), anchored an annoying Notre Dame defense that kept Ross from scoring in the paint routinely and forced 23 turnovers.

"We like to mix it up defensively," said Coach Travis Galloway. "That's something we pride ourselves on, because if we get deflections and steals it's easier to run the court and make some easy shots."

Nearly 40 percent of the Eagles' points came from Ross turnovers—but it wasn't just Notre Dame's defense agitating Ross.

The Eagles' half-court offense was equally effective. Four players posted double-digit scoring figures and six scored at least six points.

"It's obviously a nice problem to have, and they're all at different positions," Galloway said. "We can always look at different mismatches throughout the game. We have some pieces, and it was nice to see all of them put it together today."

"We have hopes to get to Columbus later in the year and this was a great chance to play in an arena like the Schottenstein."

Senior Demy Whitaker led the Eagles with 15 points, on five triples, while McIntyre, Kynard and Holmes added 12, 12 and 10 respectively. Holmes had four blocks.

University of Toledo commit Cat Wells left her mark in nearly every statistical category for the Eagles, with seven points, seven assists, five rebounds, three steals and a block.

"She's the catalyst both offen-



Fremont Ross and Notre Dame Academy mix it up Thursday in Toledo at the Huntington Center in the opening game of The Blade High School Basketball Classic. LEE WELCH/NEWS-MESSENGER PHOTO

sively and defensively," said Galloway, of his four-year letter winner.

Notre Dame started the game with a 12-0 run and held Ross scoreless for the first 5:05. Junior Shania Kiser scores the Little Giants' only first-quarter points on a feed from Ariana Spencer.

Shortly into the second frame, with the Eagles up 26-4, the Little Giants summoned a brief surge of offense and went on an 8-0 run, on two three-pointers from Hasselbach and a pair of free throws

from Bria Simms, to pull within 14.

"I think the girls just got comfortable and realized it's just a basketball game," Vela said. "First quarter they came out kind of sluggish. I think they calmed down and played ball ... and played aggressive."

The Eagles went on a 9-0 to end the half up 35-12.

A 23-3 Eagles, scoring advantage in the third quarter ended any chance of a Ross comeback. Whitaker notched three treys on five tries

and sophomore Jayda Worthy recorded all six of her points.

Notre Dame outscored Ross 33-8 in the second half.

"It's very tough when you're going up against that kind of size," Vela said of the Eagles. "They call us the Little Giants, and that's for a reason. We're a little smaller than most of our competition."

Ross' forwards scored only seven points combined, though Sam Michael harnessed a game-high nine rebounds.



Mckenzie Schneider, of Fremont Ross, drives past the St. Ursula Academy defense during the first half of a high school game Thursday. JONATHAN BIRD/NEWS-MESSENGER

Bad third quarter dooms Ross

By Kevin Shields
Sports writer

FREMONT — Over time, the phrase “patience is a virtue” has been used many times to stress how important it can be to wait.

Coming into Thursday’s Three Rivers Athletic Conference game with St. Ursula Academy, Fremont Ross coach Juan Vela hoped his team would show some diligence and composure with the ball, while being patient against the Arrows’ man-defense.

The Little Giants followed that strategy for two quarters. Then the third quarter happened.

Eight minutes later, St. Ursula had turned a four-point halftime lead into a near 20-point margin en route to handing Ross a 58-37 loss.

“Our girls just weren’t ready for the third quarter,” Vela said. “In the very first minute, Bria touches the ball, but can’t get the rebound. Shania touches the ball, she had the rebound, but didn’t

“We just weren’t mentally ready for the second half. And then once we get down, it’s hard for us to get a lead when we’re giving up so many points.”

JUAN VELA
Fremont Ross girls basketball coach

tuck it in and just gave it to the other girl.

“We just weren’t mentally ready for the second half. And then once we get down, it’s hard for us to get a lead when we’re giving up so many points.”

The third quarter belonged to the Arrows (6-4, 2-3). More specifically, it belonged to Maddie Strall.

Strall, who had five first-half points, scored 12 of her game-high 17 in the third quarter. Strall’s first five points of the quarter — a three-pointer and a basket inside the lane — were the final points of a 10-0 run for St. Ursula during the

first three minutes of period.

After splitting a pair of foul shots, she then intercepted a Ross (2-7, 1-5) pass that led to a layup in transition, scored in the paint once again and sank a jumper as part of seven-straight points she had to push the Arrows lead to 42-22.

Ross trailed just 22-18 at halftime, but the Little Giants were outscored 21-6 in the third period.

Struggling from the field in the first half, going 8-of-29 (27 percent), the Arrows were 8-of-15 in the third stanza.

“Maddie started making some shots for us and we got a couple

steals off the press in the third,” St. Ursula coach Duffy Burns said. “We started converting and making shots, and when we make shots we just look better. You feel better about yourself and you look better because of it.

“And we’ve struggled a little bit in the third quarter this season. So it was good to see that we could actually get out and make some shots in the third quarter.”

Ross had led twice — once in each of the first two periods — and the Little Giants dictated most of the play and tempo late in the half.

“The pace was on our side in the first quarter, but in the second quarter it was on (Ross’s) side,” Burns said. “They slowed it down a little bit against our zone, then we stopped pressing a bit and we settled for jump shots.”

Ross led 14-13 after a steal and layup by Abbi Hasselbach and bank shot by Bria Simms were the

Ross

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first four points of the second quarter.

Hasselbach scored six of her team-high 16 points in the opening half. McKenzie Schneider also had six points as she finished with eight.

