

# Ross advances to sectional final

By BOB MARKER  
Staff writer

NORWALK — Fremont Ross turned up the pressure and the effort expelled Ashland from the Division I boys basketball tournament Tuesday night at Norwalk Middle School.

The Little Giants trailed by 10 in the third quarter but behind Shane McConnell's 12 fourth-quarter points, Ross overtook the Arrows and posted a 67-57 win in the tournament's first round.

The victory puts the Little Giants into the 6:30 p.m. Friday sectional final against Mansfield Senior, which defeated Tiffin Columbian 90-73 Tuesday.

Ross, after spurting to a 14-9 lead with 1:52 remaining in the first quarter, fell behind 21-14 two minutes into the second period. Steve McAllister and Randy Norris

scored five points apiece for Ashland and the Arrows maintained a four to seven-point cushion the rest of the half, walking off the floor with a 35-29 halftime lead.

"We did not make any major adjustments at halftime," Ross coach Pat McGhee said, "other than we felt like we really had to increase our pressure on defense and force their guards to handle the ball."

"We caused some turnovers and chipped away at the lead with some defense and we rebounded the ball better in the second half. Those were the two things we did better in the second half."

In the second quarter, Ashland took charge of the boards and the lead.

"We were standing around and waiting for the ball to come to us instead of going to the ball and snapping it off aggressively," McGhee said. "We did not snap too

many of them in the second quarter but we went back to doing that better in the third and fourth quarter."

Coupled with the poor rebounding was Ross could not hit a short shot.

"We missed 14 shots in the paint in the first half," McGhee pointed out. "It was not so much they were beating us as we were beating ourselves."

The Little Giants trailed 39-29 before McGhee began to see his team respond to his halftime urgings.

Ross forced five turnovers while scoring 10 straight points. Jeff Green started the run with a tip at the 5:58 mark of the third period. Chris Wolfe followed with two buckets, Green hit another and Todd Clark scored on a breakaway layup off an Ashland turnover, tying the contest at the 3:30 mark.

Grant Fauver stopped the Ross run, hitting two free throws for Ashland but Hector Rodriguez canned a free throw and McConnell gave Ross its first lead since the first quarter on a driving layup. Ashland came back to lead 43-42 at the end of the three quarters but Ross had the tempo in its favor.

After Chad Honaker put Ashland up 45-42, the Little Giants took over. Wolfe hit a free throw and McConnell tied it with two more free tosses with 6:37 remaining in the game. Seventeen seconds later, McConnell launched a 3-point bomb from the left side and Ross never trailed again.

The Little Giants built a 56-51 lead before the Arrows closed to 56-55 but McConnell rifled in another 3-pointer for a 59-55

See ROSS, B-3

## Ross

Continued From B-1

lead with 2:30 to play.

Aaron Crites cut the deficit to 59-57 but the Ross defense forced two turnovers and the Little Gi-

ants made eight consecutive free throws down the stretch to hold off the Arrows.

Ross made 20 of 28 free throws, one of its better efforts.

McConnell had a season-high 23 points, Green 14 and Wolfe 12 for Ross. Crites had 14 for Ashland and Fauver 13, seven below his

average.

"We had too many turnovers in the first half (12) but in the second half, we took care of the ball better and then made the shots," McGhee said. "We just finished the plays."

That was enough to finish Ashland.