

2012 Season Review.

Twins anchor Little Giants' defense

Ross opens at home against rival Sandusky Friday

By Kevin Shields
Sports writer

FREMONT — Aside from their hair styles, it's hard to distinguish much of a difference between Ross senior twins Michael and Matthew Egbert.

Michael keeps his hair on short side, while Matthew's blond and wavy hair could rival many of the styles one would see on the beaches of California. However, both stand roughly 5-foot-9-inches, weigh 170 pounds and can deliver their fair share of hard hits.

And on Friday night at Don Paul Stadium — 7 p.m. kickoff — when the Little Giants meet Sandusky for the 107th time in the rivalry that dates back to 1895, both

Egberts will be lined up at the two middle linebacker spots. They'll anchor a group that lost some big faces, yet returns plenty of talent and experience to what should be one of the better defenses in the Three Rivers Athletic Conference.

"They're just great communicators," Ross coach Derek Kidwell said. "They get the defense lined up properly, and they recognize formations. And they're both great leaders for our team verbally and through their work ethic."

For Michael, it's his second go-around in the middle of the defense, as he started next to Jordan Garcia a year ago. Matthew was an outside linebacker as a junior who was moved over to fill Garcia's spot after his graduation.

A transition made smooth, considering who he's next to.

"The coaches always tease us about being on the same page as one another," Michael said. "We just work really well together."

The Egberts aren't the only set of twins on the Ross defense. Twins Drew and Dylan Starks frequent the secondary. Drew, however, is expected to miss the team's first eight weeks after having surgery on his collar bone after the Little Giant's scrimmage at Clyde.

Drew's absence at corner, has opened the door for seniors like Jacob Lus and Chris Mack to step in and earn a spot. Sophomore Stefan Johnson is also expected to be in the mix.

"Guys that haven't had a lot of experience

IF YOU GO SANDUSKY AT ROSS

When: Friday, 7 p.m.
Where: Don Paul Stadium
Radio: WFRO Eagle 99.1 FM

back there are stepping up big time," Matthew said. "They've stepped up to the plate for us...they want to earn a spot."

The mission will be to stop a Blue Streaks offense that lost a lot of key pieces, but according to coach Mike Franklin, may be a unit that possesses more of a threat with its feet.

"I think we've gotten a lot faster," Franklin said. "Our two quarterbacks are

See ROSS, page 2B

ROSS

Continued from Page 1B

competing hard. They both have solid arms and we got a sophomore tailback (Ben Fuller) who we think can be as good as Marquis Winston (Franklin's tailback from a year ago). He's the same type of runner."

Sandusky's shotgun/spread offense had been run the past three seasons by quarterback Lucas Poggiali. But Poggiali is gone, as is Winston, receiver Tristen Jeffries, current Eastern Michigan University lineman Mike Brown among many others.

Franklin is replacing 20 to 22 starters from a squad that went 9-2 a year ago, winning the Northern Ohio League with a perfect 5-0 record. After losing to Ross (40-28) in Week One, the Blue Streaks won nine straight, before losing to Tiffin Columbian in the first round of the playoffs.

"They got a lot of speed at the receiver position and they're new running back is fast," Kidwell said. "But I think it's going to hurt that they're losing a three-year starter at quarterback. Their new guy's first start is going to come against a very aggressive and a very veteran defense, so hopefully we can get him rattled."

"But their speed definitely stands out on film and they're ag-

gressive on defense."

Ross quarterback Tyler Wolf tweaked an ankle in the Little Giants' scrimmage at Mansfield Senior last week, but started practicing with the team Wednesday and is expected to play Friday.

"I think our kids are eager," Kidwell said. "It's a rivalry game, but it's also a rival game in the first week of the season, so there's some added pressure there. We know there's going to be plenty of excitement and butterflies along the way and we'll have to deal with that."

This is only second time the two former members of the Greater Buckeye Conference, Great Lakes League and Buckeye Conference will play in Week One. The rivalry had been played in Week 10 a total of 43 times in three different time periods, before moving last season when Ross moved to the TRAC and Sandusky joined the NOL.

"Growing up I always knew Sandusky was the one to beat," Matthew said. "But I never knew any real specific details. Friday is going to mean a lot, especially since we know what we're capable of as a team this year. We've all worked hard. I think it's going to pay off in Week One."

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FRIDAY NIGHT FOOTBALL



Fremont's Matthew Egbert takes down Sandusky's Mike Delk during the game on Friday night. JENNIFER YOUNG-BOWER/NEWS-MESSENGER
CORRESPONDENT

Ross' Lather stars in opener

Little Giants run away from Streaks for second straight year

By Kevin Shields

Sports writer

FREMONT — Jabree Lather may be the new public enemy No. 1 in Sandusky.

For the second year in a row, the Ross tailback saved one of his top performances for the Blue Streaks. And for the Little Giants, Lather's exploits helped them score more points against Sandusky than any other Ross team ever has.

Lather, a junior, zigged and zagged his way to 183 yards on 27 carries Friday, running for a touchdown and adding another on a 78-yard opening kickoff return as the Little Giants gave the Blue Streaks a 52-18 whipping on opening night at Don Paul

FREMONT ROSS
SANDUSKY

52

18

Stadium.

Lather, who ran for 196 yards on 34 carries last year at Strobel Field, was asked if he enjoyed playing the Blue Streaks, Ross' oldest rival.

"Yes sir, I love it!" Lather said. "Coach (Derek) Kidwell told me (Tyler) Wolf was still going to be dinged up a little bit, and that he was going to trust me since I'm a two-year starter. He wanted to see what I had. And he put faith in the offensive line

and we all did what he asked of us."

Senior DeAndre Gates is the lone returner on that offensive line. Kids like Jarvis Jones, Kyle Lamalie, Tyler Tran, Jalil Dolton and Blake Moyer were seeing their first significant time under the Friday night lights, and all they did was help Ross (1-0) pile up 286 yards on the ground.

"They controlled the line of scrimmage all night long," Kidwell said of his line. "If (Sandusky) got pressure, it was because they brought one more guy than we could block, it wasn't because we had a missed blocking assignment."

Lather, standing near his own 20,

See ROSS, page 2B

ROSS

Continued from Page 1B

caught the game's opening kick, which hung in the air, while the return team formed a wedge around him. The hole created was big enough to drive through, let alone run a 5-foot, 5-inch tailback. Lather, untouched, raced down the home sideline to give Ross an 8-0 lead after Wolf's scramble for two just 11 seconds in.

"We did what we had to do on that play," Lather said. "Coach (Mike) Lento planned it out for us to see what we could get from the numbers to the sideline. We'd be practicing it all week and we did what we were coached to do."

Kidwell added, "It was important for us to get momentum early, especially against your arch rival to settle the nerves. I got to give coach (Mike) Lento and coach (Jon) Ottney for drawing up that middle return. Our return team executed it to perfection."

But Sandusky (0-1) had an answer of its own.

It took two plays for new quarterback Lucas Will to find Mike Delk streaking down the left sideline for a 73-yard scoring toss. Ross's Dylan Starks, going for an interception, misread the ball near midfield, allowing Delk to run free the rest of the way.

Starks soon made up for the mistake, as he ended a 9-play, 79-yard drive with a 32-yard TD pass from Wolf. Wolf hit Dylan Jagodzinski for a two-point conversion to make the score 16-6.

The two hooked up again, two drives later, for a 23-yard scoring toss on the second play of the second quarter to bring the advantage to 24-6.

Starks led Ross with five catches for 90 yards. Wolf was 8-of-13 for the game, throwing for 135 yards and three scores.

"He was very good tonight, so we were very good offensively," Kidwell said of Wolf, who added 54 yards and a score on the ground on 11 carries, including three successful QB scrambles for two-point conversions. "We got a lot more run packages for

him, but we didn't show them tonight because he was coming off a tender ankle."

Ross converted four third and long plays for either a first down or touchdown in the opening half.

"You're going to get that when you have a three-year starter at quarterback and the type of athlete we have in Tyler Wolf," said Kidwell. "He's going to get you out of some bad situations, and in the process, he's going to make you look good as a coach, which he did tonight quite a bit."

Lather had an 8-yard scoring run, before Ross ended the half with a 27-yard TD pass from Wolf to senior Jacob Luc on a fade to the right corner.

Meanwhile, the Ross defense stood tall all night. Names like Tyler Lynch, Trey Grine, Mike Egbert and Hunter Trautwein were regularly called for big plays without the ball.

"I'm extremely impressed with the way our starting defense played," Kidwell said. "First drive of the game, Dylan Starks went for the interception instead of the collision and they got by him for that touchdown pass. Other than that, we shut them down all night."

"Sandusky has a lot of speed and they got a lot of athletes on its side. If you can shut them down, I think it says a lot about your preparation and your game planning."

On the other side, the Blue Streaks, playing 20 to 22 new starters, looked shell-shocked.

"We were struggling with our tackling, obviously," Blue Streaks coach Mike Franklin said. "(Ross) has a great back, there's no doubt about that, and they got a great quarterback."

"We're just very inexperienced at the moment and it showed."

Ross will return to non-league action next week at Brecksville Broadview-Heights. The game was in doubt as a teachers' strike loomed, but it appears an agreement has been reached.

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Fremont Ross 52, Sandusky 18

| | | | | | | |
|----------|----|----|---|----|---|----|
| Sandusky | 6 | 0 | 6 | 6 | — | 18 |
| Ross | 16 | 24 | 0 | 12 | — | 52 |

» First Quarter:

FR: Jabree Lather 78 kick return (Tyler Wolf run) 11:49.

S: Lucas Will 73 pass to Mike Delk (kick blocked) 11:09.

FR: Wolf 32 pass to Dylan Starks (Wolf to Dylan Jagodzinski) 7:30.

» Second Quarter:

FR: Wolf 23 pass to Starks (Wolf run) 11:18.

FR: Lather 8 run (Wolf run) :46.

FR: Wolf 27 pass to Jacob Luc (Lather run) :00.

» Third Quarter:

S: Ja'Vion Moore 86 yard fumble return (conversion failed) 1:58.

» Fourth Quarter:

FR: Wolf 31 run (conversion failed) 11:52.

FR: Devante Daniels 4 run (conversion failed) 9:24.

S: Will 13 pass to Ben Fuller (conversion failed) 3:50.

| TEAM STATS | S | FR |
|-----------------|---------|--------|
| First downs | 8 | 15 |
| Total Net Yards | 228 | 421 |
| Rushes-yards | 25-54 | 47-286 |
| Passing | 174 | 135 |
| Comp-Att-Int | 10-25-3 | 8-13-0 |
| Fumbles-Lost | 0-0 | 4-3 |
| Penalties-Yards | 10-72 | 8-80 |

INDIVIDUAL STATISTICS

» **Rushing:** Sandusky — Will 11-22; Moore 4-21; Fuller 8-11; Gene Porter 1-7; Arzhon Alexander 1(-7). Ross — Lather 27-183; Wolf 11-54; Ben Root 1-8; Daniels 7-43; Jalen Slick 1(-2).

» **Passing:** Sandusky — Will 10-25-4-174. Ross — Wolf 8-13-0-135.

» **Receiving:** Sandusky — Delk 2-88; Moore 3-52; Fuller 4-30; Porter 1-1. Ross — Dylan Starks 5-90; Ben Root 1-7; Jacob Luc 1-27; Drake Brown 1-11.

RECORDS I UP NEXT

» **Ross:** 1-0 (0-0); at Brecksville-Broadview ^N Hts. Friday.

Big man's big moment



In last season's meeting with Brecksville-Broadview Heights, Ross defensive lineman Dmitre Aaron dropped standout quarterback Tom Tupa Jr., ending Tupa's season and setting a tone for the game. Tupa's back and threw for 460 yards last week in the Bees' season opening loss to North Royalton. JONATHON BIRD/NEWS-MESSANGER

Aaron's sack still fresh memory for Fremont Ross

By Kevin Shields
Sports writer

FREMONT — At 6-foot-5-inches tall and 400 pounds, Ross defensive tackle Dmitre Aaron is one of the last people a quarterback wants to see shooting through an open gap in his offensive line.

Especially, if your name is Tommy Tupa, the Brecksville Broadview-Heights' senior signal caller.

Tupa (6-4, 215) and Aaron came face-to-face on the Bees' third possession of what was a 50-21 Little Giants' win in the schools' first-ever matchup last September at Don Paul Stadium. The result of their collision — a 9-yard sack on a 2nd-and-10 play — gave Aaron his biggest calling card moment to date, while for Tupa — a Miami University commit and the son of former Ohio State All-American punter Tom Tupa — it shortened his season, as he was later diagnosed with a broken left collarbone.

"Everyone has come up to me this week and said, 'let's have another moment like that this year,'" Aaron said as Ross prepares to visit the Bees for a rematch on Friday (7 p.m. kickoff). "I didn't even try to hurt him last year. It was just the way it

IF YOU GO

ROSS (1-0) AT BRECKSVILLE-BROADVIEW HEIGHTS (0-1)
» When: Saturday, 7 p.m.
» Where: Community Stadium (6,200)
» Radio: WFRO Eagle 99.1 FM

happened.

"Hurting people isn't what I'm about. I just wanted to make the play."

Anyone that meets Aaron would sing a similar tune.

"I try to be a fun guy," Aaron said. "I like to laugh, smile and keep people hyped-up."

Aaron has a serious side too.

"Dmitre is a big kid, but he works hard," Little Giants coach Derek Kidwell said. "He fights through some pain and he's always practicing when he's banged up or hurting. He's just a good kid."

Aaron says aggressive play is just a part of the nature in which he plays.

"Off the field, I can be the nicest guy in the world, but on the field, I'm really no one you want to mess with," Aaron said. "But that's just because you always have to have that aggressive side. Football is an aggres-

sive game and you have to bring that."

