

2015 Season Review

Who's back and what to expect when area teams hit the courts

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FREMONT ROSS

Coach: Lyndsey Robinson (fourth season)

Last season: 11-13 overall

Who's back: Leah Ballenger (Sr., OH); Emily Muffler (Sr., OH); Allison Sanchez (Sr., L); Elayna Ackerman (Sr., MH); Matallyn Overmyer (Jr., MH).

Who's new: Olivia DeRodes (Fr., S); Jazmin Bulger (So., S)

Outlook: Coach Lyndsey Robinson returns a good crop of talent and experience from last season, including district Player of the Year Leah Ballenger and first-team all-district libero Allison Sanchez. Elayna Ackerman also gives Ross a formidable presence in the middle. Ross believes defense will be a strength and looks forward to being more competitive in the Three Rivers Athletic Conference. How quickly young setters Olivia DeRodes and Jazmin Bulger can adjust to the speed of the game will be crucial. "We have a bright outlook for this season," Robinson said. "We have some very experienced, strong players at key positions that will help our new, young setters adapt quickly this season. As a program, we are very excited for what is to come this season."

HIGH SCHOOL VOLLEYBALL

Wins put Fliers in better state of mind

JOSH MORGRET
NEWS-MESSENGER CORRESPONDENT

Clyde coach Betty Hasselbach and her team weren't pleased after a loss last week to Old Fort. Thursday, the Fliers did something about it.

The Fliers topped host Fremont Ross, 25-10, 25-22, before defeating Route 20 rival Bellevue, 16-25, 25-16, 25-20, to improve their record to 3-1 on the season.

"I'm really happy with our intensity here," Hasselbach said. "We had the tough loss to Old Fort where we didn't communicate and didn't play well. Against Bellevue and Ross, we communicated, played well, and gave a good team effort."

Against Bellevue, the Fliers jumped out to a 6-1 lead before the Lady Red

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MOLLY
CORFMAN/THE
NEWS-MESSENGER
Fremont Ross'
Leah Ballenger
makes contact
in the game
against Clyde
on Thursday
evening.

Fliers

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(1-3) came storming back. A service ace by Shalee Weider finished off Game 1, as Bellevue won the final three points of the game.

"We came out strong against Clyde," Bellevue coach Karen Irons said. "We started strong but our serve receive let us down. It turned into a battle of wills."

In the second game, the Lady Red won five straight points to cut the Clyde lead to 18-16. Then, in a flash, the Fliers went on a run. They won the final seven points of the game to tie the match and held a 17-6 lead in the final game. In total, Clyde won 24 of 30 points to take a commanding lead.

"We did a lot of digging on defense," Hasselbach said. "We did a better job on our serve receive. When we did a better job on that, we were able to put balls down and win points."

Bellevue battled back, but it wasn't enough to top the hitting of the Fliers.

Grace Borden was key for Clyde in the opening match of the night. Six kills from the junior allowed Clyde to breeze past Ross (0-3) in Game 1, 25-10. The second game was much closer, as the teams exchanged points for 20 consecutive points, moving a 6-6 tie to a 16-16 score. Later, consecutive kills from sophomore Heidi Marshall gave Clyde the victory.

In the nightcap, Bellevue got its first win of the season, defeating Ross, 25-17, 25-9. Big hitting from Brianna Stockmaster (15 kills), Jenna Strayer (12), Weider (11), and Allison Dendinger (10) keyed the Lady Red throughout the night. Setter Morgan Hicks tallied 49 assists while Cassidy Fultz had 28 digs and Weider had 20 digs.

"Neither match did we play like our normal self," Ross coach Lyndsey Robinson said. "We weren't aggressive. We had touches but didn't play well."

After three matches in 24 hours to start their season, the Little Giants will look to regroup.

"We have to fix some miscommunications before opening league play," Robinson said. "We will get better."

Whitmer rallies, tops Ross in 5 games

Little Giants fall to 2-6 after losing lead late

JOSHUA MORGRET
NEWS-MESSENGER CORRESPONDENT

FREMONT — Leading by a point in the final game of a thriller with Toledo Whitmer, it appeared as Ross was within reach of a huge Three Rivers Athletic Conference victory. Then, in the blink of an eye, it was gone.

