

2006 Division I Sectional Tournament

Little Giants' Gedeon had plan for campaign

Prior to the sophomore campaigns of Robbie Hall, Scott King, Travayon Wolverton, Aaron Opelt and Adam Gries, Fremont Ross varsity basketball coach Mark Gedeon had only placed five second-year players on his roster.

But Gedeon had a plan. And with the first Greater Buckeye Conference championship, a 15-5, 9-1 record and an 11-game win streak on the heels of a tough non-conference slate to the group's credit this season Gedeon's formula would appear quite a valid hypothesis.

"Eight seniors graduated," Gedeon said of the third of three Great Lakes League championships to retire the conference. "We couldn't reload. We had to go with youth and inexperience to compete at the high level our schedule demands."

The results were 6-15 and 9-13 campaigns for the current seniors their first two years on varsity. But Gedeon has not been surprised by the current success.

"This was a three year process," Gedeon said. "We took some lumps but to go full circle and have success has been rewarding. Winning the GBC championship means a lot to all of us."

"This is something we were hoping would happen. If you asked those close to the program after the preseason where we had key players out with football injuries and we were behind and not playing well they would have said we'd be hard pressed to win six games. As the health and



Around the Horn

Matthew Horn

chemistry improved the level of play improved.

"We started on the 11-game win streak and believed we had a legitimate shot at a league championship. There is a big sense of satisfaction without question."

Several of the seniors stepped into increased roles with the departures of Fred Shearon and Joe Diller this season.

"We knew we'd have big roles to fill," King said. "We thought we could win the GBC."

Gedeon said the seeds for believing this could be a special campaign were planted when the seniors were in seventh grade and wished to take a journey to state to experience the atmosphere and see the talent.

"It's been such a long-term goal," Gedeon said. "Society is dictated on what can you do for me now. We've had this plan for a long time. We even projected this in the seventh grade. I think that's a great story concerning kids and self esteem."

King remembers the field trip. "It was an amazing atmosphere," he said. "I remember thinking what it would be like to play with that type of competition. Just thinking about winning

state brought chills."

King said the team's experience, depth and camaraderie are essential to its success.

"We're a fist, as coach always says," King said. "We're like a family. We've been together since the sixth grade. That's helped keep us together the whole season. The chemistry is so strong because we're all friends on and off the court."

The boys bowl together on Monday nights, often eat spaghetti at Gedeon's and rather than hang their heads when pulled off the court they instead are most often simply excited with the prospects of their replacements impact providing a lift.

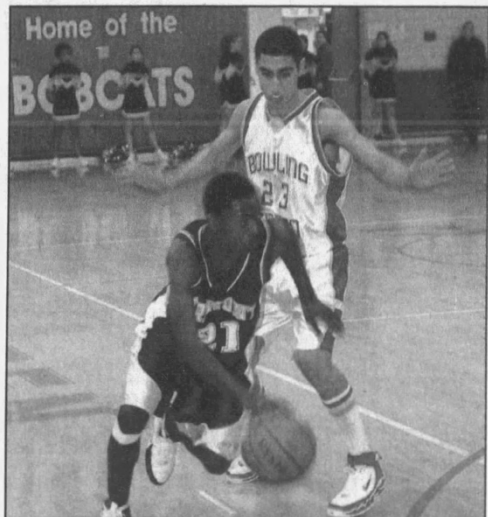
Gedeon has been impressed with what his boys have given up.

"All our players really play together as a team," he said. "They sacrifice individual goals for team goals. To get 11 young men to play in a rotation with the attention on individual stats these days and buy into the team concept has been impressive."

"Everybody brings something different and the balance has been tremendous. They understand what their roles will be."

Gedeon said the addition of junior Ryan Ottney has also provided the team a boost. Ottney had never played organized basketball before earning a starting spot.

"Ottney and Abney are always grabbing the big offensive rebound or defensive rebound," King said. "Having Ottney has been amazing. He's a hard worker and he knows what he needs to



News-Messenger file photo

TRAVEYON WOLVERTON of Fremont Ross handles the ball against pressure from a Bowling Green defender early in the season.

do to make the team better."

Gedeon said leading scorer and rebounder Gries has been the most consistent performer. Gries is also an excellent passer and intimidating defender.

"For us to be successful we knew Adam Gries would have to step up and be that leading man," he said. "He had to be the focal point and we've seen him grow and mature. He realized the re-

sponsibilities of having that label this summer and he's developed into the role."

"He's come out of his shell and turned into a dominant player. He's one of the best in Northwest Ohio."

King said he and his teammates looked forward to feeding Gries this year.

See ROSS, B2

Ross coach Gedeon had plan

Continued from B1

"Giving the ball to Gries is something we've been wanting to do since we were sophomores," he said. "He and Fred. It sticks with you and the seniors know if they give Adam the ball good things happen."

Lima Senior defeated Ross in their first meeting this season before the Little Giants ran off their winning spurt. King said a victory over the Spartans in the rematch and one over rival Sandusky on the road stand out for the regular season.

"The whole week it just felt like we were a team that could win the league," he said of Lima Senior. "Winning by 19 it really felt right."

Gedeon points to a 10-point loss to Toledo St. John's as being prominent. Gedeon said the St. John's staff couldn't believe how much Ross improved based on tape from a 20-point setback to Bowling Green only a week earlier.

"The kids heard that and believed good things would happen," Gedeon said.

King said the communication gelled, and Gedeon and his kids have been having a great deal of fun since.

"The eight seniors have grown and matured as people," Gedeon said. "It's been very, very rewarding this year. We (all) understand each other. We're focused on what we have to do together. We respect each other and we realize how much fun we're having. It's nice to see all the smiles knowing they played a part in the success."