Primarily a run-stopper, Aaron was a key cog in Ross' ability to stop the run this past Friday against Sandusky. The Blue Streaks were held to 54 yards on 25 carries.

Most of Sandusky's yards came from a 73-yard touchdown pass on its opening drive.

"They played like a veteran group and that was nice to see," Kidwell said. "I think they'll get better each and every week. But at the same time, our opponents get better each week also."

Said Aaron of the defense, "Michael Egbert was everywhere for us. I felt bad for Sandusky's running back. Each time he went up the hole, Mike was there. Matthew Egbert too."

The challenge this week: Can the Little Giants (1-0) shut down Tupa twice?

Saturday against North Royalton — a 54-42 loss at Cleveland Browns Stadium — Tupa completed 30-of-39 passes for 460 yards and five touchdowns.

Last September against the Little Giants, he went 0-for-7 with two interceptions before getting knocked out of the game.

"He's a big-time quarterback," Kidwell said. "But a good thing is our kids are familiar with this

opponent. They know the offense they ran against us last year is the exact same offense, so if we can get to Tupa, make him uncomfortable and not allow him to set his feet, it's to our advantage."

Ross scored 30 first-quarter points on the Bees (0-1) in last season's contest.

"You don't get too many games like that," Kidwell said. "Everything just went well for us in the first quarter. I don't think it truly measured which team was better. We weren't 30 points better than they were. But everything went well for us that night."

Tupa's favorite target is younger brother, Timmy Tupa.

"His brother is good, he's not the speed receiver like No. 3 is, but he's a talent," Kidwell said. "Defensively, their defensive end (6-5, 230 Mike Tyler) that committed to Vanderbilt is good too. But typically, they've had struggles against physical run teams. Hopefully, that's to our advantage."

Kidwell says Ross' best defense will be its offense, and its ability to run the ball and the game clock. The Little Giants racked up 286 yards on the ground against Sandusky, including 183 yards from Jabree

See ROSS, page 2B

ROSS

Continued from Page 1B

Lather. That with one returning starter on the line, senior DeAndre Gates.

“From the off-season to now, they’ve improved a lot,” said Aaron of the offensive line. “I’m proud of them. They got the job done this past week.”

» **CLEVELAND SUCCESS:** Under Kidwell, Ross is 7-4 against teams from the Greater Cleveland area. The Little Giants have won four straight against Cuyahoga County schools, defeating Benedictine twice (2009 and 2010), University

School in 2010 and Broadview Heights last season. All-time Ross is 33-21 against Cuyahoga County teams. The Little Giants are also 23-9 in their last 32 true road games.

» **MOST EVER:** Last Friday’s 52-18 win over Sandusky was the most points ever scored by a Ross team against the Blue Streaks. The previous mark for points against Sandusky was 49, which the Little Giants scored in wins in 2006 and 1998. Ross has won seven of the team’s last eight meetings.

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|------------------------------|-----------|
| FREMONT ROSS | 32 |
| BRECKSVILLE-BROADVIEW | 29 |

Ross makes a statement winning game two

By Kevin Shields

Sports writer

BRECKSVILLE — Quality football teams are built on making big plays to secure big wins.

Ross is only two games into its 2012 season, but Friday's 32-29 victory at Brecksville-Broadview Heights could become the win that made a difference.

Tyler Wolf's 60-yard touchdown pass to a cutting Dylan Starks with 5:01 to play was the final blow needed for Ross (2-0) to pick up some big Harbin points over what should be a quality Division I program by season's end.

"I knew I was going to throw it to (Starks) even before the ball was snapped," Wolf said of the second-and-4 play. "I saw an opening, he made a play and it took from there."

Starks added: "I knew if I caught it, all I had to do was make one move and I was going to the house. I had the safeties one-on-one."

See ROSS, page 2B

ROSS

Continued from Page 1B

Starks' play answered a 13-yard TD pass from Tommy Tupa to Carlo Milano that had given the Bees (0-2) a 29-26 lead just 57 seconds earlier. That followed a quick three-and-out for Ross after an interception by senior Oakley Contreras halted a Brecksville drive at the Little Giants' 4-yard line with 7:31 remaining.

"I didn't like how we managed those three plays," Ross coach Derek Kidwell said. "We've got to get better at that and chew up some clock. We put our defense in a bad situation, but luckily they rallied and made plays."

The two teams traded the lead seven times. Brecksville led 14-6 after one quarter and 21-18 at halftime.

Ross regained the lead early in the fourth when Jabree Lather's 9-yard scoring run ended a 15-play, 80-drive that took more than five minutes to complete. Lather finished with 75 yards on 20 carries and one score.

"I love the character our kids showed tonight," Kidwell said. "It's like I said earlier in the week, we weren't 30 points better than (Brecksville). But I was extremely proud of the way we dug and fought. We knew it wasn't going to be easy coming over here."

Most of Ross' damage on offense came from its senior signal caller. Wolf ran 15 times for 128 yards and two scores on the ground and added a 18-of-29 pass performance where he racked up 248 more yards and threw for two more scores, despite throwing three interceptions.

"He put on a show for us," Kidwell said of his three-year starter at quarterback. "He made some mistakes, but he's human. We'll get back and look at those mistakes."

"But he shook his turnovers off, hit Dylan Starks on a big seam route and that was the ball game."

Wolf opened the game's scoring with an 84-yard TD scramble 2:34 in to give the Little Giants a 6-0 lead.

"I loved getting to run again tonight," said Wolf whose running was limited because of a sore

ankle in Ross' 52-18 win over Sandusky in Week 1. "That's me getting back to what I love doing. The offensive line did a great job again, too. Me and Jabree both ran the ball well thanks to those guys up front."

Wolf tallied another TD on a 4-yard keeper in the second to bring Ross within 14-12, before he hit Contreras with 2:54 left in the opening half to put the Little Giants ahead. Contreras standing at the Bees' 1-yard turned, looked for the ball, and then leaped and made the grab, while falling backwards into the end zone.

"I didn't know what was going on," Contreras said. "Wolf just told me to run hard and I ran hard, and I didn't think he was going to throw it. He threw and I just jumped up and grabbed it."

"Lucky play."

Coming in, Ross knew the key was keeping the ball, running the clock and not allowing Tupa to throw it for more than 500 yards, as he did in the Bees' 54-42 loss to North Royalton last Saturday at Cleveland Browns Stadium.

"I thought that was a great effort by our defense in the second half to hold (Tupa) to what we held him to," Kidwell said. "It says a lot about our defense."

Tupa finished 17-of-40 for 315 yards and tossed for four scores. He was knocked out of the Ross game a year ago on the Bees' third drive when he broke his left collarbone on a sack by Dmitre Aaron.

"It's tough," Contreras said when asked how tiring it was to chase down Brecksville's receivers all night. "It takes a lot of hard work in the summer to get in condition for it."

Ross came up with a big fourth-and-15 stop with 1:44 left in the game when Tupa hit Tyler Tarnowski for 14 yards, but he was short of the first down mark after a measurement on the sideline.

Ross outgained the Bees 452-370, rushing for 204 yards on 36 attempts.

"It's definitely a big win," Wolf said. "(Brecksville-Broadview Heights) wanted to get us back from last year. Both sides had to play well and they did. It was a team win tonight."

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Fremont Ross 32, Brecksville-Broadview Heights 29

| | | | | | | |
|-------------|----|----|---|----|---|----|
| Ross | 6 | 12 | 0 | 14 | — | 32 |
| Brecksville | 14 | 7 | 0 | 8 | — | 29 |

» First Quarter:

R: Tyler Wolf 84 run (2pt failed) 9:26.
B: Tommy Tupa 43 pass to Tim Tupa (Nick Shirilla pass to Brian Musial) 7:06.
B: Tupa 15 pass to Tyler Tarnowski (2pt failed) 3:13.

» Second Quarter:

R: Wolf 4 run (2pt failed) 11:53.
R: Wolf 43 pass to Oakley Contreras (2pt failed) 2:54.
B: Tupa 3 pass to Paul Karthan (Karthan kick) :17.

» Fourth Quarter:

R: Jabree Lather 9 run (Wolf to Dylan Starks) 8:23.
B: Tupa 13 pass to Carlo Milano (Tupa pass to Christian Kessler) 5:58.
R: Wolf 60 pass to Starks (2pt failed) 5:01.

| TEAM STATS | ROSS | B |
|-----------------------|-------------|-------------|
| First downs..... | 14..... | 17..... |
| Total Net Yards | 452..... | 370..... |
| Rushes-yards..... | 36-204..... | 23-55..... |
| Passing | 248..... | 315..... |
| Comp-Att-Int | 18-29-3-... | 17-40-1-... |
| Fumbles-Lost..... | 1-1..... | 0-0..... |
| Penalties-Yards | 5-48..... | 7-44..... |

INDIVIDUAL STATISTICS

» **Rushing:** ROSS—Lather 20-75; Wolf 15-128; Ben Root 1-1. B—Jay Schott 19-50; Carlo Milano 2-2; Tommy Tupa 2-3.
» **Passing:** ROSS—Wolf 18-29-3-248. B—Tupa 17-40-1-315.
» **Receiving:** ROSS—Dylan Starks 6-105; Chris Mack 2-18; Drake Brown 5-46; Contreras 4-72; Stefan Johnson 1-9. B—Tim Tupa 3-91; Karthan 6-105; Tarnowski 5-96; Schott 3-23.

RECORDS I UP NEXT

» **Ross:** 2-0 (0-0); at Pickerington North, Friday.
» **Brecksville:** 0-2 (0-0) vs. Hudson, Friday.

HIGH SCHOOL FOOTBALL: WEEK 3 PREVIEWS

2-0 Pickerington up next for Ross

By Kevin Shields

Sports writer

FREMONT — Nothing comes easy in the Three Rivers Athletic Conference.

Ross coach Derek Kidwell doesn't believe the non-league schedule should be a cake walk, either.

So when Toledo Rogers dropped the Little Giants (2-0) from its Week 3 schedule in the spring, the veteran coach had no qualms when Columbus-area powerhouse Pickerington North, came calling.

"I would rather play a tough opponent going into our league than some easy cupcake," said Kidwell, of his team's game at Pickerington North on Friday (7 p.m. kickoff). "I don't think that makes your team better. And I think it can give you a false impression

IF YOU GO

- » **What:** Ross (2-0) at Pickerington North (2-0)
- » **When:** Friday, 7 p.m.
- » **Radio:** Won't be covered locally.
- » **Mobile:** A live twitter chat will be held on our website www.thenewsmessenger.com or you can follow **@KShieldsNM** on twitter for game updates. Use the hashtag **#nmhss** to share your own comments.

of your team.

"So, I thought playing a bigger school like (North) would only help us, because we play quite a few bigger schools in our league, and it would only get us ready for that," Kidwell continued. "Plus, it'll be neat to get our kids into a different

environment."

The Panthers (2-0) will be Ross' first Columbus-area opponent since 2006 when Ross traveled to Reynoldsburg (a 13-10 victory in Week 5). Overall, the Little Giants are 4-4-3 in their 11 past match-ups with teams from the state capital. Friday's meeting will be their first with North.

Friday's trip will conclude a two-week portion of the schedule that will see Ross cover 426 miles. It started this past Friday at Brecksville-Broadview Heights (a 32-29 win).

"We were fortunate enough to get charter buses this week, which I think will put our kids in a more comfortable environment," Kidwell said. "But we'll leave school early, make a stop in

See ROSS, page 2B

ROSS

Continued from Page 1B

Marion to feed the kids and break up the drive that way. We certainly won't use the traveling as an excuse."

Overcoming Mistakes: When he addressed the team over the weekend, Kidwell found two big positives from the win against the Bees: His team's ability to limit its penalties (four for the game) and to overcome five turnovers (three interceptions, a fumble and a turnover on downs).

"That was impressive to me that we were able to overcome all those turnovers, and yet, still beat Brecksville," he said. "There's still a lot of growth that needs to take place, but I think we can be a good football team and the kids are sensing that too."

Offense: Quarterback Tyler Wolf was back to being a dual-threat after being limited in Week 1 with an ankle injury.

Ross racked up over 400 yards of offense for the second straight week, adding another 200-plus effort on the ground. All that with, essentially, four new starters on the line.

"Our offensive line is playing well," Kidwell said. "I wish we could have ran the ball a little bit better inside the tackles, but the pass protection has been outstanding. If they continue to do that, we may throw the ball a little more than we originally planned."

Wolf spread the ball around to five different receivers. Three of them — Dylan Starks, Drake Brown and Oakley Contreras — had four or more catches, some at key moments, to extend drives.

"We've counted on those guys all summer and they've stepped up," Kidwell said. "That was the performance we needed from them."

Holding down Tupa: Ross' defense did a little bending at times last Friday, but it didn't break, as is the case with many teams facing the Bees. The Little Giants limited QB Tommy Tupa's damage to 17-of-40 passing for 315 yards and four scores.

"You watch that film and you see their receivers made some amazing catches," Kidwell said. "You can tell they've thrown the

ball a lot in the off-season.

"And we're probably the only team in 10 games that will challenge Brecksville man-to-man all night."

Kidwell liked the big plays he got from his secondary. However, he'd like to see more pressure on the signal caller from up front.

"This week, it'll most likely be the run game that would beat us," Kidwell said. "But the quarterbacks like to get to the outside where they have a run or pass option."

North features bigtime talent: The Panthers returned 18 letter winners from an 8-2 squad in 2011. Among the eight starters returning on both sides of the ball are tight end/defensive lineman Jake Butt, a Michigan recruit; running back/defensive back Godwin Igwebuike, a Northwestern recruit; and offensive tackle Chris Huhn, who has committed to Western Kentucky.

