

1999 Division I District Tournament

Ross to meet Mansfield again

Clyde, Oak Harbor also play tonight

News-Messenger reports

Two years ago, Fremont Ross met Mansfield Senior in a historic district final at Bowling Green State University.

On March 8, 1997, the Little Giants earned a rare trip to regionals with a 73-68 overtime win over the Tygers, with Joell Heidelberg's 3-pointer with 1:55 left the key shot. Heidelberg's heroics were made possible by Mansfield guard Marquis Sykes, whose last-second 3-pointer forced overtime.

Sykes is back for tonight's 7:30 p.m. Division I district semifinal at Willard High School, and so is Heidelberg, making the guards the players to watch.

Sykes, a first team Division I

all-Northwest Ohio pick, averages 19 points per game for Mansfield, which easily won the Ohio Heartland Conference. Sykes is assisted by Jeremee Butts and Ali Thompson, better known to area football fans as the quarterback and wide receiver most responsible for ending Ross's regular season winning streak.

Mansfield, coached by Gregg Collins, easily beat Ashland 64-46 to win its sectional bracket at Willard.

At Ashland University, Clyde (14-8) faces Galion (11-11) in a Division II district semifinal at 6:30 p.m. After finishing sixth in the tough Northern Ohio League, Galion beat Lexington and Willard to win the Mansfield Madison sectional.

The Tigers are led by Andy Roesch, a 6-foot-5 senior who

averaged 17 ppg. during the regular season, as well as a NOL-best 11.5 rebounds per game. Galion also turned the ball over a league-low 11 times per game this season.

Clyde is led by Lucas Messer, a first team Division II selection who averages 19.6 ppg.

Sepp Newsom is coach Marc Marshall's assist man, racking up about seven per game, and Josh Langley pitches in 11.1 ppg.

At BGSU's Anderson Arena, Oak Harbor (18-4) takes on Elida (16-5) at 8:30 p.m. Senior guard Jarron Hinton leads the Bulldogs with 16 ppg., and post Andy Dooley chips in 15 ppg.

Elida, which plays in the tough Western Buckeye League, was respectable in losses to powerful Celina, Lima Senior and Ottawa-Glandorf.

Ross falls in OT

Mansfield wins semi

Thursday

Mansfield81
Ross77

Saturday

Mansfield vs. St. Francis, 11 a.m.
District final at BGSU

By SCOTT TAPPA
Sports editor

WILLARD — It wasn't a mirror image, but Thursday's Division I district semifinal between Fremont Ross and Mansfield Senior was eerily similar to the district final the teams played two years ago.

One big difference: This time the Tygers won, 81-77 in overtime.

After an exciting back-and-forth final 31 seconds of regulation left the two teams tied at 70-70, Mansfield out-executed Ross in the extra session and advanced to meet Toledo St. Francis, an upset winner over Toledo St. John's, in Saturday's district final.

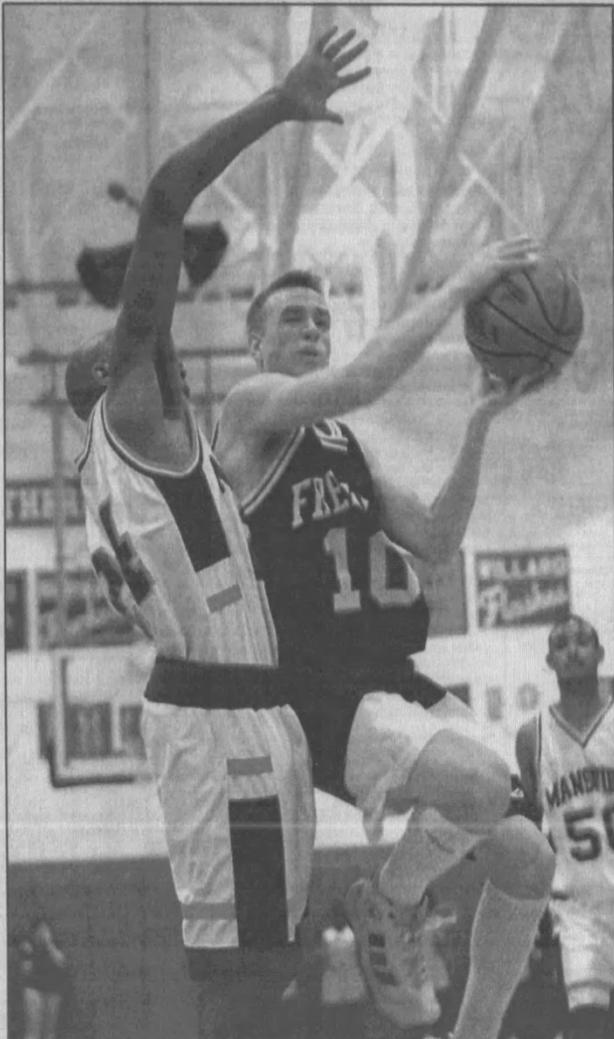
"In the overtime, they executed better than we did," said Ross coach Mark Gedeon, whose team finished 18-5. "Two years ago we scored on every single possession of overtime, and we shot foul shots a lot better two years ago."

The overtime was made possible by a frantic final 31 seconds of regulation. With 31 seconds remaining, Ross held a 68-66 lead, but missed two free throws.

Marquis Sykes, Mansfield's award-winning guard who led all scorers with 27 points, tied the game several seconds later on a tough bank shot from the right side of the lane. Ross then turned the ball over against the Tygers' full-court pressure, and after several missed shots and offensive rebounds, Sykes was fouled and went to the free throw line with eight seconds left.

Sykes made both free throws to give Mansfield a 70-68 lead.

"It was exciting," said Mansfield coach Gregg Collins. "but as soon as we got the ball back, I kept thinking, dang, I wish there was only four sec-



News-Messenger/Andrew Morrison

ROBB RITZMAN drives to the basket against Mansfield's Rick Minard during second half action in the Tygers' 81-77 overtime win Thursday at Willard.

onds left."

His instincts proved correct, as Joell Heidelberg raced the length of the court and hit a layup under pressure as time expired.

"I just wanted to push the ball up the court, get to the basket," said Heidelberg, who had 13 points in his last high school game. "It felt good when I hit that shot."

For Collins, it conjured up memories of the game two years ago, which Ross won at Bowling Green State University's Anderson Arena.

See ROSS, B3

St. Francis stuns No. 6 St. John's to reach district final

State University's Anderson Arena.

"The mindset is that St. John's is the No. 1 team in the state, and if somebody beats them, that's like somebody beating Duke," said Mansfield coach Gregg Collins.

The winner of Mansfield-St. Francis advances to meet the winner of Celina-Toledo Central Catholic in the regional semifinals.

— SCOTT TAPPA