"Sixty games together including tournament — that's a lot of experience and understanding of different situations that could arise. I've been fortunate to coach this group."

And they're fortunate he had a plan.

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HIGH SCHOOL BOYS BASKETBALL PLAYOFFS: ROSS 75, MADISON 67

Little Giants moving on

Ross will face
Mansfield
Senior on
Thursday

By KYLE TIMMONS
News-Messenger Correspondent

WILLARD — Fremont Ross entered Friday's sectional championship game with one focus: beating Mansfield Madison.

The Rams, though, were just as driven. They came ready to battle with the Little Giants before falling 75-67 at Willard.

After a 10-6 run to start the game, Fremont began to let Madison's Richard Marshall heat up.

Marshall knocked in a field goal with about three minutes left in the first quarter and moments later knocked in a 3-point shot to give the Rams an 11-10 advantage.

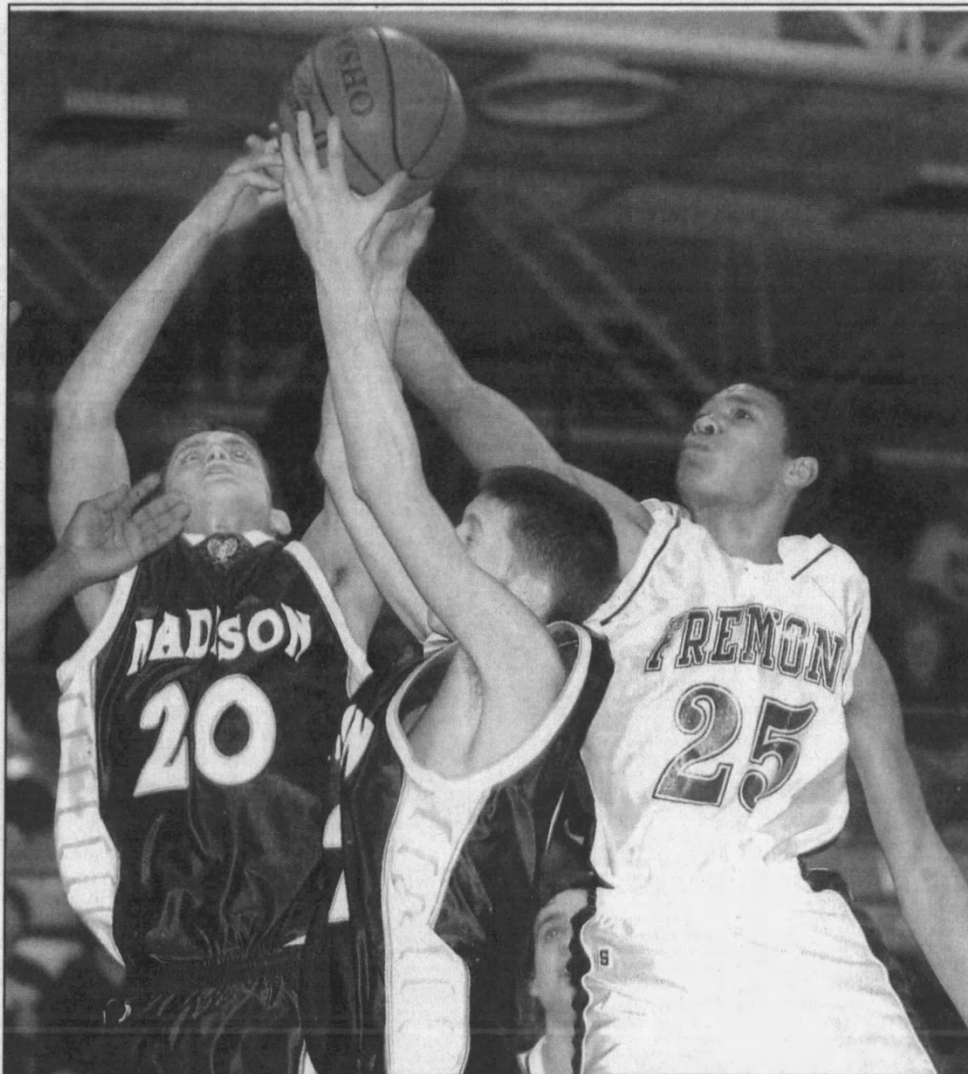
Nick Barr added another basket for Madison before Scott King drained a 3-pointer of his own to tie the game back up at 13-13.

Madison opened the second quarter by taking a 20-16 lead after another Marshall basket.

Fremont coach Mark Gedeon quickly called a timeout to fire up his squad.

Cory Clayton responded with a 3-point field goal and Fremont was back to within 20-19.

"I told them to get the ball inside to (Gries)," Gedeon said. "Then they go out there and hit four 3's. Our guard play has been getting better and better and (Clayton) is getting his



News-Messenger/Charlie Longton

FREMONT ROSS'S Ryan Croudup grabs a rebound over a pair of Mansfield Madison players during Friday's regional final. The Little Giants defeated the Rams to advance.

See ROSS, B2

High School Boys

Ross 75, Mansfield Madison 67

ROSS – Robbie Hall 2-3-7, Scott King 2-1-7, Aaron Opelt 0-1-1, Traveyon Wolverton 3-5-13, Cory Clayton 2-5-10, Ryan Croudup 4-0-9, Billy Boukissen 2-0-4, Adam Gries 6-8-20, Ryan Ottney 1-0-2. Totals 22-23-75.

Ross	15	20	17	23	—	75
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Mansfield	15	13	14	25	—	67
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Rebounds: Fremont 41, Madison 24.

Turnovers: Fremont 13, Madison 9.

Records: Fremont Ross 16-5, Madison 12-10.