“We were being patient, we were attacking and reading the defense really well,” Vela said. “But in the third quarter, we’re not rotating the right way on defense. We left open shooters, we left people on the block that were cutting and (St. Ursula) just got

easy baskets.”

Vela is still waiting for Hasselbach, Schneider and Sam Michael to be in double-digits together on a consistent basis. Michael finished with eight points and had nine rebounds.

“In the game’s where all of three of those girls are in doubles, we’ve won them or at least been competitive,” Vela said. “McKenzie did a nice job of shooting the ball, though, tonight, which I asked her to do.”

Hasselbach added four steals to her totals. Simms had seven boards.

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GIRLS BASKETBALL: CLYDE 69, ROSS 43

3rd-ranked Fliers control Ross

By Yaneek Smith

News-Messenger correspondent

This one was for Herb Cahill, as Clyde dominated from the beginning Tuesday.

The unbeaten Fliers controlled their non-conference matchup with Fremont Ross throughout, taking a commanding 17-point lead after one quarter before going into the half ahead by 25 on their way to a 69-43 victory.

“We played well, and it’s always good to get a win,” Clyde coach John Cahill said. “We passed the ball well in the first half. We’re at our best when we’re unselfish, (and) a lot of our key baskets came off assists.”

It was a bittersweet homecoming for Cahill, a 1987 graduate of Ross High School, who once played basketball for the Little Giants.

He dedicated the game to his late father, Herb, who passed away in September 2010.

Amanda Cahill led three Fliers (12-0) in double figures with 21 points. Breanne Michaels added 17 points and Rachael Smetzler 13.

Clyde, which led 25-8 after one quarter and 41-16 at the half, is ranked third in Division III.

The Fliers won by doing what they do best: playing good, hard-nosed defense and being unselfish, moving the ball on offense.

Cahill spoke of watching games at Ross High School with his father as a kid, and noted that Herb would be proud of his granddaughter, Amanda, a 2011 All-Ohio selection, who is averaging 21.2 points this season. It was the first game Cahill coached at his alma mater since his father’s passing.

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Fliers

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“It’s nice to come back home,” Cahill said. “He (my father) would’ve loved to have been here. His granddaughter played well.”

Despite the tough loss, Ross coach Juan Vela was proud of the effort put forth by his squad.

“We played hard for four quarters,” Vela said. “As good as Clyde

is, our girls played hard from the first (quarter) through the fourth. The thing we stress is playing hard and smart.

“Overall, I liked the way our team played.”

Sophomore point guard Abbi Hasselbach led the Little Giants (2-8) with 15 points and teammate Sam Michael added nine.

“She (Hasselbach) keeps getting better and better every game,” Vela said.

Ross can't match up with Whitmer

By Nick Marlow

News-Messenger correspondent

TOLEDO — In a Three Rivers Athletic Conference matchup Thursday night, Ross ran into a freight train in Whitmer.

Whitmer used its strength to triple Ross' points in the interior and thus handed the Little Giants a 59-28 defeat.

The Panthers scored 36 points in the paint — 32 of which were accounted for by Autumn Jones, Allie Missler and Keshyra McCarver.

Jones led all scorers with 15 points, and Missler and McCarver added 12 apiece.

McCarver would fall one rebound short of a double-double.

While most of Jones' buckets came on layups made in the open court, Ross' Bria Simms, Kiera Hall and Sam Michael had their hands full all night long trying to guard Missler and McCarver in the low post.

Both 5-foot-8-inches tall Missler and McCarver did not have a height advantage. They instead used their physical prowess routinely to gain position over Ross in the low post.

Though Michael did a bit more on the offensive end to balance the post scoring out

six of her team-high 10 points came underneath the basket — all three of the Little Giants' posts worked arduously on the glass.

Ross

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"Rebounding is just heart," Ross coach Juan Vela said. "At the beginning of the season we were struggling with rebounding and there were a lot of teams beating us in that aspect. That's one of the things we've been stressing lately and have been taking pride in."

The three Ross forwards tallied 17 of the Little Giants' 22 rebounds, with Simms leading the way with eight.

But it was not enough to make up for Ross' 11-for-48 effort from the field.

The Panthers came out rearing in the first quarter with an intensity that seemed to stun Ross, outscoring it 21-3.

"Whitmer came out today and started off like they wanted to win," Vela said. "They put a lot of pressure on our guards and we struggled with that."

Ross had eight turnovers in the opening frame. Its only field goal came on a putback layup by Hall after a missed jumper from McKenzie Schneider.

Ross committed nine turnovers in the opening period.

Missler led the first-quarter charge with six points.

"She's a hard-nosed kid; she has a lot of character and a lot of heart," said Whitmer coach Rhett Boyd.

"She had a knee injury last year that cost her half the season. Watching her come back from that and keep a strong mind going through the process is a testament to her and her character. And she brings that same kind of intensity to the floor every game and we're very lucky to have her."

Ross seemed to find its bearings a bit in the second, as it began to establish its half-court offense and produce nine points.

Schneider notched five of the nine on a jumper from the right wing and a trey from the left corner. She would finish with seven points.

Ross trailed 36-12 at halftime, but led by a pesky defensive performance from Abbi Hasselbach. Ross came out and outscored Whitmer 13-10 in the third.

Hasselbach ransacked Whitmer's guards each time they brought the ball up, as the Panthers committed six turnovers.

