

TOLEDO ST. JOHN'S 48  
FREMONT ROSS 40

# Ross boys flirt with upset of St. John's

JOSH MORGRET

NEWS-MESSENGER CORRESPONDENT

TOLEDO - Fremont Ross lost the first two meetings with Toledo St. John's by an average of 29 points.

The Little Giants took a lead into the fourth quarter in Friday's Division I sectional final at Toledo Central Catholic, but couldn't hold on in a 48-40 setback to the fifth-ranked Titans.

"I am very pleased with how we executed the game plan for only having two days to prepare for a very good ballclub," Ross coach Mark Gedeon said. "St. John's is a great team. We have a lot of things to be proud of."

A bucket by Taylor Druckenmiller gave Ross (7-17) a 34-32 lead after three quarters, but it was the last lead for the Little Giants.

See **SETBACK**, Page 7A



MOLLY CORFMAN

Fremont's Maliek Johnson is stopped by St. John's Payton Moyer.



# Setback

Continued from Page 6A

Payton Moyer hit his third 3-pointer of the night for St. John's (22-2) to put the Titans ahead 35-34. Ross was careless with the ball as Vincent Williams scored four points for St. John's.

Bryce McKinstry scored after grabbing an offensive rebound to slice the Titans' lead to 39-36, but despite out-rebounding St. John's by 11 on the night, the Little Giants could not grab a defensive rebound for a stretch. Williams' third dunk of the night made it 43-36 with 2:01 left.

"The turnovers were an offensive issue in the fourth quarter," Gedeon said. "The turnovers hurt. We talked about wanting to win that first possession on the defensive end to start the fourth quarter, but we did not do that. We didn't secure some defensive rebounds, which allowed St. John's some second and third shots."

Ross got back within five when Maliek Johnson scored, but got no closer. After erasing a seven-point deficit with 20 seconds left last year against Toledo Start and overcoming a 15-point third quarter deficit against Springfield on Tuesday, a third wild

postseason finish at Central Catholic was not to be.

St. John's hammered Ross twice during the regular season.

"We were really happy with the pace," Gedeon said. "St. John's is very good when the game gets fast. We knew we couldn't keep up with more possessions in the game. We tried to dictate tempo, both offensively and defensively. Even though we had turnovers, we had opportunities to score. I liked our spacing a lot better than earlier in the season."

A 3-point play from senior Brandon Trolio, coupled with buckets from Bryce Root and McKinstry established a 15-10 lead for Ross. St. John's looked like the fifth-ranked team as Moyer drilled a 3 to ignite a 9-0 run over 5:40. Root scored with 10 seconds left in the second quarter for a 19-17 deficit.

Trolio scored off an offensive rebound for a 20-19 lead early in the third quarter. Moyer canned a 3 for a 31-28 advantage before Druckenmiller gave Ross its final lead.

"We had some quality play from everyone that stepped on the floor," Gedeon said. "Nobody hurt us and everyone gave us something positive. That is what we

strive for."

The Little Giants held Williams, a 6-foot-5 junior first-team all-Ohio candidate, to four points through three quarters. He had eight points in the fourth quarter to finish with a team-high 12 and added six rebounds.

"Part of it was they got him the ball where he could be aggressive," Gedeon said. "Maybe his foul trouble early made him passive. We did a nice job in our rotations to battle him in our game plan."

Trolio finished with 11 points -- but none after picking up his fourth foul with 6:22 left in the third quarter.

"You want your experienced players on the floor, especially when they are playing well," Gedeon said. "Brandon and Taylor did a great job being senior leaders. At the same time, it shows that it is next man up."

Trolio, Druckenmiller and Alec Snodgrass will graduate for the Little Giants.

"Those three players are tremendous," Gedeon said. "They deserve to wear the Fremont Ross uniform and they wear it with pride. Seeing these kids grow up, I told them in the locker room it is tough to say good-bye to quality seniors. And that is what they are."