The Panthers won eight of the last nine points to top the host Little Giants, 25-15, 10-25, 25-27, 25-14, 15-9.

"I think in the middle of the match, we got frustrated with some calls," Whitmer coach Anna Hayes said. "We didn't want the referees to play the match for us. Our girls got upset with some of that stuff and took it out on the volleyball and played well."

Whitmer (4-2 overall, 1-1 TRAC) got big serving from Madi Knaggs. The junior served up the final five points, including three consecutive unreturnable serves that took the Whitmer lead from 11-9 to match point. Allie Rose smacked a kill to end the match and deflate the Purple Pit of energy.

The Little Giants (2-6, 0-2) bounced back after dropping Game 1 by thrashing the Panthers in the second game in surprising fashion. An error by Elayna Ackerman (12 blocks) tied the second game at 6-6 but Ross responded with 11 of the next 12 points to seize control of the game.

"We were clicking and working our offense," Ross coach Lyndsey Robinson said. "We were hitting well and communicating well. Our defense was strong and really stepped up."

Game 3 was the closest game of the match. Ross led 24-21 late in the game, but three consecutive errors by the Little Giants tied the game and prompted a timeout from Robinson. A serving error by Whitmer gave Ross a game point but Rose smacked a kill to tie it, 25-25. Ross took a two games to one lead after kills by Logan Lamalie and Olivia DeRhodes (four kills).

"We got comfortable," Hayes said. "We can't do that. I think we thought Ross would lay over for us after the first game."

Whitmer, who improved to 2-0 on the season in 5-game matches, seized control of the fourth game early on, jumping out to a 15-7 lead. Robinson used one of her two timeouts but to no

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Ross

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avail. The Panthers continued control of the fourth game convincingly and tied the match, setting up the deciding game.

Ross led 6-4 in the fifth game and led once more at 8-7 on a kill by

AnneMarie Moses before Whitmer's run to end the match. The Little Giants played the final game without Matallyn Overmyer (six blocks), which Robinson contended was a problem.

"It affected our balance," Robinson said. "When you play the whole match a certain way and then you have a change, that can cause problems."

Leah Ballenger led Ross with

nine kills while Allison Sanchez had 17 digs. Ackerman and Muffler each added four kills.

"I think we're playing fine," said Robinson. "We don't need any confidence boosters. We have young girls in different spots. We're not worried. We just need to tweak a few things and we'll be fine."

Margaretta 3, Fremont Ross 2

Fremont Ross (2-8) loss at home in five games on Tuesday, 25-12, 23-25, 19-25, 25-11, 15-8. Leah Ballenger had six aces and 16 kills, Elayna Ackerman had nine kills and 11 blocks; and Emily Muffler had nine kills and six blocks. Mattie Overmyer added eight blocks, Olivia DeRodes had five blocks and 13 assists; and Jazmin Bulger had 13 assists.

Findlay 3, Fremont Ross 0

Fremont Ross (2-9, 0-2) lost in three games, 25-13, 25-15, 25-18 on the road. Leah Ballenger had 10 kills while Elayna Ackerman had nine blocks. Allison Sanchez had 11 digs.

Notre Dame Academy 3, Fremont Ross 0

Fremont Ross lost in three games, 25-10, 25-15, 25-14 on the road. Allison Sanchez had 12 digs while Elayna Ackerman had five blocks. Leah Ballenger recorded four kills.

Fremont Ross 3, Lake 0

Fremont Ross needed only three games to win, 25-12, 25-12, 25-13 on the road. Olivia DeRodes had 12 assists and four kills while Jazmin Bulger had 13 assists. Leah Ballenger had 13 kills.

HITTING TO HEAL



PHOTOS BY DOUG HISE/THE NEWS-MESSENGER

Ross' Allison Sanchez bumps the ball to a teammate, in a match against Port Clinton.

Fremont Ross overcomes adversity to get past Port Clinton in match to honor Alexa Brown Foundation

JOSHUA MORGRET
CORRESPONDENT

On a night when Fremont Ross and Port Clinton came together for a non-league match to honor the Alexa

Brown Foundation in a "Hitting to Heal" match, it was the host Little Giants that did the biggest hitting.

Ross overcome adversity early and often to top the Redskins, 16-25, 26-24, 25-23, 27-25 to improve to 6-12 on the season.