See ROSS, page 8A

GIRLS BASKETBALL

Ross blows lead late in loss

By Matthew Horn
Sports writer

Clay won its first game of the season Thursday with a 43-42 victory over Fremont Ross in the Three Rivers Athletic Conference.

More importantly, the Eagles won a game for Cody Van Hersett, the sophomore who died in a car accident last Thursday. Clay wore a patch in memory of Van Hersett, who wore No. 23 for the Eagles' hockey program.

Sam Michael took a pass from Bria Simms after Simms grabbed an offensive rebound and completed a three-point play for a 38-31 advantage for Ross in the fourth quarter.

Ariana Spencer then scored in transition for a 40-37 lead with 1 minute, 25 seconds remaining in the game. Clay's Tylor Brummett made two free throws after a steal and later split two free throws for a 40-40 tie with 27.2 seconds left.

Abbi Hasselbach missed two free throws for the Little Giants with 23.4 seconds to play but Michael grabbed an offensive rebound and scored. Kayla Schaefer brought the ball up, passed to the wing and got the ball back before capping the scoring with a 3-pointer. Ross inbounded from in front of its own bench with 1.2 seconds left but could not get a shot off.

"We wanted (Schaefer) to shoot the three off a skip pass," Clay coach Kevin Crosson said. "It ended up being a reversal, and she got a look and knocked it down."

"With about three and a half minutes left, we challenged the girls. The girls did it for their buddy who was in the accident. They were motivated to dig down deep for their friend who died in a tragic car accident."

Michael finished with game-highs of 11 points and 10 rebounds for Ross (2-10, 1-7).

"She plays hard, and she loves to rebound and gets easy baskets that way," Little Giants coach Juan Vela said. "She's our workhorse down there."

Kiera Hall added a season-high 10 points catching and finishing

See **ROSS**, page 8A

CLAY 43
FREMONT ROSS 42

Three Rivers Athletic Conference



Fremont Ross' Bria Simms lines up a shot as she is pressured by the Clay High School defense during the first half on Thursday. JONATHAN BIRD/NEWS-MESSENGER

ROUNDUP

Old Fort slam dunks St. Wendelin

News-Messenger reports

Hunter Perry poured in 20 points and seven boards, while Dalton Perry had 15 points and eight boards as Old Fort routed St. Wendelin 79-38 in a Thursday Midland Athletic Conference game.

Matt Hill added 11 points for the Stockaders (7-5, 4-2) who outscored the Mohawks (2-10, 0-6) 46-6 in the opening half.

St. Wendelin was led by nine points from Alex Shontz.

Boys Basketball

Lakota 55, North Baltimore 50

Nick McDole's 20 points led Lakota in a

Thursday home MAL victory over North Baltimore.

Kody Brewer had 12 points for the Raiders, while Brian Vamos added eight.

Carey 86, Bettsville 43

In Carey, the Blue Devils held Bettsville to just four points in each of the first and third quarters en route to a win in the MAL.

The Bobcats (4-7, 1-4) were led by Dominic Miccichi's 16 points and seven rebounds. Dominic King had 15 points and Kennedy Hossler and Jacob Hossler each pitched in six apiece.

Ross

Continued from Page 5A

inside for Ross. Each of Hall's buckets came directly off an assist.

"Abbi was doing a good job getting to the middle and dishing off," Vela said. "Clay did better taking care of the middle and covering the gaps in the second half."

Hasselbach and Spencer turned offense into defense on occasion as Ross tried to play at a fast tempo.

"We told the girls when we get a defensive rebound, let's get the outlet pass and go with it," Vela said. "That's always the first option."

The Little Giants led 31-24 after a steal

and basket from Spencer and 33-26 after Spencer drove for a scoop in the third quarter.

"We played good for three and a half quarters and when the momentum switched (Clay) took advantage," Vela said. "We couldn't match their intensity. The same thing happened at their place but it was the other way around (Thursday).

"They played harder than us, caused turnovers and capitalized."

Ross erased a 10-point deficit to defeat the Eagles (1-12, 1-6) 50-44 earlier in the season. Clay, which won one game last year, is starring in the MTV reality show "Made."

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GIRLS BASKETBALL

Ross couldn't compete with ND

By Kevin Shields
Sports writer

TOLEDO — The records aren't showing the progress of the Ross girls' basketball program this winter.

The Little Giants still have two wins like they have the previous two seasons under coach Juan Vela. But for Vela, it's not about seeing results in the win-loss column. He's just happy seeing the Little Giants continue to make strides in the types of plays they're making.

And right now, they're looking more and more like the team he hopes to have in future seasons.

Ross lost a Three Rivers Athletic Conference game at Notre Dame Academy on Monday, falling 69-27.

It wasn't a negative result for Vela. He liked the way his Little Giants (2-11, 1-8 TRAC) executed against one of the state's top teams.

"To be able to be good and to play this game the right way you got to be able to make nice basketball plays," Vela said. "And tonight, we had moments where we made basketball plays against a very good team.

"And even though our record doesn't show it, we as coaches are seeing more of those basketball plays being made in our games."

One of those plays happened early in the game, when Sam Michael caught a lob pass and finished the play inside to tie the game at 2. Later, in the third, point guard Abbi Hasselbach, bringing the ball up the floor in transition, made some nice feeds to the post for baskets by Michael and Kiera Hall.

"Sam made some nice lob passes from the wing, and when we were in transition tonight, Abbi made some great passes where only the offensive player could get it," Vela said.

