

FREMONT ROSS GIRLS BASKETBALL

Time to blend vets, rookies

Just three letter-winners return for Fremont Ross girls hoops

By Rich McGowan
Asst. editor/sports reporter

FREMONT — Though Fremont Ross returns only a select few veterans, those who return have starting experience. Returning letter-winners Lexi Holmes, Maddi Overmyer and Allison Miller all started for the Little Giants a year ago and will be expected to lead the way this season.

“(Holmes is) aggressive on defense and loves to penetrate,” Ross coach Juan Vela. “She will be a key part to our team.

Valerie Samson “has improved on shooting, runs the floor well and can also play post.

Elayna Ackerman is “a player that is very versatile on offense and will be our best.”

Ross will look to juniors Holmes and Miller,



JONATHON BIRD/STAFF PHOTO
Fremont Ross' Valerie Samson is pressured by Port Clinton's Emily Ashley.

as well as sophomore Overmyer, to help fill the void left by the graduations of last year's seniors Abbi Hasselbach, Shania Kiser and Whitney Over-

myer. Vela believes Holmes' ball-handling skills will aid her in taking over the point guard position from Hasselbach. Overmyer

and Miller will round out the Little Giants' offense with their shooting capabilities.

“Our strength is this team is very offensive-

minded and any of them will be able to shoot or penetrate,” Vela said.

As Ross will be reliant on so many fresh faces to contribute right away, Vela said the Little Giants' success will hinge on how quickly the youngsters adjust to varsity and how quickly the established veterans can gel with the

Ross youth.

“Being a fairly young team, I am concerned on how fast they can adapt to a varsity game,” Vela said. “Biggest challenge will be the way we can work and player together as a team.”

FREMONT ROSS LITTLE GIANTS

Coach: Juan Vela (sixth season)

Last season: 11-12 overall

Key losses: Abbi Hasselbach, Shania Kiser and Whitney Overmyer.

Key Returners: Torri Holmes, Valerie Samson and Elayna Ackerman.

Key newcomers: Lexi Holmes, Maddi Overmyer and Allison Miller.

Outlook: In his first four seasons as Fremont Ross' girls basketball coach, Juan Vela oversaw a program that won just 16 games. Then, last season, the Little Giants took a step forward. Ross won 11 games and finished just under the .500 mark. Ross will have some work to do to continue its

upward momentum. The Little Giants return just three letter-winners from a season ago and will be making way for an infusion of young talent. Vela likes the skill-set of his players. If the three returners, also starters, and the incoming underclassmen can gel together, Ross may be able to continue its growth.

2014-15 SCHEDULE

- » 11/28 at Sandusky
- » 12/8 Lima Senior
- » 12/11 St. Ursula
- » 12/16 Columbian
- » 12/18 Clay

- » 12/22 Notre Dame
- » 12/30 Marion Harding
- » 1/3 Perkins
- » 1/5 Whitmer
- » 1/8 at Central Catholic
- » 1/12 at Bowsher
- » 1/13 Woodward
- » 1/15 at Findlay
- » 1/20 at Port Clinton
- » 1/22 at Lima Senior
- » 1/26 at St. Ursula
- » 1/29 at Clay
- » 2/2 at Notre Dame
- » 2/9 at Whitmer
- » 2/12 Central Catholic
- » 2/19 Findlay

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UNDER NEW OWNERSHIP



BLUE STREAKS 44, LITTLE GIANTS 34

Ross girls need to learn patience

By Rich McGowan
Asst. editor/sports reporter

Little Giants team loses season-opener to Sandusky

SANDUSKY — The Fremont Ross girls basketball team opened its season without a senior dressed in uniform and it showed.

The Little Giants' youths struggled to find a consistent source of offense Friday night, failing to break double digits in any quarter, as they lost to rival Sandusky 44-34.

"I thought you could really see our immaturity as a basketball team," Ross coach Juan Vela said. "We weren't patient enough, we didn't communicate as well. I think that cost us the game. We have a lot of maturing to do, but we'll get there."

Ross (0-1) shot a low percentage from the field and struggled to find a consistent go-to scorer.

Sandusky (1-0), on the other hand, was able to feed the ball to Ta'Sharrja Jeffries whenever it needed a bucket. Jeffries finished with a game-high 18 points, seven assists and five steals.

The Little Giants had no answer to Jeffries.

"Last year, we had Abbi Haselbach and she graduated, that

was our (go-to) player," Vela said. "This year we're trying to find that player. I think Elayna (Ackerman) could be it, I think Lex (Holmes) could be it but she's still pretty young, and Valarie (Samson), too. It wasn't our night as far as the ball going through the hoop."

