

1998 Football Season...

Pallante begins practice with 48 paying customers

High school football practice officially begins tomorrow, and Ross coach Dan Pallante is excited.

Pallante, who guided Ross to a 10-0 regular season record before falling to Toledo St. Francis in the playoffs, will open two-a-days without 1997 senior stalwarts such as Eric Lindsey, Demetris Simms, Mike Hickey, Chris Shull, Aaron Root and Jesse Sandoval.

Yet the second-year boss has to be pleased with the returning players from the school's first undefeated team in 42 years. Brent Agnew, Josh Lozano, Josh and Tyson Liggins and Aaron



Scott Tappa

Coonrod are all back, and that's not even including the gargantuan line, headlined by Frank Kaiser.

"We have a nice nucleus," Pallante said. "We have lot

of guys coming back with experience, and that's critical."

Perhaps not as critical is a roster overflowing with bodies. Forty-eight players underwent physical testing Monday, 13 less

than comprised last season's opening roster, but several more than Pallante figured on going into fall practice.

It is a situation Pallante understands, but doesn't necessarily accept.

"When I was at Youngstown Boardman, we had 80 kids out every year, but that was a bigger school," he said. "Ideally, I'd like to have 25 kids out from each class. We had 40 kids out for freshman, so we're losing about two-thirds of them."

But why? Have helmets become too tight? Are two-a-days too much? Are the beach and other alternatives too alluring?

Pallante believes in the latter, not the former.

"You almost have to blame it on that," he said. "Our kids are treated extremely well, they have good training, good equipment."

"With football, there is still a very high price to pay, and I don't think '98 kids want to pay it. But we have 48 kids who want to do it."

As such, the Ross coach and his staff do not sit around plotting methods to lure fence-sitters to the football field. Time worrying about who's not out working hard is time wasted.

Those who choose to stay

home and play Nintendo are missing out on a golden opportunity to build on last year's perfection. Great Lakes League challengers Sandusky and Findlay both suffered considerable losses at the skill positions, and the Ross line should be the conference's best.

With such bright prospects, these sidelined athletes' failure to make a short-term investment may rob them of many long-term memories.

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Ross seniors please coach

Search for Hickey's successor continues

By MICHAEL PIDANICK
Staff writer

After a 10-0 regular season last year, Fremont Ross coach Dan Pallante is asking his players his favorite question: "What are you going to do now?"

Pallante, in his second year at the helm for the Little Giants, is hoping for even more from the team this season.

"We're happy so far," Pallante said at Friday's media day at Harmon Stadium. "The question now is 'Can we progress?' We're going to come into some adversity throughout the season. You have to handle success and some-

times you have to handle getting kicked in the teeth."

Pallante is expecting leadership from the senior class, a group that he is very impressed with thus far.

"We have a super senior class," he said. "They are always working hard and always wanting to win. They're a real close knit group. To be successful you need a good senior class."

The first several practices have been positive for Ross.

"It's looking good," said junior Josh Lozano. "We're adding to our passing game and our line is big and strong, so we feel real good."

Pallante feels the passing attack will be improved in 1998.

"I'm pleased so far," the coach said. "Aaron Coonrod is returning at quarterback and he looks real good. Tyson

Liggins and Matt Kotch are good split ends and (Dan) Cobb and (Andrew) Diller also look good at tight end. Our backs can catch the ball too. We're hoping to get four or five receivers out there at a time that can catch the ball."

The other big question for the Little Giants will be replacing All-Ohio place-kicker and punter Mike Hickey, who was lost to graduation. Senior Dan Cobb will handle the punting duties. Pallante said "a slew" of candidates are battling for the place-kicking job.

Another positive factor so far for the Little Giants has been the weather. With temperatures in the 70s and low 80s, two-a-day practices have been a little more bearable.

"The weather hasn't been too bad," Lozano said. "I hope it stays that way through two-a-days."

HIGH SCHOOL FOOTBALL

So far, so good at Ross



News-Messenger/Frank Beier

JASON BILLOW of Ross is tackled by several Euclid defenders during Saturday's scrimmage at Harmon Stadium.

Little Giants show balance against Euclid

By MICHAEL PIDANICK
Staff writer

So far, so good.

Fremont Ross coach Dan Pallante is pleased with the progress shown by the Little Giants in Saturday's opening scrimmage against Euclid, but he knows there is a lot more work ahead.

"The kids got better from the first day of two-a-day (practices)," said Pallante, entering his second year as Ross coach. "They picked up the tempo of the game. It was a good first scrimmage but we still have tons of work to do."

The Little Giants reached the end zone twice — on nine-yard Robert Atkins and a 10-yard run by Kelly Lytle — in a controlled scrimmage at Harmon Stadium.

The new-and-improved passing game looked good. Senior quarterback Aaron Coonrod was 4-for-7 for 67 yards.

"I thought we passed the ball pretty well," said Coonrod. "Tyson (Liggins) had some nice catches, Dan (Cobb) had a big catch and the offensive line did a pretty good job giving us time."

"I thought we passed the ball pretty well. Tyson had some nice catches, Dan had a big catch, and the line did a good job."

— Aaron Coonrod
Ross quarterback

stunts yet."

The Little Giants did have some problems holding onto the football, fumbling six times.

"We made a couple mental mistakes, but that's expected with a first scrimmage," Coonrod said.

Euclid struggled throughout the scrimmage.

"I just thought it was a poor offensive performance," said Panthers coach Tom Banc. "I thought we'd move the ball much better. Our offensive linemen are all returnees from a year ago, and I thought they played very poorly."

Tom Soini and Tommy Virgis ran for Euclid's two scores.

Ross running back/defensive back Josh Lozano was held out of action with a shin bruise, but expects to return to practice today.

"I just banged it up during practice a little," he said. "I just had to take it easy for a little while."

Ross scrimmages Warren Harding, ranked No. 17 in the nation by USA TODAY, Thursday in Cleveland.

Coonrod-Cobb connection lifts Ross

Little Giants tie scrimmage with Warren Harding

By KYLE TIMMONS
News-Messenger correspondent

BEDFORD — Aaron Coonrod's five-yard pass to tight end Dan Cobb gave Fremont Ross a tie with Warren Harding Thursday night in a two-quarter scrimmage at Bedford High School.

Coonrod led the Little Giants' ground game, rushing the ball for 91 yards and also completing two passes for 24 yards.

"He really hurt us," said Warren Harding coach Gary Barber, whose team is ranked 17th in the nation by USA Today. "We were not physically able to control him on the option."

The Little Giants were held scoreless until their final play of the game. Coonrod opened the series with a 19-yard pass to Cobb to Harding's 14-yard line.

After a nine-yard run by Josh Lozano, Coonrod intentionally stopped the clock by spiking the football.

With three seconds left, Coonrod rolled left around his offensive line and found Cobb in the back of the end zone.

Coonrod carried the ball three

"He really hurt us. We were not physically able to stop him on the option."

— Harding coach Gary Barber on Ross's Aaron Coonrod

times, including two carries for more than 40 yards. However, Ross coach Dan Pallante was not pleased with his offensive line's performance.

"He wasn't at his best tonight," Pallante said. "We are still making too many mistakes."

Pallante attributed their performance to a lack of confidence.

"Our kids read the paper and they think, 'Oh my God, we're

playing the No. 17 team in the nation,'" Pallante said.

"We need to get over that, and our kids have to expect more of themselves."

Harding scored first at the end of the first quarter when running back Carl Diggs ran for a one-yard touchdown. Diggs has committed verbally to play football for the University of Michigan.

"He wasn't at his best tonight," said Barber. "We didn't run him much, but he still needs some more strength."

Three Raiders starters have already committed to Big Ten teams.

Pallante said his team needs more work, but he was pleased

with the play of his defense.

"We had super defensive play," said Pallante. "Tyson Liggins had a great hit and the rest of the defense played great."

Ross opens its regular season with a rare Saturday night game, Sept. 5 at Toledo Central Catholic.

"Everyone needs some more confidence," Pallante said. "We need to believe that we are a good team, because we are."

Several other local schools completed their scrimmage season tonight. St. Joseph Central Catholic faces Genoa at Sacred Heart, Clyde hosts Fostoria, and Gibsonburg plays a tri-scrimmage with Port Clinton and Benjamin Logan.

FREMONT ROSS

Weaknesses hard to find

Defense balanced all around

By MICHAEL PIDANICK
Staff writer

Fremont Ross linebacker Bryson Sewell feels the strength of the Little Giants' defense is the lack of a weakness.

"We don't really have a weak spot," the 6-foot-2, 250-pound senior said. "Everyone can do the job."

The Little Giants' defense returns several key players, but not too many, according to coach Dan Pallante.

"When those (inexperienced) players settle in is critical to your success," the second-year head coach said. "You never really know when it's going to happen, but it has got to happen after the first couple games."

Last year's team got better early in the season, and the end result was a 10-0 regular season.

This year's crew appears to have the necessary talent. The impressive linebacking corps consists of Sewell, Josh Liggins, Jason Billow and John Forshtay playing inside and Sewell and Andrew Diller will playing outside.

"There's a lot of playing experience there, and there is also a lot of inexperience there," Pallante said. "Andrew Diller and Josh Liggins have playing experience, Billow and Forshtay do not and Bryson played a lot, but not an overwhelming amount."

"They all run to the ball well, and they are all big, strong, physical kids. We're looking for them to bust tails."

"We have a good linebacking corps. We read plays well, we're strong running to the ball and we hit hard."

— Josh Liggins
Ross linebacker

Said Liggins: "We have a good linebacking corps. We read plays well, we're strong running to the ball and we hit hard."

Assistant coach Del Enders said the linebackers key the defense.

"With the schemes we use on our front line, we definitely rely on our linebackers," he said. "We try to play gap-control defense, freeing up the linebackers."

The defensive line is big, but inexperienced.

Senior defensive tackle Brian Hill and senior defensive end Tyson Liggins will join nose guards Zack Frasure, a 5-foot-9, 270-pound senior, and David Fennel, a 6-foot-2, 250-pound senior, who will both see duty.

Frasure and Fennel are new to the varsity. Hill, a starting offensive lineman, didn't play much defense, and Liggins played linebacker in 1997.

"We have a real nice mixture of experience and freshness," Pallante said.

The secondary will be the most experienced unit as senior strong safety Aaron Coonrod, junior free safety Josh Lozano and senior cornerback Jorel Heidelberg are all returnees.

"They all run to the ball well, and they are all big, strong, physical kids. We're looking for them to bust tails."

"Last year we were all young."



News-Messenger/Andrew Morrison

TYSON LIGGINS, shown here lining up at split end in a scrimmage against Euclid, will provide a pass rush from his defensive end spot this year for Ross.

the 5-foot-9, 160-pound Heidelberg said. "This season we're reading plays better and reacting faster."

David Kitchen and Kelly Lytle will both see time at the corner opposite Heidelberg. Kitchen brings size, while Lytle offers speed to the unit.

"He's kind of like a chip off the old block," Enders said of Lytle, son of Ross legend Rob Lytle. "Dad used to run into people, Kelly runs around people."

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Cobb fills hole left by Hickey's departure

By MICHAEL PIDANICK
Staff writer

When fourth down and long comes up, many fans yawn, thinking the upcoming punt is not going to be a significant play.

Fremont Ross coach Dan Pallante disagrees.

"The punt team is the most important special team we have because of the style of play we have," he said. "We play for field position. When you play that type of game, that's the most important offensive play you have."

Lost to graduation was all-Ohio second team punter and kicker Mike Hickey. Last season, Hickey punted 45 times for 1,724 yards.

Senior tight end Dan Cobb, a 6-foot-5, 210 pounder, will take on the punting duties.

"He has a good strong leg and we think he will do a good job," said Pallante. "Danny is a big guy with a strong leg. He doesn't have that game time experience, that's something he'll need to get. We've got to get him more consistent."

The man who will get Cobb the ball at tight end, senior Aaron Coonrod, will also long snap him the ball.

"We have a good long snapper," Pallante said. "They make a good combination."

As a senior, Hickey, who was also a soccer player, made six field goal attempts and also converted 17 extra points.

Pallante has again turned to Jeff Pendry's soccer program for a kicker. Senior John McCord has come on board to battle Cobb for the place-kicking duties.

McCord missed a week of practice after having his wisdom teeth removed, pushing the final decision back. Pallante said McCord is the front-runner, but doesn't plan a final decision until just prior to Saturday's season opener.

Senior Tyson Liggins and junior Jorel Heidelberg will handle return duties for both punts and kickoffs.

"They have good hands," Pallante said. "A lot of people talk about getting a punt return for a touchdown. Obviously that's a goal, but the most important goal is that we want the ball caught. If the ball gets on the ground, you lose a lot of real estate."



COBB

Lozano returns to lead backfields

Junior had team-high 5 INTs in 1997

By MICHAEL PIDANICK
Staff writer

After earning all-Great Lakes League second team selection honors as a safety last season, Fremont Ross junior Josh Lozano hopes to be even better in 1998.

"I just want to go out and do some of the same things," Lozano said. "I was able to do some things last year, and hopefully I can go out and have a better season this year."

Lozano intercepted a team-high five passes last season and recorded 46 tackles in 1997.

"This year I think our whole defense has to work together," Lozano said. "I'm just going to go out and help any way I can."

Lozano feels the experience he gained a season ago will be highly beneficial to him this season.

"I can read routes a lot better now," he said. "That will really help me."

Little Giants' coach Dan



LOZANO

Pallante is expecting big things out of the 5-foot-11, 170-pound junior.

"He's going to be one of our key guys," he said. "He works hard and does everything we ask."

In addition to his safety duties, Lozano will also be a key to the offensive backfield. He will be one of three primary running backs for the Little Giants this season.

He will be joined in the backfield by Josh Lozano, Robert Atkins, Weston Hineline and John Forshay. All will carry the ball for Ross.

"We have three really nice tailbacks in Jason Billow, John Forshay and Josh Lozano," said coach Dan Pallante. "All three of them have a different style. Lozano is the faster one, Forshay is stronger and Billow is a combination of both."

Atkins and Hineline will be the halfbacks.

By MICHAEL PIDANICK

Staff writer

When Fremont Ross running back Jason Billow put on his Little Giants jersey, he understood a certain responsibility.

"Fremont has always run the ball well," he said. "That's how it always has been."

Billow will be one of many talented ball carriers for the Little Giants this season.

He will be joined in the backfield by Josh Lozano, Robert Atkins, Weston Hineline and John Forshay. All will carry the ball for Ross.

"We have three really nice tailbacks in Jason Billow, John Forshay and Josh Lozano," said coach Dan Pallante. "All three of them have a different style. Lozano is the faster one, Forshay is stronger and Billow is a combination of both."

Atkins and Hineline will be the halfbacks.

Pallante said the multiple running backs will serve as a big advantage.

"That's the nice thing about our offense," Pallante said. "We have a lot of good running backs so no one has to carry the load."

Said Billow: "A lot of us play both ways so it really helps. One series Josh will go in and then the other series I'll go in to give the other a breather."



News-Messenger/Andrew Morrison

JASON BILLOW is one of several running backs Fremont Ross will use this season.

Since this is the second year in Pallante's system, the Little Giants have a better grasp of the system.

"Everyone looks a lot better, we learned the offense a lot last year," said Lozano. "We didn't have to spend a lot of time during two-a-days on it, so we were able to add the passing game, and that's going to help."

A major strength is the offensive line, anchored by Frank Kaiser, a 6-foot-6, 285-pound senior and Brian Hill, a 6-foot-2, 250-pound senior.

"We have a real good line that likes to block, so the holes are

going to there," Atkins said.

Pallante said one advantage to his Wing-T offense is the team mentality that comes with it.

"That's the nature of the offense," he said. "You basically have four running backs, with the quarterback, tailback and both halfbacks."

"I think with the T offense, you breed selfishness. Right now our offense just wants the ball in the end zone. That's the only goal."

Said Atkins: "It doesn't matter who gets the ball. I'm going to block for anyone, and I expect the same when I carry the ball."

Ross looks for repeat of '97 against Toledo CC

By MICHAEL PIDANICK
Staff writer

The Dan Pallante era at Fremont Ross will officially reach its second year tonight in Toledo.

The Little Giants play Toledo Central Catholic tonight at 7 p.m. at Toledo Waite High School.

Pallante likes the top-level competition to start the season.

"They have been on the schedule for years," he said. "It's a good natural rivalry. They are one of three good Toledo parochial schools."

The Little Giants cruised to a 34-12 win Aug. 29, 1997 at Harmon Stadium.

"This year we hope to do the same," Pallante said. "Central Catholic gives us a big mental test to start the season."

But the Little Giants coach

knows the opener will feature a few mistakes.

"Early in season you're trying to patch things from two-a-day (practices)," he said. "You have 11 kids that you picked to be starters, but you're not even sure if the kid is absolutely going to be the starter all year."

After routing the Irish last year, the Little Giants followed with wins over Akron Buchtel and Toledo Bowsheer.

Pallante said that quick start was a key to the 10-0 regular season.

"The first three (non-league)

games are always critical because it sets the tempo for the year," he said. "Last year we played Central Catholic really well and then we played a great game against Buchtel and it set the tone for the whole year."

Pallante said a focus for Ross will be stopping the veer option run by Irish quarterback Phil Carlisle.

"The option veer is always a good test for the defense," he said. "Right out of the gate they have a difficult challenge."

Central Catholic also has great team speed. Receiver/cornerback Gary Tisdale, running back/safety Eric Komorowski and running back/safety Webster Jackson composed three-fourths of the Irish's state championship 4x100-meter relay track team.

In last year's match-up, Ross ran the ball 45 times for 329 yards and five touchdowns.

Running backs Josh Lozano, Jason Billow, John Forshay, Weston Hineline and Robert Atkins are all capable ball carriers for Ross.

But the Little Giants will also feature more of the pass. In last season's contest, Aaron Coonrod did not complete a pass. But with Coonrod now a senior, and Tyson Liggins and Dan Cobb providing excellent targets, Pallante hopes to pass more in 1998.

The game will be broadcast on WFRO-FM 99.1. The pregame begins at 6:45 p.m. Jerry Reidling will call play-by-play of the game, with John Cullen providing color commentary and Jon Kerns announcing from the sidelines.