"They're extremely good," Kidwell said. "They're very athletic and very talented. I think about 10:30 (p.m.) on Friday night, we'll know what type of football team we are."

Igwebuike, a big, fast and physical runner, rushed for 201 yards this past Friday on eight carries, scoring on runs of 88 and 85 yards in North's 41-20 rout of Cincinnati Princeton.

"Speed," said Kidwell of what stood out on film. "They have big-play capability and their running back is very explosive. Also, they play two quarterbacks and both of them are very athletic and fast.

"Defensively, then, they're very aggressive."

North was among three teams statewide in Division I a year ago that won eight games but failed to reach the playoffs.

In Week 1, the Panthers beat Columbus St. Charles 50-22.

"Our kids won't be intimidated," Kidwell said. "If we can win the turnover battle, limit their big plays offensively and we tackle well on the perimeter, I think we'll have a chance in the fourth quarter to be in the game. That's all you can ask for on the road against a bigger opponent."

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| | |
|-----------------------|-----------|
| PICKERINGTON N | 41 |
| FREMONT ROSS | 13 |

Future 'Cat runs wild on Ross

By Kevin Shields

Sports writer

PICKERINGTON — There weren't many plays Pickerington North tailback Godwin Igwebuike didn't make on Friday.

Igwebuike, a Northwestern University recruit, ran for 223 yards and four scores on offense, while adding an interception and fumble recovery on defense as the Panthers topped Ross 41-13 on Friday in non-league play.

"He's special," said North coach Tom Phillips of the his 5-foot, 11-inch tailback. "There's no doubt about it...he's a difference-maker. Every time he's running the ball I'm in awe of some of his moves and his vision."

Added Ross coach Derek Kidwell: "He's a Division I running back on purpose, it's definitely not by accident. He may be the best running back we face all season, and we didn't tackle him all night long."

Igwebuike took a pitch from North quarterback Mason Olszewski, before racing 65 yards, untouched, to the end zone on the first play from scrimmage. He added scoring runs of 20, 39 and 41 yards — all in the first half.

"We helped them a lot with poor tackling and blown assignments," Kidwell said.

The Little Giants (2-1) answered quickly, tying the game on Jabree Lather's 25-yard TD run just three plays into their opening drive. A drive setup by a nice kick return by Dylan Starks that got the ball out to the near midfield.

Ross' defense came up big, holding the Panthers (3-0) to a three-and-out. But the Little Giants couldn't score after getting the ball down to North's 10-yard line. Lather needing five on fourth down, was held to four.

Tyler Wolf threw his first of three interceptions on the Little Giants' next drive, also in Panther territory, giving North the ball back at their own 33.

Five plays later, backup signal caller Zeph Miller gave North a 14-7 lead with a 9-yard scoring scramble.

Starks' 95-yard kickoff return for a score moved Ross within 14-13. But Igwebuike opened a gap, scoring on three long runs in the second quarter, while Ross continued to squander opportunities.

See ROSS, page 2B

ROSS

Continued from Page 1B

Down 34-13 with under a minute left until halftime, Ross was inside the Panthers' 10-yard line again. However, the threat ended as Wolf was intercepted by Igwebuike on fourth down at the 2.

"We had too many mistakes all-around in the first half," Kidwell said. "We left 14 points off the board. We didn't get a first down inside the five and then we threw an interception before the half. You can't not score against a team with the threats (North) has on offense.

"They may be the best offensive team we face all year, and they held true to that."

Igwebuike had 210 yards in the first 24 minutes on 13 attempts. North registered a total of 350 on offense in the half to Ross' 198 yards.

After a big game a week ago in the win against Brecksville-Broadview Heights (32-29), Wolf had a tough time making plays against the Panthers' defense.

"He was our No. 1 playmaker on the blackboard this week," said Phillips of Wolf he ended his night 8-of-20 for 85 yards. "We knew we had to spy on him in the middle because he ran draw so

well."

The Little Giants made into North's territory once in the second half. Lather's fumble at the 43-yard line was recovered by Igwebuike.

Jamie Hence's 64-yard TD reception down the left sideline in the fourth quarter was the game's final points. Hence had two grabs for 103 yards as the Panthers threw for 187.

Lather had 186 yards on 29 carries for Ross, which amassed 210 yards on the ground.

"This was a very good Fremont Ross team," Phillips said. "I was scared of what we see this week from them, because they ran the ball well and they threw the ball. They had playmakers.

"I'm just happy our defense only gave up seven."

Ross will open Three Rivers Athletic Conference play Friday at St. John's Jesuit.

"I told our guys, none of our goals are lost," Kidwell said. "Not one of their goals was to go 10-0. All their goals are there to achieve yet."

"We faced a very good tonight, and they were better than us. But our kids will be motivated to play St. John's next week."

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Pickerington North 41, Fremont Ross 13

| | | | | |
|---------------------------|-----------|-----------|----------|--------------|
| Fremont Ross | 13 | 0 | 0 | 0— 13 |
| Pickerington North | 14 | 20 | 0 | 7— 41 |

Scoring Summary

First Quarter

P: Godwin Igwebuike 65 run (Karch Holland kick) 11:49.R: Jabree Lather 25 run (kick good) 10:55.P: Zeph Miller 11 run (Holland kick) 2:16.R: Dylan Starks 85 kickoff return (PAT N missed) 2:01.

Second Quarter

P: Igwebuike 20 run (Holland kick) 11:40.P: Igwebuike 39 run (Holland kick) 5:26.P: Igwebuike 41 run (2pt failed) 2:16.

Fourth Quarter

P: Jamie Hence 64 pass from Mason Olszewski (Holland kick) 6:24.

| | F | P |
|-----------------|----------|----------|
| Rushes-yards | 40-210 | 37-375 |
| Comp-Att-Int | 8-20-3 | 7-12-0 |
| Passing yards | 85 | 187 |
| Fumbles-lost | 1-1 | 2-0 |
| Penalties-yards | 6-55 | 11-83 |

RUSHING: F—Lather 29-186, Starks 1-9, Wolf 10-15, P—Chambers 1—1, Goodwin 5-18, Igwebuike 14-223, Lapiro 2-18, Miller 8—5, Olszewski 7-22.

PASSING: F—Wolf 8-20-3-85, P—Miller 4-6—85, Olszewski 3-6—102.

RECEIVING: F—Contreras 3-59, Lather 1-4, Luc 1-9, P—Butt 3-33, Gillum 1-52, Hence 2-103, Lapiro 1—1.

Little Giants minus-9 in turnover ratio

By Kevin Shields

Sports writer

FREMONT — Football is a tough game in itself.

It only gets tougher when a team tries to bring itself into the competition. Something Ross has been doing the past three weeks, but managed to get away with twice.

The third time wasn't quite the

charm.

In the first three weeks, the Little Giants (2-1) are minus-9 in turnover ratio, having given the ball away 16 times and taken it away seven. That included a lopsided 6-0 margin in giveaways this past Friday in a 41-13 loss to Pickerington North — the fifth-ranked

See GIANTS, page 2B

IF YOU GO

ROSS (2-1) at St. John's Jesuit (0-3)

When: Friday, 7 p.m.

Radio: WFRO Eagle 99.1 FM

Mobile/Web: A live twitter chat will be held on our website www.thenews-messenger.com. Use the hashtag #nmhss to share your own comments.

Giants

Continued from Page 1B

team in Division I in the inaugural Associated Press poll.

"We got to stop turning the ball over and we got to stop beating Fremont Ross and our opponent," said Ross coach Derek Kidwell, whose team travels to St. John's Jesuit Friday to open Three Rivers Athletic Conference play. "We're not to that level where we can overcome our mistakes, and yet, beat our opponent. We have to make the opponent beat us."

In the air, Ross quarterback Tyler Wolf has thrown six interceptions. Possessing the ball, the Little Giants have had five fumbles, while they've turned the ball over on downs five more times.

"Some of it is routine football plays not being made," Kidwell said. "We've had balls go through receivers' hands, balls getting popped out from ball-carriers and we've been lucky some of those haven't come back to hurt us. But at the same time, it also stops drives and it stops momentum. And right now, we need every bit of momentum we can have and all the time of possession we can get in order for us to be successful."

North tailback Godwin Igwebuike, a Northwestern recruit, zigged and zagged his way to 223 yards and four scores — 65, 20, 39 and 41 — as the Panthers piled up over 500 yards of total offense, 350 of which came in the opening half. It equaled a 34-13 halftime deficit for Ross.

"We were everything a losing team needed to be," Kidwell said. "I applaud our kids effort and their discipline. They played hard until the end. But they weren't good enough on Friday."

"The kids came in on Saturday ... watched film. They watched it with a critical mindset and I think we've come out focused this week in practice."

ST. JOHN'S: Ross is all too fa-

miliar with this week's opponent St. John's knocked the Little Giants out of the playoffs two years ago in a 45-35 victory at Bowling Green State University's Doyt L Perry Stadium. Last year, the two played what many would describe as an instant classic where the Titans pulled out a 35-28 double overtime win at Dor Paul Stadium in the first-ever TRAC game for both schools.

The Titans (0-3) have never lost more than five games in a season under 11-year coach Doug Pearson (82-41 record in 10 years at SJJ). However, after being out-scored 159-53 in its first three games against opponents with a combined 8-1 record St. John's is in need of positives with home games against Ross and Whitmer in the next two weeks. St. John's started its previous two seasons 4-0.

"They've been tested more than we've been tested, they just haven't tasted any success," Kidwell said. "It'll be our job not to allow them to have any positives early in the game, so they don't believe that they can have success against us either."

Senior quarterback Brogar Roback, a 6-4 Eastern Michigan recruit, returns as one of five starters back. Roback threw for 1,645 yards and 14 TDs as a junior. Another senior, offensive tackle Matt Miller — a Wisconsin recruit — is back anchoring the line. Pittsburgh recruit Tony Harper provides a big 6-4 target at tight end.

"They like to run behind the Miller kid on the left side," Kidwell said. "We got to keep them in long yardage situations. If they can run the ball, Brogan can be really good if he can throw the ball when he doesn't have to."

"This is a big game, it's the start of the league," Kidwell added. "It's a game our kids have been looking forward to and I think when we play with a sense of urgency, we'll be pretty good."

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Fremont Ross' Jabree Lather drives forward for a first down during the first half Friday against St. John's Jesuit. JONATHON BIRD/NEWS-MESSENGER

TRAC opener not kind to Ross

By Matthew Horn
Sports writer

TOLEDO — Wide receiver Craig Mays and running back Collin Korte made it easier for St. John's Jesuit quarterback Brogan Roback to do his job Friday.

But Roback didn't need much help as the Titans topped Fremont Ross 44-14 in the Three Rivers Athletic Conference opener for both teams.

Korte and a long punt return after a safety set Roback up for three short rushing touchdowns in the first half. Korte ran for 132 yards on 18 carries for the game.

"Having a run game is the key to open up the passing game," Roback said. "(Korte) got me into position down there, and we had a surge up front. The big guys up front gave me all day and surged forward."

Roback tossed touchdown passes of 5 and 52 yards to Mays. Mays elevated to high-point a scoring pass over a defender on a fade to the back of the end zone in the second quarter. Roback pump-faked and made a perfect throw leading a streaking Mays for the 52-yard touchdown in the third quarter.

| | |
|---------------------|-----------|
| ST. JOHN'S | 44 |
| FREMONT ROSS | 14 |

Three Rivers Athletic Conference

"Craig's a sophomore, and I've been preaching to him since two-a-days that you know he'll be a Division 1-type receiver," Roback said. "He'll make you look good. Teams key on Liam (Allen). I'm glad for (Mays) to step up — he needed the confidence boost.

"With his size and speed, he's tough to cover."

Korte needed only eight carries to reach 101 yards. The Little Giants (2-2, 0-1) allowed Korte to get through the line untouched before the first hit on several occasions.

"This is all on me," Ross coach Derek Kidwell said. "I didn't have them ready. We weren't prepared. I'll take the blame. We'll go back and reassess the effort. This falls on my shoulders as the head coach.

"We've got to coach 'em up to make plays."

The Titans (1-3, 1-0) held Ross to 64 yards of offense in the first half and led 37-0 after two quarters. St. John's punted once in the first half.

"It was nothing we didn't expect," Kidwell said of the St. John's defensive schemes. "We didn't get it done. We didn't block long enough, run hard enough, catch the ball and we held the ball too long."

The Titans held Little Giants quarterback Tyler Wolf to 71 rushing yards and five completions on 16 tries. St. John's intercepted three passes.

"Our defense played the run really well," Roback said. "They slowed Wolf and (Jabree Lather), two of the top rushers in the league. They came together and they made plays."

Lather had 70 yards on 15 carries, with about half of that coming on his final four attempts late in the game.

Wolf scored from 48 yards out to make it 44-7 with 7:01 left in the game. Michael Egbert ran for a 1-yard touchdown to cap the scoring for Ross.

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201 Football

Toledo St. John's Jesuit 44, Fremont Ross 14

| | | | | | | |
|------------|----|----|---|----|---|----|
| Ross | 0 | 0 | 0 | 14 | — | 14 |
| St. John's | 23 | 14 | 7 | 0 | — | 44 |

» First Quarter:

SJ — Brogan Roback 1 run (Matt Dominique kick) 9:32.

SJ — Connor Lake 11 run (Dominique kick) 7:34.

SJ — Safety 5:40.

SJ — Roback 2 run (Dominique kick) 4:52.

» Second Quarter:

SJ — Roback 5 pass to Craig Mays (Dominique kick) 7:36.

SJ — Roback 1 run (Dominique kick) 4:09.

» Third Quarter:

SJ — Roback 52 pass to Mays (Dominique kick) 9:05.