Notre Dame's post presence was the deciding factor of Monday's game. The Eagles (11-4, 8-0) scored 19 of their 21 first-quarter points in the paint, taking a 21-4 lead to the second quarter.

Demy Whitaker got Notre Dame's outside game going in the second, canning two 3-pointers for six of her team-high 12 points.



Ariana Spencer pass to a teammate as she is double teamed by the Notre Dame Academy defense during the first half on Monday. JONATHAN BIRD/NEWS-MESSENGER

The Eagles led 37-7 at halftime.

Still Ross kept the game from getting too out of hand. The Little Giants outscored the Eagles 13-12 in the third quarter.

"Notre Dame is big, and its just a very good team," Vela

said. "But, no matter who you play, you want to be able to compete and just play hard. I think our girls did that tonight.

"We just played relaxed and went out there and played some ball. They did the best they could and had fun with it."

Michael finished with a game-high 13 points for Ross, adding eight rebounds. Hall had seven points and pulled down nine boards. Hasselbach had four assists.

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GIRLS BASKETBALL

Ross shows growth in comeback

By Yaneek Smith

News-Messenger sports correspondent

FREMONT — This is what head coach Juan Vela and the Little Giants have been working towards.

A hard-fought, dramatic victory over a good team that could serve as a springboard to better times for the program.

Thursday night, they got it.

Down 12 late in the third quarter, the Little Giants embarked on a furious rally, scoring 25 of the game's final 35 points to claim a 52-49 victory over Lima Senior in a Three Rivers Athletic Conference tilt at the Purple Pit.

"I'm very proud of my girls," Vela said. "Our girls stuck together, and we responded. Our confidence started coming and we finished the game off.

After Ross (3-11, 2-8) took a 27-26 lead early in the third quarter, the Spartans (11-4, 7-3 TRAC) responded, going on a 13-0 run to take a 12-point lead.

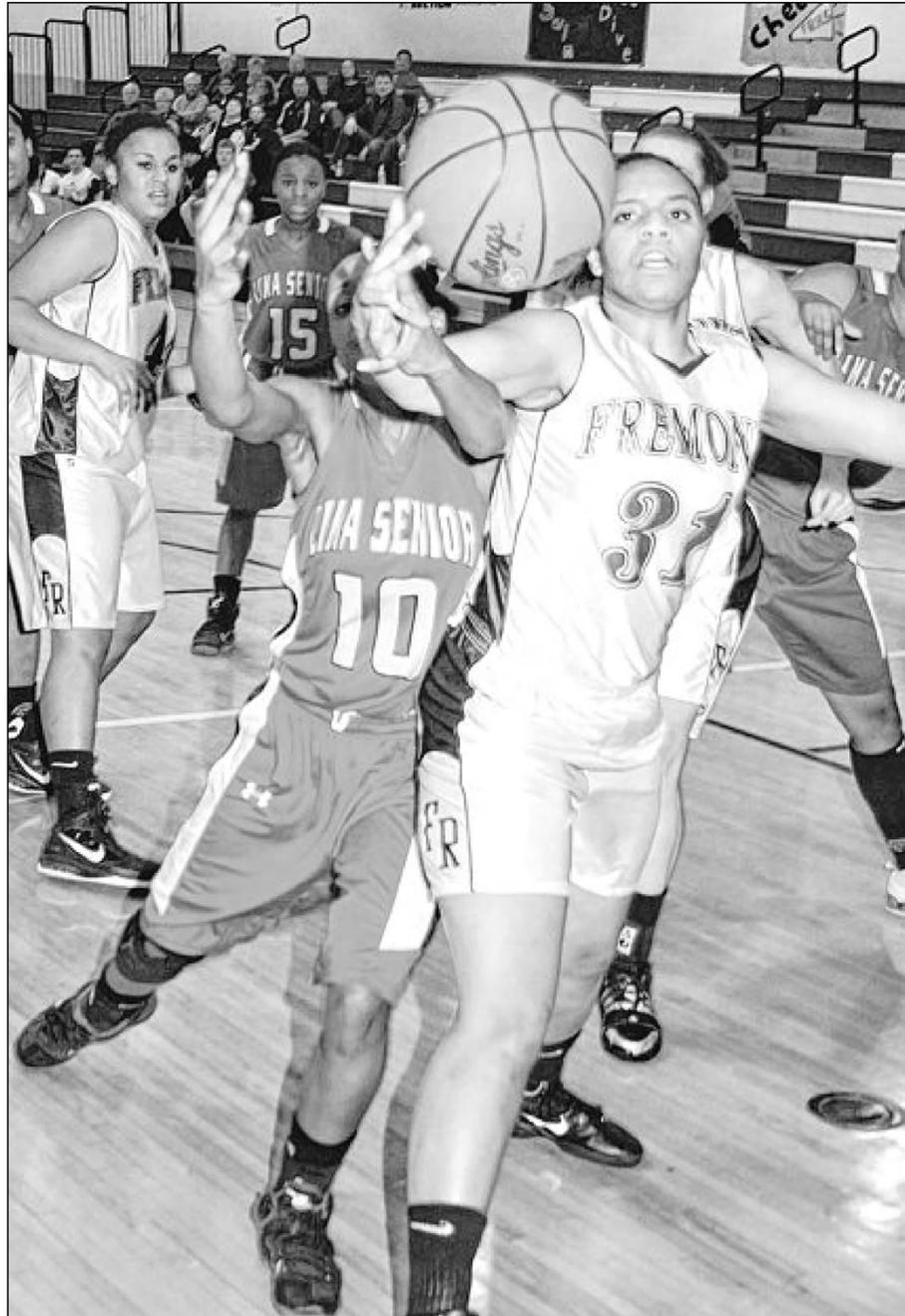
From that point on, however, the Little Giants began to chip away, going on a 7-0 run that stopped the bleeding before tying the game at 43 on a Sam Michael lay-up and one with 2:39 remaining in the fourth quarter. Michael missed the free throw. Lima Senior got the rebound and pushed the ball down the court before Airika Callahan's layup and a foul. The basket gave the Spartans a 45-43 lead, but Callahan missed the free throw, and Ross' Ariana Spencer took the rebound and found Abbi Hasselbach ahead of the pack who scored on a layup to tie it up at 45.

