

NOTRE DAME ACADEMY 59,
FREMONT ROSS 24

Showing progress at end of season

Little Giants coach
encouraged by young
team's growth

By Rich McGowan
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Juan Vela

TOLEDO — From where his team started back in November, Juan Vela doesn't have to look hard to see improvement.

Vela's Fremont Ross girls basketball team entered the season long on youth and short on varsity experience with just three returning letter-winners. While the Little Giants' still have a game yet to play Thursday — a make-up against rival Findlay — Ross got a glimpse of how far there is yet to go to contend with the elite.

Notre Dame Academy, the Three Rivers Athletic Conference champion that is ranked No. 7 in the state, and the top seed in the Division 1 sectional tournament, ended Ross' postseason. The Eagles defeated the Little Giants 59-24 at Toledo Central Catholic High School.

While Ross (6-17 overall) still has a chance to close its season on a high note with its make-up game against Findlay, Vela has seen enough development to be encouraged heading into the offseason.

"Most of our wins came in the second half of the season," Vela said. "In the beginning of the season we had very young girls, immature, didn't know how to handle the game emotionally, especially against the level of competition that we play. Toward the second half of the season, you could see the maturity level and the basketball IQ getting better."

Among the lessons learned was playing — and winning — in the tournament. Ross advanced to play Notre Dame having defeated St. Ursula, 40-36, in the opening round on Monday.

Vela is encouraged by the development of his players, particularly junior guard Lexi Holmes.

"She controls the ball better," Vela said of Holmes. "She changes speed, she looks and tries to get her teammates open. And at the beginning of the year she didn't, she had one speed — 110 miles-an-hour straight to the ball. She's matured and a lot of our girls have matured."

While Ross' lone senior, Torri Holmes, will be playing her final game Thursday, the rest of the Little Giants' roster is expected back next year. Vela is hopeful to see even more progress in the offseason, particularly shooting the ball. The Little Giants shot a little over 30 percent from the field.

"To be able to be competitive you have to shoot the ball a lot better than that," Vela said. "Shooting is a skill you don't just pick up overnight or over a week. I'm hopeful our girls enjoy the sport enough to work on their game."

Fremont Ross

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I've talked to some of them already, and they're willing to do that."

Sophomore Matallyn Overmyer was the only Little Giants to score more than one field goal Wednesday and led Ross with four points.

Dorian Miller and Kaayla McIntyre led a balanced NDA scoring attack, each scoring 10 points for the Eagles

(21-2 overall). Christian Jefferson had six assists.

"Defensively, we were sitting on our spots and we never really tried to make things happen," Vela said. "Against a team like that we can't wait for them to make a mistake because it's not going to happen. I told my girls you've to gamble but you have to be smart."

"Those are little things we have to get better at."

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