» Fourth Quarter:

FR — Tyler Wolf 48 run (PAT good) 7:01.

FR — Michael Egbert 1 run (PAT good) 2:30.

| TEAM STATS | FR | SJ |
|-----------------------|-------------|--------|
| First downs..... | 11 | 13 |
| Total Net Yards | 259 | 392 |
| Rushes-yards..... | 31-190.... | 42-220 |
| Passing | 69 | 172 |
| Comp-Att-Int | 5-16-3-.... | 8-11-0 |
| Fumbles-Lost..... | 0-0 | 1-0 |
| Penalties-Yards | 3-35 | 7-61 |
| Punts | 6 | 5 |

INDIVIDUAL STATISTICS

» **Rushing:** FR—Jabree Lather 14-71; Wolf 12-71; Egbert 7-48. SJ—Collin Korte 18-132, Roback 6(-14), Lake 11-94.

» **Passing:** FR—Wolf 5-16-3-69. Team—Roback 7-8-0-171.

» **Receiving:** FR—Oakley Contreras 2-44, Lather 1-3, Devin Benson 1-13, Ben Root 1-9. SJ—Liam Allen 4-88, Mays 3-83.

RECORDS I UP NEXT

» **Ross:** 2-2 (0-1); vs. Lima Sr.

» ***SJ:** 1-3 (1-0).

FOOTBALL » LIMA SENIOR AT FREMONT ROSS

No excuses inside the locker room



In this file photo, Fremont Ross' Jabree Lather drives forward for a first down during the first half of a game against St. John's Jesuit on Sept. 14. JONATHON BIRD/NEWS-MESSANGER PHOTOS

Little Giants look to defeat Spartans, wash bad taste out of their mouths

By Kevin Shields
Sports writer

FREMONT — While other teams may use off-the-field issues as an excuse for poor play, there's no tap dancing going on inside the Ross football locker room at Don Paul Stadium this week.

Faced with key injuries for the second straight season, and coming off two consecutive weeks of humbling defeats that have left his players a bit deflated, Little Giants coach Derek Kidwell guaranteed he and his coaching staff won't waste time trying to think up excuses.

"Like I said Friday (after a 44-14 loss at St. John's Jesuit), I'll take the full blame," Kidwell said.

"I'm in charge of the whole program and I didn't have the kids ready. And we've talked about that as a coaching staff, and it's an issue I don't foresee happening again.

"But it's across the board, too. We have to play harder, with more heart and passion. And we as coaches have to coach them with more heart and passion."

The going only gets tougher. After Friday's home game with Lima Senior (0-4, 0-1), the Little Giants (2-2, 1-0) will host the top-ranked team in Division II, Toledo Central Catholic. In two of the final three weeks, they'll face two of the top teams in Division I — No. 9 Whitmer and No. 8 Findlay — most likely needing to beat one of the two for any hopes of a post-season with no other Division I games on the schedule. Ross is in its second season as a Division II, Region 6 team where it currently stands 19th, according to Joe Eitel's unofficial rankings.

"It'll be nice for these kids not to have to hop on a bus and go an hour or two hours away this week," Kidwell said. "But more importantly, I think it'll be nice for them to go out and try get that bad taste out of their mouths."

Even the strongest Scope or Listerine mouthwash can't erase the taste the Titans left for the Little Giants. Outmanned and outplayed physically much of the game's 48 minutes, Ross was badly gashed on defense by St. John's run game. Tailback Collin Korte was mostly untouched until he reached the Little Giants' secondary en route to rushing for 132 yards on 18 carries.

That in turn, allowed standout quarterback Brogan Roback plenty of freedom to test new players, like Jabree Lather, in the Ross defensive backfield. Roback threw for 171 yards and two scores on 7-of-8 passing.

"For whatever reason, we executed well all week in practice and the kids lined up properly, but under



Fremont Ross' Tyler Wolf finds some running room during a Sept. 14 game.

IF YOU GO

Lima Senior (0-4, 0-1) at Ross (2-2, 0-1)

When: 7 p.m., Friday.

Radio: WFRO Eagle 99.1 FM

Mobile/Web: A live Twitter chat will be on www.thenews-messenger.com or you can follow @KShieldsNN on Twitter for game updates. Use the hashtag #nmhs to share your own comments.

the lights, they got a little confused and didn't recognize formations, so they were misaligned," said Kidwell of having to shuffle the defensive lineup due to injuries. "Then, we tried over-compensating for someone not being lined up and big plays happened."

On the other side of the ball, the Ross offense continues to struggle with turnovers. Tyler Wolf tossed three interceptions in a game for the third time in as many weeks. Overall, sloppy route-running and decision-making resulted in the Little Giants throwing for 69 yards on 5-of-16 passing.

"Offensively, there's really no excuse," Kidwell said. "We didn't lose anybody on offense except for Dylan (Starks). We didn't fire off the ball. We didn't protect and we didn't throw to open receivers or catch the ball. It was just a bad effort all around."

Ross' turnover margin for the season is now at minus-13.

See ROSS, page 2B

ROSS

Continued from Page 1B

"We're down and we're frustrated," Kidwell said of the emotions in the locker room. "But, this is where coaching comes into place and this is where leadership comes into place. We'll find out this team's true character this week."

"Obviously, we didn't expect to have happen what happened to us on Friday, but that's why you play football games," Kidwell continued. "They (his players) got six more games to go out and prove that we're a good football team."

THE SPARTANS: Lima Senior comes into Friday's contest having been out-scored by its first

four opponents — Thurgood Marshall, Marion Harding, Piqua and Findlay — 198-61. That included a 68-14 loss to the Trojans in last week's TRAC opener.

Ross topped the Spartans 40-17 in last year's Week 5 meeting.

"They'll always have good athletes and they'll always have speed," said Kidwell of his opponent. "They're struggling right now, but this is a week we need to worry about Fremont Ross. We need to get back to the fundamentals and the basics of football, which we'll be doing all week in practice."

Findlay's defense created six turnovers and limited the Spartans' offense to minus-2 yards rushing this past week in a first

half that saw the Trojans lead 51-0 at halftime.

Lima Senior likes to mix the spread with some option offense.

Coach Brett Lee's roster is filled with freshmen and sophomores who play significant roles.

"We're going to have growing pains, but we're going to keep playing hard every week and we're going to keep our heads because that's how we plan to rebuild Spartans' football," Lee told Dave Hanneman of The Courier, following Friday's game.

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FRIDAY NIGHT FOOTBALL



Fremont Ross' Jabree Lather attempts to shake a Lima defender during the second half on Friday. JONATHON BIRD/NEWS-MESSANGER

Ross pounds Lima Senior

By Kevin Shields

Sports writer

FREMONT — How things change.

Down in personnel and in need of answers after two straight bad showings on the road, Ross coach Derek Kidwell, known for bringing the spread offense to town nine years ago, put together a heavy run-based game plan Friday against Lima Senior.

Riding his team's strengths — the offensive line's ability to run block and his backfield's ability to make plays — Kidwell and the Little Giants pounded their way to a much-needed 48-0 Three Rivers Athletic Conference victory on a rainy night at Harmon Field at Don Paul Stadium.

"This is what we're going to do," said Kidwell, whose team passed the ball only seven times. "We're doing this from here on out. If we've been struggling to protect our quarterback out of the shotgun, and to get the ball down the field in the passing game, we're going to run it."

Jabree Lather carried the ball 25 times for 145 yards and a score. He led seven Ross (3-2, 1-1) ball carriers who totaled 231 yards on 47 carries. Mike Egbert added 42 yards and two more touchdowns on eight attempts, and Devante Daniels had 24 yards on five.

"I think we can use our offensive line to pound people," Kidwell said. "And it does a variety of things, one being it

| | |
|---------------------|-----------|
| FREMONT ROSS | 48 |
| LIMA SENIOR | 0 |

Three Rivers Athletic Conference

shortens games for us. We want to control the line of scrimmage and time of possession. And it keeps our defense on the sidelines."

After forcing a Spartan punt on the opening possession, the Little Giants' new ground attack went to work. Lather ran the first 38 yards in five plays before Tyler Wolf finished the drive with a 28-yard scoring run to put Ross up 7-0, 4:06 in, after Jake Relford's extra point.

Five plays later, Trey Grine's 46-yard interception return for a touchdown upped it to 14-0. Grine, running toward the Spartans' sideline, tipped the ball in the air, then bobbed it, before making the catch, reversing his field and running untouched down the sideline to the end zone.

Egbert's 1-yard scoring run with 3:06 left in the first quarter ended a quick four-play drive after a horrible bounce on a punt set the Little Giants up at Lima's 12-yard-line.

"I'll have to watch film, I don't know if we played that well or if Lima played that bad," Kidwell said. "(Lima's) special

teams really killed them all night. We had half the field, if not two-thirds of the field, taken away because of their blunders and struggles with the punting game.

"We put points on the board, so that was a positive. And we didn't turn the ball over, which was also a positive. But we got to clean up some of these penalties with us running this new run-based offense."

Ross' lone completion of the first half, a 24-yard toss from Wolf to Dylan Jagodzinski, gave Ross a 27-0 halftime lead. The drive started at the Spartans' 29.

Egbert tallied his second touchdown run on an 8-yarder up the middle late in the third quarter. Lather punched it in from 2 yards out 1:29 into the final quarter, before Daniels ended the scoring with a 3-yarder with 5:28 showing on the clock.

"Our offensive line has put in a lot of hard work," Lather said. "Those guys like to ground and pound, and this is what we have to do from now on."

Wolf finished 3-of-6 passing for 66 yards. Jalen Slick replaced him in the fourth quarter and threw an incompletion.

On the defensive side, the Little Giants held the Spartans (0-5, 0-2) to 63 yards. That effort was made without the

See ROSS, page 2B

ROSS

Continued from Page 1B

services of Dylan Starks and others in the defensive backfield, which has forced players, like Lather, to play both ways.

"I haven't played defense since my freshman year, so it feels good now that I've gotten the hang of it," Lather said.

Ross was outscored 85-27 in the previous two weeks in losses to Pickerington North and St. John's Jesuit.

"It just feels good to come back home and get a win," Lather said. "We had intense practices all week. Coach Kidwell prepared us for a whole new offense and it worked out well."

Ross will host Toledo Central Catholic on Friday. The Irish are ranked No. 1 in Division II and beat TRAC preseason favorite Findlay 56-27 on Friday.

"We made personnel changes this week and our kids accepted it," Kidwell said. "(The team) went out all week, they practiced hard and they rewarded themselves with a victory tonight. But I told them, enjoy until (this) afternoon because we have to start preparing for Central. Hopefully our kids accept this opportunity and this challenge, work hard this week and perform well."

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Fremont Ross 48, Lima 0

| | | | | |
|--------------|----|---|---|-------|
| Lima | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0—0 |
| Fremont Ross | 20 | 7 | 7 | 14—48 |

Scoring Summary

First Quarter

F - Tyler Wolf 28 run (Jake Relford kick) 7:54.F - Trey Grine interception return (Relford kick) 6:03.F - Michael Egbert 1 run (PAT missed) 3:06.

Second Quarter

F - Dylan Jagodzinski 24 pass from Wolf (Relford kick) 10:31.

Third Quarter

F- Egbert 8 run (Relford kick) 1:27.
N

Fourth Quarter

F - Jabree Lather 2 run (Relford kick) 9:19.F - Devante Daniels 9 run (Relford kick) 5:28.

| | L | F |
|-----------------|--------|--------|
| First downs | | |
| Rushes-yards | 42-47 | 47-231 |
| Comp-Att-Int | 2-11-1 | 3-7-0 |
| Passing yards | 16 | 66 |
| Fumbles-lost | 5-2 | 1-0 |
| Penalties-yards | 3-25 | 7-55 |

RUSHING: L—DILLINGHAM 6-21, HOLOBAUGH 10-25, LILES 11-31, SHURELDS 4-7, WRIGHT 11—37, F—Daniels 5-24, Egbert 8-42, Geary 1—14, Lather 25-147, Moreno 2-2, Root 2-4, Wolf 5-26.

PASSING: L—WRIGHT 2-11-1-16, F—Slick 0-1—, Wolf 3-6—66.

RECEIVING: L—GRAHAM 2-16, F—Jagodzinski 1-24, Trautwein 2-42.

Ross not intimidated by Fighting Irish

By Kevin Shields

Sports writer

FREMONT — This is why players want to put on the purple and white.

That's the statement Ross coach Derek Kidwell is trying to drive home to his players this week as they prepare to host the top-ranked team in the state in Division II, Toledo Central Catholic. The two Three Rivers Athletic Conference teams will do battle Friday on Harmon Field at Don Paul Stadium.

"This is why you play high school football," Kidwell said. "To have the No. 1 ranked team in the state come into your home stadium. Some people don't get this opportunity. I want our kids to relish it."

The message has well received. The fact the Fighting Irish (5-0, 2-0) are coming to town a week after running preseason league-favorite

IF YOU GO

CENTRAL CATHOLIC (5-0, 2-0) AT ROSS (3-2, 1-1)

» **When:** 7 p.m., Friday

» **Radio:** WFRD Eagle 99.1 FM

» **Mobile/Web:** A live chat will be held at our website, www.thenews-messenger.com or you can follow @KShieldsNM on Twitter for game updates. Use the hashtag #nmhss to share your own comments.

Findlay off the field in a 56-27 win, doesn't hurt.

"We're definitely excited about it," said senior quarterback Tyler Wolf of the challenge. "And we're glad it'll be at our place. It's going to be a really good game with a lot of excitement. We're looking forward to having a great atmosphere."

Ross (3-2, 1-1) is 2-0 at home this season, winning two lop-sided games against Sandusky (52-18) in Week 1 and Lima Senior (48-0) this past week.

