

Group narrows coaching choices

Ross may hire football coach in two weeks

By BRIAN SPIESS
Sports editor

Fremont Ross's next football coach will be either a current Little Giants assistant or a coach with varsity experience outside of Sandusky County, according to members of the committee asked to recommend a candidate to the

school board.

The committee, made up of a principal, athletic director, track coach, recreation director, booster and school administrator, will interview two candidates tonight in the committee's fourth meeting.

The News-Messenger talked to five of the six committee members and learned the following about the candidates for the position, which could be filled as soon as March 17:

■ Twelve finalists were picked to be interviewed from a group of

more than 30. Six have been interviewed already.

■ Five candidates are Ross assistants.

■ Seven are head coaches who did not coach within Sandusky County but have coached in the state of Ohio.

■ Coaching candidates represented both large and small schools.

"I think it's exciting," said Stan "Pete" Root Jr., vice president of the Ross boosters. "Each person you see, each one gives you a different perspective of what you're

looking for."

The job was vacated by Rex Radeloff, who announced in October that the 1996 season would be his last. The job was then posted and applications accepted up until Friday.

Committee members said they were pleased that the candidates appear excited about the prospect of making Ross — a school with a strong football tradition — into a state power.

"I want somebody to say, 'I want to come to Fremont Ross because this is one of the top pro-

grams in the state of Ohio,'" Fremont Recreation Director Larry Jackson said. "I'm looking for a lot of enthusiasm ... Someone who wants to win and will put us in the playoffs year after year."

"They are from all over the state, and that makes me feel good."

"Not one of them wants the status quo, they want to move forward and get better," Ross athletic director Art Bucci said.

See COMMITTEE, B5

Committee interviewing candidates for Ross football job

Continued from B1

"They want to continue to get better and be a power in the state."

Ross principal Joe Johnson said his first priority is to hire a teacher. Though Radeloff is expected to remain at Ross as a science teacher, retirements from other teachers will cre-

ate a teaching vacancy for the coach.

"I think the same characteristics that make a good teacher make a good coach," Johnson said.

At its first meeting on Feb. 13, the committee talked about a mission for selecting a coach and agreed on the 12 to be interviewed. At a second meet-

ing, the committee interviewed three candidates. Three more applicants were interviewed at the third meeting, and two will be interviewed tonight. Wednesday will conclude the interviewing process.

The committee will make a recommendation to the policy and finance committee, Bucci

said, and the school board could hire that person at its March 17 meeting.

The procedure has been enjoyable, the five members agreed, because everyone has had an equal say.

Besides Root, Jackson, Bucci and Johnson, the committee includes Fremont City Schools administrator Char-

les May and Ross track and cross country coach John Elder.

"I think the committee has worked well together. I don't think any one member has dominated the group," Johnson said.

"The committee developed its own questions, but people do their own scoring."

Two coaches get second interviews

Selection committee says narrowing choices for Ross football post has been difficult

By BRIAN SPIESS
Sports editor

Fremont Ross will pick a new football coach by the middle of next week, members of the selection committee said.

Two candidates will be interviewed for the second time Monday by the six-member committee, which initially talked with 12 coaches.

"We're down to two people," said Stan (Pete) Root Jr., vice president of Ross boosters.

The interviews are scheduled to start at 5:30 p.m. at the Fremont school administration offices on Cedar Street. The process is expected to take three hours, and coincides with a school board meeting the same night.

The committee could make a decision and ask the board to approve the nomination Monday night, but Ross principal Joe Johnson said it would probably be later in the week. The board

would then meet in a special session to vote on the coach.

"We haven't set a final conclusion. The process is still open," said Johnson, who emphasized that although only two were called for second interviews, no one has been ruled out.

The job became available at the end of the 1996 season, in which Rex Radeloff announced his resignation with a month of football still to play.

The school received more than

30 applications, and 12 candidates were granted interviews. Of those, five were current assistants at Ross.

Committee members chose not to reveal names of the two candidates to be interviewed Monday, but made these general statements:

"Pure enthusiasm, a love for the game, a love for the idea of coming here to Ross. Plus the fact that they both come from good programs," Root said.

"I think all our candidates have a great knowledge for the game," athletic director Art Bucci said. "A change. Change is good."

Said Larry Jackson, the Fremont Recreation Director: "It really hasn't been an easy process whittling it down, because there have been some very good candidates. I liked a lot of them, a lot of them would been very good here."

"It's a no lose situation, it really is."

Committee may pick coach today

Group talked with
2 candidates for
2nd time Monday

By BRIAN SPIESS
Sports editor

Two candidates who want to become Fremont Ross football coach were interviewed for a second time Monday night at the high school.

The six-member selection committee expects to make a recommendation to Superintendent Kent Watkins today, who would

likely contact board members before releasing the name to the public.

Members of the selection committee would neither confirm nor deny reports that the two candidates were Mike Eicher of Willoughby South and Dan Pallante of Youngstown Boardman.

"I'd rather not say until tomorrow," one candidate said as he left the North Street school after the interview.

The Little Giants have been in search of a coach since November, when Rex Radeloff coached his last game for Fremont Ross after announcing his resignation

ROSS FOOTBALL

with a month to play.

More than 30 coaches applied for the position, considered to be one of the state's most prestigious football jobs. The committee narrowed the list to 12 candidates who were each granted at least one interview before the committee asked two coaches to make a second interview.

Eicher is a 1981 Ross graduate who quarterbacked the Little Giants under head coach Pete Moore and then-assistant coach Radeloff. Eicher coached the

past three seasons at Willoughby South High School, a Division II school in Lake County, just east of Cleveland.

In the first two seasons under Eicher, the Rebels were 6-14. In 1996, Willoughby South won eight games, made the state playoffs and finished second in the Greater Cleveland Conference to Division I Euclid.

The final regular-season computer rankings saw the Rebels listed fourth in Division II, Region 6.

Eicher's three-year mark at South is 14-17. The Rebels have 438 boys in the high school, com-

pared to 665 at Ross.

Pallante has coached at least the past two seasons at Youngstown Boardman High School, located on the southern tip of Youngstown in Mahoning County.

The Division I school has 711 male students.

Calls to Youngstown Boardman athletic director Alan Burns and Willoughby South athletic director Frank Platzar were not returned as of press time.

Ross principal Joe Johnson said no coaching candidates, which included five Ross assistants, have been ruled out.

Fremont Ross ready to hire coach

By BRIAN SPIESS

Sports editor

Fremont Ross's newest football coach likely will be named this afternoon, superintendent Kent Watkins said Tuesday night.

The selection committee informed Watkins of its decision after meeting with two finalists Monday night at Ross High School.

"There was truly a 100 percent consensus on the person that was chosen," Ross principal Joe Johnson said. "We're not releasing the name, that is up to the superintendent of the board of education."

Throughout the selection process, school officials and committee members have not released the names of the coaching candidates. When contacted Monday, however, committee members did not confirm nor deny reports that the two finalists were Dan Pallante of Division I Youngstown Boardman and Mike Eicher of Willoughby South, a Division II school.

Watkins will phone the committee's No. 1 choice today, and then will inform Fremont's five school board members of his identity.

Board members Charlie Schwochow and Dan Lease said late Tuesday they had not been told who the new coach was.

It is uncertain whether a special board meeting will be called to officially hire the coach, or if he will be employed at the board's next scheduled meeting April 21.

The Little Giants have been in search of a coach since November, when Rex Radloff coached his last game for Fremont Ross after announcing his resignation with a month to play.

More than 30 coaches applied for the position, considered to be one of the state's most prestigious football jobs. The committee narrowed the list to 12 candidates who were each granted at least one interview before the committee brought two coaches back for second interviews Monday.

Little Giants have a new football leader

New coach at home in Fremont

By MICHAEL BOSI

Staff writer

The next Fremont Ross head football coach may not be a local resident, but he'll still feel right at home.

Fremont's tradition, rural character and diversity influenced 33-year-old Dan Pallante's decision to accept the position and become the 22nd head coach in Ross football history, pending approval by the Fremont City School Board.

"It reminds me of my hometown, which is Canfield," Pallante said Wednesday from his Youngstown residence shortly after Fremont City School Superintendent Kent Watkins officially announced Pallante would succeed Rex Radeloff, who retired last fall after 11 years

at the Ross helm.

"Canfield used to be more of a rural town with the same kind of mix, with an industry. (Fremont) reminds me of home," Pallante said.

That comfort, along with the sense of community commitment to the football program he perceived, leads Pallante to believe he can take the Little Giants, a 7-3 team for the last two years, to the next level of success.

Pallante will leave Youngstown Boardman High School after compiling a 22-21 record in four years, which included a trip

to the Division I state semifinals in 1995 as well as 3-7 struggles in 1993 and 1996.

The Boardman administration praised Pallante's efforts.

"I saw consistent improvement over all those years," assistant athletic director Jim Fox said. Pallante cited a need to avoid complacency as a reason he left Boardman, and said he wants to keep Ross from suffering the same type of ennui.

"Whenever you're a coach at a public school system, you're going to have a lot of up-and-down years," Pallante said. "You can't recruit guys, and if you go through a bad cycle, you cycle through the bad times."

"The foundation of the program has to be the kids and

Dan Pallante profile

Age: 33
Family: Wife, Gwen (25); son, Brady (13 mos.)

Education: Canfield High School; Youngstown State University (B.A.-social studies); Ashland University (M.A.-history).

Academic subject: Social studies.

Experience: Youngstown Boardman (Div. I) head coach (1993-96); Youngstown Boardman assistant coach (1984-92).

Notable: Youngstown Valley Playbook football coach of year (1995); Mahoning Valley Coaches Association Track Coach of the Year (1992); Boardman High Teacher of Year (1991).

believing in the school. I would say the basis of my program is the attempt to put forth the effort of winning. As long as the kids believe that, then you develop winners. I don't necessarily mean winning on the scoreboard, but developing responsible young

men."

"The thing I told the (hiring) committee is I think it's very evident that the people of Fremont work for a living. I know that if people in the community work

See PALLANTE EXCITED, B3

Assistant coaches felt excluded during selection process

By MICHAEL BOSI

Staff writer

Fremont Ross may have lost more football coaches than it gained with Wednesday's announcement that it hired Dan Pallante as its next head coach.

Upset that their loyalty to the program did not warrant a more favorable reward — promotion to the head coaching job — several Little Giants assistants were uncertain whether they would continue under Pallante.

"I'm disappointed. I'm very disappointed," said offensive coordinator Dan Fought during a pause in his baseball team's practice Wednesday.

Fought had learned only about an hour earlier that neither he nor veteran assistants Les Hull, Chuck Lindsey or Jim Kettner were hired, as the school opted for Pallante.

Pallante had been a head coach for four years at Youngstown Boardman.

"I'm disappointed because in the 13 years I've spent here I thought that I did everything in my power and in the power of the system to be that next football head coach," Fought said. "I stayed here for the reason I thought I could be the next man. I did everything within the system to prepare myself for that job, to be the right man for the job and this community and that's why I'm disappointed."

Pallante said no decisions have been made to keep or remove the current assistant staff and that he plans to meet them when he returns to Fremont next week.

"I just want to talk to as many guys as I can," Pallante said. "I'm familiar with (Ross foes) Sandusky and Findlay and Fostoria, but not that much. I'm really going to need to put a good staff together. The administration speaks very highly of the guys who have been there."

But at least two, Fought and Kettner, aren't waiting to find out what Pallante thinks of them. They have filed applications for other head coaching vacancies.

"I have no idea. Right now, at this stage of my career, I've got to explore all my options," Kettner, 43, said.

While Pallante's predecessor, Rex Radeloff, was not surprised

that the hiring committee chose a new, out-of-town face to fill the post, he said, "I'm disappointed for my staff members that were interested in the position. I'm sure any of the ones that applied were

capable of doing the job."

Hull, who has been a Ross coach for 24 years and teaches at the junior high school, said he thoroughly prepared himself for any decision. And when athletic director Art Bucci informed him Pallante was the man, Hull was quick to act.

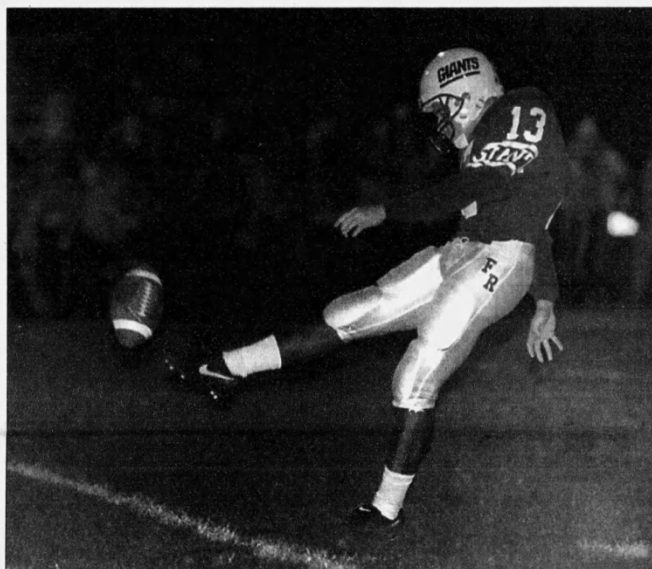
"I said, 'Art, I want to know where to mail my resume—Willoughby South (finalist Mike Eicher's school) or Youngstown Boardman,'" Hull said. "I had this all planned out once I found out I wasn't in the running anymore. I had to go to Plan 2. I had to sell myself to Dan Pallante."

In the wake of the on-going controversy surrounding the hiring practices for Ross's athletic directorship, the spotlight was on the process the selection committee followed.

"Because of all the controversy going on... sometimes we go outside (of the system) to avoid that," said Dr. Gayle Jackson, a community activist who has led efforts to have hiring practices more clearly stated.

"Those who were there sometimes say, 'How can I move up in the system?' What do I need to move up to the next step? They have rules and regulations, but it

See ASSISTANTS, B3



News-Messenger file photo/Andrew Morrison
MICHAEL HICKEY punts for Fremont Ross during an Oct. 4 loss to Fostoria. Hickey is one of the veteran players that new coach Dan Pallante will inherit when he takes over the Ross program.

Players, fans hope tradition is upheld

By MICHAEL BOSI

Staff writer

Fremont Ross's football players, coaches and fans have had five months to prepare for the shakeup that finally resonated through the program Wednesday when Dan Pallante became the school's 22nd head coach.

Now they'll see if the 33-year-old former Youngstown Boardman coach can uphold the tradition of Little Giants football.

"I'm sure the hiring committee made the right decision," said placekicker/punter Michael Hickey.

"We expect, of course, to carry on the tradition that Ross has of a great football program. We want to pick up where we ended last year, to keep winning."

The highlight of Pallante's career came two years ago, when he took Boardman to the Division I state semifinals. Ross fans are itching to a return to the playoffs. The Little Giants made the

postseason three times under Rex Radeloff, but lost in the first game each time.

"I think what (Pallante) will find more than anything is if he starts right off with a losing season, he'll hear all kinds of flack," said longtime Ross supporter Bob Wetzel.

"If he comes in and goes 50-50, I'll be happy. Rex didn't leave us with nothing, we've got some good kids coming back next year, so if he just carries on the tradition here, we should be in good shape."

In his interviews, Pallante stressed community involvement — getting his players into the community and getting fans involved with the team.

"(Fremont) has the old tradition... and it seems like a real diverse community that's going to be a great place to raise my son," Pallante said.

Could this be the end of the good ol' boy network in the foot-

ball ranks? Fans are braced for the team to take on a new identity.

"It's his program and hopefully all the decisions he makes will be the right decision," Ross Athletic Booster President Dick Ritzman said.

Pallante's appointment will initiate debate as to whether he was the most qualified candidate for the post.

"I think the program itself is strong enough that anybody coming in here will do a good job," offensive coordinator Dan Fought said. "I don't think it's a program that'll do any worse than 6-4. I wish the new guy the best."

For the assistant coaches who Pallante opts to retain, change is inevitable. Pallante will operate — on and off the field — with a different style than Rex Radeloff and the head coaches he served under, Tom Holman and Pete Moore.

See NEW COACH, B3

Pallante excited by GLL

Continued from B1

for a living, the kids are going to work on Friday nights," Pallante said.

"The one thing I'll guarantee for Fremont — I won't guarantee a win — but I know they'll be in top-notch shape and well-coached and in their own minds they'll expect to win."

Pallante also cited the Great Lakes League's competitive schedule as another benefit of coming to Ross. Boardman's schedule included Div. I powers Warren Harding, Lakewood St. Edward and Cleveland St. Ignatius.

"He sees that Fremont Ross can be a state power and he used the comment, 'I want to take us to the mountain,'" said Ross athletic director Art Bucchi. "He feels we have the talent to do that. He's got some great ideas about things."

A version of a Wing-T offense will be secondary to Pallante's Boardman trademarks: solid defense and a strong kicking game. Last year, Boardman averaged just 10.0 points and gave up 19.0. The Spartans lost their last six games, outscored 134-33, after starting the season 3-1.

Six of Boardman's opponents last year made the playoffs.

Pallante will look to improve on one of Ross's strongest traits from 1996, when the Little Giants allowed just 12.0 points per game.

"Good. Defense first? I like that," said assistant coach Les Hull, the first of the current staff to fax his resume to Pallante with the intention of remaining on the Little Giants staff.

Look for a 4-3 formation patterned after Bowling Green State University's defense, a change from the 4-4 concept that has been employed for the past two decades.

"I hate to be real specific yet because I want the offensive and defensive systems to be flexible to the kids," Pallante said.

Pallante has yet to make a decision on the future of any of the current assistant coaches, saying that he plans to meet with the staff next week. That is also when he plans to arrive in Fremont to begin molding the team.

"In my mind, the calendar for me it's late right now," Pallante said. "I think the kids have been without a head coach right now and that's very important. In my mind I would have started yesterday, the sooner the better. ..."

"Getting the kids organized and going and getting some direction, that's a real high priority of mine and I want those priorities known right away."

Coming ASAP may mean leaving his wife Gwen, 25, and son Brady, 13 months, back in Youngstown by themselves temporarily. Gwen Pallante is currently working toward her special education teaching certification at Youngstown State University.

Gwen Pallante offers her husband a connection to Northwest Ohio, as she hails from Bryan, and Dan Pallante said he is close to many coaches on the BGSSU staff.

Pallante's career record

YEAR	SEASON	PLAYOFFS
1993	3-7
1994	6-4*
1995	8-2
1996	3-7
TOTAL	20-20	2-1
* — Included victory over Cleveland St. Ignatius that ended Wildcats' 38-game winning streak.		
† — Lost to St. Ignatius, 18-14, in state semifinals.		

1996 results

Aug. 30	Sept. 6	Sept. 13
BOARDMAN33	Boardman13	MASSILON JACKSON0
Struthers0	Boardman0	Chaney41
		BOARDMAN7

Sept. 20	Sept. 27	Oct. 4	Oct. 11	Oct. 18	Oct. 25	Nov. 1
BOARDMAN14	St. Ignatius28	URSULINE20	Lakewood St. Edward17	AUSTINTOWN FITCH7	Mooney34	ALLIANCE28
Warren Harding9	BOARDMAN0	Boardman13	BOARDMAN7	Boardman (OT)0	BOARDMAN6	Boardman7
						(HOME TEAM IN CAPS)

Eicher will stay with Willoughby

By BRIAN SPIESS
Sports editor

Fremont Ross alumnus Mike Eicher will return to his Willoughby South football team in 1997 after finishing a close second for the Little Giants' coaching position.

Eicher, a 1981 graduate who played quarterback, was told Wednesday that Dan Pallante of Youngstown Boardman had been selected as the new coach.

"The Fremont Ross job was the only job I was really looking at," Eicher said. "It's definitely one of the top football jobs in the state of Ohio — tradition-wise, pride-wise. You have the community behind you and athletes that can compete on the state level."

"It would have been nice to be a part of that."

The selection committee reviewed more than 30 applications before contacting 12 candidates for interviews. Eicher and Pallante received second interviews Monday.

"I scored them 43-43," Fremont Recreation Director Larry Jackson said of Monday's interviews. "Both were excellent."

"If you ask me, the second interview won (Pallante) the job," Ross principal Joe Johnson said. "Not taking anything away from the other candidate ... it was a very tough decision. We feel that Dan is a better match for Ross."

Eicher was 15-17 in three seasons at Willoughby South, a Division II school in Lake County. The Rebels finished 8-3 in 1996 and made the playoffs. They lost in the regional semifinals to Chardon, 16-10.

"I was disappointed. It would have been a step up professionally, and closer to family," Eicher said. "I still have aspirations to be a Division I football coach."

"I wish (Pallante) luck, and maybe someday down the road something will work out."

New coach will make changes to system

Continued from B1

"He'll probably change discipline, change the offense," said Les Hull. "There will be a lot of changes that I really haven't been through as an assistant here because they haven't gone outside for a long, long time. There will be a lot of new stuff for me, and I'll have to be ready to accept change."

to accept change."

Although they will be learning new offensive and defensive schemes, Hickey said the team will work just as hard under Pallante as it did for Radeloff.

"We have to keep working hard," the junior said. "I'm sure those things will take time to get used to, but things will come and they fit into place."

Assistants seek answers

Continued from B1

needs to be written down so that people know exactly the road map. That cuts down people being disappointed."

Lindsey was one of two minorities who applied for the position. Three minorities, said Ross principal Joe Johnson, "expressed an interest."

"If I'm not a good coach," said Lindsey, "I want to be told. If I'm not a good teacher, I want to be told, I don't want to think it's just because I'm a minority."

Fought said he expected no special accommodations, but that the committee would have benefited by giving a current assistant more serious consideration.

"I don't like the way the process was," Fought said. "I'm not saying it's unfair, I just think they know me from being here for 13 years and they should have probably sat down and talked to the inside people a little bit longer just for the fact that we know the system and we knew the weaknesses and strengths."

"I think we deserved a better shake than what we got."

A lack of feedback from the committee upset Lindsey.

"I wasn't happy that other peo-

ple outside the system knew what was going on before people who applied for the job," said Lindsey, a junior high physical education teacher who said he currently has no intention of seeking another coaching job.

Lindsey said it became evident the next coach was going to be from outside Fremont before the final round of interviews.

"I think they were predetermined that they wanted to go outside the system after the Alex Clark-Art Bucchi situation," Lindsey said.

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FREMONT SCHWINN

Pallante fields assistant applications

By MICHAEL BOSI
Staff writer

All of the assistant coach positions in the Fremont Ross football program — from the seventh grade to the varsity level — are up for grabs, new head coach Dan Pallante said Sunday.

With the exception of offensive coordinator Dan Fought, who announced Friday that he accepted the head coach position at Benjamin Logan, all of the Little Giants assistants have indicated to Pallante an interest to remain with the program.

"They've been real open about stuff," Pallante said of the current assistant staff. "Right now I'm kind of doing the same thing they are — just talking about the

program and what it needs and doesn't need, what we might do, things like that. ...

"Some of those guys have been on the teaching staff and they're interested in staying in Fremont. I'm hoping by around the first week of May to have the entire staff together, and that will give us a good solid month of planning and doing things before the school year's out."

Pallante was in town last week to meet with the varsity assistants and he will return next weekend to talk to the lower level coaches.

The major change on the Little Giants assistant staff will be that Pallante will assume the offensive coordinator's job. The former Youngstown Boardman boss

said he will create a special teams coordinator, keep a defensive coordinator and redefine the assistant coach's duties.

