

2009-2010 season review

HIGH SCHOOL GIRLS BASKETBALL

Wolf won't be leading Ross hoops anymore

BY JEFF ARENZ
Sports writer

FREMONT — After 34 years of coaching Fremont Ross girls basketball, Sue Wolf will not be back to lead the Little Giants in the 2009-2010 season.

Wolf declined to sign a coaching evaluation put forth by Ross athletic director Art Bucci.

"I did not resign as Fremont Ross's girls basketball coach," said Wolf in a statement to The News-Messenger on Wednesday. "My integrity as a coach and as a person kept me from being able to sign my coaching evaluation."



WOLF

Bucci said he knew Wolf was unhappy with her evaluation.

"The evaluation process is to help people get better," Bucci said. "Sue was offered a contract, but because of the evaluation, she did not feel that she should sign the contract. I thought her statements (to me) were very good, and I know she wasn't happy."

At the end of each school year, Ross coaches are evaluated by Bucci before being sent to principal Jose Hernandez and superintendent Dr. Traci McCaudy. The final step occurs when the coaches' contracts are presented to the Fremont Schools Board of Education, which decides upon their renewal.

"Since Sue did not sign her contract, the process of renewing it was not started," Bucci said.

On Monday, the Fremont board agreed to bring back all of the Little Giants' other varsity head coaches. It also agreed to hire Randi Whitman, a 1999 graduate of Old Fort High School, to lead the Ross volleyball program.

"I wish the team the best of luck next year," Wolf said. "The potential to be good is there. They just need to work together to get there."

The Little Giants were 1-20 in 2008-2009 under Wolf, who coached Ross to a 336-362 record since the 1975-1976 season. She was inducted into the Fremont Ross Hall of Fame as a coach in 2001.

"I want to thank all my former players, coaches and support staff that I have had the honor to work with and coaches I have coached against," Wolf said. "It was a very special part of my life."

Bucci said the search to hire a new girls basketball coach will begin immediately.

"We will get the job posted so that the hunt for a new coach will begin," Bucci said. "We will see what kind of interest we get."

Boys assistant Vela named new Ross girls coach

BY MATTHEW HORN
Sports writer

Fifteen girls showed up for open gym at 6 a.m. the last few days at Fremont Ross.

Apparently the reputation of new varsity girls basketball coach Juan Vela precedes him.

Vela was Mark Gedeon's boys junior varsity coach the last two years, ninth grade boys coach the year before that and eighth grade boys coach the year prior to that. He also played for Gedeon, graduating from Ross in 2000.

"He was so dedicated as a player and he's carried that over to coaching," Gedeon said. "He got to the YMCA at 6 in the morning to shoot and after practice he'd be back over there. His senior year he was a self-supported student. His mom moved to Florida

and he wanted to stay in Fremont. He worked in a factory before and after school.

"He scored 21 points on a Friday, goes home and works 6-2 and comes back the next night with 20 points. Basketball is just a game and it's supposed to be fun and here's a high school student doing adult work and playing the game he loves and never complains. He's one of the great stories in terms of fine young men I've worked with in terms of working to be successful and never taking anything for granted."

Vela always told himself that somebody always had it worse, so he had to make the best of what he had in your hands.

"I knew what I wanted and I wanted to work to get it done," he said.

Vela would like to leave behind a legacy similar to that of outgoing coach Sue Wolf while realizing the magnitude of the objective.

"When I think about it she's been there 34 years," Vela said. "That's someone that left a legacy for girls basketball at Ross. She did a lot for the program. Anybody that takes 34 years of their life to teach these kids — it's amazing. That's a goal of mine. I feel proud to take over a position like that after she put the ladder so high that not many coaches can reach."

"To leave a legacy like she did, as much as I love basketball, I'd



VELA

love to leave a legacy like that when it's all said and done."

Vela's passion is evident to Gedeon.

"Juan's got a sincere love of basketball," Gedeon said. "He's extremely positive. His love of the game is contagious for players he's coached. His love of Fremont Ross and love of the community are something else he can offer the program."

"His enthusiasm. He's been around basketball basically his whole life in Fremont. A lot of the characteristics that are special about Juan were developed by basketball and he'll transfer those qualities to the kids he coaches."

Vela is also flexible.

"At JV you have to work your team and help the varsity team," Gedeon said. "Juan has a gift to be patient and adapt on the fly.

He won't get too high or too low and he'll work well communicating with the people he's dealing with as a people person."

Gedeon is proud to see yet another assistant move to a head coaching position. Perkins boys coach Scott McVeigh and Tiffin Columbian boys coach Bill Beaton were both former Ross assistants.

But Gedeon also acknowledged that it will be strange seeing someone other than Wolf on the girls sideline.

Vela, who played three years at Defiance after graduating from Ross, was a three-year letter winner that dressed varsity as a freshman for Gedeon. Gedeon watched Vela mature then and later as a coach.

