

Heidelberg delivers sectional title

Ross guard scores 32 points in tournament win against Northview

By BRIAN SPIESS
Sports editor

TOLEDO — Wednesday's hazardous waste spill on the Ohio Turnpike near Fremont snarled traffic and delayed Fremont Ross's trip to Toledo Waite for a sectional basketball game against Sylvania Northview.

Once the Little Giants arrived, however, there was little anyone could do to slow down Joell Heidelberg.

Heidelberg, continuing a knack for excelling in important games, scored a career-high 32 points as Ross beat the Wildcats 72-67 for a sectional title in a game marked by pivotal spurts.

Each team had five runs of 5-0 or better, with Ross pulling away for good with a 6-0 run to take a 60-54 lead midway through the final quarter.

The Little Giants (14-7) advance to play in the district semifinals March 12 against the winner of Friday's game between Bowling Green and Toledo St. John's.

Northview's season ends at 11-10. And the Wildcats have plenty of memories of Heidelberg to haunt them in the offseason.

"He's a player," Northview coach Dennis Shoemaker said of the 5-foot-11 junior. "We knew he

could score, we knew he could penetrate and we knew he could shoot 3-pointers.

"We thought we needed to keep him under 30. Obviously, we didn't do that."

Heidelberg made five 3-point shots in the first three quarters and made 7 of 8 free-throw attempts in the fourth to seal the win.

"The big-time players do big things in big-time games," Ross coach Mark Gedeon said. "It's part of the nice maturation process."

As a sophomore, Heidelberg played his best basketball in the postseason, finding his 3-point range just in time to help the Little Giants to sectional and district championships. This season Heidelberg scored 29 points in both wins against a talented Sandusky team.

Heidelberg admitted his attitude changes for March Madness.

"In a tournament game, you know that if you lose, it's your last game," said Heidelberg, who averaged 16.4 points per game in the regular season.

But Heidelberg's heroics — he scored 17 points in the first half —

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Giants' next game: March 12

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TOLEDO — The eight basketball players who graduated from Fremont Ross last spring must have left a little postseason magic behind.

The 1996-97 team used experience and patience to win both a sectional and district championship. This year's version — less experienced but more athletic — brought home another sectional championship Wednesday when Ross defeated Sylvania Northview 72-67 at Toledo Waite.

Is the repeat success surprising?

"If this was early in the year, I'd say so ... But right now it's coming together," said Reggie Jones, a sophomore who played on last year's team.

The Little Giants advanced to the district semifinals March 12, when they will meet the winner of the Bowling Green-Toledo St. John's game to be played Friday at Waite.

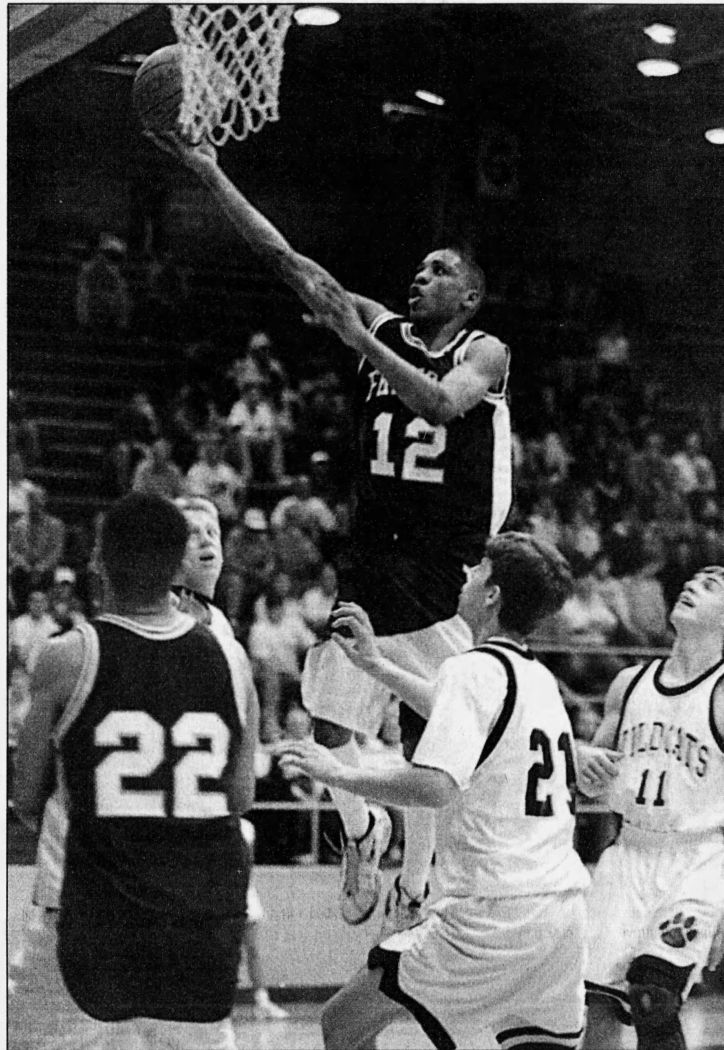
Ross will be waiting — and watching.