PALLANTE

FREMONT ROSS LITTLE GIANTS (10-1) at TOLEDO CENTRAL CATHOLIC IRISH (6-4)

When: Saturday, 7:30 p.m.

Where: Toledo Waite

Last year: Ross 34, Central Catholic 12 at Ross

Radio: WFRO-FM 99.1 (Jerry Reidling, John Cullen, Jon Kerns)

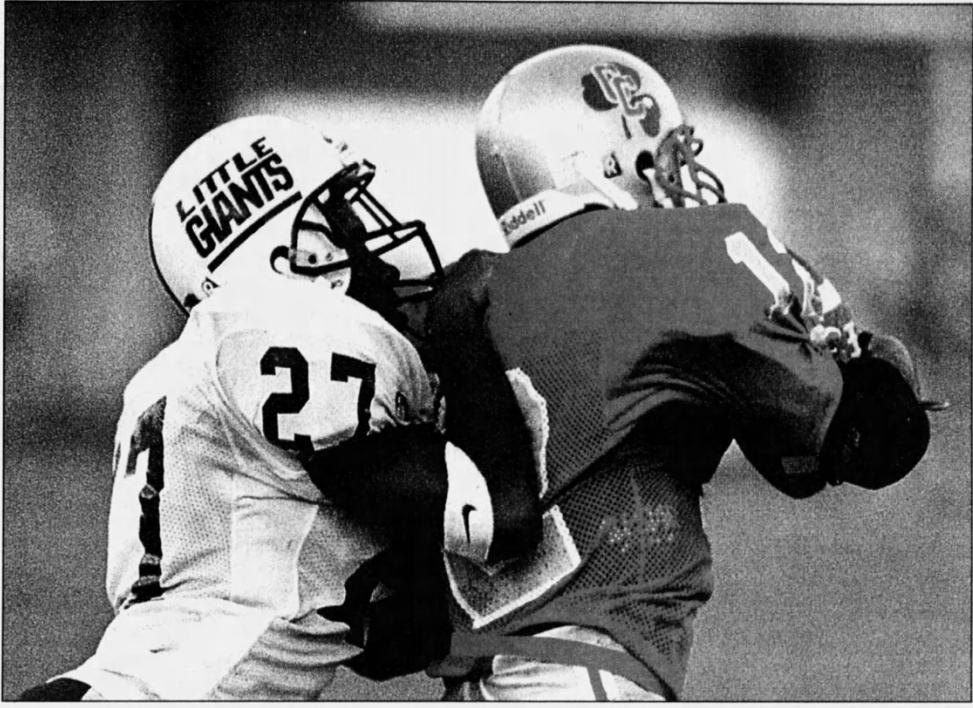
Directions to Waite: (from Fremont): Take Ohio Turnpike or Route 20 to I-280 North. Get off at Front Street Exit 9. Follow Front Street West to East Broadway. Take left onto East Broadway and Waite Stadium is at the end.

Ross players to watch: QB/SS Aaron Coonrod, SE/DE Tyson Liggins, TE Dan Cobb, RB/FS Josh Lozano, LB Josh Liggins

Toledo CC players to watch: WB/CB Gary Tisdale, RB/S Eric Komorowski, DE Josh Lenix, RB Webster Jackson, QB Phil Carlisle

Keys to the Game: The second year of the Dan Pallante era at Fremont Ross begins. The coach said the Little Giants will be in for a tough one. "Offensively, they have a good option quarterback and they run the veer well," he said. "This is always a good first test, because we have to play assignment football defensively." The Little Giants will also have their work cut out offensively. "They run a million different stunts," Pallante said. "Our offensive line has been busy this week."

Ross hangs on to beat Irish



News-Messenger/Andrew Morrison

JOREL HEIDELBURG (27) drags down Toledo Central Catholic's Webster Jackson in the Little Giants' 21-13 win Saturday night at Toledo Waite.

Little Giants win despite sloppy performance

By SCOTT TAPPA
Sports editor

TOLEDO — As far as openers go, Fremont Ross's 21-13 win over Toledo Central Catholic Saturday night was part *Speed Racer*, part *Tyson-Holyfield*, part *Great Expectations*.

Opening on the road, the Little Giants started quickly, withstood several counter blows and hung on for the victory, leaving players and coaches optimistic about the team's future.

"I hate opening on the road," said Ross coach Dan Pallante. "From the start of the game we looked sloppy. Mentally the kids were not into it."

"Thank heavens we're good enough to play terrible slop like that and still win the game."

Quarterback Aaron Coonrod opened the scoring with just under two minutes remaining in the first quarter, running 37 yards on an option keeper around

left end. The run was the longest of the day for the Ross rushing attack, which struggled for 93 yards on 42 attempts.

"We didn't block a soul tonight," Pallante said. "Everything we got was our backs on broken plays or our quarterback and receivers hooking up."

The Little Giants' special teams suffered such a breakdown on the ensuing kickoff, as Gary Tisdale answered Coonrod's score with an 86-yard touchdown return.

Ross cornerback Jorel "Pee Wee" Heidelberg countered with an upcut of his own, reeling off an 86-yard touchdown return. Heidelberg's return concluded a 25-second span in which touchdowns were scored on three consecutive plays.

"Pee Wee's just a good athlete, and a good kid who's a good athlete is going to get his dividend," Pallante said.

Saturday

Ross 21
Toledo Central Catholic 13

Friday

Akron Buchtel at Ross
7:30 p.m.

Heidelberg was also part of a Ross defense that intercepted three Central Catholic attempts, as the Little Giant pass rush and secondary limited the Irish passing attack to quick looks to the flat. Safety Josh Lozano had two interceptions, while David Kitchell had the third.

"We're reading a lot better and coming up and making the hits," Heidelberg said.

Ross extended its lead to 21-7 midway through the second quarter as Coonrod and Dan Cobb connected on a 32-yard touchdown pass. After Tyson Liggins' 20-yard punt return gave Ross the ball on Central Catholic's 32-

yard-line, Coonrod found his tight end behind the Irish secondary for his only completion of the first half.

"Aaron hung in there real nice," Cobb said. "It was a waggle away from me and I had a backside drag. Tyson was the first read, but the safety jumped him and that left me open."

Coonrod would leave the game for several series in the third quarter with cramping problems, as would linemen Brian Hill and Zack Frasure. Pallante said their brief absences killed the Little Giants' momentum.

"Our kids are in great shape, I don't know what the cramping's from," he said. "We've got to get that corrected in a hurry, it costs us the momentum. That's why this game was nip and tuck."

Webster Jackson was responsible for Central Catholic's last

See ROSS, B3

Special teams boom or bust for Ross

By MICHAEL PIDANICK
Staff writer

TOLEDO — When Fremont Ross takes a look at the special teams portions of the game film from Saturday's 21-13 win over Toledo Central Catholic, there will be a lot of roars and a lot of moans.

Special teams were responsible for several key momentum shifts as the Little Giants escaped with a 21-13 win at Toledo Waite.

On the plus side for the Little Giants was the electrifying 86-yard kickoff return by Jorel Heidelberg and the solid punting of Dan Cobb.

Heidelberg answered a 91-yard kickoff return by Central Catholic's Gary Tisdale by taking Chris Hanudel's kickoff at the 14-yard line and racing 86 yards up the middle untouched for a Ross touchdown.

"I have to give the credit to my kickoff return team," Heidelberg said. "They blocked their butts off. I just saw the hole they opened and ran through it."

Cobb effectively filled the shoes of departed all-Ohio selection Mike Hickey, as he averaged 43.6 yards on his six punts. His longest punt was a 71-yarder that picked up the last 20 yards when the Irish returner opted not to field the ball.

His most important punt of the night was a 40-yard boomer late in the fourth that forced Central Catholic to start on its own 27.

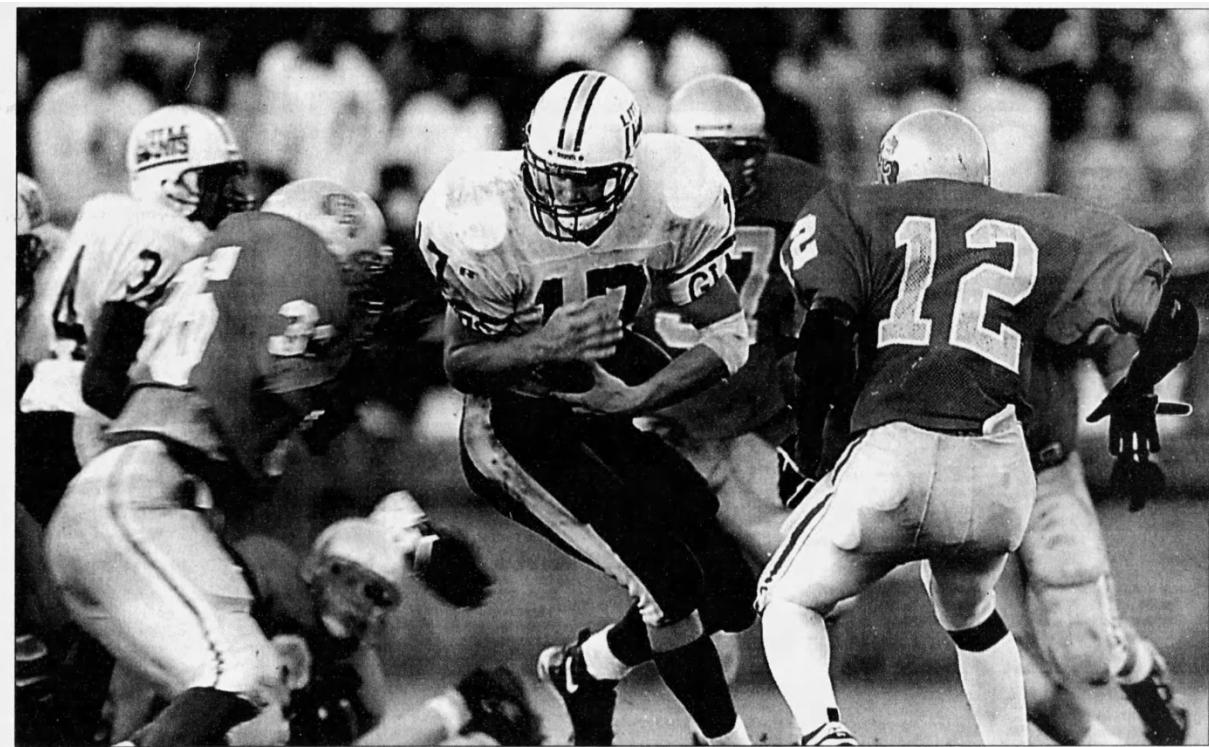
"I thought Danny did a good job punting the ball," Ross coach Dan Pallante said.

Also encouraging were the efforts of placekicker John McCord, who converted all three of his extra-point attempts.



COBB

See SPECIAL TEAMS, B3



News-Messenger/Andrew Morrison

AARON COONROD finds a hole in the Toledo Central Catholic defense during the second quarter.

Special teams up and down in 21-13 Little Giant victory

Continued from B1

On the negative side was the poor return coverage, highlighted by Tisdale's score. Irish kick returners averaged 44.2 yards per return on five kickoff returns.

In the fourth quarter, long snapper Aaron Coonrod fired a bad snap that prevented Cobb from getting off a fourth down punt. Facing an almost certain blocked kick, Cobb wisely threw the ball away for an incomplete pass.

"That was a designed play. If the snap is bad, and we can't get the play off, I roll out and throw it out of bounds," Cobb said.

But Central Catholic capitalized on the prime field position four plays later on Webster Jackson's 26-yard touchdown run.

"We have some young kids on special teams," Pallante said. "The hard thing is in practice, sometimes you don't do them live, and (Central Catholic) always does a nice job on special teams. They hurt us last year on



HEIDELBURG

special teams.

"I thought our kids were ready, but now I think we'll have to evaluate some films. We might have to replace some people."

The Fighting Irish made the first big play when Tisdale returned McCord's kickoff for a score.

"We weren't coming together on it," said Heidelburg. "We were getting kicked out a little. But it's nothing we can't work on."

Said Cobb: "Our return team could have done better, but that kid is fast. He's a real good runner."

Ross defense holds for three possessions at end

Continued from B1

score, running 26 yards for a touchdown with 9:08 remaining in the game. The Irish would have three more possessions to tie the score, but the pass defense, led by linemen Liggins and Bryson Sewell, and secondary play from Lozano and Kelly Lytle helped prevent Central Catholic from entering Ross territory.

"We made a few mistakes — it's the first game — but we'll work hard in practice this week to correct those," Lozano said.

Pallante was relieved to leave Toledo with the non-conference win.

"You can't lose your first couple games," he said. "For carry-over into the season, you've got to win them."

Ross hosts Akron Buchtel at Harmon Stadium Friday night at 7:30 p.m.

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Map: Stop Light at RT. 18, turn right onto BICKNELL ST., SUPER KMART is on the right. The Race Place is across the street.

High School

Ross 21, Central Catholic 13

at Toledo Waite

Ross	14	7	0	0	—21
Central Catholic	7	0	0	6	—13

First Quarter

R — Aaron Coonrod 37 run (John McCord kick), 1:56

T — Gary Tisdale 91 kickoff return (Chris Hanudel kick), 1:42

R — Jorel Heidelberg 86 kickoff return (John McCord kick), 1:31

Second Quarter

R — Dan Cobb 32 from Coonrod (John McCord kick), 7:15

Third Quarter

No scoring

Fourth Quarter

T — Webster Jackson 26 run (kick failed), 9:08

TEAM STATISTICS

	Ross	TCC
First downs	5	6
Rushes-yards	37-93	26-84
Passing yards	62	83
Passes-Comp.-Int.....	6-3-0	20-11-3
Punts-average	6-43.6	7-33.6
Fumbles-lost.....	5-2	6-0
Penalties-yards.....	2-15	5-30

INDIVIDUAL STATISTICS

RUSHING — R — Josh Lozano 18-31, Robert Atkins 6-31, Weston Hineline 5-9, Aaron Coonrod 7-60, Jason Billow 1-3; T — Eric Komorowski 5-17, Joe Koelsch 7-16, Webster Jackson 9-37, Gary Tisdale 2-7, Phil Carlisle 3-4.

PASSING — R — Aaron Coonrod 3-6-2-1, Dan Cobb 0-1-0-0; T — Phil Carlisle 10-18-71-0, John Amato 1-2-5-0.

RECEIVING — R — Dan Cobb 1-32, Weston Hineline 1-4, Tyson Liggins 1-26; T — Webster Jackson 7-49, Eric Komorowski 2-8, Webster Jackson 1-13, Jermain Pettis 1-4, Colin Brennan 1-17.

Area Standings

GREAT LAKES LEAGUE

	Overall		League		PF	PA
	W	L	W	L		
Ross	1	0	0	0	21	13
Findlay.....	1	0	0	0	35	32
Bedford	0	1	0	0	13	41
Fostoria	0	1	0	0	10	20
Oregon Clay	0	1	0	0	11	22
Sandusky.....	0	1	0	0	19	42
Whitmer	0	1	0	0	14	21

AKRON BUCHTEL**GRIFFINS (0-1) at****FREMONT ROSS****LITTLE GIANTS (1-0)****When:** Friday, 7:30 p.m.**Where:** Harmon Stadium**Last year:** Ross 21, Buchtel 19**Last week:** Ross 21, Toledo Central Catholic 13; Cleveland St. Ignatius 42, Buchtel 13.**Radio:** WFRO-AM 900 (Jerry Reidle and John Cullen)**Ross players to watch:** QB Aaron Coonrod, CB/KR Jorel Heidelburg, OG Rick Legg, NG John Forshtay**Buchtel player to watch:** ILB Charles Beckett**Keys to the game:**

The Griffins are a tough team to prepare for, said Ross coach Dan Pallante. For one thing, there's Buchtel's speed. "The big challenge is the unbelievable amount of team speed they have, and they have good size," Pallante said. In addition, Buchtel's opening-game loss to Cleveland St. Ignatius is not an effective scouting tool, since St. Ignatius relies heavily on the pass. "It's a really hard from that game to evaluate," he said. "We're seeing Ignatius throw, (Buchtel) playing pass defense, stunting and blitzing. We, conversely, want to try to run the ball. Of our 10-game schedule, this is one of the toughest challenges — thank heavens we're at home." The Little Giants will focus on inside linebacker Charles Beckett, a three-year starter who dominates the middle. "Their style of defense is where they cover people up so he's free to roam to the ball, that always gives you a problem," Pallante said. To give his running attack, which averaged just 2.5 yards per carry against Toledo Central Catholic, a boost, Pallante will start Rick Legg at guard to allow Bryson Sewell to concentrate on defense, and move John Forshtay from linebacker to nose guard to spell Zack Frasure. After a less-than-perfect opener, Pallante is pleased with his team's practices this week.

Ross's Legg, Forshtay change roles

Post-touchdown cannon quieted

By SCOTT TAPPA
Sports editor

Fremont Ross football coach Dan Pallante was clearly displeased with his team's play following its 21-13 win over Toledo Central Catholic.

Fine. Done. Over with.

Akron Buchtel is the Little Giants' opponent this week, and Pallante has a simple question for his players: "What are you going to do now?"

For starters, the coach hopes his team doesn't overlook the Griffins, as he thinks they overlooked the Irish.

"I don't think we took Central Catholic very serious," said Pallante, whose record

at Ross improved to 11-1. "(Central Catholic) played inspired football, we didn't, and hopefully they learned a lesson."

Two players in particular will be asked to do more this week against Buchtel. Sophomore Rick Legg will take Bryson Sewell's spot at guard, allowing Sewell to concentrate on defense, and senior John Forshtay moves from linebacker to nose guard, allowing Zack Frasure to concentrate on his line play.

"(Legg) is a tough kid, I'm sure he'll do a good job," Pallante said.

Legg will be part of a Ross line Pallante hopes can put together more consistent drives than Saturday's game. Sustained drives were also hard to come by in last

year's 21-19 win over Buchtel.

"Last year, even though we put 21 points on the board, we never really sustained a drive," he said. "At that time we were having trouble with consistency. We're still having trouble with consistency, but the kids had a good week of practice."