After the Spartans turned the ball over on the ensuing possession, Ross worked the ball around. Bria Simms then drove the lane and scored with 1:04 remaining to complete the comeback, giving the Little Giants the lead for good at 47-45. Ross would push the lead to four points before the Spartans cut it to three and missed on a heave from just in-

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FREMONT ROSS 52
LIMA SENIOR 49

Three Rivers Athletic Conference



Ross' Bria Simms grabs a rebound from Lima Senior's Mi'Chae Williamson. DOUG HISE/NEWS-MESSENGER CORRESPONDENT

Ross

Continued from Page 5A

side half-court at the buzzer.

For the game, Ross had three players finish in double figures, among them Michael (15), Hasselbach (11) and Spencer (10). Spartan guard Indiya Benjamin led all scorers with 16 points and Callahan chipped in with 14 points.

“I give all the credit to Fre-

mont,” Lima Senior coach Vince Halliday said. They outplayed us (and) they wanted to win more. We didn’t play hard enough. They made all the plays down the stretch. We turned the ball over a lot and they took advantage. The bottom line is they outplayed us.

“We got them down 12 in the third quarter, and they never panicked. They made all the plays in the fourth quarter that needed to be made. I give Juan and his girls credit.”

GIRLS BASKETBALL: FREMONT ROSS 56, SANDUSKY 54 OT

Michael drops 30 in 'blowout game'

By Kevin Shields
Sports writer

FREMONT — Sam Michael isn't known for putting up big point totals.

The Fremont Ross senior post had never even eclipsed the 20-point barrier in a game until doing so in last year's preseason Foundation game against St. Joseph Central Catholic.

But Tuesday, when the Little Giants needed a go-to player for points late in the game against rival Sandusky, Michael was the one that stepped forward.

She tallied a career-high 30 points — 22 in the second half — as Ross topped the Blue Streaks 56-54 in overtime during the non-conference game at the Purple Pit.

"I was just out there playing my game," Michael said. "It was nice

to have that big of an impact for my team. This win feels really good."

For Ross (4-11), that's two games in a row that have ended positively. The Little Giants beat Lima Senior 52-49 last Thursday.

At the time, the Spartans had just two league losses and it was coming on the heels of an embarrassing loss for Ross at home to then-winless Clay.

"I think that (Lima Senior)

game gave them confidence and made them think maybe we aren't as bad as we think we are, we just need to learn how to play and finish a game," Little Giants coach Juan Vela said. "And they just pulled together and played as a team. They played harder and smarter and I think it showed again tonight."

Abbi Hasselbach showed some of the heart and basketball IQ that

Vela talked about at the end of regulation. With Ross down 42-38, Hasselbach drove the ball the length of the court and laid it in while drawing contact with 9.9 seconds to go.

It stayed a two-point game after the Little Giants were called for a lane violation. But it didn't matter, because Hasselbach made a nice

See ROSS, page 7A

Ross

Continued from Page 6A

read on the inbounds pass.

She stole the ball and found Michael open in the lane, who hit her shot with just under five seconds to send the game to overtime.

"I was just thinking, don't let my skills fail me now," Michael said. "Abbi made a great play and after she made that pass, I just had confidence in myself I'd make it."

"I don't think (Abbi) realized what she did until after the game."

Playing with the momentum, Ross scored the first eight points of the extra session. The first six came from Michael.

"She had a blowout game," Vela said. "I know she has the potential to play like that and she came out and showed it. She's starting to become a workhorse down in the post, catching nice passes and getting offensive rebounds and putting them up. She's always around the basket. She just knows how to play the game."

When Michael wasn't scoring, she was dishing out assists. She found Hasselbach for a lay-up to give Ross a 52-43 lead with just under two minutes left in the overtime.

"We just played extremely well," Vela said. "Our best quarter was our last quarter."

Then Sandusky (4-12) nearly had a comeback of its own.

Dorresha Green's jumper made it 52-45, then Carline Estel split a pair of foul shots to make it 52-46.

Michael got the lead back to eight with a jumper, before Aschelle Smith-Crager scored the next three points, cutting Ross's edge to 54-49 with 47.9 remaining. Bria Simms sank two foul shots to make the Blue Streaks deficit 56-49 with 30.5 seconds to go, then Estel hit a three in the final seconds, stole an inbounds and nearly had a 3-point play with 1.5 seconds showing, but Sandusky got called for a lane violation of its own.

Ariana Spencer caught the ensuing inbounds and ran the clock out for the Little Giants.

"I love this game," Vela said. "You just never know what it's going to bring. Whether you're playing good or playing bad, this game can change at any moment."

Michael said the credit belongs with their senior leader.

"Mckenzie (Schneider) does a great job of being a team leader and honestly, if she wasn't out there telling us to be focused we could've let it slip through our hands in overtime," she said.