"Some of the things will be different because there's a million ways to skin a cat," Pallante said.

Linebackers coach Del Enders has been conducting offseason workouts thus far.

Pallante said he does not foresee any of his Boardman assistants accompanying him to Fremont. One got the Boardman head job, two went on to other schools to become head coaches and three will remain in Youngstown.

Pallante, who would not comment on the fates of the individual assistants, is fielding applica-

tions from "all over the place," he said.

"I felt it was fair," Pallante said, "to be real professional about it, and they all had to send in a resume and cover letter and bring everything they could. I felt that was fairest way to do it. We're interviewing for every position seven through 12."

That process is likely to be the continuation of the facelift of Ross football that began when Rex Radeloff retired last fall.

"I think change is good if it's for the betterment. It's not good just for change," athletic director Art Bucci said. "I think we need change, especially since this guy wants to take us to another level. ... Maybe it's time to step aside and let some new blood in."

Winds of change

Fremont Ross football developments since head coach Rex Radeloff announced his retirement Oct. 10:

Oct. 10 — Radeloff announces the 1996 season would be his last after 11 years as head coach.

Nov. 1 — Radeloff coaches his final game, a 28-14 victory over Napoleon at Harmon Stadium.

March 19 — Dan Pallante officially hired as head coach.

March 24 — Pallante makes first Fremont public appearance.

April 11 — Offensive coordinator Dan Fought announces he will leave Ross for head football coach job at Benjamin Logan.

First week of May — Pallante's target date to name his assistant coaching staff.

Five Ross football coaches return

But veteran Hull will become an 8th-grade coach

By MICHAEL BOSI
Staff writer

Five Fremont Ross assistant football coaches will have their contracts renewed — but not the one with the most seniority — if new head coach Dan Pallante's recommendations are approved, he told The News-Messenger Friday night.

Les Hull, a 24-year Little Giants coaching veteran, is one

of three of last year's assistants, including Dan Fought and Mitch Curliss, who will relinquish his varsity headset.

Fought accepted the head coach job at Benjamin Logan last month, while Hull will now be one of two eighth-grade head coaches. Curliss is still considering an offer to be an eighth-grade assistant coach.

"I'll enjoy it," said Hull, who told The News-Messenger Wednesday he was shocked to hear of the change but has since realized the importance of Pallante's plan to build the junior high program.

Those coaches who are return-

ing to the varsity team, moves that are pending approval by the Board of Education next month, will have new job descriptions.

One new face on the varsity sidelines will be an old face in Fremont. Curt Gonya, a 1989 St. Joseph Central Catholic graduate, will be the special teams coordinator.

Pallante has recommended one other newcomer, the defensive coordinator, but will not release his name until he is officially hired June 16.

Pallante's two priorities: finding coaches who can interact well with the players and building his junior high program.

"The focus of my staff has always been youthful and energetic and relating well to the kids," Pallante said. "There's a real nice blend of experience and some youth."

Jim Kettner, last year's offensive line coach, will become the assistant head coach, whose duties will be top-heavy with public relations assignments.

"I think it's a new start," Kettner said. "We've got somebody that comes in and wants to do it his way, and that's fine."

Lindsey, who started coaching the Little Giants in 1977, is now

See LINDSEY, B2

Fremont Ross coaching staff

VARSITY

Head coach/offensive coordinator — Dan Pallante

Asst. head coach — Jim Kettner

Defense coordinator — To be announced

Linebackers/running backs — Del Enders

Offensive line/defensive line — Tony Ruiz, Joe Bajomas

Wide receivers/Defensive secondary — Chuck Lindsey

Special teams — Curt Gonya

■ Coaches for grades 7-9, B2

Lindsey becomes most senior coach

Continued from B1

the senior member of the staff. He goes from defensive coordinator to wide receivers and defensive secondary coach.

"I see that coach picked the people he thought was best for Fremont Ross, and he did move a couple of people here and there, and whatever he did, it was for the best for our program," Lindsey said.

"I coach because I like kids. Whoever has a title, it's a title. I'm there to make sure Fremont Ross is the best football team they can be."

Ross coaching staff

The coaches for the Ross freshman, eighth-grade and seventh-grade football teams.

FRESHMAN

Head coach — Joe Zam
Assistants — Jeff McNutt,
Grover Dowell, Troy Dull

EIGHTH GRADE

Head coaches — Mike
Gilbert, Les Hull
Assistants* — Curt Billow,
C.J. Burel, Dennis Tompkins

SEVENTH GRADE

Head coach — Greg Gallagher
Assistants* — Bill Isaman, Bill
Cranston

* — One assistant coach for
the eighth and seventh grade
teams will be named later.

While not revealing the new defensive coordinator, Pallante assured, "Chuck is an excellent football coach. He's very qualified, and they're going to make a great combination. I've got two very experienced defensive coaches."

Del Enders, who joined Ross last season and has overseen much of the off-season workouts, will remain as line-

backers coach and assume the running backs responsibilities, a job that formerly belonged to Hull.

Tony Ruiz and Joe Bajornas have been retained as offensive and defensive line coaches.

Gonya fits Pallante's ideal for a special teams coordinator. The 25-year-old Crimson Streaks and Youngstown State University alumnus has "the youth, the enthusiasm and relates real well with people," Pallante said. "I've always wanted a special teams coach who is fiery."

Pallante hired six new coaches into the system, including the freshman and junior high levels. He has yet to fill two assistant slots in junior high.

Head wrestling coach Grover Dowell will join Joe Zam's freshman team. Bill Isaman and Bill Cranston are new to the Greg Gallagher's seventh-grade squad, and Curt Billow, formerly an assistant with Enders at Gibsonburg, will work with the eighth-graders.

"We have a lot of work to do just because of everything being so different," Pallante said. "I just feel like right now I'm drowning, being out of town and selling the house, finishing a job and starting a job. And I'm glad to get the staff together because they're going to have to carry me for a few weeks."

The entire staff will meet for the first time this morning at 7 a.m.

Hull, whom several players directly attributed their successful performances to last season, said he anticipates maintaining a Friday night role as much as working with the eighth graders.

"I think it's going to be a plus," eighth grade head coach Mike Gilbert said. "I know Les is a good coach and he'll do a good job."

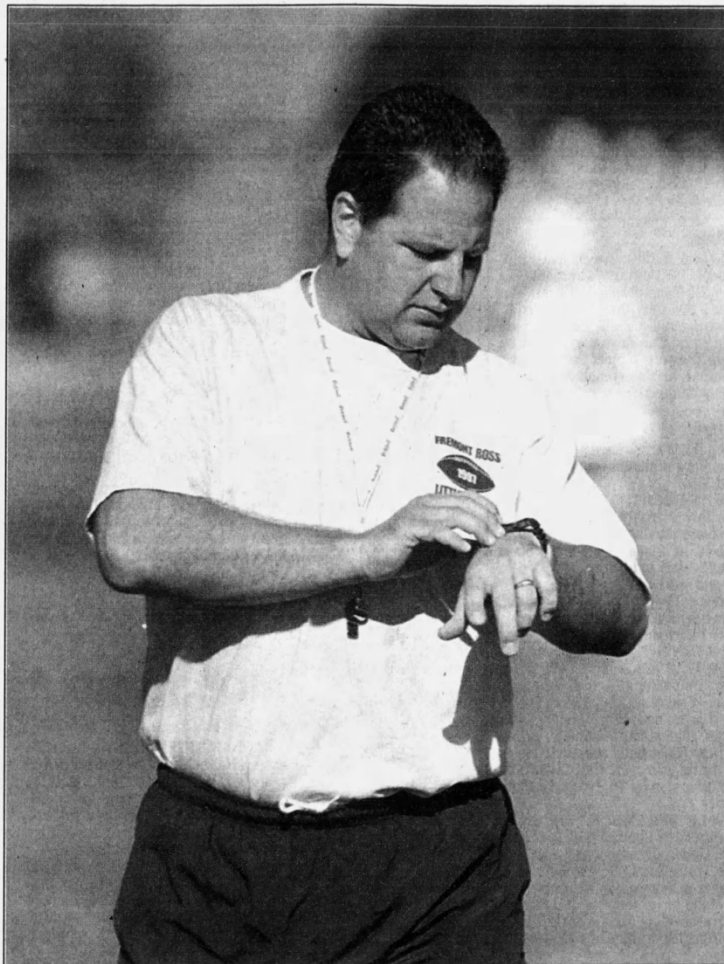
All the junior high assistants will have game night duties.

"I just want to be there and chat with the kids on the sidelines, and when they're down, try to pick them up and add and contribute a little bit," Hull said.

Curliss, 33, applied for the assistant coaching position, and is waiting to give Pallante a decision about his future.

"The one thing I don't want to do is start a controversy. What's important is the kids, and the kids need to believe in what they're doing," said Curliss, a 1982 Ross graduate.

Bottom line for Pallante: "I think Fremont is in the need of change."



DAN PALLANTE checks his watch during practice Aug. 6. The first-year coach will be without six of his players for the first two games of the season.

News-Messenger/Andrew Morrison

Six Ross gridgers suspended 2 games

Players involved in 2 separate entries

By **MICHAEL BOSI**
Staff writer

Six Fremont Ross football players, including three returning starters, have been suspended for the first two weeks of the season as a result of their involvement in separate juvenile incidents.

The suspensions of the two seniors, three juniors and one sophomore adhere to the 365-Day Code of Conduct, a contract between Ross High School and the Sandusky County Juvenile Court, and is the first major pre-season challenge for new head coach Dan Pallante.

"There was a total of four boys involved in an incident in January and two more involved in an incident in May. All six are participating in this program," Pallante said.

The February incident reportedly involved the burglary of a home and the May incident reportedly involved a break-in at a Fremont public school building.

The "combination varsity and junior varsity" players, Pallante said, are still participating in the team's pre-season workouts and are in contention for starting positions. But upon return from their suspensions — Sept. 12 at Toledo Bowsheer would be the first game day of eligibility — those players will have to fight again for positions.

Because the players involved are all under 18, their names are not being published.

None of the players had a prior juvenile record, which figured into the decision on the punishment.

"I've known those kids since seventh grade," athletic director Art Bucci said. "I've known all six since seventh grade and they're not bad kids."

Said Ross principal Joe Johnson: "The six students we're talking about, I think as young peo-

ple, made a mistake in judgment. This is the first major problem they've been in.

"I think like us in the adult world, they need to be looked at as people who made a mistake and probably deserve another chance."

Under the terms of the contract, which Ross administrators and juvenile court Judge Brad Culbert designed, the players are suspended for 20 percent of the season (two games in the football team's case). They must participate — with 100 percent attendance and a clean behavior record — in three sports and must serve 100 hours of community service.

"If they violate that contract, they violate their probation," Pallante said.

All Ross students participating in athletics or other extracurricular activities must sign the 365-Day Code of Conduct, which also details assumptions of risk, equipment contracts and participation fees. Parents, coaches, the athletic director and the principal also sign the contract.

This is the first incident involving disciplinary actions for Pallante, who was hired in March.

"I've never come across anything like this," he said. "The kids who are involved ... the way the judge feels about it is the kids' only shot is to be around positive role models. It's kind of a trial thing and we'll have to see how well it works."

"So far so good."

One concern, Bucci said, is how the suspensions will affect the way other schools, communities and teams view Fremont Ross.

"I don't know how much of this is out, not only in the community but outside the community," Bucci said.

Players get second chance under 365 Code of Conduct

By **MICHAEL BOSI**
Staff writer

The Friday night lights may have been turned off permanently for the six football players who recently received juvenile penalties if they had committed their crimes before the 365-Day Code of Conduct at Fremont Ross High School was implemented last year.

"They would have been done. (Under) the old way they would have been out. The courts would have done what they wanted to do," Ross athletic director Art Bucci said.

Today, they get a second chance.

Whether it's a deserved one could be a point of contention as

"I don't want to give anyone the impression that these kids are just given a hand slap and thrown back on a sports team. That's not the case at all."



CULBERT

— Judge Brad Culbert

opinions form, since the players' punishment seems — on the surface, at least — to be less harsh

than ones others have received for lesser wrongdoing.

For example, in cases when players fail to pass at least four classes, the basis for academic ineligibility, they cannot play until the next grading period — approximately nine weeks, which is close to an entire season. That is a rule outlined by the OHSAA.

Considering only the athletic portions of their punishments, the six Ross players in this particular case receive a two-game suspension for breaking a law.

"The major difference here is in the first case with eligibility, we fall under state standards of the Ohio High School Athletic

See **PLAYERS, B2**

Players must maintain grades

Continued from B1

Association," Ross principal Joe Johnson said. "That's nothing that either coach (Dan) Pallante, myself or the athletic director (can control)."

The policy also does not make clear which offenses will or will not fall into the school's jurisdiction. According to Johnson, "The school always has the right to say no, so it's done on an individual basis."

The judge who heard the juveniles' cases and approved the policy said the sentences they received amount to much more than free spots on the roster.

"I don't want to give anyone the impression that these kids are just given a hand slap and thrown back on a sports team. That's not the case at all," Judge Brad Culbert of the Sandusky County Juvenile Court said, stressing the 100 hours of community service, detention time and other restitution the offenders have already faced.

Plus, Culbert said, the offenders will be held to some higher standards than the rest of the players.

"These kids have to keep their grades up," Culbert said. "These kids have been consequences enough by the time they walk onto the sports field. If there are problems, it provides for more consequences, including a one-year suspension from sports."

While there appear to be loopholes in the new code of conduct, it has been touted as a way to keep juvenile offenders around school activities and other positive influences.

The 365-Day plan, which went into effect at the start of the 1996-97 school year, also gives the school a chance to have more input on the probation sentence juveniles receive.

"The major change between then and now has been a more formal arrangement via a student/parent/court/school contract, which we feel gives a school a little more latitude in what it feels should be done to the student," Johnson said.

That was not the case, Bucci said, about a year ago, when former football coach Rex Radeloff had to accept two players who were convicted as juveniles and told to play football as part of

their probation. In that case, the school was essentially court-ordered to place the players on the roster.

The seven-section code also details athletes' assumptions of risk, equipment contracts, usage fees and other eligibility standards.

Students involved in extracurricular activities must sign the contract at the start of the year. The coach, the athletic director, the principal, the judge and parents also sign the agreement.

Section 5 of the code of conduct is where the teamwork between the court and Ross becomes evident in cases where a serious offense has been committed. The last sentence reads, "Also, school will always work with the court in dealing with a student ... in regard to that student's eligibility."

Culbert agrees that a second chance is often juveniles' best chance.

"Generally," he said, "by the time they're ready for probation, they've served any detention or substantial time and they're coming back to the community and it's in the best interest of all the community to involve the kids in as much activity as possible."

Now that the 365-Day Code of Conduct has been put to work for the first time, Bucci and Pallante said they anticipate criticism, including questions regarding the incongruity of punishments created by the policy.

Members of the Ross community have been cautious in their reaction since this is the first time the policy has been implemented on this scale. But most are in favor of helping the offenders.

"A lot of people think kicking them off (the team) is the best thing but then you have no contact with them," said Sue Wolf, the senior-most head coach at Ross. "This way you still get a chance to get them back on the right path."

Stan Root, a parent who has seen five sons pass through the Little Giant ranks, said he hopes the kids realize their responsibilities.

"Do we not give anyone a chance?" Root asked. "Everybody always says somebody should get a chance, and I guess that's what I'm looking for. I hope these kids accept it as a challenge and they're sorry for what they did."



WOLF

"A lot of people think kicking them off is the best thing ... This way you still get a chance to get them back on the right path."

— Girls basketball coach Sue Wolf

Fremonters take final reps



News-Messenger/ Andrew Morrison

TYSON LIGGINS of Fremont Ross brings down Columbus Watterson's Christian Kuehl on the first series of play Friday night at Harmon Stadium.

Ross coach names Coonrod as starter

By **MICHAEL BOSI**
Staff writer

Fremont Ross head coach Dan Pallante has named junior Aaron Coonrod his starting quarterback for the 1997 football season, a spot Coonrod secured after three weeks of preseason competition with Wesley Esquivel and Dan Cobb.

The three-way battle was for quarterback. What Pallante was really looking for sounds more like a linebacker.

"We want that style of foot-

FOOTBALL

ball," Pallante said. "We want that smash-mouth football."

Showing Pallante's version of the Wing-T to Harmon Stadium fans for the first time, Coonrod connected on his only pass, a 31-yarder to a wide-open Keith Pert in the first half that set up Ross's first touchdown in Friday night's 14-10 win over Columbus Watterson.

"I play defense, too, and I just try to go out and help the

team as much as possible," said Coonrod, who had an interception and laid a punishing hit on the Eagles' Dave Moore as the starting safety.

Pallante had help making his decision this week. Esquivel, a senior unhappy with reduced playing time and the new offensive scheme, quit the team at Wednesday's practice.

Esquivel was not in uniform Friday but has said he'll return to the team.

"In the type of offense we run, I didn't think I was going

Football roundup

Lakota intercepted four passes and Oak Harbor's James Wagner's had a 70-yard touchdown run in separate scrimmages.

Roundup, B2

to like it this year so I quit," he said after the game. "But then I prayed about it and thought about it real hard and said, 'No

See ESQUIVEL, B2

Esquivel: Coonrod deserves job

Continued from B1

matter what, even if this offense ain't exactly for me, I still want to help the team and do the best I can.'

"So whatever the coach wants me to do, I'll do it."

Esquivel gave Coonrod his endorsement.

"He deserves it," Esquivel said. "He looked good tonight — he looked real good."

Cobb played the third quarter and completed a 15-yard pass. He directed Ross to its second touchdown with a 10-play, 70-yard drive that culminated with Josh Liggins' 3-yard run.

But it will be three more weeks until Ross will get any more production out of Liggins, as well as five other players who have been suspended two games for their parts in juvenile crimes.

Another, Brent Agnew, also had a strong game against Watterson. In second-string duty, Agnew rushed three times for 16 yards and also made a leaping catch.

"Josh and Brent are both two good running backs and they ran the ball with authority. They're going to do a great job this year," Pallante said.

J.R. Adkins, Brian Hill, Matt Martel and Jeremy Davis are the other players who are also suspended.

"I was pleased with the kids who were suspended who didn't get to

start," Pallante said. "Right now I think the situation's going real well. I think the kids who are suspended are supporting the kids who are playing, and I think the kids who are playing are really stepping up and working their tails off. ...

"I think right now we've made a bad situation good, and it's a tribute to the kids. I'm proud of them for that."

Bryson Sewell is one of the players who has taken advantage of the vacancies the suspensions have created on the defensive line. Sewell had one sack and nearly got a second. He also made consecutive tackles in the second quarter.

"I was at all the workouts this summer that's about it," the 6-foot, 248-pound right tackle said. "I just followed the program, I didn't do anything special."

LITTLE GIANTS NOTES: After Dennis Nesbit's 36-yard field goal put Watterson up 3-0, Ross took a 7-3 lead on Demetris Simms' 1-yard run on the last play of the first quarter. On the next play following Liggins' TD, Watterson scored as backup quarterback Mike Schultheis sprinted for a 70-yard score. ... Among the Ross players in street clothes were punter/kicker Michael Hickey, who sprained knee in a soccer game, and guard Aaron Root. ... Cobb did the punting and averaged 34.7 yards on three attempts. ... Of Ross's 40 plays, 35 were on the ground.

The air's not so apparent for Ross's quarterbacks

They're forced to learn new Wing-T philosophy

By MICHAEL BOSI
Staff writer

The ground war has begun.

And that has left the quarterbacks on the Fremont Ross football team wondering what that means for their future.

With new coach Dan Pallante implementing a Wing-T offense, it's time for Aaron Coonrod, this year's starting quarterback, to learn a new system.

"It was kind of tough at the beginning because everything was new and we had to learn everything else," Coonrod, a 6-foot-3, 185-pound junior said.

"It's a big turnaround," backup Wesley Esquivel said.

Playing second fiddle didn't sit well with Esquivel, who led the team with four touchdown passes while throwing for 202 yards in 1996. Two days before Ross's second scrimmage, a disappointed Esquivel left the team.

Even before his temporary hiatus — he has since come back to the team and vowed to "help the team and do the best I can" — Esquivel voiced his displeasure about Pallante's new system.

"I was kind of upset with that

part, I'm not going to beat around the bush about that," the senior said at Ross's media day. "But I've got to be a team player, and we're all here for the same reason — to go to the playoffs."

Esquivel has seniority over Coonrod, but Coonrod has taken to playing quarterback the same way he's approached his starting defensive role. Being a junior, he could establish himself for next year, too.

"I don't know," Coonrod shrugged after Ross beat Bishop Watterson last Friday. "I think me and Wes and Dan Cobb are all going to get playing time, and we're all going to get our chance to do our thing."

Cobb appeared to be third on the depth chart following the first scrimmage at Elyria but has since moved up.

"I was in a couple of games (last season). I played the whole second half of the Bedford game and a lot of the Sandusky game, so that was good experience for me," Cobb said at media day. "That got me used to it."

Ross games will likely be over very quickly this season with the

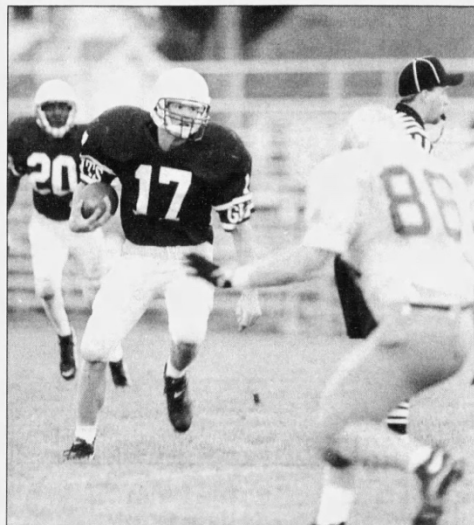
running game chewing up most of the game clock. But Pallante wants a reduction of passing, not complete elimination.

"I think we'll run the ball most of the time, but once in a while to keep them honest we'll pass the ball," Coonrod said.

Pallante has spent as much of training camp teaching his quarterbacks the Wing-T philosophy as he has teaching them how to execute it.

"That's one of the things we're having a little bit of trouble with," Pallante said. "It's not a passing offense in the sense of a dropback. It's a passing offense that attacks the flank and puts pressure on the perimeter with option and play-action passes. ...

"The way I've always defined it is we'll throw the ball, but we'll throw when we want to throw it."



News Messenger/Andrew Morrison
AARON COONROD (17), a junior, earned the No. 1 quarterback job with a strong exhibition game against Bishop Watterson last week.



**The Best Way
to Get Your
Class Ring**

Glass is half full for Morrisette

By **MICHAEL BOSI**

Staff writer

One-game wonder.

Not exactly a label any athlete wants.

Not Kenny Morrisette, anyway.

That was the case last season when, as a junior for the Fremont Ross football team, Morrisette appeared to set the tone for a strong season by scoring twice and rushing for 205 yards on opening night against Toledo Central Catholic.

Then, slowly but surely, Morrisette disappeared into obscurity. His production waned to the point that, in Ross's two biggest games of the season (against Sandusky and Fostoria), he never even touched the ball.

He finally scored his third touchdown of the season in a 63-0 blowout over Sylvania Northview. But even though Morrisette was second on the team with 430 yards, people couldn't help but wonder if he was a one-game wonder.

That won't happen this year, he has vowed.

