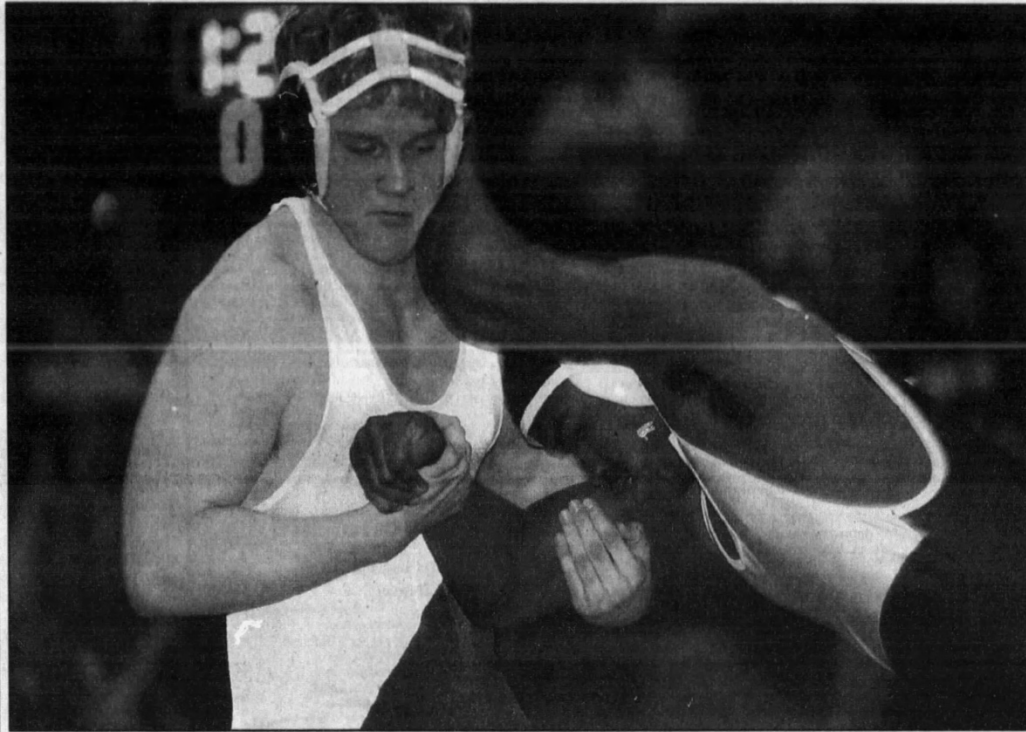


2003 District ...

Lose and learn



News-Messenger file photos/Ben French

ANDREW LEGG, left, of Fremont Ross battles Brandon Mitchell of Sandusky during a Jan. 9 tri-meet at Clyde.

Legg, Davis hope to thrive after rare defeats

By ALEXIUS TOMASZEWSKI
Staff writer

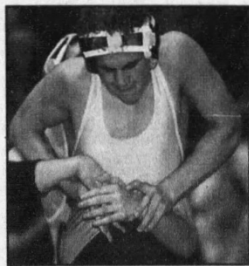
Rarely do high school wrestlers complete a full season with an unblemished record.

As painful as it is, losing is a fact of wrestling. But those who learn from losses are less likely to repeat them.

Fremont Ross 125-pounder Brock Davis learned and earned vindication. Now teammate and friend Andrew Legg looks to follow.

Davis avenged a loss to Whitmer's Dampen Abitua to win the Little Giants' lone individual sectional title on Saturday at Toledo Rogers. His patience and determination serve as a model for Legg, whose 29-match winning streak and chance for an undefeated season ended in the sectional semifinals.

"I didn't wrestle like I wanted to. It shouldn't have been close at all," Legg said of his 11-10 loss to Toledo Waite's Justin Brown. "I just made a few mistakes and didn't wrestle the way I wanted.



BROCK DAVIS of Ross fights for hand control during a Jan. 8 match against Clyde's J.R. Ysaguirre in Clyde.

"It was disappointing, but, in a sense, it's a lot less stressful now. It's a lot different when you're going through a season trying to protect a loss. There's a lot less pressure now."

Legg will be looking to repeat as district champion when he and four other Little Giants head to the Division I Hillard Darby District on Friday and Saturday. Wrestling begins at 4 p.m. Friday. Accompanying Legg and

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Davis will be Austin Earle (152 pounds), Myles Porter (160) and Chris Kayser (215). Legg, Earle and Kayser are returning district qualifiers.

Ross advanced eight wrestlers to district last year.

"I was happy with the whole team's performance," said Ross head coach Grover Dowell of Saturday's sectional. "Five are going to district and I wasn't unhappy with anybody. I thought all our kids wrestled their best and that's what you're looking for."

Legg, a junior, is looking to return to state, and his path has been beset by obstacles on and off the mat. He returned as the Little Giants' top wrestler after a fifth-place finish at last year's state tournament and carried the weight of a perfect record for most of the season.

And to throw a log in the pressure cooker, Legg was tabbed a projected state champion at 189

pounds by wrestling swami Brian Brakeman in his famous midseason report.

