

Little Giants turnaround season ends prematurely



Fremont Ross' Shania Kiser drives to the hoop during a basketball game against Marion Harding on Monday. JONATHON BIRD/NEWS-MESSENGER

Presidents outscore Ross 31-18 in fourth quarter

By Kevin Shields
Sports writer

FOSTORIA — Fallyn Stephens only had two points in the regular-season match-up between Fremont Ross and Marion Harding.

On Monday, the Presidents' star sophomore made up for it and more.

Stephens poured in a game-high 35 points as Harding avenged its Jan. 18 home loss to the Little Giants, topping them 73-63 in a Division I sectional opener played in front of a friends-and-family only crowd at Fostoria High School.

Ross (11-12) toppled the Presidents (8-15) 46-29 in the first meeting between

the former Greater Buckeye Conference foes.

"We thought she'd have a little better outing this time around," said Harding coach Evan Geyer of his 5-8 combo guard, who averages over 16 points per game. "In her short time at Harding, she's done a lot for us. She can definitely score the basketball when she's hot."

Stephens was 10-of-11 at the foul line in the final quarter, allowing the Presidents to build a 49-39 lead in the with 6:13 remaining. The Little Giants never got closer than four on Abbi Hasselbach's 3 that cut the Harding lead to 51-47 with 4:30 to go.

"I'm always working on my free throws," said Stephens who finished

13-of-15 at the charity line. "A lot of us didn't play well the first time we played (Ross). We made sure we weren't going to lose this time around."

The Little Giants had led as much as 20-14 in the opening minute of the second quarter after a Harding technical gave them three points at the foul line. From that point until the start of the fourth quarter, the Presidents outscored Ross 31-18.

"Tonight was a lot like our game against Mansfield Senior last year," Little Giants coach Juan Vela said. "We stole that game, and like I told the girls in the locker room, 'sometimes

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basketball goes the other way' It sucks to be on the other side, but we tried to do all kinds of things to try and keep within our game plan. There were just times we couldn't buy a basket and we kept on fouling them.

"Everything we weren't suppose to do, we did."

Ross was just 6-of-24 from the field in the middle two quarters. On the defensive end, it sent the Presidents to the line 27 total times — Harding shot 17 foul shots in the fourth quarter alone.

The Little Giants had

jumped out to a 17-12 lead after one quarter, thanks in large part to 10 first-quarter points from Hasselbach. Hasselbach, a three-year starter for Vela, finished with 22 points in her final game wearing the purple and white.

Ross led 32-31 at half-time.

Stephens scored in the paint and sank a 3-pointer as part of a 10-0 second quarter spurt by the Presidents that saw them cut a 20-14 deficit and turn it into a 24-20 lead.

Valerie Samson's 3-pointer to tie the game at 26-26, keyed a Ross comeback. Later, two foul shots and drive to the basket for two from

Hasselbach, followed by a second-chance bucket by Shania Kiser equaled a 32-27 advantage for the Little Giants.

Kiser, a 5-10 post, was one of six Ross seniors — Whitney Overmyer, Pam Michael, Tajai Pitts, Erin Slaughter and Hasselbach were the others — playing their final game. Kiser finished with 11 points and nine boards.

Samson contributed 12 points for Ross, which also got four steals and six assists from Hasselbach.

The Little Giants had their first 11-win season in over a decade.

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