After being tied 8-8 after the first quarter, Sandusky gradu-

ally built a lead in the second quarter and took a 22-16 lead into halftime. The Blue Streaks quickly pushed their lead to nine early in the third quarter and maintained a six-to-10-point lead the rest of the way as Ross never managed to make an extended scoring run to get back into the game.

Ackerman had a quality night on both ends of the floor

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Holmes scores 13 points as Ross falls to Lima Senior

Torri Holmes scored 13 points but Fremont Ross's girls basketball team fell to Lima Senior 55-54.



DOUG HISE/NEWS-MESSENGER CORRESPONDENT
Ross' Matallyn Overmyer and Tiffin Columbian's
Laura Heminger fight for a loose ball.

GIRLS: TIFFIN COLUMBIAN 42, FREMONT ROSS 33

Turnovers too much for Ross girls to overcome

By Rich McGowan
Ast. editor/sports reporter

FREMONT — The script couldn't have been written more in the favor of the Fremont Ross girls basketball team Tuesday.

The Little Giants were crashing the boards early and often and their opponent's star player, Tiffin Columbian senior Valesha Province was held scoreless at halftime.

Turnovers, however, soured the story and a Tornadoes' buzzer-beating 3-pointer gave Columbian the momentum, and the lead, going into halftime which they turned into a 42-33 victory over the Little Giants.

"Right now we're trying figure out ourselves," Ross coach Juan Vela said. "It's hard to compete when you don't have

things rolling. I told our two captains, 'That's not us. That's not us at all.' We have to figure out who we are as a team. We have to figure that out."

Turnovers plagued Ross from the second quarter onward. After just three turnovers in the first period, after which Ross led 9-4, the Little Giants lost the ball four times in the opening minute of the second, and saw its lead slip away soon thereafter.

Ross put together a 6-0 run late in the first half to take an 18-15 lead. Columbian then seized the lead on a long 3-pointer by Brianna Leon Guerrero, giving the Tornadoes the at halftime advantage, 20-18, despite Province yet to register on the scoresheet.

"I think we had a break there when he

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Ross

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hit that deep three which was a nice piece of momentum,” Columbian coach Seth Almekinder said. “You don’t script that but we’ll take whatever we can get.”

Ross turned the ball over six times in the second quarter and another seven in the third. As the Little Giants’ miscues increased, Province finally got going, scoring seven points of her nine points in the opening minutes of third as Ross’ deficit grew to 31-22.

Ross finished the game with 21 turnovers.

“The kind of turnovers we’re having, they’re just ridiculous,” Vela said. “It’s a simple pass that’s just a lob to an open person. It’s not like they’re double-teaming us, actually, I think we’re doing all right if they double-team us. It’s just as simple as a team sitting in a zone, we try that



DOUG HISE/STAFF PHOTO

Ross' Kristen Widman shoots over Tiffin Columbian's Alexxa Ingalls.

lob (pass) and we turn the ball over. That’s what hurting right now.”

Ross did a good job under the glass, out-rebounding Columbian 31-28, and limited the Tornadoes’ second-chance baskets but, ultimately,

the turnovers created too many first-chance opportunities for Columbian.

“I stress rebounding every day in practice and I expect that and we have girls who are hard-nosed and go after the ball,” Vela said. “But the turnovers have got to stop.”

Matallyn Overmyer led Ross with 10 points. Elayna Ackerman scored on a couple early baskets before Columbian focused on not allowing her to get the ball in the post. Ackerman finished eight points and eight rebounds while Valarie Samson scored six and grabbed nine boards.

The loss drops Ross to 0-4.

“We beat ourselves,” Vela said. “This is the fourth game I thought we beat ourselves. No disrespect to any other team, but we’re beating ourselves right now.”

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GIRLS BASKETBALL

OREGON CLAY 56, FREMONT ROSS 32

Ross can't keep up with Clay at end

Eagles' speed wore down Little Giants

By Rich McGowan
Assistant editor/sports reporter

FREMONT — For the opening 10 minutes of its game against Oregon Clay, the Fremont Ross girls basketball team looked like it could run and keep up with the Eagles.

But as the second quarter wore on, then gave way to the third, the Little Giants began to falter.

Clay started connecting with its perimeter shooting and Ross could not come up with an answer as the Eagles defeated the Little Giants 56-32.

"Clay would not stop," Ross coach Juan Vela said. "They play one speed and it's fast and it's for four quarters. And it's not just one, two, three or four players, it's the whole team. They get

subs in and they do not miss a beat.

