

2006-2007 Season Review

HIGH SCHOOL BASKETBALL ROUNDUP

Ross falls in second half

News-Messenger reports

The Fremont Ross boys basketball team was holding a three-point halftime lead over Bowling Green.

Then the second half started.

The Little Giants dropped their season opener to the Bobcats 62-35 after managing to score just 10 points in the second half — and only four from the floor.

The problems came out of the gate, as Ross (0-1) turned the ball over on its first four possessions. Overall, Ross had 16 turnovers, double that of the Bobcats.

"Unfortunately, we're a little of our own worst enemy," said coach Mark Gedeon. "That really took some momentum from our kids."

In the first half, Gedeon said the Little Giants were able to play their style of game, dictating tempo and

keeping the Bobcats on the perimeter.

"We played a good first half," Gedeon said. "We didn't play a good second half, that's for sure."

Ryan Croudup led the Little Giants with 12 points.

Clyde-Columbian

Josh Bender led all scorers with 15 points as Clyde toppled Tiffin Columbian 58-40 to open the campaign.

Alex Gillett had 11 points and Justin Cook 10 for the Fliers.

The Tornadoes were held to seven points in the first and third quarters.

Clyde outrebounded Columbian 42-24.

Gibsonburg-Danbury

Matt Kreglow scored 18 points as Gibsonburg bettered Danbury 62-58.

Jordan Kirwen had 15 points — including four 3-pointers — and Cody Fisher added 12 for the Golden Bears.

"In the third quarter, I thought we did a great job defensively," said Gibsonburg coach Brent Liskai. "We moved our feet and kept them off the foul line."

"I was extremely happy with our guard play. Our post will get there, we just have to get them some experience."

Girls Basketball

Lakota-Elmwood

Morgan Podach scored 14 points but Lakota fell to Elmwood 45-37.

Alison Park added 12 points for the Raiders.

Podach had eight rebounds and Blake Cheatham six for Lakota.

Lakota (1-1, 0-1) turned the ball over only six times and held the Royals to 15 second-half points in the setback.

See WOODMORE, B2

High School Boys

Bowling Green 62, Ross 35

BOWLING GREEN — Fortney 4-4-13, Markey 5-0-12, Graham 3-3-10, Donnell 6-1-13, Dible 0-2-2, Kilpatrick 4-0-8, Kennard 1-0-2, Vannett 2-0-4. Totals 23-12-62.

ROSS — Kirt Munson 0-1-1, Ryan Damman 0-1-1, Cory Clayton 1-2-4, Ryan Croudup 5-2-12, Devin Johnson 1-4-6, Phillip Weickert 1-0-2, Ryan Ottney 4-0-9. Totals 12-10-35.

B. Green	16	6	19	21	—	62
Ross	13	12	2	8	—	35

3-point goals: Bowling Green 4 (Fortney, Markey 2, Graham). Ross 1 (Ottney).

Rebounds: Ross (Clayton 3, Ottney 3, Johnson 5). Turnovers: Bowling Green 8, Ross 16.

Record: Ross 1-0, Bowling Green 0-1.

JV score: Ross 36, Bowling 30.

JV leaders: Ross — Ruben Saldiver 8 pts.

HIGH SCHOOL BASKETBALL

Ross falls to Waite

Strong second half can't overcome 19-point halftime deficit

By VINCE GUERRIERI
Sports Editor

TOLEDO — The Ross boys basketball team started Saturday's game against Waite much like they ended Friday's season opener against Bowling Green: sluggish and sloppy.

The Little Giants managed just 20 points in the first half, but 12 turnovers. But even with a 19-point deficit against the Indians, Ross coach Mark Gedeon remained optimistic in the locker room.

"I still believed we could win the ballgame," Gedeon recalled telling his team at halftime. "I questioned how

many of them believed it."

Apparently, Cory Clayton and Ryan Croudup did, leading the Little Giants within five. But Ross couldn't overcome the deficit, falling 67-59 in a non-conference matchup.

The duo had one point between them in the first half — a foul shot by Croudup — but came alive in the second half. Clayton scored 14 points, while Croudup scored 11 — a total of 25 of the Little Giants' 39 second-half points.

"The second half is how we expect both of those



CLAYTON

gentlemen to play for us," Gedeon said. "Both have special abilities."

Robert Jackson hit a jumper for the Indians (2-0) to give them a 41-20 lead at the beginning of the second half, but the Little Giants (0-2) scored nine straight points — seven by Croudup and two by Kirt Munson — to close the gap.

But as the third quarter wound down, Ross was still down 14. A Clayton half-court three at the end of the period was waved off as coming after the buzzer.

In the fourth, the Little Giants kept chipping away, pulling within seven on a couple occasions, and within five once. But the Indians' offensive barrage,

See LITTLE GIANTS, B2

Little Giants fall to Indians

Continued From B1

led by Khari Riley, was too much.

Riley led all scorers with 20 points, including nine in the second half.

"The ability to hold off that last big run by Fremont was character-building," said Indians coach Dave Pitsenbarger.

Gedeon said he was pleased with the Little Giants' second-half turnaround.

"I thought in the second half we grew up a little bit," he said. "It would have been very easy to pack it in."

Pitsenbarger noted that his team — made up of mostly underclassmen — slacked off a little bit in the second half.

"We had some guys playing out of po-

sition," he said. "We got confused. We got caught flat-footed on both ends of the floor."

In the first period, a Munson three pulled the Little Giants within one, 7-6, but Riley hit the first of his four three-pointers as the Indians went on an eight-point run. Additionally, the Indians ended the half on an 11-point run.

Munson was responsible for 11 of Ross' first 18 points. He finished the game with 13.

The Little Giants have until Friday to recover. They'll open Greater Buckeye Conference play then, on the road against Marion Harding.

Vince Guerrieri can be reached at vguerrie@fremont.gannett.com.

High School Boys

Tol. Waite 67, Fremont Ross 59

ROSS — Kirt Munson 5-13; Cory Clayton 4-6-14; Ryan Croudup 4-3-12; Ryan Ottney 3-6; Phillip Weickert 2-4; Devin Johnson 3-2-8; Jordan Jones 1-2.

WAITE — Antonio Allen 2-4; Sean Petaway 2-2-6; Brent Meredith 7-2-16; Khari Riley 7-2-20; Ray Parker 0-1-1; Robert Jackson 3-6; Hakeem Muhammed 6-12.

Ross	11	9	15	24	—	59
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Waite	21	18	10	18	—	67
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Three-point goals: Ross — Munson 3, Croudup. Waite — Riley 4.

Rebounds: Ross 16 (Croudup 4); Waite 15 (Riley 5)

Turnovers: Ross 15; Waite 11

Records: Ross 0-2, Waite 2-0

JV score: Ross 40, Waite 38

BOYS' HIGH SCHOOL BASKETBALL

Ross falls in overtime

By RUSS GOULET
Gannett News Service

MARION — If Fremont Ross coach Mark Gedeon had to pick out one play which hurt the Little Giants in a 59-58 overtime loss to Marion Harding Friday night, he knows which one he would choose.

"If you can look at just one play, the three by (Isaiah) Twine was big," said Gedeon of an extra-session bucket after Ross had fallen in Greater Buckeye Conference play. "He stepped up and hit a big shot. If he misses, we get the rebound and we are in good shape. He hit the shot and they got the momentum."

Twine's triple came with 1:25 left in the overtime session and gave the Presidents a 55-54 lead. Harding never gave the lead back.

Harding's Phillip Haddad hit a pair of foul shots with 41 seconds left to give the home squad a three-point edge.

After the teams traded turnovers, Ryan Croudup knocked in a foul shot for the Little Giants (0-3, 0-1). Haddad then split a pair of foul shots to give the Presidents a 58-55 lead with 12.8 seconds to play.

After a Ross turnover with three seconds to go, Twine split a pair of foul shots with 2.1 ticks on the board. That foul shot became big as Croudup meshed a long-range three-pointer at the buzzer.

Gedeon lamented his clubs miscues during the contest.

"It was the little things," he said. "Between free throws and turnovers, we made a lot of mistakes."

The Little Giants canned just 6-of-16 at the foul line and had 24 turnovers. Hard-

ing had 18 miscues.

"We had four of those turnovers in the overtime," Gedeon said, "and we didn't make our foul shots in the overtime."

Fremont Ross hit just 2-of-6 shots in the overtime and only 4-of-13 in the second half.

The Little Giants jumped out fast on the Presidents and held a 12-5 lead late in the first period. The Presidents rolled back to take a 14-12 edge in the second chapter and led 23-20 at halftime.

Fremont Ross zoomed out again in the third period to grab a 27-23 lead early in the third, but a 7-0 Harding run gave the Presidents a 32-29 edge and neither team led by more than 3 until Harding grabbed the 4-point gap late in the overtime session.

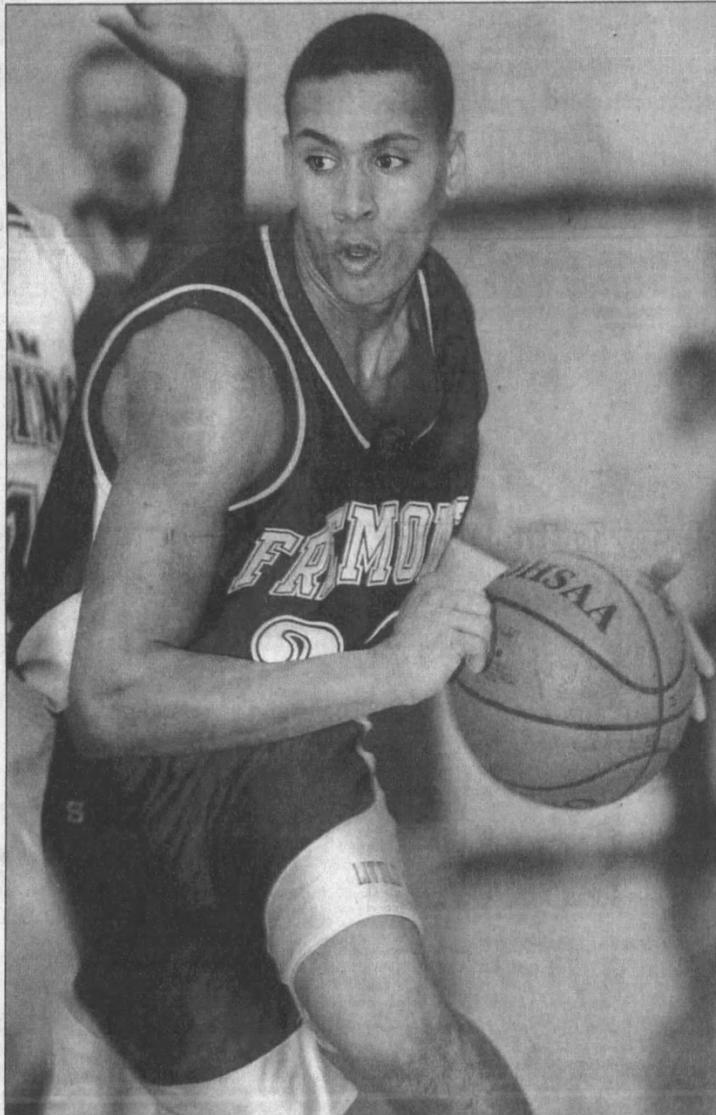
Croudup led the Little Giants with 25 points and 7 rebounds. He helped Fremont Ross to a 35-24 edge off the glass.