Hasselbach finished with eight points and seven assists. Simms had eight points and a game-high 13 boards. Michael added nine rebounds, while Schneider had five steals and four assists.

Aschelle Smith-Crager had 15 points to lead Sandusky, while Green had 13.

"It was a hard-fought game, I wish some foul calls would've went our way, but we're on the road and it's supposed to be that way," Blue Streaks coach Nic Venerucci said. "It was a shocker. We're up four with nine seconds to go, then next thing you know we're in overtime."

The Blue Streaks led 11-8 after one. Ross tied it at 16 at halftime and led 30-29 entering the final quarter, before Sandusky led by as much as five in the with 2:12 left in regulation.

"We came out playing like we had nothing to lose again, just like we did against Lime Senior," Michael said. "We played really well as a team and just kept finding the open person. It was tough, but we pulled it out in the end."

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Findlay slips away from Ross



Fremont Ross' Kierra Hall gets caught in traffic between two Findlay defenders Abbey Smarkel and Taylor Stanfield during a Three Rivers Athletic Conference game at the Purple Pit on Thursday. GREG BURR/NEWS-MESSENGER CORRESPONDENT

By Nick Marlow
News-Messenger correspondent

FINDLAY 51
FREMONT ROSS 44

Three Rivers Athletic Conference

FREMONT — The Little Giants will look back at its game against Findlay at the Purple Pit on Thursday night and grit their teeth wondering what could have been.

Several missed layups and free throws in the second half allowed the Trojans to take a seven-point halftime edge to the final buzzer and the Three Rivers Athletic Conference contest 51-44.

Equally damaging to the Little Giants (4-12, 2-8) was Findlay's scoring and rebounding machine Christina McQueen.

The 6-foot-2 forward led scorers with 20 points and added a game-high 11 rebounds. McQueen had six of Findlay's 13 offensive rebounds and scored eight of her points on second-chance efforts.

"When there's a good player

like (McQueen) you try different things, and it puts your defense in a different position than you're used to," Ross head coach Juan Vela said. "I think she's the one that killed us. She's a very good player."

Guard Nicole Muehl added 15 for the Trojans (8-8, 6-5), six coming in the fourth quarter.

The Little Giants began shooting themselves in the feet during the third quarter, missing five uncontested bunnies and turning the ball over five times — three on traveling calls. Kiera Hall relieved starting forward Sam Michael, who registered her third foul

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GIRLS BASKETBALL: TOLEDO CENTRAL CATHOLIC 68, FREMONT ROSS 39



Fremont Ross' McKenzie Schneider is pressured Monday by Toledo Central Catholic's Sydney Shaffer. JONATHAN BIRD/NEWS-MESSENGER

Hot shooting beats Ross

By Matthew Horn
Sports writer

TOLEDO — McKenzie Schneider scored a game-high 15 points Monday, including 10 in the fourth quarter, but Fremont Ross fell to Toledo Central Catholic 68-39 in the Three Rivers Athletic Conference.

"That's Schneider," Little Giants coach Juan Vela said. "She'll fight to the end whether we're up 50 or down 50. She won't stop competing."

Central Catholic (11-7, 9-3) led 23-6 after one quarter Monday.

"They came out and it felt like

they couldn't miss a shot," Vela said. "They kept on scoring and it got uglier. (We) were working hard but just getting beat. (We) hustled but just didn't make plays.

"The shots didn't go in early, we dug a hole and the confidence was low. We just want to put this behind us."

Central Catholic's Sydney Shaffer scored 11 points in the first quarter on three three-pointers and a transition bucket.

"She's a real good shooter," Central Catholic coach Marty McGurk said. "When she gets her feet set she can shoot with any-

body. We run her out to get her those shots."

Central Catholic scored 10 straight points for a 33-8 advantage early in the second quarter and 10 more in succession to start the third quarter for a 49-15 margin.

"We transitioned," McGurk said. "We wanted to get the ball up and down against them and create some easy shots. We made some shots early and got into a rhythm. We did a nice job for the first three quarters on defense."

Ross (4-13, 2-9) scored 21 points in the first three quarters.

"When you're down by (19) it's very tough," Vela said of a first quarter deficit. "We're not a great shooting team so that makes it tougher. Central Catholic was ready to play."

Abbi Hasselbach scored 10 points while Kiera Hall added seven rebounds for the Little Giants. Sam Michael, who was first injured against Findlay, left Monday's game in the first quarter and spent the remainder of the contest icing her knee.

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GIRLS BASKETBALL

First quarter spark doesn't last for Ross

By Drew Sullivan
News-Messenger correspondent

Fremont Ross netted 8 of 13 field goals in the first quarter Thursday, enabling the Little Giants to establish a five-point lead after the opening period at St. Ursula Academy.

But unfortunately for Ross, its first-quarter success didn't reflect the remaining 24 minutes of the game as the Arrows scored at least 18 points per quarter after the first en route to a 71-57 home victory.

"They're good shooters, and

ST. URSULA	71
FREMONT ROSS	57

when you have (Maddie Strall), as good of a player as she is, we try to play man-to-man and really, really help out," Ross coach Juan Vela said. "And she did a good job of finding the open shooters. And they knocked down some big 3s. When you're playing that kind of defense, you risk the 3 and not give up easy layups. I think the

big part was they hit some big shots, big 3s."

St. Ursula (9-9, 5-7) nailed nine 3-pointers in the game, including six in the second half.

