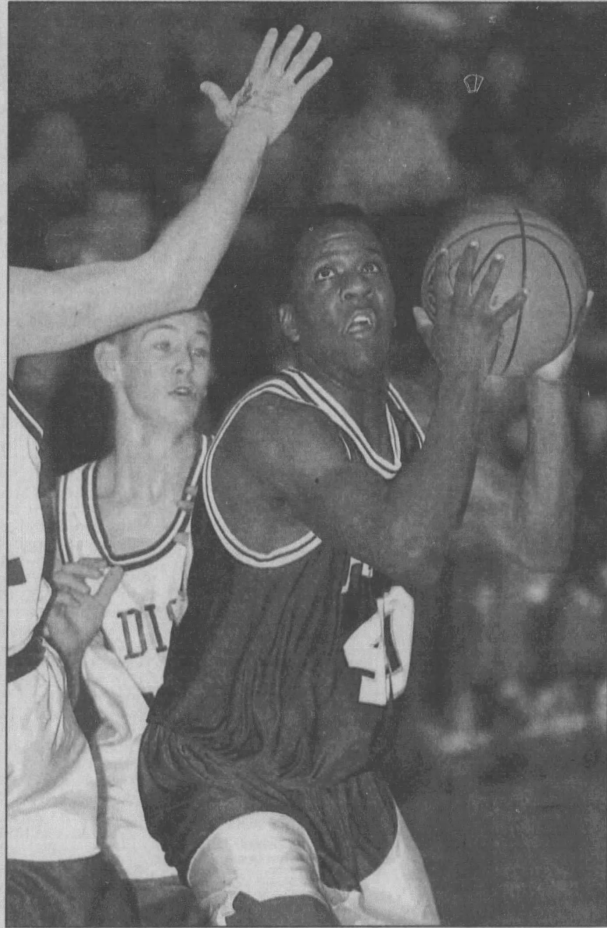


Vann's the man for Giants

Division I: Ross goes inside to beat Rams, set up rematch with Tygers



News-Messenger photos/Ben French

ALFONZO VANN prepares to shoot against Madison defenders Tuesday during the Little Giants' 65-58 victory at the Division I sectional tournament at Willard High School.

By **TIMOTHY R. WOLFRUM**
Sports editor

WILLARD — Fremont Ross coach Mark Gedeon picked up Alfonzo Vann for practice Saturday morning and used the car ride to remind the senior forward how vital his presence is to the team.

Just hours earlier, Vann had spent much of the regular season finale in foul trouble, allowing Fostoria to ring up points close to the basket and hand the Little Giants their second straight defeat.

Fortunately for Ross, Vann and his teammates got Gedeon's message.

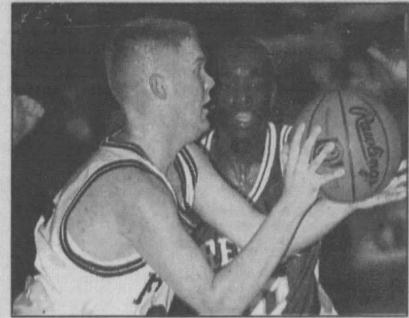
The Little Giants fed Vann for a career-high 24 points Tuesday as Ross came from behind to eliminate Mansfield Madison 65-58 in Division I sectional tournament action at Willard High School.

"Alfonzo was a true warrior for us. ... This game, I thought he worked incredibly hard on getting the ball in the paint," Gedeon said. "He worked hard for position. He's very, very active, and he finished when he got those opportunities to finish."

Said Vann, "Coach talked to us about how Madison would give us a challenge. We came today prepared to take that challenge."

Ross (15-6) advances to face third-ranked Mansfield Senior (19-1) in the sectional final at 6:30 p.m. Friday at Willard. The Little Giants have been bounced out of the tournament by the Tygers in thrilling games each of the past two seasons.

In the other sectional semifinal Tuesday, Sandusky defeated Tiffin Columbian 68-58. The Blue



MIKE PRICE of Ross sticks to John Mambourg of Mansfield Madison during Tuesday's Division I sectional game at Willard.

Streaks (7-14) will meet second-seeded Ashland (16-4) in the second game Friday.

Terrence Jones scored 14 points, T.J. Hammer 11 for the Little Giants on Tuesday. Vann and Jones shared rebounding honors with eight apiece.

Madison (4-17), led by junior guard Ryan Pore's 29 points, held an advantage for much of the game. The Rams led by as many as nine points in the first half and still held a 45-39 margin midway through the third quarter.

But the Little Giants' size advantage wore down Madison. Ross went on an 8-0 run to end the third quarter. Two of the buckets came from close range by Vann, another was a Jones layup that resulted from a Bryan Root offensive rebound.

"They're so much bigger and stronger than us that eventually ... We were trying to change defenses, and really nothing worked. You've got to give them cred-

it for being patient on offense and getting it to guys that could score," Madison coach Chad Allen said.

A Jones 3-pointer broke a 47-all tie and gave the Little Giants the lead for good with six minutes, 55 seconds to play in the game.

After that, Root made sure the ball found its way to Vann, who hit 11 of his 14 field-goal attempts. Root, a senior center who scored only five points, recorded four assists, three of them to Vann, as the Little Giants built a 61-53 advantage with 2:32 to play. The Rams got no closer than five points thereafter.

"I was just really working hard in the middle," Root said. "I was trying to score, but I didn't have the opportunities that Alfonzo did."

The Rams came charging out of the gate Tuesday. Pore scored 13 points, and Madison led 21-12 late in the first quarter.