"We've played two solid games at home thus far," Kidwell said. "But we also aren't naive to the fact those opponents weren't nearly to the caliber of Central. With that said, though, I think it's tough to win on the road in this league. It kind of held true last year, and it's held true this year too."

Road teams were a combined 14-15 in the TRAC's first season. TCC was 1-3, as was Ross. Findlay and Whitmer were the only unbeaten road teams in league play, going 4-0 and 3-0, respectively.

"We'll probably have to play a near perfect football game, and get a little help from Cen-

See ROSS, page 2B

ROSS

Continued from Page 1B

tral to be in it at the end of the night," Kidwell said. "Watching film, there's no weakness I can find on this team. We're just going to have to do what we're going to try to do."

In last week's win against the Spartans, the Little Giants ran the ball 47 times for 231 yards, attempting only seven passes. A new wrinkle Kidwell said his team will stick with as it best utilizes his personnel and talent.

"I think our kids are excited about the little offensive change we made," he said. "It's a little more physical. We got a boat-load of running backs and a bunch of tight end type of kids, we feel this gives us the best chance to win as a staff."

All that's been done is Kidwell has substituted two receivers for an extra tight end and running back.

Taking most of the carries away from main tailback Jabree Lather was senior Mike Egbert. Egbert, who doubles as one of the team's middle linebackers, tallied two TDs on the ground, piling up 42 yards on eight attempts.

"It's been a great experience," Egbert said. "It's tough going both ways, but I love being able to run the ball more."

Lather rushed for 145 yards, while Wolf added 26. Wolf, known as a dual-threat quarterback, finished 3-of-6 passing for 66 yards and a score.

"At first, we didn't know what was going to happen with it," said Wolf of the switch to a run-dominate strategy. "But after last week, we saw it can be pretty successful. The receivers, obviously, weren't too excited about it at first, but they know our main goal is to win."

Wolf passed for 899 yards and ran for 521 more as a junior.

"I think Tyler can still be explosive in this offense, as he showed glimpses of last Friday,"

Kidwell said.

Offensive woes haven't be an issue in the first five weeks for TCC. The Irish have averaged 52.4 points a game, and feature some of the area's best skilled position players with quarterback DeShone Kizer and tailback Amir Edwards, highlighting the group.

Kizer, a 6-foot-4, 210-pound junior reportedly being recruited by several Division I colleges, showed his passing potential in Week 4, throwing for 267 yards and five TDs in TCC's 56-19 win over Clay.

"He just does enough," said Kidwell of Kizer. "If asked to manage the game and hand the ball off 60 some times, he'll do that. If he's asked to make plays, he'll make plays."

Edwards has rushed for 758 yards and 13 TDs, which included a 217-yard, four-touchdown effort a week ago in the win over the Trojans where the Irish ran 67 times for 531 yards.

"Amir is a very, very good running back," Kidwell said. "If Central can run the ball, they'll run it over 60 times in a game and try to run it down your throat."

Two humbling losses in back-to-back weeks had left Ross a bit deflated. But according to Egbert, the mood has drastically changed.

"Even last week during practice it happenend," Egbert said. "We were doing some tackling drills and it really seemed to get the spirits up. And this past week has really boosted the team morale big time."

The Irish beat Ross 28-14 a year ago, but the Little Giants lead the all-time series 12-8. Ross was the only team to top TCC in 2005, the year the Irish won the state championship.

"I think our kids are focused and excited about the challenge," Kidwell said. "It's definitely a big challenge. (The Irish) are as good as advertised, we'll have our hands full."

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Fremont Ross' Tyler Wolf is chased by the Toledo Central Catholic defense during the second half Friday. JONATHON BIRD/NEWS-MESSENGER

Ross no match for Central Catholic

By Kevin Shields
Sports writer

FREMONT — Each down has been kind to Toledo Central Catholic's high-powered offense this season.

But Friday evening on Harmon Field at Don Paul Stadium, fourth down was the Fighting Irish's best friend.

Central converted three fourth-and-long plays — all passes — inside Ross' 30-yard-line on its first three possessions and turned each one into a touchdown two to three plays later as the Irish, the

state's top-ranked team in Division II, tallied 28 unanswered points in the opening half en route to handing the Little Giants a 42-21 Three Rivers Athletic Conference defeat.

"Fourth downs were huge tonight," Ross coach Derek Kidwell said. "Our defense battled their butts off for three downs and then on fourth down (the Irish) would get a conversion. That's frustrating and demoralizing."

Central (6-0, 3-0) started the game's opening drive at its own 38 and methodically ran and passed its way into Ross

(3-3, 1-2) territory, before it stalled at the 25. Facing a fourth-and-7, Irish quarterback DeShone Kizer found Cedric Gray for a 16-yard pickup. A play later, Paul Moses' 9-yard scoring run gave Central an early 7-0 lead after Jacob Suder's extra point.

After a three-and-out by the Little Giants, the Irish once again drove down to the Ross 25, using a combination of runs and quick pass plays. This time on a fourth-and-6, Kizer hit Jermiah Braswell

See ROSS, page 2B

ROSS

Continued from Page 1B

just on the other side of the sticks for a 7-yard conversion. Three rushing plays by Moses made up the final 18 yards, ending in his 2-yard TD rush with 45 seconds remaining in the first quarter.

"That was great execution where we ran some nice quick and crisp routes," Irish coach Greg Dempsey said of the fourth-down success. "And it was good passing and timing by Kizer and the guys he was throwing to."

Moses totaled all 68 of his yards in the opening 12 minutes. In the second quarter he handed off the tailback duties to Amir Edwards, who scored on 15-yard sweep play up the middle with 10:03 left until halftime to make it 21-0 Irish. Edwards' run came two plays after Ross thought it had Central stopped on fourth-and-8 at the 27, only to have the drive continue after a roughing the passer call.

Edwards' 25-yard scoring run two drives later gave the Irish a 28-0 halftime lead. He finished with 119 yards on 20 carries, adding a third-quarter score.

"We knew we'd have to play close to a perfect game and get help from them, but we didn't get any help from them," Kidwell said. "Whereas we turned the ball over too many times. We didn't get a fourth down when we went for it and we fumbled the ball a few times. You can't do that against a state-ranked opponent."

Ross didn't get a first down until the final play of the first quarter, when Tyler Wolf scrambled for a 12-yard gain. Mike Egbert's fumble to open the second quarter gave the ball right back to the Irish in Little Giants' territory.

Central outgained Ross 219-57 for the half.

"There's a lot of respect for Fremont," Dempsey said when asked if his team was focused coming in after a big 56-27 win over pre-season TRAC favorite, Findlay, a week earlier. "The kids have played at the stadium before and they've seen how important football is here. We played them last year and it was kind of like, we got them in a trap game coming off our big loss to Findlay.

"We reminded the kids that, 'hey, you have big goals and the last time we played Fremont and were ranked No. 1, we lost.' And that was big on our kid's minds."

The Irish knew Ross would

challenge them with the run after the Little Giants passed only seven times in Week 5's 48-0 win over Lima Senior. In the first 24 minutes, Ross threw a single pass that went for an interception.

"That was huge," Dempsey said of the first-half defensive effort. "We knew (Ross) would come out and challenge our manhood. After what we saw last week on film, knowing that's the background from when Derek (Kidwell) was a player and his dad (Ross assistant coach Dick Kidwell) was back at Fostoria, they definitely have the tight ends and running backs to run it. We were just able to not let them string plays together."

Wolf's 70-yard scoring run on the second play of the third quarter finally got Ross on the board.

Trailing 28-7, finally feeling a little momentum, the Little Giants' defense then forced the Irish to go three-and-out. The punt took a favorable bounce and gave Ross great field position at the Central 44.

But on the first play from scrimmage, Jabree Lather was stripped of the ball. Central safety Joseph Solomon picked up the ball on a hop, and sprinted 60 yards for a TD to make it 35-7.

Mike Egbert's 6-yard run in the fourth quarter and Wolf's 57-yard TD throw to Oakley Contreras completed Ross' scoring.

Wolf led all Ross rushers with 110 yards on 13 rushes. Lather had 50 yards on 15 carries and Egbert 17 on three. Wolf was 3-of-6 passing for 90 yards. Kizer was 12-of-20 for 89 yards for Central.

"Hats off to them (the Irish), their football players are better than our football players right now," Kidwell said. "We battled. I loved our kids' effort. We didn't quit and we battled to the end. It's just their Jimmies are better than our Joes right now."

Ross, 1-2 in the TRAC for the second straight year, will look to rebound Friday when it faces St. Francis de Sales at the Glass Bowl on the campus of the University of Toledo.

"I think there's a lot of fight left in this group," Kidwell said. "Physically, I don't think we were dominated. But from a mental and execution standpoint we just got to get better."

"We have four tough opponents remaining, but if we execute things properly, we can beat all four of those opponents."

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Toledo Central Catholic 42, Fremont Ross 21

| | | | | | |
|------------------|----|----|----|----|------|
| Central Catholic | 14 | 14 | 14 | 0 | — 42 |
| Fremont Ross | 0 | 0 | 7 | 14 | — 21 |

Scoring Summary

First Quarter

CC — Paul Moses 5 run (Jacob Suder kick)
7:35CC — Moses 2 run (Suder kick) :45

Second Quarter

CC — Amir Edwards 15 run (Suder kick)
10:03CC — Edwards 25 run (Suder kick) 1:28

Third Quarter

R — Tyler Wolf 70 run (Jake Relford kick)
11:04CC — Edwards 4 run (Suder kick)
5:22CC — Joseph Solomon 60 fumble return
(Suder kick) 1:28

Fourth Quarter

R — Mike Egbert 6 run (Relford kick) 10:39R
— Oakley Contreras 57 pass from Wolf
(Relford kick) 1:30

| | C | F |
|-----------------|---------|--------|
| Rushes-yards | 46-202 | 33-183 |
| Comp-Att-Int | 12-21-0 | 3-6-1 |
| Passing yards | 89 | 90 |
| Fumbles-lost | 1-0 | 2-1 |
| Penalties-yards | 6-43 | 6-45 |

RUSHING: C—Campbell 1-4, Edwards 20-119,
Fann II 2-0, Gray Jr. 3-8, Kizer 2-1, Moses III
11-68, Weiland 4-8, F—Egbert 3-17, Lather
15-50, Trautwein 1-5, Wolf 13-110.

PASSING: C—Kizer 12-20-0-89, Sullivan 0-
1—, F—Wolf 3-6-1-90.

RECEIVING: C—Anderson 1-8, Braswell 1-7,
Gray Jr. 1-16, Towbridge 2-24, Weiland 7-34,
F—Contreras 1-57, Streater 1-26, Trautwein
1-7.

Ross in must-win game at St. John's

By Kevin Shields

Sports writer

FREMONT — Off to a 1-2 start in the Three Rivers Athletic Conference for the second straight year, Ross coach Derek Kidwell knows very well what kind of situation his team faces as it heads to University of Toledo's Glass Bowl Friday to take on St. Francis de Sales.

"Is it a winnable game? Absolutely," Kidwell said. "Is it a must win game? Absolutely."

"We need to win as many football games as we have left if we want to be considered the good football team that we thought we were at one point."

Four weeks ago, the Little Giants (3-3, 1-2) started the 2012 season 2-0. Spirits were up. Talks of playoffs and competing for a league title filled the town.

Since then, it's been a struggle. Injuries piled up and forced changes on both sides of the ball, and with the changes came some poor play and some humbling defeats.

The Little Giants rebounded from back-to-back losses with a 48-0 drubbing of Lima Senior in Week 5, but again, find themselves coming into Week 7 on the heels of defeat after losing to Toledo Central Catholic, the No. 1



Ross running back Michael Egbert finds space last week against Toledo Central Catholic. JONATHON BIRD/NEWS-MESSANGER

ranked team in Division II, this past Friday 42-21.

"Right now, we just need to try to win two football games in a row," Kidwell said. "Some of our kid's goals are still attainable. If they come out and play well, maybe they'll be able to extend their season yet."

Ross currently sits 13th in the Division II, Region 6 playoff points. Victories by Sandusky (2-4) and Brecksville-Broadview Heights (3-3) the past two weeks have given the Little Giants much needed help. Both were 0-3 at one point.

Last Friday's outcome left Cen-

tral Catholic (6-0, 3-0) and Whitmer (6-0, 3-0), Ross' next opponent, tied atop the TRAC standings. Findlay (5-1, 2-1) and St. John's (2-4, 2-1) are both a game back, while the Little Giants are tied with Clay (3-3, 1-2) for fifth. St. Francis (1-5, 0-3) and Lima Senior (0-6, 0-3) are winless in the league.

The Knights opened 2012 with a 30-27 victory over Sylvania Southview, but are 0-5 since. Their offense has averaged 23 points per game, while their defense has surrendered 39.3.

"When you watch film, you see a lot of progression from week to week," said Kidwell of St. Francis. "To go to Findlay and put up 42 points, says a lot."

New St. Francis coach, Chris Heddon, a former offensive assistant at the University of Toledo for seven years (2001-2008) and recently at Akron (2009), has implemented the spread offense.

Junior quarterback David Nees has thrown for 1,030 yards and 10 TDs for the Knights. His top receiver, junior Andrew Bonfiglio caught 12 balls for 195 yards and three scores in St. Francis' 61-42 loss to Findlay, in which Nees was 26-of-36 for 371 yards.

See ROSS, page 2B

ROSS

Continued from Page 1B

On the ground, the Knights amassed 200 yards against the Trojans led by senior Michael Wagner's 133 yards on 25 carries.

In previous seasons under the guidance of legendary coach Dick Cromwell, the Knights were a run-dominate squad with the quarterback under center and a fullback or two in the backfield, as well as a tight end or two.