New Harding coach Roger Jury had waited since May for his first win with the Presidents.

"We would have liked to have had the first win last weekend, but I didn't mind the extra wait tonight," said Jury, whose Presidents are now 1-2 overall and 1-1 in the GBC. "The kids played hard and they deserved to win this one."

Twine led Harding with 20 points.

The junior varsity battle was nearly as exciting as the varsity tilt, with the Little Giants nabbing a 44-42 victory. Kenny Penn tossed in a shot just before the final horn. He led Fremont Ross with 10 points. Cody White led Harding with nine points.



James Miller /Gannett News Service

CORY CLAYTON of Fremont Ross drives to the paint around defender Bryson Faggs during the President's home game against the Little Giants on Friday.

High School Boys

**Marion Harding 59,
Fremont Ross 58, OT**

FREMONT ROSS — Ryan Croudup 10-4-25; Ryan Ottney 6-2-14; Munson 3-0-6; Damman 1-0-2; Clayton 4-0-9; Johnson 1-0-2. 3-point goals: Clayton, Croudup.

HARDING — Isaiah Twine 6-6-20; Phillip Haddad 5-6-16; Cody Hecker 4-1-10; Kirkpatrick 2-1-5; Faggs 3-0-6; Robinson 1-0-2. 3-point goals: Twine 2, Hecker.

Ross	12	8	15	14	9	—	58
Harding	10	13	13	13	10	—	59

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Field goals	25	21
Field goals attempted	54	44
Free throws	6	14
Free throws attempted	16	28
Rebounds	34	24
Turnovers	24	18

Junior Varsity: Fremont Ross 44, Harding 42.

JV Leaders: Ross — Kenny Penn 10. Harding, Cory White 9.

BOYS' HIGH SCHOOL BASKETBALL

Ross loses to Lima Sr.

By THOMAS PASCH
News-Messenger correspondent

The Fremont Ross boys basketball team led by as many as 17 points but were not able to hold off athletic Lima Senior, falling 59-54 in a Greater Buckeye Conference contest Thursday.

Free throws, once again, hurt the Little Giants (0-4) in the loss.

"Free throw shooting hurt us just like against Marion," Ross coach Mark Gedeon said. "We are shooting under our goal percentage of 70 percent."

The Little Giants shot 12-23 on the night (52 percent).

Ross stormed out to a 20-3 first quarter lead, as Cory Clayton scored 11 of his game-high 23 points in that period. Multiple Little Giants got in on the action as Kirt Munson, Ryan Croudup, and Ryan Ottney helped build the lead. The Spartans were, however, able to pull to 22-11 before the end of the first frame.

The Spartans started to get their offense rolling in the second. Behind Anton Hawkins' 12 first-half points, the Spartans were able to rally and tighten up the contest. Having battled back to 25-20, Lima Senior coach Mark Gaffney was whistled for a technical foul for arguing calls. With two Clayton free throws, Ross extended their lead to 27-20.

"We got away from our game plan," Gedeon said. "When the intensity picked up, we tried to match their fast pace instead of sticking to our own."

With 3:39, Ross extended their lead to 10 with a Croudup bucket at 32-22. But that turned out to be Ross' last big lead as the Spartans were able to cut the lead to one at 35-34 going into the break.

Clayton finished the first half with 13 points.

"I finally relaxed," Clayton said. "I get too tense in most game and my shot suffers as a result. Tonight I just let it go."

Lima Senior took the lead early in the third at



Charlie Longton/News-Messenger

FREMONT ROSS' Ryan Croudup makes a layup against Lima Senior on Thursday night at home.

36-35, a lead they would never surrender. Ross

never surrendered. Ross stayed close, however, as Clayton's second three-point basket of the night pulled Ross to within one at 44-43.

Having four fouls, Clayton was forced to watch the last minute of the third

on the bench. Ross was able to keep the deficit low as they trailed 51-48.

Two Robert Thompson baskets early in the fourth extended the Spartan lead to six at 55-49 but

Clayton's third three-pointer kept the Giants close at 55-52. That three-

by Clayton marked the end of the scoring for over four minutes.

Ryan Ottney drew a one and one foul, still trailing 55-52, but missed the first with 1:02.

Hutchin's basket with one minute remaining put the game ultimately out

of reach for the Little Giants. Devin Johnson added a layup to pull within three but the Spartans went on to win.

"We are in a bit of a slump right now," Clayton said. "But I have faith in our team. We are going to get out of it."

High School Boys

Lima Senior 59, Ross 54

ROSS — Kirt Munson, 1-0-3. Philip Miller, 1-2-4. Cory Clayton, 9-2-23. Ryan Groudup, 4-2-10. Ryan Ottney, 1-1-3. Paul Hershey, 1-0-2. Devin Johnson, 2-4-8. Phillip Weickert, 0-1-1.

LIMA SENIOR — Anton Hutchins, 9-0-21. Dongale Long, 3-3-12. Antonio Tyree, 2-1-5. Ricardo Duncan, 2-0-4. Robert Thompson, 4-3-11. Tony Schimmoeller, 4-0-8. Danyel Walton, 0-1-1.

Lima	11	23	17	8	— 59
Ross	22	13	13	6	— 54

Rebounds: Lima — 26 (Hutchins 7); Ross — 22 (Johnson, Ottney 5)

Turnovers: Lima — 14; Ross — 14

BOYS' HIGH SCHOOL BASKETBALL

Ross remains winless

By VINCE GUERRIERI
Sports Editor

Ross boys basketball coach Mark Gedeon reached a milestone Tuesday night.

And he's not happy about it at all.

With Tuesday's 66-54 loss to Whitmer at the Purple Pit, the Little Giants fall to 0-5 — equaling their loss total from the last regular season. It's the first time in a 21-year coaching career on any level that a Gedeon-led team is winless in its first five games.

"We have ability on this team, but we make too many mental mistakes to be successful at this point in time," said an exasperated Gedeon after Tuesday's game.

After a first period where Gedeon said the team executed terribly, the Little Giants recovered at the foul line in the second. Ross trimmed an 18-13 deficit at the end of the first to a one-point gap, 32-31 at the half.

The Panthers (2-2) hit some early three-pointers in the first, and got lulled into lousy shot selection, said coach Bruce Smith.

"We found some fools gold early on," he said. "We were making some very poor decisions out there."

Additionally, Whitmer tried to press on defense in the first half, which got them into foul trouble.

"We're not very good at that," Smith said.

The Little Giants went into the bonus early in the second period, and although they managed just 10 points from the floor, Cory Clayton and Ryan Croudus accounted for eight points from the foul line in that period as well.

"That's a great way to get easy."

All in all, Gedeon went into the locker room feeling good, knowing that it was a one-point game in spite of his team playing below their capabilities.

Smith, on the other

hand, was fired up.

"Half of what I told them, I can't tell you," he said when asked about his halftime remarks. "I thought we were worrying about things on the floor that we couldn't control."

The Panthers, who got the opening possession in the second half, scored the first four points before a Clayton basket. Clayton led Ross with 17 points. Whitmer then went on a six-point run before Gedeon called a time out. An Antwan Wills three-point play gave the Panthers a 10-point lead, 47-37.

Whitmer had gone to a man-to-man defense in the second half, which shut down the Little Giants' scoring as well as led to fewer fouls — and thus, fewer foul shots for Ross.

The Panthers' adjustment was coupled with a Little Giants cold streak. They scored just nine points in the period, as a result of playing less aggressively, Gedeon said.

"We were not working together to get good shots," he said.

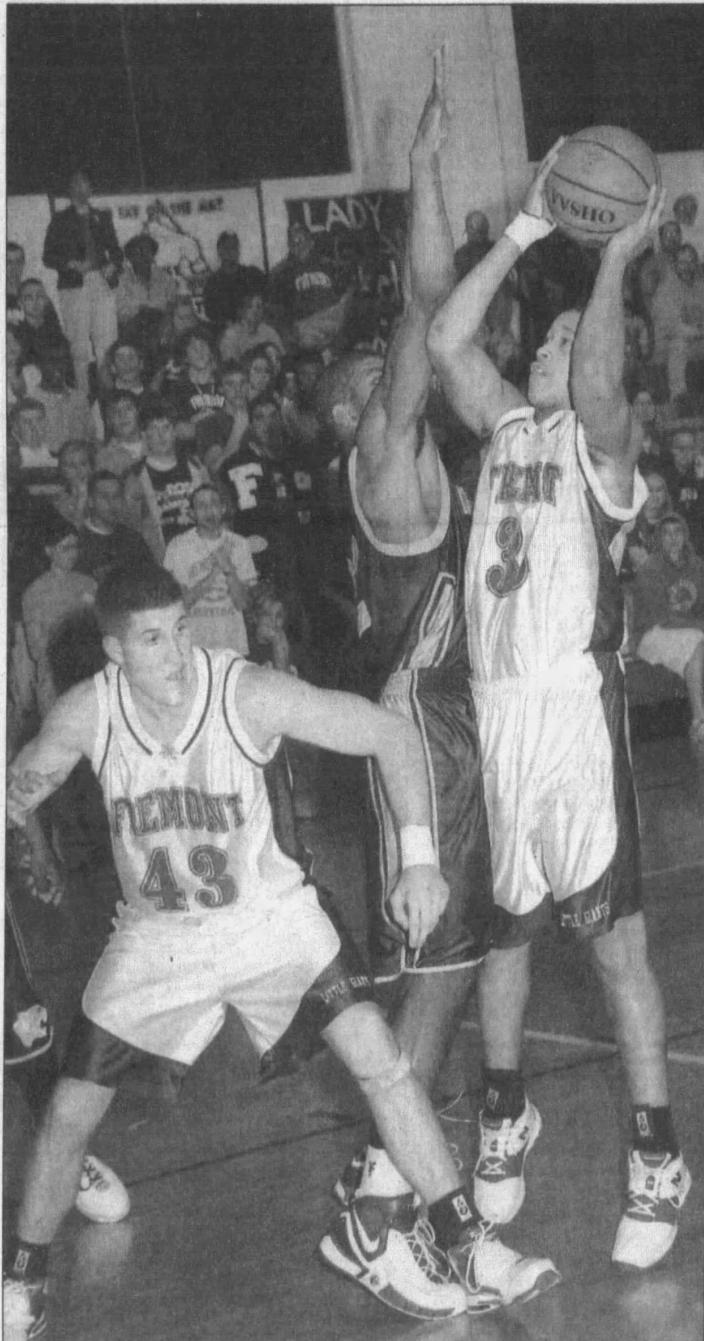
Additionally, the Ross defense was making mental mistakes, including giving Ryne Smith too many uncontested three-pointers. Smith finished with 22 points, including four threes. Gedeon estimated that three of those shots were wide open.

"You can't afford to give good teams those easy points," he said.

However, Gedeon was pleased with the performance of Phillip Miller. The senior scored just three points, all from the foul line in the second half, but led the team with five rebounds.

"If we can get everyone to play with the intensity and heart of a Phillip Miller, we'd have a darn good team," Gedeon said.

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Doug Hise / News-Messenger correspondent

KEVIN JOHNSON puts up a shot against Kevin Koger of Toledo Whitmer, while Ross' Ryan Ottney blocks out.

