

Champs again!



News-Messenger photos/Ben French

ROSS HEAD COACH Mark Gedeon and senior Lee Root celebrate in the final moments of Friday's Great Lakes League victory over Fostoria. Gedeon became the all-time winningest coach in boys history as the Little Giants clinched a tie for the GLL crown.

Giants set milestones galore, earn GLL title tie

By **TIMOTHY R. WOLFRUM**
Sports editor

An overflow crowd crammed into the Purple Pit on Friday and witnessed what may have been the most memorable regular season game in the history of Fremont Ross boys basketball.

The Little Giants exploded for a school-record 107 points to blast Fostoria and gain a tie for their second consecutive Great Lakes League championship.

Ross scored the first nine points of the game and led by an eye-popping 54-19 margin at halftime. The Little Giants shot 73.3 percent from the field in the first half, 71.2 percent for the game.

It was more than Ross's three seniors — Bo Martin, Lee Root and Mike Price — could have dreamed for their swan song at the Pit.

"I did not think that was going to happen at all," said Root, who tied his career high with 17 points.

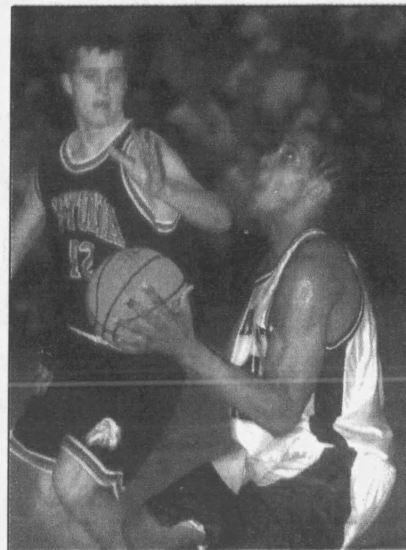
"It was a very emotional game for me. I'm sad to be leaving here, but it's got to

happen sometime. This is definitely the one I'll remember most."

Here's the short list of the milestones reached by the Little Giants on Friday:

■ After going without a league title for 47 years, the past two Ross teams have turned in the first back-to-back league crowns in history. Findlay's 63-40 victory over Sandusky on Friday meant Ross (13-7, 7-3 GLL) shared the crown with the Trojans, but the Little Giants didn't seem to mind. They played their now-annual Queen medley of "We Will Rock You" and "We Are the Champions" and cut down the net at the east end of the gymnasium after Friday's game.

■ Little Giants head coach Mark Gedeon recorded his 103rd career victory, giving him the all-time wins mark at Ross. Gedeon (103-52), a seventh-year coach, broke the previous record set by Al Ziemke (102-101), who coached at Ross from 1947-58.



BO MARTIN, right, of Fremont Ross prepares to go up for a layup as Fostoria's Curtis Echelberry closes in during Friday's game at the Purple Pit.

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Ross waxes Fostoria to earn GLL title share

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"That's nice, the most wins in school history. ... It just shows how fortunate I've been to be coaching with some great assistant coaches and obviously some great players as well," Gedeon said.

■ And Ross broke the single-game scoring record when bench player Kyle Hintze hit consecutive treys in the final minutes. Gedeon said the previous mark was 101 points, but Ross historians said they remembered a 102-point game in the Ziemke era.

"It means a lot to get the league championship, getting the record in scoring and getting coach the wins record," Martin said, summing up the entire experience.

"After the first game, I thought they (Fostoria players) were going to come in fired up and ready to play. They disappointed me. We just took them out of the game."

All five Ross starters, including the three seniors, scored in double figures. Juniors Luke Lyle and Chad Clark scored 22 and 21 points, respectively. Root hit four 3-pointers on his way to 17 points, Price added 14 points and Martin had 12.

Price, Lyle and Martin each grabbed nine rebounds. Lyle dished out seven assists.

The die was cast at the very beginning of Friday's game. Ross was almost back to full strength after missing several players due to injury and illness during the past few weeks.