The Little Giant defense will be tested by a diverse Buchtel attack. After seeing an Irish offense which relied on quick running and passing plays, Pallante expects to see a more balanced Griffin attack.

"They show a little bit of everything, it's going to be split right down middle," he said. "They have a nice quick pass, play action passing, five-step drop, they run the draw well, toss weep, Washington Redskins' country trey."

When Ross scores this week, expect the ensuing cannon blast to contain one-half the regular boom. Athletic director Art



LEGG

Bucci said cannon operators have promised to cut down on the sometimes startling post-touchdown noise.

Bucci also said the Ross athletic department will be circulating cannon-related surveys in the Harmon Stadium neighborhood, and welcomes comments at 332-6462.

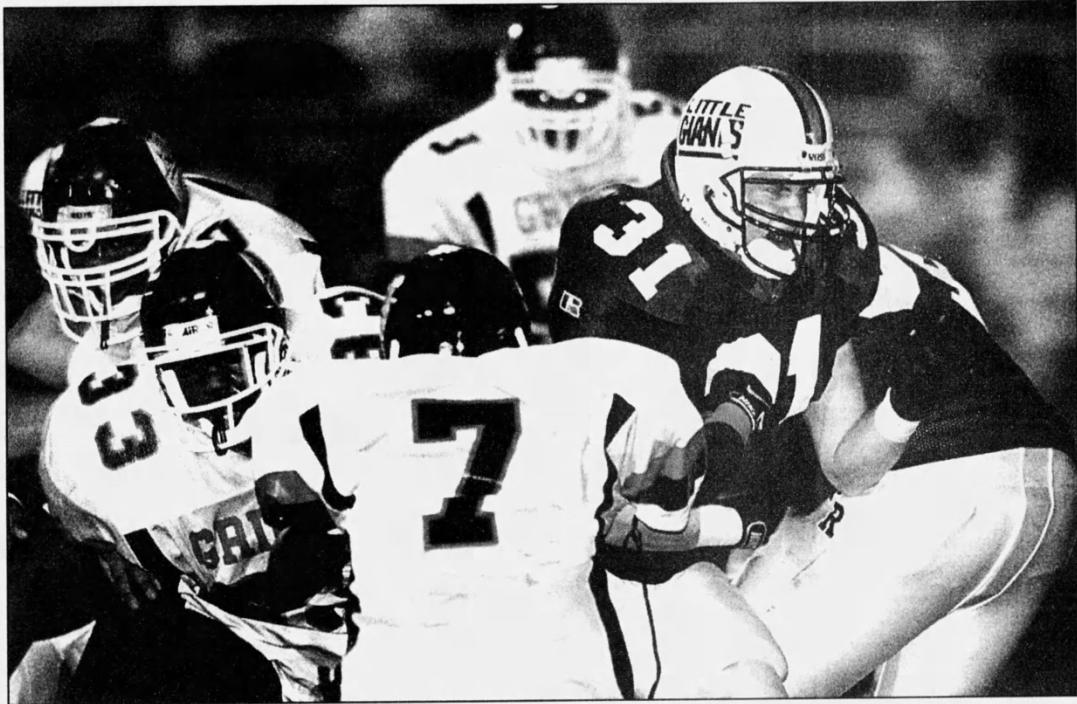
In other action, Clyde takes on Tiffin Columbian, hoping to avenge last year's 21-7 loss, while Gibsonburg takes on potential Suburban Lakes League surprise Lake.

Woodmore, which travels to Northwood, is dedicating the game to Shannon Tobias, the student athletic trainer killed in an auto accident Sunday night outside Woodville.

"There's been a lot of support there for all the kids all week," said Wildcats coach Lou Bosh.

Lakota travels to Hopewell-Loudon, Margaretta plays at Willard and Oak Harbor hosts Rossford.

Ross rushes to win



News-Messenger/Andrew Morrison

JASON BILLOW bursts through the line to score a second quarter touchdown in Fremont Ross's 14-6 win over Akron Buchtel.

Hineline, Billow score in victory

By MICHAEL PIDANICK
Staff writer

Who needs to pass?

Fremont Ross ran the ball 57 times, and passed only twice, but still powered out a 14-6 win over Akron Buchtel Friday at Harmon Stadium.

"After we got into game I didn't think needed to (pass)," said Ross coach Dan Pallante. "Our kids were doing a nice job with the run."

"I wanted to balance the attack a little more. But we couldn't protect the quarterback. They were bringing so much heat and their linebackers were coming every single play."

The Little Giants were able to gain 243 yards on the ground, using a lot of traps, mixed in with some option runs. Weston Hineline led the attack, picking up 78 yards on 14 carries.

John Forshtay ran for 70 yards on 19 carries. Josh Lozano picked up 47 yards on six carries and Robert Atkins ran eight times for 39 yards.

Hineline credited the Ross offensive line of Frank Kaiser, Zack Frasure, David Fennel, Rick Legg and Brian Hill.

"We had great blocking tonight," said Hineline, who also scored the Little Giants' first touchdown. "The line was excellent. Running behind these guys

Friday

Ross 14

Akron Buchtel 6

Next

Toledo Bowsher at Ross, Friday

was great."

Ross quarterback Aaron Coonrod was 1-for-2 for 24 yards. Pallante was pleased with Coonrod's ability to direct the offense.

"Aaron was reading the veer right and reading option right," he said. "The kids were running well and coming off the ball well."

The Ross defense was also solid and held Buchtel to 124 total yards, most of which came on its final drive with Ross in a prevent mode.

"Fremont is a good football team and we had some breakdowns," said Griffins coach Claude Brown. "We have to look at the films and go in and correct some things."

The Griffins passing game was atrocious. Quarterbacks Destin Scott and Steve Reynolds were a combined 7-for-26 for 62 yards.

Cornerback Jorel Heidelberg had an interception and several nice pass defenses.

"I saw the ball and I broke on it," Heidelberg said of his pick. "I had to dive for it because it was underthrown."

Linebacker Josh Liggins led the Little Giants' defensive attack. The senior made several big plays, highlighted by a hard hit that sent Buchtel's Rashaad Dix flying and forced an incomplete pass.

"Our coaches had told me the back was going to come out of the backfield," Liggins said.

"I saw him, he turned around, and I just made the hit."

In the first quarter, a 17-yard punt by Andre Lessears gave Ross the ball at the Buchtel 44-yard line.

On the drive's first play, Lozano broke a tackle and raced 40 yards down the right sideline to the four-yard line.

Three plays later, Hineline took a pitch from Coonrod and cruised into the end zone.

Coonrod's only completion of the game helped set up the Little Giants' second score. On the



News-Messenger/Andrew Morrison

JOSH LIGGINS (5) and Andrew Diller (82) make a tackle. In the opening play of the drive, he connected with Dan Cobb for a 24-yard gain to the Buchtel 43-yard line.

Two plays later, Atkins broke a 10-yard run, and the Little Giants gained 15 more when he was hit out of bounds.

Forshtay picked up 12 more yards on three carries, and Jason Billow finished it off with a one-yard touchdown run.

Ross plays Toledo Bowsher next Friday at Harmon Stadium. Pallante is hoping for continued improvement.

Football

High School

Ross 14, Buchtel 6

At Harmon Stadium

Buchtel	0	0	0	6	—	6
Ross	7	7	0	0	—	14

First quarter

R — Weston Hineline, 1 run (McCord kick)

Second quarter

R — Jason Billow, 1 run (McCord kick)

Third quarter

No scoring

Fourth quarter

B — Sidean Watson, 2 run (kick failed)

	B	R
First Downs.....	6	10
Rushes-Yards.....	17-62	57-243
Passing yards.....	62	24
Passes-Comp.Int.....	25-7-1	2-1-0
Punts-Avg.....	6-30.1	4-33.5
Fumbles-Lost.....	4-1	3-1
Penalties-Yards.....	7-47	4-39

RUSHING: Ross — Weston Hineline 14-78, John Forshtay 19-70, Robert Atkins 8-39, Josh Lozano 6-47, Jason Billow 3-6, Aaron Coonrod 7-3; Buchtel — Hill 9-44, Watson 4-13, Reynolds 2-6, Rashaad Dix 2-1.

PASSING: Ross — Aaron Coonrod 1-2-24-0; Buchtel — Destin Scott 5-13-44-0, Steve Reynolds 2-12-18-1, Thomas Hill 0-1-0-0.

RECEIVING: Ross — Dan Cobb 1-24; Buchtel — William Scott 2-22, Dix 1- (-1), Hill 2-31, Ryan Martin 1-10.

TOLEDO BOWSHER

REBELS (0-2)

at **FREMONT ROSS**

LITTLE GIANTS (2-0)

When: Friday, 7:30 p.m.

Where: Harmon Stadium

Last year: Ross 10, Bowsher 8

Last week: Ross 14, Buchtel 6; Holland Springfield 14, Toledo Bowsher 12

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

Ross players to watch: RB Weston Hineline, LB Josh Liggins, OG/NG Zack Frasure

Bowsher players to watch: TB Mark Triplett

Keys to the game: The Little Giant offensive line made huge strides last week, paving the way for nearly 250 yards rushing against Buchtel. "That's always a major goal," said Ross coach Dan Pallante. "In high school football, if you can be 250 yards-plus on ground, you're going to be in good shape, eating up the clock, playing a field position game." Pallante credited the work put in by both his linemen and his line coaches. "They and the kids were almost to the point where they were offended after the first game," he said. "That

Monday morning, Labor Day, everybody was down. You couldn't tell we'd won." In addition to several personnel moves aimed at reducing fatigue, the Ross line coaches reduced the distance of the linemen's splits — the distance between each one — from 3-4 feet to 1-2 feet. The tighter formation helped linemen Frank Kaiser, Zack Frasure, Rick Legg, David Fennel and Brian Hill prevent the penetration Toledo Central Catholic got in the opener. The line will need a repeat performance against Bowsher, a team Pallante said "harassed" the Little Giants last year in a tighter-than-expected 10-8 decision. "They've played two pretty good games," he said. "We're the better football team, but I thought we were last year, too." Bowsher is coached by Mark Gysan, a Ross player in the late 1970s who played with Ross line coach Tony Ruiz. The Rebels are led by tailback Mark Triplett and a new quarterback who transferred from Springfield.



FRASURE

Fremont Ross 29, Bowsher 6

FREMONT — John Forshtay ran for 105 yards and one touchdown on 17 carries, and the Little Giants' defense scored twice on turnovers.

Ross got off to a quick start. Forshtay's two-yard run and a 24-yard field goal by John McCord in the first quarter.

The Little Giants put it away in the third quarter when Aaron Coonrod ran 23 yards for a touchdown, Kelly Lytle recovered a fumble in the end zone, and Andrew Diller scored on a 54-yard interception return.

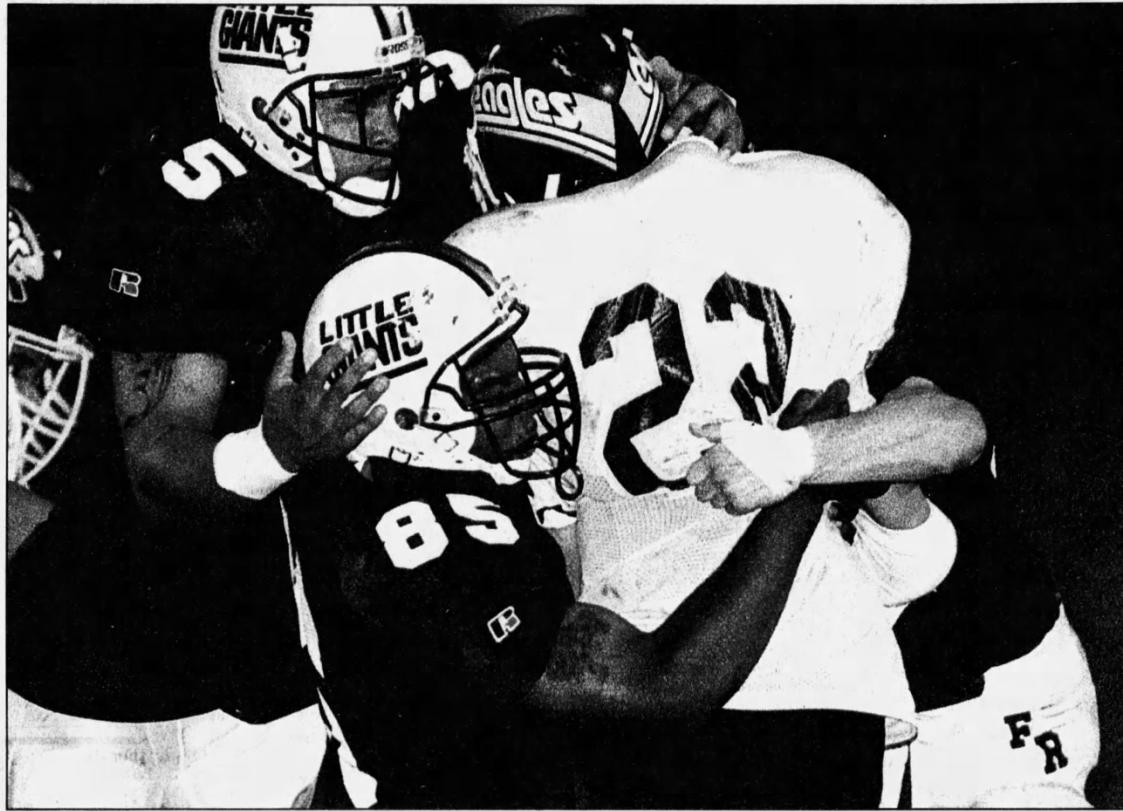
The Rebels avoided a shutout when Josh McCloud hit Brian Gendaszak for a 21-yard TD late in the fourth quarter. McCloud completed 6 of 15 passes for 100 yards.



New-Messenger file photo

DAN PALLANTE'S Ross football team is ranked 11th in Ohio Div. 1.

Ross gangs up on Clay



News-Messenger/Andrew Morrison

JOSH LIGGINS (5) and Tyson Liggins (85) tackle Oregon Clay running back Tony Katschke in the Little Giants' 34-14 win Friday night at Harmon Stadium.

Little Giants limit Eagles to 81 total yards in GLL win

By SCOTT TAPPA
Sports editor

Fremont Ross linebacker Josh Liggins didn't need much time to come up with a reason for the Little Giants' 34-14 win over Oregon Clay Friday night.

"I think we have the best run defense in the area," said Liggins. "We have 11 studs on the squad."

Few in attendance at Harmon Stadium for Ross's Great Lakes League opener would disagree. The Little Giants limited their guests to just 54 yards rushing on 31 carries, and 81 yards of total offense in running their overall record to 4-0.

"Everything's starting to click," said Ross coach Dan Pallante, who has still not lost a regular season game in his 1½-year tenure. "It's happening more often, and it's happening at the time in the season when it has to happen."

The Ross offense wasn't clicking early, as Clay linebacker Ryan Donley returned a Little

Friday

Ross 34
Oregon Clay 14

Next

Ross at Bedford (Mich.), Friday

Giant fumble 75 yards for a touchdown.

"At first, things were kind of shaky, but after that it was OK," said Ross tackle Frank Kaiser.

Donley, also Clay's starting quarterback, was knocked out of action midway through the second quarter, but returned in a defense-only role in the second half. Backup Bill Fisher took over at quarterback for Clay, and the Eagles' passing game became limited and predictable.

"They were trying to hit us with quick outs, which is what I expected," said Ross cornerback Jorel Heidelberg.

Ross quarterback Aaron Coonrod answered Donley's touchdown with less than 30 seconds remaining in the first quarter, running 25 yards for a touchdown on a fourth-and-two option keep-

er. The run, which Coonrod turned upfield deftly after the Clay end had hemmed him in, capped a 10-play drive.

After another Clay three-and-out series, Ross methodically marched down the field again, with Coonrod's 3-yard plunge capping a seven-play, 53-yard drive. The touchdown was Coonrod's second on a fourth-down option run to the right, and the quarterback would finish with 104 yards on 11 carries.

John Forshay stretched the Ross lead to 19-6 with just under two minutes remaining in the first half, and Coonrod's pass to Dan Cobb gave the Little Giants the two-point conversion. The touchdown was set up by Andrew Diller's recovery of punter Matt Wohlgamuth's fumble.

Ross special teams would continue to feast on the Clay punt

team, as Kelly Lytle partially blocked Wohlgamuth's attempt less than two minutes later.

John McCord's 45-yard field goal with one second left in the half gave Ross a 24-6 lead after Coonrod's 16-yard pass to Tyson Liggins got the Little Giants in range. McCord's kick was two yards shy of Tim Rakes' school-record of 47 yards, set in 1995 against Napoleon.

McCord would add a 44-yarder early in the fourth quarter.

"John, for a kid who plays two sports simultaneously, is unbelievable," Pallante said of McCord, who also plays soccer. "For him to step up like that is incredible, he filled such a weakness. We were dead without Mike Hickey."

Ross dominated the first half, piling up 176 yards of total offense and 11 first downs, compared with Clay's totals of 22 and one, respectively. The Little Giants doubled their guests in time of possession for the half,



LIGGINS

See ROSS, B3

High School

Ross 34, Clay 14

At Harmon Stadium

Clay	6	0	0	8	—	14
Ross	7	17	7	3	—	34

First quarter

C — Ryan Donley, 75 fumble return (conversion failed), 6:04

R — Aaron Coonrod, 25 run (John McCord kick), 0:28

Second quarter

R — Aaron Coonrod, 3 run (kick failed), 7:54

R — John Forshtay, 3 run (Dan Cobb pass from Aaron Coonrod), 1:59

R — John McCord, 45 field goal, 0:01

Third quarter

R — Matt Kotch, 13 pass from Aaron Coonrod (McCord kick), 5:43

Fourth quarter

R — McCord, 44 field goal, 10:43

C — Derek Besgrove, 1 run (Tony Katschke from Bill Fisher), 4:43

	R	C
First downs	18	6
Rushes-yards	48-316	31-54
Passing yards	62	27
Passes-Comp-Int.....	8-4-0	7-4-1
Punts-Avg	1-40	6-33.4
Fumbles lost	4-3	1-1
Penalties-yards	6-60	6-50

INDIVIDUAL STATISTICS

RUSHING: Ross—Aaron Coonrod 11-104, John Forshtay 18-99, Weston Hine-line 8-42, Robert Atkins 4-6, Aaron Hines 4-17, David Rhodes 2-43, Ryan Wilhelm 1-5; Clay—Derek Besgrove 15-32, Brad Henning 4-3, Tony Katschke 6-14, Ryan Donley 1-6, Matt Wohlgamuth 1-(-17), Bill Fisher 4-16.