"It's hard to match that right now."

Ross matched it for more than a quarter. Elayna Ackerman hit a pair of early buckets in the post and Torri Holmes hit from 3-point range as Ross took a 9-4 lead in the opening five minutes. Clay opened the game cold from the field as several 3-point shots rimmed out. Though the Eagles held the advantage in rebounding, second-chance points eluded them as well.

"I think the first quarter we came out with energy," Vela said. "We responded, we played good defense we were sharing the ball and not turning the ball over. It was a good quarter, a great quarter."

Ackerman scored the opening basket of the second

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PHOTO BY DOUG HISE

Ross' Lexi Holmes puts up a shot and is fouled on the play by Clay's Maddison Grimes.

Ross

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quarter and Allison Miller made 1-of-2 free throws to tie the game at 14 with 6:22 to go before halftime. But the Little Giants did not score again until 5:31 remained in the third quarter.

Clay began hitting its shots, including a pair of 3-pointers within 41 seconds by Hannah Kuhlman, and soon opened up a double-digit lead, 25-14 going into halftime, as the Eagles went on a 21-0 run spanning the second and third quarters.

"We're too good not to shoot 3-balls," Clay coach Corey Slovak said. "In the second, a couple dropped and we opened

it up a little bit."

The second half saw the Eagles take off while the Little Giants' fortunes tumbled. Ross compounded its struggles shooting with turnovers, including nine in the third quarter. While the first half saw Ross compete on defense and keep up with Clay's motion-heavy offense, the Little Giants' wore down as the game went on.

"Defensively we got into a funk, almost like they stopped believing," Vela said. "That was my speech at halftime. It was, 'You're not going to win in the first quarter. You're not going to win in the second, third fourth. This game might even go overtime. You have to keep fighting, keep fighting and grinding.'"

Ackerman led Ross with eight points, all of which came in the first half, and five rebounds. Valarie Samson added six points and Lexi Holmes had a nice defensive game, coming up with five steals.

Ross' record dropped to 0-5 overall, 0-3 in the Three Rivers Athletic Conference, leaving Vela unsure how much confidence his team has in itself.

"I don't know, I question that too, but we're going to come back tomorrow and start figuring that out," Vela said. "It's a long season we can always turn it around. That' all we can do, try turning it around."

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Rough night for Little Giants

Toledo Notre Dame hands Fremont Ross devastating 56-14 walloping

By Josh Morgret
News-Messenger correspondent

FREMONT — Toledo Notre Dame is currently on another level when compared to most of its opponents.

Notre Dame topped Fremont Ross 56-14 in Three Rivers Athletic Conference action Monday.

"Our defensive pressure forced them into some mis-

takes," Notre Dame coach Travis Calloway said. "I think we played well from start to finish. Our guards got in their face and it set the tone."

Notre Dame (4-1, 3-0 TRAC) nearly had more 3-pointers (six) than Ross had field goals (seven). Ross finished shooting just 7-of-43 (16.3 percent) from the field.

Notre Dame, which has made three consecutive trips to

the state semifinals, nearly scored more points to start the game than Ross did in total. The Eagles led 13-0 before Elayna Ackerman scored with 2 minutes, 9 seconds left in the first quarter.

By that time, the Little Giants (0-6, 0-3) had missed five shots and had eight turnovers. Notre Dame led 15-4 after one quarter and scored the first 13 points of the second quarter en route to a 28-6 advantage at halftime.

"To be honest, Notre Dame is just a better team than us," Ross coach Juan Vela said. "Their

pressure was relentless and they work as a unit. We were over-matched in all positions."

Ross was only able to muster four points in the third and fourth quarters. Ten of the team's points came from Ackerman while Lexi Holmes scored the other four.

Ross didn't eclipse the 13 points the Eagles scored to start the game until Ackerman's steal and score with a minute left in the fourth quarter.

"Our girls played with intensity the whole night," Vela said.

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DOUG HISE/NEWS-MESSENGER

Fremont Ross's Torri Holmes drives to the basket against Notre Dame Academy's Erin Delaney.

Rough

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“We didn’t back down.”

Kaayla McIntyre topped the Eagles with a double-double of 15 points and 11 rebounds while sophomore Mariah Copeland had 13 points, including a trio of 3-pointers.

“Kaayla really does it all for us,” Calloway said. “Mariah hit some shots for us. We’re working on our team chemistry. We just want to keep getting better as we move forward.”

Notre Dame out-rebounded Ross 42-28 and forced the Little Giants into 32 turnovers.

