

## Giants show improvements, not enough to beat Streaks

BY KEVIN SHIELDS  
Sports writer

WILLARD — For three and a half quarters Friday, Fremont Ross looked like a sectional championship caliber team.

The Little Giants hustled. They got after it on the glass. They defended the inside well and took away a lot of what their archrival Sandusky wanted to do.

But in the final half of the third quarter and most of the fourth period of what turned into a 62-47 win for the Blue Streaks, they showed why they're still one step ahead of the improving Little Giants.

Sandusky, trailing by two with 4:06 remaining in the third quarter, went on 14-4 run to close the third quarter and scored the first seven points of the fourth in the Division I sectional title tilt at Willard High School.

"There was no question we had chances tonight," Little Giants coach Mark Gedeon said. "Starting the game down 10-2 wasn't the best thing for us, but still our kids fought back and got a lead in the second quarter. We finished the half with a 19-10 run.

"Even in the first part of the third quarter for us, things still weren't quite clicking, but it was still a back-and-forth ballgame there."

Ross (9-12) led 21-20 at halftime and traded the lead with Sandusky six times in the early stages of the third quarter. Finally, after Jordan Kidd went 2-of-3 at the foul line after getting fouled on a 3-pointer, Ross led 32-30 with 3:42 left in the third quarter.

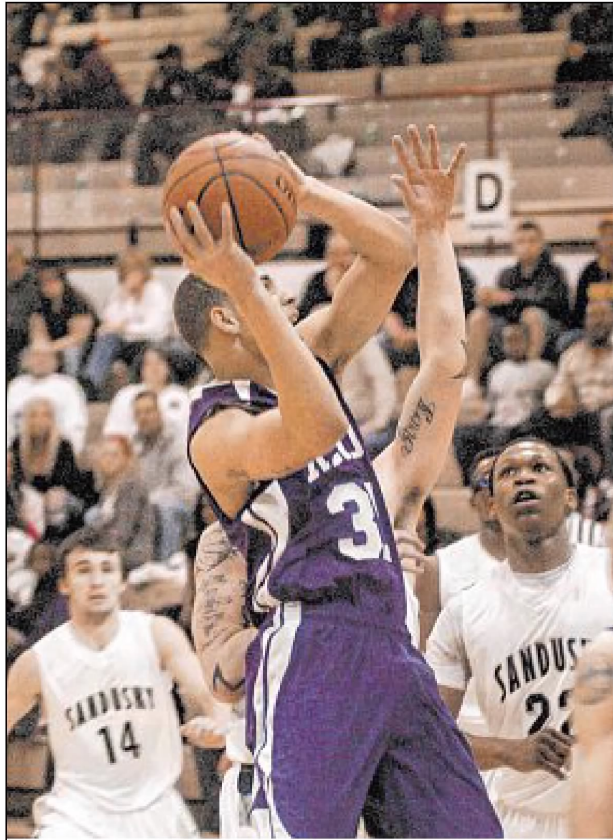
It would be the last time the Little Giants led.

"Unfortunately we had about three straight possessions there where we had major defensive rotation breakdowns," Gedeon said. "Then they hit the two threes and got the and-one and that gave them the comfort zone they needed."

Jay Page and Xavier Turner paced the Blue Streaks (11-12) with 11 points apiece. Page added nine rebounds.

Sandusky's big spark came from Tristen Jeffries, who had eight points, but chipped in seven steals. Dameyion Smith also sparked the Blue Streaks with

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JONATHAN BIRD/NEWS-MESSENGER

Fremont Ross' Jordan Kidd is fouled as he drives to the hoop during the first half of the Div I sectional basketball game against Sandusky on Friday at Willard High School. Kidd made the foul shot completing a three point play.

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eight points off the bench in the second half.

“Dameyion Smith was a huge spark off the bench and then Tristen Jeffries did an excellent job also,” Sandusky coach Steve Keller Jr. said. “We were finally able to find five that played really well together in that second half. I was very pleased with how we finished this basketball game.”

Sandusky led 42-34 after three quarters, they pushed it to 54-39 halfway through the fourth period.

“I thought a key to the game was a new wrinkle we put in, and we were able to get some really good half-court traps in the second half,” Keller said. “We were able to show it after halftime and it created some transitional basketball for us that was critical.”

Early on, Ross took it to the Blue Streaks on defense, with an 18-17 edge on the glass and Shunnar Gamble had 11 boards.

“Fremont did an excellent job,” Keller said. “They really packed it in against us and took away our paint action in the first half.”

Gamble finished with nine points and 16 boards in his final game as a Little Giant. Skylar Refner led Ross with 16 points, adding nine rebounds.

“Shunnar is definitely a talented player,” Gedeon said. “And he’s going to have opportunities to take his game to the next level as a student-athlete in college.”

Jake Hiestand is the other Ross senior.

“You can’t ask for a harder worker than Jake,” Gedeon said. “He’s as true a Little Giant as they come.”

Ross had come into Friday winners of five straight to end the regular season a win shy of .500.

Friday was also the last time the Ross basketball team will officially represent the Greater Buckeye Conference. The Little Giants will move to the Three Rivers Athletic Conference next season, joining former GBC rivals Findlay and Lima Senior and the schools formerly in the Toledo City League that weren’t part of the Toledo Public Schools — Oregon Clay, Whitmer, Toledo Central Catholic, St. Francis, St. John’s, St. Ursula and Notre Dame.

“The TRAC is going to be an outstanding league competitively,” Gedeon said. “It’ll be one of the top five in the state. Our players are going to have to realize that just showing up with that Fremont jersey on isn’t going to get it done.”

Email Kevin Shields at  
kshields@gannett.com.

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