

Regionals for Galion?

Tigers nip Little Giants in sectional, 61-60

By **BOB MARKER**
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ASHLAND — Ross lost a heartbreaker to Galion, 61-60, in the Ashland Class AAA Sectional Basketball Tournament, and with it, a chance to go farther in a state tournament than any Ross team ever has.

"I honestly feel that if we had gotten by Galion, we could have made it to the regionals," Ross coach Ken Miller said Sunday afternoon, the day after his team had lost by the narrowest of margins.

"Right now, I say Galion will make it to the regionals."

Miller's hopes went up in smoke with 2:14 to play when Mike Nicholls hit an 18-foot jumper from the left side to put Galion up, 61-60. Miller had watched his team race to a 36-25 lead late in the first half only to hold a 36-30 lead at the half.

But still the hope for what would have been termed an upset against the tournament's top seeded team was there, even with seven seconds to go.

Ross actually had two chances in the last 17 seconds to pull the game out of the fire. With Galion coach Jim Kirk ordering his team into a stalling offense with two minutes to play, Ross was forced to either foul or go all out for the steal. The latter came true with Dave Fahrbach taking the ball away from Galion's Chuck Roser at the midcourt line with 17 seconds to play.

Fahrbach fired the ball to Kevin Smith who snaked his way downcourt, fired up an 18 footer that bounced off the rim and into the hands of Galion's Bill Fox. Fahrbach immediately fouled Fox.

Ross called time out at that moment with seven seconds left to play.

Miller was asked if he had wanted a time-out earlier after the Fahrbach steal.

"No," he said, and added an explanation. "It was a matter of judgment at that point. I felt that they would be scrambling if we did make a steal just like we were. In that case we would have a better chance to get off a clean shot."

"If we missed then we could have a shot at the rebound or a quick foul. As it happened, the latter was true."

Miller called a time-out to give Fox a chance to think about the charity toss at the seven-second mark.

The extra thinking worked as Fox missed and Fahrbach grabbed the rebound, whistled a pass to Ford who got the ball downcourt but was immediately double teamed.

Ford, who scored 26 points in the game, managed to shovel a pass to Smith with two seconds to go. Smith put up the shot but Galion's Jeff Fischer got a hand on the ball to partially block the shot and dash Ross' hopes.

Miller explained his thinking about the regional after rehashing the last seconds of the game.

"I felt that over the last six weeks we were twice as good a team as we had ever been and that was simply caused because we were more physical," he said.

"I think the way we played, we made Galion look bad but they are not a bad team," the Ross mentor said. "I think that by playing us and getting by us, Galion can go on and show just how good they really are."

As for Kirk, he was busy breathing big sighs of relief over the one-point win.

"I knew we were in for a good game . . . but that was too close. That Ford really hurt us," Kirk said.

But Kirk told of the lifesaver for his club, the press.

"We had to have those eight points that we were down at the start of the second half and we knew the press was giving Ross trouble so we put it back on and it got us those points."

Those eight points that Kirk referred to came in the first four minutes of the third period. Ross was leading 38-30 on Smith's bucket 45 seconds into the period but the momentum started to swing toward Galion at that point.

Capitalizing on four straight Ross turnovers, the Tigers took the lead on Nicholls' bucket at the 4:15 mark, 40-38.

Ross came back in the final period to take a 52-47 lead but Galion outscored the Little Giants, 10-2, from 6:46 to 4:00 to take a 57-54 lead.

"We lost our poise for a couple of minutes," Miller said. "You know when a team throws one way against a press, it sometimes affects you like that."

Ross took the lead for the final time at 60-59 on four straight points by Neal Oberholtzer and Ford. That lead came with 2:26 to play but Nicholls hit his shot 12 seconds later to win it for the Tigers.

Miller summed up his feeling about the season-ending defeat.

"I have no complaints — anytime kids play that hard, you cannot say anything but good things about them. I'm sure they feel badly about losing but they never gave up and they have nothing to be ashamed about."

Ford's 26 led all scorers with Oberholtzer adding 13 for Ross. Fox had 18, Fischer, 16, and Nicholls, 10 (all in the second half) to lead Galion. Ford and Jim Flower held Galion's high scorer, Chuck Roser to nine points.

SCORE BY QUARTERS

Ross	17	19	12	12-60
Galion	12	18	17	14-61

SCORING

ROSS — Oberholtzer 5-3-13, Ford 11-4-26, Celek 1-0-2, Smith 4-1-9, Fahrbach 1-4-6, Belch 1-0-2, Clark 0-0-0; TOTALS 24-12-60
 GALION — Roser 4-1-9, Fox 7-4-18, Reynolds 2-0-4, Nicholls 3-4-10, Rischer 6-4-16, Keesey 1-0-2, Dankowski 0-2-2; TOTALS 23-15-61
 Season records: Galion 16-3; Ross 10-10

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