SEE VELA | B2



Jonathon Bird | News-Messenger

St. Joseph Central Catholic's Kayla Yeckley and Ross' Sam Mitchell go after a loose ball during an Ohio High School Athletic Association Foundation game played Friday at Ross. The Crimson Streaks won the exhibition game, 38-31.

A COMMUNITY EVENT

SJCC-Ross basketball night helps local charities

JEFF ARENZ
Sports Writer

FREMONT — Community pride and support were overflowing inside the Purple Pit at Fremont Ross High School on Friday.

As the Fremont Ross and St. Joseph Central Catholic boys and girls basketball teams scrimmaged, about \$2,500 was raised for Liberty Center, Parker's Purpose and the United Way of Sandusky County during an OHSAA Foundation doubleheader sponsored by Fricker's.

"We know that we raised several thousand dollars for three great Fremont charities," Little Giants boys basketball coach Mark Gedeon said. "That was the focus of the night."

SJCC athletics director Gary Geller agreed. "It was a great atmosphere with great community spirit and both teams played really hard," Geller said.

Gedeon said several ideas were used to raise money Friday, when the bleachers at the Purple Pit were filled to capacity by fans of the Little Giants and Crimson Streaks. Even the bands of both schools took turns playing musical selections.

"We had a 50/50, a halfcourt challenge and there were some donation boxes out there," Gedeon said. "But for both schools to come together, we had people on both sides who donated time and made an extra effort to make this night happen. It doesn't happen because of one person ... it was a community effort."

Former Ross post player Victoria Logan had her name drawn from 57 entries to take one shot from the midcourt stripe. When she stepped on the hardwood, Logan's attempt clanked off the iron and bounded away.

In action on the court, Ross and SJCC played to a split.

The Crimson Streaks won the girls game 38-31 by outscoring the Little Giants 16-6 in the final quarter. Ross led 25-22 through three before SJCC sophomore Taylor Flick and senior Jessica Molyet took over. They combined to score 11 fourth-quarter points as Flick had game-highs in points (nine) and rebounds (11) while Molyet added eight points and eight rebounds.

"Taylor is going to be a player because she works so hard at both ends of the floor and it's going to very hard to keep her out of the lineup," said Geller, who is also the Crimson Streaks girls basketball coach. "I was impressed with freshman Kristin Sessler, too. It would help a lot to get Molyet in double-figure in both categories (points and rebounds)."

SEE COMMUNITY | B6

COMMUNITY FROM B1

Morgan Welty, Alex Ferguson and Alyssa Palmer all scored six points for the Little Giants, who received eight rebounds from Alexis Chapman and seven more from Welty.

COVER STORY

Rare change at the top for two local programs

JEFF ARENZ
Sports Writer

FREMONT — The Fremont Ross girls basketball and St. Joseph Central Catholic boys basketball programs have changed leadership heading into the 2009-10 season.

The deans of the Sandusky County basketball coaching scene — Ross girls hoops coach Sue Wolf and SJCC boys hoops coach Mike Gabel — are no longer drawing up plays with the clipboard and dry-erase marker.

Wolf, who coached the Little Giants for 34 years, was 336-362 (48 percent) in 698 games since the 1975-76 season. Ross captured four conference titles (1978 co-Buckeye Conference; 1994 co-Great Lakes League; 1996 and 1997 outright GLL championships) and three sectional titles (1993, 1995, 1996) during that span.

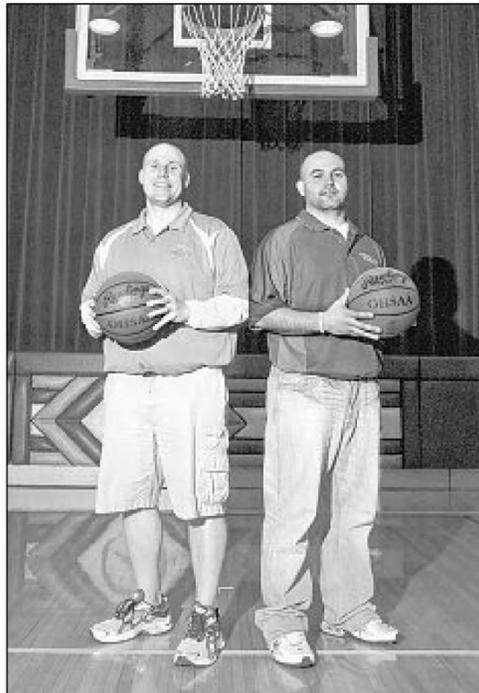
In 18 years under Gabel, SJCC was 221-180 (55 percent) in 401 games since the 1991-92 season. He guided the Crimson Streaks to two Midland Athletic League titles (1993 and 2001), captured nine sectional championships (1992 to '94, '96 to '99, '03 and '05) and two district titles ('99 and '05).

Wolf and Gabel decided to step away after the 2008-09 basketball campaign. Wolf declined to sign her coaching evaluation from Little Giants athletics director Art Buccini and Gabel decided to retire in favor of spending more time with his family.

Enter Juan Vela and Jonathon Will.

