

Comeback lifts Ross

By BOB MARKER

Sports Editor

HOLLAND — Fremont Ross outscored Toledo Central Catholic 9-2 in the final 90 seconds for a 46-45 victory in the Division I girls district tournament semifinals at Springfield High School Thursday night.

"I never thought we were out of the game," Cari Ritzman of Ross said. "I thought we could come back."

DISTRICT FINAL

Ross (18-5) vs. Sylvania Southview 7:30 p.m. Saturday at Springfield High School

Dawn Zerman's two free throws with 22 seconds left gave Ross a 44-43 lead — the Little Giants' first lead since an 11-10 edge in the second quarter.

Cari Ritzman added two free throws 10 seconds later to give

the Little Giants a cushion that enabled them to survive a last-ditch attempt at a tie by Central's Breanna Heinrichs.

Ross coach Sue Wolf used a mixture of veterans with inexperienced youth in an outside attack that offset the lack of an inside game for the Little Giants.

"They were pushing us around and we weren't pushing them back," said Wolf, who countered

Zerman boosts Little Giants

Dawn Zerman's emergence as an outside shooter caught Toledo Central Catholic by surprise.

"I think she shot the ball from the perimeter much better than we had seen her," Central coach Steve Pfahler said. "We played her more for the penetration and drive. But tonight she stepped out and nailed 3s."

Zerman had four 3-point baskets, including two while scoring 12 points in the fourth quarter.

"We told our kids that she would be possibly one of the finest guards we faced all year," Pfahler said. "She stepped up and had a big game...good kids will do that."

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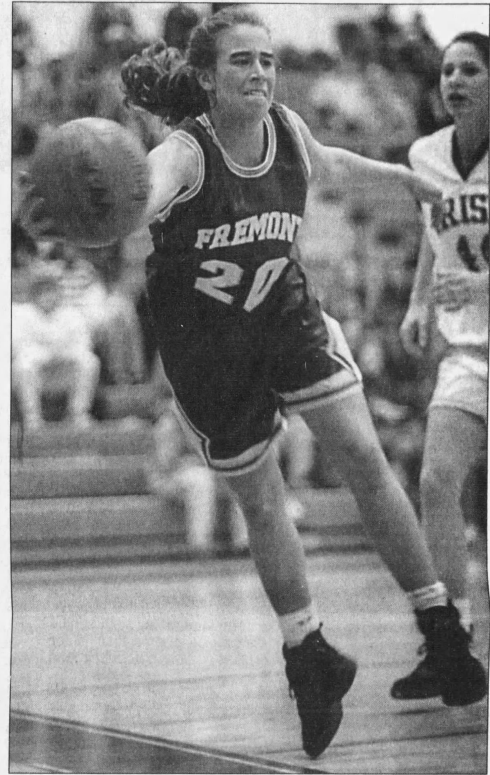
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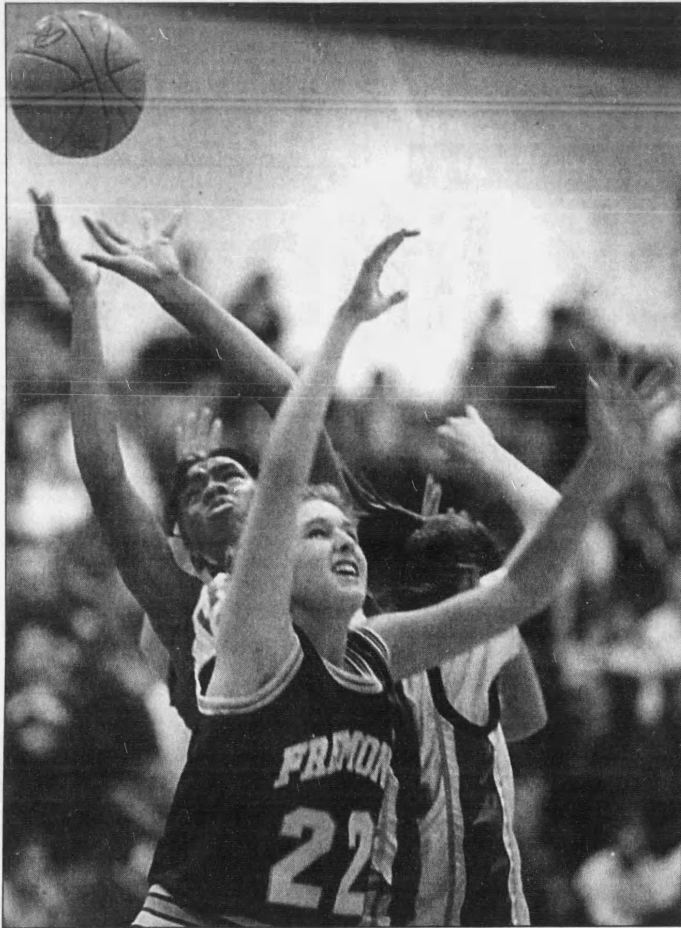
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FREMONT ROSS basketball players Michele Smith (left), Emily Dowell (center) and Holly Peffrey (right) watch intently during the Little Giants' fourth-quarter comeback against Toledo Central Catholic in a Division

I district tournament game at Springfield High School in Holland Thursday night. At right, Cari Ritzman of Ross saves the ball from going out of bounds during the first half. The Little Giants advanced to the district finals.



News-Messenger/Andrew Morrison



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DENA SCHEPFLIN (22) of Fremont Ross battles Jenice Johnson of Toledo Central Catholic for a rebound during the first half of Thursday night's game.

Ross defeats Central Catholic

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with a quicker lineup.

The quicker Ross defense forced Central into 1-of-9 shooting in the last quarter.

"We needed the speed," Wolf said. "We knew we had to press. ... Those people had the speed and got in their faces."

Central coach Steve Pfahler said, "For whatever reason, we've had a mental lapse when it's come to some big games we played this year. I wish I had an answer for that. We just did not get some things accomplished."

Taking turns on the floor for Ross were juniors Dena Schepflin, Zerman and Cari Ritzman, along with sophomore Lisa Oprie and regular junior varsity players Marcy Reinbolt and Jami Toeppe.

The Irish, 17-4, led 35-23 late in the third quarter before Ross went on a 14-2 run.

A free throw by Reinbolt, another sophomore, tied it at 37 with 3:12 left in the game.

The Irish ran off the next six points on a pair of free throws and a basket by Heinrichs, who finished with 19 points, and a pair of free throws by Angie Marti.

Toeppe, a freshman who had played approximately four minutes of varsity ball, according to Ross assistant Dave Fleming, scored on a putback with 1:30 to play to start the Little Giants' stretch run.

Zerman, who finished with 20 points but didn't score in the third period, followed her fourth 3-point basket before giving Ross the lead with her free throws.

"I was never frustrated because my teammates were stepping it up," Zerman said. "This win really feels great."

After Ritzman's two free throws, Heinrichs was fouled by Toeppe on a 3-point attempt with six-tenths of a second remaining. Heinrichs missed the first free throw before making the last two.

On the inbounds play, Schepflin tossed the ball over the Central defense to Toeppe as time expired.