

Ross advances to sectional final

By BOB MARKER
Staff writer

NORWALK — Fremont Ross went to the beauty shoppe just in time to salvage a 42-22 girls Division I sectional basketball tournament win over Columbian Tuesday night.

Ross, 14-7, will take on Mansfield Senior at approximately 3 p.m. Saturday in the sectional finals.

"It was ugly," Ross coach Sue Wolf admitted, "but we'll take the win. After all, a win is a win is a win."

"Uh huh" on both counts.

It was very ugly in the first half as Ross

and Columbian took turns kicking the ball away. Neither team could penetrate the other's defense and good shooting was a non-existent luxury.

Ross led 4-3 after one quarter and 11-10, almost by default, at the half. The Little Giants survived 14 first-half turnovers and 5-of-17 shooting. Columbian was better on the turnovers with eight but 2-of-17 shooting took away the effect of a 1-3-1 defense that was baffling Ross.

With 6-foot-1 Melanie Sears at the point of the zone, the Little Giants could hardly see over, let alone pass the ball over the Columbian freshman.

"We tried to go over her instead of going right at her," Wolf explained.

After her beautification speech at half-time, that changed.

"We started to go at her and then drop the ball off inside," Wolf said, "and that allowed us to attack it (zone) a little better."

In the first 2:15 of the second half, Ross nearly doubled its score, racing to a 20-10 lead. A pair of layups by Andrea McGee, a 3-point play by Cortney Cominsky and a Cominsky jumper from the right side put Ross up by 10 with 5:45 remaining in the quarter.

It was another three minutes before Natalie Robbins and Cominsky hit back-to-back buckets for a 24-11 lead. The Little Giants finished the quarter with a 4-2 *burst* for a 28-12 lead.

It was all over except for sighs of relief. Columbian was 1-of-11 shooting in the third quarter and Ross 8-of-11.

In the final quarter, the Ross lead grew to 40-19.

Ross, 14-7, made 17-of-45 shots and 8-of-11 free throws. Columbian was 6-of-39 and 10-of-15. The Little Giants outrebounded the Tornadoes 43-25 but had 23 turnovers, three more than Columbian.

Little Giants fall from tourney

Quick Tygers snare victory

By TIM HARMON
Staff writer

NORWALK — Mansfield Senior's 56-48 victory over Fremont Ross in a girls Division I sectional championship game at Norwalk Middle School Saturday was never that close.

"We didn't look like we were in it," Ross coach Sue Wolf said. "I didn't think we were in it from the very beginning."

"At one point in the season, we had a letdown, but we got it back together. I thought we would win today."

The Tygers' victory, which lands them in the district tournament Thursday night at Hopewell-Loudon against Wapakoneta (a 47-42 winner over Celina in a sectional final at Cory Rawson), can be succinctly explained by a brief stretch midway through the fourth quarter. A stretch that featured Mansfield offensive rebounds, Ross turnovers and the Tygers' transition game.

After the Little Giants whittled a 15-point Mansfield lead down to 41-34, Chandee White scored for the Tygers in transition and was fouled. White missed the free throw, but Stacy Osburn rebounded the miss and scored.

Ross, 14-8, then committed two of its 25 turnovers and White converted the second into a layup for a 47-34 lead with 3:39 remaining.