JUAN VELA

In Wolf's final season, Ross compiled a 1-20 record. Now, first-year coach Vela has the task of rebuilding a program from the bottom up.



Jonathon Will | News-Messenger

St. Joseph Central Catholic boys basketball coach Jonathon Will and Fremont Ross girls basketball coach Juan Vela.

"For getting a basketball program started, the kids need to have trust in their coach," Vela said. "If a coach injects energy into a program, I believe the kids are going to respond with energy. With me as the coach of this program, I need the kids to trust in what I'm trying to teach."

Vela said Guilford College (Greensboro, N.C.) coach Tom Palombo, who was Vela's basketball coach at Defiance College, and Mark Gedeon, the all-time leader in Ross boys basketball victories, have influenced his coaching style.

"I am modeling some of offensive and mainly defensive philosophies after Coach Palombo and Coach Gedeon," Vela said. "We're just trying to tie in a bunch of different things as a coaching staff. We're going to see what we'll come out with this year."

Palombo is 355-158 in 19 seasons overall. He has led three Guilford Quakers men's basketball teams to the NCAA Division III tournament after taking two Defiance men's hoops squads and three Yellow Jackets' women's teams to D-III tour-

ney appearances.

According to his Guilford College biography, characteristics of Palombo's teams include full-court defensive pressure and up-tempo offenses. For the last two seasons, Vela has served as the Little Giants boys basketball program as an assistant coach for Gedeon (175-133 in 14 seasons). In addition to Gedeon, Ed Gable (105) and Al Ziemke (103) are the only Ross coaches with more than 100 wins. Vela believes the Little Giants have responded to his methods.

"It's gone really well," Vela said. "This entire coaching staff is bringing energy into each practice."

"Hopefully, that rubs off a little on each player."

JONATHON WILL

Gabel guided SJCC to a 5-16 record in his final campaign. But with Will and an infusion of new players — particularly from the Crimson Streaks' 9-2 football team — new enthusiasm has been injected into the SJCC boys basketball program.

"My kids know that I am here for them and I am only here to help them," Will said. "They know that they can trust me and I will definitely lead them the best I can."

Will believes in the benefits of hard work.

"We're going to work hard," Will said. "That's the only way we're going to survive ... by outworking every team on our schedule."

While spending five seasons assisting Marc Jump at Sylvania Southview, Will learned his craft and gained ideas on how to build a successful program.

"As a new coach, a lot of the stuff that I have learned comes from Marc Jump at Sylvania Southview," Will

"If a coach injects energy into a program, I believe the kids are going to respond with energy."

JUAN VELA
Ross girls hoops coach

"My kids know that I am here for them and I am only here to help them."

JONATHON WILL
SJCC boys hoops coach

said. "He has been instrumental, as far as giving me the confidence as a new coach to taking a new program (at SJCC) that he has prepared me to be ready for this."

Will also borrows his style from a couple of famous NCAA Division I men's basketball coaches.

"I'm a diehard North Carolina fan, and Dean Smith and Roy Williams are two coaches that I like to follow," Will said. "I like to play at the same tempo that North Carolina plays. But, I'm definitely a defensive-minded coach, which I take from Dean Smith."

Smith's UNC teams varied in style, depending on the players he had available. They generally had a fast-break style, a half-court offense that stressed the passing game and an aggressive, trapping defense that produced turnovers and easy baskets. His teams were known for always shooting the ball well.

Upon his retirement in 1997 after 36 years of coaching, Smith had 879 wins. It was a record Indiana and Texas Tech coach Bobby Smith surpassed in 2007.

Smith and Williams have two NCAA national championships apiece.

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Giants fall after fighting back

BY KEVIN SHIELDS

News-Messenger correspondent

OREGON — When a program is struggling to find positives, anything can help, especially in the first game of the season.

The Fremont Ross girls basketball team dropped its season opener 54-26 at Clay on Saturday night, but even in defeat there were positives.

After falling behind 26-5 at halftime, the Little Giants (1-20 a year ago) could have let the Eagles run them out of the gym. Instead, they fought back and were only out-scored seven points in the third quarter, and Ross hung with Clay point-for-point in the fourth quarter.

"I like the way we responded in the second half," Ross coach Juan Vela said. "We started to be aggressive and were making plays on the ball, and we were looking to attack offensively."

Nicole Steinmetz led all scorers with 13 points for Clay. Meghan Scharer added 11 points and grabbed five rebounds. The Eagles held the Little Giants to 9-for-43 (21 percent) shooting. Clay was 20-for-47 (43 percent).

Despite the struggles from the field, the Little Giants' defense was the key in the second half. Ross shot 5-for-25 (20 percent) in the final 16 minutes, but forced Clay (10-for-23 in the second half) into 13 turnovers, as the Eagles had trouble with their transition game. Clay had jumped out to a big first-half lead in large part because of rebounding and pushing the ball up the court.

"In the second half, defensively, we were in the passing lanes and all five of our girls were ready to get a steal and were ready to play defense," Vela said. "In the first half, we were just intimidated, like it was a big championship game and we were just scared out of our pants."

