

Little Giants win sectional championship

By BOB MARKER
Staff writer

ADA — John Cahill and John Stierwalt can smile. After three years of frustration, they are getting their reward.

Cahill and Stierwalt led a host of Ross stars Saturday to the Class AAA boys sectional basketball title in King-Horn Center on the Ohio Northern University campus. The Little Giants knocked off Lima Senior, coming from seven points down in the third quarter to post a 63-57 victory.

Ross, 11-11, will play Lexington, 12-11, at 9 p.m., Thursday, in Bowling Green

State University's Anderson Arena in the second game of the AAA district.

"This is probably the biggest game we have played in," Cahill said while watching the net-cutting ceremonies. "It seemed like some other team was always taking our place."

Stierwalt, who had 24 points to pace the Ross win, echoed his teammate's feelings about the game adding that this was the first championship for the basketball team.

Three years ago, Cahill was a starter and Stierwalt a key reserve on the Greg Bender-led Ross team that posted a 15-6

record. Mansfield beat the Little Giants in overtime in the first game of the sectionals and cruised all the way to the state tourney finals. That memory was mentioned by both the Ross seniors.

Manoah Jones, the third Ross senior starter, popped in eight points while handling the Spartan half-court pressure and directing the Ross offense. Jones said that even though Lima Senior took that seven-point lead, he was not too concerned.

"There are breaks during a game," he said while alluding to the hot and cold spells teams can have, "but we brought it back. I

knew that we could."

Nick Hall, a 6-4 junior, carved through the tired Spartan defense for nine final quarter points as the Ross outscored Lima Senior 25-16, wiping out a 41-38 deficit after three quarters. Ironically, it was a series of Ross misses at the end of the third quarter that Coach Pat McGhee said lit the spark that ignited Ross in the final eight minutes.

Arlo Brown, a 6-3 sophomore, stole a Lima pass, drove to the basket but missed the layup while under heavy pressure. He got the rebound but missed the easy lay-in. Teammate Mike

Wolfe got that rebound but he also missed the short shot as the buzzer ended the period.

"Even though we did not make that shot," McGhee said, "that sparked us."

Ross caught Lima at 46-46 at the 6:07 mark of the final quarter. Hall and Jones scored but Ross still trailed 46-42 before Jones scored again and Stierwalt dropped in two free throws to tie. Cahill gave Ross its first lead since the first quarter with an 18-foot jumper but Carlton Thomas' bucket tied it with 4:37 to play.

Jones put Ross ahead for good with long jumper and sophomore Adam Bulger made it a four-

point lead with a layup. The Little Giants outscored the Spartans 11-3 in the next two minutes to put the game on ice. Stierwalt's final two of 12 free throws in the game, put Ross up 63-53 with 35 seconds remaining.

"The key to the game was our three guards — Jones, Stierwalt and Cahill — McGhee said. "They controlled the play and made sure we took the good shots."

Hall finished with 19 points and Cahill had eight while holding Lima Senior's top scorer, Thomas, to no points in the first three quarters. Kevin Ingram had 14 points for the Spartans.