Basketball

High School Boys

Whitmer 66, Ross 54

Whitmer — Ryne Smith 9-22; David Sweeney 8-5-23; Jeremy Jones 1-1-3; Beau Norton 1-2; Kevin Koger 0-2-2; Antwan Wills 2-6-10; Ryan Hafner 1-2; Joshua Bates 1-2.

Ross — Paul Hershey 1-2; Devin Johnson 3-1-7; Ryan Ottney 4-0-8; Ryan Croudup 3-4-10; Cory Clayton 6-5-17; Phillip Miller 0-3-3; Kirt Munson 1-2-4; Ryan Damman 1-2.

Whitmer	18	14	15	19	— 66
Ross	13	18	9	14	— 54

3-point goals: Whitmer 6 (Smith 4, Sweeney 2)

Rebounds: Whitmer 20 (Koger, Wills 4); Ross 17 (Miller 5)

Turnovers: Whitmer 13; Ross 13

Records: Ross 0-5; Whitmer 2-2

JV score: Whitmer 45, Ross 42

HIGH SCHOOL BASKETBALL

Keller comes back to area for first time

By VINCE GUERRIERI
Sports Editor

SANDUSKY — Steve Keller had spent four years as Clyde's basketball coach.

His son, Kole, continues to battle cancer.

But when the Sandusky boys coaching job came open, Keller — who spent two years coaching the Blue Streaks' junior varsity team — had to aim for it. After prayerful reflection, Keller knew what to do — even though the job came open under awkward circumstances.

"I believe the Lord is leading me back to Sandusky," Keller said.

And Friday, Keller will re-

turn to Sandusky County when Sandusky takes on Fremont Ross in a Greater Buckeye Conference matchup at the Purple Pit.

It's a matchup Keller's looking forward to.

"We're excited," said Keller, who used to play at open gym at Ross while he was a high school player at Oak Harbor. "It's a great high school atmosphere."

Friday's matchup will al-



KELLER

so pit two teams in a state of flux right now. The Little Giants have more talent than their 0-5 (0-2 GBC) record would indicate. The Blue Streaks dropped their first three games, but have bounced back to win their next two.

Sandusky lost close games to Toledo Libbey — expected to be the frontrunner in the Toledo City League — and Mansfield Senior, the team that bounced the Ross boys from the postseason last year, before losing by 17 points to GBC rival Findlay. However, they've recovered with wins over Tiffin Columbian and GBC rival Napoleon.

"All you can ask is to get a little better every day," Keller said.

However, Keller points out that the teams that beat the Blue Streaks are a combined 13-0.

"That's not a bad start to your season as far as competition," Keller said.

The Little Giants, on the other hand, have lost conference games to Marion Harding and Lima Senior, as well as non-conference games against Toledo Waite, Whitmer and Bowling Green.

Both coaches maintain a healthy respect for each other — and Keller sees similarities between the Streaks and Little Giants.

"They've done a lot of very good things," Keller said of Ross, noting that both teams are trying to decrease the amount of mistakes they make on the floor.

Gedeon knows Keller and his family. Steve Keller Sr. was a basketball coach for many years at Oak Harbor.

"He's the type of person that with his positive enthusiasm can get the most out of his players," Gedeon said of Keller Jr.

The Sandusky job came open when the board of education declined to renew the contracts for basketball coach Thomas James and football coach Jim Bollenbacher. Keller still goes to

church at The Chapel in Sandusky.

"I still know a lot of people within the schools in Sandusky," he said. "I definitely still had ties in Sandusky."

It was also in Sandusky where Kole was diagnosed with a brain tumor last year. Keller missed most of the basketball season as Kole was treated at St. Jude's Children's Hospital in Memphis. Keller said Kole continues to battle cancer.

"He's just plugging away," he said.

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BOYS' HIGH SCHOOL BASKETBALL

Ross falls to Sandusky

Little Giants come close in fourth, can't overcome Streaks

By VINCE GUERRIERI
Sports Editor

By the end of Friday night's game against Sandusky, Ross boys basketball coach Mark Gedeon needed a shower.

Between the heat of a gym packed for the Greater Buckeye Conference rivalry game and his own exertion, Gedeon had perspired through his suit.

His effort, however, was nothing compared to that of his team.

The Little Giants lost to the Streaks, 62-53, to drop to 0-6, but Gedeon is pleased with the progress the team is making.

"We're getting closer," Gedeon said. "I loved our kids' heart tonight."

Midway through the third quarter, the Little Giants were staring at a 43-30 deficit, but Ross went on an eight-point run to end the quarter down 45-38. Ross continued to mount a comeback in the fourth, paced by four points by Ryan Croudup, including a steal and dunk that got the crowd at the Purple Pit roaring.

Overall, Croudup had eight points, but his six from the floor came in the fourth quarter. The junior started two days after having to leave school due to illness.

"He was definitely fatigued, but he made some big plays," Gedeon said.

The Little Giants pulled within five several times in the fourth quarter, but could get no closer until a Sandusky turnover led to Devin Johnson pounding in a putback to pull Ross within three, 51-48.

"We closed it to a one-possession game," Gedeon said. "We needed that big play."



Charlie Longton/News-Messenger

FREMONT ROSS' RYAN OTTNEY grabs a rebound against Sandusky on Friday night at home. Ottney led the Little Giants with 13 points.

But the Blue Streaks sealed the game, as Martell Brown started knocking down key shots. He was responsible for seven of Sandusky's 17 points in the final quarter.

First-year Sandusky coach Steve Keller was thrilled to come away with a win.

"Anytime you play a Fremont team that's very well-coached, you've got to fight as best you can," he said. "Tonight we did that and came out victorious."

Ross got off to an early lead, when a Ryan Ottney putback gave the Little Giants a 6-5 lead halfway

through the first. Ottney would go on to lead Ross with 13 points.

But the Blue Streaks went on an eight-point run, including a Kelsey Williams steal and dunk. Williams scored eight points from the floor in the first period, on the way to a game-leading 25 points.

Paul Hershey broke the scoring drought with a free throw, and then hit a three, stole the ball and put in a jumper to close the gap to one, 13-12.

Hershey ultimately tied the game at 15 in the second quarter with a free throw. Hershey scored nine

of Ross' first 15 points, and had 11 points on the night in the most playing time he's seen yet this season.

"Paul's a very tough athlete," Gedeon said. "He really likes to compete. Once we get him in basketball mode, he's going to have a big impact."

But in the second quarter, the Little Giants went cold from the floor. Gedeon said the team didn't attack the paint, and the Streaks went on a 10-0 run to end the first half up 31-21.

The Blue Streaks, after dropping their first three games, are now at .500.

"We're just excited we're

getting better," Keller said.

The Little Giants remain winless, but Gedeon told his team before Friday's game, the Little Giants still have 15 games to play at the very least.

"We're just scratching the surface," he said. "If they continue to stay focused and buy into the things we're trying to teach them, the rewards will be there."

"But they've got to work."

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High School

Sandusky 62, Ross 53

SANDUSKY — Cole Prophet 2-2-8; Martell Brown 4-2-11; Kelsey Williams 12-1-25; Erik Jackson 0-2-2; Shon Alexander 4-8; Randy Walton 1-2; Cornelius Hall 3-6.

ROSS — Devin Johnson 2-3-7; Paul Hershey 4-2-11; Ryan Ottney 5-2-13; Ryan Croudup 3-2-8; Cory Clayton 5-0-11; Phillip Miller 0-1-1; Kirt Munson 1-0-2.

Sandusky	13	18	14	17	—	62
Ross	12	9	17	15	—	53

Three-point goals: Sandusky — Prophet 22, Brown. Ross — Hershey, Ottney, Clayton

Rebounds: Sandusky — 20 (K. Williams 6); Ross — 18 (Johnson 4)

Turnovers: Sandusky — 17; Ross — 19

Records: Ross 0-6 (0-3); Sandusky 3-3 (2-1)

JV score: Sandusky 52; Ross 49

BOYS' HIGH SCHOOL BASKETBALL

Ross nails Napoleon in overtime

By VINCE GUERRIERI
Sports Editor

NAPOLEON — Ross' Ryan Ottney grabbed the rebound after the Wildcats' Lee Hunter missed a long three at the end of overtime Friday.

Ottney threw the elbows to clear away any potential steal and then gave a whoop that would make Howard Dean proud.

The Little Giants had just put away their first win of the season, a 58-53 overtime thriller against a Greater Buckeye Conference rival.

"We were tired of losing," said Ross' Ryan Croudup, who led all scor-

ers with 21 points. "We had a good week of practice and we were clicking."

The Little Giants (1-7, 1-

3 GBC) had led for the

entire

game until a cold

streak in the last

four minutes of

regulation, but

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BOYS' HIGH SCHOOL BASKETBALL

Little Giants get trounced by Trojans

By VINCE GUERRIERI
Sports Editor

FINDLAY — Don't let the records fool you.

Trojans boys basketball coach Jim Rucki, enjoying an undefeated season so far, was legitimately concerned when the Ross boys, with just one win this year, came to town Friday night.

"I was worried they were going to come in here and execute and we'd be in trouble," he said.

As it turns out, he had little cause for concern. Findlay set the tempo from

the opening tip with a Luke Kraus steal and basket, and the Trojans (9-0, 4-0) won their ninth game this year, 72-42.

The Little Giants (1-8, 1-4) took a beating a week after getting their first win a week ago, and face two tough opponents next week in Lucas County: Toledo Bowsher on Tuesday and Oregon Clay on Saturday.

"I still believe in these boys," said Ross coach Mark Gedeon. "It's on them how they're going to deal with it."

It seemed like Ross was

in trouble from the outset, as Findlay mounted an early 14-5 lead, and Ryan Croudup and Ryan Ottney each got into foul trouble early in the first quarter.

Rucki said the game



Munson

tie further," he said.

The momentum seemed to shift early in the second period, though, as the Little Giants, using three-point plays by Cory Clayton and Devin Johnson, closed within six, 27-21.

"There was a stretch where they were starting to get comfortable, but we started to trap," Rucki said.

The teams then traded baskets, 29-29, before the Trojans ended the half on a 10-point run for a 39-29 lead that would get no closer.

"We shared the ball pret-

ty well," Rucki said. "We found the open man."

In the third, Findlay's Jesse Wohl found his shot. Of his game-high 20 points, 11 came in the third period as the Trojans buried the Little Giants, outscoring them 21-10.

"It's pretty tough to deal with when you can't hit the shot at one end, and then you can't stop them at the other," Gedeon said.

Rucki said the Trojans got a little sloppy in the fourth period defensively.

"We tried to get the steal

every time," he said. "We

can't try to be someone we're not."

Despite the loss, Gedeon did manage to find some positives.

"I think we showed some good energy," he said.

Kirt Munson led the Little Giants with 17 points.

"He played as hard as he could, and I'm very proud of his efforts," Gedeon said of the senior.

Cory Clayton scored 11 for Ross.

E-mail Vince Guerrieri at vguerrie@fremont.gannett.com.

High School

Findlay 72, Fremont Ross 42

ROSS — Kirt Munson 7-17; Phillip Miller 1-1-3; Cory Clayton 4-3-11; Ryan Croudup 1-2; Paul Hershey 1-2; Devin Johnson 2-1-5; Ryan Damman 1-2; Stephen Carnicom 0-1-1.

