



Quotable

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— Mark Gedeon, Fremont Ross head coach

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— Rick Renz, Old I

Tygers too strong

Davison dominance dooms Little Giants in Div. I sectional final

By TIMOTHY R. WOLFRUM
Sports editor

WILLARD — A fifth consecutive trip to overtime against Mansfield Senior was still well within Fremont Ross's grasp Friday when Terrence Davison ripped it away.

Davison, a 5-foot-10 wing player who had owned the glass all night, scored a rebound bucket with 12 seconds remaining to end Ross's hopes for a comeback and secure a 77-73 victory for the Tygers in the Division I sectional final.



Friday
Mansfield77
Ross.....73

“He just played an aggressive style of basketball, on the offensive boards, dribble penetration, knocking down a big 3 for us,” Mansfield head coach Gregg Collins said of Davison, his team's leading scorer.

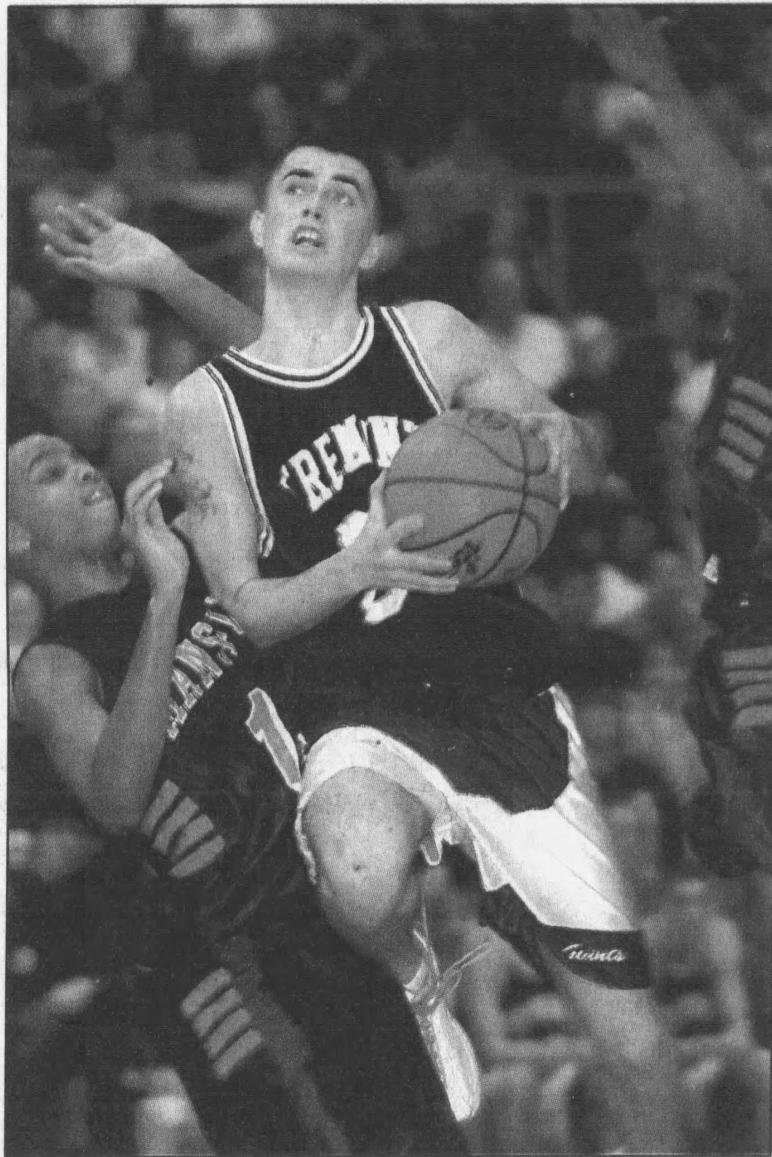
The previous four tournament meetings between Ross and Mansfield had gone to overtime with each team winning two. Friday's game was in doubt until Mansfield's Wayne Merriweather rolled in a free throw with 2.7 seconds remaining to put the Tygers up by the final margin.

But Ross's best chance to tie the game came a few seconds earlier. The Little Giants, who led just once in the second half and trailed by as many as nine points, drew to within 74-71 on a Chad Clark rebound bucket with 27 seconds remaining.

Mansfield broke the Ross press, and Ron Williams broke free for a five-foot jumper. But the ball banged off the back of the rim, giving Ross a chance to tie the game with a 3-pointer.

Enter Davison.
Exit Ross.

“That's one of his strengths,” Ross head coach Mark Gedeon said of Davison's rebounding. “He's such a great athlete and a physical player. He knows how to get to the basketball and to the rim.



LUKE LYLE, right, of Fremont Ross charges into the lane against Kris Mathews of Mansfield during Friday's game at Willard. Lyle led all scorers with 25 points and had 10 assists.
News-Messenger/Ben French

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Ross falls to Tygers, ends 14-8

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"We knew they were going to be very aggressive to the offensive glass. They have great instincts for the basketball. Obviously, we gave them too many second-chance points. We battled them; we competed. Unfortunately, we didn't do the job we needed to win this ballgame."