"But I told the girls that it's just a high school basketball game and you're going to come out and do what we taught you to do, and they did that."

Senior guard Morgan Welty scored nine points in the final 16 minutes for the Little Giants, to finish with a team-high 12 points, including seven in the final quarter. Junior Kayleigh Baker added six points for Ross, while junior



Lee Welch | News-Messenger correspondent

Fremont Ross' Alyssa Palmer drives the lane against Oregon Clay's Megan Agoston during a game Saturday.

SEE ROSS 17

ROSS FROM 5

post player Casey Clark finished with a team-high eight rebounds.

The first half was a different story. While Ross came out flat and couldn't relax at either end of the floor, the Eagles controlled play and executed their offense.

"I like that we came out right away and got after it," Clay coach Roger Achter said. "We dictated the tempo, which I thought was really important to do, and we should've controlled it. I have three seniors that started and they know what we expect, and they set the tempo, and we executed and finished early."

Steinmetz had seven first-quarter points and teammate Tori Harper had six, as the Eagles had a 5-0 and 11-0 run in the quarter to lead 16-3 after eight minutes of play.

Clay scored 18 of its 26 first-half points in the paint, as it collected six rebounds on the offensive end to four for Ross. The Eagles out-rebounded the Little Giants 17-15 and forced Ross to turn the ball over 32 during the game.

"We weren't being aggressive at all," Vela said. "I was really disappointed in the way we played that whole half."

But the Little Giants had no quit in them.

"(Ross) played hard the whole game," Achter said. "I give them a lot of credit because they never gave up. We jumped on them early and they kept playing hard and they kept trying to execute, which they deserve credit for."

Vela wasn't shy to acknowledge that Welty and Clark — the two of his five returners who have the most varsity experience — were big factors in the Little Giants battling back.

"Those two girls played pretty well for us," said Vela. "Morgan (Welty) didn't shoot the ball particularly well, but she was taking shots and being aggressive on the ball defensively.

Then Casey (Clark) was being aggressive on the boards, and we hope their play rubs off on these other young girls."

Clay out-boarded Ross 37-34 and was 11-for-25 at the foul line, while the Little Giants were 6-for-18. The Little Giants were 2-for-9 from three-point range with the Eagles going 3-for-8.

"We can't beat ourselves up for losing the first game," said Vela. "Was I pleased with our performance? No. But I got to be patient, and we have to be patient. It wasn't a league game, and we have to get back to the drawing board and get ready for Tiffin Columbian on Tuesday."

MARION 62, ROSS 36

Morgan Welty scored 16 points as Fremont Ross dropped a 62-36 Greater Buckeye Conference decision at Marion Harding.

The Presidents took a 20-5 lead after the first quarter and led 36-9 at halftime.

The Little Giants outscored Harding 27-26 by holding an 18-14 edge in the fourth quarter.

Welty drained three 3-point field goals among her six baskets.

Alexis Chapman added 8 points for Ross (0-3), while Sam Michael chipped in 6 more.

Fremont Ross comes up short in loss to Bowling Green 71-35

BY KEVIN SHIELDS

News-Messenger correspondent

BOWLING GREEN — Pressure defense is a natural enemy for any inexperienced team.

On Tuesday night at Bowling Green High School, the inexperienced Fremont Ross girls basketball team fell victim to that enemy in a 71-35 loss to the Bobcats in non-conference play.

Bethany Hoehner had a game-high 19 points for BG (2-2), who scored over 70 percent (52 points) of its points in the painted area and forced Ross (0-4) into 30 turnovers. BG finished with 16 giveaways.

“I thought we got better as a team the last two games,” Ross

head coach Juan Vela said. “But tonight we took one or two steps backwards.

“It was just the little fundamentals that we work on every-day in practice — they didn’t get those done.”

All night long, the BG pressure defense and half-court trap led to easy baskets in transition, as Ross finished with 43 shots in the game, compared to 60 for the Bobcats.

The Bobcats began the game with a 9-0 run, before a McKenzie Schneider finally got the Little Giants on the board halfway into the quarter. BG went on to

SEE ROSS B3

ROSS FROM B1

lead 18-9 after the opening eight minutes.

Defense again started a BG run to begin in the second quarter, as it jumped out to a 25-9 lead in the first four minutes. The Bobcats had 12 points in the paint in the second eight minutes as they shot 14-for-33 (42 percent) in the opening half to 6-for-23 (26 percent) for Ross, who had 17 first-half giveaways. Ross trailed 37-16 at halftime.

"That definitely made the difference," BG coach Jeffrey Nichols said of his team's half-court trap and full-court press. "Fremont is a young team and coach (Juan) Vela has them going in the right direction, but I think the trap and pressure made them play uncomfortable and turnovers led to baskets for us."

"(BG) did a nice job passing the ball around and shooting the ball," Vela said. "They were attacking us off the dribble and never got a chance to contain the ball on defense."