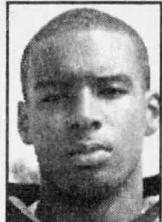
PASSING: Ross—Aaron Coonrod 4-8-1-62; Clay—Bill Fisher 4-7-0-27.

RECEIVING: Ross—Tyson Liggins 3-49, Matt Kotch 1-13; Clay—Tony Katschke 2-5, Aaron Roggelin 1-10, Brad Henning 1-4, Josh Morris 1-8

FREMONT ROSS LITTLE GIANTS**(4-0) at BEDFORD (MICH.)****KICKING MULES (3-1)****When:** Friday, 7:30 p.m.**Where:** Bedford H.S.**Last week:** Ross 34, Clay 14;
Bedford 14, Fostoria 6**Last year:** Ross 34, Bedford 7**Radio:** WFRO-AM 900 (Jerry Reidel and John Cullen)**Ross players to watch:** CB Jorel Heidelberg, CB Kelly Lytle, S/QB Aaron Coonrod, S Josh Lozano, LB Bryson Sewell, LB Tyson Liggins**Bedford players to watch:** QB D.J. Lutz, SE Patrick Gill, LB Ryan Ditty

Keys to the game: The Ross secondary of cornerbacks Jorel Heidelberg and Kelly Lytle and safeties Aaron Coonrod and Josh Lozano will get its first big challenge this week against Bedford quarterback D.J. Lutz. Lutz leads the Great Lakes League with 665 yards passing, including seven touchdowns against just two interceptions. "This will be a big test for us, this kid's a great athlete," said Ross coach Dan Pallante. "Our secondary hasn't really been tested

yet." The Little Giants have held their first four opponents to just 63.3 passing yards per game, with Toledo Central Catholic, Akron Buchtel, Toledo Bowhser and Oregon Clay

**T. LIGGINS**

confined to short passing attacks. When forcing opponents into third down and more than 10 yards to go, Ross has held all 19 times this season. Pallante figures his defense will face more passing-oriented schemes in at least half of its last three games. "We have three big passing tests, one Friday, one against Mansfield Senior, one against Findlay," he said. "All three have quarterbacks that throw the ball really well, and all three can run." Offensively, Ross must cure a case of fumble-it's. The Little Giants have fumbled the ball 19 times this season, almost five times per game, and have lost 10. "We have no respect for the football," Pallante said after Ross coughed it up four times against Clay. The fumbles aren't coming on pitches or option plays, but on counters and bellies.

Ross stays unbeaten

Little Giants stop Mules' air attack

By KYLE TIMMONS

News-Messenger correspondent

BEDFORD, Mich. — Fremont Ross came into Friday night's game with the Great Lakes League's No. 1 defense, while Bedford (Mich.) entered the game with the GLL's top-ranked passing attack.

Something had to give, and the Little Giants continued their defensive intensity against the Kicking Mules, limiting them to 186 total yards, 156 through the air as Ross defeated Bedford 28-6, improving its record to 5-0 overall and 2-0 in the league.

"It was a big game for them," said Ross coach Dan Pallante of the hosts. "They are a good team."

The Ross defense was led by Bryson Sewell and Brian Hill, who continually put pressure on Bedford quarterback D. J. Lutz. Ross did not allow a Bedford first down until two minutes remained in the first half.

John Forshay led the Little Giants down the field in the first quarter, running for 54 of his career-high 144 yards, and finished it off with a 1-yard plunge.

Forshay credited his offensive



HILL

Friday
Ross 28
Bedford (Mich.) 6

Next
Ross at Fostoria Friday

line for his performance.

"They were getting off the ball real nice," Forshay said. "They did an excellent job blocking."

Pallante was counting on a big game from his fullback.

"We figured that we were going to make them stop our fullback," Pallante said. "We were going to stay with him until they stopped it."

Bedford coach Ray Moran, said the Little Giants' size advantage was the deciding factor as his team fell to 3-2 and 1-1 in the GLL.

"They executed their offense

real well," Moran said. "They were able to run the ball and control the game."

Robert Atkins scored the second Ross touchdown when he recovered a fumbled pitch by Aaron Coonrod and carried the ball nine yards for a 13-0 lead.

"It should have been ours," Moran said of the loose ball. "The kid picked it up and ran it in."

Atkins' touchdown was set up by a 37-yard pass from Coonrod to Tyson Liggins on third-and-12.

"The game started off slow," said Moran. "If you take away the six points from that fumble, we're in it."

Pallante said Bedford had a different defensive set, causing some confusion.

See HEIDELBURG, B2

Heidelberg gets second touchdown return

Continued from B1

"They ran all kinds of different stuff tonight, stuff that they haven't run all year," Pallante said. "The penetration caused a little trouble for some of the counters."

Jorel Heidelberg put the Little Giants up 21-0 when he took the second half kickoff and ran 94 yards for a touchdown.

The Heidelberg touchdown was made possible when David Kitchen's block allowed him to break free for the touchdown.

The Ross defense continued its solid defensive play when Tyson Liggins intercepted a Lutz pass at the 29-yard line.

The Little Giants' final score came on a 4-yard pass from Coonrod to tight end Dan Cobb. Coonrod finished the game with two completions for 41 yards.

The Little Giants' bid for a shutout was erased when Bedford scored on a 7-yard pass from Lutz to Andy Baker.

"We have the tendency to relax when we get up," said Pallante. "I think that is going to come back to haunt us."

Ross kept trainer Joe Hershey busy, as Coonrod, linebacker Jason Billow, cornerback Kelly Lytle and guard Zack Frasure suffered minor injuries.

"We got a little beat up tonight," Pallante said. "From talking to Joe Hershey, he said they should be ready to play next week."

The Little Giants will try to win their 20th consecutive regular season game next week at Fostoria, the last team to beat them in regular season play.

"Our kids will be ready to play," Pallante said. "They'll want to play, and be geared up. It's that great backyard rivalry. It's always a great game."

High School

Ross 28, Bedford 6

Ross	7	6	8	7	— 28
Bedford	0	0	0	6	— 6

First quarter

R— John Forshtay, 1 run (John McCord kick), 3:42

Second quarter

R— Robert Atkins, 9 run (kick failed), 7:40

Third quarter

R— Jorel Heidelberg, 94 kickoff return (Aaron Coonrod run), 11:46

Fourth quarter

R— Dan Cobb, 4 pass from Coonrod (McCord kick), 11:55

B— Andy Baker, 7 pass from D.J. Lutz (kick failed), 9:16

	R	B
First downs	14	9
Rushes-yards	44-188	12-30
Passing yards	41	156
Passes-Comp.-Int.....	4-2-0	38-25-0
Punts-avg.	2-31.3	5-31.3
Fumbles-lost.....	2-0	1-0
Penalties-yards.....	8-60	10-82

INDIVIDUAL STATISTICS

RUSHING: Ross — John Forshtay 26-144, Weston Hineline 3-10, Aaron Coonrod 8-42, Robert Atkins 4- (-2), David Rhodes 3- (-6); Bedford — Mike Moran 8-30, D.J. Lutz 3- (-1), Aaron Swick 1-1.

PASSING: Ross — Aaron Coonrod 2-4-0-41; Bedford — D.J. Lutz 25-38-0-156.

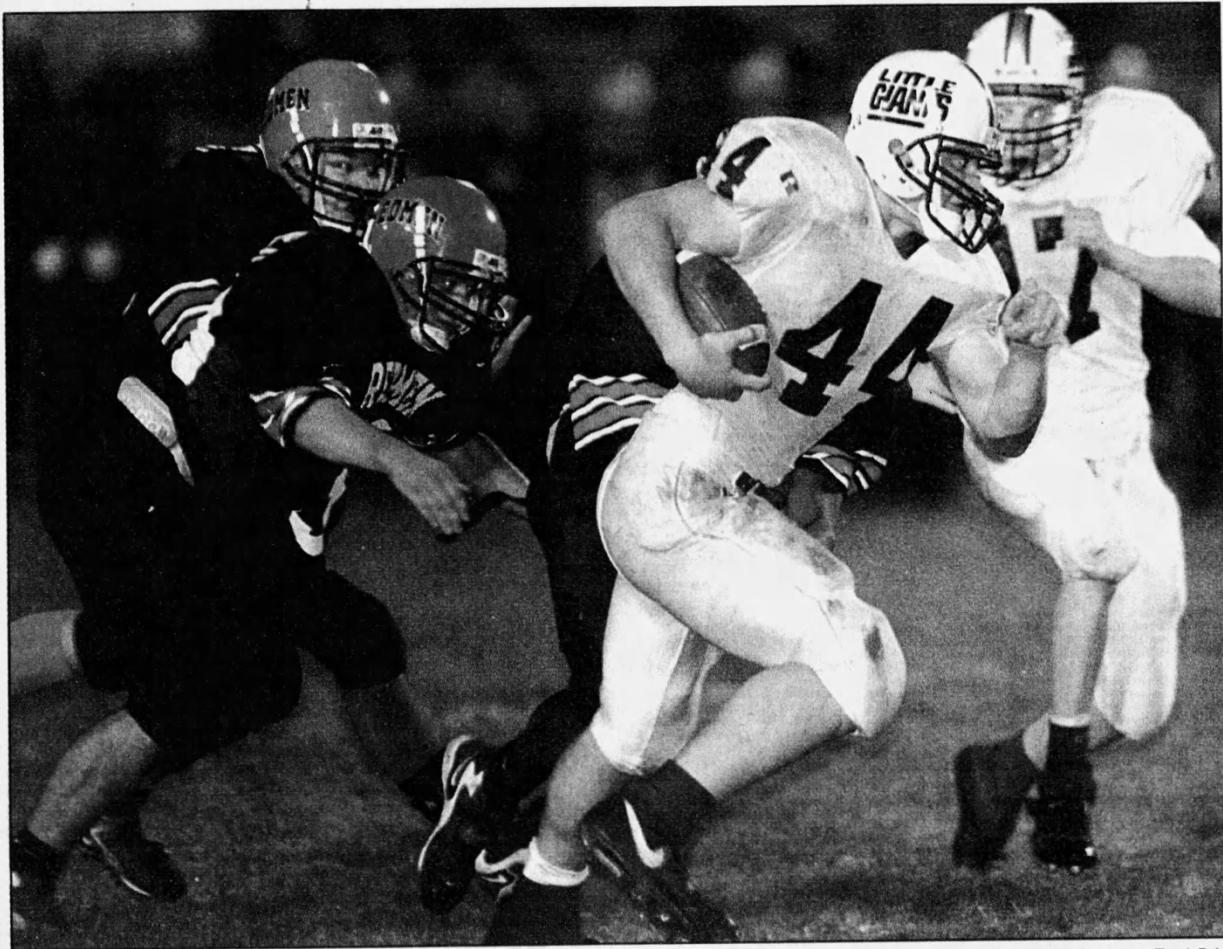
RECEIVING: Ross — Tyson Liggins 1-37, Dan Cobb 1-4; Bedford — Aaron Swick 7-25, Fred Smith 7-51, Steve Lisk 6-56, Mike Moran 2-14, Pat Gill 2-8, Andy Baker 1-7

Records: Ross 5-0 (2-0), Bedford 3-2 (1-1)

FREMONT ROSS**LITTLE GIANTS (5-0) at
FOSTORIA REDMEN (1-4)****When:** Friday, 7:30 p.m.**Where:** Fostoria**Last week:** Ross 28, Bedford 6;
Whitmer 48, Fostoria 14**Last year:** Ross 42, Fostoria 0**Radio:** WFRO-AM 900 (Jerry Reiling and John Cullen)**Ross players to watch:** OT/DL Brian Hill, LB Bryson Sewell, RB John Forsthay, P/TE Dan Cobb, LB Jason Hull**Fostoria players to watch:** QB Ryan Gerritsen, RB Justin Kiser, E Greg Fleming, DL Cory Echelberry, LB Cory Freshour, DL Zeb Wedge**Injury update:** Ross— LB Jason Billow (ankle), out; OL Zack Frasure (shoulder), probable; QB Aaron Coonrod (Achilles' heel), probable

Keys to the game: After facing a crazy Bedford passing attack based on trick plays and short tosses, the Little Giants face Fostoria quarterback Ryan Gerritsen, who has run for 327 yards (third in the Great Lakes League) and passed for 359 yards (also third). Pallante and some of his players became familiar with Gerritsen at an Ohio University camp this past summer. "They are actually doing some similar offensive stuff, we're both running the veer a little bit," Pallante said. "(Gerritsen's) not a big kid, but he makes plays, runs the option well. He's not a deep passer, but he'll give an option look, then dump the ball to the flat on trips, or do a quick pass out of the option." Defensively, the Redmen run a 50 angle, where the nose guard, two tackles and two ends line up head-on an offensive lineman, then take a different gap on the snap. "It really takes a lot of work for our linemen," said Pallante, who added that Toledo St. Francis and Findlay also run similar defenses. "The defensive line is doing something different and opposite on every snap. Teams are moving and stunting on us, so the kids are used to it, but it's one of those things that can create problems." At the middle of the Fostoria 50 angle are linebacker Cory Freshour, lineman Zeb Wedge and linebacker Cory Echelberry. Echelberry, last year's Division II discus champion, is Fostoria's leading tackler with 55 stops. "He's a solid linebacker, we have to find where he is on every play," Pallante said. On the health front, Aaron Coonrod, Kelly Lytle and Zack Frasure are all expected to play after minor injuries against Bedford. Linebacker Jason Billow, however, will miss the game with a sprained ankle. Junior Jason Hull, who suffered a broken hand in fall camp, is expected to maintain the level of play set by Billow. "In camp, Jason and Jason were competing pretty heavy," Pallante said. "Jason Billow's going to have to fight for his job back."

Ross shuts out Fostoria



News-Messenger/Frank Beier

JOHN FORSHAY looks for running room in the Little Giants' 17-0 victory at Fostoria Friday night.

Little Giants win second straight over rival Redmen

By MICHAEL PIDANICK
Staff writer

FOSTORIA — Six down, four to go — at least.

Fremont Ross used a tenacious defense to shut down Fostoria and earn a 17-0 win at Fostoria Memorial Stadium.

"It feels great," said safety Josh Lozano after the Little Giants improved to 6-0 overall and 3-0 in the GLL. "We're past halfway there. We've got four games to go and hopefully we'll come away with a league championship and make the playoffs."

The Little Giants held Fostoria

to just 112 yards of total offense, and posted their first shutout of the season.

Redmen quarterback Ryan Gerritsen had been one of the more dangerous players in the GLL this season, compiling 327 yards rushing in Fostoria's first five games. But Ross sacked him three times — by Zack Frasure, Bryson Sewell and Tyson Liggins — and held him to minus-10 yards rushing and 25 yards passing in the game.

"I was worried coming in," said Ross coach Dan Pallante. "They have a good option quarterback.

Friday

Ross 17

Fostoria 0

Next

Whitmer at Ross, Friday, 7:30 p.m.

But I think our kids were just too physical for them up front."

The Redmen gained just 64 yards on the ground and 48 through the air, and fell to 1-5 overall and 0-3 in the league.

Fostoria coach Tom Grine felt the Little Giants' speed advantage and ability to make adjustments limited what his offense

could do.

"When you hurt them with something, you're not going to get them again with that same play," he said. "We completed a bootleg pass and they don't give that to us again. We run a couple of blasts successfully and they move their linebackers up and they're filling like bandits and we don't get any room to run the football."

Fostoria picked up only four first downs in the game and only reached Ross territory one time.

See ROSS, B3

Ross wins 17-0

Continued from B1

The defense came up with the biggest play of the game with eight minutes left in the first half. The Redmen tried a double pass, but the lateral from Gerritsen to Jamie Smith was errant and Lozano scooped up the loose ball and raced 16 yards for a touchdown.

"That was just a great defensive play by everyone," Lozano said. "At first I thought Pee Wee (cornerback Jorel Heidelberg) was going to get it for a second. Then my brother (safety Jamin Lozano) set a nice block, I have to give him credit for it too, because I wouldn't have gone in without his block."

The Little Giants' offense was far from impressive, but it got the job done. John Forshay ran 19 times for 117 yards, Weston Hineline added 62 yards on eight attempts, and Coonrod gained 46 on 10 carries.

The Little Giants scored on their opening drive, as Hineline busted up the middle and raced 38 yards to the end zone.

"The line just blew that wide open," said Hineline. "You could have driven a truck through that. The line really came out and dom-



News-Messenger/Frank Beier

TYSON LIGGINS takes a hit but hangs on for the first down.

inated a good defensive line."

Lozano's defensive score made it 14-0 with 7:54 left in the second quarter, but the Redmen held tough on defense.

Dan Cobb hit a 25-yard field goal with 3:22 left in the third quarter to provide the final margin of victory.

Heidelberg and Josh Lozano had fourth quarter interceptions to seal the game.

Jamin Lozano played strong safety, as Aaron Coonrod played

only offense because of an injury, and did a solid job. Linebacker Jason Hull started in place of the injured Jason Billow, and was a force all night.

"Jason stepped up," Pallante said. "We'll have some fun this week between him and Jason Billow to see what they can do."

Pallante said Coonrod was held out of defensive duty as a precaution and should return next week as Ross hosts Toledo Whitmer Friday at 7:30 p.m.