"We're trying to turn the corner on our season," Ross coach Lyndsey Robinson said. "The girls are concentrating on the second half of the season and getting better.

Our defense in the back row and at the net was working well. Our serve receive has been a definite improvement from the beginning of the season."

The teams battled for nearly two hours but in the spirit of a better cause in Brown, who died in 2009 at age 11 after a three-year battle with a brain tumor.

"This foundation raises money to help support families whose children have contracted juvenile cancer as a result of the Clyde Cancer Cluster," the night's program

read. "They help with financial cost of transporting the children back and forth to treatments, and the cost of hospital stays."

"Our girls really always try to give 110 percent on our Hitting to Heal night."

LYNDSEY ROBINSON
FREMONT ROSS HEAD COACH

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Port Clinton's Erin Hiller sets the ball during Tuesday night's match against Fremont Ross.

Hitting

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Since 1996, about 35 children in a 12-mile-wide circle of Clyde have been diagnosed with brain and central nervous system tumors, lymphoma, leukemia, and other forms of cancer. In the six years of Hitting to Heal, the Ross program, along with family, friends, and sponsors have raised over \$5,000 for the foundation, Alexa's Butterflies of Hope.

"Our girls really always try to give 110 percent on our Hitting to Heal night," Robinson said. "They talk about Alexa a lot. We're lucky to have supportive parents. We set the date but they organize everything after that. I get ahold of the other coaches to get the jerseys but they do most of the work. Really, the whole program does a good job with this fundraiser."

The Redskins took the opening game after Ross led, 9-6 early. The hitting of Marissa Day and Sydney Alexander, who each finished 15 kills, aided Port Clinton in the opening game. The Little Giants bounced back in Game 2. They led, 21-13, and appeared to be easily headed to tying the match when

Port Clinton seized an opening.

Behind the serving of Melanie Payne, the Redskins reeled off eight of the next nine points to draw within 22-21. The teams went back and forth before a pair of kills from Leah Ballenger gave Ross the game, 26-24.

"Our setters have grown a lot," said Robinson of freshman Olivia DeRodes and sophomore Jazmin Bulger. "I think earlier in the season they'd get rattled in the close situations but they were able to settle in the close ones here."

In Game 3, a kill by Alexander tied the game, 10-10 but Matallyn Overmyer went down with an ankle injury on the play. The game again went deep, with Ross leading 24-22 before a block from Port Clinton cut the lead to one. A hitting error by Day put Ross ahead, two games to one.

Robinson was encouraged by the play of DeRodes, who had eight assists and six kills while controlling the offense when she served.

"She started (Monday) with a jump serve and she's got a great jump float," Robinson said. "(Monday) she had a few nice serves and you can tell she's building confidence. She has to believe in herself because her teammates do. She's starting to step up and take leadership."

The end of the fourth game resembled Game 2 almost exactly. Ross led, 24-18, but Port Clinton won seven of the next eight points to tie it up, 25-25. Port Clinton was called for a net violation and Overmyer (4 kills, 4 blocks) put down a kill to end the match and send the large crowd into a frenzy.

Ballenger tallied 14 digs and eight kills while Emily Muffler finished with 12 digs and five kills. Elayna Ackerman registers eight kills and seven blocks while Logan Lamalie had three blocks.

"We played a strong first game and very tough at the net with Erin (Hiller) stepping in as setter and Chloe Avis moving to outside hitter," PC coach Kelly Ward said. "Our communication was great. At the beginning of game 2, we broke down a bit and fell behind. We tried and pushed to get back control of the ball, but fell short. Fremont made several saves throughout game 2 and 3 to stay in the lead, they picked everything up and had great hustle."

Alexander added seven digs while Wammes had nine digs and five blocks. Avis had five kills while Ebony Kleinhans had 5 blocks and 3 kills, Hiller tallied 40 assists, and Payne had 11 digs.

Fremont Ross 3, Whitmer 1

The Lady Giants (7-14) won their second TRAC tournament match against Whitmer on Monday 22-25, 25-22, 25-20 and 25-18.

Ross was led by Allison Sanchez with 38 digs and 2 kills, Leah Ballenger and Emily Muffler both had 8 kills, Matallyn Overmyer had 11 blocks and 3 aces while Olivia Derodes and Jazmin Bulger had 7 assists apiece.