Ross would have a run of its own in the third quarter, down 48-16, as it scored eight points in-a-row to get within 24. But the Bobcats went on a 6-2 run to lead 54-26 heading into the final quarter.

"Our guards were really intense on defense in practice," Vela said. "But they didn't show any of that intensity in this game. A lot of girls weren't crashing the boards inside as well."

Leading the way for the Little Giants was Schneider, who had a team-best nine points. Casey Clark finished with eight and a

game-high nine rebounds.

"She's always consistent as far as playing hard and giving it her all," Vela said of Clark, a junior post. "But it's not a one-man show. We need five girls out there doing that same thing, plus our bench players."

BG finished the game with a 33-29 edge in car-

oms, as Jenna Stoner had a team-high seven rebounds for the Bobcats. BG shot 29-for-60, while Ross was 11-for-43.

"I'm a little disappointed in our team right now," Vela said. "But we'll be ready for Sandusky on Thursday."



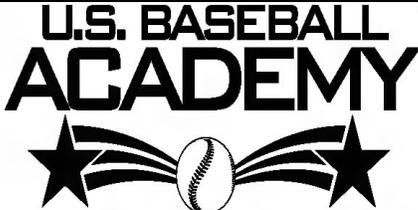
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GIRLS BASKETBALL

SANDUSKY 79, ROSS 28

Streaks dominate in win over Little Giants

JEFF ARENZ
Sports Writer

SANDUSKY — It would be a vast understatement to say Sandusky dominated Fremont Ross during a 79-28 Greater Buckeye Conference girls basketball game Thursday night. The Blue Streaks scored the first 13 points of the contest and led 20-4 after 8 minutes. Before the Little Giants walked to the locker room at halftime, Ross trailed 36-7.

"We jumped on (Ross) early and that was our goal," Sandusky coach Nick Venerucci said. "We wanted to get a fast start because we had a lot tired legs after playing (Lorain Southview) Wednesday night."

And it got uglier from there. "It's tough to start the season 0-5 with a new coach, but we just have to keep playing and practicing," Little Giants coach Juan Vela said. "Every time we hit the floor, we're trying to get better. We can't worry about the score until we get better. The girls shot the ball. It just didn't go in."

Ross (0-5, 0-2) made 22 percent of its field goals on 13-of-60 shooting and was out-rebounded 50-37. The Blue Streaks (3-2, 1-1), who were getting easy looks from inside the lane, made 52 percent of their baskets on 33-of-64 shooting.

The Little Giants could not stop Sandusky post players Brianna Crowe (19 points, 6 rebounds) and Maurisha Brown (14 points, 11 rebounds), who combined for 22 points and 13 rebounds in the first half.

Crowe, who transferred to Sandusky from Ross before the 2009-2010 school year, went 7-of-10 from the field and 5-of-6 at the foul line. Brown added a 6-of-9 effort underneath the basket and was 2-of-2 at the charity stripe.

"We need to be able to shoot

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ROSS FROM B1

better and get back on defense," Vela said. "Most of Sandusky's points came from its post players on layups. They just killed us. It's going to be this way until we take care of our problems."

But the Blue Streaks had another scoring threat Ross had trouble slowing down.

Cara Croom drained a game-high 20 points on 10-of-17 shooting from the field while collecting 9 rebounds and generating 2 steals.

"We're running with eight players, and the key for us was to rotate players in and out, similar to line changes during a hockey game," Venerucci said. "After we had the fast start, we could relax because we're staying refreshed, but still putting the heat on (Ross)."

Casey Clark provided the most offense for Ross by scoring seven of her 10 points in the third quarter. The Little Giants reached double digits on

the scoreboard with at the 5:12 mark on a basket from Alex Ferguson (4 points, 9 rebounds).

Ross's Andra Snodgrass had all four of her points in the third quarter before Kayleigh Baker knocked down a pair of shots for four fourth-quarter points.

"I've been in Coach Vela's shoes last season when I took over this Sandusky program," Venerucci said. "I know what the Little Giants are going through. They are trying to correct the bad habits."

E-mail Jeff Arenz at jarenz@gannett.com.

"We need to be able to shoot better and get back on defense. Most of Sandusky's points came from its post players on layups. They just killed us. It's going to be this way until we take care of our problems."

JUAN VELA
Ross head coach



Greg Burr | Submitted photo

Fremont Ross' Sam Michael looks for a passing lane during a game Saturday against Toledo Woodward at the Purple Pit.

Ross earns first win of season

News-Messenger reports

Sam Michael and Alexis Chapman each scored 14 points as the Fremont Ross girls basketball coach Juan Vela earned his first victory with a 62-36 win over Woodward on Saturday.

"It was more special for the kids — they've been working hard and playing hard and they deserve a win," Vela said. "I hope they continue to work and keep seeing positive results."

Kayleigh Baker added 12 points for the Little Giants.

Spencer Robles added 16 points for the Fliers (3-1, 2-0).

Sarah Weyer scored 12 points for the Polar Bears (1-3, 0-2).