"I'm a senior and I have to step up and make big plays," he said at Ross's media and picture day. "I'm going to be expected to play all four quarters this year. Last year, I'd just play one quarter behind Derek Thiessen. This year, I'm No. 1 and not the back-up anymore."

Ross's backfield will see

Morrisette starting at right half-back opposite Demetris Simms, with Brent Agnew at tailback.

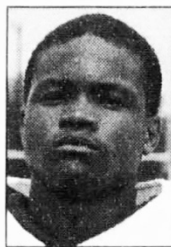
"I feel comfortable especially since I've got Demetris Simms

and Brent Agnew in the backfield with me,"

Morrisette said.

"That's like a dream to me.

I've got them in the backfield and together coach says we're the best backs he's



MORRISETTE

ever coached."

What head coach Dan Pallante wants is for all three to feel like No. 1s.

"What the kids have to understand is it's one of those things that one guy doesn't carry the rock, it's really shared," Pallante said. "The (opponent's) defense has to defend the entire field. It's an offense that the kids have to understand is a real team offense."

That wasn't the case last season, with Thiessen carrying for a Great Lakes League-high 955 yards and 17 touchdowns.

Morrisette says Ross has the right running backs mix to successfully execute the Wing-T.

"Since we've got the speed in the running backs to run the Wing-T," he said. "we'll be unstoppable when we run it against any team."

Some secondary thoughts

Youth abounds in Ross's backfield

By MICHAEL BOSI
Staff writer

Two heads may be better than one for the Fremont Ross football team as it assembles its defense for the upcoming season.

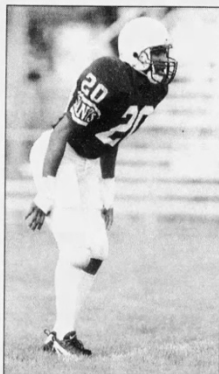
Especially in the secondary. And especially for the first two games.

That's where veteran defensive backs coach Chuck Lindsey and new defensive coordinator D.J. Ogilvie are banging heads to form a cohesive unit.

"(The secondary) is inexperienced but Chuck and D.J. are doing a great job with them," head coach Dan Pallante said. "It's one of those things that we're going to say they're inexperienced — the phrase I like using is they're young — but after a couple of scrimmages and a couple of games, you can't use that inexperience statement anymore."

Senior free safety Demetris Simms returns after making two interceptions and forcing two fumbles a year ago. Moving from linebacker, junior Aaron Coonrod is the other safety.

Junior Brent Agnew, who started at outside linebacker last year, joins the cornerbacks along with junior Jorel Heidelberg. Senior Brett



News-Messenger/Andrew Morrison
SENIOR DEMETRIS SIMMS is the veteran leader of Ross's defensive backfield.

Hufford, who has not played a defensive down since his sophomore year, will likely start while Agnew serves his two-game suspension.

"They're very talented," Pallante said. "Talent-wise, I don't see any reason why they can't be the best I've had as head coach."

"Coach Lindsey had a great secondary last year," Ogilvie said, alluding to a group that included Sam Root and Harry Liggins. "That'll be our most inexperienced (position), but I have great confidence in coach Lindsey that they'll do a fantas-

tic job."

The secondary's importance will be magnified this year, as Pallante introduces a 50-shade defense.

"It's an attack defense that tries to build a wall and make everything bounce outside so the linebackers and secondary support and make the plays," Pallante said.

With the down linemen, the Little Giants expect to field a five-man rotation, including returning senior starters Chris Shull (nose guard) and J.R. Adkins (defensive end). Aaron Root will start at tackle, and will be joined by Brian Hill when Hill completes his two-game suspension. Adkins is also suspended, which will give senior Keith Pert more playing time for the first two games.

"We'll play any of those guys and we'll have a good rotation that's fresh," Ogilvie said.

The top two returning tacklers solidify Ross's inside linebacker corps, with Josh Liggins, who had 40 solo tackles, and Jesse Sandoval (33) back. Eric Lindsey, who saw just 17 defensive downs last year, is likely to fill the void left when Liggins, another of the suspended juveniles, sits out.

Tyson Liggins will move from left end to outside linebacker, and the top candidate to be his partner is Bryson Sewell, a 6-foot, 248-pound junior. Henry Sewell and Andrew Diller will back up.

Pallante finds former Fostoria foe for assistant

By MICHAEL BOSI
Staff writer

When Dan Pallante was introduced to the Fremont Ross athletic boosters as the Little Giants' new head coach last spring, one of the most spirited moments of applause occurred when he told the club he had beaten Fostoria with Youngstown Boardman — not once but twice.

Since then, Pallante has claimed a piece of Fostoria as his own, making former Redmen assistant coach D.J. Ogilvie his defensive coordinator.

Ogilvie is one of two new faces — the other being special teams coordinator Curt Gonya — that Pallante selected when he restructured the team's coaching staff.

"From back at Fostoria, I knew this was a great, superior, excellent tradition," Ogilvie said. "The expectations are high and the community so far has been super supportive."

Ogilvie, 28, graduated from Youngstown Boardman and was a four-year letterman at Bowling Green State University. For the last two years, he was defensive coordinator at Salem High School.

Ogilvie and last year's defensive

coordinator-turned-secondary coach Chuck Lindsey are sharing duties in organizing the defense.

"He's got a great football mind, and we're always working together," Ogilvie said of Lindsey. "Dan's going to have the final say on everything, but so far we're on the same page with everything."

Gonya comes to the Little Giants to fill Pallante's wish to field strong special teams. Gonya, 26, is no stranger to Harmon Stadium, however. He graduated from St. Joe in 1990.

What will it be like for Gonya to root for the other Fremont team?

"Kids are kids," he said. "It doesn't change a thing. They're all from Fremont."

Gonya, who considers former St. Joe coach and current Hudson skipper Tom Narducci his most positive influence, said his reasons for coming to Ross are simple.

"We all have high expectations, we want to be coaches and we wouldn't be doing what we'd be doing if we didn't want to be the best," he said. "I'd just go back and sit on my hands and watch TV on Saturdays if I didn't want to be the best."

1996 Ross stats

Final regular season				
SCORING BY QUARTER				
Ross	68	88	70	47
Opponents	0	40	40	0

TEAM STATISTICS		
	Ross	Opp.
FIRST DOWNS	127	105
Rushing	91	70
Passing	30	25
Penalty	6	10
RUSHES	414	401
RUSHING YARDS	2,207	1,228
PASSING ATT. COMP.	52-120	49-134
Had intercepted	10	16
Passing pct.	43.3	36.6
Net yards	754	656
OFFENSIVE PLAYS	2,961	1,884
YARDS PER GAME	296.1	188.4
PUNTS	28	52
Yards/avg.	1,019-36.4	1,671-32.2
PUNT RETURNS	25	7
For TD	1	0
Yards/Avg.	305-12.2	66-9.4
KICKOFFS RETURNED	30	53
For TD	0	0
Yards/Avg.	499-16.6	602-11.4
PASSES INT.	16	10
Return yards	169	92
For TD	1	0
PENALTIES-YARDS	57-556	77-659
FUMBLES-LOST	32-20	22-13
TIME OF POS.	238:35	241:25

INDIVIDUAL STATISTICS

SCORING				
Player	TD	PAT	PAT2	FG
Derek Thiessen	17	0	0	0
Mike Hickey	0	27	0	0
Harry Liggins	7	0	1	0
Brett Hufford	3	0	0	0
Kenny Morrisette	3	0	0	0
Johnny Airdge	3	0	0	0
Brent Agnew	1	0	1	0
Dan Cobb	1	0	0	0
Terry Cisco	1	0	0	0
Scott Pearson	1	0	0	0
Kevin Mosser	1	0	0	0
Jeremy Hallinger	0	0	0	1

RUSHING				
Player	TD	Yds	Avg.	
Derek Thiessen	181	955	5.3	
Kenny Morrisette	61	430	7.1	
Brent Agnew	33	200	6.1	
Travis Bulger	38	167	4.4	
Harry Liggins	37	150	4.1	
Brian Milton	10	115	11.5	
Brett Hufford	2	95	47.5	
Johnny Airdge	9	62	6.9	
John Forstray	6	45	7.5	
Demetris Simms	1	14	14.0	
Weston Hineine	4	9	2.3	
Josh Liggins	1	5	5.0	
Eric Lindsey	2	5	2.5	
Mike Hickey	3	3	1.0	
Terry Cisco	6	0	0.0	
Aaron Coonrod	3	-1	-0.3	
Dan Cobb	4	-2	-0.5	
Sam Root	1	0	0.0	
Wesley Esquivel	15	-37	-2.5	

PASSING				
Player	Comp.	Att.	Yds.	Int.
Harry Liggins	38-82	485	8	3
Wes Esquivel	11-31	292	2	4
Johnny Airdge	1-3	70	0	1
Dan Cobb	2-3	17	0	0
Terry Cisco	0-1	0	0	0

RECEIVING				
Player	No.	Yds.	TD	
Brett Hufford	16	311	2	
Johnny Airdge	10	143	2	
Terry Cisco	9	84	1	
Kevin Mosser	8	108	1	
Harry Liggins	3	48	1	
Derek Thiessen	2	24	0	
Travis Bulger	1	14	0	
Scott Pearson	1	40	1	

FIELD GOALS				
Player	Made-Att.	Pct.		
Michael Hickey	7-11	640		

PUNTS				
Player	No.	Yds.	Avg.	
Michael Hickey	28	1,019	36.4	

Giants plan on flying high with Wing-T

By MICHAEL BOSI
Staff writer

Having the third-ranked offense among Great Lakes League football teams wasn't good enough for Fremont Ross to win a league title last year.

So don't expect it to be this year.

More running and less passing — created by a Wing-T offense — will be the way the Little Giants try to improve on the 295.3 yards per game they averaged in 1996, and when they finished second to Fostoria.

"The main thing about the Wing-T is there's only maybe seven plays that you can run out of it, but you can run out of 10 different formations," explained senior halfback Kenny Morrisette. "So you can give about 40 different looks out of the Wing-T and teams just don't understand it."

An offensive line anchored by returning guards J.R. Adkins and Chris Shull and returning tackle Frank Kaiser gives the Little Giants reason to believe the change will work.

While Adkins serves a two-game suspension as part of his juvenile probation, Aaron Root will step in.

Bryson Sewell will also work at tackle until Brian Hill, also suspended two games, returns.

Senior Henry Sewell will be replacing all-star center Greg Reinbolt.

"I'm real comfortable because there's a lot more experience (on the offensive line) coming back this year. They were young last year but now they're experi-

enced," said Wesley Esquivel, who will be one of Aaron Coonrod's backups at quarterback.

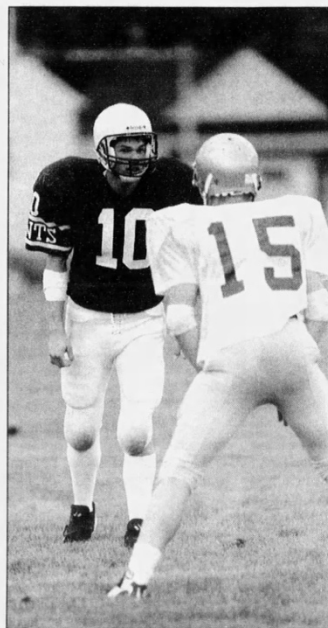
In the backfield, Brent Agnew has secured the starting tailback job, but won't be there until Week 3, when he returns from serving his suspension time. Two inexperienced backs, Eric Lindsey and Jesse Sandoval, are Agnew's backups.

Demetris Simms, who ran the ball only once in 1996, and Morrisette, the team's top returning rusher (430 yards) will line up at halfback.

Derek Thiessen, who has since graduated and gone to play at the University of Findlay, was a driving force behind Ross's offense in 1996. Thiessen rushed for a GLL-league high 955 yards and scored 17 touchdowns.

Brett Hufford returns as a split end, but wonders whether his role will be reduced as head coach Dan Pallante has eliminated most dropback passing plays.

"I'm just looking forward to when I get a chance," Hufford said. "When the receivers get a chance, we've got to catch the ball. I hope they throw it a little more than what's expected. But once gametime comes around, you do what's expected of you and make big plays when you get a chance."



BRETT HUFFORD (10), shown lining up against Bishop Watterson last Friday, may find himself in a reduced role this season. Ross will run out of the Wing-T, with more emphasis on the run than the pass.

News-Messenger/
Andrew Morrison

Pallante assured Hufford, as well as split end Jorel Heidelberg and tight ends Keith Pert and Tyson Liggins, that he will see the ball.

"In the past, if a team was a pure passing offense, they'd spread the ball around. Our passing, we'll either go to Brett or one of the backs, that's one thing," Pallante said. "I'll bet by the time the season's over, his catches are high in number."

Go Ross!

ATLAS

Industries, Inc.

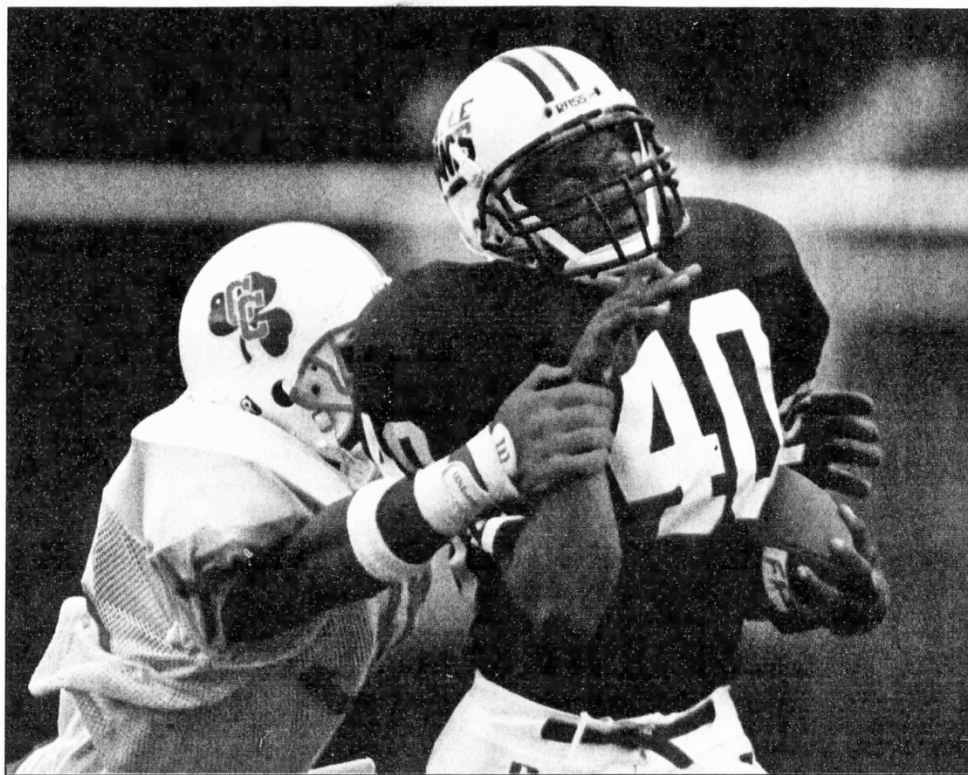
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Giants win Pallante's debut



KENNY MORRISETTE of Fremont Ross tries to elude Toledo Central Catholic's André Ragland in the first quarter Friday at Harmon Stadium.

News-Messenger/Andrew Morrison

Ross scores 34-12 win against Irish

By MICHAEL BOSI

Staff writer

So this is football, Dan Pallante Style.

Get out of my way. In your face. Twist your gut.

Sounds like a good cheeseburger.

Eat your heart out, this is the way it's going to be. Get used to it.

For those fans at a packed Harmon Stadium wondering what the next generation of Fremont Ross football would look like, Friday night was it. The Little Giants, backed by 115 rushing yards from Demetris Simms and stingy ball-control offense, beat Toledo Central Catholic, 34-12, to give the new coach pleasant memories of his Fremont coaching debut.

That's the way it's going to be.

"Yeah, pretty much," said Jesse Sandoval, who scored Ross's third touchdown in his first game at tailback.

As with any opening night, there were edges to the Little Giants that were a little rough — like several special teams booboos and 73 yards in penalties — but the end result, a victory in an always important non-league game, was what they were after.

"To win 34-12 and still make that many mistakes tells you

See ROSS, B3

Ross beats Central Catholic, 34-12

Continued from B1

you're a good team, but you've got to get a lot better," Pallante said.

This week's practices, however, will not be easy for either team. Central coach Tom Santoro said it's time for his team to "go back to Square 1 and evaluate the personnel decisions we made earlier."

Ross stymied Central's offense, allowing only 118 attack yards. The Fighting Irish were stuck in neutral after failing to score on an 11-play opening drive.

"Coach Pallante has done a fine job of building off the foundation left by Rex Radeloff and his staff. Rex and his people were longtime friends of mine," Santoro said. "We came up empty on the first drive and after that we couldn't get any rhythm going offensively, due in part to the fine defensive line play of the Ross front five."

Pallante gladly accepted the victory, but was critical of the Little Giants' mental mistakes (read: 13 penalties and allowing Central back within two touchdowns late in the game).

"I was pleased with our effort and I was pleased for the first game," Pallante said, "but I just wasn't pleased with the mental mistakes — all over the place."

Sandoval, Simms and Eric

Lindsey last season combined for a whopping three rushing attempts. Friday night, they along with Kenny Morrisette totaled 33 runs for 281 of Ross's 329 ground yards.

Simms had 112 yards in the first half, including a 46-yard touchdown score with 4:51 left in the half. He never got his chance to show his rushing skills last year, getting only one carry. This year, Pallante is taking full advantage of the Ross track relay star's potential.

"The first day when I came here and coach came here, he talked to me and said, 'I want you to run the ball,'" Simms said. "Right then and there, just like that, he looked at me from head to toe and said, 'I want you to run the ball.'"

"That's how I play offense."

Michael Hickey boomed a 43-yard field goal to give the Little Giants a 10-0 lead with 6:03 left.

Central, which had 32 yards of offense in the first 24 minutes, had little luck in stopping a relatively simple Ross attack in the first half. The Irish's only reprieve came on seven Ross penalties, which knocked the Little Giants back 40 yards.

Simms' run gave Ross a 16-0 lead, and when Sandoval punched in from a yard out with 4:26 left in the third quarter, the Fighting Irish were fighting from

a 22-point hole.

Eric Komorowski broke Ross's bid for a shutout with an 8-yard scamper with 57 seconds left in the quarter.

Sandwiched around André Raglund's 42-yard fumble return for a fourth-quarter touchdown were Lindsey's 8-yard TD run and a 39-yarder from Morrisette.

The Little Giants suffered few side effects — other than a lot of fatigued players — from having four starters serve the first game of their two-week suspensions.

"You've got kids in new positions and kids stepping up for the suspended players, and as a result we have a lot of kids playing both ways because of those four kids not starting," Pallante said. "It really took its toll on us. Our kids were really tired and usually they would have a break."

But they had enough energy to make the trek down the street to Ross and ring the school's bell.

It's part of a new tradition The New Coach has started.

LITTLE GIANTS NOTES: Hickey's field goal was three yards short of the school record, set by Tim Rakes in 1994 against Napoleon. Shawn McCarthy's 44-yarder against Napoleon in 1984 is the second longest. ... Chris Shull was injured in the second half and returned with his left foot heavily taped.

Ross 34, Tol. Central Cath. 12

At Harmon Stadium

Central Cath.	0	0	6	6	—	12
Ross	0	16	6	12	—	34

SCORING**Second quarter**

FR — Jesse Sandoval 2 run (Michael Hickey kick), 10:32.

FR — Michael Hickey 43 field goal, 6:03.

FR — Demetris Simms 46 run (Hickey kick blocked), 4:51.

Third quarter

FR — Sandoval 1 run (pass failed), 4:26.

TCC — Eric Komorowski 8 run (rush failed), 0:57.

Fourth quarter

FR — Eric Lindsey 8 run (Hickey kick blocked), 9:37.

TCC — André Raglund 42 fumble return (pass failed), 2:14.

FR — Kenny Morrisette 39 run (Hickey kick failed), 1:31.

TEAM STATISTICS

	TCC	FR
First downs	6	15
Third down conv.	2-11	3-10
Rushes-yards	38-94	45-329
Passing yards	24	0
Comp.-Att.-Int.	3-11-1	0-5-0
Punts-Avg.	5-19	3-38.6
Penalties-yards	4-40	13-73
Fumbles-lost	0-0	3-2

INDIVIDUAL STATISTICS

RUSHING — Central Catholic, Eric Komorowski 12-48, Rene'l Thompson 6-15, Sherron Peacock 1-1, Gary Tisdale 13-26, Marc DeMain 3-2, Joe Koelsh 1-1, Webster Jackson 2-1; Fremont Ross, Eric Lindsey 6-80, Demetris Simms 11-115, Jesse Sandoval 8-35, Kenny Morrisette 8-51, Aaron Coonrod 7-39, Weston Hineline 2-(-5), Jason Hull 2-12, Spencer Root 1-2.

PASSING — Central Catholic, Tisdale 1-3-9-1, DeMain 2-8-15-0; Fremont Ross, Coonrod 0-5-0-0.

RECEIVING — Central Catholic, Bill Boyle 1-6, Armondo Cortez 1-9, Komorowski 1-9.

INTERCEPTIONS — Fremont Ross, Tyson Liggins.

RECORDS — Central Catholic 0-1, Fremont Ross 1-0.

**BUCHTEL GRIFFINS (0-1)
at ROSS LITTLE GIANTS (1-0)**

When: Friday, 7:30 p.m.

Where: Harmon Stadium.

Radio: WFRO-FM 99.1, WFRO-AM 900 (Jerry Reidling, John Cullen and Jon Kerns).

Last week: Ross defeated Central Catholic, 34-12; Buchtel lost to St. Ignatius 36-6.

Buchtel players to watch: WR Will Scott, junior QB Corteze Macon, senior OT/DE Deon Hayes, senior TB Raymond McCray.

Ross injury update: RG/DT Chris Shull (sprained ankle) likely; SE/CB Brett Hufford (broken thumb) probable for defense.

Outlook: Buchtel was hammered by an aerial assault vs. St. Ignatius. That means nothing to Fremont Ross, which will put the Griffins to the test defending the option and Wing-T for the first time. Patience will be a virtue for Ross on both sides of the ball; Buchtel's offensive line averages 288 pounds, its defensive line goes 273. Scott, a transfer from St. Vincent-St. Mary has game-breaking speed. Ross coach Dan Pallante noted the Griffins, under new coach Claude Brown, are much more undisciplined than the squad that was a Division II state finalist under Tim Flossie last season. Patience and discipline will also help Ross clean up its illegal procedure penalties. The Little Giants are also looking to cut down on special teams miscues, which included a fumble and three failed PATs against Central last Friday. "For us to be successful," Pallante said, "I want to use special teams to break the game open, and we've got kids using special teams for rest."

Ross withstands Buchtel charge

Lindsey scores two touchdowns in second win

By MICHAEL BOSI
Staff writer

Fremont Ross football really has changed this year.

New coach. New key players. Very interesting.

New final outcome against Akron Buchtel.

Whoa, we've got something brewing here.