High School

Ross 17, Fostoria 0

at Fostoria Memorial Stadium

Ross	7	7	3	0	—	17
------	---	---	---	---	---	----

Fostoria	0	0	0	0	—	0
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First quarter

R — Weston Hineline 38 run (Dan Cobb kick); 8:34

Second quarter

R — Josh Lozano 16 fumble return (Cobb kick); 7:54

Third quarter

R — Cobb 25 field goal; 3:22

Fourth quarter

No scoring

	R	F
First Downs.....	5	4
Rush-Yards	43-226	34-64
Passing yards.....	28	48
Pass-Comp.Int	8-3-0	17-5-2
Punts-Avg	4-39.3	12-31.5
Fumbles-Lost.....	3-2	2-1
Penalties-Yards	7-60	2-10

INDIVIDUAL STATISTICS

RUSHING: Ross — John Forshay 19-117, Weston Hineline 8-62, Aaron Coonrod 10-46, Robert Atkins 1-2; Fostoria — Pedro Campos 5-18, Cory Freshour 15-36, Ryan Gerritsen 10-(-10), Jamie Smith 3-31.

PASSING: Ross — Aaron Coonrod 3-7-0-28; Fostoria — Ryan Gerritsen 3-10-0-25, Jamie Smith 2-7-2-11.

RECEIVING: Ross — Tyson Liggins 2-24, Hineline 1-4; Fostoria — Jeremy Smith 2-13, Campos 1-17, Jameson Botimer 1-1, Greg Flemming 1-5.

Records: Ross 6-0 (3-0), Fostoria 1-5 (0-3)

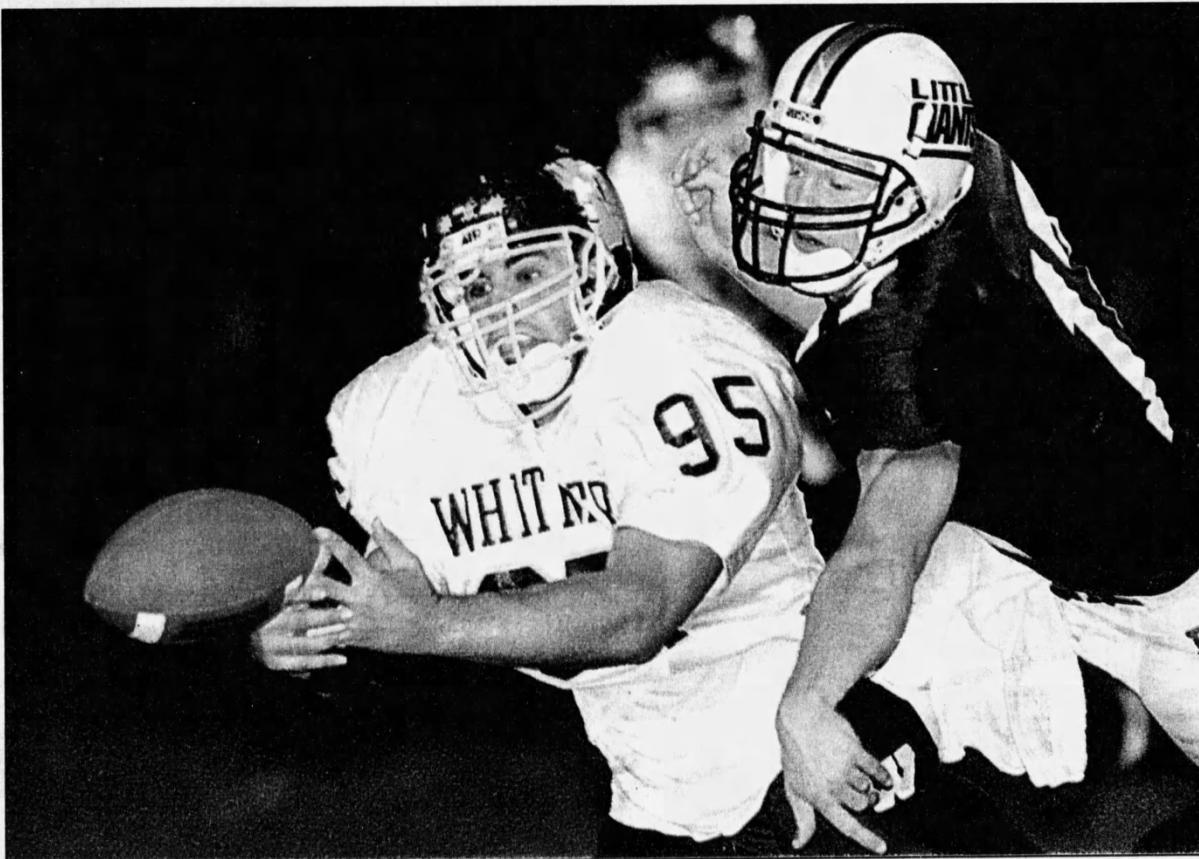
TOLEDO WHITMER PANTHERS**(4-2) at FREMONT ROSS****LITTLE GIANTS (6-0)****When:** Friday, 7:30 p.m.**Where:** Harmon Stadium**Last week:** Ross 17, Fostoria 0; Whitmer 14, Sandusky 13**Last year:** Ross 17, Whitmer 0**Radio:** WFRO-AM 900 (Jerry Reiding and John Cullen)**Ross players to watch:** QB/S Aaron Coonrod, S Josh Lozano, S Jamin Lozano, G/NG Zack Frasure, RB John Forshay, LT Frank Kaiser**Whitmer players to watch:** RB B.J. Barre, LB Ben Sheriff, QB Jay Watt, SE John Garrow, RB/LB Rob Hutka**Keys to the game:** The Panthers were down a year ago, struggling to a 2-8 finish, but enter Friday's game as the only team other than Ross without a loss in Great Lakes League play. Running back B.J. Barre is third in the GLL with 532 yards rushing, and has 12 touchdowns.

Behind center is quarterback Jay Watt, who has completed just 26-of-73 passes on the year, while John Garrow (15 catches, 172 yards) is the top receiving target. Stud linebacker Ben Sheriff (230 pounds, 51 tackles) leads the Whitmer defense, and gets plenty of help from Rob Hutka (52 tackles). Ross is coming off a 17-0 win over Fostoria which is eerily reminiscent — on paper, anyway — of the Little Giants' 17-0 win over Whitmer last year. Consider: Ross had five first downs against Fostoria last week, six against Whitmer last year. Josh Lozano scored on a fumble recovery return last week, while Aaron Root's fumble recovery set up Eric Lindsey's touchdown run last year. The scores were the same. The Little Giants' defense bent but didn't break against Whitmer last year ... well, it didn't even bend last week.

Enough with the historical perspective, this much is clear: Ross's run defense is stingy, and running back John Forshay is going to get the ball for Ross, and often. Forshay, overtaken by Oregon Clay's Derek Besgrove for the GLL rushing lead, has accounted for 35 percent of the Little Giants' 281 carries, approximately one percent less than Lindsey's percentage last year as the feature back. In all likelihood, this game will boil down to how well Forshay fares against Whitmer's fourth-ranked rushing defense, and whether or not Barre can earn enough first downs to give his team some type of field position edge.

**FORSHAY**

Atkins busts out in win



News-Messenger/Andrew Morrison

AARON COONROD knocks the ball away from Whitmer's Rob Hutka in the Little Giants' 38-14 victory Friday at Harmon Stadium.

Little Giants rush for 448 yards, 4 TDs against Whitmer

By SCOTT TAPPA
Sports editor

So that's what Robert Atkins can do.

After a sometimes frustrating first six games of the season, in which the senior halfback rushed for 84 yards on 33 carries, Atkins exploded for 156 yards rushing and two touchdowns on just eight carries Friday night in the Little Giants' 38-14 over Toledo Whitmer.

"That's what we've been waiting for," said Ross coach Dan

Pallante, whose team improved to 7-0 overall, 4-0 in the Great Lakes League. "It's been a tough coaching decision, because he's done it in practice, and we haven't seen it on Friday night. We saw it tonight.

"I'm really proud of him. For a kid that's had a lot of doubts, he really hung in there and got it done."

And how. Atkins' runs included touchdown runs of 74 and 34 yards, two of five Ross ground scores, while his 156 yards were

	Friday
Ross	38
Whitmer	14

	Next
Mansfield Sr. at Ross	Friday, 7:30 p.m.

part of the Little Giants' 448 rushing yards.

Atkins opened the scoring midway through the first quarter, breaking loose from 74 yards out. On what appeared to be a routine off tackle run to the right, Atkins broke free of B.J. Barre's arm

tackle, almost doubling his season rushing output to that point in one carry.

"The whole defense was going to the right side, and it left a cut-back lane, and I just took it," said Atkins. "We've been practicing that all week, trying to speed it up that way, get the defense flowing that way."

Atkins' cutback impressed his blockers, including center David Fennel.

See ROSS, B3

Ross runs for 448 yards in 38-14 win

Continued from B1

"Half the time I didn't even know what he was doing," Fennel said. "He was cutting back and I would realize he was still running. He runs hard every play."

With just under a minute to play in the third quarter, Atkins busted loose again, taking Coonrod's option pitch and running 34 yards for the touchdown.

"Coony gave me a great pitch. I made a move, and there was only field," Atkins said. "We've been working on that in practice, over and over, repping it and repping it, and it was just like we brought it from the practice field to the game."

"Just like Pallante wanted it."

"We made a commitment to open it up, formation-wise, and option-wise," Pallante said. "I made my mind up that I was going to live and die with the veer. We ran one play Tuesday night in practice for an hour and 20 minutes."

"We haven't been attacking the perimeter. The whole philosophy of the offense is that if you can't get to the perimeter, the inside stuff doesn't go. And Whitmer did a great job of defending the inside stuff, the trap, the belly."

Still, workhorse running back John Forshay ran for 100 yards on 21 carries, including several key first downs.

Barre would break a big special teams play early in the second quarter, fielding Dan Cobb's 47-yard punt in his own 6-yard line, racing 94 yards up the east sideline for the touchdown.

Barre's touchdown represented the first points allowed by Ross in the second quarter this season.

Ross answered with a methodical 11-play, 61-yard drive capped off by Coonrod's 1-yard plunge behind tackle Brian Hill and guard Rick Legg. Forshay carried for 61 yards on the drive, including seven after a delay of game penalty threatened to end the drive.

Ross would outgain Whitmer in the half, and nearly doubled the Panthers in time of possession, 15:11 to 8:11.

Linebacker Andrew Diller got the second half started right for Ross, intercepting Whitmer quarterback Nick Gallup and returning the ball to the Whitmer 20. Four plays later Coonrod rumbled in from 5 yards out, keeping the ball on an option to the left.

The Little Giant defense snuffed out a short drive late in the third quarter, with Diller leveling Panther receiver John Garrow on a short pass, while Josh Liggins intercepted Gallup's pass on the next play, making a spectacular catch.

Three plays later, Coonrod hit Tyson Liggins on a play-action 27-yard touchdown pass, his first completion of the night.

Jay Watt entered the game at quarterback for Whitmer, and briefly energized the Panthers, passing for 45 yards before his jump ball was intercepted by Kelly Lytle.

Four plays later, Coonrod ran an option keeper 46 yards for the Little Giants' final touchdown.

"There's no way he didn't want to not run (the option)," Pallante said. "He wanted to run the option — you could tell the kids had confidence in it, and if the kids exude the confidence, then I'm going to stay with it."

Coonrod's touchdown was set



News-Messenger/Andrew Morrison

B.J. BARRE (4) grabs John Forshay's facemask.

up by Weston Hineline's 38-yard run. In addition to the 100-yard rushing efforts by Atkins and Forshay, Hineline had 77 yards, Coonrod had 67 — even sophomore Jamin Lozano ran for 37 yards on his first career carry.

"Fremont has so many weapons — wow!" said Whitmer coach Jeff Robbins, whose team fell to 4-3 overall, 2-1 in the GLL. "Atkins, the fullback, the quarterback ... they did a lot of things that forced us to make changes at halftime to try and shut them down. When their offense is on the field and

we're only on three plays, or two plays, that killed us."

Whitmer's star linebacker Ben Sheriff sat out the game, and will be out the rest of the year after blowing out his knee recently. Sheriff had 51 tackles entering the game, second on the team.

Leading tackler Rob Hutka was knocked out of the game in the third quarter, suffering what appeared to be an arm injury on punt coverage.

Ross hosts Mansfield Senior, a 24-10 loser to Marion Harding Friday night.

Ross defense bears down, buries Barre

By KYLE TIMMONS
News-Messenger correspondent

Scary.

That's the word Ross coach Dan Pallante used to describe Toledo Whitmer running back B.J. Barre.

"It's the first real true, pure back we've faced," Pallante said. "He's one of the fastest backs that I've ever seen."

But Barre, who entered the game third in the GLL in rushing with 532 yards and one of the leading scorers, was held to 62 yards on the ground.

"They took us out of our game plan," said Whitmer coach Jeff Robbins. "I think that it was going to be a real physical game, and obviously Fremont is a very physical team."

Ross, which has held its opponents to 484 rushing yards this season, received great defensive play from several individuals.

"We have a tenacious defense," said Ross lineman Zack Frasure. "We're a tight defense and we

stopped everybody."

Ross did have some difficulty with Barre on special teams, as he raced 94 yards on a punt return.

"We felt that special teams were important," Robbins said. "We scored on special teams. After that, offensively we just couldn't do what we wanted."

Safety Aaron Coonrod said that the defensive play made up for Barre's score.

"Defensively we totally shut them down," said Coonrod. "They had a couple of big plays, but our defense pretty much held them."

Pallante said he was pleased with the way his team defended Barre.

"I think that the kids did a nice job of gang tackling," Pallante said. "I think we beat him up a little bit."

"He could break it any time. The kid had a good effort all night and he never stopped and hung in there the whole game. But that is the definition of good defense."

Key play

Fremont Ross set the tone for the second half on Whitmer's very first drive. The Panthers entered the third quarter trailing 12-7, as quarterback Nick Gallup dropped back to pass.

But his pass was intercepted by linebacker Andrew Diller, who returned it to the Whitmer 20-yard line. Aaron Coonrod eventually punched it in from 5 yards out.

Diller's interception sparked the Little Giants' defense the rest of the game as Kelly Lytle and Josh Liggins also came up with interceptions. Liggins' pick gave Ross 12 on the year.

"They shut us down offensively," said Whitmer coach Jeff Robbins. "We turned the ball over I don't even know how many times. I didn't count them all."

—Kyle Timmons

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Ross 38, Whitmer 14

at Harmon Stadium

Whitmer 0 7 0 7 — 14

Ross 6 6 13 13 — 38

First Quarter

R — Robert Atkins 74 run (kick blocked), 6:43

Second Quarter

W — B.J. Barre 94 punt return (John Garrow kick), 9:12

R — Aaron Coonrod 1 run (conversion failed), 3:34

Third Quarter

R — Coonrod 5 run (John McCord kick), 9:47

R — Atkins 34 run (kick failed), 0:54

Fourth Quarter

R — Tyson Liggins 27 from Coonrod (McCord kick), 10:05

R — Coonrod 46 run (kick failed), 6:49

W — Garrow 39 from Jay Watt (Garrow kick), 4:04

	R	W
First downs	17	6
Rushes-yards	50-448	20-54
Passing yards	27	140
Passes-Comp-Int.....	3-1-0	20-8-3
Punts-Avg.....	4-39.3	4-30.8
Fumbles-lost	4-0	1-1
Penalties-yards.....	8-70	1-10

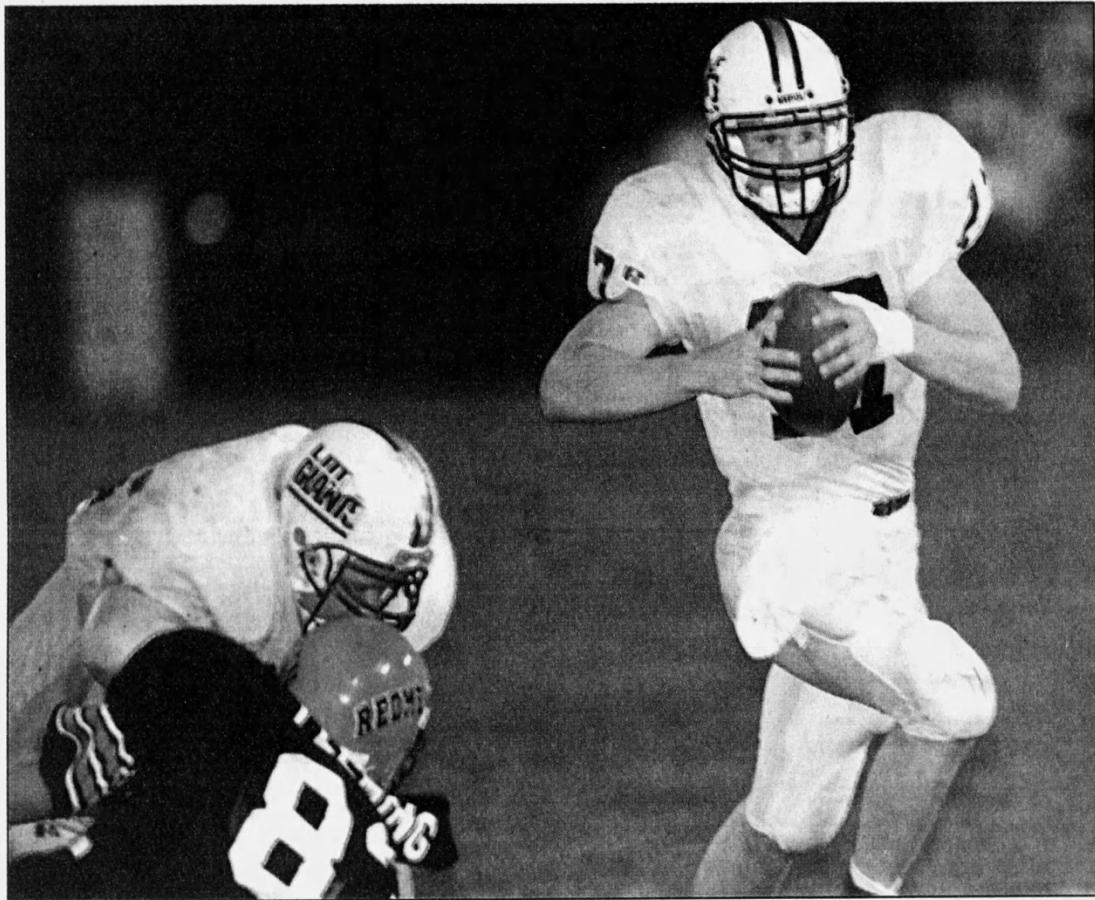
INDIVIDUAL STATISTICS

RUSHING: Ross — Robert Atkins 8-156, John Forshtay 21-100, Aaron Coonrod 8-67, Weston Hineline 8-77, Jamin Lozano 2-40, Kendrid Nason 2-6, Jason Billow 1-2; Whitmer — B.J. Barre 15-62, Brian Szych 3-10, Nick Gallup 1- (-18), Rob Hutka 1-0.