Gibsonburg suffers setback

Aubrey Goetz had 14 points, but Gibsonburg's girls basketball team fell to New Riegel 60-42 in a non-conference matchup.

Samantha Stainbrook had five rebounds and Goetz added four assists for the Golden Bears (1-2).

Amy Gosche led Lakota with 11 points. Rachel Hoffman had nine rebounds and Gosche eight for the Raiders. Stephanie Miller added five assists.

Boys basketball

Old Fort falls in MAL

Jared McKeen and Steven Balliett each scored 11 points but Old Fort's boys basketball team lost to Tiffin Calvert 65-49 in the Midland Athletic League.



Jennifer Young-Bower | News-Messenger correspondent
Fremont's Morgan Welty heads for the hoop during Thursday's game against Findlay. Ross fell 64-22. No other information was reported.

THE ONE THAT GOT AWAY

Ross rallies to tie Rogers, but misses shots at victory

BY KYLE SCHIMMING
News-Messenger correspondent

The Fremont Ross girls basketball team dug itself too deep a hole to climb out of in a 41-40 setback to Rogers on Monday night.

The Little Giants outscored the Rams 28-19 in the second half, but couldn't complete the comeback.

After a sloppy first half in which they only scored 12 points, the Little Giants tied the game late. Ross, however, failed to capitalize on two possessions with a chance to take the lead in the final 25 seconds.

With 42 seconds remaining in the game, Casey Clark converted one of two free throws to even the score at 40-40, but on the ensuing possession Jalisa Brown, who hadn't scored in the game, was fouled and gave the Rams (5-1) the lead for good at 41-40 when she split her two free throws with 25 seconds left.

With 14 seconds left, Ross's Morgan Welty was called for traveling as she drove along the baseline. The Little Giants then stole the inbounds pass but McKenzie Schneider misfired with her jumper and the Rams came up with the rebound to seal the game.

"I'm not happy with our first half, we had a lot of mental mistakes," Ross coach Juan Vela said. "But in the second half we were much better. The girls responded to the changes we made at half.

"We had a couple chances to win the game, but couldn't score. That's how sports goes sometimes."

The Little Giants' first half struggles were primarily due to Rams guard Latisha White, who scored a game-high 20 points.

"Tisha's our leader, she's great on and off the court for us and the heart beat of this team," Rogers coach Gary Wolfe said. "Our hustle created a lot of turnovers and that was a big factor in the game."

Clark led Ross, which shot 35 percent



Jonathon Bird | News-Messenger

Ross guard McKenzie Schneider and Rogers' Latisha White chase a loose ball during the first half of Monday's game at the Purple Pit. Rogers made the plays late and left with a 41-40 victory.

from the field, with nine points and six rebounds, and Schneider added seven points and five rebounds.

"You always want to win, but we have to move on to tomorrow and keep working and continue to improve," Vela said.

Whitmer 50, Ross 29

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TOLEDO — Casey Clark had eight points for Fremont Ross, who fell to Whitmer 50-29 Saturday in non-league play.

The Little Giants trailed by 10 at halftime (24-14), but were outscored 14-5 in the third quarter.

No other information is available on this game.

Lima beats Ross

LIMA — Morgan Welty and Sam Michael had nine points apiece, as Fremont Ross fell 68-48 to Lima Senior on Tuesday in Greater Buckeye Conference play.

Alex Ferguson added eight points for the Little Giants, who trailed by 11 at halftime, before things got away in the third quarter.

“(Lima Senior) hit seven 3-pointers in the third quarter and we weren’t playing too hard,” Ross coach Juan Vela. “Other than that, the girls played hard during the other three quarters.”

Presidents rule the night

Seventh-ranked Marion Harding runs over Little Giants

BY KEVIN SHIELDS
Sports Writer

FREMONT — The Marion Harding girls basketball team is an experienced and seasoned group — unlike the team it faced Friday.

A young, inexperienced Fremont Ross team was no match for the Presidents, who downed the Little Giants 74-22 in Greater Buckeye Conference play.

"We just wanted our kids to come out and play with a lot of energy and a lot of enthusiasm, which we did," Harding coach Greg Noftz said. "We wanted to be fundamental and to do the things that got us here."

"In any situation like this, it's tough for both teams, but Juan (Vela) is doing a great job and they competed right to the end."

Harding, ranked seventh in the state in the latest Division I poll, jumped out to a 16-5 lead after one quarter and led 40-8 at halftime.

As usual, the Presidents' (13-0, 6-0) success came from the dominating play of Louisville signee Shawnta' Dyer and Bre-nae Harris. The duo, which had combined for 36.3 points per game coming in, combined for 22 alone in the first half. They also combined for 12 rebounds, five assists, eight steals and two blocks in the first 16 minutes as Ross (1-12, 0-5) couldn't find answers defensively.

"We just fell into a slump where we were looking up to Harris and Dyer and we needed to play our game instead," Ross coach Juan Vela said. "(Harding) got a lot of inside shots because we were letting them penetrate and we weren't taking care of the paint."