“We’re going to keep working on our game,” Vela said. “We’re going to enjoy these holidays coming up. We, as coaches, know what’s important and that’s spending some time with the families. We’ll keep attacking and get this thing turned around.”

Fremont Ross 46, Perkins 35

Elayna Ackerman scored 15 points as Fremont Ross's girls basketball team topped Perkins 46-35 in a non-conference matchup.

Maddi Overmyer added 12 points for the Little Giants.

TOLEDO WHITMER 51, FREMONT ROSS 42 (OT)

Little Giants lose heartbreaker

Ackerman leads 4th-quarter rally to force overtime

By Matthew Horn
Sports writer

Elayna Ackerman scored seven points in the fourth quarter Monday as Fremont Ross forced overtime.

The Little Giants, however, fell 51-42 to visiting Toledo Whitmer in the Three Rivers Athletic Conference.

Ross trailed by six early in the fourth quarter before Ackerman tied the game at 32-32 with a three-point play and again at 34-34 with a bucket with 2 minutes, 22 seconds left in regulation. Ackerman scored for a 38-36 deficit with 55 seconds remaining before Lexi Holmes and Torri Holmes scored consecutive baskets to force overtime at 40-40.

Torri Holmes collected a loose ball off a sideline out of bounds play and scored with five seconds to go in the fourth. Each team then committed a turnover before Whitmer missed a 3-pointer.

"Our girls stayed focused," Little Giants coach Juan Vela said. "A key for us is to keep working. The girls did a good job keeping their composure. We went from man-to-man to zone and gave them some fits. Just plugging away."

Whitmer (4-4, 3-2) scored the first eight points in overtime.

"We were patient at the end," Whitmer coach Sean Flemmings said. "They extended their zone and forced some quick shots. We were more patient in the fourth quarter."

Ross scored 17 points in the fourth quarter after allowing only four in the third.

"It's a 2-3," Vela said. "We try to cover gaps and take away the short corner or elbows. The girls did a good job executing (in the third quarter). The girls have come a long way. They're playing together and understanding what to do in certain moments. They've grown up a lot."

Ackerman finished with a game-high 18 points.

"Offensively, this was her best game," Vela said. "She attacked the basket. She took a few jumpers — she's trying to improve there."

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JONATHAN BIRD/STAFF PHOTO

Fremont Ross' Valarie Samson takes the high road against Toledo Whitmer on Monday night.



JONATHAN BIRD/STAFF PHOTO

Fremont Ross' Lexi Holmes drives to the hoop through the Whitmer defense.

Turnovers the key in Ross girls' victory

By Josh Morgret

News-Messenger correspondent

FREMONT — Fremont Ross coach Juan Vela even acknowledged his team's win over Toledo Woodward wasn't the prettiest.

The Little Giants made just 16-of-70 (22.9 percent) but forced 40 turnovers in a 46-22 victory over Woodward on Tuesday.

"It was nice to come out and I think the girls played well," Vela said. "I think we just made more plays than them."

Ross (2-8 overall) led just 4-2 early on but strung together an 11-2 run through the rest of the first quarter and the first 15 seconds of the second. The shooting woes started

early for the Little Giants, making just 4-of-19 shots in the first quarter.

Angela Johnson scored for the Lady Bears (3-9) to cut the lead to 17-8 with 5 minutes, 41 seconds left in the second quarter but Ross scored the next eight points to open a double-digit lead.

A series of turnovers late in the second quarter allowed Valarie Samson to nail one of her three 3-pointers. Matallyn Overmyer then scored and Ross took a 30-10 lead into halftime.

"We had lots of turnovers and that's been our downfall all year," Woodward coach Tom West said. "Our guards

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Ross

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just aren't as strong as I'd like them to be."

Each team struggled in the third quarter. The teams combined to make just 4-of-19 shots and had 17 total turnovers. Each team scored just five points.

Ross was able to empty out its bench in the fourth quarter, getting some varsity time in a victory for girls that wouldn't otherwise see time.

"Whenever you can get a win at the varsity level, it's a good thing to see the girls laughing and having fun," Vela said. "It's nice to end the night on a posi-

tive note."

Samson topped Ross with a double-double of 17 points and 10 rebounds while Lexi Holmes scored seven points. Overmyer grabbed six rebounds for the Little Giants.

"Valarie was our most consistent scorer," Vela said. "I think she's starting to shoot like she can. We know what she's capable of."

Robin Dowdy topped the Lady Bears with seven points while Cierra Stamper had five points and nine rebounds.