PASSING: Ross — Aaron Coonrod 1-3-27-0-1; Whitmer — Jay Watt 5-7-120-1-1, Nick Gallup 3-13-20-2-0.

RECEIVING: Ross — Tyson Liggins 1-27; Whitmer — John Garrow 4-99, B.J. Barre 2- (-1), Mike Meridieth 2-13, Ryan Elridge 1-29.

Eyes on the Tygers



News-Messenger file photo/Frank Beier

AARON COONROD and Fremont Ross face their toughest test of the season Friday when they host Mansfield Senior at Harmon Stadium.

Mansfield Senior poses tough test for Ross Friday

By SCOTT TAPPA
Sports editor

Fremont Ross football coach Dan Pallante compares Mansfield Senior quarterback Jeremee Butts to Randall Cunningham.

Tall, lanky, poised, the quarterback draws high praise from Pallante, who leads his 7-0 Little Giants into Harmon Stadium for a 7:30 p.m. showdown Friday with the 5-2 Tygers.

"They do it all," Pallante said. "They run a one-back, throw deep, throw short, crossing routes, run the option well, off tackle well. He's a nice package."

Mansfield coach Stan Jefferson prefers to compare Butts not to an aging NFL veteran,

but rather the Butts of 1997. Butts has completed 81-of-160 passes this season, with eight touchdowns and six interceptions, while running for 272 yards on 65 carries.

"Compared to the Jeremee Butts of a year ago, he is a much better quarterback," said Jefferson. "He has a year's experience, and he has led our team well."

Helping Butts is a talented supporting cast. On the receiving end of Butts' passes are split end Ali Thompson (22 catches, 298 yards) and tight end Jermaine Bradley (22 catches).

"Ali is a much more horizontal receiver, catches the ball real well," Jefferson said. "Jermaine Bradley is also a very

good receiver."

While the Tyger receivers are capable of getting deep, Jefferson said he would rather base his offense on short- to medium-length passing.

"We prefer to throw a ball-control passing game, to use a lot of play action and to throw the ball downfield only when we have to," Jefferson said.

In the Ross three-deep zone, Butts' short passing will put added pressure on the four members of the Little Giants' underneath zone — linebackers Jason Billow, Josh Liggins and Andrew Diller, as well as safety Aaron Coonrod.

"To have a really good game they have to be successful, not only in the passing game, but in run support," Pallante said.

Football: Week 8

More area high school coverage inside:

■ Oak Harbor has had Clyde's number this decade — will Friday be different?

Page B2

■ St. Joe gets set to face Calvert passing juggernaut.

Page B3

■ Game-by-game previews for week 8. **Page B4**

Littleton Lloyd is the latest runner to test his luck against the Ross run defense, which has allowed an average of 60 rushing yards per game and just 2.2 yards per carry this year. Lloyd

See ROSS, B2

MANSFIELD SENIOR TYGERS**(5-2) at FREMONT ROSS**
LITTLE GIANTS (7-0)**When:** Friday, 7:30 p.m.**Where:** Harmon Stadium**Last week:** Ross 38, Whitmer 14;
Marion Harding 24, Mansfield 10**Last year:** Ross 12, Mansfield 6**Radio:** WFRO-AM 900 (Jerry Reiling and John Cullen)**Ross players to watch:** QB/S Aaron Coonrod, HB Robert Atkins, LB Josh Liggins, SE/LB Tyson Liggins, G/NG Zack Frasure, LB Andrew Diller, LB Jason Billow, DL Bryson Sewell, DL/RT Brian Hill**Mansfield players to watch:** QB Jeremee Butts, RB Littleton Lloyd, SE Ali Thompson, TE Jermaine Bradley, LB Erik Dandy, LB Maurice Bradley**Keys to the game:** The Little Giants won an ugly game in Mansfield a year ago, allowing a touchdown on the seventh play of the game before buckling down. This year's outfit is a much-improved 5-2, in no small part because of quarterback Jeremee Butts. Butts has passed for 939 yards and eight touchdowns this season, and is second on the team in rushing with 272 yards, but his ability to cut down his turnovers has helped turn the Tygers around. Split end Ali Thompson (22 catches, 298 yards) and tight end Jermaine Bradley (22 catches) are Butts' favorite receivers, while Littleton Lloyd (900 yards rushing, eight touchdowns) is Mansfield's between-the-tackles workhorse running back. Defensively, "Mike" linebacker Erik Dandy leads the Heartland Conference with 97 tackles — 20 more than his next closest competitor — but defensive end Jeremy Haynes (16 sacks) may be Mansfield's biggest threat from his roaming defensive line position. Ross is coming off perhaps its most complete performance of the season, crushing Whitmer in a manner that was both spectacular (four touchdowns of more than 25 yards) and methodical (a 32:54-15:06 time of possession advantage). Linebackers Jason Billow, Josh Liggins, Andrew Diller and safety Aaron Coonrod will be key in stopping the Tygers' underneath passing game, while running back John Forshtay's running is necessary for Ross to control the clock.

No ifs, ands or Butts



News-Messenger/Andrew Morrison

JOHN FORSHAY (44) is wrapped up by Mansfield defender David Davis in the Tygers' 25-20 win over Ross Friday at Harmon Stadium.

Mansfield quarterback leads 25-20 win over Little Giants

By SCOTT TAPPA
Sports editor

Anatomically speaking, Fremont Ross's 21-game regular season winning streak was snapped by the arms and legs of a quarterback named Butts.

Mansfield Senior quarterback Jeremeen Butts rushed for two touchdowns, set up two with long passes and iced the game with a key first down completion as the Tygers beat Ross 25-20 Friday night at Harmon Stadium.

The loss, which was the Little Giants' first in regular season play since an 18-0 loss to Fostoria on Oct. 4, 1996, dropped Ross to 7-1 overall, while Mansfield

improved to 6-2.

"We laid an egg," said Ross coach Dan Pallante. "We dug ourselves such a hole, and I told the kids you can't focus on that. That happens when you face a good opponent. We made some really costly errors, and they got us."

The errors started on the first drive for Ross, as a pass interference call set up the Tygers' first touchdown. Jason O'Neal capped off the drive with a 10-yard touchdown run, scoring after taking the reverse handoff from Adam Burdette, ending a 10-play, 71-yard drive.

"He followed my block," Butts said of O'Neal. "Everybody bit on

	Friday
Mansfield	25
Ross	20

Next

Ross at Findlay, Friday, 7:30 p.m.

the pitch sweep, and he came around."

Jorel Heidelberg temporarily halted the Tygers' momentum, blocking Nick Shasky's 33-yard field goal attempt on Mansfield's next possession.

But following a Ross punt, Mansfield needed just four plays to go 45 yards, with Butts' 1-yard plunge capping the drive. Again coming off the corner, Heidelberg blocked the ensuing extra point attempt.

The Tygers moved into position on Butts' 43-yard pass to Perry Cameron, one of four Butts passes which gained more than 30 yards. The 6-foot-3, 200-pound senior would finish with 211 yards, spreading the ball around to five receivers.

"He's very inconsistent, but he got hot," Pallante said. "He was inconsistent enough that we wanted him to throw the ball, and he wasn't throwing awesome passes, but we just weren't playing them well."

See ROSS, B3

Ross win streak snapped

Continued from B1

Mansfield struck again slightly more than a minute into the second quarter. Linebacker Maurice Bradley sacked Ross quarterback Aaron Coonrod, forcing him to fumble, and David Davis returned the fumble 39 yards to give the Tygers a 19-0 lead.

"That's never happened — they hit us right in the mouth," Pallante said. "As a matter of fact, they did it last year, but last year we didn't make the terrible offensive mistakes, we didn't put the ball on the ground, we didn't give them the touchdown."

Mansfield's run defense was tough all night, essentially taking the option pitch away from Coonrod, and forcing the quarterback to run himself. Coonrod finished with 43 yards on 19 carries, while wingbacks Weston Hineline, Robert Atkins and Josh Lozano combined for just 15 carries.

"They really made their mind up they were going to take the pitch away," Pallante said. "At the end of the game, they were giving us the pitch, but we weren't executing. We weren't used to seeing that kind of speed."

Ross got on the board in the second quarter with an 11-play, 67-yard drive, capped off by Hineline's 20-yard touchdown run. On a wingback counter, Hineline faked inside, bounded outside, and beat a Mansfield defensive back to the end zone.

The Tygers wasted little time answering, going 69 yards in seven plays, capped off by Butts' 1-yard touchdown run. Ali Thompson's 51-yard reception put the Tygers in scoring position, gathering in a beautiful pass from Butts.

John Forshtay's 1-yard touchdown run capped the first half scoring for Ross, diving in with just under two minutes remaining. Forshtay's plunge was set up by Andrew Diller's 48-yard catch-and-run on a tight end drag, a play that was originally ruled a touchdown.

The two teams controlled the ball for almost exactly the same amount of time in the half, with Ross leading the time of posses-



News-Messenger/Andrew Morrison

WESTON HINELINE (46) is brought down by Mansfield defenders Adam Burdette (26) and Perry Cameron (27).

scoring battle 12:01 - 11:59.

The Little Giant defense provided the momentum boost to start the second half. After Mansfield recovered a Ross fumble, back-to-back sacks by Bryson Sewell stymied the Tygers' scoring opportunity.

But after Ross took over on downs, an errant pitch on the next play was recovered by Mansfield.

The Little Giant defense held again, though, stuffing Butts on fourth-and-goal from the 1-yard line after the quarterback bobbed the snap.

The Tygers' third quarter offensive inefficiency frustrated coach Stan Jefferson.

"Not to take anything away from Fremont, but the score should have been 14 more points for us," Jefferson said. "We had some opportunities but just did not get it in."

After the third quarter ended with neither team scoring, the two teams traded punts, and Ross scored with 3:45 remaining in the fourth quarter. On fourth-and-1 from the Mansfield 10, Hineline

scored on a play similar to his earlier touchdown.

"It was pure adrenaline," said Hineline, who finished with 69 yards on nine carries. "The comeback was there and I took it."

After Derek Fisher recovered Coonrod's onside kick for Mansfield, two short runs and an offside penalty put the Tygers in a third-and-14. With Ross out of timeouts, Butts completed a 41-yard pass to O'Neal, icing the game for Mansfield.

"We were all ready to go," Pallante said. "We had the two-minute offense ready, the plays called..."

"I used that timeout, and I knew they were going to run the ball three times, but then they completed that past, and it kind of took the wind out of our sails."

While the win breathes life back into Mansfield's playoff hopes, Pallante said Ross needs help from their southern neighbors in their postseason hunt.

"We need some help out of the Columbus teams," Pallante said. "The biggest thing right now is I want to win the league."

Key play

Mansfield's 41-yard pass from Jereme Butts to Jason O'Neal late in the fourth quarter preserved the Tygers' 25-20 victory over Fremont Ross.

Facing a third-and-12 with just under three minutes remaining in the fourth quarter, Butts completed the pass and the Tygers chewed up the rest of the clock.

"One man runs the post," Butts said of the pass. "If they take the post, he comes underneath everybody. We needed that first down big."

Pallante said that he knew Mansfield would run the ball to eat up the clock, but the pass is what really hurt.

"I knew they were going to run the ball three times," said Pallante. "But when they completed that pass, and it kind of took the wind out of our sails."

Mansfield coach Stan Jefferson said that the completion was a boost for his team.

"That really took us out of the hole and pushed them back," he said.

—KYLE TIMMONS

Ross comeback falls short

Down 19-0 early, Little Giants can't catch up to Tygers

By KYLE TIMMONS
News-Messenger correspondent

After falling behind 19-0 early in the second quarter to Mansfield Senior, Fremont Ross held the Tygers scoreless in the second half, but the team's bid for a comeback fell short in the 25-20 loss.

Despite the loss, Ross coach Dan Pallante emphasized the positives in the comeback.

"I'm proud of the kids for hanging in there, really proud," he said.

Ross battled back to trail 25-14 at the half, and after struggling through a scoreless third quarter, Weston Hineline gave the Little Giants a glimmer of hope, scoring on a 10-yard touchdown run with 3:45 remaining in the game.

"I thought that we had the chance to come back," said Pallante after his second touchdown of the game. "One man runs the post," Butts said of the pass. "If they take the post, he comes underneath everybody. We needed that first down big."

Pallante said that he knew Mansfield would run the ball to eat up the clock, but the pass is what really hurt.

"I knew they were going to run the ball three times," said Pallante. "But when they completed that pass, and it kind of took the wind out of our sails."

Mansfield coach Stan Jefferson said that the completion was a boost for his team.

"If we didn't get the first down, they've got to make a big play," Jefferson said. "With the type of team they have, they can make a big play."

Jefferson added that the late heroics would not have been necessary had his second half strategy not been snuffed out by turnovers and missed opportunities.

"We had held our team at the half that we had to score three touchdowns," Jefferson said.

"We had the opportunity in the third quarter to maybe score twice, but we didn't get it in."

"We had some opportunities. If we could have capitalized on those the score could have been different."

Pallante said his team was playing better than the Tygers in the fourth quarter.

"The most important thing is for the better part of three-fourths of a game, we shut them down," said Pallante.

"We got back in our offensive mode and did a nice job, we just ran out of time."

The Little Giants, who gave up 197 total yards in the first half, buckled down in the second half limiting Mansfield to 91 yards.

"The secondary really bounced back well," Pallante said.

Pallante, whose team suffered its first loss of the season, said he was not disappointed with his team's performance.

"I think the kids showed a lot of character tonight," Pallante said. "That's the thing you don't see character when you win."

"I'm just as proud of these guys as I have been the last seven games."

Mansfield 25, Ross 20

at Harmon Stadium

Mansfield	13	12	0	0	—	25
Ross	0	14	0	6	—	20

First Quarter

M — Jason O'Neal 10 run (Nick Shasky kick), 8:03

M — Jeremee Butts 1 run (kick blocked), 1:44

Second Quarter

M — David Davis 37 fumble return (conversion failed), 10:44

R — Weston Hineline 20 run (kick blocked), 6:01

M — Butts 1 run (run failed), 2:45

R — John Forshtay 1 run (Aaron Coonrod run), 1:46

Third Quarter

No scoring

Fourth Quarter

R — Hineline 10 run (pass failed), 3:45

	R	M
First downs	15	14
Rushes-yards	46-187	38-109
Passing yards	48	211
Att-Comp-Int	6-1-0	17-10-0
Punts-Avg	3-36.7	2-38
Fumbles-Lost	4-3	1-0
Penalties-Yards	4-35	7-60

INDIVIDUAL STATISTICS

RUSHING: Ross — Aaron Coonrod 19-43, Weston Hineline 9-69, John Forshtay 12-46, Robert Atkins 5-26, Josh Lozano 1-3. Mansfield — Littleton Lloyd 18-70, Jeremee Butts 12-8, David Davis 6-17, Adam Burdette 1-4, Jason O'Neal 1-10.

PASSING: Ross — Aaron Coonrod 1-6-48-0-0. Mansfield — Jeremee Butts 10-17-211-0-0.

RECEIVING: Ross — Andrew Diller 1-48. Mansfield — Jason O'Neal 4-92, Littleton Lloyd 3-12, Ali Thompson 1-51, Jeremy Haynes 1-13, Perry Cameron 1-43.

Records: Ross 7-1, Mansfield 6-2

We're not going to lie to you: this week's game-by-game football matchups are nowhere near as exciting as last week's. Only three of the area's nine games feature two teams with winning records, Bellevue (6-2) and Tiffin Columbian, Margaretta (6-2) and Sandusky Perkins (6-2) and Gibsonburg (8-0) and Otsego (5-3). Still, Fremont Ross (7-1, 4-0) could clinch the Great Lakes League with a win at Findlay (4-4) and St. Joe (5-3, 4-1) looks to keep its playoff hopes alive against North Baltimore (1-7, 0-5).

FREMONT ROSS

LITTLE GIANTS (7-1) at FINDLAY TROJANS (4-4)

When: Friday, 7:30 p.m.
Where: Findlay High School
Last week: Mansfield Senior 25, Ross 20; Findlay 38, Whitmer 37 (OT)

Last year: Ross 14, Findlay 13
Radio: WFRO-AM 900 (John Cullen and Jerry Reidling)

Ross players to watch: LT Frank Kaiser, LG/NG Zack Frasure, C David Fennel, RG Rick Legg, RT/DL Brian Hill, DL/LB Bryson Sewell, QB/S Aaron Coonrod

Findlay players to watch: RB Dane Whited, QB Ryan Hite, SE Ben Roethlisberger, SE/KR Mike Iriti, DL Dave Gallegos, LB Jim Arnold, DL Jason Rhoads, TE/DE Nick Sayers

Keys to the game: It was bound to happen sooner or later, a regular season Fremont Ross football loss. "It was weird," said coach Dan Pallante of the Little Giants' 25-20 defeat at the hands of Mansfield Senior. "When you get kicked in the teeth, you have to pick yourself up, and readjust your goals." For Ross, that means focusing on a Great Lakes League championship. "We're pretty much out of the playoff picture," said Pallante, whose team sits five spots out of a playoff spot in Region 2. "But a GLL championship could come our way, and the kids need to be proud of that. Whenever there's any calamity anywhere, people tend to focus on the negative, but they should be proud of who they are."

This week, a young Findlay team hosts Ross, a team coming off a dramatic 38-37 overtime win over Toledo Whitmer on Friday.