Friday night, Ross coach Dan Pallante apparently uncovered

whatever secret to beating the

Griffins that has been pretty well

kept the last two years:

Play a great first half, then cross your Little

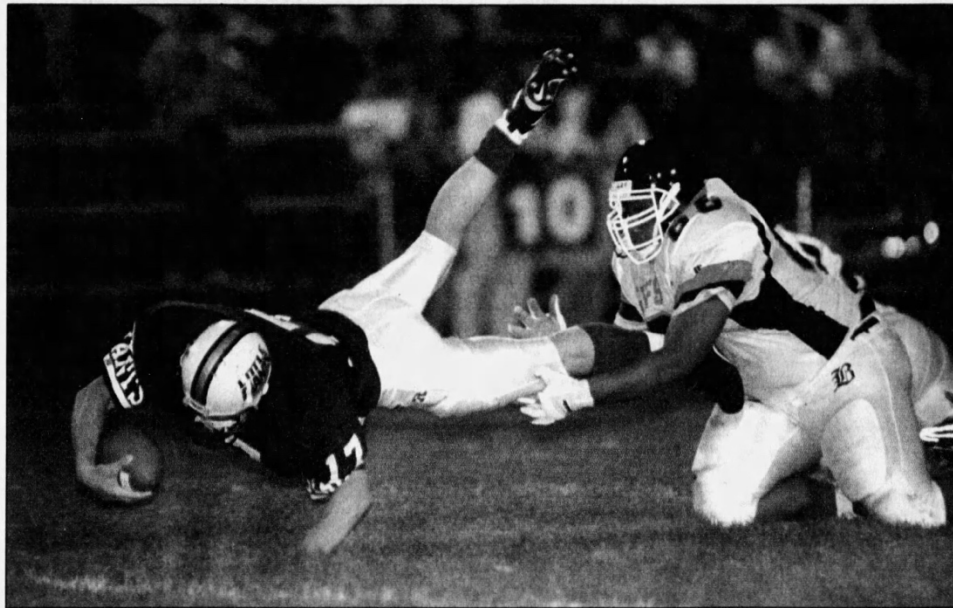
Fingers.

Before leaving Harmon Stadium with their second victory of the season, 21-19, Ross scored the first two touchdowns then weathered a second-half storm similar to the one the Griffins staged in their own victory last year.

"We still have a lot of work to do in the way of execution, but heart we have," Pallante beamed after his team won despite just 140 total offensive yards — all via the running game.

Things have changed for the Griffins this year, too.

A year ago, under Tim Flossie, they were Division II finalists. But gone now is Flossie. In is new head coach Claude Brown. Gone are the stars like running back Robert Foster and linebacker Mark Strickland. In is a younger squad still learning the



AARON COONROD of Fremont Ross dives for extra yardage as Akron Buchtel's Willie Johnson trips him up during the second quarter Friday at Harmon Stadium. Ross won 21-19 to improve to 2-0 under first-year coach Dan Pallante.

News-Messenger/Andrew Morrison

meaning of discipline.

And that has translated into being 57-25 in eight quarters of football.

"We're a young team this year," Brown said. "We lost some key kids to graduation and things like that, but we're a young football team. ... We're going to bounce back strong."

Ross can now hope they do. Losses in the last two years were

major reasons the Little Giants were on the outside looking in when it came to shopping for computer playoff points.

"Beating Akron Buchtel right now feels great," said Eric Lindsey, who scored two touchdowns and led Ross's running game with 89 yards. "It's a bit of heavy weight off our shoulders since we lost to them two years in a row, especially the way we did at

home."

In the first half, the Griffins looked nothing like the team that took on Fostoria in the Div. II championship game. Ross administered some shock therapy, taking a 14-0 lead on Jorel Heidelberg's 60-yard punt return. With some hard-hat defense from Jesse Sandoval, the Little Giants also dodged some bullets that Buchtel teams of the past likely

would have made Fremonters swallow.

The Little Giants took advantage of the second of two early breaks. Michael Hickey missed a 30-yard field goal attempt after the Griffins gave Ross the ball at their own 23. But on the next play, Buchtel quarterback Reggie Crook threw right into Tyson

See ROSS, B3

Ross tops Buchtel

Continued from B1

Liggins' numbers, the Ross senior's second interception of the season. Liggins returned the ball to the 1, and Eric Lindsey cashed in from there.

After Lindsey's touchdown run, Crook left the field with a twisted ankle, giving way to backup Corteze Macon. Macon finished with 53 yards on 7-for-16 passing but couldn't get Buchtel into the end zone even though it had the ball twice as long as Ross in the first 24 minutes.

Heidelberg's first career touchdown was entirely his own making. Fielding a Willie Johnson punt at his own 40-yard line, the 5-foot-9, 162-pound junior shed two tackles and raced past the visiting sideline with 5:36 left in the first half.

Pallante was critical of his special teams' play in last week's win over Central Catholic but said Friday night, "The special teams got much better."

Sandoval was responsible for

thwarting two Griffin drives. He stuffed Charles Beckett on a fourth-and-2 to end a 15-play, 66-yard drive, and later sacked Macon to spoil a drive that started on Ross's 10.

Ross has seen the driver's seat against Buchtel before. Last season, it led 7-3 after three quarters, only to give up the next 18 points.

Friday night, the Little Giants nearly suffered a repeat meltdown.

It was after Lindsey took a draw and streaked straight up the middle 59 yards, outracing Charles Beckett the last 30 yards to make it 21-0 that Buchtel — more precisely, Ramon Walker — made it a game by scoring twice in the next six minutes.

Walker, who had a game-high 160 yards on 11 carries, scored on runs of 96 and 28 yards to bring the Griffins, who missed both 2-point conversions, within 21-12. He capped his all-around (160 rushing yard) with a 15-yard tailback option pass to a wide-open

Liggins picks his spots

By MICHAEL BOSI
Staff writer

Tyson Liggins has not played an offensive down for Fremont Ross.

That hasn't stopped him from being wide open for passes.

Two games into the young season, Liggins already has two interceptions at middle linebacker, the second of which came Friday night as Ross beat Akron Buchtel, 21-19.

Eric Lindsey got the lion's share of the scoring accolades, with two touchdowns, but it was Liggins' first-quarter pick that helped give Ross the crucial first score.

And late in the fourth quarter, with Buchtel driving for survival, Liggins chased down quarterback Corteze Macon for a sack, ignit-

ing the Parents Night crowd at Harmon Stadium.

"Tyson played a great game," Lindsey said. "That interception at the beginning of the game, that really hyped us up, and that sack at the end, that almost sealed the deal for us."

The interceptions, this week on Reggie Crook and last week against Central Catholic's Gary Tisdale, have resulted in everything but touchdowns for Liggins. Each time he's gotten within five yards of the end zone.

"It's my pass drop. I'm just watching the quarterback, that's about it, and the line is yelling out, 'pass,' and stuff," said Liggins, who is learning a new position after playing left end last season.

Lyndon Hamilton with 7:46 left in the game.

A key sack by Liggins and a batted pass by Demetris Simms spelled the end of Buchtel's last-ditch attempt to complete a comeback.

For the last two weeks, Little

Giants' fans have wondered how a Ross team depleted by suspensions of four starters would fare. "Deep down inside, without those kids, I really wasn't sure," Pallante admitted.

Two games. Two victories. How's that for an answer?

Ross 21, Akron Buchtel 19

At Harmon Stadium

Akron Buchtel 0 0 12 7 — 19

Fremont Ross 14 0 7 0 — 21

SCORING

First quarter

FR — Eric Lindsey 1 run (Michael Hickey kick), 8:01.

FR — Jorel Heidelberg 60 punt return (Hickey kick), 5:36.

Third quarter

FR — Lindsey 59 run (Hickey kick), 10:29.

AB — Ramon Walker 96 run (pass failed), 10:05.

AB — Walker 28 run (rush failed), 4:06.

Fourth quarter

AB — Lyndon Hamilton 15 pass from Ramon Walker (Brandon Hayes kick), 7:46.

	AK	FR
First downs	13	5
Third-down eff.	3-11	4-9
Total yards	316	140
Rushes-yards	35-248	28-140
Passing yards	68	0
Comp.-Att.-Int.	8-18-1	0-2-0
Punts-Yards	3-88	4-133
Punt avg.	29.3	33.3
Penalties-yards	5-30	4-20
Fumbles-lost	2-1	1-1

INDIVIDUAL STATISTICS

RUSHING — Buchtel, Corteze Macon 9-(-25), Ramon Walker 11-160, Raymond McCray 9-98, Reggie Crook 1-3, Charles Beckett 5-12; Ross, Jesse Sandoval 2-2, Aaron Coonrod 7-9, Eric Lindsey 12-89, Kenny Morrisette 6-13, Demetris Simms 11-27.

PASSING — Buchtel, Macon 7-16-53-0, Crook 0-1-0-1, Walker 1-1-15-0; Ross, Coonrod 0-2-0-0.

RECEIVING — Buchtel, Lyndon Hamilton 2-26, William Scott 5-45, Rod Nash 1-(-3).

INTERCEPTIONS — Ross, Tyson Liggins.

MISSED FIELD GOALS — Hickey, 30.

RECORDS — Ross 2-0, Buchtel 0-2.

**ROSS LITTLE GIANTS (2-0)
at BOWSHER REBELS (1-1)**

When: Friday, 7:30 p.m.

Where: Toledo.

Radio: WFRO-AM 900 (Jerry Reiding/John Cullen).

Directions to Bowsher: Take Ohio Turnpike to Exit 4. Take Reynolds Road north to first light (Heatherdowns). Take a right onto Heatherdowns and proceed to the fourth light (Byrne Road). Take a right onto Byrne Road and at the next light, go left onto Glanzman Road, which takes you to the high school, which on the left.

Last week: Ross beat Akron Buchtel, 21-19; Bowsher beat Holland Springfield, 22-21.

Bowsher players to watch: TB/S Mark Triplett.

Ross injuries: QB/FS Aaron Coonrod (right wrist) will not play offense. HB Demetris Simms (shoulder) is day-to-day. OG/DT Chris Shull may not be available on offense.

You should know: There will be rest for the weary this week, as the Little Giants will receive the services of four key players, who have been serving suspensions the last two weeks. "I think we let Buchtel back in was because of fatigue," head coach Dan Pallante said. With J.R. Adkins (defensive end), Brian Hill (right offensive tackle), Josh Liggins (halfback/linebacker) and Brent Agnew (halfback/cornerback) back in the fold, some of Ross's injured starters will get a break. Dan Cobb and Wesley Esquivel will split time calling the signals. Bowsher is largely a one-man show, with Triplett at center stage, Pallante said.

Ross struggles, wins third game

Coach 'disgusted' with turnovers in 10-8 game

By JEFF KRAUS
News-Messenger correspondent

TOLEDO — The Fremont Ross Little Giants are becoming pretty good at overcoming adversity.

First, they had to adapt to a new head coach (Dan Pallante) and offensive system (the wing-T). Then they had to play with six players suspended for the first two games of the season.

If that wasn't enough, the Little Giants overcame five

turnovers, 60 yards in penalties and only 178 yards in total offense in a 10-8 road win over the pesky Rebels of Toledo Bowsher Friday night.

The Little Giants (3-0) had to fight for their lives against the Rebels, who struggled themselves. The Rebels could muster just 139 yards of offense and turned the ball over four times.

"I'm disgusted. You can't give the ball away like we did and win," Ross coach Dan Pallante said. "It was a lack of concentration. The mistakes will catch up to us and if we don't fix it we'll

Friday

Fremont Ross10
Toledo Bowsher8

Next week

Fremont Ross at Oregon Clay
7:30 p.m. Friday

get beat."

Ross and Bowsher combined for seven first-half turnovers.

On the game's initial series, Bowsher fumbled the ball and Ross recovered at the Rebel 39. The Little Giants committed two turnovers, however, and could not capitalize.

The comedy of errors contin-

ued. After a Bowsher punt, Jorel Heidelberg fielded the kick near midfield and raced untouched down the left sideline for an apparent Ross touchdown.

But hold the fort. The Little Giants were called for an illegal block and the score was negated. Ross proceeded to fumble the ball with Bowsher recovering on their own 33.

After a false start penalty moved the ball back to the 28, Rebel quarterback Chad Meyers was picked off by Tyson Liggins,

See HICKEY, B3

Hickey's field goal gives Ross two-point win

Continued from B1

who rumbled 25 yards for a Little Giant touchdown. Michael Hickey added the extra point and Ross was in front 7-0 with 6:15 left in the first quarter.

After Bowsher could gain just eight yards on the next series, Ross took over on the Rebel 40 after a short punt. On second-and-2 from the 32, Ross QB Dan Cobb fumbled and Rebel defender Keith Triplett caught the ball in mid-air and raced untouched 70 yards for a touchdown. After a successful 2-point conversion, Bowsher led 8-7 with 3:16 left in the first.

Ross and Bowsher both struggled to move the ball in the second stanza, and the Rebels took a surprising 8-7 lead into the locker room at the half.

Ross finally put together a sustained drive to start the third quarter. Starting out with the ball on their own 35, the Little Giants put together a 13-play, 44-yard drive

"A win's a win. I hope this game builds character for us. I give Bowsher credit. They're a scrappy, tough football team."

— Ross coach Dan Pallante

which chewed 5:42 off the clock. The end result was a 34-yard field goal by Hickey that gave Ross a 10-8 lead 6:18 to go in the third.

Bowsher's passing game finally started clicking in the fourth quarter, but it was too little, too late. With 7:55 left, the Rebels took the ball on their own 21. Two key third-down conversions kept the drive alive. On third-and-7 from their own 24, Meyers gained 22 yards on a QB keeper to give the Rebels a first down on their own 46. Two plays later, on third-and-6 from the 50, Meyers hit Kyle Schaetzke on a 17-yard pass over the middle for a first down at the Little Giant 33.

On the next play, Jesse Sandoval intercepted Meyers' pass at the Little Giant 28.

With 4:41 left, the Little Giants took over offensively and played ball-control. Ross kept the ball until Sandoval fumbled with just 24 seconds left and Ross at the Bowsher 3. The Rebels connected on one pass for 25 yards on their next series before time expired.

Pallante wasn't happy with his team's play, but he's happy to be 3-0.

"A win's a win. I hope this game builds character for us," Pallante said. "I give Bowsher credit. They're a scrappy, tough football team."

Ross travels to Oregon Clay next Friday.

NOTES: Bowsher's Keith Triplett is the grandson of former Detroit Lion Mel Triplett ... Ross was 0-3 on pass attempts, leaving the Little Giants without a pass completion in three games this season.

Ross 10, Bowsher 8

At Toledo

Ross	7	0	3	0	—	10
Bowsher	8	0	0	0	—	8

First quarter

Ross—Tyson Liggins 25 interception return (Mike Hickey kick), 6:15.

Bowsher—Kirk Triplett 70 fumble recovery (Jonte Ellis run), 3:16

Third quarter

Ross—Mike Hickey 34 field goal, 6:13.

TEAM STATISTICS

	Ross	Bow.
First downs	9	6
Rushes-yards	50-191	36-80
Passing yards	0	60
Comp.-Att.-Int	0-3-1	5-16-3
Punts-Avg.	6-40.1	6-28.7
Penalties-yards	6-62	5-67
Fumbles-lost	4-2	1-1

INDIVIDUAL STATISTICS

Rushing—Ross, Eric Lindsey 17-100, Brent Agnew 16-44, Jesse Sandoval 5-21, Kenny Morrisette 8-12, Weston Hine-line 2-10, Dan Cobb 1-3, Wes Esquivel 1-1; Bowsher, Mark Triplett 7-15, Dan Ayana 3-4, Chad Meyers 3-22, Jonte Ellis 8-18, Ed Dickerson 1-3, Robert Forbes 4-6, Jim Gdnasek 10-12.

Passing—Ross, Wes Esquivel 0-3-0-1; Bowshwer, Chad Meyers 5-16-60-3.

Receiving—Bowsher, Bo Reed 3-47, Charles Smith 2-13.

Interceptions—Ross, T. Liggins, Jorel Heidelberg, Jesse Sandoval; Bowsher, Kirk Triplett.

Team records—Fremont Ross 3-0, Toledo Bowsher 1-2.

Giants ranked 18th in the state

News-Messenger reports

Dan Pallante's past and present were represented in the first Ohio Associated Press high school football poll released Monday.

Pallante, first-year coach at Fremont Ross, has the Little Giants off to a 3-0 start and 18th ranking in the Division I poll. His former school, Youngstown Boardman, is tied for 10th with Euclid. Cleveland St. Ignatius leads the big school poll.

In Div. III, Northern Ohio League school Bellevue earned a No. 5 ranking in a division topped by Mentor Lake Catholic. Mar-

FOOTBALL

garetta was sixth in Div. IV, five places behind Germantown Valley View, the team which ended the Polar Bears season a year ago. And Oak Harbor earned a No. 11 ranking in that same class.

All four local schools represented in the poll are unbeaten.

In other football news:

Former Flier standout shelved

BOWLING GREEN — Bowling Green State University freshman free safety Chad Long of Clyde will be sidelined 4-6 weeks with a broken right thumb, the school said Monday.

Long, the Div. III Defensive Player of the Year for the Fliers last year, injured the thumb during the Falcons loss to Ohio State Saturday. He had started against the Buckeyes and in the previous week against Miami after seeing extensive playing time in the season opener against Louisiana Tech.

Long is tied for fifth on the team with 12 tackles in three games.

Ohio school forfeits victories

CINCINNATI — The Reading High School says it used an ineligible player in two games this season and will forfeit victories over Lockland and New Miami.

Coach Ken Minor said a first-year player, a second-string wide receiver, was enrolled for his ninth semester at Reading High. A student's sports eligibility ends after eight semesters.

Run-happy Ross wins GLL opener

By MICHAEL BOSI
Staff writer

OREGON — It was sloppy. It was wet.

Scratch that, it was very wet. And it was everything the Fremont Ross football team could wish for.

Obviously, this a team that is going to live and die by running the football. And what team would try to iron out the wrinkles in its abysmal passing game in downpours like Friday night?

Not Ross.
The 18th ranked Little Giants

Friday
Fremont Ross18
Oregon Clay0

Next week
Bedford at Fremont Ross
7:30 p.m. Friday

(4-0) may not complete a pass all season — rain or shine — and it's not exactly lighting up the scoreboard, averaging about three touchdowns per game. But if run-driven victories like Friday's 18-0 decision over Clay (Ross's sixth straight win over the Eagles) keep coming, the Little Giants

fans will go home happy.

Maybe wet, but happy.

Touchdowns from Demetris Simms, Brent Agnew and Kenny Morrisette and a defensive effort that limited the Eagles to four first downs in the game got Ross off on the right foot in the Great Lakes League season.

"The league's got good solid defenses, so that's going to be the thing. That is ball-control, field-position football," head coach Dan Pallante said.

Ross gained 292 offensive yards — all on the ground, of



SIMMS

course — and kept Clay to 77.

The numbers on both sides were hindered by a 15-minute rain and lightning delay in the second quarter.

"It broke our rhythm," Pallante said.

Simms led Ross with 105 rushing yards on just 12 carries, Eric Lindsey ran for 74 yards and quarterback Aaron Coonrod, still nursing an injured wrist, had 69

yards.

The Little Giants held a 12-0 halftime lead, scoring on half of their first four possessions. Simms had a 67-yard run and Agnew scored his first touchdown of the season, a 1-yarder.

Ross had just completed a 16-play, 80-yard drive that Agnew capped with a one-yard touchdown run and was on Clay's 23 when thunderstorms forced officials to clear the field and Fed-erici Stadium.

See ROSS, B3

Ross wins fourth game of '97

Continued from B1

The opening drive brought an immediate smile to Pallante's face.

"That's my style of football," he said. "That's what I want to do. I want to take the opening drive and eat the entire first quarter and get a touchdown. That's the first time all year we've done that an executed all the way down the field."

"They kept it simple," Clay coach John Johnson said. "They were stronger up front than we were. We had our opportunities. Our kids played extremely hard the second half, but we let them have the big play, it seemed, every time."

It appeared Ross came out of the locker room with feet as soggy as the field, as Clay's Ben Warnke broke the first play from scrimmage for a 31-yard run. But four plays and an Adam Peiffer 46-yard punt later, the Little Giants started their first and only drive of the first

quarter.

Coonrod's 25-yard carry got Ross into Clay territory, and although it took three attempts from the 1-yard line to punch in, the Little Giants took a 6-0 lead. Michael Hickey's extra point attempt sailed wide to the right.

On the first snap of the second quarter, Peiffer shanked a punt, giving Ross the ball at Clay's 49. But four plays into the drive, the rains prevailed.

Mother Nature forced fans into Clay's gymnasium, and the few who returned to witness glorified mud wrestling saw Simms break around the right end for his touchdown run with 3:24 left in the half, helping him gain a quick 78 first-half rushing yards. On the 2-point conversion, Coonrod fumbled the snap.

If anything was dry in the second half, it was both teams' offenses.

Clay (2-2) mustered just 18 yards in the second half and its frustration

showed in the form of some pushing and shoving on the game's final play. The Eagles never penetrated closer than Ross's 33, and they gave Ross the chance to score its third touchdown with a roughing-the-kicker penalty.

Ross fumbled the ball five times before Morrisette, whose stock on the running backs depth chart has dipped since Agnew returned, scored with 58.9 seconds left on an 8-yard run, his first carry of the night.

Four plays earlier, Hickey had missed a 42-yard field goal attempt but was knocked down, keeping Ross's drive alive.

"That one at the end hurt us when we roughed the kicker," Johnson said.

"We've done that the last couple of games — we've made the big mistakes. For us to be successful, we have to play no-mistake football and we haven't done that the last two weeks."

Ross 18, Clay 0

At Oregon

Fremont Ross	6	6	0	6	—	18
Oregon Clay	0	0	0	0	—	0

SCORING

First quarter

Ross—Brent Agnew 1 run (kick failed), 1:33.

Second quarter

Ross—Demetris Simms 67 run (fumbled snap), 3:24.

Fourth quarter

Ross—Kenny Morrisette 8 run (rush failed), 0:58.9.

TEAM STATISTICS

	Ross	Clay
First downs	14	4
Rushes-yards	59-292	26-61
Passing yards	0	20
Comp.-Att.-Int.	0-1-0	2-9-0
Punts-Avg.	2-38.5	7-27.4
Penalties-yards	7-30	7-55
Fumbles-lost	5-2	0-0

INDIVIDUAL STATISTICS

Rushing—Ross, Aaron Coonrod 18-69, Brent Agnew 9-35, Kenny Morrisette 1-8, Eric Lindsey 17-74, Jesse Sandoval 1-0, Weston Hineline 1-1, Demetris Simms 12-105. Clay, Ron Hennemen 9-7, Dan Steingraber 5-21, Omar Abou-Arab 5-6, Ben Warnke 4-38, Eric Donley 2-(-8), Derek Besgrove 1-(-3).

Passing—Ross, Coonrod 0-1-0-0; Clay, Hennemen 2-9-20-0, Ryan Donley 0-0-0-0.

Receiving—Clay, Mike Palmer 2-20.

Team records—Ross 4-0, 1-0 GLL; Clay 2-2, 0-1 GLL.

Coach hospitalized with kidney stone

By **MICHAEL BOSI**

Staff writer

Fremont Ross football coach Dan Pallante was admitted to the hospital Monday morning for a kidney stone but said, "I'll be rarin' to go" for Friday night's game against Bedford.

"I just woke up Saturday night with a lot of pain and went to school (Monday) morning and it started bothering me," the 33-year-old coach said from his Memorial Hospital room Monday afternoon.