Mansfield outrebounded the Little Giants 39-24 and pulled down 18 offensive boards to Ross's 7. Davison led all rebounders with 12 to go along with his 18 points, 15 of which came in the second half.

The Tygers (18-3) advance to meet Sandusky (13-9) on Thursday in the district semifinal at Willard. The Blue Streaks overcame second-seeded Ashland, 58-57, in the other semifinal Friday.

Ross junior point guard Luke Lyle led all scorers with 25 points. He added 10 assists. Clark contributed 16 points and a team-high six rebounds, and Lee Root pitched in with 14 points.

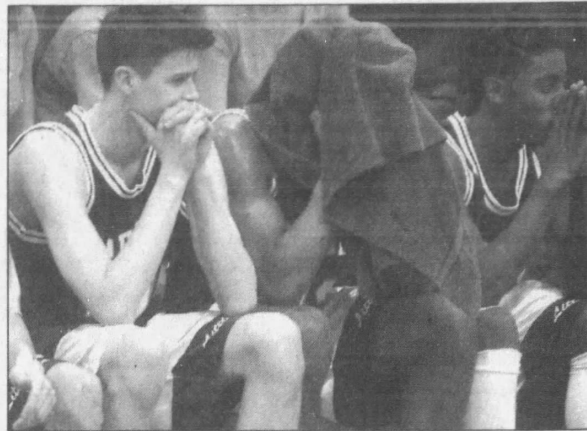
Lyle drove the Little Giants' offense Friday, continually dribbling through traffic and creating shots for himself and his teammates.

"I made the comment to our team that Lyle reminds me a lot of (Mansfield Madison's) Ryan Pore. ... The kid can shoot from the perimeter, he can dribble-penetrate, he plays hard. He just had his way tonight," Collins said.

Said Gedeon of Lyle, "We knew because they put some much pressure on the perimeter, that would open up driving lanes for him. He did give us a spark when we needed it. Obviously, he had a very good game for us.

"He's really started to make a name for himself, getting the accolades that he's deserving of. Hopefully, this trend continues."

Antonio Graves led the Tygers with 24 points, 16 of which came in the first half. Merriweather and Tony Jackson added 10 apiece.



News-Messenger/Ben French

LITTLE GIANTS Dan Thompson, Bo Martin and Kyle Tucker, seated left to right, agonize over Ross's 77-73 loss to Mansfield on Friday night.

Graves, a 6-foot-2 post player, hit 7 of 9 field-goal attempts in the first half and helped Mansfield to three leads of five points.

"Antonio was on fire early," Collins said. "He felt very, very confident. He was shooting the ball well from the perimeter and dribble-penetrated and knocked down the 10- to 15-footer well."

Mansfield led 32-27 with 2:10 remaining in the first half. But the Little Giants rattled off the final five points of the quarter on a trey by Root and a Bo Martin deuce to tie the game at halftime.

Ross took its only lead of the second half at 38-37 on a Lyle drive and bucket with 5:10 remaining in the third quarter.

But the Tygers responded by outscoring the Little Giants 16-6 over the next 3:40. Davison's long 3-pointer from the right corner handed Mansfield its largest lead at 53-44 with 1:30 to play in the period.

Ross got right back into the game, though, spurred by treys from Root and Lyle. Lyle's 3-pointer at the buzzer made it 56-52 Mansfield heading to the fourth.

"When we closed it to four going into the fourth quarter, you felt pretty good because we didn't play a very good third quarter, either offensively or defensively," Gedeon said. "We allowed too many easy opportunities for them to get into the paint."

The Little Giants got as close as 62-61 when Lyle came up with a traditional three-point play. But Davison responded with a three-point play of his own after an offensive rebound.

Ross never had the ball with a chance to tie or take the lead thereafter.

Despite the lack of the traditional overtime, Friday's game was marked by the high intensity and drama of the past games. The two coaches looked forward to future matchups as well.

"You get these two teams together, they each have strong reputations; they're both league champions. The teams are going to play hard, and they're going to play well," Collins said. "The only difference is I look at Fremont, and I see a lot of juniors out there. You look at Ashland, and you see a lot of juniors. Those are the two teams next year that a lot of teams are going to be shooting for."

Said Gedeon, "The tradition will continue. If the players want to put the time and effort into this, it's still going to be one of the top sectionals in the area, period."

Ross finishes its season with a second consecutive Great Lakes League championship, but it saw its string of five consecutive sectional championships come to an end.

Still, Gedeon said a 14-8 season is successful for a team that missed 25 total games to injury and played a schedule that included the likes of No. 1-ranked Toledo St. John's, Ottawa-Glandorf, Willard and Toledo Central Catholic.

"We told our people at the beginning of the year that they were going to see some great basketball. Our kids rose to many challenges," he said. "Knowing that we got beat twice at the buzzer as well, our kids were that close to maybe being one of the better teams in the area."