"They're a pretty young team," Pallante said. "They play a lot of juniors and a few sophomores. They'll be a very good team next year. They do a lot of things well." Primarily, the thing the Trojans do best is pass, as they have on 44 percent (214 of 486) offensive downs this season. Pallante said he thinks that percentage could rise to somewhere around 70 percent against Findlay, given the Little Giants' stinginess against the run (allowing a GLL-best 64.9 yards per game, 70.9 better than No. 2 Bedford). Quarterback Ryan Hite, son of Findlay coach Cliff Hite, is at the helm, and has passed for a GLL-best 1,310 yards this season. The 6-foot-2, 175-pound senior stays in the pocket about as often as the wallet of a compulsive gambler. "He's not the big, calm, relaxed kid," said Pallante. "He's a different style, gets out of the pocket." Yet some people familiar with the Findlay program contend that the younger Hite, or "Beaker" as his father calls him, is the second-best quarterback on the team, with Ben Roethlisberger the player to watch next year. For now, the 6-foot-5 junior has to settle for being the league's leading receiver — by far — having caught 45 passes for 545 yards and six touchdowns. The secondary of cornerbacks Kelly Lyle and Jorel Heidelberg and safeties Aaron Coonrod and Josh Lozano will be tested for the second straight week.



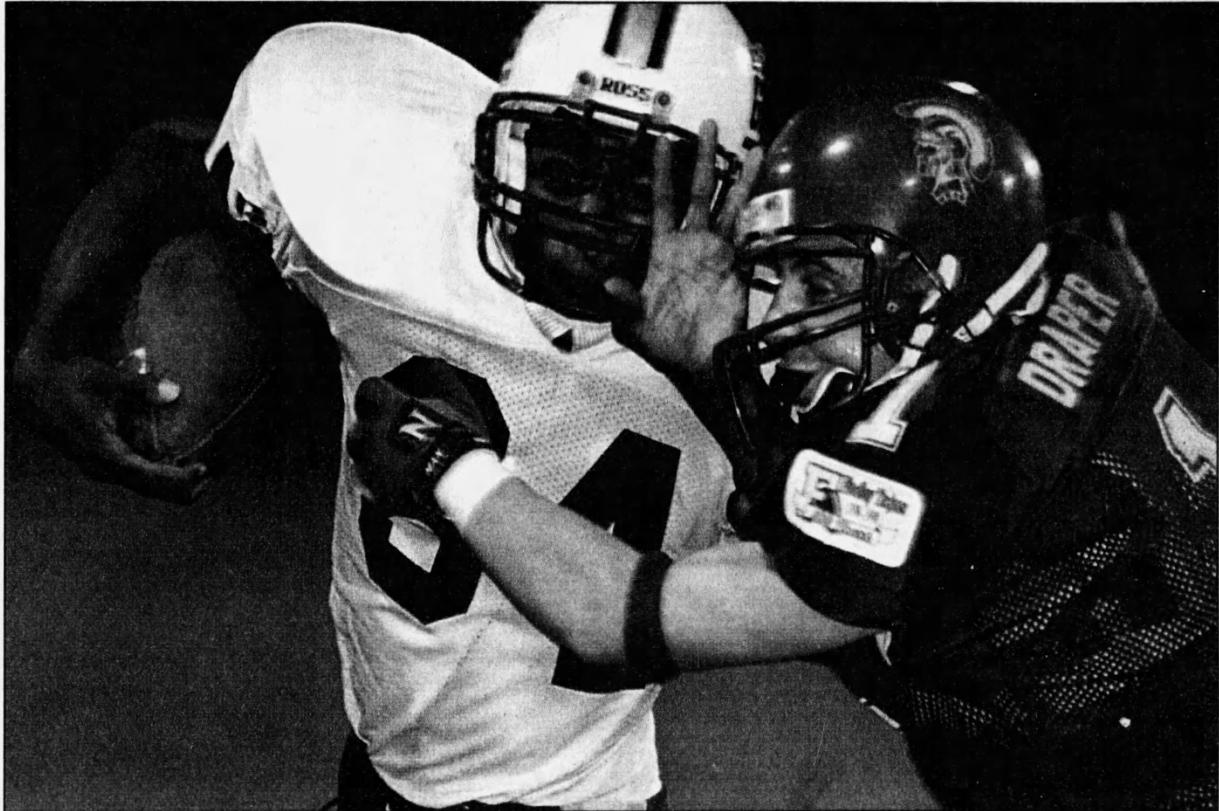
PALLANTE

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PALLANTE

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Ross blitzed at Findlay



News-Messenger/Andrew Morrison

ROBERT ATKINS (left) gets his hand in the face of Findlay's Doug Draper in the Trojans' 45-8 win Friday night at Findlay.

Little Giants stunned by Trojan passing in 45-8 loss

By MICHAEL PIDANICK
Staff writer

FINDLAY — It took Fremont Ross about an hour to get to Findlay for Friday's contest with the Trojans. Considering what was in store for the Little Giants, they might have been better off making a U-turn around Bettsville.

The host Trojans dominated the Little Giants from start to finish and posted a 45-8 Great Lakes League win Friday at Donnell Stadium.

"That scoreboard tells the story," said Ross coach Dan Palante, after his team fell to 7-2

overall and 4-1 in the GLL. "There's nothing else to say."

The loss was the Little Giants' worst since Sept. 8, 1995, when Akron Buchtel whipped Ross 39-0, two games into the post-Charles Woodson era.

The Little Giants, who had their 21-game winning streak snapped last week with a 25-20 home loss to Mansfield Senior, saw their 14-game GLL winning streak end Friday. Findlay improved to 5-4 overall and 4-1 in the league and moved into a first place tie with Ross and Bedford, a 15-14 overtime winner over Toledo Whitmer.

The Trojans, who outgained

	Friday
Findlay	45
Ross	8

Next
Sandusky at Ross, Friday, 7:30 p.m.

Ross 321-0 through the air, dominated a Little Giants team it has had trouble with for the two decades.

"We haven't beaten Fremont in 18 years, except for one time," said Findlay quarterback Ryan Hite. "So maybe we were due. We pulled together as a team and did what we needed to do."

Hite completed 15-of-28 passes

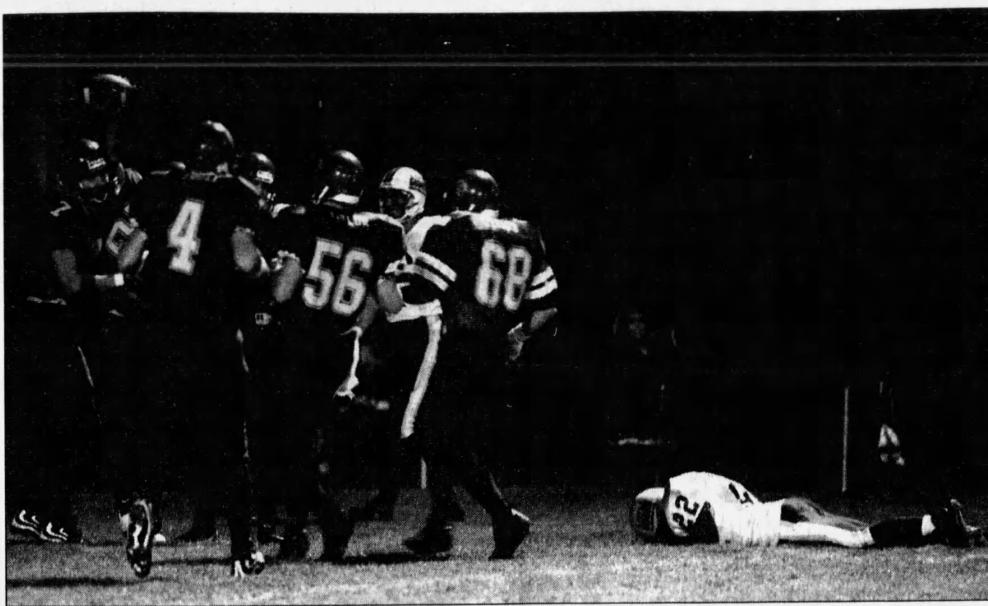
for 210 yards and a touchdown for the Trojans.

Split end Mike Iriti led the all receivers, catching 11 passes for 165 yards and three touchdowns.

On the first series of the game, Findlay marched down the field on a seven-play, 73-yard drive, and Dane Whitted capped it off with a 5-yard run for his first of two touchdowns.

The Trojans extended their lead 3:24 into the second quarter. Hite eluded two defenders and connected with Iriti for a 28-yard touchdown pass to cap an 82-yard drive.

See ROSS, B3



News-Messenger/Andrew Morrison

DAVID KITCHEN lies in the end zone after a Findlay touchdown pass gave the Trojans a 13-0 second quarter lead.

Findlay hands Ross GLL loss

Continued from B1

Pallante gambled on Ross's next possession, as the Little Giants went for it on fourth-and-one at its own 26-yard line. Robert Atkins got the ball and picked up the first down. But on the next play, quarterback Aaron Coonrod fumbled and Tyler Zeto recovered for the Trojans at the Ross 7-yard line. Three plays later, Whitted cashed in on a 5-yard run.

After the teams traded punts, Coonrod was intercepted by

Whitted, who returned it to the Ross 22-yard line. One play later, Ben Roethlisberger threw a halfback pass to Ryan Traux for Findlay's fourth touchdown.

Meanwhile, the Little Giants could do nothing on offense, and picked up just one first down in the game's first 21:30.

Atkins broke the drought late in the first half, as he took an option pitch broke a tackle in the backfield, eluded another defender and then turned on the speed and raced 81 yards to the end zone.

It looked like Ross would get the ball back in the final minute of the half, but the Trojans ran a fake punt, and Ben Farnsworth hit Mick Bloomfield for a 30-yard pickup to the Ross 14-yard line. Josh Huston hit a 30-yard field goal with 14 seconds left to give Findlay a 29-8 halftime lead.

The second half was more of the same. On Ross's opening possession, Coonrod fumbled and David Gallegos recovered for the Trojans.

On the next play the Trojans went back to the halfback pass and Farnsworth hit Iriti for a 44-yard touchdown connection.

Another Ross turnover late in the third quarter gave Findlay the ball on Ross's 23-yard line. Three plays later, Hite ran it in from the 3-yard line.

A 27-yard field goal by Huston

with 5:07 left in the fourth quarter finished the scoring.

Several Ross reserves played well in the fourth quarter, including quarterback David Rhodes, running back Aaron Hines and tackle Anthony Vann.

The Little Giants look to snap their two-game losing streak Friday at 7:30, as GLL rival Sandusky visits Harmon Stadium.

Key play

FINDLAY — It didn't take very long for Findlay to set the tone for its 45-8 win Friday over Fremont Ross at Donnell Stadium.

On the second play from scrimmage, Findlay's Ryan Hite connected with running back Mike Iriti for 21-yard gain.

Hite would complete four-of-five passes, three to Iriti, on the opening drive, and Dane Whitted's 5-yard touchdown run put Findlay on the board.

Hite and Iriti were able to pick the Little Giants apart all night on short screen passes.

"Fremont wasn't going to give us the deep ball, and they were going to stuff the run," Hite said. "So we just had to pick them apart with that."

—MICHAEL PIDANICK

How they fared

A look at how the teams around St. Joe, Gibsonburg, Oak Harbor and Bellevue in the computer rankings fared Friday.

Region 10

Columbus Mifflin 19,
Columbus Eastmoor 16

Napoleon 35,

Akron Coventry 21

Columbian 7, **BELLEVUE** 0

Region 14

Black River 32, **Clear Fork** 21

Kenton 21, Lima Bath 14

Coldwater 19, St. Henry 9

OAK HARBOR 18, St. Mary's 0

Region 22

Tiffin Calvert 37, Mohawk 14

GIBSONBURG 6, Otsego 0

Pandora-Gilboa 62, Arcadia 0

N. Baltimore at **ST. JOE**, tonight

High School

Findlay 45, Ross 8

Ross	0	8	0	0	—	8
Findlay	7	22	13	3	—	45

First Quarter

F — Dane Whitted 3 run (Josh Huston kick), 9:51

Second Quarter

F — Mike Iriti 28 pass from Ryan Hite (Huston kick), 8:36

F — Whitted 5 run (kick blocked), 5:35

F — Ryan Truax 22 pass from Ben Roethlisberger (pass failed), 2:55

R — Robert Atkins 81 run (Aaron Coonrod run), 2:35

F — Huston 30 field goal, 0:14

Third Quarter

F — Iriti 44 pass from Ben Farnsworth (run failed), 9:07

F — Hite 2 run (Huston kick), 2:02

Fourth Quarter

F — Huston 27 field goal, 5:07

	R	F
First downs	12	14
Rushes-yards	48-245	31-74
Passing yards	0	321
Passes-Comp.-Int.	10-0-2	32-19-0
Punts-Avg.	5-37.5	5-24
Fumbles-Lost.....	4-3	0-0
Penalties-Yards	6-50	5-55

RUSHING: Ross — John Forshtay 9-26, Weston Hineline 8-41, Robert Atkins 11-109, Aaron Coonrod 6- (-4), Ryan Wilhelm 3-21, David Rhodes 5-10, Aaron Hines 5-30, Jamin Lozano 1-11. Findlay — Dane Whitted 8-9, Chris Thomas 11-39, Ryan Hite 9-21, Jeremy Reinhammer 2-5, Ben Farnsworth 1-0.

PASSING: Ross — Aaron Coonrod 0-8-0-2—0, David Rhodes 0-2-0-0—0. Findlay — Ryan Hite 15-28-0-1—210, Ben Roethlisberger 2-2-0-1—66, Ben Farnsworth 2-2-0-1—45.

RECEIVING: Findlay — Mike Iriti 11-165, Ben Roethlisberger 5-89, Ryan Truax 1-22, Chris Thomas 2-45.

Records: Ross 7-2 (4-1), Findlay 5-4 (4-1)

SANDUSKY BLUE STREAKS**(1-8) at FREMONT ROSS****LITTLE GIANTS (7-2)****When:** Friday, 7:30 p.m.**Where:** Harmon Stadium**Last week:** Findlay 45, Ross 8; Columbus DeSales 40, Sandusky 15**Last year:** Ross 21, Sandusky 6**Radio:** WFRD-AM 900 (John

Cullen and Jerry Reidling)

Ross players to watch: QB/S Aaron Coonrod, HB Robert Atkins, G/NG Zack Frasure, C David Fenner, LB Andrew Diller, LB Jason Billow, DL/SE Tyson Liggins, DL/OL Brian Hill, LT Frank Kaiser, DL Bryson Sewell, RB John Forshay, CB Jorel Heidelberg, LB Josh Liggins, SE Matt Kotch, TE/P Dan Cobb, CB David Kitchen, HB West-on Hineline**Sandusky players to watch:** TB Endrako Carr, RB/LB Jimmy Cherry, QB Aaron Williamson, WR El Da'Sheon Nix, LB Andre Matthews, LB John Rosekelly, DB Nick Vandootingh**Keys to the game:** Ross coach Dan Pallante said Sandusky has had injury problems this season. In addition, the Blue Streaks have played a murderous schedule including Mansfield, Columbus DeSales and Poland Seminary. How else to explain the 1-8 record? "They're big, strong, and they've got good skill," Pallante said. "They've had a bad problem with injuries." Wide receiver/defensive back

El Da'Sheon Nix is an electrifying talent, having caught 37 passes for 650 yards (17.6 yards per reception) and 9 touchdowns on offense and picked off four passes on defense. Running back Endrako Carr leads the ground attack with 527 yards rushing, while 5-foot-10, 175-pound junior Aaron Williamson (679 yards, 7 touchdowns passing) is the quarterback. Linebacker Andre Matthews (81 tackles) leads the Sandusky defense, and linebacker Jimmie Cherry (65 tackles), defensive back Nick Vandootingh (64 tackles) and linebacker John Rosekelly (63 tackles) are solid as well. At the tail end of last week's loss at Findlay, Pallante and his staff discovered what they had hoped would develop: the younger Little Giants have matured. "Early in the season, some older kids didn't have competition for jobs," he said. "Our young kids were young, they didn't really compete for jobs, and the thing that's happened over the last 4-5 weeks of the season, some of the young kids have stepped up, some by force, some by injury. It's made us a better football team."

**KAISER**

Seniors lead Ross win



News-Messenger/Andrew Morrison

AARON COONROD (17) is hauled down by Sandusky's El Da'Sheon Nix (19) in the first quarter of Ross's 49-28 win Friday at Harmon Stadium.

Little Giants withstand record-setting passing for win

By SCOTT TAPPA
Sports editor

Fremont Ross was down 7-0 early in Friday night's game against Sandusky, and things looked bleak for the Little Giants.

Sandusky had marched the ball down the field swiftly on their opening possession in a manner reminiscent of recent Ross losses to Mansfield and Findlay, and after taking advantage of a fortuitous bounce, the Blue Streaks were driving again.

Enter Aaron Coonrod. The senior safety/quarterback returned an interception 71 yards for a touchdown, his first of five touchdowns on the night, and Ross was on its way to a 49-28 victory.

The win gives Ross a share of the Great Lakes League title, along with Bedford (Mich.) and Findlay.

"Our seniors stepped up and made plays, first Aaron, then Tyson Liggins, then Josh Liggins," said Ross coach Dan Palante, whose team ended 8-2 over-

	Friday
Ross	49
Sandusky	28

all, 5-1 in the GLL. "That's what you need your seniors to do."

Ross withstood a record-setting passing performance from Sandusky (1-9, 1-5). Quarterback Aaron Williamson passed for a GLL-record 294 (breaking the old record of 272 set by Fostoria's Derek Kidwell in 1991), while wideout El Da'Sheon Nix

amassed an eye-popping 16 receptions for 274 yards.

"We had nothing to hold back," said Sandusky coach Larry Cook.

Sandusky opened the scoring on its first possession, driving 69 yards in just under three minutes. Jimmie Cherry capped the drive with a 1-yard touchdown run.

Cherry's run was set up by a 33-yard pass from Nix to Nick Vandoeingh, a play in which Nix passed off of a reverse handoff.

See ROSS, B3

Ross wins season finale over Sandusky

Continued from B1

"That was the first time we did that play," said Nix.

Said Cook: "We've been running that reverse for three or four weeks, and decided to pass out of the reverse. After that, we just squandered the lead away."