"I went to the doctor and he sent me here. I had an X-ray and they found a kidney stone, and they're going to take it out (today). If I felt OK (today), the doctor said it would be done as an outpatient thing."

Kidney stones, called renal calculi, result from the precipitation

of salts in urine, and can be caused by dehydration. The major symptom is sudden, severe lower back pain.

"Actually, I thought the pain was pulled muscle in my back

and it wouldn't go away," said Pallante, who added his only previous hospitalization was for knee surgery.



PALLANTE

Pallante joked his stone developed from all the excitement of

last Friday's 18-0 victory in the rain at Oregon Clay.

"It must be," he said.

Pallante's condition caused him to miss a luncheon speaking appearance Monday at the Fremont Rotary Club.

**BEDFORD KICKING MULES (3-0)
at ROSS LITTLE GIANTS (4-0)**

When: Friday, 7:30 p.m.

Where: Harmon Stadium.

Radio: WFRO-AM 900 (Jerry Reiding/John Cullen)

Last week: Bedford defeated Fostoria, 24-8; Fremont Ross defeated Clay, 18-0.

Ross injury update: SE/DB Brett Hufford (broken thumb) saw a doctor Tuesday and is probable for Friday. Ross coach Dan Pallante underwent a shockwave procedure to have a kidney stone removed and will be on the sideline.

Bedford players to watch: Senior QB Scott Feldman, junior OL/LDE Joe Laparl, senior RB John Mikesell, senior RB Thomas Nowak, senior TE/DL Jeff Hooper.

You should know: Another first for the Little Giants: they will be at full strength for the first time this season, assuming Hufford gets the doctor's OK to play. Ross is perfect in seven meetings against the Kicking Mules, including last season's 51-0 laughter in Michigan. As long as Ross can control Feldman, whom Pallante said "is pretty good. He's very opportunistic," it will be eight in a row Friday. Feldman can be elusive under pressure. Mikesell and Nowak are the main threats from the backfield, while Laparl could hinder Ross's offensive production to the right side. Hooper had four sacks last week.

Ross throws Mules for loss



DEMETRIS SIMMS runs past several Bedford tacklers in the Little Giants' 34-7 win Friday at Harmon Stadium. Ross is 5-0 this season. News-Messenger/Steven Garner

Little Giants complete first passes in fifth victory

By MICHAEL BOSI
Staff writer

This has to rank right up there with the world's most historic moments.

You know where you were when Bobby Thompson hit the Shot Heard 'Round the World. You know where you were when President Kennedy was shot. You know where you were when Neil Armstrong walked on the moon.

When they're old and gray, the 5,000 football fans in the Harmon Stadium crowd for Friday night's Fremont Ross Homecoming festivities will remember exactly where they were on Sept. 26, 1997. That was the night when the Little Giants completed their first pass of the season.

Friday	
Fremont Ross	34
Bedford	7
Next week	
Fostoria at Fremont Ross	
7:30 p.m. Friday	

With exactly four minutes left in the first quarter of Ross's 34-7 victory over Bedford, Aaron Coonrod hit Tyson Liggins for a 17-yard pass, eliciting a standing ovation.

"I thought the stadium was going to fall down," Ross coach Dan Pallante said with a laugh.

And too much of a good thing can't be that bad. The same two players hooked up again later in the game.

"The pressure's off, man," assistant coach Jim Kettner

shouted in Coonrod's direction after the game.

Aside from the fact that Ross finished a perfect first half of the season on the strength of a three-touchdown, 209-yard rushing performance from Eric Lindsey, the talk around this morning's bacon and eggs will surely be of Coonrod's completions.

On his fifth pass of the night, Coonrod hit Liggins on the same play, and Liggins turned the catch into a 36-yard gain. That set up Michael Hickey's 31-yard field goal in the third quarter.

"Both of them were to Tyson



COONROD

and they were both curls coming back to me and I just hit him and he did his job after the catch," Coonrod said.

One of Pallante's buddies this week pointed out a correlation between the coach's irritating kidney stones and the way the Little Giants handle a football: Passing both have been painful.

Ross had gone four weeks and 12 attempts before the Coonrod-Liggins connections.

"We knew we were going to throw the ball just because we've been practicing it a lot," said Liggins, who moved to split end two weeks ago.

"I think throwing on the run was the biggest part of the prob-

See GIANTS, B3

Giants win fifth straight

Continued from B1

lem," Coonrod said. "Last year, on the passes we ran we just dropped back and passed it. This year, it's always throwing on the run, which we're getting used to. The timing's starting to come together."

And just in time. Friday's win puts Ross (5-0, 2-0 GLL) into the anticipated two-team Great Lakes League dogfight with Sandusky. The Blue Streaks (4-1, 2-0 GLL) battered Clay 45-13, leaving Ross and Sandusky — get your Halloween masks ready — as the GLL's two remaining unbeaten teams.

"I just hope the kids stay focused and don't read the computer rankings (they're ranked second in the region) and the AP poll (they're ranked 16th in the state) and they stay focused and they always remember what got them here," Pallante said. "If we keep doing that we'll be in good shape."

A Ross first quarter worthy of this morning's trash collection was disposed of by a three-touchdown second quarter. Three Ross fumbles on its first three possessions put Bedford in the driver's seat, but all the Kicking Mules, who were 51-0 victims of the Little Giants last season, had to show for it was Tom Nowak's 6-yard touchdown run 1:35 into the game.

In the last three weeks, Ross has had a season's worth of fumbles: 13. Talk about a dirty baker's dozen.

"We put everything together (Friday) night and we just played really well," Coonrod said. "We had a couple of fumbles early but we just forgot about them and came back and played really well."

But like last year, the Mules lost their star. In Michigan a year ago, quarterback Scott Feldmann, who passed for 58 yards (8-for-18), was injured in the first quarter. Friday night, Nowak, the GLL's seventh-ranked rusher, left the game after his touchdown with a injured knee.

"Don't get me wrong, I'm not saying the reason we lost the game was because Tommy Nowak wasn't there," Bedford coach Ray Kwiatkowski said. "(Ross) is a good football team. They beat us, and they beat us in every possible way. But it wasn't the same, and you say, 'It takes



ERIC LINDSEY rushes for some of his 209 yards Friday night against Bedford at Harmon Stadium. The Little Giants won, 34-7, to remain unbeaten.

News-Messenger/Steven Garner

one guy to do all that?" Well, he's the best running back we have and we didn't have him."

The Little Giants, however, did have their best running back.

Lindsey, who all night ran behind the gaping holes created by left-side linemen Frank Kaiser and J.R. Adkins, scored his first touchdown on a 32-yard draw to bring Ross within 7-6 on the third play of the second quarter. Lindsey set up Ross's second score, a 9-yard Brent Agnew rush, with a 30-yard run on third-and-11.

On the ensuing possession, Bedford botched a punt play and gave Ross the ball at the 20. It took Lindsey one play to score from there for an 18-7 halftime lead.

In the third quarter, Hickey

boomed his field goal (8:32), Jorel Heidelberg returned a fumble on a fake punt 53 yards for a touchdown (6:44) and Lindsey scored again from 20 yards out (3:20).

At 34-7, the rout was on, over and out.

In last year's blowout, Ross limited Bedford to 61 offensive yards. The Kicking Mules were not much more effective on Fremont turf, gaining just 87.

LITTLE GIANTS NOTES: Ross has not lost to Bedford in eight meetings. ... Lindsey's rushing performance marked the fourth 100-plus yard performance for a Ross offensive back this season. He and Demetris Simms have both hit the century mark twice.

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Check Out This Impressive Lineup

Ross 34, Bedford 7

At Harmon Stadium

Bedford	7	0	0	0	—	7
Ross	0	18	16	0	—	34

First quarter

Bedford—Tom Nowak 6 run (Kevin Stock kick), 10:25.

Second quarter

Ross—Eric Lindsey 32 run (kick failed), 10:40.

Ross—Brent Agnew 9 run (rush failed), 5:44.

Ross—Lindsey 20 run (rush failed), 3:57.

Third quarter

Ross—Michael Hickey 31 field goal, 8:32.

Ross—Jorel Heidelberg 53 fumble return (Hickey kick), 6:44.

Ross—Lindsey 20 run (kick failed), 3:20.

TEAM STATISTICS

	Bedford	Ross
First downs.....	5	15
Rushes-yards	31-29	45-280
Passing yards.....	58	53
Comp.-Att.-Int.	8-18-0	2-6-0
Penalties-yds.	4-30	3-35
Punts-yards	7-32.6	2-35.5
Fumbles-lost	1-1	4-4

INDIVIDUAL STATISTICS

Rushing—Bedford, Scott Feldmann 8-(-31), Tom Nowak 1-6, John Mikesell 9-22, Patrick Gill 12-22, Kevin Stock 1-10; Ross, Aaron Coonrod 6-22, Eric Lindsey 24-209, Demetris Simms 3-(-2), Brent Agnew 7-36, Weston Hinline 3-16, Kenny Morrisette 1-(-3), Jason Hull 1-2.

Passing—Bedford, Feldmann 8-18-58-0; Ross, Aaron Coonrod 2-6-53-0, Dan Cobb 0-0-0-0.

Receiving—Bedford, Clark Main 3-14, Stock 4-17, Gill 1-5, Jeff Hooper 1-22; Ross, Tyson Liggins 2-53.

Records—Ross 5-0, 2-0 GLL; Bedford 3-1, 1-1 GLL.

Ross out to end Fostoria's reign

Will this be the year?

It's been 36 long seasons since the last time the Fremont Ross football team was able to walk away from a game with Fostoria on the winning side of the scoreboard.

Since Mal Mackey last figured out how to beat the Redmen, the Little Giants have gone through five coaches.

What's Fostoria gone through since 1961? Just eight undefeated seasons, 11 playoff berths and a couple of state championships.

Even though the Redmen are 0-5, Ross coach Dan Pallante knows the ghosts of the past — hello, Dick Kidwell — always loom.

"A tradition-rich football program can always recover that," Pallante said. "They played a good against the best team on their schedule so far — St. John's. That's who they played the best. We're looking forward to a really good game Friday night. I think when we play Fostoria and Fremont plays Sandusky — records mean nothing."

True. But even though the rivalry took a 29-year hiatus from 1962-91, Little Giants Nation hasn't forgotten that Fostoria owns a 32-17-4 record over their hometown heroes.

Here's more on the 54th all-time matchup between the Little Giants and Redmen, as well as the rest of this weekend's games:

FOSTORIA REDMEN (0-5) at ROSS LITTLE GIANTS (5-0)

When: Friday, 7:30 p.m.

Where: Harmon Stadium.

Radio: WFRO-FM 99.1 (Jerry Reidling/John Cullen)

Last week: Ross beat Bedford, 34-7; Fostoria lost to Whitmer, 39-19.

Fostoria players to watch: Junior QB Ryan Gerritsen, senior RB Jason Rhubright, senior WR/DB Chanc' Register.

Injury update: Ross is healthy. Fostoria will start freshman DT/OT Adam Grine, coach Tom Grine's son, in place of senior Robert Scott. Also, starting guard Cydell Smith has been ill the past week.

You should know: In his tenure at Boardman, Pallante beat Fostoria twice. During the week, he pulled out some old tapes of those games and was reminded that Fostoria was very susceptible to the quarterback option, which could be the case again this year. Whether Fostoria starts Gerritsen or St. Wendelin transfer Doug Bringman, Pallante expects the Redmen to throw the ball early and often. "I would think so," Pallante said. "I think our front seven, when they play together, are a very physical football team, and I think if I was (Fostoria), that would be my game plan." Coming into the week, Ross ranks first in the Great Lakes League in rushing offense and total defense.

The honor roll

Scoring leaders

Player, school	TD	PA1-2	FG	S	TP
Jon Blechinger, Wood	9	9-2	0	0	67
John Jackson, Gib	8	0-3	0	0	54
Brian Riedmaier, Gib	6	0-6	0	0	48
Mark Baker, OH	7	0-0	0	0	42
Duke Fox, Bellevue	7	0-0	0	0	42
Aaron Justice, Marg	7	0-0	0	0	42
Devin Pollick, SJCC	7	0-0	0	0	42
Russ Kuns, Bellevue	6	0-1	0	0	38
Eric Lindsey, Ross	6	0-0	0	0	36
James Wagner, OH	6	0-0	0	0	36
Chris Sharp, Bellevue	6	0-0	0	0	36
Dave Mason, Gib	5	0-2	0	0	34
Doug Miller, Gib	5	0-1	0	0	32
Josh Donnell, Gib	4	0-4	0	0	32
Jason Osborne, OH	5	0-0	0	0	30

Touchdown passes

Player, school	No.
Josh Hatlay, Lakota	7
Roger Kuns, SJCC	6
B.J. Thomas, Marg	6
Jason Kelley, Woodmore	4
Dave Kneram, OH	4
Justin Donnell, Gib	3
Duke Fox, Bellevue	3
Carl Schuett, Gib	3
Josh Young, Clyde	3

Radio: WFRO-AM 900 (Jon Kerns/Rob Kerr).

Last week: St. Joe defeated St. Wendelin, 47-7; Hopewell-Loudon lost to Mohawk, 36-6.

Hopewell-Loudon players to watch: QB Kyle Borer, RB Ryan Martinez, RB Andy Distel, RB Mike Miller, WR Eric Elchert.

You should know: Though they are not on the same pace that got them to the playoffs last season, the Chieftains bring some talent out of the backfield in Borer and Martinez. Borer throws at a 40.5 percent efficiency, and he has five touchdowns. "They graduated a lot of people, but thing that impressed me about them," St. Joe coach Rick Wonderly said, "is how well they hustle and get to where they're supposed to be going. They keep coming at you."

CLYDE FLIERS (3-2)

at ST. MARY PANTHERS (0-5)
When: Saturday, 7:30 p.m.

Where: Strobel Field, Sandusky.

Directions to Sandusky: From Clyde, take Route 101 to Sandusky. At intersection with Perkins Avenue, take a right. Follow Perkins Ave. and Strobel Field will be on the left.

Radio: WFRO-FM 99.1, WFRO-AM 900 (Jon Kerns/Rob Kerr).

Last week: Clyde defeated Margareta, 27-3; St. Mary lost to Huron, 42-14.

St. Mary's players to watch: Senior QB Andy Fantozz, senior WB Dusty Roth, senior WB Jared Opfer, senior FB Ron Baum.

You should know: Taking teams too lightly was not a problem Clyde had to worry about the last four weeks. But going against the 0-5 Panthers — especially after his team thoroughly dominated Margareta in an upset victory — leaves Clyde coach Bob Bishop guarding against unwarranted optimism. "This week it's a case that we have to get the kids not to take anyone too lightly," Bishop said. "We just

face the run-and-shoot people in motion, you have to make sure you have the ability to stop it," Bishop said.

EDISON CHARGES at OAK HARBOR ROCKERS

When: Friday, 7:30 p.m.

Where: Oak Harbor.

Last week: Edison beat Port Clinton, 47-0.

Edison players to watch: Jake Deehr, FB Kelly SE Jim Merrill, NT Chris Eric Haeutple, LB Rich

You should know: Teams who have never lost to each other both teams joined the Section 1 have had a few scares against the Chargers. In addition to the close game, Oak Harbor won 27-20 in 1995, 20-7 in 1992. The Chargers lost in last week's loss to Perkins, as Deehr tossed interceptions and the defense was unable to stop the Pirates game. Oak Harbor coach Quisno said one reason for the loss was because of the Rockets' success always after the Port Clinton and before Huron and Clyde no said.

PORT CLINTON REDSKINS at MARGARETTA POLAR BEARS

When: Friday, 7:30 p.m.

Where: The Duck Pond

Last week: Port Clinton beat Oak Harbor, 47-0; Margareta beat Clyde, 27-3.

Port Clinton players to watch: Senior QB Cort Kaufman, Collin Kaufman, junior Moritz, senior RB Rick

You should know: Port Clinton just has all the luck. They had to face Oak Harbor after the Rockets lost the game (to Margareta). Port Clinton pummeled PC, 47-0. Redskins get the Polar Bears are "licking our wounds" coach Don Wilson, after their first loss. Wilson said PC's record, and says back option threat is one. "We didn't play the well (against Clyde) and (PC's) best play is the son said. "That means scary situation for us. That's something we address."

GENOA COMETS at WOODMORE WILD

When: Friday, 7:30 p.m.

Where: Elmore.

Last week: Genoa beat Wood, 35-6; Woodmore beat Clyde, 36-20.

Genoa players to watch: Senior RB Adam Turney, senior QB F

Ross finally stops Fostoria



BRENT AGNEW (6) of Fremont Ross carries the ball and a couple of Fostoria defenders during the second quarter of Ross's 42-0 win Friday at Harmon Stadium. News-Messenger/Andrew Morrison

Lindsey scores three TDs as Little Giants rout Redmen

By MICHAEL BOSI
Staff writer

Somehow it doesn't matter that the Fostoria football team hasn't won this year. Or that last year's Division II state champions lost 19 starters. Or that legendary head coach Dick Kidwell no longer lurks the sidelines.

Fostoria is one of only three Ohio schools with over 600 victories.

But how the mighty have fallen. And how little pity they'll find in Fremont.

None of Fostoria's woes could

Friday	
Fremont Ross	42
Fostoria	0

Next week	
Fremont Ross at Toledo Whitmer	
7:30 p.m. Friday	

take away from the pleasure Fremont Ross took in hammering the Redmen into the Harmon Stadium turf Friday night, 42-0.

"It's still Fostoria," said Eric Lindsey, who scored three touchdowns, giving him six in the last two weeks.

This one was a victory for the

ages, and Little Giants of the past, present and future rejoiced. Not since 1961 had Ross beaten Fostoria.

That was 36 long years ago. Mal Mackey was coach. John F. Kennedy was President of the United States. And Dan Pallante hadn't even been born.

"I just think we were the better football team," said Pallante, who beat Fostoria twice at Boardman. "This town made a lot of hype because Fostoria's gotten the best of us, and I understand that but I've told the kids

all week that we were the better football team and you earn that from preparation and working hard and they deserve (the victory)."

Guy Nuhfer quarterbacked Ross to its last victory over Fostoria. Friday night, it was Lindsey, the Great Lakes League Player of the Week, taking charge.

Lindsey rushed for 147 yards and scored touchdown Nos. 8-10. Demetris Simms added 69

See ROSS, B3

Ross solves Fostoria

Continued from B1

yards on the ground and had an interception as Ross won its sixth game in a row and third in the league.

You can say this about the Little Giants: When they beat Fostoria, they beat the Redmen bad. In 1961, the final score was 40-6.

Friday night, the Little Giants gained 345 rushing yards and, with the help of nine sacks of quarterbacks Ryan Gerritsen and Doug Bringman, held Fostoria to minus-34.

Bryson Sewell had three of those, and Aaron Root had a pair, giving him five in the last two weeks.

"We were just outmatched," first-year Fostoria coach Tom Grine said. "We just couldn't get anything on the ground. They're just so physical and so big and quick, we just didn't have any success moving the ball on the ground."

All it took to realize why Ross is ranked first defensively — they've allowed just 145.5 yards per game — in the GLL was to watch the first half. Fostoria was held to negative 12 yards and no first downs while watching the Little Giants roll rack up 199 yards and a 21-0 lead.

Six weeks into a winless season, Grine's team is struggling. This was the third time this season Fostoria has gone a half without making a first down.

"Right now, we need a win in the worst kind of way," the former Clyde coach said.

After a first quarter played entirely in its own zone, Fostoria was fortunate to escape the first quarter in a scoreless tie. But with a drive that started with 1:40 left in the quarter, Ross put the first points on the board when Lindsey plunged in from a yard out on the first play of the second.

The six-play drive was set up



AARON COONROD
(17) of Ross has to dodge Aaron Root's helmet while running the ball against Fostoria in the first quarter Friday at Harmon Stadium.

News-Messenger
Andrew Morrison

by Brent Agnew's 34-yard halfback counter.

The Little Giants got warmed up in the second quarter, one that featured a 66-yard touchdown run by Demetris Simms with 6:39 left and a 16-yard score by Lindsey. The run-oriented Ross offense also completed another pass, this time, it was Aaron Coonrod hitting Brett Hufford on a 17-yard curl.

Ross opened the second half with a nine-play, 58-yard drive that Jesse Sandoval capped with a 9-yard touchdown run.

With 8:22 left in the game, Lindsey set up his own 2-yard run with a 36-yard sprint on a third-and-8 play.

Backup quarterback Doug Bringman moved the ball effectively in the second half, throwing for 147 yards, including a 46-yard bomb to Chanc' Register. But he also threw a pair of interceptions (one to Josh Liggins and

one to Simms in the end zone).

To send Fostoria packing on a sour note, Spencer Root scored on a 47-yard halfback counter with 44 seconds left.

It was the first career touchdown for Root, just a junior who will likely figure prominently into next year's attack.

Like we said, this was one for all Little Giants. Past, present and future.

LITTLE GIANTS NOTES: Pallante announced during the week that third-string quarterback Wesley Esquivel has again quit the team, presumably for good this time. ... Ross now leads the all-time series 33-17-4. ... Fostoria did not get a first-down until 3:38 left in the third quarter. One play later, Bringman carried for eight yards to get the Redmen over midfield for their first time. ... Lindsey had a potential fourth touchdown nullified by a holding penalty with 3:07 left in the game.

Ross 42, Fostoria 0

At Harmon Stadium

Fostoria	0	0	0	0	—	0
Ross	0	21	7	14	—	42

Second quarter

Ross — Eric Lindsey 1 run (Michael Hickey kick), 11:57

Ross — Demetris Simms 66 run (Hickey kick), 6:39.

Ross — Lindsey 16 run (Hickey kick), 1:25.

Third quarter

Ross — Jesse Sandoval 9 run (Hickey kick), 7:39.

Fourth quarter

Ross — Lindsey 2 run (Hickey kick), 8:22.

Ross — Spencer Root 47 run (Hickey kick), 0:44.

TEAM STATISTICS

	Fostoria	Ross
First downs	8	13
Rushes-yards	31-(-34)	45-345
Passing yards	149	17
Comp.-Att.-Int.	10-24-2	1-4-0
Punts-Avg.	5-32.8	2-39.5
Penalties-yards	4-36	6-74
Fumbles-lost	1-0	2-1

INDIVIDUAL STATISTICS

RUSHING — Fostoria, Ryan Gerritsen 7-(-7), Jason Rhubright 9-10, Cory Freshour 8-(-4), Cory Echelberry 1-(-8), Doug Bringman 6-(-25); Fremont Ross, Aaron Coonrod 6-19, Eric Lindsey 21-147, Demetris Simms 9-69, Brent Agnew 5-47, Jesse Sandoval 1-9, Weston Hine-line 2-7, Spencer Root 1-47.

PASSING — Fostoria, Ryan Gerritsen 1-3-2-0; Doug Bringman 10-21-147-2; Ross, Aaron Coonrod 1-4-17-0; Dan Cobb 0-0-0-0.

RECEIVING — Fostoria, Chanc' Register 4-88, Greg Fleming 1-10, Michael Burke 1-4, Brad Bennet 1-14, Lerone Martin 3-24, Andrew Brandeberry 1-9; Ross, Brett Hufford 1-17.

INTERCEPTIONS — Ross, Josh Liggins, Simms.

RECORDS — Fostoria 0-6, 0-3 GLL; Fremont Ross 6-0, 3-0 GLL.