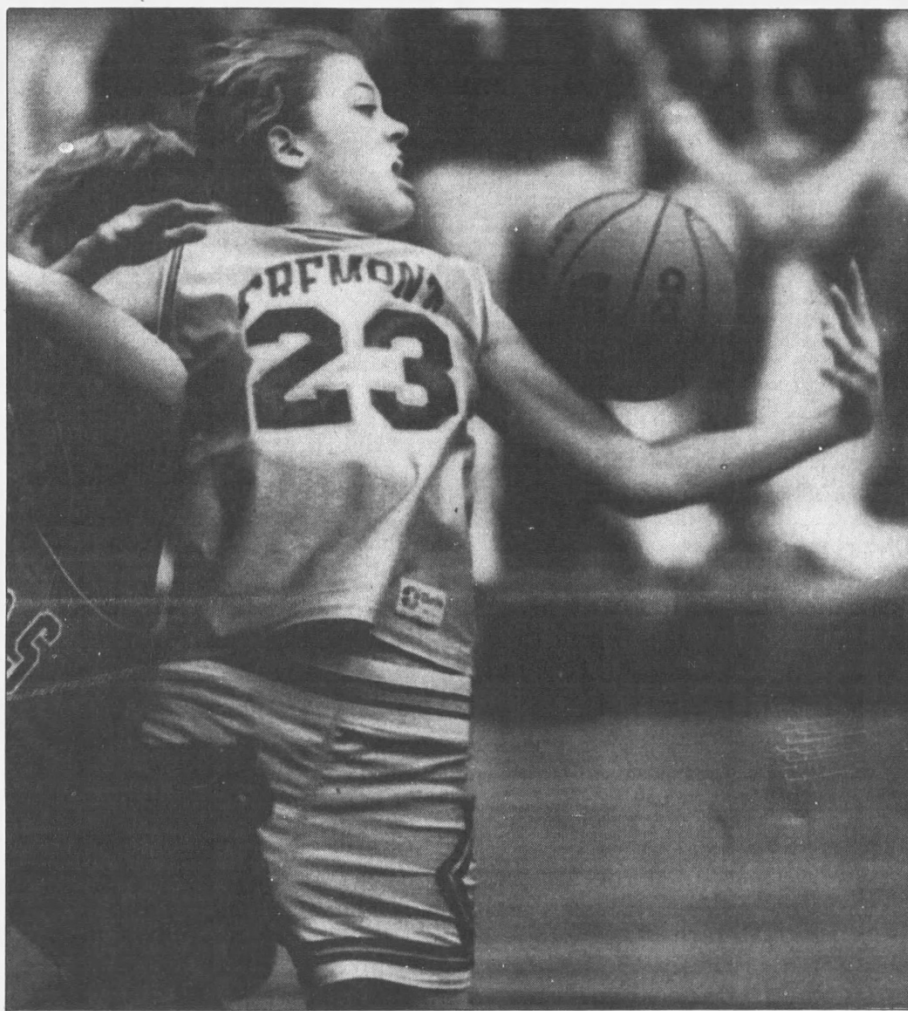
Mansfield, 15-6, collected 21 offensive rebounds in the game — many off missed free throws.

"We looked like we were a step slow," Wolf said. "I don't know if we were tentative."

"We looked like we were waiting for them to do something then we would react to them. That's not how we play defense."

The Little Giants, who never led, pulled within 48-43 with 1:56 remaining after a 9-1 run. The Tygers, though, put the game away at the foul line — making 10 of 19 free throws in the fourth quarter to 2-of-8 for Ross.

"To stop and be patient is not exactly fitting our nature," Mansfield coach John Miefert said, "but we handled the ball and either drew the foul or hit



News-Messenger/Andrew Morrison

BECKY WILLIAMS of Fremont Ross tries to control a rebound during the fourth quarter of the Little Giants' Division I sectional championship game against Mansfield Senior Saturday.

some nice passes inside and got a couple of baskets that broke it back open again."

Mansfield pulled away from a 4-4 tie (both Ross baskets coming from Leah Lomax) for an 11-4 lead after one quarter, and the Tygers led 21-17 at halftime.

"Courtney (Cominsky) couldn't get on; they did a nice job defending her," Wolf said. "They knew that was the player to stop and they did a nice job doing it."

Cominsky, who finished with 17

to lead Ross, scored five points in the first half after going to the bench with her second foul with 2:22 left in the first quarter.

A basket by White from the left wing with 1:48 to go in the third quarter gave Mansfield a 36-21 lead, but Ross closed to 38-25 with one quarter left.

Becky Williams scored 11 of her 15 points for the Little Giants in the fourth quarter as Ross nearly doubled its scoring output through three quarters in the pe-

riod, but it went for naught.

"I'm sure (Ross) is a step quicker than seven out of 10 teams they play, but we're probably one of those three out of 10 that's just a step quicker than they are," Miefert said.

Requette Lindsay led Mansfield with 15 points, White finished with 13 and Marinise Pender added 10.

Osburn led all rebounders with 11, while Williams collected 10 rebounds for Ross.