"I think he was putting pressure on himself, and other people were putting pressure on him because of that," Ross head coach Grover Dowell said. "But that's why I think this loss is a good thing. The pressure's off, and I think he'll wrestle better now. He was pushing stuff and trying to win hard. Now that he's got that loss, he'll wrestle better, smoother this weekend."

Legg said he was honored to be the top pick in the wrestling forecast. He read the analysis of his weight class, as did a lot of Legg's opponents. It showed on the mat.

"Ninety percent of my matches, people don't wrestle me," Legg said. "They wrestle passive and not aggressive. They like to run and not get close. I try and take what they give me, but it's tough because it's frustrating. It's hard to do set-ups and shoot and finish moves."

See ROSS, B2

Ross wrestlers Legg, Davis shoot for state

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The prestige of being a projected state champion has positives and negatives. Legg knows he has a bulls-eye pinned to his back every time he steps onto the mat. And he doesn't mind at all.

"I don't doubt it. Then again, I'd be doing the same thing if I were wrestling someone who was picked to win it all," Legg said. "I like being the hunted. I like being No.1 and having people aiming at you.

"It's also more nerve-racking. It gives you butterflies because you could go out and

lose to any one kid. It can be good and bad."

In his report, Brakeman said the 189-pound weight class "is undoubtedly the weakest class in Division I."

Does Legg believe he's in the weakest weight class?

"The only reason he said that is because I'm the only returning state placer. There are about eight or nine state qualifiers in my weight class," he said.

Having a year of state experience under his belt has Legg confident heading into this weekend's district. And as for a rematch with Brown, Legg would relish the opportunity.

"I've got to step it up a few notches, personally. I don't think this weekend will make a difference. If I meet up with him, all the better," he said.

While Legg has considerable postseason wrestling experience, Davis is making up for lost time.

Last season at St. Joseph Central Catholic, Davis missed the postseason after coming down with mononucleosis. He transferred back to Ross in the offseason, and has enjoyed a fruitful season.

Davis won the sectional title after a 5-4 victory over Abitua, giving him a great mental springboard into the district tournament.

"It felt pretty good. The first time I wrestled him I was hurt, so I was like a different person when I wrestled him this time around," Davis said.

Making the move from SJCC and Division III to Division I has brought out the best in Davis' skills.

Said Dowell, "He's probably one of the best technicians I've ever coached. Of course, I expect Andrew and Brock to go to state."

Honing his offensive skills last year and over the summer, Davis now has his sights set on a state championship. He said he feels ready.

"I think it really helped me a lot this year. Technique and speed are probably the two things that have carried me. ... In Division I, you have tougher kids in the quarterfinals, semifinals. In DIII, you get average wrestlers up until the finals. In DI, you get tougher wrestlers more often."

Excitement for the postseason has given Davis many restless nights. He's eager to prolong a promising postseason after a short season a year ago.

But he still has perspective.

"I'm looking to take it one match at a time," Davis said.

Ross's Legg, Davis qualify for Columbus

News-Messenger reports

HILLIARD — Andrew Legg went from a sectional also-ran to a district champion Saturday at Hilliard Darby.



Legg, an 189-pounder from

LEGG

Fremont Ross, blanked Donnie Reinhart of Dublin Coffman, 3-0, to claim his second consecutive Division I district title.

The top four wrestlers in each weight class advanced to the state tournament, which begins Thursday in Columbus.

Legg (33-1) dropped his only match of the season on the way to a third-place finish at last week's Rogers Sectional. But he didn't blink Saturday in clinching a second straight state berth.

"He had a real nice tournament," Ross head coach Grover Dowell said of Legg. "He pretty well controlled all the

See DAVIS, B3

Davis fights chest injury, advances

Continued From B1

matches. It was a completely different kid (from last week).

"I think he's on a roll right now."

Legg will be joined at state by teammate Brock Davis, who overcame a painful chest injury to earn a fourth-place finish.

Davis (125 pounds) defeated Toledo Whitmer rival Damen Abitua, 8-4, to clinch his state berth. Abitua downed Davis during a du-

al meet earlier this season and won the 125-pound crown at the Great Lakes League meet before Davis got revenge by beating him for the sectional title last week.

Dowell scratched Davis (29-4) for Saturday's third-place match against Dublin Scioto's John Gruneisen because of the injury. Davis should be recovered for the state meet.

"He was not happy with my decision," Dowell said. "He's a competitor. He wanted to go for third place.

"But he did an excellent job of sucking it up and doing what he had to do. There was no sense risking further injury before the state."

Three other Ross wrestlers — Austin Earle (152), Myles Porter (160) and Chris Kayser (215) — came up short of state berths. Kayser was scratched Saturday after suffering a possible concussion.

Division I state competition begins at 6 p.m. Thursday at Schottenstein Center.

Wrestling

High School

Division I District Tournament

at Hilliard Team Scores

1. Pickerington	141.5
2. Waite	91
3. Mt. Vernon	87.5
4. Marysville	82.5
5. Westland	79
6. Hilliard Darby	70
7. Groveport-Madison	69.5
8. Grove City	67.5
9. Lincoln	67
10. Whitmer	62
16. Ross	43

Ross Results

First Place Matches

189 — Andrew Legg (R) dec. Donnie Reinhart (Dublin Cofmn) 3-0

Consolation Matches

125 — John Gruneisen (Dublin Scioto) def. Brock Davis (R) default