FINDLAY — Zach Bundy 0-2-2; Nathan Bundy 0-1-1; Drake Unger 1-2; Jimmy Davidson 2-0-4; Mac Cloud 4-1-9; Nate Reinhart 1-2-4; Jesse Wohl 9-20; Tyler Birchmeier 4-2-12; Luke Kraus 5-8-19.

Ross 14 9 9 10 — 42

Findlay 23 16 21 12 — 72

Rebounds: Ross 12 (Hershey 3); Findlay 15 (Wohl 5)

Turnovers: Ross 19; Findlay 10

Records: Ross 1-9 (1-4); Findlay 9-0 (4-0)

JV score: Findlay 38, Ross 36

Croudup leads Ross over Bowsher

News-Messenger reports

All of a sudden, the Ross boys basketball team has a little momentum.

The Little Giants have won two of their last three with a 47-39 road win Tuesday against Toledo Bowsher.

Little Giants coach Mark Gedeon said Ross (2-8) managed to get an early lead, thanks to its defense.

"Our game plan was to try to go out and trap and force some turnovers," he said. "We were able to disrupt them offensively and turned that into some offense for us.

"Overall we did a good job rebounding and taking care of the basketball."

The Little Giants turned over the ball eight times, compared to 14 for the Rebels.

Ryan Croudup led all scorers with 17 points.

"He did a very nice job of attacking the basket, drew a lot of fouls," Gedeon said. "He was definitely one of the people we were looking for offensively."

Ryan Ottney led the Little Giants with seven rebounds, to go along with four points.

Ross is facing a brutal stretch, with four games in eight days starting Saturday, when the Little Giants go to Oregon to take on Clay. They'll then host Tiffin Columbian and Willard next week, sandwiched around a road Greater Buckeye Conference game against Lima Senior.

High School Boys

Fremont Ross 47, Bowsher 39

FREMONT — Kirt Munson 3-2-8, Jordan Jones 1-0-2, Cory Clayton 4-0-8, Ryan Croudup 5-7-17, Devin Johnson 0-6-6, Phillip Wieckert 1-0-2, Ryan Ottney 2-0-4, Totals 16-15-47.

BOWSHER — Doiselle 1-0-3, Gillard 1-0-2, Warnes 3-6-13, Kaighin 2-0-4, Logan 3-0-6, Woodley 3-1-7, Mayes 2-0-4, Totals 15-7-39

Fremont	14	12	10	11	— 47
Bowsher	9	11	8	11	— 39

3-point goals: Bowsher 2 (Warnes, Doiselle)

Rebounds: Ross 26 (Ottney 7); Bowsher 20 (Woodley 5)

Turnovers: Ross 8, Bowsher 14

JV Score: Ross 57, Bowsher 47

JV leader: Ryan Dammon 11, Donaviyon Flemming 11

Clayton not enough in Little Giants' loss

By KEVIN YANIK
Staff Writer

OREGON — Fremont Ross coach Mark Gedeon designed his offensive game plan Saturday night around senior Cory Clayton, who's handled the team's point guard duties the last three seasons.

"We thought the way [Oregon Clay] played its zone, it would offer a lot of opportunities in that slot there," Gedeon said. "We wanted to get Cory more shots than he had been getting."

Clayton actually took 20 shots against the Eagles and finished with a team-high 20 points. Unfortunately for the Little Giants, they still lost, 64-55, in a non-conference game.

They gave up a game-high 36 points to Eagles senior A.J. Achter, who dunked three times in the third quarter alone and nailed a pair of 3-pointers in the second half.

The Little Giants had a little more luck handling Eagles senior Zac Taylor, a 6-foot-8 center who was held to 12 points. He spent part of the second half in foul trouble, and gave up several inside shots to Clayton and Little Giants senior Devin Johnson.

"I thought Devin did very well inside against a guy who's seven inches taller," said Gedeon, whose team dropped to 2-9. "He never backed down even though he hasn't played basketball in two years. This was his second start, and I thought he gave everything

he had."

Johnson gave Gedeon 10 points, and he was perfect (4-of-4) from the free throw line.

Still, Achter was nearly perfect from the field in the third quarter, when he scored 17 of his 36 points. The Little Giants started the third in a 28-17 hole, which Achter stretched to 12 on a three-point play.

Clayton and senior Ryan Ottney cut that margin back to six a couple of minutes later with three baskets between them, but the Little Giants fell behind by 11 at the start of the fourth.

"We had a little bit of momentum right there, and we just needed to get that one or two more plays," Gedeon said. "We were trying to climb the hill the whole

time."

The Little Giants fought back again midway through the fourth, and trimmed their deficit to six at 50-44. That was as close as they got, though, because Achter drilled a 3-pointer and Taylor added a free throw with 3:33 to play.

"We obviously played a very talented team with those two players," Gedeon said. "Achter comes in averaging about 23 a game, Taylor averages about 18 a game. I thought we did a good job of attacking Taylor and getting him into some foul trouble, but we also have to realize that they have a special player in [Achter]."

"We recognize that very well, and he made some very talented shots."

Indeed he did, but Achter won't be draining 3's and slam-dunking next season in the Big Ten.

"He's been offered a Division I scholarship in football and basketball, and he accepted one from Michigan State for baseball," said Clay coach Joe Guerrero, whose team improved to 8-4. "He is an athlete, and he's had some great games for us."

Clayton has played some splendid games for Ross, as well. And Saturday's stands out.

"He hit some good, tough shots in the third and fourth," Guerrero said of Clayton. "He had a nice game. Every time he seemed to be open, he hit it."

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High School Boys

Oregon Clay 64, Fremont Ross 55

ROSS — Kirt Munson 1-0-2, Ryan Damman 1-0-2, Paul Hershey 2-1-6, Cory Clayton 10-0-20, Ryan Croudup 4-3-11, Devin Johnson 3-4-10, Ryan Ottney 1-0-2, Dontaviyon Fleming 1-0-2, Totals 23-8-55.

CLAY — A.J. Achter 13-8-36, Andrew Kuns 0-3-3, Jordan Kovacs 1-0-3, Terrell Huggins 2-2-6, Matt Swain 1-3-5, Zac Taylor 5-2-12, Totals 22-18-64.

Ross	13	4	19	19	— 55
Clay	15	13	19	17	— 64

3-point goals: Ross 1 (Hershey); Clay 3 (Kovacs 1, Achter 2)

Rebounds: Ross 23 (Johnson 33), Clay 31 (Taylor 10).

Turnovers: Ross 20, Clay 23.

JV Score: Clay 44, Fremont Ross 28

Home cooking

By KEVIN YANIK
Staff writer

After 32 days on the road, Fremont Ross boys basketball coach Mark Gedeon is still seeing purple.

As odd as it was, the Little Giants still beat Tiffin Columbian, 65-55, in a non-conference game at the Purple Pit — with their white uniforms on.

"We even practice in the purple jerseys, so just getting back to the routine was definitely odd," said Gedeon, whose team finally returned home Tuesday night after wearing its purple road uniforms in five straight games. "It was nice to be back."

"The kids said it felt weird to have the white uniforms on. They're understanding our expectations, they're understanding their roles and they're understanding how to play as a team. Hopefully, we'll have a nice second half of our year right now."

The Little Giants are on that track, at least, with wins in three of their last five games. So what happened to the Ross team that began the season 0-7?

"We had a little trouble in the first half of the year," said Ross junior Ryan Croudup. "I think we're coming together, and this is the first of our three games this week. We're trying to go 3-0 this

week."

The Little Giants locked up this week's first win early in the fourth quarter against the Tornados. Ross opened the quarter with a 43-39 lead, which stretched to eight following layups by senior Devin Johnson and Croudup.

Just seconds later, senior Cory Clayton sank a free throw after Columbian coach Derek Lewis picked up a technical foul for arguing.

"We had them," Lewis said of the Little Giants. "I'll take credit for our loss. I talk to my kids about dealing with adversity every single day in practice, and tonight I didn't deal with adversity. I disagreed with a call that I thought was a travel, and my emotions got the best of me."

And the Little Giants reaped the benefits of those emotions.

"It was definitely a big play, without question," Gedeon said. "They had the ball, as well, so that got us up nine. It allowed our players to play a little bit more relaxed and force [Columbian] to put on more defensive pressure."

Clayton extended Ross's run with a driving layup at the 6:10 mark, and gave the Little Giants a 50-39 lead. Croudup then scored three of his team's next four baskets to finish with

a game-high 21 points.

"The technical foul really set it up for us," Croudup said. "After that, we just started draining shots."

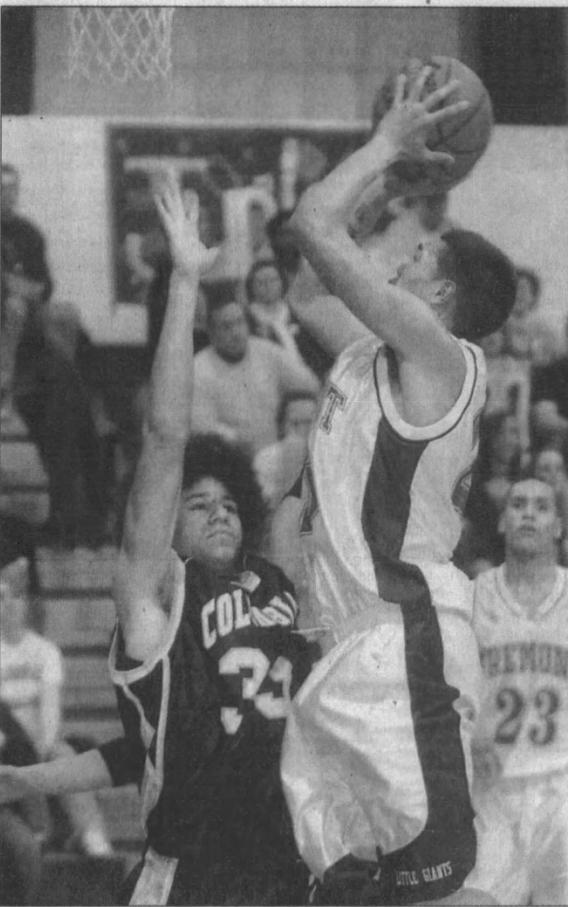
The Little Giants (3-9) drained four shots in the first quarter and raced out to a 16-12 advantage five minutes into the game. Seniors Kirt Munson and Ryan Ottney each nailed a 3-pointer during that stretch, and Johnson added four points.

"We got out there in the first couple of minutes and I was thinking to myself, 'We're only averaging 52 points a game, I think,'" Gedeon said. "So for us to go and score that many points that quick, it says offensively we're getting better but defensively we're not quite doing what we needed to do."

Still, the Little Giants grabbed nine offensive rebounds in the first to overcome any defensive setbacks.

"Their putbacks killed us," said Lewis, whose team dropped to 3-10. "They had nine offensive rebounds that quarter, and I'll bet you six of those resulted in points. We can't afford that. We can't afford to give second chances."

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Charlie Longton/News-Messenger

FREMONT ROSS' Ryan Croudup goes for two against Tiffin at home on Tuesday evening.

High School Boys

Fremont Ross 65, Tiffin Columbian 55

COLUMBIAN – Ethan Kagy 4-0-9, Austin Landers 1-2-5, Brady Derker 5-2-13, Derek Kneeskern 3-0-6, Matt Bowen 1-0-2, Aaron Hurd 3-0-6, Trent Bogard 4-0-8, Nick Lucius 1-2-6. Totals 21-6-55.