Dyer (19.5 points per game) had 12 first-half points, while Harris (16.8) had 10 points and six steals. Harding tallied 10 points off turnovers in the half, forcing the Little Giants in 16 turnovers. Ross had 25 for the game to 18 for the Presidents.

"That's a big part of our game," Noftz said. "We want to get out in transition and run on steals, blocked shots and misses."

Harding ended the game with 17 steals and 18 total points off Ross giveaways. Harris tallied seven off those thefts with Kura Hairston nabbing four and Dyer three.

"People question why we play a 2-3 zone with the athletes we have," Noftz said. "But in our zone, we can cover a lot more ground with our length."

On defense, the Presidents, who came in allowing teams to shoot only 28 percent from the field, forced the Little Giants to shoot just 8-for-58 (13 percent). That included a 1-for-14 effort behind the 3-point line. Harding



Doug Hise | News-Messenger correspondent
Ross' McKenzie Schneider wins a scrum for a loose ball during Friday's game with Marion Harding at the Purple Pit. Harding, ranked No. 7 in the latest Division I state poll, won 74-22.

finished 30-for-59 and 4-for-14 respectively.

Dyer had three of those shots beyond the arc, finishing with a game-best 20 points and 15 boards to go with seven assists, five blocks and three steals. Harris added 19 points, seven rebounds and three assists. The two were the only two Lady Presidents to reach double figures.

"When you have players like (Dyer and Harris) and a good supporting cast around them,

we can put some points up real fast," Noftz said.

Ross wasn't without its positives, however, as Harding won the rebounding battle 37-33.

Sam Michael pulled down 11 boards for the Little Giants, with Casey Clark collecting seven and Alex Ferguson six. Michael and Morgan Welty led Ross with five points each with both adding two steals.

"I think they've improved," Vela said of his team. "I tell them

to just relax and play ball and I think they're starting to get that."

Harding, a three-time defending GBC champ, also feels its right in line for positive things down the stretch.

"We're really excited about where we're heading," Noftz said. "We haven't had many lapses up to this point — we've just played solid basketball from day one."

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Missed free throws hurt Ross

Little Giants do better second time around against Blue Streaks

BY KEVIN SHIELDS
Sports Writer

FREMONT — The magic number for the Fremont Ross girls Thursday night was 39.

That's how much better the Little Giants did against Sandusky the second time they played them.

On Thursday, Ross lost 49-37 to Sandusky in a Greater Buckeye Conference game inside the Purple Pit. When they played Dec. 10 the Blue Streaks routed the Little Giants 79-28.

"I went in the locker room after the game and wrote the score down on the chalkboard from the last game," Little Giants coach Juan Vela said. "I told them that's a huge change and I was happy with that."

Ross trailed four times in the first six minutes, but scored four of the last five points to lead 11-10 after one quarter.

Kayleigh Baker gave the Little Giants their biggest lead then at 22-16 on basket inside with 3:49 remaining until the break. But the Blue Streaks hung around, thanks in large part to Ross's inability to convert at the free-throw line. The Little Giants were 4-for-12 in the first half at the line and 12-for-28 for the game. Sandusky was 4-for-7 and 18-for-31 respectively.

"The foul shooting needs to be better," Vela said. "It killed us tonight, but we got to work on improving a couple things at a time and shooting is one of them."

The Little Giants came out and hit the offensive glass hard, though, getting eight offensive rebounds in the first-half alone and 17 total in the game. Sandusky finished six.

"We're not a great shooting team right now, so we need more chances to shoot the ball," Vela said. "And getting offensive rebounds always gives you that chance."

Ross led 25-23 at the break, before the third quarter went totally Sandusky's way. The Blue Streaks outscored the Little Giants 14-4, getting to the line 14 times in the period, as they became the offensive aggressors.

"I challenged the girls at half-time," Sandusky coach Nic Venerucci said. "We didn't play well the whole first half. We were terrible on defense and weren't rotating properly and weren't finishing plays on the offensive end."

Former Little Giant Brianna Crowe scored 10 of her 13 points in the second-half for Sandusky, who led 37-29 heading to the fourth quarter.

Crowe, who also added a game-high nine boards, was one of two Blue Streaks to reach double figures. Sandusky was led by



Photos by Jonathon Bird | News-Messenger

Fremont Ross' Morgan Welty moves in for a layup ahead of the Sandusky defense during the first half of Thursday's game. The Little Giants lost 49-37 to the Blue Streaks.

Cara Croom's 14 points. Charles'sha Patrick kicked in five assists.

Two foul shots from Sam Michael got Ross within 41-35 with 1:29 to go, but that would be as close as it got. Crowe got two baskets down low for the Blue Streaks in the final 40 seconds to give the game its final score.

"(Ross) played hard," Venerucci said. "I give coach Vela and those girls a lot of credit. When you overlook a team like that, which I think we did a bit tonight, you'll be in a dogfight, and we were lucky to get a win."

Morgan Welty paced the Little Giants with 10 points, adding four boards and two steals. Michael added nine points, five rebounds and two steals.