Wing-T teams Running wild

Little Giants use offense as springboard to 6-0 start

By MICHAEL BOSI
Staff writer

What no football mind in Fremont could figure out for 36 years — how to beat Fostoria — Dan Pallante knew before he ever got to Ross High School.

Fostoria could not stop the Wing-T offense.

The Redmen couldn't do it in 1994, when Pallante beat them as coach of Youngstown Boardman. And they couldn't do it in 1995.

It's 1997. Different year. Same offense. Same result.

"Our kids were just fighting like the devil to get into the action," Fostoria coach Tom Grine said at Harmon Stadium last Friday night after watching his team lose 42-0 to Ross.

In the days leading up to the Fostoria game, Pallante broke into his VCR archives and whipped out tapes of the Boardman victories.

The Wing-T worked then. And it's working now. Ross has won six games. The Little Giants also lead the Great Lakes League in total offense, when they've completed just two passes all year.

Why? What makes the Wing-T so much harder to defend than, say, more traditional I-formation attacks?

"It makes (defenses) play assignment football," Pallante said, "and what assignment football does is slow you down."

A four-back attack

Ross quarterback Aaron Coonrod, tailback Eric Lindsey and halfbacks Brett Agnew and Demetris Simms comprise a four-back formation taken directly from an offensive philosophy first employed by Dave Nelson in the 1950s at the University of Delaware, where it was later perfected by veteran coach Tubby Raymond.

Attacking the perimeter of the field in the form of sweeps, counters, traps and quarterback options — with deception being the No. 1 weapon — has led to Ross's average of 273.7 yards per game.

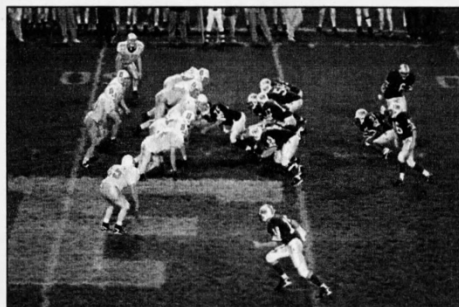
And despite what the Little Giants have done, the Wing-T, while being a ground-oriented offense, does not dismiss the passing game.

The Wing-T forces a defensive secondary to play at least three deep to defend against the receiving threats of the split end, wing-back and tight end.

As other high school Wing-T squads like Oak Harbor, Elmwode and Margareta, and Notre Dame University when it won 95 games in Ara Parseghian's 11 years as head coach (1964-74), have shown, the passing game can become lethal.

"Actually, I can never predict how much we'll throw the ball, because if people come in and put

The offense in question



1 As QB Aaron Coonrod takes the snap, right HB Brent Agnew (6) begins a counter motion left. His pattern balances the left side and he can become a receiving threat. TB Eric Lindsey, in a 3-point stance behind Coonrod, is the primary threat to the middle. Left HB Weston Hineline completes the four-man backfield.



2 Coonrod hands off to Lindsey (35) as the offensive line angle blocks to the right. LT Frank Kaiser (69) traps inside and Hineline prepares to throw the lead block. Ross's J.R. Adkins (79) begins to block right DE Jeff Hooper to the left. SE Brett Hufford looks downfield for a secondary block.



3 Lindsey has the ball behind Hineline's block and runs through the seam provided by the offensive line. Five Bedford defenders are occupied to the right side of the field. Coonrod draws the attention of Bedford OLB Greg Hubbard to himself and away from the ball carrier by carrying out the play-action fake.



4 Lindsey penetrates the defense for at least a four-yard gain as the Bedford secondary reacts. Hubbard is forced to make a quick read upon realizing Coonrod no longer has the football. The line continues its blocks and Hineline is back on his feet to attempt another block.

How do you stop it? Don't cheat and respect the pass

By MICHAEL BOSI
Staff writer

Coaches who preach the Wing-T offense to their teams agree that discipline is the key to successful execution.

The same theory applies to defending the Wing-T.

"The kids need to be disciplined and watch their keys," Elmwode coach Roger Frank said. "Hopefully they'll do that and that will put them in position to make the play."

When teams run the true Wing-T, they usually perform variations of about five plays: a quarterback option, a tailback dive, a halfback sweep, a halfback counter or a play-action pass.

Ross defensive coordinator Chuck Lindsey is happy that he doesn't have to worry about such

things.

"There are so many different options off of it that when you get a true Wing-T, it's pretty tough to defend," Lindsey said. "Every play has a counter play off of it if you're running the blocking schemes right."

Some other dos and don'ts.

■ Do not cheat.

"If you really cheat against it, then you open up the passing game big-time. They've got to play honest," Lindsey said.

"Someone's got to take the belly and someone's got to take the quarterback and someone's got to take the pitch," Ross coach Dan Pallante said.

■ Watch the trap and running threat up the middle.

In addition to running the Wing-T himself, Oak Harbor coach

Gary Quisno has to defend it when he plays Sandusky Bay Conference rivals Perkins, Margareta and Edison, as well as Rossford. "They put pressure on you in the perimeter," Quisno said. "It's a pressure that has a good strong trapping game, and it always has the capability to play-action pass if you cheat too much on the run."

■ Familiarize players with the Wing-T formations.

Whitmer coach Jeff Robbins has spent this week preparing his team for Ross and the Wing-T. "Whether you're keying a guard or a back based on what formations he's running, our linebackers have to be really disciplined. They just have to read keys well. The Wing-T is a timing situation. It's good ball-handling and faking. We have to put our players in

a situation that they'll feel comfortable about what they'll see on Friday night."

■ Respect the pass.

Ross has not attempted more than six passes in a game this season — and it's only completed 2-of-20 attempts all year — but opponents still must afford the Little Giants air attack respect.

"They just pound you and pound you, and so you come up and support the run, support the run and support the run, and then they sneak that pass in there," Fostoria coach Tom Grine said.

■ If you can't beat 'em, join 'em.

"They say the best way to defend the Wing-T is to run it yourself," Frank said. "That way your linebackers and defensive backs get used to it in the season."

Wing-T teams Running wild

Several backs key attack

Continued from B1

more than seven people in the tackle box, we'll throw the ball," Pallante said before the season began. "If people sit out and let us run, we'll run. I'll do what they let us do. The No. 1 thing — and I go in this order — I want to run the ball off tackle first. Then I want to option, then I want to throw. That's the order I go."

Oak Harbor coach Gary Quisno, who became a Wing-T disciple because he was a Notre Dame fan, has taken advantage of the strong arms possessed by Dave Knierem and Ben Reinbolt to complement the running of tailback James Wagner.

"This year we're really balanced," Quisno said. "I've got a couple of quarterbacks that do a nice job throwing the ball. We're really kind of balanced."

Carrying the responsibilities

Lindsey leads Ross in rushing, but on any Friday night, the Wing-T gives Simms, Agnew and even Coonrod the opportunity to be the Little Giants' top rusher.

"The Wing-T is not built on just one running back dominating," Lindsey said out after scoring three touchdowns against Fostoria. "It's built on three different running backs, so you don't know where coming it's from."

While Lindsey scored three times, Grine couldn't help but admire the way Ross set up its scoring drives with key counters from Agnew, who finished with 47 yards.

"They ran that doggone wing counter and they've got everybody going in this direction," Grine said, motioning to his right, "and they got the wing-back on the other side."

That balance of contribution also tends to keep players hap-

"I think with the Wing-T, you've got to have really crisp blocking and great execution and very disciplined kids to make that work."

— St. Joe coach Rick Wonderly, whose team uses the Wing-T

py.

But if there is one position that is crucial to the entire setup, it's the quarterback.

With drop-back passing out of the picture, a mobile, agile quarterback with a strong arm like Coonrod is a must. It is the signal-caller's job to carry out the play-action fakes, run the options and throw on the run — while disguising each of those plays as something else. Who's going where isn't as much a problem as who has the pigskin.

Without that type of quarterback, Pallante said, "what I'd have to do is break the formation. I'd have to make the guys — rather than being option people — I'd have to spread them and make them pass-oriented people, which you can do, but you're really less effective because it doesn't fit with what you're doing. And you end up being half of one offense and half of another."

There are some fundamental responsibilities and options each of the backs carries out. The deception is that each can be a potential ball-carrier, blocker or receiving threat. Under Ross's basic alignment, here are some of the X's and O's that can develop:

■ The quarterback lines up under center, as opposed to the oldtime single-wing, where he'd set up as a wing to block and the snap went to the tailback. In the Wing-T, the quarterback rolls out to play-action pass,

option or block.

■ The tailback is a primary dive, trap and isolation threat.

■ The left halfback is also a dive threat, but also is a primary sweep threat and pitchout man to the right.

■ The right halfback, or wing-back, offers the counter, which Agnew so successfully ran for 34 yards against Fostoria. But he is also an immediate receiving threat. His motion balances the attack to the left side.

■ The burden on the offensive line is to angle block effectively. Other offenses rely heavily on base, or straight-up, blocking because the objective is to protect the quarterback pocket. In the Wing-T, there is no pocket to protect, but there are running seams that need to be created.

Winging it

After just two years of running the Wing-T, Elmwood is rewriting its record books, and will continue to do so this season. The Royals, under second-year coach Roger Frank and led by quarterback Ty Rhoad and tailback Curt Simon, turned to the Wing-T after realizing Otsego's success with the same scheme.

Frank took the if-you-can't-beat-'em, join-'em approach. Along the way, Elmwood established new marks for most yards in a game (556 vs. St. Wendelin) and most points (55 vs. Ottawa Hills).

Of teaching his troops the system, Frank said, "Really, it hasn't been hard at all.

"They need to believe in (the Wing-T) and they did that right off the bat. Once they believe in it, you've got most of it taken care of."

Ross struggled early to get its offense rolling, but much of that was due to the team's lack of personnel for two weeks, with

How it works

A picture sequence from the Fremont Ross-Bedford game shows one option off of the Wing-T. B1

suspensions and injuries taking their toll. Coaches say there is nothing inherently difficult about developing the Wing-T.

"We've been doing it so long and the kids do it in the junior high," Quisno said. "The kids come up in the junior high and when they get to high school, when we say 'Rip 28,' which is one of our plays, they know that and they know exactly what they're doing."

St. Joe coach Rick Wonderly, whose team runs the relatively simple Wing-I offense, says the key to learning the Wing-T is discipline.

"I think with the Wing-T, you've got to have really crisp blocking and great execution and very disciplined kids to make that work," Wonderly said. "The Wing-I is more of a power offense. ...

"To do it right you've got to be willing to do it over and over and over and over again. It's got to look the same every time you run it."

The ultimate beauty of the Wing-T is that it minimizes turnovers. Some teams still pass 15-20 times a game, as Rhoad does at Elmwood, but interceptions come at a premium. Pallante takes delight in knowing his quarterbacks have only been picked off once. Elmwood fumbled, Frank said, for the first time last week.

It also became evident, especially when Ross beat Clay on Sept. 20, that the Wing-T is one of the best foul-weather offenses. Rain, snow or shine, there is nothing to change.

Ross defense pitches shutout

Friday
Fremont Ross 17
Toledo Whitmer 0
Next week
Fremont Ross at Mansfield Senior
7:30 p.m. Friday

By JEFF KRAUS
News-Messenger correspondent
TOLEDO — Who needs offense?

On a night when the Fremont Ross offense did not manage a first-half first down, the defense pitched a shutout to lead the Little Giants past Whitmer, 17-0. The win helped Ross improve to 7-0 while Whitmer dropped to 1-6.

The Little Giants gained 37 yards in the opening two quarters and 171 yards for the game. The Fremont Ross running game, a trademark of this undefeated team, had to claw and scratch for 166 yards on 39 carries on the night.

"We came into the game running a lot of audibles based on the defense they were running," Ross coach Dan Pallante said. "We were tentative because it was too complicated. In the second half we ran more basic stuff and came off the ball better."

Despite the slow start offensively, the Little Giants led 7-0 at the intermission. Ross capitalized on a Whitmer fumble on the Panthers' first series of the game. On third-and-16 from its own 8, Whitmer coughed up the football and Aaron Root recovered for the Little Giants on the Panther 6.

Three plays later, Eric Lindsey bulled into the end zone from 2 yards out and, after Michael Hickey's extra point, Ross led 7-0 with 8:59 left in the first quarter.

The two teams traded punts for the remainder of the first quarter. It wasn't until 10:13 left in the second when Whitmer made its first threat of the night.

Panther quarterback Mike Merideth completed a screen pass to running back Jeff Horton which gained 36 yards and gave Whitmer a first down at the Little Giant 32. Merideth fired a pass over the middle to John Garrow for 26 yards and a first down at the Little Giant 14. The Panthers could not capitalize, but punted from the Ross 25 and pinned the Little Giants back to their 1-yard line.

Three plays later Ross punted from its own end zone. After the Hickey punt, Whitmer took over on the Ross 44. The Panthers drove the ball to the Little Giants' 15 before attempting a 32-yard field goal by Garrow, which was wide left with 1:14 to go before the half.

The first-half defensive performance was a classic case of "bending but not breaking," according to Pallante.

"We run a very conservative defense," Pallante said. "We bend but don't break and we want other teams to have to drive the length of the field against us. The philosophy held true tonight. We played well when we had to, especially in the red zone (inside the 20)."

Whitmer's opening possession of the second half was the same as its first possession in the opening quarter: a fumble leading to a Ross touchdown drive.

Jesse Sandoval recovered the ball for Ross at the Panthers' 30 with 10 minutes showing in the third quarter.

From there, the Little Giants went 30 yards on seven plays for a touchdown. On second-and-goal from the 9, quarterback Aaron Coonrod pitched the ball to Josh Liggins on an option play, and Liggins sprinted into the end zone for the score.

After Hickey's extra point, Ross led 14-0 with 6:38 left in the third.

Hickey's 26-yard field goal gave Ross a 17-0 bulge with only 52 seconds left in the third quarter.

Football

High School

Ross 17, Whitmer 0

Fremont Ross	7	0	10	0	—	17
Whitmer	0	0	0	0	—	0

First quarter

Ross—Eric Lindsey, 2 run (Michael Hickey kick), 8:59

Third quarter

Ross—Josh Liggins, 9 run (Hickey kick), 6:58

Ross-Hickey, 26 field goal, :52

	FR	W
First downs	6	8
Rushes-yards	39-166	31-8
Passing yards	5	129
Passes-Comp-Int	1-4-0	12-25-2
Punts-Avg	3-40	6-26
Fumbles lost	6-2	3-2
Penalties-yards	5-20	5-39

INDIVIDUAL STATISTICS

RUSHING: Ross—Lindsey 18-79-1.
Whitmer—Eric Grover 10-26.

PASSING: Ross—Coonrod 1-3-5.
Whitmer—Merideth 10-18-125-2.

RECEIVING: Ross—Liggins 1-5. Whitmer-Garrow 8-78.

Records: Ross 7-0 (4-0), Whitmer 1-6 (1-2).

ROSS LITTLE GIANTS (7-0) at MANSFIELD SENIOR TYGERS (1-6)

When: Friday, 7:30 p.m.
Where: Mansfield.
Radio: WFRO-AM 900 (Jerry Reiding/John Cullen).

Last week: Ross beat Whitmer, 17-0; Mansfield Senior beat Marion Harding, 8-0.

Directions to Mansfield Senior: From Fremont, take 20 east to Norwalk, then 61 south. At Shelby, take 39 south to Trumble Road. Turn right and travel 2-3 miles to the Fourth Street intersection, and the stadium is on the left side.

Mansfield Senior players to watch: Junior QB Jereme Butts, DL Earl Dandy, ILB Jermaine Bradley.

You should know: The unbeaten Little Giants play a team which is nearly winless. The Tygers scored on their opening drive and held on for an 8-0 win against Marion Harding in Week 7, but that's the only victory for coach Stan Jefferson's team. "They have a lot of talented individuals, but they haven't played many games as a team," Ross coach Dan Pallante said, noting that the Tygers have lost to some top teams. The Fremont Ross-Mansfield Senior matchup is a throwback to the days of the Buckeye Conference, but this Tygers team is young and mistake-prone. Butts leads an offense with a similar style to Sandusky and the Tygers have gained 719 yards on the ground and 636 through the air. Butts has thrown nine interceptions in 115 pass attempts. To stop the option, Pallante said his team "has to play assignment football." The Mansfield Senior defense is led by Dandy and Bradley. "They're big and they really run to the football," Pallante said. Ross continues to win with rushing yards and defense. The Little Giants are second in the Great Lakes League to Findlay in yards per game with 257.1, and Ross allows teams just 142 yards each contest — tops in the league. The Little Giants dropped to fifth in their region in the computer rankings, but Pallante said, "The whole season is in our hands. All we have to do is win."

Ross survives eighth week

Friday	
Fremont Ross.....	12
Mansfield Senior.....	6
Next week	
Findlay at Fremont Ross	
7:30 p.m. Friday	

By JEFF KRAUS

News-Messenger correspondent

MANSFIELD — Josh Lozano's first interception gave Fremont Ross the opportunity to win. His second made sure they didn't lose it.

Lozano, a 5-11 sophomore, intercepted two of Mansfield Senior quarterback Jereme Butts's passes as Fremont Ross beat the Tygers 12-6 Friday night to remain perfect in eight games.

The Little Giants got 90 yards rushing from Brent Agnew and two Michael Hickey field goals to become the first Ross team to start the season 8-0 since Chuck Shuff's 1973 team.



AGNEW

"We hurt them with the option," Ross coach Dan Pallante said after watching his team chew up 29 minutes and 54 seconds of clock time. "We knew we must get outside to be successful. The option kept us in the game tonight."

For the second straight week Mansfield (1-6) scored on its first possession. The Tygers, who beat Marion Harding 8-0 a week ago, capped a six-play, 68-yard drive when Butts hit DaShawn Luttrell with a 31-yard scoring strike.

After Mansfield failed on its extra point kick attempt, the Little Giants answered with the first of Hickey's field goals, this one a 38-yard boot with 4:05 left in the opening quarter.

The next score came with 8:56 left as Hickey connected on a 34-yard field goal to close out the first-half scoring at 6-6.

Neither team scored in the third quarter, though Ross continued to hit the outside via Aaron Coonrod to Brent Agnew options. Ross finished the game with 203 yards rushing.

With 45 seconds left in the third quarter, Lozano made his first interception inside Ross territory. The Little Giants responded with an 11-play, 55-yard scoring drive which took 5:10 off the clock. Agnew's 35-yard dash to the Mansfield 5 was the key play, and Eric Lindsey took it in from 3 yards out for Ross's only touchdown with 7:34 left in the game. Hickey's PAT was blocked.

Though Demetris Simms also had a pick, Pallante felt his defense was flat.

"We didn't look good defensively in practice and it showed at times tonight," he said.

See ROSS, B3

Ross 12, Mansfield Senior 6

Fremont Ross	3	3	0	6	—	12
Mansfield Senior	6	0	0	0	—	6

First quarter

Mansfield—DaShawn Luttrell, 31 pass from Jereme Butts, (kick failed), 9:20

Ross—Michael Hickey, 38 field goal, 4:05

Second quarter

Ross—Hickey, 34 field goal, 8:56

Fourth quarter

Ross—Eric Lindsey, 3 run (kick blocked), 7:34

	FR	MS
First downs	9	13
Rushes-yards	44-203	28-106
Passing yards	3	169
Passes-Comp-Int.....	1-4-0	10-18-3
Punts-Avg	3-48	3-19
Fumbles lost	1-0	0-0
Penalties-yards	5-45	7-35

INDIVIDUAL STATISTICS

RUSHING: Ross—Lindsey 16-36, Brent Agnew 9-90, Demetris Simms 8-52, Aaron Coonrod 6-6, Josh Liggins 5-19. Mansfield—David Davis 3-4, Butts 13-67, Littleton Lloyd 4-14, Jessie Wilson 2-4, Lashan Edmonds 5-16, Adam Burdette 1-1.

PASSING: Ross—Coonrod 1-4-3-0. Mansfield—Butts 10-18-3-169

RECEIVING: Ross—Keith Pert 1-3; Luttrell 3-76.

Records: Ross 8-0, Mansfield Sr. 1-7.

Ross vs. Findlay,

Two area teams are off to their school's best starts in 24 years: Fremont Ross and Gibsonburg. A 10-0 season would be good, Gibsonburg coach Tom Peiffer said, but he's still preaching "1-0" to his team. "You can't get to perfection without 1-0," he said. The Golden Bears host Genoa Friday. Ross hopes to avoid a recurrence of its 1973 game against Findlay, when the Trojans ended Ross's last 8-0 string.

FINDLAY TROJANS (6-2) at ROSS LITTLE GIANTS (8-0)

When: Friday, 7:30 p.m.

Where: Harmon Stadium.

Radio: WFRO-AM 900 (Jerry Reidling/John Cullen).

Last week: Fremont Ross beat Mansfield Senior, 49-7; Findlay beat Toledo Whitmer, 24-21.

Findlay players to watch: RB Demetrius Ball, QB Ryan Hite, CB Marc Bosworth, DE Ed Przedwiecki, K Nick Lotz.

You should know: Findlay is the toughest opponent Fremont Ross has played in weeks, and Ross coach Dan Pallante couldn't be happier about it. "It's a coach's nightmare to be the heavily-favored team," Pallante said, referring to wins against Oregon Clay and Mansfield Senior. Wins against Findlay and Great Lakes League leading Sandusky would likely vault Ross into the playoffs. "You hope, at the beginning of the year and during two-a-days, you hope you're sitting in this position." On offense, Findlay hands the ball to Ball. He has already broke Findlay's single-season rushing mark with 1,388 yards. "They're not a big possession team, they are a big play team," Pallante said of the Trojans. "As Ball goes, so goes Findlay." The Trojans lead the league in offense with 305 yards per game. The Little Giants are first in defense, limiting teams to 158.5 yards each contest. Both teams kickers are solid, but Findlay has the edge. Lotz has made eight field goals — including a 46-yarder — and only five of his 44 kickoffs have been returned this year. "We barely practiced kickoff returns this week," Pallante said. Ross kicker Mike Hickey has made six field goals, including two last week against Mansfield.

MOHAWK WARRIORS at ST. JOE CRIMSON

When: Saturday, 7:30 p.m.

Where: Harmon Stadium.

Radio: WFRO-AM 900 (Jerry Reidling/John Cullen).

Last week: St. Joe beat Findlay, 49-7; Mohawk beat Toledo Whitmer, 21-14, 2OT.

Mohawk players to watch: QB Blair, RB Mike Chester.

You should know: St. Joe's Wonderly did not waste time motivating his players for motivation. "We don't have to do a heck of a lot," Wonderly said. "We're playing for the championship. That's why you play sports." Both teams are in the league play. Time saved could be well spent vs. Findlay's Streaks defense, which has held down Blair's pass-catchers. Blair, who played quarterback last year, was the Midland League offensive Player of the Year. He has 104 catches for 104 yards in his first year. "We win against Tiffin Calve, we scored 219 points this season. The 243 tallied by St. Joe is what they can score touchdowns," Blair said. "They feel they can beat anybody." But Mohawk has the best defense, giving up only one touchdown game. The Warriors run the defense, which is good for a team which likes to see a rusher Devin Pollick on the field. He has won two overtime games.

CLYDE FLIER at EDISON CHARLOTTE

When: Friday, 7:30 p.m.

Where: Milan.

Radio: WFRO-FM 900 (John Cullen/Kerns/Rob Kerr).