ROSS – Kirt Munson 2-0-6, Philip Miller 1-2-5, Cory Clayton 6-2-14, Ryan Croudup 9-1-21, Devin Johnson 4-5-13, Ryan Ottney 1-0-3, Jordan Jones 1-0-2, Dontaviyon Fleming 0-1-1. Totals 24-11-65.

Columbian 16 15 8 16 — 55

Ross 16 16 11 22 — 65

3-point goals: Ross 6 (Munson 2, Croudup 2, Miller 1, Ottney 1)

Rebounds: Columbian 27 (Bogard 6), Ross 25 (Croudup, Johnson 6).

Turnovers: Columbian 16, Ross 13.

JV Score: Ross 57, Columbian 41.

HIGH SCHOOL BASKETBALL

Little Giants fall short against Lima

By VINCE GUERRIERI
Sports Editor

LIMA - It looked like the Ross boys basketball team was going to sneak away with a win.

After watching an eight-point lead turn into a seven-point deficit in the third period, the Little Giants had clawed their way back into the Greater Buckeye Conference matchup, leading by one with 30 seconds left. But with 8.1 seconds left,

Lima's Dongale Long converted a three-point play. It appeared that Ross would get the last shot of the game, but Robert Thompson stole the ball from Cory Clayton to preserve the 59-57 victory for the Spartans.

"Unfortunately, we made too many mistakes," said Ross coach Mark Gedeon.

Gedeon was confident in his team in the waning seconds, noting that at eight seconds, there was plenty

of time for someone to get off a shot.

"We just needed someone to make a play," he said.

Lima coach Mark Gaffney knew the ball was going to end up in Clayton's



JOHNSON

hands, and all he told his players was to stay between Clayton and the basket and let them take a shot.

But Thompson homed in on the three-year starter and took the ball away.

It was fitting that the Spartans (5-7, 3-3 GBC) won the game with a steal. Their press had been giving Ross fits all night.

"We can be very dangerous when we press," Gaffney said. "We're at our

best when we're in transition."

The Little Giants held a one-point lead at the half, 26-25, but widened their lead to 33-27 on a basket by Devin Johnson and seven straight points by Ryan Croudup, who led all scorers with 22 points. Kirt Munson then scored his only basket of the night, a layup from underneath the basket, to give Ross (3-10, 1-5 GBC) a 37-29 lead.

Long hit a baseline jumper to make it 37-31, and then the Spartans stole the ball on two successive inbounds passes and scored easy layups to pull within two, 37-35. Cory Clayton hit a basket in the paint, but a three by Anton Hutchins pulled Lima within one, 39-38. Following a Ross turnover, a Long basket gave the lead back to Lima, 40-39.

See LATE, B2

Late comeback falls short for Ross

Continued from B1

"We knew Lima would bring a lot of pressure," Gedeon said.

The Spartans widened their lead to 46-39 before the Little Giants went on a seven-point run to tie the game up early in the fourth quarter, culminating in a three-point play by Johnson, who scored 11 points, all after halftime.

The Little Giants' scoring streak ended early in the fourth when a foul by Paul Hershey sent Hutchins to the line. He made both foul shots to give the Spartans the lead back, 48-46.

Johnson and Croudup each made one of a pair of free throws to tie the game back up before Danyel Walton drove the lane to give the Spartans a 50-48 lead. Croudup tied the game on the ensuing possession with a pair of foul shots.

The Spartans scored five straight points to take a 55-50 lead with three minutes left to play, but the Little Giants pulled within one on jumpers by Johnson and Croudup. Long made a foul shot to stretch Lima's lead to two, 56-54.

Ottney found Johnson under the basket, and he drew a foul while making

the shot. Johnson converted the three-point play to give the Little Giants a 57-56 lead, and then pulled down a rebound off a Long miss, giving the Little Giants possession with 30 seconds left.

The first half belonged to Clayton and Croudup. Clayton scored 10 of his 14 points before halftime, and Croudup had 10 points as well. The two accounted for 20 of Ross's 26 first-half points.

In the second period, Ross was turning the ball over – six of their total 20 turnovers came in the stanza – but managed to stay in the game, and took a 26-25 halftime lead on a Phillip Miller buzzer-beater.

Since joining the Greater Buckeye Conference, the Little Giants have beaten the Spartans just once – a year ago at the Purple Pit en route to a GBC title.

Gedeon said that the Spartans game was to be one of those where Ross could gauge their improvement since the beginning of the season, and still remains optimistic.

"We haven't peaked yet," he said.

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High School

Lima Senior 59, Ross 57

ROSS — Kirt Munson 1-0-2; Cory Clayton 6-2-14; Ryan Croudup 7-7-22; Devin Johnson 4-3-11; Ryan Ottney 2-0-4; Paul Hershey 0-1-1; Phillip Miller 1-0-3.

LIMA SENIOR — Ricardo Duncanson 1-2; Ed Shine 2-4; Tony Schimmoeller 1-2-4; Daniel Walton 4-9; Robert Thompson 2-1-6; Dongale Long 8-2-18; Anton Hutchins 6-2-15.

Ross 14 12 17 14 — 57

Lima Senior 14 11 21 13 — 59

3-point goals: Ross 2 (Miller, Croudup); Lima Senior 3 (Walton, Thompson, Hutchins)

Rebounds: Ross 22 (Croudup 7); Lima 14 (Hutchins 4)

Turnovers: Ross 20; Lima Senior 12

Records: Ross 3-10 (1-5 GBC); Lima 5-7 (3-3 GBC)

JV score: Lima 41, Ross 40

Late basket lifts Ross to win

By KEVIN YANIK
Staff Writer

Fremont Ross senior Cory Clayton missed his first career chance at a game-winning shot last season, when a 3-point attempt rattled off the rim against Sandusky.

And Clayton waited a year until his next try Saturday night, when he sank a pull-up jumper with 35 seconds remaining to give the Little Giants a 57-56 non-conference victory against Willard.

"Cory made some really nice plays for us," Ross coach Mark Gedeon said. "We were hitting those big pull-ups in the lane, and we actually moved him up on top so he could split that seam. He was able to do that."

Clayton's game-winner came after the Little Giants trailed 54-47 with less than three minutes to play. They could've fallen behind by nine, but senior Paul Hershey blocked a shot, recovered the ball and gave the Little Giants another possession.

Senior Kirt Munson made that possession worthwhile, scoring a 3-pointer to pull the Little Giants within four.

"Being down seven there didn't look good, and then Kirt goes out and hits the 3," Gedeon said. "We took another timeout to reinforce, and they made plays on defense."

The Little Giants made a couple of steals and forced a pair of Willard travels. Clayton followed one of those with a 3-pointer to cut the Crimson Flashes' lead to one, and sophomore Jordan Jones found Croudup under the basket for a layup to keep the Little Giants within one.

"Steals were big this



Charlie Longton/News-Messenger

FREMONT ROSS' RYAN Croudup makes a lay-up on Saturday night at home against Willard.

game," Croudup said. "We thought we could put pressure on them, and we started doing that toward the end of the game when they started making bad decisions."

Croudup made his

biggest steal with 50 seconds left, which led to Clayton's game-winning shot in the lane from about 12 feet.

Until that final quarter, Clayton was just 1-of-5 for two points. Yet he finished with nine and that first ca-

reer game-winning shot.

"He did not have a traditional Cory Clayton game," Gedeon said. "He's our second-leading scorer, our most experienced player and we expect big things out of him. He definitely

struggled there a little bit."

"I told him going into the fourth quarter, 'Are you ready now?' He said, 'Yes, I'm ready.'

The Little Giants were clearly ready on defense after Clayton's jumper gave them a 57-56 lead. Croudup poked the ball loose and forced a turnover to seal the victory.

"[Turnovers] were crucial, very crucial down the stretch," said Clayton, whose team forced 18 turnovers. "They have some really good shooters. So if they can get a wide-open shot, there's a good chance of it going in."

In the first quarter, Croudup scored 14 of his team's first 19 points and gave the Giants an eight-point cushion. He finished with a game-high 24 points and 10 rebounds.

"Ryan was on fire," Gedeon said. "We're seeing now what we saw out of him this summer. Ryan's a very talented athlete, a scorer. He works them outside, inside, off the dribble. You can tell he's got his basketball legs with him now, and his confidence."

"He's making some big-time plays — defensively, off the glass, in transition. We've seen him do that before, but now we're seeing him do that in games."

But Croudup wasn't Gedeon's only major contributor this game.

"Everybody came in and gave us something positive," Gedeon said. "Paul Hershey's block is a big play, as well as Jordan's assists and Kirt's pull-up 3. It allowed us to get right back in this thing."

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High School Boys

Fremont Ross 57, Willard 56

WILLARD — Jordan Barnett 2-0-5, Sylvest Nino 3-0-8, Matt Steinmetz 1-0-2, Kory Phillips 1-0-2, Kevin Deidrick 4-2-10, Darrien Douglas 5-7-20, Jake Buss 4-1-9. Totals 20-10-56.

ROSS — Kirt Munson 3-0-8, Paul Hershey 1-0-3, Cory Clayton 4-0-9, Ryan Croudup 10-2-24, Devin Johnson 3-1-7, Ryan Ottney 2-0-4, Jordan Jones 1-0-2. Totals 23-3-57.

Willard 13 15 14 14 — 56

Ross 22 11 4 20 — 57

Rebounds: Willard 23 (Deidrick 9), Ross 19 (Croudup 10).

Turnovers: Willard 18, Ross 13.

JV Score: Ross 61, Willard 51.

HIGH SCHOOL BASKETBALL

Thin Ross team falls to Blue Streaks

By VINCE GUERRIERI
Sports Editor

SANDUSKY — During Friday's Greater Buckeye Conference matchup against Fremont Ross, the Blue Streaks committed 18 turnovers — all but four unforced.

Three times, they got whistled for lane violations during Little Giant free throws.

But ultimately, their speed, height and depth overcame any mental mistakes they made, pulling out a 64-55 win.

"The good Lord blessed us with a win," said first-year Blue streaks coach Steve Keller.

Ross coach Mark Gedeon was very pleased by the heart his boys displayed during the latest install-

ment of a bitter rivalry.

"I thought our kids had a great effort against a more athletic and taller team," Gedeon said.

Ross (4-11, 1-6 GBC), already facing a short bench due to the absence of Antwan Spencer and Ryan Ottney, were further wounded Friday night. Spencer and Ottney were out due to season-ending injuries, and Phillip Miller and Paul Hershey were each taken to the hospital for stitches after getting injured on the court.

For Ross, the game belonged to Cory Clayton. The senior guard had a career-best 28 points, including scoring 11 of the Little Giants' first 15 points in the game.

"Cory was dynamite tonight," Gedeon said.

The Blue Streaks (10-6, 5-3) started to pull away at the end of the third when Cole Prophet hit a three to give Sandusky a 39-38 lead. From there, the Streaks opened a 43-39 lead, but the Little Giants fought back to tie it up at 45, and a three-point play by Ryan Croudup gave the lead back to the Little Giants.

With 3:52 left, Kirt Munson went to the line and hit the first free throw to tie the game at 49. He missed the second, but got a reprieve after a Sandusky lane violation and made it to give Ross a 50-49 lead.

But baskets by Cornelius Hall and Diamond McKinney put Sandusky back up, 55-54. Ross closed that gap to one, 55-54, but baskets by Hull and Kirt Munson gave the Streaks a margin they would not lose.