Casey Clark grabbed eight boards and Alex Ferguson seven for the Little Giants, who won the rebounding war 34-29.

"We were playing hard and being scrappy out there to start the game," Vela said. "It's the best we've played all year and



Fremont Ross' Casey Clark calls for the ball to help teammate Alex Ferguson who is pressured by the Sandusky defense in the first half Thursday.

we're still improving."

Ross got a big energy-boost watching the JV team win 48-38 beforehand. Anissa Guardiola led

the Little Giants with 15 points.

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Griffin leads Fliers past Ross

Junior center's 20 points, 17 rebounds spark Clyde's victory

BY KEVIN SHIELDS
Sports Writer

FREMONT — Clyde girls basketball coach John Cahill will be the first to tell you how fortunate he is to have a post player like Kaylea Griffin.

The junior scored 20 points and pulled down a game-high 17 rebounds Tuesday night for the Fliers, who downed Fremont Ross 64-30 in non-league play.

Griffin added three steals, a block and an assist as Clyde never trailed, leading 17-4 after one quarter and 33-11 at half-time.

The win got the Fliers (10-5) back in the win column after two tough losses to Willard (Jan. 26) and Sandusky Perkins (Jan. 30).

"I don't know if I've had a more difficult week than last week, coaching or playing," Cahill said. "But the kids are resilient and I think we spent a little time feeling sorry for ourselves and decided to come out and try to get as good as we can."

Second chance points were the Fliers' best friend early, as they got nine points in the first eight minutes alone off misses. Griffin had four points off misses, scoring seven of her points in the first quarter.

"I was just pursuing the ball more tonight and trying to get back to what I usually do," Griffin said. "That's going for the rebound every time and act like every shot is a miss so I can get the rebound."

Clyde shot 6-for-16 in the first quarter and 12-of-29 for the first half.

"A missed shot was almost our best offense early on," Cahill said. "We were missing shots, and Kaylea (Griffin) was getting them back and getting easy put-backs."

Griffin had 11 points and nine boards at the break for the Fliers. Spencer Robles added 12 of her game-high 24 points with three coming from the long ball. Robles finished with six 3-pointers, adding three steals and two assists.

"They just took it to us," Ross coach Juan Vela said. "Whether it was the post players or the guards, they do a lot of good things fundamentally and those are the things we're trying to improve on."

In the second quarter Clyde really caught its stride. From the halfway point of the first quarter to the halfway point of the second, the Fliers outscored the Little Giants (1-14) 24-5.

"We didn't have a lot of energy early," Cahill said. "But once we got going we played hard."

Of Griffin's 17 rebounds, nine came on the offensive end as Clyde owned a 16-5 edge on the offensive glass. The Fliers finished with a 40-20 edge in total boards. Kelsey Keegan and Rachel Smetzler added five a



Doug Hise | News-Messenger correspondent

Clyde's Kaylea Griffin reaches over Fremont Ross' Rachel Smetzler for a rebound during Tuesday's non-conference game at the Purple Pit. Griffin had 20 points and 17 rebounds in the Fliers' 64-30 victory.

piece, with Smetzler adding 15 points and five helpers.

Clyde had 22 second chance points.

"They had no answer for (Griffin) on glass or in the paint," Cahill said. "She did what's she's been doing for three years and I'm glad she's on our side."

For Ross, Morgan Welty led the

way with seven points and three steals. Sam Michael tallied six points and a team-best seven rebounds. Casey Clark had six boards and Bria Simms five.

"It never stops," Vela said. "As a coach you just got to keep teaching the fundamentals and keep on trying to improve. We had a good week last week, but

life goes on and we can't just dwell on that week."

Ross was victorious in the JV game, though, winning 40-34. Teljani Pitts led Ross with 14 points. Katie Lynch's 12 points topped the Fliers.

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Girls Basketball

Little Giants fall to Trojans

FINDLAY — Fremont Ross lost to Findlay 60-18 in the Greater Buckeye Conference on Thursday.

Kayleigh Baker led Ross with six points. Sam Michael and Casey Clark added four apiece for the Little Giants (1-15, 0-8), who was held to single-digit scoring in three quarters and scoreless in the fourth quarter.

Christina McQueen netted 13 points to pace the Trojans (12-5, 5-3).

GIRLS BASKETBALL

FREMONT — Morgan Welty led the Little Giants with 12 points, but Ross fell 58-43 in Greater Buckeye Conference play to Lima Senior.

Kiara Crockett led the Spartans with 19 points.

Ross beats Lakota in non-league action

FREMONT — Morgan Welty scored 21 points to lead the Fremont Ross girls basketball team to a 46-36 win against Lakota in non-league play.

Fremont (2-18) took a 12-6 first quarter lead and held off a second and third quarter push by Lakota, who outscored the Little Giants 24-19. Ross secured the game by scoring 15 and holding Lakota to just six points in the final quarter.

Amy Gosche scored 12 points the Raiders (6-13).