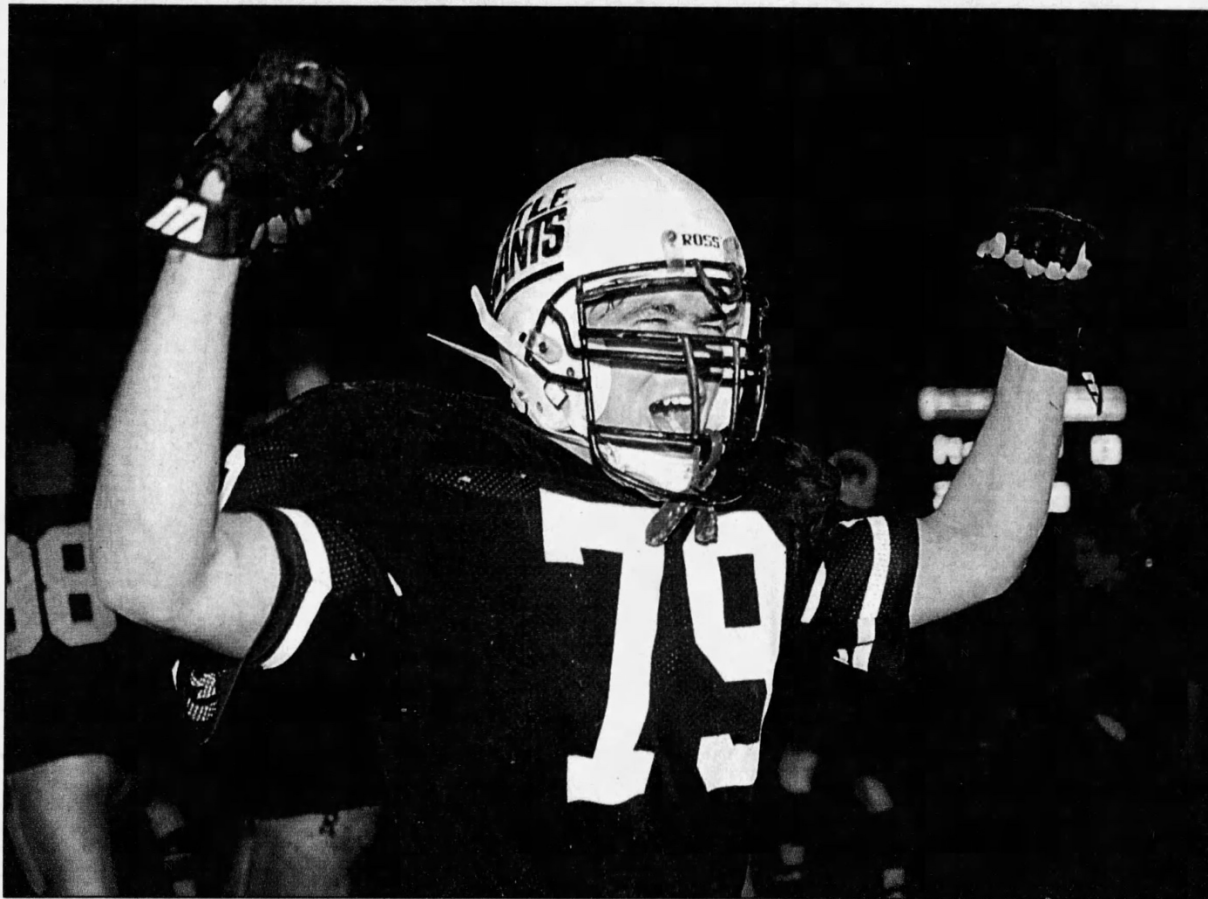
Last week: Clyde lost to St. Joe, 20-7; St. Mary's beat Edison, 21-14.

Edison players to watch: QB Deeher, FB Kelly Wlodarski, LB NT Chris Warren, LB Rickey.

Clyde injury report: Clyde is still out with nerve injury in his right arm.

You should know: Clyde is still out with nerve injury in his right arm.

Ross escapes, 14-13



J.R. ADKINS of Fremont Ross celebrates the Little Giants' 14-13 win against Findlay Friday at Harmon Stadium. Ross is 9-0 entering next week's Sandusky game. News-Messenger/Andrew Morrison

Missed FG enables Giants to stay unbeaten

By JEFF KRAUS

News-Messenger correspondent

Maybe Fremont Ross coach Dan Pallante brought some luck with him from Youngstown Boardman.

Pallante's Little Giants remained unbeaten when it escaped with a 14-13 Great Lakes League win against Findlay at Harmon Stadium. Ross entertained the home crowd with their typical stellar defense, run-heavy offense and plenty of drama.

Findlay nearly won the game

Friday

Fremont Ross	14
Findlay	13

Next

Fremont Ross at Sandusky
Friday, 7:30 p.m.

in the final minute.

Trailing by the game's final margin with 6:04 to play, the Trojans got the ball on their own 10-yard line after a Ross punt. Findlay employed a three wide receiver offense and moved the ball down the field. Mixing the

pass and run, the Trojans gained 86 yards on 12 plays before having a first and goal from the Fremont 4.

Three more plays netted 0 yards, however, and Findlay was faced with a fourth down at the 4.

Findlay head coach Cliff Hite sent out field goal kicker Nick Lotz for a seemingly easy 22 yard field goal with only 42 seconds left. Lotz, a 6-foot-2 senior who has hit from 46 yards out this year, missed right.

"Two great teams played their

hearts out tonight," Hite said. "I'm unbelievably proud of our team. We played like champions, and we'll bounce back."

For Ross, the win means the Little Giants are unbeaten after nine games for the first time since the 1983 team went 8-0-1 in their first 9 games. That team tied Toledo St. Francis in the third week of the season before losing to that year's state champ Cincinnati Princeton in the playoffs.

See ROSS, B3

Ross wins one-point game on Senior Night

Continued from B1

"We had problems with this team early on, but that built character and strength. Our kids have been playing their tails off," said Pallante.

A big part of that equation is defense. Ross limited Trojan tailback and GLL rushing leader Demetrius Ball to 47 yards on 20 carries — 32 of which came on Findlay's final drive when the Trojans spread the field with their wideouts.

Findlay used special teams to get its first lead in the third quarter. With 8:15 left, Josh Smith returned a Mike Hickey punt 63 yards for a touchdown and after Lotz's extra point the Trojans led 13-6.

Findlay later got the ball back on its own 20 with 11:57 to go in the fourth period.

But three Trojan plays lost three yards and Findlay sent out Lotz for a punt at their own 17. Little Giant senior Brett Hufford fought through the Findlay line and blocked the kick. Hufford's play gave the Little Giants a first down at the Trojan 14.

Three plays later Eric Lindsey scored his second touchdown of the night from four yards out and the Little Giants now trailed 13-12 with 9:15 left. Pallante sent out Hickey for the extra point to tie the game, but Findlay jumped off-

sides during the extra point attempt. With the ball now placed at the one-yard line, Pallante gambled. Lindsey bulled in and Ross led 14-13 with 9:15 left. Both teams traded punts before Findlay got the ball back for the drive which ended in the missed field goal.

Though happy with the win on

Senior Night, Pallante was irked by the officiating.

"The refs were too picky," said Pallante, whose team had three scores called back. "In high school football, you can call holding on every play. It was like the refs were more important than the game. They nearly took the game away from us tonight."

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Reg. \$316.99 (LH-48)

Football

High School

Ross 14, Findlay 13

Findlay	0	6	7	0	—	13
Fremont Ross	6	0	0	8	—	14

First quarter

Ross—Lindsey, 1 run (kick failed), :27

Second quarter

Findlay-Hull, 19 pass from Hite (kick failed), 1:59

Third quarter

Findlay—Smith, 63 punt return (Lotz kick), 8:15

Fourth quarter

Ross—Lindsey, 4 run (Lindsey run), 9:15

	N	Fi	FR
First downs	7	7	
Rushes-yards	30-35	44-158	2
Passing yards	98	31	
Passes-Comp-Int	7-8-1	2-6-0	
Punts-Avg	8-36	8-32	8
Fumbles lost	2-1	3-2	
Penalties-yards	6-52	10-65	

INDIVIDUAL STATISTICS

RUSHING: Findlay—Ball 20-47.
Ross—Lindsey 16-86.

PASSING: Findlay-Hite 7-18-98-1.
Ross—Coonrod 2-6-31.

RECEIVING: Findlay-Baxter 2-40, Ball 2-22. Ross-Liggins 1-24, Hufford 1-7.

Records: Ross 9-0 (5-0), Findlay 6-3 (4-2).

**FREMONT ROSS LITTLE GIANTS
(9-0)**

at SANDUSKY (7-2)

When: Friday, 7:30 p.m.

Where: Strobel Field, Sandusky

Radio: WFRO-AM 900 with Jerry Reiding and John Cullen.

Last Week: Ross edged Findlay 14-13; Sandusky lost to Columbus DeSales 28-7.

Sandusky players to watch: FB Casell .Cousey, TB Darcell Irby, and L Greg Hall.

Injuries: None to report for Ross.

Directions to Sandusky: Take Route 6 East into Sandusky. Follow Route 6 past Margaritaville and turn right, passing Toft's Ice Cream. At intersection with Route 101, continue straight onto Perkins Avenue. At intersection with Route 4, turn left (there's a BP Gas on the far left corner). School is on the right, field is on the left.

You should know: If you like tradition, then this game's for you. Ross has had only one losing season in the last 15 years. Sandusky made the state semifinals in 1990 and has gone 43-17 since under coach Larry Cook, who is 89-48 overall. Ross lived dangerously last week against Findlay. A missed field goal by Nick Lotz from 22 yards was the difference. Ross has been tough against the run. Last week, the Little Giants held Findlay running back Demetrious Ball in check. Ross is in the middle of the playoff hunt. The Little Giants are third in Division I, Region 2. Ross trails Canton McKinley and Toledo St. Francis and is ahead of North Canton Hoover. Ross has benefited from two Medina losses the last two weeks. The Bees were ranked first in Region 2 recently but have lost to Brecksville and Strongsville in Cleveland-area football the last two weeks. Medina is sixth in the region, just behind Toledo St. John's. Even though Ross is in the middle of the playoff hunt, head coach Dan Pallante is thinking league title first. "I think when you sit down at the beginning of the season, winning the league is a priority. We've never talked about the playoffs. If you take one game at a time, those things take care of itself," said Pallante. The first-year Ross coach does not feel Sandusky's 28-7 loss last week to DeSales is a sign of weakness. "DeSales is a great football team. They beat Columbus Watertson, who we scrimmaged against. They'll bounce back," said Pallante.

PERFECT 10

Ross whips rival Sandusky to complete 10-0 regular season



AARON ROOT (67) and **Keith Pert** (90) of Fremont Ross sandwich Sandusky's **Cassell Causey** to knock the ball loose Friday at Sandusky. The Little Giants recovered and capitalized one play later when **Aaron Coonrod** hit **Brett Hufford** for the game's first score. Ross went on to a 21-6 win for its first 10-0 season in 41 years.

News-Messenger/Andrew Morrison

Stingy Giant D stops Sandusky in GLL clincher

Week 10 results

Fremont Ross 21, Sandusky 6
Clyde 35, Port Clinton 7
Elmwood 46, Gibsonburg 44, 2OT
Woodmore 28, Eastwood 22
Lakota 12, Lake 7
Oak Harbor 29, Perkins 14
Bellevue 26, Bucyrus 16
Margaretta 26, St. Mary's 7

Saturday's Game
Seneca East at St. Joe, 7:30 p.m.

Ohio scores, B2

By **JEFF KRAUS**
For The News-Messenger

SANDUSKY —It was a special way to finish what was a special regular season for Fremont Ross.

The Little Giants' 21-6 road win against Sandusky Friday capped off a 10-0 season in which Ross won the Great Lakes League championship and have a shot at qualifying for the state playoffs in coach Dan Pallante's first year. The Little Giants 10-0 year was their first since 1956.

Friday

Fremont Ross21
Sandusky6

But what was truly special was the way the Little Giants handled the Blue Streaks. The Ross defense was stingy against the run, holding Sandusky to 60 yards rushing on 30 carries.

"We have a lot of experience back from last year. Some teams can run on us early, but we adjust on the field," said Pallante.

Ross also made a very surpris-

ing offensive adjustment early in the first quarter. After the defense recovered a Cassell Causey fumble at the Blue Streak 17, the Little Giants did something which brought the visiting crowd to its feet.

On first down at the 17, quarterback Aaron Coonrod dropped back to pass and found Brett Hufford wide open over the middle for a touchdown and a quick Little Giants lead. After Michael Hickey's extra point, Ross lead 7-0 with 9:35 left in the first quar-

ter.

The touchdown pass was a dramatic change from the normal Ross philosophy of running the football.

"In the red zone, you have an opportunity to throw. People have made fun of our passing game, and there wasn't a better time to throw than there," said Pallante.

Sandusky answered the Ross challenge. The Blue Streaks

See **LITTLE GIANTS**, B3

Little Giants unbeaten under new boss

Continued from B1

marched 69 yards in 16 plays for a touchdown after the Ross kickoff. The series was keyed by a draw play on third-and-7 at the Ross 24 that picked up 7 yards and a first down at the 17. Sandusky scored on fourth-and-goal from the 1 when Causey bulled past a stubborn Little Giants defense with 1:55 left in the first quarter. Sandusky chewed up 7:40 off the clock on the ball-control drive, but couldn't tie the game when Mike Poeschl's extra point was wide right.

Ross extended its advantage in the second quarter.

Tyson Liggins' 11-yard punt return gave the Little Giants field position at the Ross 45. From there, Eric Lindsey did his best Larry Csonka impersonation, rumbling 32 yards down to the Sandusky 23. Two more plays netted 12 yards, and on first down from the 11, Coonrod kept the ball along the right side and

pitched out to Josh Liggins on the option play for an 11-yard touchdown. Hickey added the extra point and Ross led 14-6 with 5:38 left, giving Ross a 14-6 half-time lead.

Ross had a chance at a bigger halftime lead after taking over at the Sandusky 35 with 3:38 remaining in the half following a Blue Streaks punt. The Little Giants moved the ball down to the 29 before facing a fourth down decision. Instead of going for the first down, Pallante opted for a 47-yard but Hickey's attempt was short.

The second half began with a Blue Streak mistake. On the kickoff, Darcel Irby fumbled Hickey's kick out of bounds on the Sandusky 2. With his club pinned deep in its own territory, Sandusky coach Larry Cook tried to surprise Ross with the passing game. The plan backfired when the Little Giants Josh Lozano intercepted Blue Streak signal caller Jeremy Newell's pass at

the Sandusky 42.

With field position again, Ross nailed down the Blue Streak coffin. On third down from the 37, Demetris Simms sprinted into the endzone for the Little Giants third and final touchdown. Hickey added the extra point and Ross was cruising 21-6 with 7:04 left in the third stanza.

From that point on, Sandusky abandoned what little running game they had in favor of its passing game. The Little Giants pass defense, which has given up yardage at times this year, stepped up with three interceptions that ended potential Blue Streak drives.

Facing a possible playoff berth, Pallante is confident and optimistic.

"The way I look at it, all the teams are equal. Anyone can win it," he noted.

If the Little Giants rise to the occasion in the postseason like they did Friday night, Pallante just may be right.

Football

High School^N

Ross 21, Sandusky 6

Ross	7	7	7	0	—	21
Sandusky	6	0	0	0	—	6

First quarter

Ross—Brett Hufford, 17 pass from Aaron Coonrod (Mike Hickey kick), 9:35

Sandusky—Causey, 1 run (kick failed), 1:55

Second quarter

Ross—Josh Liggins, 11 run (Hickey kick), 5:38

Third quarter

Ross—Simms, 37 run (Hickey kick), 7:04

	FR	S
First downs	9	16
Rushes-yards	41-191	30-60
Passing yards	17	159
Passes-Comp-Int.....	1-2-0	12-27-4
Punts-Avg	5-42	3-32
Fumbles lost	0-0	2-1
Penalties-yards	3-35	1-5

INDIVIDUAL STATISTICS

RUSHING: Ross—Lindsey 17-77.
Sandusky—Aaron 6-29.

PASSING: Team—Coonrod 1-2-0-17.
Sandusky—Newell 12-27-4-159.

RECEIVING: Ross—Hufford 1-17.
Sandusky—Irby 4-52.

Records: Ross 10-0 (6-0), Sandusky 7-3 (5-1).

Ross finishes 10-0

Ross rips
Blue Streaks
21-6; first
unbeaten
season
since 1956

News-Messenger reports

SANDUSKY — For the first time in 41 years, Fremont Ross has a perfect football team.

The Little Giants defeated rival Sandusky 21-6 Friday night at Strobel Field to finish the regular season 10-0 and clinch the Great Lakes League championship. The win, which will likely vault the Little Giants into the playoffs, set off chants of "Undeclared," and "GLL," from the Ross players who stood outside their locker-room after the game.

The players also doused first-year coach Dan Pallante with Gatorade.

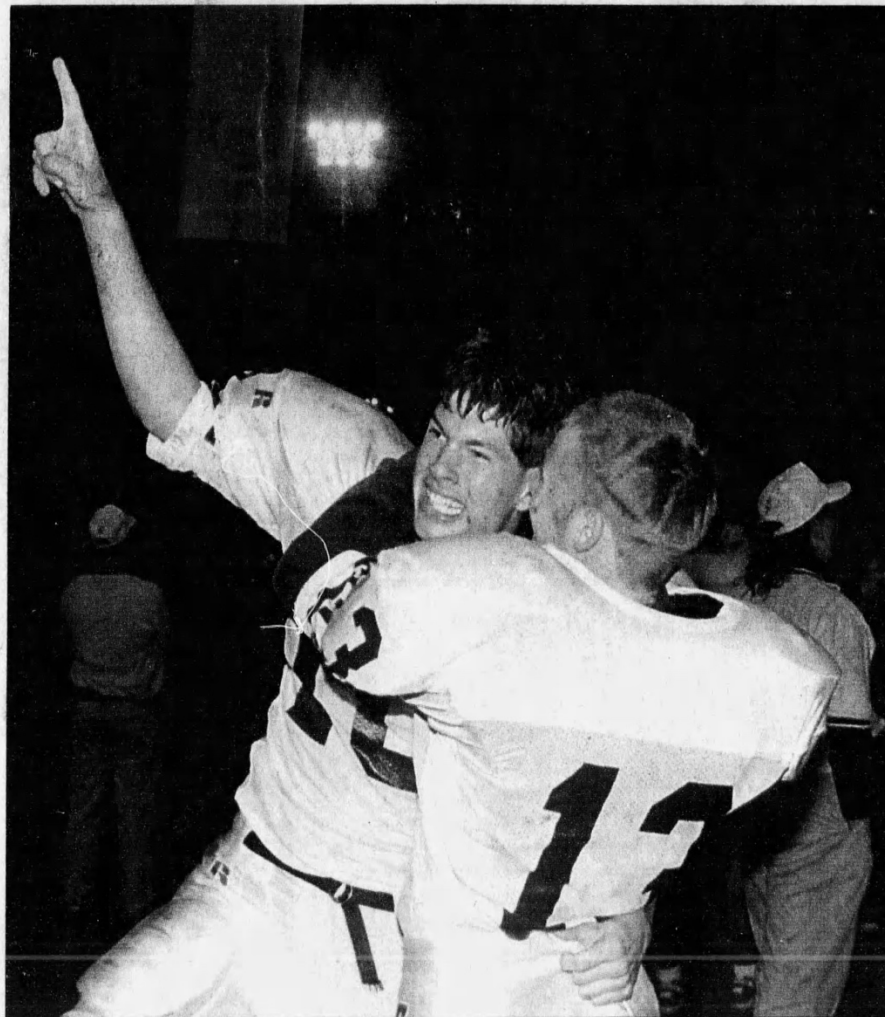
"We're peaking at the right time," said Pallante, hopeful of a playoff berth. "The way I look at it, all the teams in the region are equal. Anyone can win."

The Little Giants' last 10-0 season came in 1956, which followed another 10-0 year in 1955.

Recently, Ross went 9-0-1 in the 1983 regular season and beat Sandusky in the playoffs before losing in Week 12 against Princeton to end the year 10-1-1.

The 1993 team went 9-1 and in 1974, 9-0-1.

This year's GLL title is



News-Messenger/Andrew Morrison

FREMONT ROSS seniors Brett Hufford, left, and Mike Hickey celebrate the win over Sandusky Friday night.

the school's third overall and first with an unbeaten league record. The 1994 and '95 teams won despite losses to Fostoria.

If Ross makes the playoffs, to be announced Sunday night, it will be its first appearance since 1994.

**Details of game,
photos — B1**

Second season starts Saturday

Ross plays state's 8th-ranked team

On radio

Fremont Ross and St. Joe will each have their games broadcast Saturday on local radio. Here is the schedule:

■ Ross vs. Toledo St. Francis, 7 p.m. kickoff (6:45 pregame), WFRO-AM 900 (Jerry Reidling and John Cullen).

■ St. Joe vs. Woodmore, 7 p.m. kickoff (6:45 pregame), WFRO-FM 99.1 (Jon Kerns and Rob Kerr).

By JEFF KRAUS
For The News-Messenger

Fans of wide-open, high-scoring offenses should stay away from Saturday night's Division I playoff clash between Fremont Ross and Toledo St. Francis.

The successes of those teams are based more on stingy defenses and running the ball.

St. Francis (9-1) plays Ross (10-0) at 7 p.m. at Oregon.

The eighth-ranked Knights use a Pro-I offense featuring running back Ed Price.

"We try to run him 25 times per game," St. Francis coach Dick Cromwell said.

Style of play can impact a team's ruggedness, Ross coach Dan Pallante said.

"I think running the football makes kids tougher," Pallante said. "All I know is the Wing-T.

The first job I had, the guy I worked for ran a lot of Wing-T characteristics."

Pallante has said he has confidence in his team's passing attack, despite completing just eight passes in 36 attempts. Against Sandusky in Week 10, the Little Giants' only pass completion was a 17-yard touchdown.

One reason for recent optimism in the passing game could be because of the return of split end Brett Hufford, who missed seven weeks with a broken wrist. The position switch of Tyson Liggins from tight end to split end has also helped, Pallante said.

"We play a '50' defense," Cromwell said. "We're not going to change what we do. Ross runs very well. The quar-



News-Messenger/Andrew Morrison

AARON COONROD runs the ball during Ross's 21-6 win Friday against Sandusky. The Little Giants quarterback leads the team against Toledo St. Francis Saturday night at Oregon.

See GIANTS, B2

Giants, Knights meet in playoffs

Continued from B1

terback runs the option well. And when they do throw, they throw it well."

One of the Knights' victories this year was against Div. I state champion Lima Senior, a 7-6 St. Francis win.

"We had high expectations this year," Cromwell said. "I know Ross did, too. It was a big lift to go down and beat Lima."

The only Knight loss was to St. Ignatius in a rainy game ended early in the second half because of poor weather. The Wildcats were leading St. Francis at the time 26-7 before Ignatius was told to head back to Cleveland.

Ross suffers first loss

St. Francis ends dream season 27-0

By BRIAN SPIESS
Sports editor

OREGON — Somebody finally spoiled the surprise.

Eight months and 10 games into the Dan Pallante Era at Fremont Ross, the Little Giants suffered their first loss, 27-0 to Toledo St. Francis in a Division I playoff game at Oregon Clay Memorial Stadium.