The Streaks held a four-point lead after the first period, 11-7, but Clayton pulled down two defensive rebounds and converted them both into scores to tie the game at 12. However, the lead was short-lived, as Prophet tied the game at 18. The Little Giants managed to take a 22-20 lead into the locker room for an extended halftime, as the Blue Streaks honored their junior high basketball teams.

In the third, the Little Giants committed two early turnovers before a Johnson jumper. At one point in the third period, Johnson — who finished with nine points — was the only player other than Clayton and Croudup to score. Johnson and Kirt Munson, who had four points, were the only other Little Giants to get into the scoring column.

The Little Giants shot exceedingly well from the foul line, going 17 of 23 from the charity stripe, but Sandusky ruled the game with second-chance points.

"We could not match up with them consistently on the glass," Gedeon said.

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CLAYTON

High School Boys

Sandusky 64, Ross 55

ROSS — Kirt Munson 1-2-4; Cory Clayton 9-8-28; Ryan Croudup 5-4-14; Devin Johnson 3-3-9.

SANDUSKY — Erik Jackson 1-1-3; Cornelius Hall 2-0-4; John Staugh 5-0-10; Kirt Munson 10-6-26; Cole Prophet 4-6-15; Nathan Williams 2-1-5.

Ross	7	15	16	17	— 55
Sandusky	11	9	19	25	— 64

3-point goals: Ross 2 (Clayton 2); Sandusky 2 (Prophet 2)

Rebounds: Ross 19 (Johnson 8); Sandusky 27 (Williams 9)

Turnovers: Ross 19; Sandusky 16

Records: Ross 4-11 (1-6); Sandusky 10-6 (5-3)

JV Score: Sandusky 60, Ross 41

Hard work does pay off

By KEVIN YANIK
Staff Writer

Fremont Ross senior Devin Johnson wasn't sure he was good enough to make Mark Gedeon's team this season.

Johnson sat the bench most of his freshman year, and spent the last two seasons cheering on the Little Giants from the stands at the Purple Pit.

"He used to come all the time to our open gyms when he was a younger kid, so I think there might have been a concern there he might fall short," Gedeon said.

But Johnson, a first-team all-state running back this season, weighed all of 180 pounds back then. He stood around 5-foot-9.

Pretty solid, right? Still, Johnson didn't think he was varsity material.

Since his sophomore year, though, Johnson has grown a few inches, and he's now a 205-pound block of muscle. Ross seniors Antwone Spencer and Cory Clayton witnessed Johnson's growth over the years, so they, at least, tried to convince him to try out.

Fortunately for the Little Giants, he did.

"Athletically, he's really filled out," Gedeon said. "He's a man now, and he's just chiseled. He's a hard worker; he definitely wants to be the best. It's not easy to come in and do the game of basketball when you haven't been taught, so I'm very pleased with him so far."

Gedeon is so pleased with his progress, in fact, that Johnson has started at forward over the past couple of weeks. He's among the team's leading rebounders, as well, and he's someone who's willing to drive hard to the basket for easy points.

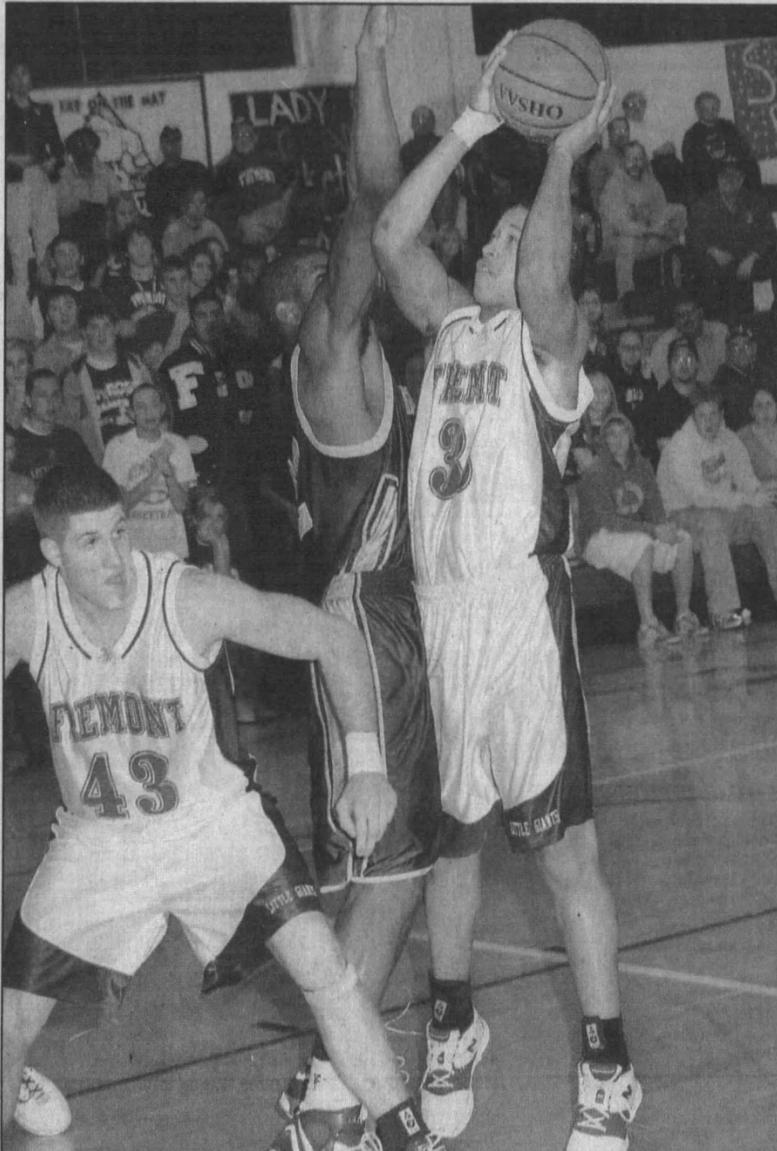
"Somebody needs to get the ball down in the paint," Clayton said. "Devin's good at getting fouled, and getting the [three-point play]."

The only three-point plays Johnson really made before this season came at the Fremont Recreation Complex, where he played some 5-on-5 with friends.

Still, none of that was too serious, Johnson said. It certainly wasn't high school varsity basketball.

"I like playing basketball and stuff, but I just always had a thought that I would be better off playing on my own," he said. "I never thought I would play basketball again as a senior and a starter."

Johnson didn't make any starts early this season. For he was still learning Gedeon's coaching schemes in November and De-



Doug Hise/News-Messenger correspondent

ROSS'S DEVIN JOHNSON puts up a shot against Whitmer's Kevin Koger during a game in December. Ryan Ottney is to left.

ember, and overcoming a grueling 11-game football season.

"[My] schemes can be pretty complex," Gedeon said. "There's a lot of running, there's a lot of rules and it takes a lot of repetition and communication."

"At the same time, you have to get your basketball legs. For all of our football players, it takes awhile to get used to the hard-

wood as opposed to the turf."

Johnson eventually adjusted to basketball, showed promise off the bench and played more minutes as this season's progressed.

The Little Giants have progressed lately, as well, with him in the lineup. They won three times in a five-game stretch to wrap up January.

"He's come a long way," Clayton said of Johnson. "His freshman year, he really didn't play much. I don't know if it's because the coaches didn't know what he could do, but he went from hardly playing at all to starting the last few games."

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Ross sweeps Napoleon

By KEVIN YANIK
Staff Writer

Fremont Ross senior Cory Clayton stood outside his locker room Thursday night with a large pizza in-hand as he chatted with reporters.

By the interview's end, Clayton was down a few slices.

"Man, I'm not going to have any left," he said after a couple of teammates and assistant coach Chuck Lindsey snuck a slice from his stash.

Fortunately for Clayton, he escaped the interview with a postgame meal left to devour after leading the Little Giants to a 60-55 Greater Buckeye Conference win against Napoleon. The Little Giants have beaten the Wildcats both times this year — the only league opponent Ross has defeated.

Clayton nailed a couple of 3-pointers in the first quarter to help stake Ross to an early lead, and he made 6-of-9 free throws in the fourth to seal his team's fifth win.

In between, though, the Little Giants let a 13-point advantage slip away. They went scoreless over the first five-plus minutes of the third, and actually fell behind, 34-32, on Wildcats sophomore Joel Hunter's layup.

"It was very important for us to come out and win the third quarter," Ross coach Mark Gedeon said. "Especially that first three minutes, so we could put some doubt in their minds."

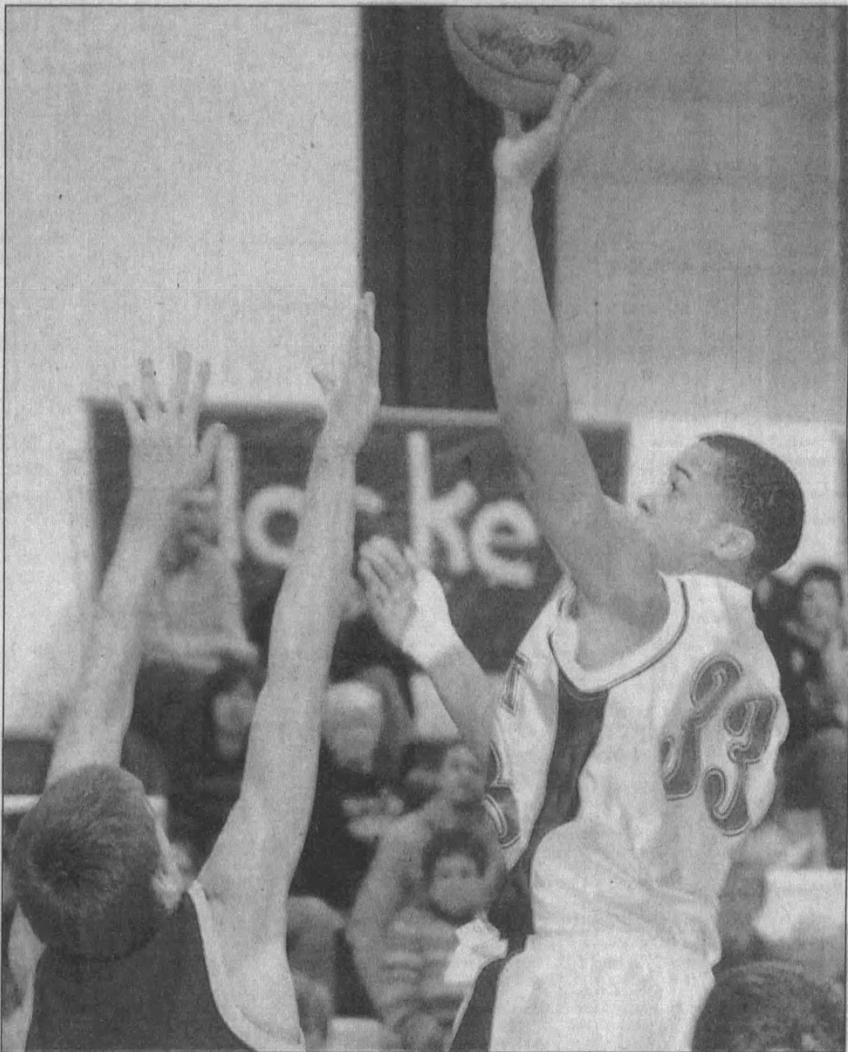
Napoleon coach Gregg Merrill told his team at halftime it needed to win the third quarter, as well, if it expected to pick up its seventh win.

