

# Croudup carries Ross



Charlie Longton/News-Messenger

**FREMONT ROSS'** Ryan Croudup steals the ball from a Marion Harding player at Willard on Tuesday.

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**WILLARD** - For the second time in a week, the Ross boys' basketball team beat Marion Harding by a score of 77-56.

But this time, in a Division I sectional semifinal Tuesday, the Presidents made it a lot more interesting.

After being down eight at the half, Harding tied the game in the third period, but behind the shooting of Ryan Croudup and Cory Clayton, the Little Giants pulled away to advance to the sectional finals Friday, when they'll play Mansfield Senior at 6:15 p.m., also at Willard.

"At our place, we were able to maintain the double-digit lead," said Ross coach Mark Gedeon.

At the beginning of the second half, baskets by Isiah Twine and Kyle Oney closed the gap to 34-30. The Presidents (4-17) had gone on a six-point spurt at the end of the first half to close the

gap to 34-26, as the teams headed into the locker room.

"I'm real proud of the kids' ability to come back," Jury said. "We got down early and it would have been very easy to pack it in for the year."

Clayton hit a jumper to extend the lead back to six, and Kirt Munson stole the ball, but the Little Giants (8-13) promptly turned it over, and a Cody Hecker three closed the gap to 36-33. On the ensuing Harding possession, Hecker was fouled, making the first of his two foul shots and Twine, who went to have a game-high 18 points and 10 rebounds, hit a shot to tie the game.

"Our defense lapsed," Gedeon said. "They were able to attack the paint, and at the same time, we got impatient on shots."

Croudup was sent to the line, making a pair of foul shots to give the lead back to Ross, 38-36, but the third period belonged to Clayton, who scored 10 of his 14 points in the stanza.

Gedeon said Ross switched to more of a trap game early in the second half, freeing up guards Clayton and Croudup to shoot more.

"We started getting out in transition," Croudup said. "We started to beat them in transition. That put the nail in the coffin."

The Little Giants ended the quarter on a seven-point run, and Croudup scored the opening basket of the fourth to make it 53-40. The Little Giants' lead never dipped below 10 points after that.

Croudup, held scoreless from the floor in the middle two quarters, ended up leading the Little Giants with 17 points - 13 coming in the second half. Croudup said he had a slow start due to events at home - his grandmother, Paulina Levario, died Monday.

"I want to dedicate this game to her," Croudup said.

Although the Presidents tied the game in the third, they prob-

ably lost it in the first half. Harding turned over the ball on its first four possessions of the game, on the way to a total of 24 turnovers. Jury also noted that they missed a few easy layups.

"We cut our turnovers in half and make a few easy ones, it's a whole different ballgame," he said.

The Little Giants went on a 10-2 run early in the second period, thanks in large part to Devin Johnson, who scored 11 of his 15 points in the second.

"We made a conscious effort to get the ball to Devin early," Gedeon said.

Johnson was relatively silent in the second half, making just one basket from the floor and missing a pair of foul shots - but by then, it was Clayton's time to shine, and then Croudup's.

"They have three or four kids who can score," Jury said.

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