The Little Giants (4-14, 2-12) owned a 16-11 lead heading into the second quarter, but the Arrows recorded the first six to commence the second, four of which were scored by senior Emily Page. Page finished the game with 17 points.

A basket from the left-block by Ross junior Ariana Spencer with 5:48 remaining in the second gave

the Little Giants their final lead of the game, 18-17.

After Spencer's bucket, St. Ursula outscored Ross 16-8 to end the half. The Arrows outscored the Giants by 12 in the second, which ended up being the quarter with the largest point disparity, to enter intermission with a 33-26 lead.

"I have three injured right now, and one of them is my leading scorer, Sam (Michael)," Vela said. "She was out, too. She's averaging about 11, 12. So, without

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Ross

Continued from Page 6A

our leading scorer, and only five girls plus Whitney (Overmyer), our JV girl coming in and relieving my other post, I think we did an awesome job. It was probably one of the better games that we played.”

St. Ursula senior Strall had a monumental and unforgettable game. She eclipsed the 1,000 point barrier, becoming only the second player in the Academy’s history to record more than 1,000 points. Shonda Roberts scored 1,451 points for the Arrows from 1991-94.

Strall entered the game with 993 career points and finished with 1,007 after scoring 14. She reached the century mark on a front-end free throw with 44 seconds left in the first half.

“It means everything to this school,” St. Ursula coach Duffy Burns said of the record. “She’s only the second player in history to have a thousand points.

“She really worked hard at it, did it the right way, and we’re just thrilled for her and her family to get that milestone. And it’s great for our basketball program.”

Only starting players scored for Ross, but three of those players finished with double digits. Bria Simms had 13 points and 14 rebounds while Abbi Hasselbach had 16 points and Spencer had 10.

GIRLS BASKETBALL

Ross can't stand up to PC, despite Hasselbach's 24

By **Matthew Horn**
Sports writer

PORT CLINTON — Abbi Hasselbach scored a game-high 24 points Tuesday, but Fremont Ross lost to Port Clinton 67-47 in a non-conference matchup.



Hasselbach

"Abbi plays hard," Little Giants coach Juan Vela said. "She always has. She gives me everything she has and she wants to make plays."

Port Clinton posts Hope Thorbahn (21 points) and Tiffany Colston combined for 35 points and 13 rebounds Tuesday.

"They can handle the ball, they know when to lob, and they get very good po-

sition," Vela said. "It's hard to defend them. Coach (Toby Bickel) has a nice team."

"We struggled defensively. Port Clinton moved the ball, shot well and worked it inside and out."

Much of Ross' production early in the game came off offensive rebounds but it trailed 37-21 at the half.

"In the game of basketball sometimes you're outexecuted or outdefended but offensive rebounding is hustle and who wants it," Vela said. "I expect my team to want the ball at all times."

Kiera Hall added 10 points for Ross (4-15).

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Fremont Ross' Ariana Spencer drives to the hoop during the first half against Port Clinton on Tuesday. JONATHON BIRD/NEWS HERALD



Loss ends tough season for Ross

By Kevin Shields

Sports writer

FREMONT — Whitmer coach Rhett Boyd kept telling his Panthers “to grind it out” down the stretch of Thursday’s Three Rivers Athletic Conference game at Ross.

For both squads — battling injuries, illness and any other nagging issues associated with the grind of the season — it was their regular season finales. Tournament play is right around the corner and with only pride and final win totals on the line, both were trying just to survive a game that lacked flow, and for the most part, an atmosphere.

But it was the Panthers’ ability to make a difference on the scoreboard at the foul line that was key in them coming out of the Purple Pit with a 44-33 victory.

Autumn Jones went 5-of-5 from the charity stripe and Ashley Finch was 4-of-4 as Whitmer (11-9, 6-8 TRAC) shot 14-of-17 from the line as a group. Jones led the Panthers with 11 points, adding six rebounds, three assists and three steals.

“The foul shooting is some-

thing that has been our best friend at times this year. In our two big wins over St. Ursula and Lima Senior, we shot the ball really well from the line,” Boyd said. “But, there’s been some games too where it really hurt us. Tonight, we were very fortunate we shot well from the line.

“We did enough. It’s that time of year where you might not always have your A game, so you have to grind it out and find a way.”

Ross (4-16, 2-12) had cut its deficit to 33-25 on Bria Simms’ jumper from the foul line area with a little under a minute to go in the third quarter. The Little Giants closed the quarter on a 10-5 run. Whitmer had led by as much as 13 on two occasions in the first four minutes after halftime.

Problem was, Ross couldn’t take advantage of the stops it was making on the defensive end.

The Little Giants finished 12-of-39 (30 percent) from the floor and 9-of-13 from the foul line. They were 1-of-8 from the field in the final quarter.

“We struggled offensively,” Little Giants coach Juan Vela

See ROSS, page 7A

Ross

Continued from Page 6A

said. "Abbi (Hasselbach) had a nice game. We just needed some more offensive points, whether it was offensive rebounds for put-backs or good defensive stops that led into transition."

Hasselbach, a sophomore point guard, finished with a game-high 17 points. Behind her, only two players managed at least four points. Ariana Spencer had six points and Mckenzie Schneider had four.

Ross was playing without leading scorer Sam Michael, who missed her third game with a knee injury. Vela expects her to be ready for Ross' sectional opener against Sandusky on Wednesday in Bucyrus.

Without Michael's presence inside on Thursday, most of those responsibilities fell on Simms and Kiera Hall. Hall picked up her fourth foul in the first half and saw limited minutes the rest of the way.

