

Ross wins tourney opener

Root, Zilles star in OT

By BOB MARKER
Staff writer

WILLARD — Chad Root's free throw and Jason Zilles' blocked shot helped Fremont Ross to a 69-68 overtime win over Mansfield Madison Tuesday night in the Division I sectional basketball tournament at Willard High School.

Tickets available

Tickets for Friday night's Division I boys sectional title game between Fremont Ross and Ashland at Willard High School will go on sale after 1 p.m. today at the Ross athletic department office, Fremont Athletic Supply and Ken Dummer Photography.

The price is \$3 for adults and \$2 for students. Ross will keep 20 percent of the presale money.

The win puts the Little Giants, 7-14, into the sectional finals at 8:30 p.m. Friday against Ashland, 14-6. Madison bowed out 12-9.

Root, after coming up short on the first of his two free throw attempts, survived a Madison timeout to bury the second with 10 seconds remaining in overtime.

Rob Whitfield had a shot at winning it for the Rams, but Zilles blocked his shot from in close with two seconds to play and Charles Woodson batted the ball toward midcourt to preserve Ross coach Frank Gioffre's first tournament win.

"I just slammed it right in his face," Zilles, a 6-4 senior said. "I had the whole thing (ball)."

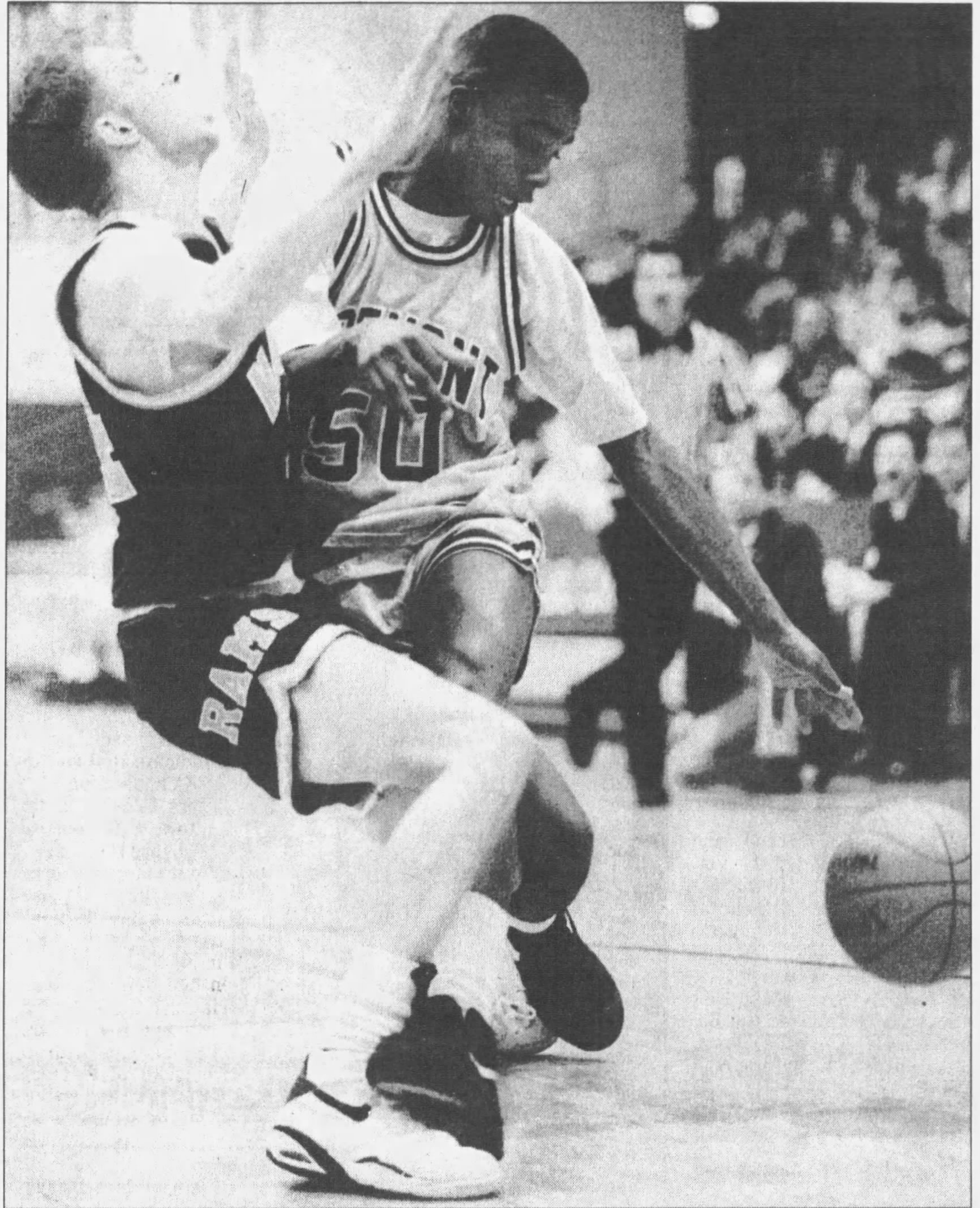
It was the second attempt at a game-winning shot for the Rams. Josh Hood's 15-foot jumper bouncing off the rim as regulation time ran out.

Root's and Zilles' heroics capped a sizzling Ross shooting night. The Little Giants made 15 of 18 shots (83 percent), including all five 3-point attempts in the first half, while wiping out an early 18-6 deficit for a 35-30 halftime lead.

"That's two games in a row where our kids have fought back, and we were fortunate enough to win," Gioffre said.

Last Friday, the Little Giants came from 17 points behind in the fourth quarter to edge Findlay 74-73.

Against Madison, Ross was



News-Messenger/Andrew Morrison

MIKE PATTERSON of Fremont Ross runs over during the first quarter Tuesday night. Patterson Mansfield Madison's Greg Rush for a charge helped the Little Giants win in overtime.

29-of-45 (64 percent) — and needed that performance as Madison made 16 of 28 second-half shots and held a 28-16 rebounding edge.

"We were down big early," Gioffre said. "I knew our kids were nervous ... but Mikey Patterson picked us up in the second quarter, Chad (Root) hit a big 'three' for us and David Gibbs and Moe (Bryan Myers) came in and did a great job for us."

The hot shooting cured the Little Giants' case of the nerves.

"Not at all, that was not nerves," Gioffre said about the shooting, "but eight turnovers in the first quarter,

that's nervousness."

Ross made 10 of 12 second-quarter shots as Patterson, Myers and Root scored five points apiece — each hitting 3-pointers. Gibbs came off the bench to score seven points, which included a 3-pointer and a shot at the haltime buzzer.

Ross rolled to a 45-36 lead midway through the third period but Madison, paced by Joe Schag's two 3-pointers, cut the Ross lead to 51-46 with one quarter left.

Schag scored the Rams's first five points of the final quarter as Madison caught Ross at 53 and went ahead 57-55 with 4:30 left.

Neither team led by more

than two in the final quarter, with the Rams taking a 64-63 lead with 1:24 to play on Whitfield's free throw. Root got it even again with a free throw 16 seconds later.

In the overtime, Woodson scored four straight points, giving him 24 for the night, but Hood and Whitfield converted after Ross turnovers to tie it at 68.

That set up the heroics by Root and Zilles.

Patterson finished with 16 points and Root nine as Ross evened its record in overtime games this season at 2-2.

Whitfield with 22, Schag with 16 and Hood with 15 paced Madison.