See **ROSS, B3**

NEXT: Ross (15-6) vs. Mansfield Sr. (19-1) 6:30 p.m. Friday

Ross, Tygers tangle Friday

Continued From B1

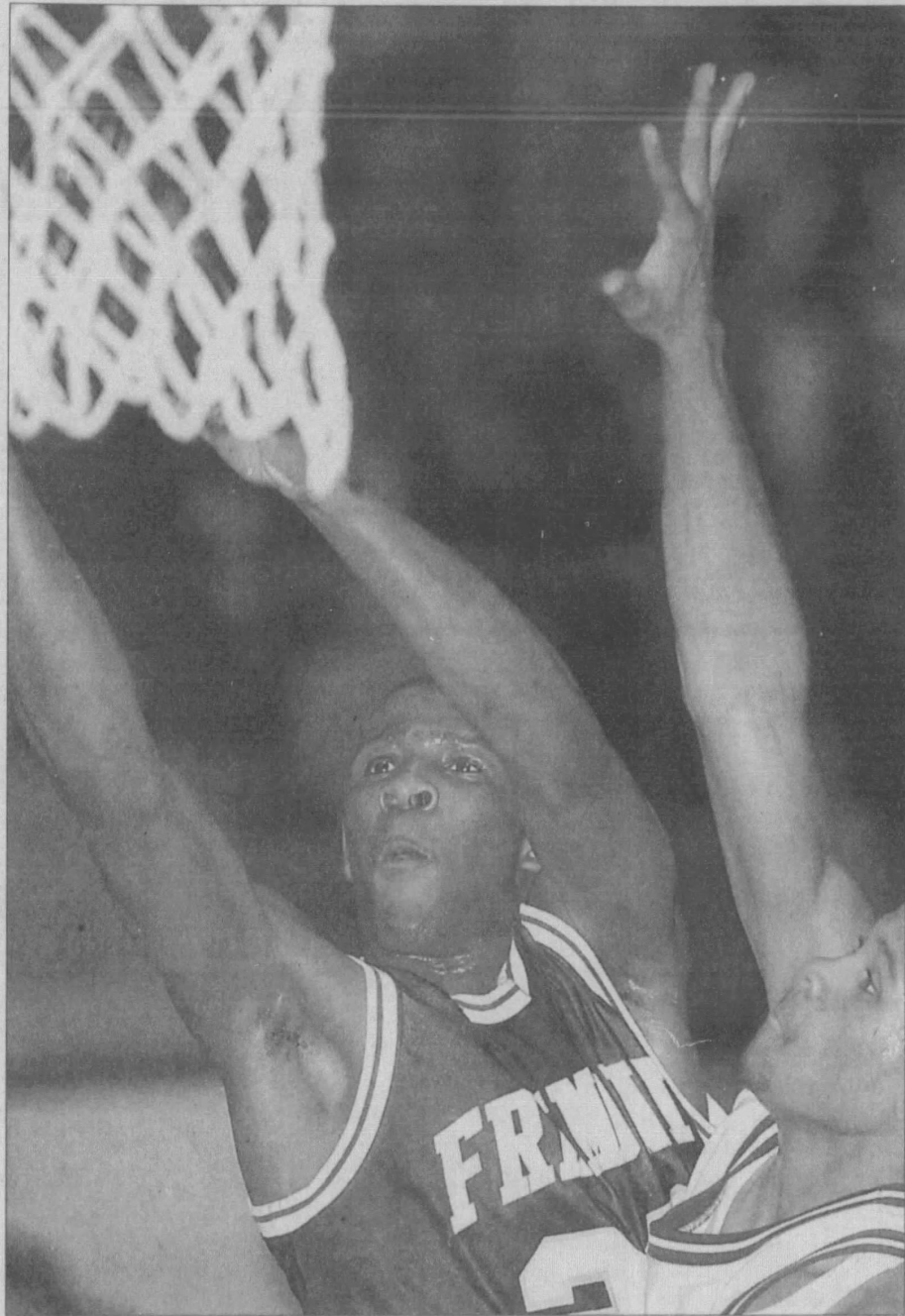
"They came out and hit everything in sight," Gedeon said. "They got some quality looks and drained them and got some energy. We took a time-out and told our kids that we've had five league wins on the road where we were down eight points and came back to win. We were tested before."

But Ross would have to make its comeback without Hammer, a senior leader who picked up his third foul midway through the second quarter and sat the rest of the half. Hammer, who had four assists and three rebounds, started the second half but picked up his fourth foul at the 6:28 mark and sat for the next eight minutes.

Sophomore guard Luke Lyle filled in admirably, though. His driving layup during the 8-0 run late in the third quarter tied the score at 45, and his feed to Vann gave the Little Giants the lead on the next possession.

Meanwhile, Ross had to find a way to stop Pore, who scored 20 points in the first half. In the second half, the Little Giants went to a diamond-and-one defense with the 6-foot-2 Bo Martin shadowing the 5-11 Pore. Pore managed just nine points in the second half.

"Ryan had just an outstanding ballgame. I totally tip my



News-Messenger/Ben French

TERRENCE JONES of Ross takes aim at the basket against the defense of Madison's Brandon Gilmore during Tuesday's game at Willard. Jones scored 14 points.

hat to him," Gedeon said. "He came out like a true competitor and gave his team an opportunity."

The pace of the second half was considerably slower than the first half, and that favored

Ross. The Rams managed only seven points in the third quarter.

"I didn't sub very much, and we were tired," Allen said. "That cost us at the end. There's only so much we can do when

we get down there and our guys are tired."

Ross hit 26 of 52 field-goal attempts (50 percent) and outrebounded Madison 35-33. The Rams connected on 22 of 57 field-goal attempts (38.6 percent).