The Little Giants attacked the Redmen's renowned press and didn't stop until the game was well in hand, ripping off points by

the bunch. Although Ross committed 24 turnovers, it got layup after layup. The Little Giants hit 22 of 30 shots in the first half and 42 of 59 for the contest. Ross also hit 8 of 14 trey attempts.

"To be honest, there weren't a lot of X's and O's with this game," Gedeon said. "We worked all week to go against this type of pressure. Our jayvees did an outstanding simulating some of the things Fostoria does."

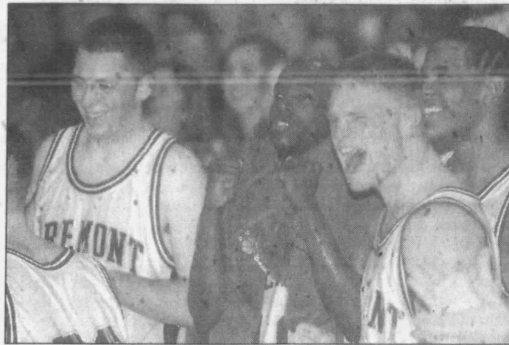
The Little Giants held Fostoria scoreless for nearly four minutes and leapt ahead 9-0 with points coming from four different players.

After Redmen freshman Jacob Diebler scored on a three-point play — they turned out to be his only points of the game — and Brice Fuller followed that up with a bucket, Ross erupted for another seven points to lead 16-5. The lead remained at double digits for the rest of the game.

"We've got a thing right now that we've got to get solved," Fostoria coach Keith Diebler said. "When we get out of the gate slow, we don't play well. ... In our five losses, it all traces back to the same thing, and I know Mark knows that. They came out really emotional, real hard and did a nice job."

Ross scored the first eight points of the second quarter to lead 28-10, then, after four Fostoria points, put up the next 11 markers to go up 39-14.

The Little Giants sent their crowd into a frenzy right before halftime by grabbing defensive rebounds a throwing three-quarters court passes for easy shots. Price scored six points in the final two minutes of the first half, and Matt Zilles punctuated the half with a



ROSS SENIORS Mike Price, second from left; Lee Root, second from right; and Bo Martin, far right; enjoy the final seconds of Friday's victory at the Purple Pit. Junior Chad Clark is at left.

dunk and layin to send Ross up by 35 points at the intermission.

"We wanted to play a little bit more man-to-man defense, get in their face, because we've seen some teams do that well. And they put it right back in our face," coach Diebler said.

Gedeon said the first half reminded him of a Jan. 14, 2000, victory over eventual GLL champion Sandusky. The Little Giants raced ahead 51-19 in that game before settling for an 86-74 victory at the Purple Pit.

"We were playing the right opponent, and the situation was right in terms of the intensity of the ballgame," Gedeon said of Friday's game. "Our kids came through and executed. ... We did it against a very high-quality opponent."

Fostoria (14-6, 5-5 GLL) got 18 points from Fuller, 15 from Michael Tucker, 13 from Trevvon McBeth and 10 from bench player Curtis Echelberry.

McBeth, Fostoria's leading scorer, managed just one point in the first half. He sparked a Redmen resurgence in the third quarter by

scoring 12 points, but Fostoria could only close the deficit to 67-43.

Gedeon said his team's defense was the key to the rout.

"I couldn't have imagined anything like this," Gedeon said. "I thought our kids came out and played outstanding defense. That's the one thing that's been lacking over the last period of time because we have been down bodies. By being able to rotate some people through, it allows us to play with that passion and intensity."

Root drew the assignment on Jacob Diebler and limited the hard-nosed, athletic player.

"Coach said he's the main guy on the team; he gets them going. I didn't want him to get them going. I had to shut him down," Root said.

Ross spent the fourth quarter trying to get to the century mark. It finally arrived when Kyle Tucker fed Dan Thompson for a bucket and a foul with 1:10 remaining.

The Little Giants begin tournament play at 6:30 p.m. Tuesday against Tiffin Columbian at Willard.