Heddon's offense features multiple formations, with lot of motion and shifting, which includes sometimes two tight ends and double wings.

It's an offense that is sure to test a Ross defense that has struggled the past four weeks, giving up 31.7 points per contest. The Irish passed for 89 yards against the Little Giants, but ran for 202, out-gaining Ross 219-57 in the first half.

"Effort was outstanding," Kidwell said. "Offensive execution

lacked in the first half, so that forced our defense to stay on the field way too much."

Injuries to the Starks' twins in the secondary has forced multiple guys to see time at corner. A position Kidwell says needs to improve.

"It's been a revolving door back there," he said. "We have no consistency. The corners haven't played bad, but there haven't been any outstanding plays or splash plays."

Jalen Slick's play has stuck out however.

"He's played better each and every week at free safety," said Kidwell of Slick, a 5-foot-11, 155-pound sophomore. "He was in on about a total of 18 or 19 tackles last week when you combine first hits and assists. He's making the plays he needs to make."

The Little Giants offense ran for 183 yards against Central Catholic. Numbers, Kidwell says, need to go up with their new run-based look.

"I don't know if we're forcing,

as much as we're not just not running the ball exactly where it's suppose to be ran," said Kidwell asked if his team is struggling with being patient after running more of a spread offense. "Our offensive line is playing pretty well, all things considered. We just need to get four yards and not 40 on each play. Sometimes our kids are trying too hard to make the extraordinary play, instead of the average play that moves the chains and controls the clock for us."

Ross trails the all-time series with St. Francis 3-5-1. The Little Giants won last year's battle 35-0.

"We still got a lot of room for improvement and hopefully we keep improving," Kidwell said. "But if we get the effort we got the effort we got this past Friday night (Central Catholic game), this Friday, I feel pretty confident that at the end of the night we'll have a chance to win the football game."

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DESALES
FREMONT ROSS

24
13

Three Rivers Athletic Conference

Turnovers doom the Little Giants

By Kevin Shields

Sports writer

TOLEDO — One play summed up what kind of Friday night it was Ross at the Glass Bowl.

Leading by six in the third quarter, just after his defense forced a punt in its own territory, Little Giants quarterback Tyler Wolf muffed a punt near the Ross 15 yard line. The ball bounced off Wolf, then proceeded to skip all the way to the back left corner of the end zone where St. Francis' Chris Gill fell on it for a go-ahead score.

It was the second of six Ross turnovers for the game and one of five in the second half. That play and many more doomed the Little Giants in a 24-13 Three Rivers Athletic Conference contest loss to the Knights on a rain-filled night on the campus of the University of Toledo.

"You don't deserve to win games like that," said Ross coach Derek Kidwell in a brief statement afterwards. "Special teams cost us tonight."

"I thought we had a good game plan. We didn't come out and execute."

The Little Giants (3-4, 1-3 TRAC) turned the ball over on downs twice in the third quarter, both times deep in Knights' territory. Another special teams mistake, a fumble on a kickoff, cost them what would have been great field position at the St. Francis 35 yard-line.

David Nees' 25-yard touchdown pass to Andrew Bonfiglio on the play prior to the fumble gave the Knights (2-5, 1-3 TRAC) a 21-13 lead with 9:39 remaining.

Nees and Bonfiglio, playing in a fast-paced no huddle offense installed by new St. Francis coach Chris Heddon, gave the Ross secondary fits throughout. Nees finished 19-of-39 for 201 yards. Bonfiglio, his top target, caught 11 balls, including both of Nees' touchdown passes, for 146 yards, 99 of which came in the opening half.

The Knights added another 180 yards on the ground, most which came from Michael Wagner, who ran for 119 yards on 25 attempts.

See ROSS, page 2B

ROSS

Continued from Page 1B

"Unfortunately, I don't think we performed as well as we could have offensively with the rain and everything," Heddon said. "I give Fremont a lot of credit. (Ross) did a nice job ... played hard and it was a battle. We just happened to come up on the positive side tonight."

But that was the second half.

Ross looked on its way to a good night early when Wolf gave the Little Giants the lead 1:22 in. Wolf made a nice play-action fake, kept the ball, then outran the defense down the home sideline for a 68-yard score. Jake Relford's extra point made it 7-0.

"I don't know what it is about the first play and runs for a touchdown," said Heddon of his team's early deficit. "We gave one up on the first play last week (a 61-42 loss at Findlay)."

The Knights, though, were quick to answer back. Nees' 38-yard strike to a wide-open Bonfiglio concluded a 10-play, 77-yard drive to tie it back up at 7-all. Bonfiglio caught three balls for 60 yards during the possession.

St. Francis dominated the first half time of possession. Nees threw for 157 yards in the opening half, but three of the Knights drives stalled deep on the Little Giants' side of the field. All three times, the St. Francis turned to kick Drew Stark. Stark missed field goals of 27, 19 and 32 yards.

With 2:41 left in the half, the Ross offense finally got the ball moving after three straight three-and-outs. Jabree Lather ran for 32 yards and Wolf added 16 of what was a 10-play, 80-yard drive. Jacob Luc made a key fourth-and-8 conversion with four seconds remaining from the Knights' 32,

running to the 14 where a late hit brought the ball to the seven. A play later, Wolf found Dylan Jagodzinski for a 7-yard scoring strike to give Ross a 13-7 halftime edge.

"I knew Fremont was going to come out in the second half and play hard," Heddon said. "I told the guys there's going to be a big play, and obviously, the fumble on the punt return was the big play that I think gave us the momentum."

St. Francis' victory snapped a five-game losing streak. The Knights topped Sylvania Southview in Week 1, then ran into a tough stretch on their schedule, which included games with Whitmer and Findlay.

"When you're in this conference, every week is a battle," Heddon said. "And our kids have been battling. We've been on the short end for five straight weeks, and this something that is to (the players') credit because they've come out with a positive attitude and practice hard. I told them, 'we're going to get when of these, if you keep it,' and we did it tonight."

Ross was penalized in the game 12 times for 122 yards.

Wolf ran the ball nine times for 98 yards and a score. He was 4-of-15 in the air for 30 yards and a TD.

Lather ran 15 times for 66 yards, Ben Root ran four times for 49.

Facing, what Kidwell called "a must-win" situation, the Little Giants will most likely have to win-out to continue their season past Week 10. Ross will host Whitmer next week then host Clay the week after that prior to finishing the year at Findlay.

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St. Francis De Sales 24, Fremont Ross 13

| | | | | | |
|--------------|---|---|---|-----|----|
| Fremont Ross | 7 | 6 | 0 | 0— | 13 |
| De Sales | 7 | 0 | 7 | 10— | 24 |

Scoring Summary

First Quarter

R — Tyler Wolf 68 run (Jake Relford kick)
10:38.SF — Andrew Bonfiglio 38 pass from
David Nees (Drew Stark kick) 7:52.

Second Quarter

R — Dylan Jagodzinski 7 pass from Wolf (PAT
missed) 0:00.

Third Quarter

SF — Chris Gill fumble recovery in end zone
(Stark kick) 8:24.

Fourth Quarter

SF — Bonfiglio 25 pass from Nees (Stark kick)
9:39.SF — Stark 20 field goal 4:28.

| | F | S |
|-----------------|----------|----------|
| Rushes-yards | 36-256 | 42-180 |
| Comp-Att-Int | 4-15-2 | 19-39-0 |
| Passing yards | 30 | 201 |
| Fumbles-lost | 2-2 | 1-1 |
| Penalties-yards | 12-122 | 9-62 |

RUSHING: F—Egbert 5-34, Lather 15-66, Luc
2-11, Root 3-49, Wolf 9-98, S—Johnson 12-
55, Nees 5-6, Wagner 25-119.

PASSING: F—Wolf 4-15-2-30, S—Nees 19-39-
0-201.

RECEIVING: F—Jagodzinski 2-12, Luc 1-3,
Slick 1-15, S—Bonfiglio 11-146, Johnson 4-
23, Thebes 4-32.

It's time to step up



Fremont Ross quarterback Tyler Wolf finds running room earlier this season against Toledo St. John's. The Little Giants face a big challenge this week against Whitmer, which hasn't lost in its last 25 regular season games. JONATHON BIRD/NEWS-MESSENGER

Ross needs it's best effort against state power Whitmer

By Kevin Shields
Sports writer

FREMONT — Respect is a powerful thing.

Everyone wants it. Especially when one thinks it isn't getting enough.

Take Ross' Week 8 Three Rivers Athletic Conference opponent, the Whitmer Panthers, for instance. After losing four first-team all-state players, another third-teamer, their starting quarterback and the coach from a Division I state semifinal run, the Panthers weren't suppose to be 7-0 at this point. But they are.

Whitmer also wasn't suppose to be this dominate, but they have been. The Panthers (7-0, 4-0) are winning games by an average margin of 33.4 points a game, including an impressive 36.2 margin in four TRAC contests. That includes a 49-6 victory over St. John's Jesuit and a 31-point win

over Findlay (56-25) — the supposed top team in the conference according to the preseason poll — this past week.

The Little Giants (3-4, 1-3) are next on the Panthers' slate. The two teams will do battle Friday on Harmon Field at Don Paul Stadium.

"We had some inklings that this could be a really good football team," said first-year Whitmer head coach Jerry Bell, a long-time Panthers' assistant. "Obviously, we had some pieces of the puzzle we had to put together, but we're very thankful for our start."

Whitmer was slated third in the preseason TRAC poll.

"Absolutely," said Bell, asked if his team has a chip on its shoulder. "I think our senior class had a big-time chip on their shoulder. They wanted to try and prove to people, whether it be in the media or people in our community, that they were still going to be a dominate

football team."

Ross coach Derek Kidwell is a believer.

"They're good," Kidwell said. "They're as good as they've ever been. They don't do a whole lot offensively, but what they do, they do extremely well. And defensively they got two of the best defensive tackles — Marquise Moore (6-1, 285-pound senior) and Joenathan Mays (5-9, 265-pound senior) — that we've seen in a long time."

The Panthers, ranked fifth in the Division I state poll, have reeled off 25 consecutive regular-season victories, going 32-3 since the beginning of 2010. Their last regular-season loss came at Don Paul Stadium in Week 2 of the 2010 season when Ross topped them 22-16.

"I reminded our kids on Monday that we don't have that good of a record going down to Fremont," Bell said. "And coach Kidwell will have his team ready.

"We know there is a rivalry here. It's always been that way, going back to when I played (at Whitmer) in the 1990s. Coach (Ken) Winters on our staff is a Ross graduate and he's even clued them in about the rivalry and what it means to the kids at Ross."

Whitmer is 3-7 in its last 10 trips to Ross. Overall, the two squads have split their last 10 meetings going back to the 2000 season.

» **HOLLEY:** Whitmer senior quarterback Nick Holley (6-foot, 175) doesn't like the limelight.

"He's not one that likes to get on a radio station or have the media talk to him," said Bell of his signal caller.

Bell described him as "quiet and reserved." His play on the other hand, has been anything but.

In last week's win over Findlay, Holley ran for 324 yards on 16

See ROSS, page 4B

ROSS

Continued from Page 1B

carries, scoring four times on runs of 22, 80, 35 and six yards. He added 121 yards and a TD through the air, while adding an interception on defense, out-leaping a 6-7 receiver, to take away a Trojans' score in the end zone.

"He's the biggest individual threat we've seen since the Pickerington North running back (Godwin Igwebuike)," Kidwell said. "He's a special player."

Holley leads the Panthers rushing attack (117 carries, 1,100 yards, 13 TDs), and is 54-of-87 passing for 711 yards and 11 more scores. Whitmer's offense averages 41.1 points a game.

"He leads by example,"

Bell said. "He's really close to his teammates and they kind of gel around him."

Around Holley are tailbacks Me'Gail Frisch and Tre Sterritt. His top receiver is 6-4, 190-pound junior Christopher Boykin.

Ross' defense is allowing 28.2 points an outing. On offense, it's averaging 27.5 points.

» TURNOVER MARGIN: With the 6-2 difference in turnovers against St. Francis (a 24-13), Ross' season turnover margin climbed to a season-high minus-13. That's included 12 interceptions, eight fumbles and 11 turnovers on downs.

On the flip side, the Little Giants' defense has forced five interceptions, three fumbles and 10 turnovers on downs.

"You can't expect to have a winning season doing that," Kidwell said. "We're just finding ways to

keep turning the ball over. Until we stop getting in the way of ourself, we're not going to win games."

There have been only eight seasons in recorded Ross history where a Little Giants team has thrown more interceptions.

» DEFENSE: Ross' defense was on the field for 88 total plays a week ago against the Knights, yet it held St. Francis to 381 total yards.

"You can't ask your defense to be out there that much and not give up anything," Kidwell said. "Especially, in the first half, our defense battled and battled. Then in the second half, we couldn't get off the field, mostly because we couldn't stay on the field offensively."

Bell was impressed with Ross' quickness on defense. He was also quick to point out Kole Amor on the de-

fensive line.

"He could potentially be one of the better defensive linemen we see," said Bell of the 5-10, 190-pound junior. "He's quick to get off the ball."

» INJURIES: The Little Giants continue to pile up the injuries. This past Friday, Tyler Wolf was forced to play quarterback, defensive back, punt returner, punter and do kickoffs.

"I know our kids are going to play hard," Kidwell said. "We're running into some more injury issues, but we'll keep plugging away and play who we have. Effort-wise, our kids are giving us effort. It's not a matter of kids cutting on us on Friday nights. They're still busting their butt and playing hard."

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Whitmer shows strength

Ross surprises Panthers with early scores, but can't hold lead

By Kevin Shields
Sports writer

FREMONT — Whitmer has been having itself a Holley, jolly time this fall.

But senior quarterback Nick Holley has had few bigger displays with his arm than he did Friday on Harmon Field at Don Paul Stadium.

