

Little Giants sent home

By VINCE GUERRIERI
Sports Editor

WILLARD - Early in Friday's sectional final, the Ross boys' basketball team held a lead over Mansfield Senior. The student sections for both schools jockeyed back and forth, but the Ross faithful shouted the ultimate comeback.

"Scoreboard! Scoreboard," they yelled.

It was fun while it lasted.

The Ross boys' basketball team led for much of the first half, but Mansfield Senior ended Ross's season - again - with a 72-61 loss at Willard.

The Tygers (19-2) now hold a 6-2 postseason record over Ross, its former rival in the old Buckeye Conference.

"Anytime these two schools get together, they just battle," said Senior coach Gregg Collins. "The effort was there by both teams. You have to give Fremont credit."

Little Giant coach Mark Gedeon was pleased with the team's performance.

"I'm so proud of these guys," he said. "To compete at such a high level with one of the greatest teams in Northwest Ohio shows a lot of heart."

Cory Clayton, in his final basketball game as a Little Giant, led all scorers with 29 points. Clayton's prominence in the game plan was by design, Gedeon said.

"Cory's a three-year starter and he's been in those battles," Gedeon said. "He can take the pressure."

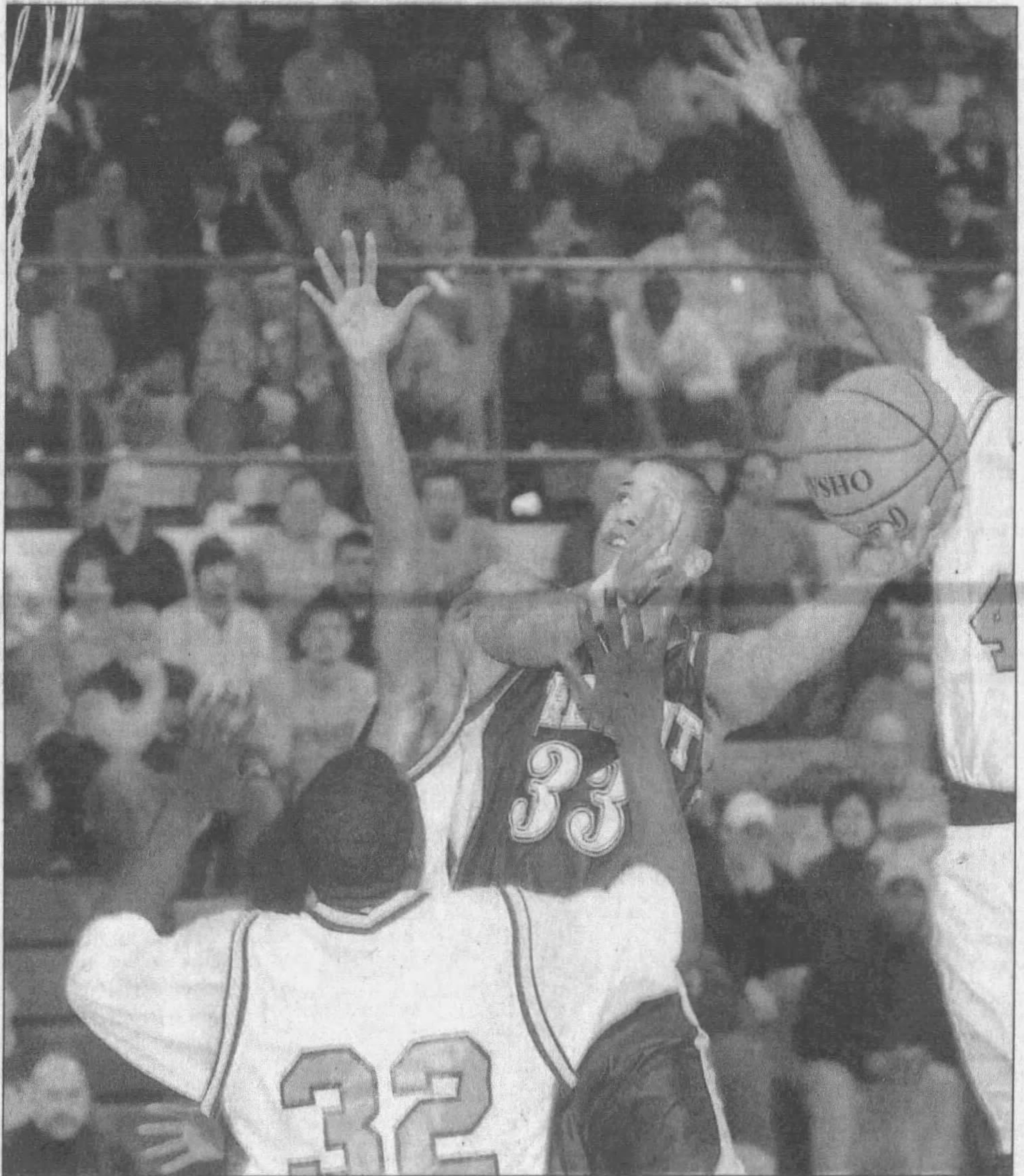
"What a great way to end his career, with a performance like that against tough competition."

Collins' game plan included lots of pressing, but it didn't have much of an effect on Clayton, who scored 12 of his 20 points from the floor in the first quarter.

"They were handling it," he said. "He got some open looks."

The Little Giants were using the long ball in the first half, with two threes by Clayton and one each from Kirt Munson - who finished with 14 points - and Paul Hershey.

"We wanted to force the perimeter shot," Collins said.



Charlie Longton/News-Messenger

LITTLE GIANTS Devin Johnson goes up for two and gets fouled on the way against Mansfield Senior at Willard High School on Friday night.

Senior took their first lead of the night on an Antwoine Smith three, 29-27. On the ensuing possession, the Little Giants turned the ball over. However, the Tygers gave it right back on a traveling call. Clayton hit one of two free throws to close the gap to 29-28 at halftime.

The Tygers widened their lead in the third period before Ryan Croudup - who missed school Friday to attend his

grandmother's funeral - hit a layup, his first points from the floor since he scored the game's opening basket. Croudup then pulled down a defensive board on the other side of the floor, got a fast break and slammed it home to pull the Little Giants within one, 35-34.

However, the Tygers widened their lead with threes, including three in the third by Markeith Johnson and one by Di'Nero

Ramseur just before the buzzer, widening the Senior lead to 48-39.

"You can't take everything away from them," Gedeon said. "They knocked them down, to their credit."

From then on, the Little Giants could get no closer than seven.

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