Thanks in no small part to the play of Ross's seniors.

On the ensuing kickoff, John Rosekelly's low line drive kick hit Ross up man Brooks Obermyer in the back, and the Blue Streaks recovered at the Ross 41.

Three plays later, though, Coonrod picked off Williamson's pass and returned it 71 yards down the right sideline for the touchdown. The interception was the hard-hitting senior's first of the season.

"If Aaron Coonrod doesn't make that pick, I don't know what happens," said Pallante. "The team was going nowhere at that point, it was kind of like, Here we go again."

Linebacker Josh Liggins gave the Little Giants their second defensive score on Sandusky's next possession, returning an interception 44 yards for a touchdown. Liggins' interception was caused by defensive end Tyson Liggins' big hit on Williamson from the quarterback's blind side.

The Blue Streaks wasted little time answering, with Nix scoring on a nifty 73-yard catch and run. As he did often throughout the game, Williamson threw a high ball only the 6-foot-3 receiver could reach, and when the Ross defender fell down Nix had no obstacles to the end zone.

"We thought that if they played a three-deep zone, we could get El'Dasheon open underneath," Cook said. "We thought we could throw the ball."

Coonrod answered next for the Little Giants, scoring from three yards out on an option keeper. The run was set up by John Forshay's 42-yard run.

Dan Cobb caught the two-point conversion pass from Coonrod to make it 21-14.

Cobb's 58-yard reception set up Ross's next score, a 5-yard touchdown run by Forshay. Cobb made a nice play on the extra point attempt, fielding a low snap cleanly to set up John McCord's



News-Messenger/Andrew Morrison

JOHN FORSHAY (44) puts a hand on Robert Atkins (34) as he turns upfield on a second quarter run.

"They couldn't run the ball an inch on us."

— Aaron Coonrod
Ross safety

successful kick.

Cornerback Jorel Heidelberg set up the half's closing score, intercepting Williamson's overthrown pass to Nix and returning it 20 yards to the Sandusky 32. After a pair of runs, Coonrod hit Tyson Liggins on a slant route, and the senior split end took it in 18 yards for the touchdown.

"Tyson did a nice job reading the safety," Coonrod said.

One week after allowing 22 points in the second quarter against Findlay, the Little Giants returned the favor Friday, scoring 22 second quarter points en route to their highest-scoring half of the season.

"That's been the story of our year, we couldn't stop the big plays," Nix said.

Coonrod opened the second half scoring 2½ minutes into the third quarter, scoring on a 19-yard option keeper to the right. Coonrod's score was set up by long runs by Robert Atkins and Forshay.

The Little Giants finished with

a total of 337 yards on the ground, led by Forshay with 151, Coonrod with 106, Atkins with 67 and Weston on Hinelane 13.

Sandusky scored on the opening play of the fourth quarter, with Cherry taking it in from 1 yard out for his second touchdown of the game. The touchdown capped a 12-play, 5:02 drive.

Coonrod got his third rushing touchdown on the next possession, running 47 yards on an option keeper to the left.

Sandusky had one final scoring opportunity, but the Ross run defense held on three consecutive runs from its own 1-yard-line. The Little Giants allowed just 2.9 yards per carry on 39 attempts.

"They couldn't run the ball an inch on us," Coonrod said.

Said nose guard Zack Frasure: "We dominated up front, we worked on that all week."

For Ross, the win provided a desperately needed escape from losses the two previous weeks.

"We were scared going in," Pallante said. "Losing two straight games really rocks your confidence."

Pallante said he, his staff and his players will take the next month off before evaluating the completed season, and begin

Key play

Fremont Ross may have yielded a record-breaking passing performance from Sandusky's Aaron Williamson in Friday's 49-28 win, but were able to douse the Blue Streaks' firework at several opportune moments with interceptions.

Perhaps the biggest was safety Aaron Coonrod's interception with the game just four minutes old. When Williamson tried to hit wide receiver El'Dasheon Nixon on a short out, Coonrod stepped in front and returned the ball 71 yards for a touchdown.

Josh Liggins followed suit on the next possession, returning an interception 44 yards for a touchdown, and Ross was rolling. Jorel Heidelberg and Jamin Lozano — making his first start at cornerback in place of the injured Kelly Lytle — also had interceptions.

—SCOTT TAPPA

preparing for next season.

"It hits all week long, when you're doing things for the last time," he said. "You're a stadium rat for three months, then you go back to being a normal human being."

Football

High School

1998 All-GLL team

First Team

Offense

Player (School)	Gr.	Ht.	Wt.
Greg Fleming (Fostoria).....Sr.	6-1	175	
El Da'Sheon Nix (Sandusky)Jr.	6-3	175	
Ryan Donley (Clay).....Jr.	6-3	205	
D.J. Lutz (Bedford).....Sr.	5-9	170	
Ryan Hite (Findlay).....Sr.	6-2	172	
Sean Salah (Whitmer).....Sr.	6-3	235	
Frank Kaiser (Ross).....Sr.	6-6	285	
Brian Hill (Ross).....Sr.	6-3	255	
Michael Moran (Bedford)....Sr.	5-9	190	
Ben Roethlisberger (Findlay)Jr.	6-4	180	
John Garrow (Whitmer)....Sr.	5-9	145	

Placekicker

Josh Huston (Findlay).....Jr.

Defense

Ryan Ditty (Bedford).....Jr.	5-11	185
Cory Echelberry (Fostoria)Sr.	6-2	255
Mike Iriti (Findlay).....Jr.	6-0	168
Bobby Conry (Whitmer)....Sr.	6-3	215
Aaron Coonrod (Ross)....Sr.	6-3	190
Cory Freshour (Fostoria)....Sr.	5-9	170
Rob Dunnigan (Bedford)....Sr.	5-8	160
Jim Arnold (Findlay).....Sr.	6-1	192
John Rosekelly (Sandusky)Jr.	6-2	227
Steve Lisk (Bedford).....Sr.	5-10	160
Andrew Diller (Ross)....Sr.	5-11	175

Punter

Dan Cobb (Ross).....Sr.

Second Team

Offense

Ryan Gerritsen (Fostoria)....Sr.	5-9	170
Steve Stewart (Sandusky)....Sr.	6-6	325
Derek Besgrove (Clay).....Jr.	6-2	200
John Forshtay (Ross)....Sr.	5-11	215
Josh Adams (Bedford).....Sr.	6-3	240
Tyson Liggins (Ross)....Sr.	6-3	220
Robert Burch (Sandusky)....Sr.	5-11	205
Andy Baker (Bedford).....Sr.	6-0	185
John Seng (Findlay).....Jr.	6-1	330
Zack Frasure (Ross)....Sr.	5-10	265
Rob Hutka (Whitmer).....Sr.	5-9	185

Defense

Zeb Wedge (Fostoria).....Sr.	5-9	165
Eric Hugueley (Clay).....Jr.	6-1	200
Art Snowberger (Bedford)....Sr.	6-4	260
Mick Bloomfield (Findlay)....Sr.	6-0	154
Josh Lozano (Ross)....Jr.	6-0	185
Jay Watt (Whitmer).....Sr.	6-2	190
Josh Liggins (Ross)....Sr.	6-0	210
Nick Salyers (Findlay).....Jr.	6-3	200
Pat Gill (Bedford).....Sr.	6-1	180
Nick Gallup (Whitmer).....Jr.	5-11	165
T.J. Battisti (Findlay).....Sr.	6-0	239

Special recognition

Ben Sheriff (Whitmer)....Sr.

Honorable mention

BEDFORD—Joe Laparl, Brian Seitz, Jeff LaPointe, Tony Peake, Aaron Swick, Fouad Eid; **CLAY**—Josh Vieth, Matt Casey, Tony Katschke, Kurt Baumgardner, Jered Donley, Matt Gomoll; **FINLAY**—Owen Merrill, Dane Whitted, Jason Rhoads, Ben Farnsworth, Tyler Zeto, David Gallegos; **FOSTORIA**—Tony Agapiou, Jameson Botimer, Jarrod Bottimer, Brandon Distel, Jeremy Smith, Scott McElwain; **ROSS**—Jorel Heidelberg, Weston Hineline, Jason Billow, **Bryson Sewell**, Robert Atkins, **Dave Fennell**; **SANDUSKY**—Kevin Smith, Aaron Williamson, Jon Krabill, James Bickley, Nick VanDootingh, Jimmy Cherry; **WHITMER**—Mike Meredith, Alex Salwitz, Jim Zilliox, Ryan Eldridge, Justyn McNett, Adam Dubendorfer

Offensive lineman of the year: Brian Hill (Ross)

Defensive lineman of the year: Cory Echelberry (Fostoria)

Offensive back of the year: Ryan Hite (Findlay)

Defensive back of the year: Aaron Coonrod (Ross)

GLL coach of the year: Cliff Hite (Findlay)

COLUMBUS — The 1998 Associated Press Northwest Inland All-District football teams, as selected by a panel of sportswriters and broadcasters from the district:

DIVISION I

First Team

Offense

Ends—Ben Roethlisberger, Findlay, 6-foot-5, 180, Jr.; El-Da'Sheon Nix, Sandusky, 6-1, 175, Jr.; Linemen—Jared Butts, Mansfield Senior, 6-2, 245, Sr.; Joe Iorio, Toledo St. Francis, 6-4, 290, Sr.; Chris Martinek, Toledo St. John's, 6-1, 277, Sr.; Andy Butler, Toledo Start, 6-1, 244, Sr.; **Brian Hill**, **Fremont Ross**, 6-2, 250, Sr.; Running backs—Littleton Lloyd, Mansfield Senior, 5-10, 180, Sr.; Brandon Carter, Toledo Start, 5-10, 172, Sr.; Greg Owens, Toledo St. John's, 5-8, 170, Jr.; Quarterback—Jereemee Butts, Mansfield Senior, 6-2, 200, Sr.; Placekicker—Josh Huston, Findlay, 6-2, 160, Jr.

Defense

Linemen—Alphonso Townsend, Lima Senior, 6-6, 280, Jr.; Matt Evans, Toledo St. Francis, 6-1, 265, Sr.; Tony Bunker, Toledo St. Francis, 6-2, 210, Sr.; Jeff Ketcham, Toledo St. John's, 6-0, 210, Sr.; Linebackers—Eric Dandy, Mansfield Senior, 5-11, 190, Jr.; Lavelle Daniels, Toledo Start, 6-2, 234, Sr.; Jim Arnold, Findlay, 6-0, 192, Sr.; Tony Pillarelli, Toledo Start, 5-6, 215, Sr.; Defensive backs—Terry Cannon, Lima Senior, 5-6, 170, Sr.; Mike Iriti, Findlay, 6-0, 155, Jr.; **Aaron Coonrod**, **Fremont Ross**, 6-3, 195, Sr.; Punter—Matt Warner, Toledo Start, 5-10, 190, Sr.

Offensive player of the year: Brandon Carter, Toledo Start.

Defensive player of the year: Matt Evans, Toledo St. Francis.

Coach of the year: Stan Jefferson, Mansfield Senior.

Second Team

Offense

Ends—Ali Thompson, Mansfield Senior, 6-2, 180, Sr.; Jonte Ellie, Toledo Bowsher, 6-0, 180, Sr.; Linemen—Pat Bruss, Toledo St. John's, 6-4, 251, Sr.; Sean Saliah, Toledo Whitmer, 6-3, 240, Sr.; Kyle Dankert, Toledo Bowsher, 6-0, 210, Jr.; **Frank Kaiser**, **Fremont Ross**, 6-6, 285, Sr.; Running backs—Emil Price, Toledo St. Francis, 5-11, 205, Sr.; **John Forshtay**, **Fremont Ross**, 5-10, 190, Sr.; Quarterback—Ryan Hite, Findlay, 6-2, 172, Sr.; Placekicker—Royce Haas, Toledo St. Francis, 5-8, 145, Sr.

Defense

Linemen—Jim Kinsman, Toledo Start, 6-1, 183, Jr.; Jermaine Bradley, Mansfield Senior, 6-2, 240, Sr.; Jason O'Neal, Mansfield Senior, 6-0, 185, Sr.; T.J. Battisti, Findlay, 6-0, 239, Sr.; Linebackers—Bobby Conry, Toledo Whitmer, 6-2, 215, Sr.; Ben Sheriff, Toledo Whitmer, 6-3, 240, Sr.; Brian Gendaszek, Toledo Bowsher, 5-10, 175, Sr.; **Andrew Diller**, **Fremont Ross**, 6-0, 175, Sr.; Defensive backs—Raphael Worthy, Toledo Start, 5-11, 191, Sr.; B.J. Schlageter, Toledo St. John's, 6-2, 180, Jr.; Pat Kruzel, Toledo St. Francis, 5-10, 175, Sr.; Punter—Jared Parseghian, Toledo St. John's, 5-11, 165, Jr.

Honorable mention

Daryl Lyon, Toledo Waite; **Josh Lozano**, **Fremont Ross**; Kelly Knerr, Toledo St. Francis; Quentin Manley, Lima Senior; Travis Lepley, Lima Senior; Mick Bloomfield, Findlay; Nick Salyers, Findlay; John Seng, Findlay; Owen Merrill, Findlay.

Ross High School hands out fall sports awards

Athletes named all-GLL, all-academic

News-Messenger reports

Fremont Ross High School recently honored the athletes involved in fall sports.

For Dan Pallante's football team, Brian Hill, Zach Frasure and Aaron Coonrod were named captains, Tim Pearson won the Little Giant Award, Dave Rhodes won the Scout Team award and John Forshay won the Joe Lotycz Award.

Earning first team all-Great Lakes League honors for the 8-2 Little Giants were Hill, Coonrod, Frank Kaiser, Andrew Diller and Dan Cobb. Coonrod was named defensive back of the year, and

Hill was named offensive lineman of the year.

Earning second team all-GLL were Forshay, Frasure, Tyson Liggins, Josh Liggins and Josh Lozano. Jorel Heidelberg, Weston Hineline, Jason Billow, Bryson Sewell, Robert Atkins and David Fennel were honorable mention.

For coach John Elder's boys cross country team, Jeremy Framstad was MVP, Jon Framstad and Josh Burris were named captains and Art Neely was Most Improved. Jeremy Framstad and Adam Swope were second team all-GLL, and Josh Burris, Matt Kotch and Jon Framstad were all-academic.

For Cathy Esposito's girls cross country teams, Molly Gocke was MVP, Lindsay Frontz

was named captain, Gocke and Jenny Gabel won the Coach's Award and Gabel was Most Improved. Gocke was a second team all-GLL pick, and Amy Barnes was all-academic.

For Denny Brudzinski and Denny Ritchie's boys golf team, Jay Farrell was MVP, Matt Bauer was named captain and Kyle Peck was Most Improved. Peck, Doug Garvey and Leon Garza were second team all-GLL. Farrell was honorable mention and Bauer, Farrell, Aaron Kingsborough and Ian Steinert were all-academic.

For Jeff Pendry's boys soccer team, Marshall Amor was first team all-GLL, Dusty Shively and Derek Dalton second team all-GLL, Adam Wagner, Adam

Swope and Craig Hickey were honorable mention and John McCord earned special recognition. Brett Spicer was named all-academic.

For Maggie Bliss and Karrie Gardner's volleyball team, Jodi Fick was MVP, Fick and Brittany Brudzinski were named captains. Brudzinski was named Best Defensive Player, Rebecca Brown was Most Improved and Fick set school record for most kills in a game (20), season (250) and career (767). Fick and Erin Barr were first team all-GLL. Rachelle Domiray was second team, Brudzinski and Krissy Lotycz were honorable mention and Brudzinski and Fick were all-academic. Fick was also named GLL Player of the Year.

For Lisa Wolfe's girls tennis team, Ainsley Watkins was named MVP, Courtney LaBonne and Morgan Carnicom won the Leadership Awards, Natalie Wolfe won the Coach's Award, Stefanie Lagrou was Varsity Most Improved, Ashley Lozano was JV Most Improved and Sarah Rhodes and Sheri Pollock had the JV best season record. Watkins was first team all-GLL and the GLL Player of the Year, Wolfe, LaBonne and Lagrou were second team all-GLL and Carnicom, Jenny Schaaf and Gina Melchiori were honorable mention. Lisa Wolfe was GLL Coach of the Year.

Carnicom, LaBonne, Lagrou, Rhodes and Schaaf were all-academic.

Coonrod, Hill earn all-Ohio honors

Local, wire reports

COLUMBUS — Fremont Ross had two players earn 1998 Associated Press Division I all-Ohio recognition. Lineman Brian Hill was a second team choice, and safety Aaron Coonrod earned special recognition.

For Hill, a 6-foot-2, 250-pound senior, the honor was just the latest in a string of postseason awards. Hill has already been named first team all-Northwest Ohio, first team all-Great Lakes League and Great Lakes League lineman of the year.

Coonrod, a 6-foot-3, 195-pound senior, has also compiled an impressive list of postseason awards. The Ohio State baseball recruit has already been named first team all-Northwest Ohio, first team all-Great Lakes League and Great Lakes League defensive back of the year.

Troy's Ryan Brewer, who rushed for 2,856 yards, and Warren Harding's Carl Diggs, who made a name stopping players who ran for big yardage, headline the 1998 all-Ohio high school football team announced today.

They were selected as the division's offensive and defensive players of the year, based on recommendations of a state media panel.

Brewer, a 5-foot-10, 205-pound senior, gained his yardage on 315 carries while scoring 40 touchdowns. The 2,856 yards is believed to be a state record, exceeding the 2,765 yards of Union City Mississinawa Valley's Curtis Enis, who went on to star at Penn State and is now with the Chicago Bears.

Brewer averaged 286 yards a game and 9.07 yards per carry.

Diggs, a 6-2, 225-pound senior linebacker, was a standout on both sides of the ball. He had seven sacks, intercepted two passes (including one returned for a touchdown), recovered two fumbles (including another score) and had five tackles for minus yardage. On offense, the University of Michigan signee rushed for 1,284 yards despite coming off an injury-plagued season in which he didn't see action.

Chosen as coach of the year in the big-school division was Strongsville's Russ Jacques.

Inside: Complete Division I all-Ohio lists. **Page B2**