

# Strong second half sparks Ross

## Little Giants oust Ashland

By SCOTT TAPPA  
Sports editor

SHELBY — It's not always easy to see the positive side of foul trouble in a basketball game. It's kind of like reasoning that a sunburn is good, because it eventually fades into a tan.

But in Fremont Ross's 44-36 win over Ashland on Tuesday, foul trouble was no trouble at all for the Little Giants.

With Ross starters Alison Decker, Sashay Price and

Sammantha Schneider sitting next to coach Sue Wolf in the second quarter, each with two fouls, Ashland overcame a nine-point deficit to knot the score at 23-23 heading into halftime.

The Little Giants (15-6) used the down time to rest up, and burned the Arrows badly in the second half,

forcing 19 turnovers and allowing just 13 points, propelling Ross to a Division I sectional semifinal win.



DECKER

## Girls basketball

"It hurt us, and it helped us," Wolf said, "because those people that were sitting on the bench were well-rested in the second half, and it showed up in the second half."

So did the Little Giants' realization that simply walking into the Shelby High School gymnasium wasn't enough to beat Ashland, which entered the game 4-16.

"It was kind of scary going into halftime tied, because I honestly think we underrated them," said Decker, who led all scorers with 19 points. "I

## Tuesday

Ross .....	44
Ashland .....	36

## Saturday

Ross vs. Mansfield Senior, sectional final at Shelby, 8:15 p.m.

think we kind of came out like, 'Oh, it's going to be an easy game.' We did that against other teams and came out with a loss, and we weren't going to lose this one, because if we did, then we're done."

Instead, Ross advances to meet state-ranked Mansfield Senior in the sectional final on Saturday. The game, which will follow the 6:30 p.m. Mansfield Madison-Tif-

fin Columbian matchup, is a rematch of Senior's 50-41 win at the Purple Pit on Jan. 14.

If Ross is to knock off the Tygers — who are now playing with Dionne Goodwin, the District 6 player of the year who sat out the teams' first meeting — Wolf is going to have to get more of what drove Ross on Tuesday: scoring from Decker, and an opportunistic defense.

Decker entered the game on a hot streak, averaging 14.5 points per game in the final two games of the regular season. She picked up quickly, scoring the game's first four points on offensive putbacks, and finishing the

first quarter with nine points.

"Every time we had a fast break my teammates found me every time," said Decker, who also grabbed a game-high 12 rebounds. "I got in the right places, and they just saw me."

Decker also scored a pair of early buckets in both the third and fourth quarter, giving Ross breathing room.

"She's had three in a row now," Wolf said. "It's real important for her to do that, because Sashay's not shooting the ball real well right now. It's nice to have Alison back playing like that."

See ROSS, B3

# Ross advances to sectional final

## Continued from B1

"Alison's gathering her body, she's not flying around as much, and she's at a better angle, she's not under the basket. Even on defense, she's starting to read things a lot better."

The same could be said for the entire Ross defense Tuesday. After forcing just one turnover in the second quarter, Ross forced eight in the third quarter and 11 in the fourth, as Ashland struggled to get the ball into the front-court.

"I think when we didn't score a little bit, we started to press with the basketball ourselves," said Ashland coach Barry Fortune. "We may have been rushing it a bit much. We didn't get into a good rhythm in the third quarter offensively, and that

rolled into our press break, sometimes we attacked it too slowly, sometimes we attacked it too quickly.

"They didn't win 15 ballgames this year for nothing, they're a good defensive basketball team, and they turned the pressure up a notch."

Ross racked up 16 steals, led by Taneshia McKinstry's six. Schneider had three steals, Price, Decker and Laura Wilson had two apiece and Fallon Bailey had one.

"We took better angles, we weren't behind the ball as much," Wolf said. "When we went in (the locker room at halftime), we stressed to get in the passing lanes and take better angles, and they did a nice job of doing it."

"In the first half, we looked like individuals playing defense,

we weren't playing team defense. At halftime, I told them, 'We've got to play team defense, and we've got to play team offense. If we do it, we'll take control of the game,' and they did a nice job of doing that."

As a team, Ross had a pretty good shooting game, making 20-of-45 field goal attempts (44.4 percent), while limiting Ashland to 14-of-36 shooting (38.9 percent).

Behind Decker's 19, Wilson scored eight points for Ross, Schneider had six, Price had five, Bailey had four and McKinstry had two.

Nichole Marquette scored 14 points to lead Ashland. Kelly Witchen and Candace Kaylor had eight points apiece, and Christy Lohmers added six points.