Still, the Little Giants were able to keep the Panthers to just 24 points in the paint after giving up 36 in the first meeting (a 59-

28 loss) on Jan. 12.

"Our girls played tough in there," Vela said. "We didn't make any excuses for not having Sam. We had some JV players in there. Our starting post was in foul trouble, but it's basketball and you just got to roll with it.

"And I thought we could've had this game tonight."

Whitmer led 8-6 after one quarter and 18-10 at halftime. The teams combined to shoot 9-of-36 (25 percent) in the opening half. Whitmer shot 4-of-22 in the first half and 14-of-42 (33 percent) for the game.

Allie Missler added 10 points and eight rebounds for the Panthers. Simms led Ross with eight boards.

"I think any coach would back me up in saying that it's a blessing to have our girls playing with that much energy in the last game," Vela said. "There's a lot of coaches right now who are just trying to get their kids to play hard, and my girls played very hard for me this last game.

"That's a credit to the girls I have this year."

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2012 AP Northwest All-District teams

COLUMBUS (AP) — The 2011-12 Associated Press Northwest All-District boys and girls basketball teams, as elected by a media panel from the district, with height, year and regular-season scoring average:

BOYS

Division I

FIRST TEAM: Marc Loving, Tol. St. John's Jesuit, 6-8, jr., 22.9; Nigel Hayes, Tol. Whitmer, 6-7, jr., 13.8; Mark Donnal, Whitehouse Anthony Wayne, 6-9, jr., 19.6; Keon Johnson, Mansfield Senior, 5-7, jr., 21.5; C.J. Gettys, Findlay, 6-11, sr., 20.6.

Player of the year: Marc Loving, Tol. St. John's Jesuit.

Coach of the year: Steve Gray, Norwalk.

SECOND TEAM: Tyler White, Lima Senior, 6-3, sr., 21.5; Alookie Mustafaa, Tol. Bowsher, 6-3, sr., 22.1; Clemmye Owens, Tol. Rogers, 6-0, jr., 18.8; Keith Towbridge, Tol. Central Cath., 6-5, jr., 12.0; Jeff Thomas, Norwalk, 6-4, soph., 13.2.

THIRD TEAM: Leroy Alexander, Tol. Whitmer, 6-1, sr., Allen Gant, Sylvania Southview, 6-2, sr., 12.4; Jaquan Thompson, Mansfield Madison, 5-8, sr., 15.6; Jalen Jones, Mansfield Senior, 5-9, sr., 11.6; Jake Fetherolf, Norwalk, 6-6, jr., 11.4.

Special Mention

Tony Kynard, Tol. Rogers; Dion Ivery, Tol. Rogers; Connor Hartnett, Sylvania Northview; Scott Milne, Perrysburg; Shawn Flanagan, Maumee; Diante Pettiford, Fremont Ross; Shaquille Brooks, Mansfield Madison; Brandon Vardo, Ashland; Jabree Lindsay, Mansfield Senior; Cooper

Old Fort; Marquise Harrison, Oregon Cardinal Stritch; Tyreece Edwards, Tol. Emmanuel Christian; Rick Deichert, Tol. Maumee Valley; Ben Schroeder, Kalida; Kevan Unverferth, Kalida; Bret Slattman, Continental; Kevin Schnipke, Ottoville; Shane Christian, Ridgemont; Shane Rofe, Upper Scioto Valley; Lee Turner, Waynesfield-Goshen.

GIRLS

Division I

FIRST TEAM: Miriam Justinger, Sylvania Northview, 6-0, sr., 19.5; Cat Wells, Tol. Notre Dame, 5-4, sr., 10.7; Michelle Holmes, Tol. Notre Dame, 6-1, sr., Maddie Strall, Tol. St. Ursula, 5-9, sr., 19.5; Jamie Sobczak, Tol. Central Cath., 5-8, sr., 17.3.

Player of the year: Miriam Justinger, Sylvania Northview.

Coach of the year: Travis Galloway, Tol. Notre Dame.

SECOND TEAM: Jessica Jessing, Sylvania Northview, 6-3, sr., 13.7; Lexi Lopez, Sylvania Southview, 5-10, jr., 19.0; D'Angela Hicks, Tol. Start, 6-0, jr., 18.3; Kelsea Newman, Perrysburg, 6-0, sr., 16.5; Hayley Williford, Bowling Green, 5-7, sr., 14.8; Indiya Benjamin, Lima Senior, 5-4, soph., 17.3.

THIRD TEAM: Asia Woodson, Tol. Bowsher, 5-6, sr., 19.9; Aisha Tyre, Whitehouse Anthony Wayne, 5-10, sr., 15.5; Marquia Fitch, Tol. Waite, 5-7, sr., 14.2; Christina McQueen, Findlay, 6-2, jr., 12.5; Imani Vickers, Mansfield Senior, 5-3, jr., 14.7.

Special Mention

Jenna Stoner, Bowling Green; Alexis Stoops, Ashland; Nicole Muehl, Findlay; Taylor Knight, Perrysburg; Kendall McCoy, Sylvania Northview; Demy Whitaker, Tol. Notre Dame; Torrie McDuffie, Tol. Start; Kre'Ana Henry, Tol. Waite; Allie Missler, Tol. Whitmer; Abbi Hasselbach, Fremont Ross; Morgan Newell, Sandusky; Dierra Bluester, Mansfield Senior; Bobbi Litten, Ashland.