"We might not be ahead of the team at the end of the third quarter — if we are, we are — but I said we need to win the third," he said. "Even after it, I said we haven't won anything yet. We had to keep playing smart."

They didn't, as Ross took advantage of six Napoleon turnovers and eventually tied the game in the fourth on junior Phillip Weickert's jumper.

The Little Giants fell behind again briefly, but senior Kirt Munson made a go-ahead 3-pointer at the 5:07 mark for a 44-43 lead. And they never relinquished that.

"I thought the 3-pointer he hit



Charlie Longton/News-Messenger

FREMONT ROSS' Devlin Johnson soars above his opponent as he set one in against Napoleon on Thursday night at home.

was a very big shot for us offensively to give us some momentum," Gedeon said.

The shot was also good for Munson's confidence after sitting much of the first half. A couple of turnovers and a few early fouls landed him there.

"He was very frustrated throughout the game," Gedeon said. "[He] got those quick fouls, which definitely kept him from being as aggressive as he is."

Munson agreed.

"Coach Lindsey just told me to keep my head up and focus on the game the whole time I was on the bench," he said.

And because Munson did, he was able to make a couple of game-changing steals and score 11 points in the fourth.

Senior Ryan Croudup added 12 points for the Little Giants, who allowed a career-high 27 points to sophomore Lee Hunter.

Still, those points ultimately weren't enough to prevent the

Little Giants from improving to 5-12 overall and 2-6 in the GBC. Hunter's career night didn't spoil Clayton's effort — or pizza — either.

"The first couple of games this season, I felt a little pressure," Clayton said. "Now, I just relax. Plus, it helps when you're getting fouls from 3-point range and those things."

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High School Boys

Fremont Ross 60, Napoleon 55

NAPOLEON — Lee Hunter 7-10-27, Joel Hunter 5-1-7, Ben Behnfeldt 2-0-4, Wes Hesterman 3-0-6, Ryan Fleck 4-3-11, Totals 23-14-55.

ROSS — Kirt Munson 4-2-11, Ryan Damman 1-0-2, Philip Miller 1-0-2, Cory Clayton 5-8-21, Ryan Croudup 5-2-12, Devin Johnson 3-2-8, Phillip Weickert 2-0-4, Totals 22-14-60.

Napoleon 11 11 17 16 — 55

Ross 18 14 3 20 — 60

3-point goals: Napoleon 3 (Lee Hunter 3); Ross 4 (Clayton 3, Munson 1)

Rebounds: Napoleon 16 (Hesterman 6); Ross 23 (Johnson, Croudup 4)

Turnovers: Napoleon 17, Ross 16

JV Score: Napoleon 49, Ross 45 OT

at 125 pounds.

Basketball

Boys

Ross-Rogers

The Ross boys overcame a severe height advantage to beat Toledo Rogers, 90-72, in a non-conference matchup Saturday afternoon.

"They were significantly

taller to say the least," said Ross coach Mark Gedeon, noting they had just one player under six feet tall on their roster. "Our kids came to battle, though. We actually outrebounded them."

The Little Giants (6-11) cleaned the boards, 33-24 against the Rams (2-15). Cory Clayton had a career best, pouring in 31 points. Clayton's feat was even more impressive consider-

ing that he sat most of the first period. Clayton injured his back Thursday, and fell on his back after getting undercut at the basket.

"He scored 31 points in a little more than 24 minutes," Gedeon said. "That's very efficient."

Clayton also pulled down 10 rebounds.

Ross rode a 30-12 second period to the win, after being tied at 18 after one period.

High School Boys

Ross 90, Rogers 72

ROGERS — Schuler 2-2-7; Landry 7-18; Haskins 0-2-2; Short 2-0-4; Bishop 9-0-22; Tabb 4-3-11; Heard 2-4-8.

ROSS — Kirt Munson 4-1-9; Ryan Damman 1-0-2; Paul Hershey 3-0-8; Jordan Jones 1-1-3; Cory Clayton 9-11-31; Ryan Croudup 4-2-10; Devin Johnson 4-4-12; Dontaviyon Fleming 1-1-3; Phillip Weickert 3-0-6; Steven Carnicom 2-0-4; Anthony Walker 1-0-2.

Rogers	18	12	22	20	—	72
Ross	18	30	20	22	—	90

Rebounds: Ross 33 (Clayton 10, Johnson 7), Rogers 24

Turnovers: Rogers 28, Ross 22

Records: Rogers 2-15; Ross 6-11

JV score: Rogers 62, Ross 57

Ross falls to Findlay

By THOMAS PASCH
News-Messenger correspondent

The Fremont Ross boys basketball team saw a seven-point lead disappear in the final minutes of play as they fell to Findlay 50-46 in Friday night's Greater Buckeye Conference matchup.

The Little Giants (6-12, 2-7 GBC) led 44-37 with just over three minutes to play.

"We played extremely well for three and a half quarters," Ross coach Mark Gedeon said. "We just made too many mistakes late in the game."

Ross' Paul Hershey ignited the jam-packed Purple Pit when he forcefully blocked Findlay guard Luke Kraus' shot out of play.

However, Hershey's block seemed to ignite Findlay (15-2, 9-0 GBC) more than Ross as the Trojans, starting from the inbound of that blocked shot, went on an 11-2 run that won the game.

Cory Clayton led the Little Giants with 14 points even though he saw a slight decrease in play due to foul trouble.

"Execution is what kept us in the lead all game," Clayton said. "But that short lack of execution was enough for them to take this one."

Clayton was charged with his third personal foul late in the second quarter and received his fourth with 2:22 remaining in the third.

"The fouls took away a little bit of my game," Clayton said. "I couldn't penetrate as much as I would have liked to."

Ross' Kirt Munson opened up Ross' game-high lead of seven with a basket and two free throws early in the fourth quarter. He finished with eight points, six from the foul line.

After Findlay's Kraus hit one of six Trojan three point goals, Clayton, with four fouls, hit one of two foul shots and scored a basket to put the lead back at seven with 3:39.



CLAYTON

See LITTLE GIANTS, B2

Little Giants lose to Trojans

Continued From B1

From that point on, a pair of Munson foul shots accounted for the remainder of Ross' scoring.

Findlay tied the game at 46 with 1:31 remaining and Kevin Krucki hit a driving lay-up with 45 seconds to go to score the eventual game-winner.

Krucki finished with a mere four points and Jesse Wohl led all scorers with 19 points and 10 rebounds.

"Late turnovers killed us," Gedeon said.

Ross committed only four fourth-quarter turnovers but all four led to Trojan baskets.

Krucki's basket gave the Trojans their first lead since 25-22 with 2:06 remaining in the second quarter.

There were a total of nine lead changes and seven ties for the game.

"We had a great effort tonight," Gedeon said. "We finally have our basketball legs under us rather than football."

Gedeon wants to take this great effort forward.

"We want to keep building," Gedeon said. "A good playoff run can cure a lot of struggles we have had this season."

"I really think we are peaking at the right time."

High School Boys

Findlay 50, Fremont Ross 46

FINDLAY — Luke Kraus, 3-2-10. Tyler Birchmeler, 4-0-11. Kevin Krucki, 2-0-4. Janek Schmidkunz, 0-1-1. Nathan Reinhardt, 1-0-2. Mac Cloud, 1-1-3. Jesse Wohl, 4-10-19.

ROSS — Kirt Munson, 1-6-8. Philip Miller, 0-2-2. Cory Clayton, 6-2-14. Ryan Croudup, 4-0-8. Devin Johnson, 3-0-6. Stephen Carnicom, 3-0-3. Ryan Damman, 2-1-5.

Findlay	8	17	7	18	— 50
Ross	12	15	10	9	— 46

3-point goals: Findlay 6 (Tyler Birchmeier 3, Luke Kraus 2, Jess Wohl); Ross 1 (Stephen Carnicom)

Rebounds: Findlay 28 (Jesse Wohl 10); Ross 23 (Devin Johnson 5)

Turnovers: Findlay 16; Ross 12

Records: Findlay 15-2 (9-0 GBC); Ross 6-12 (2-7 GBC)

JV Score: Findlay 63, Ross 45

HIGH SCHOOL BASKETBALL

Ross wins home finale

By MASON LOWRY
News-Messenger correspondent

Fremont Ross guard Cory Clayton admitted he was a little nervous going into his final home game at the Purple Pit on Tuesday night. The first shot that he hoisted towards the basket was an airball.

"I think I was a little too psyched," he said.

But as soon as his nerves calmed down, he was able to lead the Little Giants to a definitive 77-56 victory over Marion Harding in their Greater Buckeye Conference finale.

"Any time you come to the end of a season or the last game of a home career, you want to make sure that it's something for your guys to remember," said Little Giant coach Mark Gedeon. "It was nice to see the guys have fun out there, and that's what is really important."

The Presidents actually led 8-7 early following a Cody Hecker jumper, but the Giants embarked on a 9-1 run to jump out to 17-8 lead. The spurt was a microcosm of the rest of the game; everyone became involved with the offense, with four different players putting points on the board, including Kurt Munson, who scored four of his six points.

"We came out very aggressive. We tried to give the crowd what they wanted," he said.

And despite only putting up six points, he was able to dish out a game-high nine assists.

Kory Kirkpatrick ended the run with a bucket inside, but Clayton scored five of Ross' next seven points to push their lead to 13 points. Harding sophomore Isaiah Twine — who finished with 13 points and six boards — hit a jumper followed by two free

throws to get the Ross lead back into single digits, but the Little Giants did not allow them to get any closer as they took a 33-18 lead into halftime.

Ross was able to extend its lead in the third quarter behind their seniors, as Clayton, Paul Hershey, Phillip Miller, and Devin Johnson all scored to go up by 15. From there, it was the juniors' turn to shine. Ryan Croudup and Ryan Damman combined to score the Giants' last 14 third-quarter points. "I thought our seniors did a great job of setting the tone at the start of each half," Gedeon said. "And both Ryan and Ryan were very good as well."

All 12 of Croudup's points came in the third, while Damman collected one basket in each quarter to finish with eight points.

See LITTLE GIANTS, B2



Jonathon Bird/News-Messenger correspondent

FREMONT ROSS' Cory Clayton drives to the hoop between Marion Harding's Kyle Oney (left) and Nacara Robinson (right).

Little Giants look forward to end of season

Continued From B1

The five Fremont seniors made their final exit with 5:21 to go in the final stanza to a rousing ovation from the home crowd. And from there it was to coach Gedeon's young players to finish the job. Damman, Croudup, Phillip Weickert, Jordan Jones, Andrew House, Stephen Carnicom, Anthony Walker, and Don-taviyon Fleming all saw action in the last period, which Gedeon said could be crucial as the Giants enter tournament play.

"It's nice to not have to worry about sitting kids for quarters," he said. "This experience could definitely help us."

Clayton led the Giants with 14 points and six rebounds. Hershey finished with nine points, Miller had six points and four assists, and Johnson had eight points and six boards in their final home appearances. Seniors Ryan Ottney and Antwone Spencer missed the game due to injury.

Kirkpatrick led the Presidents with 17 points including four triples. Kyle Oney led the team with seven boards.

