

Little Giants ousted by St. John's

Heidelberg limited to six points by Titans in a district semifinal

By **MICHAEL PIDANICK**
Staff Writer

TOLEDO — The temperature outside the Toledo Waite Field House may have been below freezing Thursday, but it was not as cold as the Fremont Ross offense in the first half of a 65-46 district semifinal loss to St. John's Jesuit.

The Little Giants hit just 6 of 21 shots from the floor and managed just 17 points in the first two quarters, and could not recover.

"Against a team as good as St. John's, our start was very important," said Ross coach Mark Gideon. "It's hard to come back against a team like that."

"They did a nice job, you have to give them credit," said Ross junior guard Joell Heidelberg. "We came out a little nervous and couldn't get our shots to fall."

Heidelberg, a second team all Northwest Ohio selection, scored just six points in the game, 11 below his season average, and was shut out in the second half.

"Heidelberg is a great player and we wanted to make sure he didn't score 30 points on us," said Titans coach Ed Heintschel. "We wanted to at least contain him and I thought we did that at least for most of the game."

Reggie Jones and Robb Ritzman each scored 13 points, and Juan Vela added 12 more for the Little Giants.

The Titans won the rebounding battle, 24-19, and was able to create several second opportunity points on offense.

"We play in the Toledo City League, so we're used to battling hard inside every night," said St. John's forward Mike Dissett, who grabbed nine boards, to go with his game-high 16 points. "We know how to box out and how to play hard under the boards."

Ryan Carder added 13 points and Matt Forrester netted eight for the Titans, who will play

Whitmer, Saturday at the University of Toledo in the district title game. Whitmer defeated Bowsler 55-40, in the second game of Thursday's double header at Waite.

After Jones hit a 3-pointer 30 seconds into the game, the Little Giants went dormant on offense. They missed their next eight shots from the floor, and the Titans took a 13-5 lead after the first quarter.

Ritzman hit a 3-pointer to start the second quarter, but after the team's traded buckets, the Titans went on a 9-2 run to take a 24-12 lead. Heidelberg buried a 3-pointer and Jones followed with another bucket, to bring the Little Giants back to within seven.

But St. John's owned the rest of the half. Dissett hit back-to-back baskets and Nate Zechman followed with a layup. Jason Repp then hit a reverse layup and on the Little Giants possession. Zechman stole the ball at mid court and raced in for a layup, giving the Titans a commanding 34-17 lead at the break.

"That late run really hurt us," Gideon said. "If we're down by single digits at halftime, we can hit a few shots and its a ballgame again."

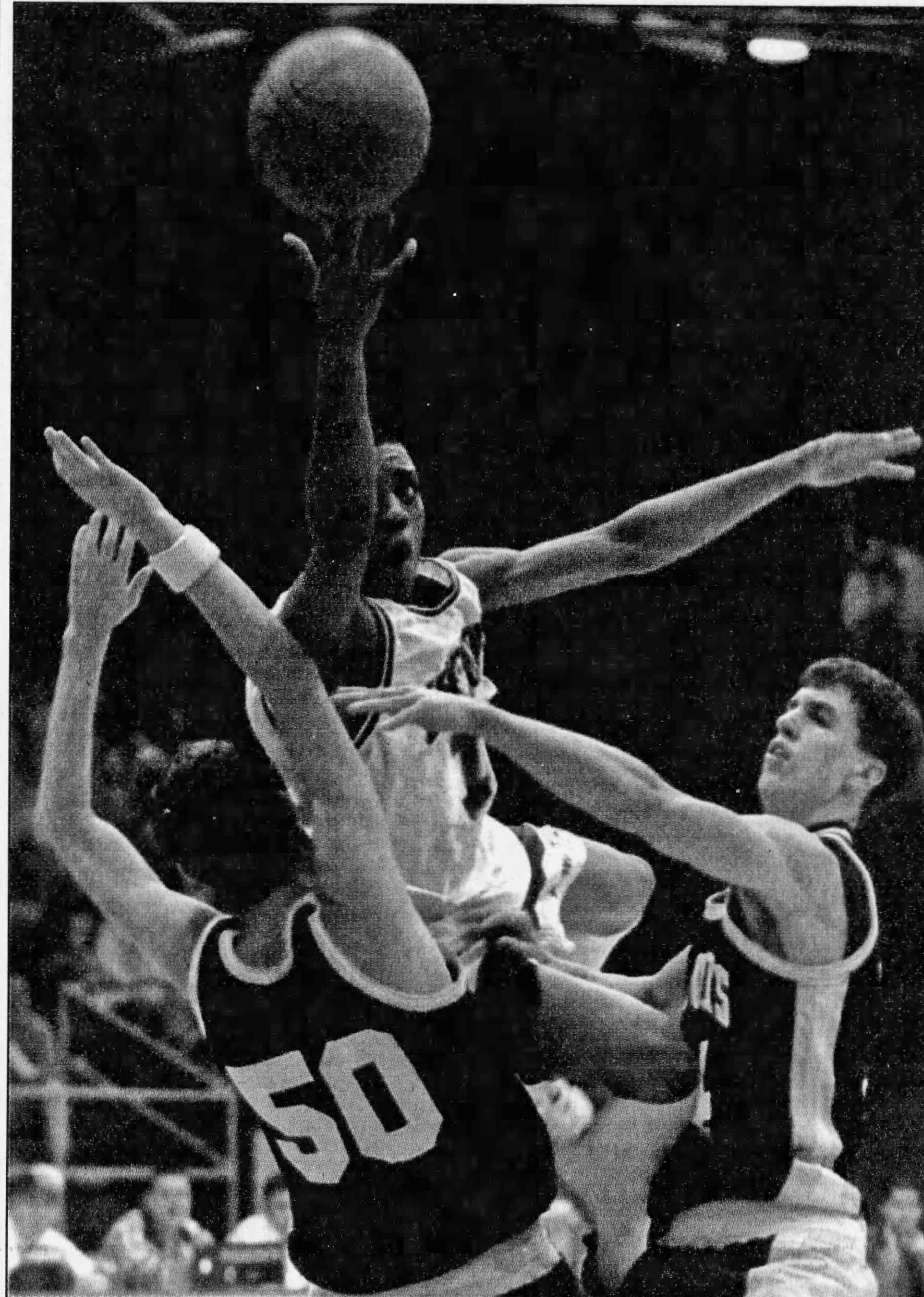
Ross finally heated up in the third. The Little Giants hit their first eight shots of the period, four by Vela, who scored 10 of his 12 points in the third, and three more by Ritzman.

But the Titans had an answer at the other end each time, and Ross never got closer than 11 points.

"Our defense wasn't as tough in the third, but fortunately we kept scoring," Dissett said.

"It seemed like every time we hit three, they would hit a three, and every time we turned it over they would capitalize," Gideon said.

"They out-executed us at both ends of the floor."



News-Messenger/Daryn Slover

FREMONT ROSS' Joell Heidelberg drives to the basket as Nate Zechman (50) and Ryan Stoner of St. John's defend.