

FREMONT ROSS WINS THRILLER OVER START



MOLLY CORFMAN/THE NEWS-MESSENGER

Ross' TJ Mason, right, and Toledo Start's Keishawn Syph go after a rebound.

Little Giants rally from down 5 with 11 seconds left to top Toledo Start

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TOLEDO - Fremont Ross could see its season coming to an end. The Little Giants trailed by five points with 11 seconds left. Then, with a pair of timely buckets aided by quick thinking, Ross found new life.

Brandon Trolio nailed a bucket with a toe on the line, and after a steal and assist from Jarren Hampton, Brody Chudzinski hit the game-tying 3-pointer.

Trolio and Chudzinski each hit a key shot in overtime as Ross escaped with a 71-68 win over Toledo Start in a Division I sectional game at Toledo Central Catholic High school on Monday.

"We found a way to win," Chudzinski said. "A lot of people thought we were going to lose after we lost to them the first time, but I thought we played a lot better tonight."

The Little Giants improve to 8-15 and advance to a sectional semifinal matchup with second-ranked Lima

Senior (22-0) on Wednesday back at Toledo Central Catholic. The Spartans end their season at 3-18.

"We got down seven points and we took a timeout and told the kids they had to be aggressive," Ross coach Mark Gedeon said. "Start made free throws down the stretch to really force us to make shots. We hit some 3s. Jarren Hampton make a big play defensively, knowing where to be and making a smart play by kicking it out to Brody."

Chudzinski's 3-pointer sent the Ross crowd into a frenzy, as many thought Trolio's shot was also a 3-pointer, as was announced by the announcer. The officials talked it over and correctly ruled the game to be tied with one second left on the clock. Start inbounded, but a 3-point heave was well short, sending the game to overtime.

"We had some careless turnovers in the fourth quarter," Gedeon said. "Thankfully, the 3-point line was our friend in the end."

Keishawn Syph, who had hit four straight free throws in the final 45 seconds of regulation, hit two more and Jacoby Myers scored to put Start ahead, 68-64, with 2:28 left in overtime. Trolio, who had struggled with his shot for the first three-plus quarters, drilled a 3-pointer to draw the Little Gi-

ants within a point. After Start committed one of its 21 turnovers on the night, Chudzinski airballed a 3-pointer, but the Spartans missed on an opportunity to extend the lead on the other end.

As all good shooters do, Chudzinski used his best short-term memory loss. He hit his seventh 3-pointer on the night to put Ross ahead, 70-68.

"We did a nice job reversing the ball on that play with Brody," said Gedeon. "We made an extra pass to get it to him in the corner and he made it."

The teams exchanged turnovers before a jump ball gave the Little Giants possession. Taylor Druckenmiller was fouled and made the second of the two free throws. After a Start timeout, a 3-pointer by Deonte Henderson, who had made two 3s earlier, was short, sending the Ross crowd into a frenzy, for real this time.

"Early on, I thought our game plan to get it inside was good," said Gedeon. "Steven Blodgett did a nice job for us early and we got them in the double bonus quickly and we were aggressive. All of a sudden, we wanted to be an outside team and that didn't work. I wanted to see us attack and frustrate them."

Ross took a 45-43 lead when Blodgett made a pair of free throws to fin-

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ish off a 8-0 run by the Little Giants in the third quarter. Start responded with 11 of the next 13 points to build a 54-47 margin with 4:32 left.

Chudzinski hit a 3-pointer, but a bucket by Jahneil Douglas pushed the Start lead back to 56-50 with 1:46 left.

Hampton sliced the lead in half with a 3-pointer but later, two free throws by Syph gave Start a 62-56 lead with 31 seconds left.

Hampton made a 3-pointer and Gedeon called timeout. Myers made two free throws for a 64-59 lead, setting up the improbable finish for Ross.

Start defeated Ross earlier in the season, 69-50, in Fremont.

"Xavier is great and we have to stop him."

BRODY CHUDZINSKI
FREMONT ROSS

"We were extremely selfish that night and tonight, we played much better and made good passes," Gedeon said. "We played poorly defensively the first time. They hit some shots because we weren't aggressive defensively."

Chudzinski topped the Little Giants with 21 points, while Blodgett had 13 points. Hampton tallied 10 points and Tavarious Simms had nine rebounds.

Ross advances to meet fellow Three Riv-

ers Athletic Conference member in Lima Senior, who blasted Ross, 103-57 in Fremont on Dec. 15, and 103-54 in Lima on Feb. 2.

"Our goal is to play better and we have to if we want to win," said Gedeon. "The nice part is we've played twice already. Their goal is to get to Columbus for the state semifinals. We have the mentality of what to expect, but we have to compete better and be aggressive."

Lima is led by University of Michigan verbal commit Xavier Simpson. He scored a school-record 59 points in the first meeting, only to top it with 64 points in the second meeting.

"Xavier is great and we have to stop him," said Chudzinski. "We know we have to execute if we want to beat them. We have to make shots like we did tonight."