Holley, a 6-foot, 175-pounder who has rushed for more than 1,200 yards on the year, threw for 237 yards and five scores as the Panthers scored 51 straight points, including 34 in the second quarter, to hand Ross a 51-14 Three Rivers Athletic Conference defeat.

After the Little Giants (3-5, 1-4) took a 14-0 lead just 2:26 in, via scoring passes of 75 and 19 yards from Tyler Wolf to Jacob Luc, Holley and the Panthers shook off the dust and flexed the muscles that have made them the fifth-ranked team in Division I.

"Our kids gave us everything, especially in the first quarter," Ross coach Derek Kidwell said. "They came out ready to play and I thought they paid attention to details.

"(Whitmer) is just better than us. They found a weakness on us, which is our secondary right now, and they exploited it."

Having been a run-dominant offense the past three weeks, the Little Giants surprised many with their early assault through the air. On the first play from scrimmage, Wolf had Oakley Contreras wide open down the visiting sideline, but Contreras was unable to haul it in. So, Wolf tried again, and this time went the opposite way to Luc, who brought the ball in around midfield before outracing the Whitmer secondary to the end zone.

"They're better than we are inside the tackles," Kidwell said. "They got two good defensive tackles and a good core linebacker group. We knew we wouldn't be able to line up like we had been the past couple weeks and run it down their



Ross' Jacob Luc returns a second quarter kickoff against Toledo Whitmer. DOUG HISE/NEWS-MESSANGER CORRESPONDENT

throat, because we're not as strong as they are. So we decided to spread it out and take advantage of Tyler's experience."

The surprises continued as Ross proceeded to execute an

onside kick, setting up the next score that ended a quick 5-play drive.

Whitmer had given up more than seven points in a game once all season — Week 7's 56-25 win over Findlay. It had

never trailed by more than a score all season.

"Obviously, we weren't prepared for the quick start, and being down 14-0," Whitmer

See ROSS, page 2B

ROSS

Continued from Page 1B

coach Jerry Bell said. "But what that shows, is that there is no panic on our team whatsoever. And our coaches did a great job of adjusting to their fade."

"Coach Kidwell sent the message right away that he wasn't going to hold back and I give them a lot of credit."

Whitmer drove the field for a 26-yard Michael Baldwin field goal on its first drive. The Panthers' defense then forced the Little Giants to turn the ball over downs, after a blown fake punt at the Ross 44 yard-line. Four plays later, Holley hit his running back Tre Sterritt for a 28-yard TD toss on the first play of the second quarter.

Following another stop on defense, Sterritt gave Whitmer the lead for good with a 43-yard scoring run, after Ross defenders failed to wrap him up after an initial stop.

The Panthers then executed their own onside kick, setting up Holley's 47 yard scoring pass to his twin brother, Nate Holley. The two hooked up for another score — a 26-yard toss — with 18 seconds left in the opening half that give Whitmer a 37-14 advantage at halftime.

Holley added a 19-yard touchdown pass to Christopher Boykin. He finished his efforts in the third quarter when he found Me-Gail Frisch for 33-yard scoring pass.

"We wanted to control the run all night, and we controlled the quarterback running the ball," Kidwell said. "But (Nick Holley) killed us with his arm. I think he's the best football player in our league right now."

Holley added 102 yards on the ground on 16 carries. Sterritt had 96 yards on 10 carries and added two scores.

Nate Holley had three catch-

es for 83 yards for the Panthers, Boykin had five for 59 yards.

"We knew that the passing game was going to be there and that (Ross) would load up the box," Bell said. "Hats off to (the Little Giants) they tried to shut down the run game and we were able to take advantage of the pass game. Nick did a great job of reading the field."

Wolf, battered by injury throughout the game, passed for 202 yards on 10-of-19 passing for Ross. Luc finished with three grabs for 122 yards, while Contreras chipped in five for 68. It was Wolf's first 200-yard passing game since he threw for 248 yards in Week 2's 32-29 win at Brecksville-Broadview Heights.

"He played well until he got dinged up," said Kidwell of his senior QB. "When he got dinged up, he tried to force some things and got dinged up more."

"The kid is a competitor. He kept battling."

Ross was hurt again by turnovers, throwing four interceptions and fumbling the ball away three times.

"We weren't holding anything back," Kidwell said. "We were going to try and be aggressive because we knew we were undermanned on that level."

The Little Giants, losers of five of their last six games, will host Clay next Friday, before finishing the year at Findlay.

"I like our kids, they're giving us effort," Kidwell said. "We're not giving up on them and they better not give up on us because we're here to teach them things about life and not just about winning a football game. Sometimes things in life aren't easy and your true character is shown when you have to face adversity. We want to see how these young men respond."

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Whitmer 51, Fremont Ross 14

| | | | | |
|--------------|----|----|---|-------|
| Whitmer | 3 | 34 | 7 | 7— 51 |
| Fremont Ross | 14 | 0 | 0 | 0— 14 |

Scoring Summary

First Quarter

R — Jacob Luc 75 pass from Tyler Wolf (Jake Relford kick) 11:24R — Luc 19 pass from Wolf (Relford kick) 9:24W — Michael Baldwin 26 field goal 5:01

Second Quarter

W — Tre Sterritt 28 pass from Nick Holley (Baldwin kick) 11:51W — Sterritt 43 rush (Baldwin kick) 7:27W — Nate Holley 47 pass from Nick Holley (Baldwin kick) 7:17W — Christopher Boykin 19 pass from Nick Holley (PAT missed)W — Nate Holley 26 pass from Nick Holley (Baldwin kick) 0:18

Third Quarter

W — Me'Gail Frisch 33 pass from Nick Holley (Baldwin kick)

Fourth Quarter

W — Sterritt 1 run (Baldwin kick) 11:39

| | W | F |
|-----------------|----------|----------|
| Rushes-yards | 39-245 | 27-33 |
| Comp-Att-Int | 17-22-1 | 10-24-4 |
| Passing yards | 237 | 235 |
| Fumbles-lost | 4-4 | 5-3 |
| Penalties-yards | 6-35 | 11-54 |

RUSHING: W—Frisch 8-41, Holley 16-102, Winzeler 1-3, F—Daniels 11-46, Lather 2-1, Root 2-11, Trautwein 1-1, Wolf 8-8.

PASSING: W—Holley 17-22-1-237, F—Slick 0-5-1-0, Wolf 10-19-3-202.

RECEIVING: W—Bell 3-15, Bodeman 2-11, Boykin 5-59, Frisch 2-33, Holley 3-83, Sterritt 2-39, F—Contreras 5-68, Luc 3-122.

Amor's motor is always on

By Kevin Shields
Sports writer

FREMONT — Kole Amor is a whistle-to-whistle kind of guy.

At 5-foot-11, 190 pounds, he's not the biggest or most athletic player on the Ross roster, but the junior's work ethic on and off the field is second to none. And many, outside his own coaching staff are taking notice.

"He gave us fits, especially early on," Whitmer coach Jerry Bell said of Amor after the Panthers' 51-14 win Friday night over the Little Giants.

Ross (3-5, 1-4) hosts Oregon Clay (3-5, 1-4) in a Three Rivers Athletic Conference contest on Friday. The Little Giants have lost three straight games for the fifth time since 2004 and the third time in the past four seasons.

"We're ready to play and we're trying our hardest, things just aren't going the way we want them

to go," said Amor of the recent defeats. "We got a lot of young players playing right now with inexperience. There's errors that have been made. But we still feel good about ourselves.

"This is a tough league. We have to play our butts off each play. But we'll get better if we just keep grinding away."

Through thick and thin, good times and bad, Amor has been a constant for Ross coach Derek Kidwell.

"He just gives you everything," Kidwell said. "He brings us intensity and tenacity. He's one of our hardest workers and vocal leaders. I think that's why he was voted a captain as a junior. It was a well-deserved title for him."

Amor has a motor that has allowed him to play against linemen nearly twice his size, and yet be a pest in the offensive backfield from his defensive end spot.

"He's played well all year," Kidwell said. "He always grades out

high and doesn't make many mistakes. And he's a strong kid that plays with a heart and passion. Anytime you do that, good things are going to happen for you."

Amor's got the speed and quickness to beat his blocker to the outside. He's also got the strength to drive through blocks and make open-field stops on bigger players.

"Every play, just go all out and go as hard as I can," Amor said of his mental approach. "You got to be aggressive and play mean."

He's never known another way to play. As a sophomore, Amor started at nose tackle for Ross.

"I'm not the biggest guy in the world," he said. "Playing defensive line against some these guys, all I got going for me is speed."

Depth has been a factor for the Little Giants all season, even going back to the preseason. But it continues to take hits each week.

See AMOR, page 5B



Kole Amor, right, helps make a tackle Sept. 28 against Toledo Central Catholic. The junior captain is all over the field for the Fremont Ross defense. JONATHON BIRD/NEWS-MESSANGER

Amor

Continued from Page 1B

"We're playing against one, two, three different guys and we still have the same guys in," Amor said. "It's hard. Still, we have a bunch of young kids that have stepped up. Jalen Slick is playing safety and Stefan Johnson is playing corner and it's their first year on varsity playing those spots. So, it's been a real eye-opener for them."

» **PASSING GAME:** Ross' passing game had been non-existent for three weeks before the Whitmer game. But against the Panthers, the Little Giants opened up the playbook and returned to the offense everyone saw for the first four weeks of the season.

"We'll do a little bit of both,"

said Kidwell asked if his team would throw the ball 24 times or more against the Eagles, like it did against the Panthers, or if it would return to the ground game it displayed in Weeks 5-7. "We're kind of banged up, so I don't think we can pound it as well as we wanted. And our receivers have proven a little bit in practice that they deserve to be on the field a little bit more, so we'll kind of do what we did early in the season."

Wolf passed for 202 yards on 10-of-19 passing, adding two touchdowns and three interceptions. "When he has protection and he has open receivers, he throws the ball well all the time," said Kidwell of Wolf's first 200-yard game since a 32-29 win over Brecksville-Broadview Heights in Week 2. "It's when protection breaks down and he tries to force things, when

IF YOU GO

OREGON CLAY (3-5, 1-4)
AT ROSS (3-5, 1-4)

» **When:** Friday, 7 p.m.

» **Radio:** WFRO Eagle 99.1 FM
» **Mobile/Web:** A live chat will be held at our website, www.thenews-messenger.com or you can follow @KShieldsNM on Twitter for game updates. Use the hashtag #nmhs to share your own comments.

things happen."

Kidwell said his receivers are working harder and earning their spots back. He wasn't pleased with their play in losses at Pickerington North and St. John's Jesuit.

"They weren't playing well and didn't deserve to be on the field," Kidwell said. "Then they started

practicing harder, made some plays and showed they deserved to be on the field, so we gave them another chance."

» **THE EAGLES:** Clay opened its season with a 42-21 win over Sylvania Northview, before dropping a tough 24-23 contest to a good Perryburg team in Week 2. It recovered to beat Toledo Waite 48-12, but like Ross, has struggled to a 1-4 TRAC record.

"They play extremely hard," said Kidwell of the Eagles. "They've moved the ball on everybody. They got a very good offensive team with some good speed. Their quarterback, at one time, was leading the league in passing, and may still be."

"Then defensively, they give you a lot of different looks and bounce around a lot."

Junior signal caller Josh Pen-

nington, who has thrown for more than 1,800 yards, spearheads the attack. Senior twins Damon (500-plus rushing yards) and Devin (300-plus receiving yards) Dominique are his top weapons. Kyle Row has 37 catches and 565 yards receiving, while Anthony Ramirez has 31 for 348.

Clay is averaging 26 points a game and giving up 33.3.

"It's certainly a game we're not taking for granted," Kidwell said. "It's a game we could win if we don't turn the ball over. We got to protect the football and make sure we make them have long drives, because with their offense, they can score a lot of points on a short field."

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FOOTBALL FRIDAY NIGHT



Fremont Ross' Ben Root carries the ball in the first half against Oregon Clay on Friday. JONATHON BIRD/NEWS-MESSENDER

Ross can't stop Eagles runners

By Kevin Shields
Sports writer

FREMONT — Oregon Clay left Ross seeing double Friday night.

Twins Damon and Devin Dominique combined to run for 256 yards and added five total touchdowns as the Eagles handed the Little Giants their fourth straight Three Rivers Athletic Conference defeat, 34-14, on a rainy and chilly night on Harmon Field at Don Paul Stadium.

Clay (4-5, 2-4 TRAC) ran for a total of 276 yards and forced Ross (3-6, 1-5 TRAC) into five turnovers, including a costly fumble in the final minute of the first half. The Little Giants gave the ball to Ben Root at their own 1 yard line. Root fumbled it away at the 5, setting up a quick 5-yard strike from Damon Dominique — one of his four rushing touchdowns — for a 20-7 halftime lead.

"That really set the tone going into halftime," said Eagles coach Mike Donnelly. "Then coming out of halftime, I thought our defense played very well at the beginning."

"With the weather like it was, it was important that we got that running game going," Donnelly added. "Both twins (Damon and Devin) did a nice job of running the ball hard. The offensive line got on people and with those two as talented as they are, as long as we stay engaged with defenders, they're going to make plays."

Damon finished with 170 yards on 22 carries, while Devin had 86 yards on 17.

OREGON CLAY 34
FREMONT ROSS 14

Three Rivers Athletic Conference

"I love running with my brother, it's great being twins and growing up together," Damon said. "It's a connection that no one else can have on the field. When you're a twin, you're together your whole life. It's just a great thing and I love that he's on the field with me."

Ross held Clay's duo in check early, forcing a quick three-and-out on the game's first possession.