"We don't manage the press well and it's common knowledge around town to press Woodward and we'll make turnovers," West said. "I told the girls that what doesn't kill us will only make us stronger. Hopefully this will too."

GIRLS BASKETBALL

Fremont Ross girls win second game in a row

The Fremont Ross girls basketball team won its second game in a row, thanks to a terrific fourth-quarter effort that saw the Little Giants overcome a seven-point deficit after three quarters to take a 53-49 victory.

Ross entered the final period trailing 38-31 before doubling up Findlay in the fourth quarter, 22-11, to come back for its first Three Rivers Athlet-

ic Conference win.

Elayna Ackerman led Ross with 16 points while Torri Holmes scored 15 as Ross improved to 3-8 overall.

Lakota girls lose to SMCC

Bree Long-Meyer scored a team-high 14 points along with eight assists and six rebounds but the Lakota girls basketball team lost 66-43 to St. Mary Central Catholic.

Katie Park added 13 points for the Raiders.

PT. CLINTON 62, FREMONT ROSS 48

Free throws doom Giants

By Josh Morgret

News-Messenger correspondent

PORT CLINTON — The gymnasium at Port Clinton High School is known as “The Supreme Court.”

In the second half of Tuesday’s non-league contest against Fremont Ross, it was the Redskins who held court.

Port Clinton doubled Ross’ offensive output in the third quarter and made 28-of-30 (93.3 percent) free throws in a 62-48 victory.

“We have shot well from the free-throw line all season really,” senior Emily Ashley said. “We all know that, so we have confidence there and we know if we aren’t making outside shots, we want to get it inside, either to a post or by driving.”

Port Clinton coach Toby Bickel notes the free throw shooting is a good start toward a

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JONATHON BIRD/STAFF PHOTO

Fremont Ross’ Valarie Samson drives through the Port Clinton defense during a basketball game Tuesday. Samson scored 11 points in the contest.

Ackerman scores eight points, but Ross falls in TRAC

Elayna Ackerman scored eight points, but the Fremont Ross girls basketball team fell 68-35 to Toledo Central Catholic in the Three Rivers Athletic Conference.

Central Catholic 60, Ross 53

Central Catholic	18	16	14	12	—	60
Ross	9	14	8	22	—	53

Central Catholic

Margaret Buchele 2 4, Keytha Foreman 1 2, Alyssa Galernik 9 3 21, M Hanenkratch 2 4, K Kovacs 2 4, Alexandra Matus 2 2 8, Lyndsey Matus 1 2, Demi Russell 5 1 11, Mikayla Simon 2 4. Totals 26 6-10 60.

Ross

Elayna Ackerman 9 2 20, Lexi Holmes 1 2, Torri Holmes 3 4 10, Allison Miller 1 2, Matallyn Overmyer 2 2 6, Valerie Samson 5 13. Totals 21 8-10 53.

3-Point Goals - Central Catholic 2 (Alexandra Matus 2), Ross 3 (Valerie Samson 3).

LOCAL ROUNDUP

Ross girls knock off Sandusky

Matallyn Overmyer^N scored a game-high 10 points as Fremont Ross' girls basketball team took a 34-28 home-court victory over rival Sandusky.

Elayna Ackerman added six points while grabbing 10 rebounds and five steals.

The victory raised the Little Giants' record to 5-16 overall.

Bellevue's Santoro is District 6 POY in Division II

News-Messenger report



Bellevue's Carly Santoro was recognized District 6 player of the year in Division II.

Carly Santoro Clyde's Kelsey Michaels is also a first-team selection while the Fliers' Collin Rieman is first-team for the boys. Margareta's Dylan Bailey is first-team for the boys in Division III.

Fremont Ross's Elayna Ackerman and Valerie Samson are first-team in Division I for the girls.

The Lady Red's Shelby Stamm is second team while Jenna Strayer is honorable mention. Old Fort's Alli Adelsperger and Peyton Miller, and St. Joseph Central Catholic's Ashley Burns are second-team in Division IV.

Clyde's Heidi Marshall is honorable mention.

The Little Giants' Torrie Holmes and Mattalyn Overmyer are second-team.

The Stockaders' Hootie Cleveland and the Crimson Streaks' Lucas Michael are second-team for the boys.

Ross's Grant McConnell and James Wright are second-team while Steven Blodgett and Tavarious Simms are honorable mention. The Fliers' Zach Rieman and Bellevue's Dylan DeWitt are honorable mention.

SJCC's Maliek Johnson, Old Fort's Adam Alexander and the Polar Bears' Tristan Scott are honorable mention.

