

Ross misses upset chance

By CRAIG SNYDER
Staff correspondent

WILLARD — Missed opportunities, from start to finish, took their toll Tuesday night on Fremont Ross as Mansfield Madison beat the Little Giants 73-62 in a first-round Division I sectional tournament game.

"I think we counted six layups we missed," Ross coach Mark Gedeon said. "Those are baskets, that come tournament time, you have to have."

Ross closes the season 9-12, while Madison (13-8) advances to play top-seeded Tiffin Columbian (18-2) for the sectional championship Friday night.

"If they make a shot here or there at key points in the game, it could have been a much closer game," Madison coach Dennis Bartlett said.

The game began as if there would be little opportunity for Ross.

Ron Arnold, who finished with 18 points to lead Madison, made two 3-point baskets in the game's first minute to key an 8-0 Rams' start.

The hot shooting, coupled with an aggressive man-to-man defense that forced four Ross turnovers in its first six possessions, produced an 18-3 lead with 2:25 to play in the opening quarter.

Madison's defense gave Ross its first, and first missed, opportunity.

"Their defense was over-rotating early and leaving our backside post open on the reversal," Gedeon said. "But we held, held, held (the ball) and hesitated...and allowed their defense to reset.

"I think our youth showed a little at the start. We were very passive and indecisive as to how to attack their defense."

Three-point baskets by John Overberg and Rob Stotz, and a short jumper by Shaun Root cut the Little Giants' deficit to 20-11 as the first quarter ended.

Each of the remaining quarters presented key opportunities, none of which the Little Giants could take advantage to get on top.

Harry Liggins' steal and breakaway layup midway through the second quarter rolled off

the rim — a basket which would have cut the Rams' lead to 26-20.

Madison answered Liggins' miss with consecutive baskets by Jason Jakubick and Arnold to push its lead to 30-18. Les Adkins' 55-foot 3-pointer as the first half closed made it 36-26.

The Rams led 51-44 at the end of the third quarter — a quarter that included another missed Ross breakaway.

The Little Giants fought back to trail 58-53 after two Derrick Hershey foul shots midway through the fourth quarter.

But a near steal by Sam Root trickled out of bounds off his foot and Ross got no closer. Ross missed three more layups in the game's final three minutes, while Madison sank 7 of 10 foul shots.

"We were just looking for those one or two breaks, but we just couldn't seem to get them," Gedeon said.

John Overberg led the Little Giants with 14 points, including four 3-pointers. Sam Root and Derrick Hershey added 13 points each.