With the shutout victory, the Knights (10-1) advance to the regional finals against Canton McKinley. Ross's season ends at 10-1.

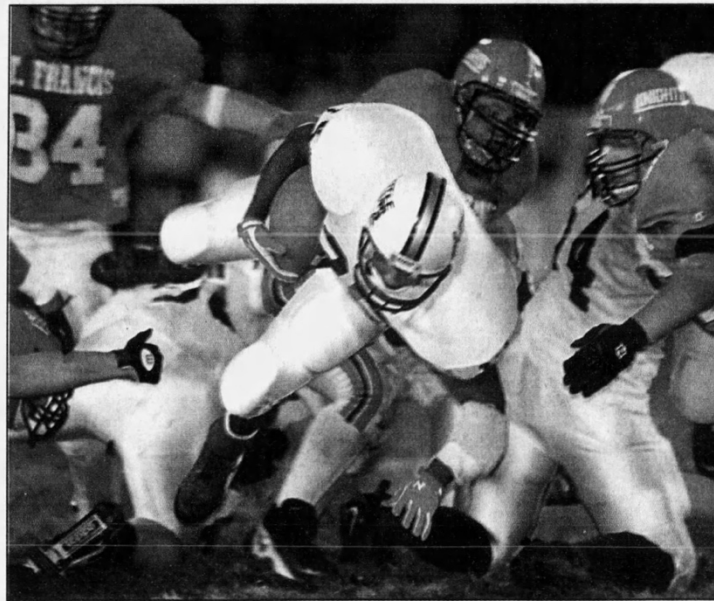
"Everybody left their hearts on the field just like coach asked," Ross senior Demetris Simms said. "We gave it our all."

"This whole season, with a new coach, the whole thing has been a surprise," Pallante said. "That's a credit to the senior class. This senior class returned the tradition to Fremont Ross football."

Playing the school's first playoff game in three years in front of a sea of Purple & White which more than filled its side of the bleachers, Pallante admitted his team was tight.

"We didn't bring the same team that we had the other 10 games," said Pallante, who came to Fremont after four years as head coach of Youngstown Boardman. "We need playoff experience."

St. Francis took charge first, driving 80 yards on 10 plays to



News-Messenger/Andrew Morrison

ERIC LINDSEY of Ross dives through the line during second-quarter action Saturday night.

open the game with a score. After quarterback Brian Cromwell completed three third-down passes to sustain the drive, tailback Ed Price shoved his way to the end zone for a 1-yard touchdown. Pete Cromly's first point-after kick made the score 7-0 with 6:50 to play in the first quarter.

"They're so strong on defense,

and that first score gave our kids a boost," St. Francis coach Dick Cromwell said.

"It was like when you have two great prize fighters, and our nose got broken and we were knocked to the canvas," Pallante said of the Knights' first score.

The Little Giants appeared back in the fight early in the second quarter, when sophomore

defensive back Josh Lozano intercepted a Brian Cromwell pass and returned it to the St. Francis 44.

Fullback Eric Lindsey and quarterback Aaron Coonrod took turns carrying the ball until Lindsey picked up the team's first first down on a third-and-1 run to the 33. Four plays later, a defensive pass interference

penalty on a throw intended for Brett Hufford gave the Little Giants the ball at the St. Francis 20.

Lindsey gained one yard on first down, setting up what Pallante called the game's turning point.

Coonrod threw again for Hufford, but St. Francis free safety Ed House stepped in front for the first of his three interceptions and returned it to the 33.

"The kid literally took it right out of Hufford's hands," Pallante said.

Despite his heroics, House was more concerned with run defense.

"We wanted first to stop their three great running backs," House said, referring to Lindsey, Simms and Brent Agnew.

"They were really aggressive," Simms said. "They came off the ball hard. I give them credit, they did a good job."

Ross's defense forced St. Francis into its second punt of the game, but a muffed return by Tyson Liggins pinned the Little Giants deep in their territory. When that drive stalled and the Little Giants punted, the Knights got the ball at the Ross 41 with 1:28 remaining in the second quarter.

After losing one yard on three plays, Cromwell connected with House on a 24-yard pass down the left sideline to the 18. He looked for House twice more, resulting in an 11-yard reception and a pass interference call against Simms to put the ball on the 3 with 24 seconds left.

Cromwell then found Kevin McMahon wide open on the right side of the end zone to give his

See ST. FRANCIS, B3

News-Messenger/Andrew Morrison

The Knights didn't let up. Ross was stopped on three plays and punted after the second-half kickoff. St. Francis then used a 45-yard gallop by Price as a springboard to a six-play, 69-yard scoring drive. Cromwell threw to House from nine yards out for the team's third touchdown.

"We wanted to make sure they didn't get back in it," coach Cromwell said.

A botched option play forced the Little Giants to punt on their next drive, and Ross's Jorel Heidelberg had the ball knocked loose on a punt return with 1:14 left in the third quarter.

The Knights responded by marching 41 yards, most of it on Price's 31-yard catch and run on a wide open screen to the right side with 10:50 left in the game. The point-after was blocked, but the Knights led 27-0.

Ross reached St. Francis territory twice in the fourth, but House interceptions ended both drives, sending some of Ross fans to the exits early.

"I'm surprised at the score," coach Cromwell said. "We're both pretty good defensive teams and I thought it'd be one touchdown, 7-6 or something."

The loss came on the same field where Ross's 14-game win streak started with a 32-20 win against Clay on Oct. 11, 1996. Last year's team won the final four games under former coach Rex Radeloff, who had announced his resignation after a loss to Fostoria.

In March Pallante was hired. "I moved almost three hours from the place where I grew up for 34 years ... and this team and this community gave me a place to call home."

The 1997 Little Giants won the school's first outright Great Lakes League title with its first unbeaten regular season since 1956.

"Not in a million years," would Pallante of guessed that, he said. "In my eyes there was so much work to do."

Sometime during the summer

the players began to believe in themselves, Pallante said, which translated into practicing harder and running harder.

Eleven seniors will graduate. But 38 underclassmen, including Coonrod and Agnew, will be back seeking to improve on Saturday's playoff result.

"The most important thing a team can do is learn to win," Pallante said. "And our kids have done it."

ROSS NOTE: With a four-yard run in the fourth quarter, Lindsey reached the 1,000-yard mark.

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DUELER

3 DAYS

St. Francis 27, Ross 0

At Oregon Clay

Fremont Ross	0	0	0	0	—	0
St. Francis	7	7	7	6	—	27

First quarter

St. Francis—Ed Price, 1 run (Pete Cromly kick), 6:50

Second quarter

St. Francis—Kevin McMahon, 3 pass from Brian Cromwell (Cromly kick), :20

Third quarter

St. Francis—Ed House, 9 pass from Cromwell (Cromly kick), 7:41

Fourth quarter

St. Francis—Price, 31 pass from Cromwell (Kick blocked), 10:50

	FR	SF
First downs	8	11
Rushes-yards	35-110	34-124
Passing yards	38	178
Passes-Comp-Int.	11-3-3	18-11-1
Punts-Avg	5-36.8	3-41.3
Fumbles lost	1-1	1-1
Penalties-yards	2-8	1-15

INDIVIDUAL STATISTICS

RUSHING: Fremont Ross—Eric Lindsey 11-44, Demetris Simms 11-34, Brent Agnew 5-12, Aaron Coonrod 7-18, Weston Hine 1-2.

PASSING: Fremont Ross—Aaron Coonrod 3-11-3—38.

RECEIVING: Fremont Ross—Brett Hufford 2-33, Agnew 1-5.

Records: Fremont Ross 10-1, St. Francis 10-1.

Pallante voted best Div. I coach

By BRIAN SPIESS
Sports editor

Fremont Ross's 21-6 win against Sandusky in Week 10 secured a perfect regular season, an outright Great Lakes League title and a playoff berth.

It also helped coach Dan Pallante win another fan.

"I think it's remarkable what he accomplished in his first year in a new school district," Sandusky coach Larry Cook said of Pallante, who on Thursday was named Northwest Ohio's Division I Coach of the Year.

"That's great, he deserves it," Cook said.

The postseason honor caps a wild eight months for Pallante, who was selected to replace former Ross coach Rex Radeloff in March 1996. Since that time, he instilled a new offense and defense, overcame the two-game suspensions of six players and led the team to its best regular season record in 41 years.

The Little Giants perfect run ended Saturday, however, with a 27-0 loss to Toledo St. Francis in the playoffs.

"It really doesn't mean too much," Pallante said when told of the award Thursday night. "I'd much rather still be in the playoffs."

Pallante, who played college football at Youngstown State before coaching at Youngstown Boardman High School, said the award proves that teamwork leads to success.

"The reason I coach football is you can never achieve something like that by yourself," said Pallante, who was a league coach of the year in 1995. "I wasn't a good enough athlete to go undefeated, but working with great athletes and a dedicated staff you can do that. That (award) belongs to the kids and the staff."



DAN PALLANTE, shown instructing Fremont Ross quarterback Aaron Coonrod during Saturday's playoff loss, won the Northwest Ohio Division I Coach of the Year Award Thursday.

The players worked so hard, Pallante said, that he had to alter his coaching methods during the 10-1 campaign.

"There were some times when we really worked the kids hard and they were almost at their breaking point with a new system and all the new ideas," Pallante said. "Rather than flying off the handle I was just real patient."

So Pallante implemented Thursday touch football games.

"I started doing things to make it more fun," he said. "I felt the kids were a little too tense. So every Thursday we'd play touch football and the kids got to relax and throw the football around."

"The kids started seeing the rewards for their hard work," Pallante said. "It was about midway through the season when the players started laughing a little bit during practice. It's hard to go through it if it's drudgery. Once we got out of that mode, then we really took off."

For athletic director Art Bucci the award was a validation of what he already believed — the selection committee hired the right man for the job.

"He's done a tremendous job here. ... With the whole new offense, new defense and new coaches and moving into a new community," Bucci said. "The

whole community and the kids have found something. Even though we got beat against St. Francis, the look on the kids faces the last two games against Findlay and Sandusky you could see they were achieving and believing in what they can do."

"I commend (Pallante) and his staff on doing a tremendous job," Bucci said.

Said Cook: "A remarkable job putting together a football team in a short time. They were well-coached, well-disciplined and well-prepared. They just did not make mistakes."

And apparently neither did the Ross selection committee.

Pallante won his honor after leading Fremont Ross to its first playoff appearance in three years and its first perfect season since 1956.

"I'm one of those people that kind of have trouble with compliments," Pallante said from his home Thursday after being told of the award. "An award like that belongs to the team and the coaching staff."

Ross was also represented by running back Eric Lindsey (first team), offensive linemen Chris Shull (first team) and Frank Kaiser (second team), punter Mike Hickey (first team), defensive lineman Aaron Root (second team), linebacker Jesse Sandoval (first team) and defensive back Demetris Simms (second team).

Awards

Great Lakes League football

Offensive lineman of the year: Dustin Marshall, Findlay, Defensive lineman of the year: Chris Shull, Fremont, Offensive back of the year: Demetrius Ball, Findlay, Defensive back of the year: Cassell Causey, Sandusky, GLL Coach of the year: Dan Pallante, Fremont Ross.

FIRST TEAM

OFFENSE—Adam Pfeiffer, Clay, Sr., 6-4 200, Chanc' Register, Fostoria, Sr., 6'0" 190, J. R. Adkins, Fremont, Sr., 5'10" 185, Todd Birie, Whitmer, Sr., 6'1" 230, Eric Lindsey, Fremont, Sr., 6'0" 205, Demetrius Ball, Findlay, Sr., 5'11" 186, Scott Feldman, Bedford, Sr., 6'2" 278, Dustin Marshall, Findlay, Sr., 6'3" 278, Gregg Hall, Sandusky, Sr., 6'2" 248, John Garrow, Whitmer Jr., 5'9" 145, Bobby Manuel, Sandusky, Sr., 6'3" 285.

DEFENSE—Dustin Ulrich, Clay, Sr., 6'0" 200, Omar Abou-Arab, Sr., 6'1" 220, Chris Shull, Fremont, Sr., 5'11" 248, Marc Bosworth, Findlay Sr., 5'9" 165, Bill Eiseman, Bedford, Sr., 6'4" 245, Cassell Causey, Sandusky Sr., 6-0 240, John Yates, Whitmer, Sr., 6'1" 230, Aaron Coonrod, Fremont, Jr., 6'3" 190, Darcel Irby, Sandusky Sr., 5'10" 197, Jesse Sandoval, Fremont, Sr., 5'10" 187, Mike Fitzgerald, Findlay, Sr., 6'0" 190. PLACE-KICKER—Nick Lotz, Findlay, Sr., 6-2 212, PUNTER—Mike Hickey, Fremont, Sr., 5'9" 175.

SECOND TEAM

OFFENSE—Zeb Wedge, Fostoria, Jr., 5'9" 160, Ron Henneman, Clay, Sr., 6'2" 175, Ben Bucher, Findlay, Sr., 5'11" 205, Orlando Williamson, Sandusky, Sr., 6'3" 230, Ben Sheriff, Whitmer, Jr., 6'3" 230, Demetrius Simms, Fremont, Sr., 6'3" 185, Jeff Hooper, Bedford, Sr., 6'2" 185, Dan Steingraber, Clay, Sr., 5'11" 180, Tyson Liggins, Fremont, Jr., 6'3" 212, Vernon Seavers, Sandusky, Sr., 5'9" 222, DeMarcus Alexander, Sandusky, Sr., 5'5" 185.

DEFENSE—Cory Eckelberry, Fostoria, Jr., 6'3" 260, Jamie Rose, Whitmer, Sr., 5'9" 155, Ben Warnke, Clay, Sr., 6'2" 170, Aaron Root, Fremont, Sr., 5'10" 230, Josh Liggins, Fremont, Jr., 5'10" 210, Damaris Walls, Sandusky, Sr., 5'6" 156, Ed Przedwiecki, Findlay, Jr., 5'11" 215, Mike Nash, Bedford, Jr., 5'10" 140, Josh Lozano, Fremont, Soph., 5'9" 175, Jason Rhoads, Findlay, Jr., 5'11" 188, Brandon Sartor, Sandusky, Sr., 6'1" 210, PUNTER—Jason Zess, Sandusky, Sr., 6'1" 195.

PLACEKICKER—Mike Poeschl, Sandusky, Sr., 6'3" 195.

SPECIAL RECOGNITION—Clay: Mike Palmer, Findlay; Matt Draper, Tony Ritzler, Fremont; Tom Nowak.

HONORABLE MENTION

BEDFORD: John Mikesell, Scott Opdyke, Clark Main, Kevin Stock, Mike Moran, Chris Streidl, CLAY: Ryan Donley, Andy Schlageter, Bob Motter, Eric Hugueley, Chris Kadlick, Josh Vieth, FINDLAY: Ryan Hite, Josh Smith, Mike Iriti, Owen Merrill, David Gallegos, Scott Kidwell, FOSTORIA: Orlando Barrientes, Mike Burke, Cory Freshour, Ryan Gerritsen, Greg Fleming, FREMONT: Keith Pert, Brett Hufford, Frank Kiser, Brent Agnew, Brian Hill, Jorel Heidelberg, SANDUSKY: Jeremy Newell, Sean Neer, Mike Smith, Curt Romp, Shonsai Aaron, Steve Stewart, WHITMER: Eric Grover, Mike Meridieth, Kerry Drake, Sean Salah, Brian Lenix, Brian Dock.

PREP FOOTBALL

ALL-STATE

DIVISION I

First Team

OFFENSE: Ends—Jeff Lerner, Cleve. St. Ignatius, 6-foot-1, 185 pounds, Senior; Matt Campbell, Massillon Perry, 6-3, 220, Sr. Linemen—Mike Munoz, Cin. Moeller, 6-6, 300, Soph.; Jamie Byrum, Grove City, 6-3, 230, Sr.; **Chris Shull, Fremont Ross, 6-0, 248, Sr.;** Chris Tuminello, Youngs. Boardman, 6-5, 270, Sr.; **Nick Tice, St. Francis, 6-0, 295, Sr.** Quarterbacks—Dave Ragone, Cleve. St. Ignatius, 6-4, 205, Sr.; Jeff Ryan, Youngs. Boardman, 6-1, 190, Sr. Backs—DeMarlo Rozier, Canton McKinley, 5-10, 204, Sr.; Jesse Kline, Upper Arlington, 6-2, 210, Jr.; Tony Fisher, Euclid, 6-1, 203, Sr.; Ryan Brewer, Troy, 5-10, 191, Jr.; **Shaun Ball, Findlay, 5-11, 180, Sr.;** Ed Price, St. Francis, 6-0, 202, Sr. Kicker—**Nick Lotz, Findlay, 6-2, 215, Sr.**

DEFENSE: Linemen—Kenny Peterson, Canton McKinley, 6-4, 255, Sr.; Gino Dunlap, Galloway Westland, 6-1, 245, Sr.; Sean Nelson, Kettering Fairmont, 6-4, 240, Sr.; **Bobby Manuel, Sandusky, 6-3, 285, Sr.** Linebackers—Matt Edwards, Cin. Moeller, 6-3, 225, Sr.; **Cassell Causey, Sandusky, 6-1, 240, Sr.** Lawrence Cook, Warren Harding, 6-0, 200, Sr.; Chris Harshbarger, Cleve. St. Ignatius, 6-2, 225, Sr. Backs—Rocky Boiman, Cin. St. Xavier, 6-4, 210, Sr.; Joe Sellers, Lima Sr., 5-10, 175, Sr.; Nate Clements, Shaker Hts., 6-0, 185, Sr.; Josh Kreider, Canton McKinley, 6-1, 190, Sr. Punter—George Stegmiller, Upper Arlington, 6-1, 160, Sr.

Offensive players of the year: Tony Fisher, Euclid; Ryan Brewer, Troy.

Defensive player of the year: Kenny Peterson, Canton McKinley.

Coaches of the year: Thom McDaniels, Canton McKinley; Gerry Stueber, Cleve. E. Tech; Jeff Gafford, Worthington Kilbourne.

SECOND TEAM

Offense: Ends—Robert Redd, Huber Hts. Wayne, 5-11, 165, Sr.; Matt Curry, Canton McKinley, 6-1, 180, Sr. Linemen—John Hill, Springfield South, 6-3, 295, Sr.; Aaron Burger, Dublin Coffman, 6-3, 265, Sr.; **Jason Beier, St. John's, 6-2, 240, Sr.** Ben Lewis, Lima Sr., 6-3, 285, Sr.; Les Thompson, Canton McKinley, 6-2, 225, Sr. Quarterbacks—Micah Faler, Worthington Kilbourne, 6-2, 180, Jr.; Ben McDaniels, Canton McKinley, 6-0, 153, Jr. Backs—Wiz White, Cin. Winton Woods, 5-10, 195, Sr.; Jamar Martin, Canton McKinley, 6-0, 244, Sr.; Wes Cates, Westerville North, 6-0, 180, Sr.; Matt Dallman, Troy, 6-0, 210, Sr. Kicker—Darell Penyak, Grove City, 5-11, 170, Sr.

Defense: Linemen—Jamal White, Cin. Colerain, 6-3, 207, Sr.; Trent Karn, Piqua, 6-1, 226, Sr.; Steve Niehaus, Cin. Moeller, 6-3, 240, Sr.; Howie Grimmett, Gahanna Lincoln, 5-11, 257, Sr.; **Tony Crippen, St. John's, 6-1, 245, Sr.** Linebackers—Ryan Glass, Springfield South, 6-3, 210, Sr.; David Routt, Cin. Princeton, 6-5, 210, Sr.; Chuck Berger, Hilliard Davidson, 6-2, 220, Sr.; Geno Burden, Cleveland Hts., 6-2, 195, Sr. Backs—Sean Black, Newark, 5-11, 170, Sr.; Jay Hutchins, Upper Arlington, 5-9, 180, Sr.; **Marc Bosworth, Findlay, 5-8, 165, Sr.** Scott Gruber, N. Canton Hoover, 6-1, 180, Sr. Punter—Jesse Milligan, Cleve. St. Ignatius, 6-0, 200, Sr.

SPECIAL MENTION

Orlando Williamson, Sandusky; Jon Alexander, St. John's; Dustin Marshall, Findlay; Dave Dzierwa, St. John's; Eric Lindsey, Fremont Ross; Ben Wright, Lima Sr.; Ed Przedwiecki, Findlay; Isaac Melton, Mansfield Sr.; Chris Shepherd, St. Francis; John Yates, Whitmer; Jesse Sandoval, Fremont Ross; Ed House, St. Francis; Mike Hickey, Fremont Ross.

Nick Elrod, Dan Stricker, Cin. Elder; Roger Schwartz, Cin. LaSalle; Brandon Bridges, Hamilton; Chris Jackson, Troy; Kevin Kerr, Cin. St. Xavier; Reuben Dunbar, Huber Hts. Wayne; Matt Edwards, Cin. Moeller; Chris Imwalle, Cin. St. Xavier; Mark Adams, Troy; Scott Hirsch, Cin. Colerain; David Brown, Fairfield;

Dre Williams, Hilliard Davidson; Shane Dansby, Newark; Jared Fowler, Galloway Westland; Archie Godfrey, Gahanna Lincoln; Russ Harbuck, Pickerington; Paul Stanko, Reynoldsburg; Steven Crosby, Upper Arlington; Rob Mayzer, Westerville North; Tyler Burt, Upper Arlington; Ricky Crouse, Newark; Fred Pagac, Dublin Coffman; Duran Cooley, Marion Harding; Mark Minor, Dublin Coffman;

Chris Yates, Logan; Ryan Berry, Logan; Shaun Robinson, Warren Harding; Matt Shook, Medina; Chris Hawkins, Brunswick; Steve Smith, Canton McKinley; Scott McGrady, Massillon Jackson; Deryck Toles, Warren Harding; Dave Harris, Brunswick; Christian Morgan, Massillon Washington; Kosta Karapetsas, Warren Harding; Josh Hill, Massillon Washington; John Bell, Medina; Tim Harbison, Cuyahoga Falls; Brian Ignazio, Youngs. Boardman; Gary Evans, Youngs. Austertown Fitch; Chad Lukens, N. Canton Hoover; Mark Schindelholtz, Medina; Brad Peterson, Brunswick; Mike Doss, Canton McKinley; Chad Deeser, Massillon Perry;

Chad Heuser, Elyria; LeCharles Bentley, Cleve. St. Ignatius; Aaron McMickle, Shaker Hts.; Rick Hughes, Solon; Howard Westfield, Euclid; Derrick Tatum, Shaker Hts.; Michael Shropshire, Cleve. East Tech; Paul Bockmore, Strongsville; Sam Poucki, Parma Hts. Valley Forge; Al Simpson, Euclid; Chris Wiggins, Solon; Oranjie Gimes, Shaker Hts.; Larry Witherspoon, Cleve. St. Ignatius; Dorian Goude, Euclid; Amos Renix, Euclid; Derick Adams, Solon; Mike Mystic, Cleve. St. Ignatius; DeJuan Groce, Lakewood St. Edward; Cedric Canstarphen, Euclid; Tony Miller, Lorain Southview.

Ross awards

FOOTBALL

Captain—Eric Lindsey, Jesse Sandoval, Chris Shull

Most Improved—Eric Lindsey

Scout Team Player—Jason Hull

Joe Lotycz True Grit—Jesse Sandoval