

Lexington dumps Ross 59-54

By BOB MARKER

Reporting for The News-Messenger

WILLARD — Lexington was guilty of "flashing" but it was Ross which was arrested and banished for the Minutemen's indiscretion Tuesday night.

The Minutemen, fresh from the Class AA ranks last year, took advantage of Ross turnovers to pull off a 59-54 victory in the first round of the Class AAA boys sectional basketball tournament at Willard High School.

Coupled with 24 Ross turnovers, Lexington turned to "flashing," minus raincoat, in the second half to keep the Little Giants at bay.

"The key to the game for us," Lexington Coach Gregg Collins said, "was we did a better job of executing offensively in the second half. We were not flashing to the ball in the first half, but in the second half we began to flash to the ball and that helped us to get it to the weak side, which was open."

While Lexington was flashing, the Little Giants were not blushing. Instead, Ross was hanging close and refusing to turn away.

At one point, the Little Giants, who trailed by eight points several times in the the first half, grabbed a 43-42 lead on a pair of free throws by Shawn McCarthy with five minutes left in the final quarter.

Ross led once more, 45-44, on Pat Hetrick's bucket before the Minutemen began to flash again.

Tim Shaffer and Dave DeWitt hit back-to-back long bombs and Darron Phillips hit from in close to put Lexington up 50-45 with 2:50 to play.

Ross got no closer than three the remainder of the game as Shaffer hit six of six free throws in the final minute-and-a-half to keep the Little Giants at arm's length.

The Minutemen nearly stumbled in the final 22 seconds. Up 55-51, Phillips missed a reverse dunk that would have put his team up by six. John Cahill of Ross was fouled on the rebound.

The Ross junior hit the front end of the one-and-one but missed the second and Marc Pfizenmayer came down with the key rebound for Lexington. Shaffer followed with two more free throws and DeWitt topped it off with two more charity tosses with four seconds remaining.

"We had too many turnovers," Ross Coach John Sawyer said. "We, basically, did what we wanted."

"We got the ball inside and got them into foul trouble, but their press gave us more trouble than I thought it would."

The Minutemen had to operate most of the game without 6-4 Grant Weaver, who picked up three first-quarter fouls and eventually fouled out early in the final quarter without scoring a point.

Lexington used a 2-2-1 full-court press to force Ross into many of the turnovers. The press denied the inbounds pass, and when the Little Giants did get it in, many times a forced pass ended up in the wrong hands. Ross had 16 first-half turnovers.

"We thought if we held them to under 60 points, we had a good chance of winning the game," Sawyer said, "but the turnovers were the difference."

Phillips topped all scorers with 20 points, 12 in the second half. Shaffer added a dozen and DeWitt 10.

Dave Kovaleski and McCarthy had 12 points apiece for Ross and Stan Newell added 10.

Ross had a 38-28 rebounding edge but made just 19 of 43 shots. Lexington was 21 of 54 from the floor but a hot 17 of 20 at the foul line. Ross made 16 of 25 free throws.

The loss dropped Ross to 7-13 while Lexington will carry an 11-10 record into the sectional championship game Friday against the winner of tonight's Mansfield Madison-Tiffin Columbian game.