Fremont Ross is losing a senior class that is full of quality people, according to Gedeon. "Their all great kids," he said. "They have been very successful, they all

have grade point averages over 3.0 and they are good kids to be around. It's a very special group."

Their regular season finale will take place in Toledo against City League opponent St. Francis, who lost in their league semifinal game 67-59 to the William Buford-led Libbey on Tuesday. But the St. Francis game is a winnable one, according to Clayton.

"They are a lot like Rogers [another Toledo City League team Ross beat this year]," he said. "They have height. But if we can keep them out of the paint it is certainly a winnable game."

He also thinks that this momentum will carry over into the tournament. "We just have to keep it going because we (the seniors) want to go out with a long tourney run."

The Little Giants and the Presidents will meet again in the first round of tournament play at Willard next week. This scheduling fluke is reminiscent of the end of the 1998 season, where Ross faced Sandusky on a Friday night and saw them again the next Tuesday to open the tournament. Ross won both games.

"We hope that the same thing happens again," Gedeon said. "But we're going to have to earn it."

Fremont Ross 77, Marion Hard-ing 56

FREMONT ROSS — Kirt Munson 2-2-6, Ryan Damman 4-0-8, Paul Hershey 4-0-9, Phillip Miller 3-0-6, Cori Clayton 6-2-14, Ryan Croudup 6-0-12, Devin Johnson 3-2-8, Phillip Weickert 3-1-7, Stephen Carnicome 1-0-2, Anthony Walker 1-0-2, Dontaviyon Fleming 1-0-3.

MARION HARDING — Kory Kirkpatrick 6-1-17, Cody Hecker 1-1-3, Cory White 0-2-2, Isaiah Twine 4-5-13, Patrick Jones 0-1-1, Nacara Robinson 1-2-4, Kyle Oney 5-3-13, Skip Davis 1-1-3.

Harding 9 9 17 21 — 56

Fremont Ross 14 19 23 21 — 76

3-point goals: Marion Harding 4 (Kirkpatrick 4), Fremont Ross 2 (Hershey, Fleming)

Rebounds: Marion Harding 26 (Oney 7), Ross 26 (Clayton, Johnson 6)

Assists: Marion Harding 8 (Hecker 2), Fremont Ross 22 (Munson 9)

Ross closes season

By VINCE GUERRIERI

Sports Editor

TOLEDO - The Ross boys' basketball team got drubbed in their regular season finale, 69-44, by St. Francis.

But to Little Giants coach Mark Gedeon, it's still a teachable moment.

"It's definitely something we can use to prepare ourselves for tournament time," he said. "It's more physical, it's more intense and if we can't match our opponent's intensity, we won't win."

Gedeon was pleased with the game's start, as the Ross offense was able to execute early on, but cracks started to show with 5:06 left in the first period.

At that point, Phillip Miller was whistled for an intentional foul against the Knights (11-7), but Kevin Henry made just one of two foul shots, and the Little Giants (7-13) got a rebound and came down the floor down just 7-5.

But Ross couldn't hold on to the ball, turning it over on four straight possessions as St. Francis went on a 12-2 run - including three baskets by Nick Meinart -- to take a commanding lead, punctuated by a dunk by Marlon Price, who finished with 10 points.

"They had that run," Gedeon said. "That's where I thought we didn't match their intensity."

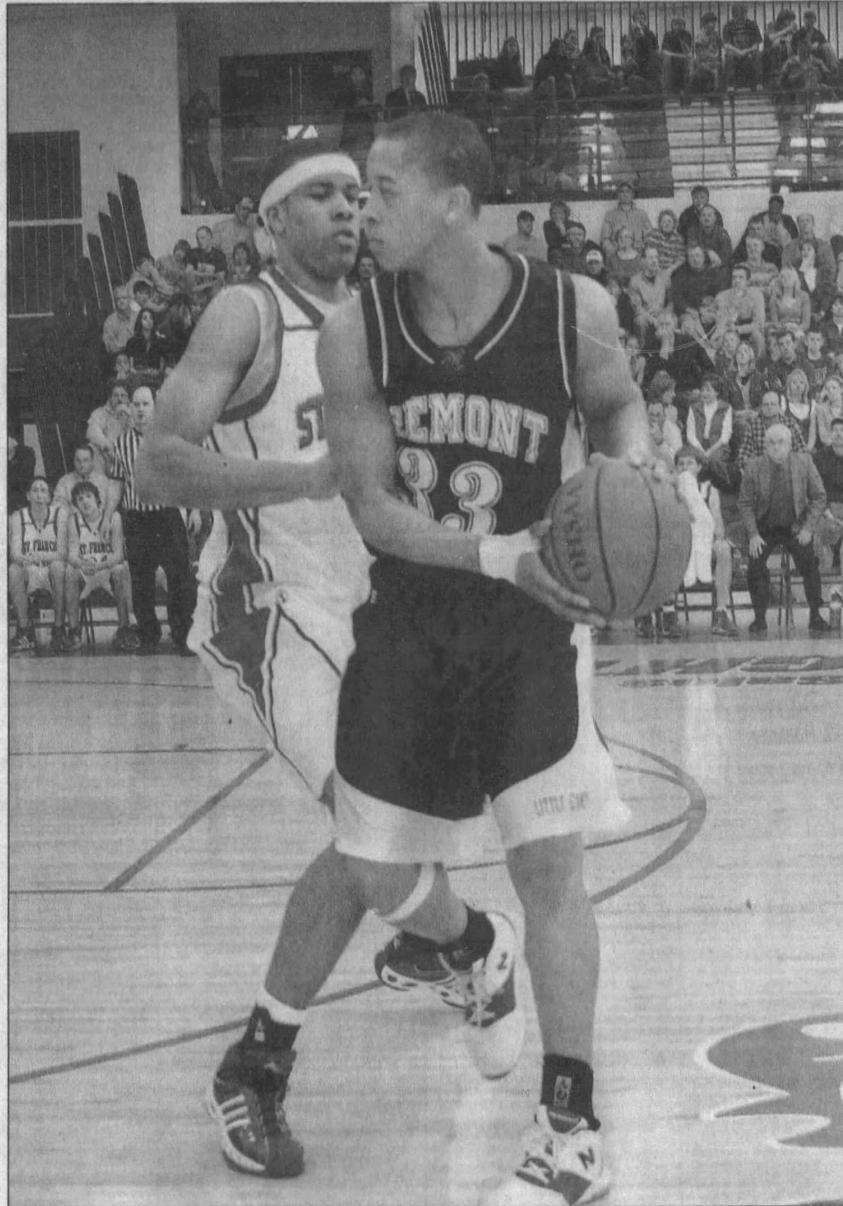
The Knights scored the first five points of the second period to open their lead to 24-9 before the Little Giants got a defensive stop and Ryan Damman knocked down a shot to stop the rally.

A steal and slam by Henry pulled St. Francis up to 30-14.

"I thought we played very physical defense," said Knights coach Nick Lowe. "We made a lot of shots in transition and that took them out of what they wanted to do."

Cory Clayton then was able to get loose, scoring the next three baskets for seven points to make it 30-16. Clayton led the Little Giants with 13 points. Ryan Croudup had eight, but nobody else scored more than five. Gedeon said poor shot selection was a factor in the Ross loss.

The Little Giants turned over the opening possession of



Lee Welch/News-Messenger correspondent

FREMONT ROSS' Devin Johnson attempts a pass against Toledo St. Francis' Kevin Henry

the third period, as the Knights widened their lead. Three St. Francis starters scored at least 10 points, led by Meinart's 18. Henry also came off the bench to score 12 points for the Knights.

St. Francis will begin their postseason run Wednesday, taking on Toledo Rogers. The

Little Giants beat the Rams previously, as did the Knights, but Lowe said his team needs to be mentally prepared.

Ross will rematch Marion Harding on Tuesday night at Willard. The Little Giants wallop the Presidents on Tuesday, 77-56, but Gedeon said that a win isn't a fore-

gone conclusion.

"It definitely is a lesson for our young players," he said of tonight's game, "To learn what is expected of them next week."

E-mail Vince Guerrieri at vguerrie@fremont.gannett.com

High School Boys

St. Francis 69, Ross 44

ROSS — Kirt Munson 1-3; Cory Clayton 6-13; Ryan Croudup 4-8; Devin Johnson 2-4; Ryan Damman 2-4; Paul Hershey 1-1-4; Phillip Weickert 2-5; Dontaviyon Fleming 1-2; Anthony Walker 0-1-1.

ST. FRANCIS — Eric Swint 0-1-1; Steven Vaculik 2-4; Jordan Frost 2-2-6; Kevin Henry 5-1-12; Alex Reicker 3-8; Nick Meinart 7-3-18; Marion Price 5-10; Matt Meinart 3-3-10.

Ross	7	13	11	13	— 44
St. Francis	19	23	13	14	— 69

3-point goals: Ross 2 (Clayton, Hershey); St. Francis 5 (Henry, Reicker 2, N. Meinart, M. Meinart)

Rebounds: Ross 20 (Clayton, Johnson 4); St. Francis 18 (M. Meinart, Vaculik 4)

Turnovers: Ross 15; St. Francis 11

Records: Ross 7-13; St. Francis 11-7

JV score: St. Francis 58, Ross 43

NORTHWEST ALL-DISTRICT TEAM

All-district teams announced as season comes to close

By KEVIN YANIK
Sports Writer

St. Joseph Central Catholic senior Megan Boukissen missed her team's final six games this season.

But she wasn't missing on the Division IV Northwest all-district first team, which was named Thursday.

"I think it's a big honor for first team, obviously," SJCC coach Gary Geller said. "That's a very hard thing to do because the northwest area covers so much. She's very deserving of anything that she gets because of her work ethic; she's worked very hard for four years."

So has Clyde senior Jenny Miller, who was named to the

Division II all-district first team. Miller and senior Stephanie Meyer, who received honorable mention, propelled the Fliers to a 16-5 season.

"Both of them had great careers, and they're great kids," Clyde coach John Cahill said. "We're awfully proud of both of them. They're both going on to play college basketball."

Margareta junior Cayla Keegan isn't headed to college yet, but she was named to the Division III all-district first team.

"Cayla had just a tremendous year — offensively and defensively," Margareta coach Tim Tucker said. "You couldn't ask for much more. The good is we have her back, and we can build



BOUKISSEN



MILLER

all-district third teams in Division II. Bender's teammates, junior Logan Tea and sophomore Alex Gillett, were given honorable mention.

"I think all three of them are very worthy," said Clyde coach Ryan Carter. "Our district is a very difficult one to get players in with the likes of some of the teams there."

Polar Bears senior Matt Zabel, who ranked third in the Sandusky Bay Conference in scoring (16.7 ppg), made his first team, too.

Nobody in the area was named to a second team, but Bellevue junior Mariah Strayer and Clyde senior Josh Bender were named to their respective

year."

Other boys who received honorable mention included Bellevue senior Jeff DeBlase, Margareta senior Jared Kromer, Gibsonburg juniors Jordan Kirwan and Matt Kreglow, Old Fort senior Cody Perry and junior Corey Witker and senior Austin Dean of Woodmore.

Other girls who received honorable mention were Margareta sophomore Brittany Morris, SJCC junior Hannah Nagy, Woodmore senior Danielle Lowry, Lakota senior Ali Park, Old Fort senior Emily Cleveland and Bettsville's Emily Johnson.

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