Coach Mark Gedeon plans to practice Friday, feed his team pizza and then shuttle players to the other sectional title game to scout.

Northview coach Dennis Shoemaker said the Little Giants, winners of six straight, have a chance to go deep into the tournament.

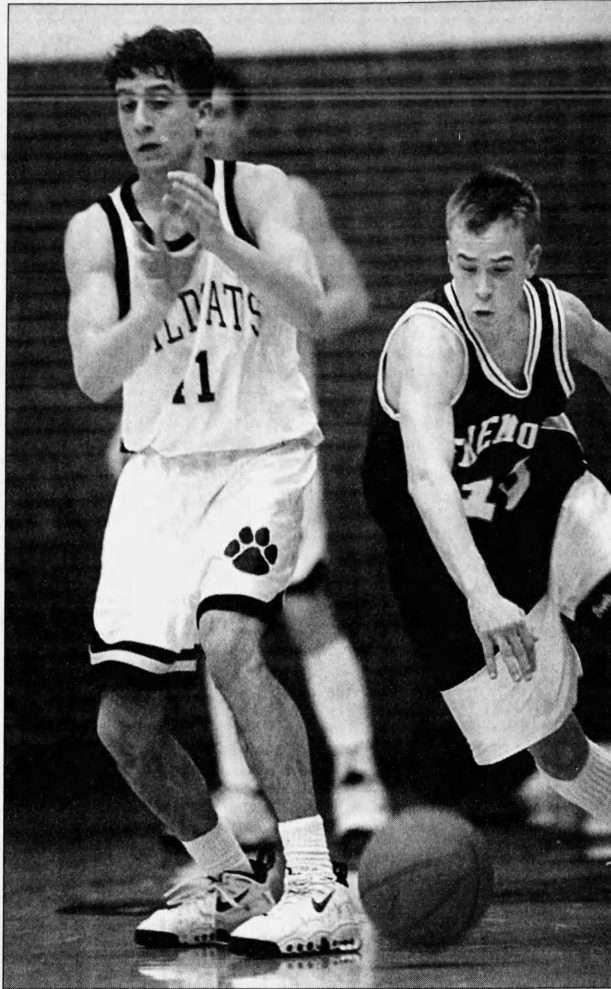
"They match up well with Bowling Green and St. John's because of their quickness," Shoemaker said.

■ Wednesday's scores, B2



News-Messenger/Andrew Morrison

JOELL HEIDELBURG of Fremont Ross drives for two of his seven first-quarter points Wednesday against Sylvania Northview. Heidelberg finished with a career-high 32 points in Ross's 72-67 sectional win at Toledo Waite.



News-Messenger/Andrew Morrison

ROBB RITZMAN of Fremont Ross steals the ball from Sylvania Northview's Andrew Huntzinger during the third quarter of Wednesday's sectional title game at Waite.

Ross reaches districts

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were not enough to put away the Wildcats, who stayed close in part because of the inside-outside duo of Mike Pierce and Eric Zare.

Pierce, a 6-5 senior center, scored 10 first-half points and Zare drained three 3-pointers as the teams battled to a 32-32 tie.

Ross implemented a mixture of zone and man-to-man defenses in the second half to limit Pierce's output.

The first surge of the third quarter belonged to Northview, which scored eight straight points to erase a three-point deficit and take a 42-37 lead.

Ross responded, closing the quarter with a 17-5 run that featured six points from Heidelberg, five from Tyson Liggins and four from Reggie Jones. Ross led 54-47 entering the final eight minutes of play.

Brock Rieger hit a 3-pointer and a 2-point field goal and Zare made a jump shot to start the fourth quarter for Sylvania, tying the game at 54-all.

But Jones, who scored all 11 of his points in the first half, scored on a

post-up move for Ross. Heidelberg followed hit both ends of the bonus on Ross's next trip and Jones scored off of an offensive rebound after that as the Little Giants reclaimed a six-point advantage. Heidelberg added five more free throws and a jump shot in the final minutes as Northview drew no closer than four points.

"We executed pretty well, but their quickness really hurt us," Shoemaker said. "I told our guys that if (Ross) scored over 70 points, they were going to win."

NOTES: The turnpike accident was reported at 1:58 p.m. and both eastbound and westbound lanes were closed for the cleanup of phosphoric acid. Coach Mark Gedeon called Waite High School officials from the turnpike to let them know the Little Giants might arrive late. Ross was in Toledo by 5:45 p.m. for the 6:30 game, however. ... Mike Pierce and Eric Zare finished with 18 points apiece for Northview. Ross's Tyson Liggins scored 12 points to join teammates Joell Heidelberg and Reggie Jones in double figures.