The Little Giants nearly fumbled away a bad snap on a second-down play in Clay territory, but recovered it at the Eagles' 47. One play later, Tyler Wolf found a wide-open Oakley Contreras for 47-yard touchdown toss down the home sideline, as Ross led 7-0, 2:07 in after Jake Relford's extra point.

Momentum was on the Little Giants' side. Then suddenly it shifted. Three plays into the next drive, Damon Dominique took a pitch from Clay quarterback Josh Pennington and ran 66 yards down his sideline untouched to the end zone. The Eagles went for two and failed, leaving Ross with a 7-6 edge.

"We practiced against that all week," said Little Giants coach Derek Kidwell, of Clay's dive plays. "We knew what they were going to do. But when it comes

game time, we got individuals not doing what they're coached to do and (Clay) get a big play on us."

"Then we get down to their end, don't score. That really hurt."

Costly turnovers have been the Little Giants' Achilles heel all season, and again, giveaways cost Ross many opportunities at points. On the ensuing drive after Damon's run, Ross drove the ball to Clay's 15, taking it 59 yards in 11 plays, but they came up empty when Wolf threw three straight pass incompletions to turn the ball over on downs.

One possession later, Wolf was intercepted by the Eagles' Kyle Row, at Clay's 18.

Clay made sure it hurt. A long 18-play drive that took nearly eight minutes off the clock ended with a six-yard scoring toss from Pennington to Devin Dominique.

The Eagles' offense outgained the Little Giants 217-128 in the opening half, including 139 to 66 on the ground, where they dominated the time of possession.

"We kept the ball out of Tyler Wolf's hands, which was very needed," Donnelly said. "I was scared each time he went back to pass."

Ross' offense got deep in Clay territory again on the first drive of the second half, going 52 yards in seven plays. However, the drive stalled at the Eagles' 10 when Wolf was stopped short of the first down marker on a fourth-and-two call.

See ROSS, page 2B

ROSS

Continued from Page 1B

The defense proceeded to force a three-and-out to get the ball back on Clay's side at the 44. But on the first play of the drive, Logan Davies stepped in front of Wolf's pass and returned the interception to the Little Giants' 32.

"Same team that's been losing," Kidwell said. "Keep shooting ourselves in the foot. Can't stop the run. Can't get off the field. Can't get momentum."

"We got to keep fighting. At the same time, though, that's football. Everyone is going to give you their best shot. Clay came out ready to play and that's why they were victorious."

A three-yard run by Damon Dominique gave Clay a 26-7 edge with 4:21 left in the third.

Ross answered with a long 43-yard pass from Wolf to Chris Mack to cut the deficit to 26-14 less than two minutes later.

The Little Giants would touch the ball once in the final quarter as the Eagles executed 12 and 13-play possessions in the game's

final 14 minutes. The first, a 12-play, 70-yard drive ended in Damon Dominique's two-yard scoring run.

"The last couple weeks we didn't execute," Damon Dominique said. "And now look at us, we're 4-5 now. Now we're trying to be .500 when we should be in the playoffs."

Clay had lost three straight coming in to Whitmer (37-6), St. John's Jesuit (42-12) and Findlay (54-20). Meanwhile, the Little Giants find themselves in their first four-game skid since losing four in a row in Weeks 3-6 of the 2005 season. It's the third time it's happened under Kidwell.

Wolf finished 7-of-18 passing for 162 yards and two interceptions. He rushed for 47 yards on 12 carries, while Jabree Lather had 16 yards on seven.

Chris Mack led the receivers with two grabs for 79 yards.

Ross will finish its season next Friday when it visits its biggest league rival, Findlay.

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Oregon Clay 34, Fremont Ross 14

| | | | | | |
|--------------|---|----|---|----|----|
| Oregon Clay | 6 | 14 | 6 | 8— | 34 |
| Fremont Ross | 7 | 0 | 7 | 0— | 14 |

N

Scoring Summary

First Quarter

R — Oakley Contreras 47 pass from Tyler Wolf
(Jake Relford kick) 9:53C — Damon Dominique
66 run (2pt failed) 8:59

Second Quarter

C — Devin Dominique 6 pass from Josh
Pennington (Damon Dominique run) 4:34C —
Damon Dominique 5 run (2pt failed)

Third Quarter

C — Damon Dominique 3 run (2pt failed)
4:21R — Chris Mack 43 pass from Wolf
(Relford kick) 2:29

Fourth Quarter

C — Damon Dominique 2 run (Devin
Dominique pass from Pennington) 9:58

| | C | F |
|-----------------|--------|--------|
| Rushes-yards | 56-276 | 26-68 |
| Comp-Att-Int | 4-15- | 7-18-2 |
| Passing yards | 78 | 162 |
| Fumbles-lost | 1-0 | 4-1 |
| Penalties-yards | 3-20 | 5-37 |

RUSHING: C—Dominique 17-86, Dominique 22-170, Mildenberger 2-7, Pennington 12-32, Seymour 1—1, F—Daniels 1-0, Egbert 1-1, Lather 7-16, Luc 1-23, Root 2-8, Wolf 12-47.

PASSING: C—Pennington 4-15—78, F—Wolf 7-18-2-162.

RECEIVING: C—Jones 1-6, Row 2-65, F—Contreras 1-47, Egbert 1-21, Jagodzinski 1-10, Mack 2-79, Slick 1-5.

Ross still has lots to fight for Friday

By Kevin Shields

Sports writer

FREMONT — There'll be no playoffs for Ross this fall.

Mathematically eliminated according to unofficial tallies after a 34-14 loss to Oregon Clay on Friday, the Little Giants (3-6, 1-5) lost any hope of making a late postseason push. Ross' Friday opponent, the Findlay Trojans, on the other hand, are still kicking — currently 10th in the Division I, Region 2 standings — when it comes to playoff discussions. The Trojans (7-2, 4-2) — the Little Giants' chief rival in the Three Rivers Athletic Conference — would need a

IF YOU GO

ROSS (3-6, 1-5) AT FINDLAY (7-2, 4-2)

When: 7 p.m., Friday

Radio: WFRO Eagle 99.1 FM

Mobile/Web: A live chat will be held at our website, www.thenewsmessenger.com. Use the hashtag #nmhss on Twitter to share your comments.

win Friday, along with some outside help, to slip into one of the top eight spots. It's an outside chance at best.

See ROSS, page 2B

Ross

Continued from Page 1B

But if the Little Giants had it their way, all that talk would come to an abrupt end sometime around 10 p.m. on the FieldTurf of Findlay's Donnell Stadium.

"That's what we talked to our kids about on Monday, how we could dampen (Findlay's) chances of making the playoffs or knock them out of the playoffs," said Ross coach Derek Kidwell of Friday's TRAC contest, asked if this was his team's pseudo-playoff game. "They kind of did that to us last year, so we had the feeling."

Coming into last year's Week 10 contest, both the Trojans and Little Giants needed wins to make a Week 11 appearance. The teams combined for 81 points and 942 yards of offense, 520 of which came from Ross. But Findlay escaped Don Paul Stadium with a last-minute 42-39 victory.

"We like nothing better than to go over and play the complete game that we haven't played all year, and see where our chances lie in the fourth quarter," Kidwell said. "But that's easier said than done, because (Findlay) is probably one of the best offensive teams we've seen all season."

Findlay's spread offense has been putting up Xbox-type numbers this year, averaging 30.5 points a game — including four contests where the Trojans have eclipsed 60 points.

"They present a lot of challenges to a defense," Kidwell said. "You have to defend them sideline to sideline, yet keep enough guys in the box to defend against the run."

Trojans' tailback Vance Settimone rushed for a school-record 373 yards in a 62-34 victory last Friday over St. John's Jesuit. The senior has rushed for a record-breaking 1,682 yards this season.

Jabree Lither is the Little Giants' top rusher with 798 yards on 155 carries. Tyler Wolf has rushed for 567 yards on 100 attempts and is 65-of-140 through the air for 1,087 yards.

On offense, Findlay's attack is quarterback Paul Cosiano, who has thrown for 1,480 yards on 81-of-132 passing and 18 scores. Jimmy Orwick leads his receivers with 30 catches for 604 yards.

On defense, Findlay is giving up 27.7 points a game. Ross' defense, on the other hand, is surrendering 31.4.

"We haven't played well defensively in recent weeks, so that's a major concern of ours," Kidwell said. "Findlay's strength is our weakness right now. We'll have to have a good game plan and our kids will have to believe in themselves."

Ross has dropped four straight contests for the first time since 2005. It'll be trying to avoid its first five-game losing streak under Kidwell.

ROSS TURNOVER MARGIN: With a minus-four in the turnover department against Oregon Clay, Ross' season turnover margin dropped to minus-21.

"It's been frustrating and it's been disappointing," Kidwell said. "We've just happened not to play sound football down the stretch and it's cost us some games we should have won. Some of them, we were outmanned, but our kids still played hard. And that's all we want to see. We just want them to give us maximum effort and play with pride."

SENIORS: Friday's game will be the final game for a group of Ross seniors that has helped the Little Giants to a mark of 17-13 the past three years they were on the varsity team. That stretch included a 9-3 record and a Greater Buckeye Conference title and a playoff appearance in 2010.

"This group has contributed a lot to the program," Kidwell said. "Three of them played a lot and started on a playoff football team as sophomores. Then we went a different direction and got into a tougher league and we've felt that the past two seasons have been disappointing."

"Some decided to quit on us, but for those that have stuck it out, I got a lot of respect for them. It's not easy to show up when you're losing. But I think for those that have stuck it out, it'll make them better young men."

HIGH SCHOOL FOOTBALL

» **FINDLAY 48,**
FREMONT ROSS 13

Trojans trounce Little Giants

By Chris Graber

News-Messenger correspondent

FINDLAY — Following a 48-13 loss in Three Rivers Athletic Conference play at Findlay on Friday, Fremont Ross coach Derek Kidwell said he is glad Trojans running back Vance Settlemire is graduating.

The senior basically rewrote the Findlay record book this season, eclipsing more than 1,900 rushing yards with a 209-yard performance on 22 attempts against the Little Giants that included five rushing scores.

The Trojans "have an explosive offense that could have scored 70 points tonight," Kidwell said. "To come out of here and for them only scoring 48, defensively my kids fought hard."

"That is a very good 8-2 football team."

Settlemire opened the scoring for the contest at the 9:36 mark of the first quarter on a 13-yard run that capped off a five-play 86 yard drive and the Little Giants would only trail 7-0 after the opening period.

Settlemire "has set all of the rushing and scoring records for our school," Findlay coach Mark

See TROJANS, page 4B

Trojans

Continued from Page 2B

Ritzler said. "The Fremont game plan was to take the offense out of our hands and our kids hung tough, bent but didn't break."

It was in the second quarter that the Findlay offense started to get in sync. Settemire opened the quarter with a 24-yard touchdown at the 11:21 mark and quarterback Paul Cosiano added two scores

passing as Findlay would take a commanding 27-0 lead before a Ross score in the final two minutes of the period.

Little Giants running back Hunter Trautwein provided some daylight on a stormy, cold field with 1:20 remaining before half-time on a two-yard TD run. Following the score that capped a 14-play, 73-yard drive, Ross would trail 27-7 heading into the half.

The third quarter saw three rushing scores for Findlay from Settemire, while Ross found some

strength in its young backfield.

For part of the game plan, Kidwell said he went to the youth movement and Little Giants freshman running back Isaiah McDonald provided a spark.

McDonald contributed 102 yards on 12 attempts, which included a 66-yard cutback TD run at the 5:59 mark of the third quarter following a one-yard TD from Settemire.

"We are excited for the future of our program," Kidwell said. "We played hard against a very good football program."

Findlay 48, Fremont Ross 13

| | | | | | | |
|---------|---|----|----|---|---|----|
| Ross | 0 | 7 | 6 | 0 | — | 13 |
| Findlay | 7 | 20 | 21 | 0 | — | 48 |

» First Quarter:

F — Vance Settlemire 13 run (Grant McKinness kick) 9:36.

» Second Quarter:

F — Settlemier 24 run (McKinness kick) 11:21.

F — Austin Niwwander 21 pass from Paul Cosiano (McKinness kick) 9:44.

F — Joseph Davidson 66 pass from Cosiano (kick failed) 7:03.

R — Hunter Trautwein 2 run (Patrick Rusher kick) 1:20.

» Third Quarter:

F — Settlemire 1 run (Travis Essinger kick) 6:18.

R — Isaiah McDonald 66 run (kick blocked) 5:59.

F — Settlemire 33 run (Essinger kick) 1:06.

F — Settlemire 3 run (Larson Storer kick) 1:41.

| TEAM STATS | F | R |
|-----------------------|--------|--------|
| First downs..... | 15 | 22 |
| Total Net Yards | 418 | 319 |
| Rushes-yards..... | 29-231 | 65-306 |
| Passing | 187 | 13 |
| Comp-Att-Int | 8-10-1 | 1-6-1 |
| Fumbles-Lost..... | 0-0 | 3-2 |
| Penalties-Yards | 3-40 | 7-53 |

INDIVIDUAL STATISTICS

» **Rushing:** Findlay—Settlemire 22-209, Cosiano 6-24, Niswander 1-(-2). Ross—Tyler Wolf 24-125, Isaiah McDonald 12-102, Ben Root 8-38, Uriah Haun 16-34, Cody Umbs 16-34, Jabree Lather 3-4, Hunter Trautwein 1-2.

» **Passing:** Findlay—Cosiano 8-10-187.

Ross—Tyler Wolf 1-6-13.

» **Receiving:** Findlay—Jimmy Orwick 4-92, Joseph Davidson 2-78, Niswander 2-17. Ross—Trautwein 1-13.

RECORDS

» **Findlay:** 8-2 (5-2).

» **Ross:** 3-7 (1-6 TRAC).