

# Tygers' defense too much

Down two at halftime, Little Giants outscored 16-5 in third

By KYLE TIMMONS  
News-Messenger correspondent

WILLARD — Thursday's district semi-final match-up between Fremont Ross and second-ranked Mansfield Senior resembled a heavy-weight, knockdown battle.

But it was the Tygers delivering the knockout punch on defense in the third quarter, as they knocked the Little Giants out of the tournament with a 58-45 victory at Willard — the Tygers' third straight win in the postseason series between the two teams.

Mansfield's ferocious de-

fensive attack caused 11 Fremont turnovers as they outscored the Little Giants 16-5 in the quarter and ran away with the victory.

"That's the key," Mansfield coach Greg Collins said of his team's attacking style of defense. "We knew that whoever got the easiest baskets would win.

"For (Ross), they want to get the ball inside to Gries. Our way is to get steals and get transition lay-ups. That's the key, to get points off defense."

Things weren't so easy though early on for the Tygers, as it took them nearly five and a half minutes to score their first field goal as the Little Giants asserted themselves defensively and kept Mansfield's shooters in check.

Fremont junior Cory Clayton threw the game's opening punch early with a basket as the Little Giants began the game with a 4-0

lead as senior guard Trayvon Wolverton added another basket.

Midway through the first quarter Mansfield's Jarmel Sutton put the Tygers (21-1) on the scoreboard with two free throws and it wasn't until two minutes later that Dwaine Lentes tied the ballgame at 4 with 2:34 left in the opening period.

Following another Lentes' basket, Little Giant senior Adam Gries earned his first two points.

Mansfield would outscore Fremont the remainder of the quarter 6-3 and the Tygers won the opening quarter 12-9.

The Tygers then opened a 14-9 lead on a Rashad Reed basket and the Little Giants faced their biggest deficit of the opening half.

But it didn't take Fremont long to rebound as Clayton added two more of his 12 points and teammate Travis Miller nailed a 3-

point shot as the Little Giants tied the game back up at 14.

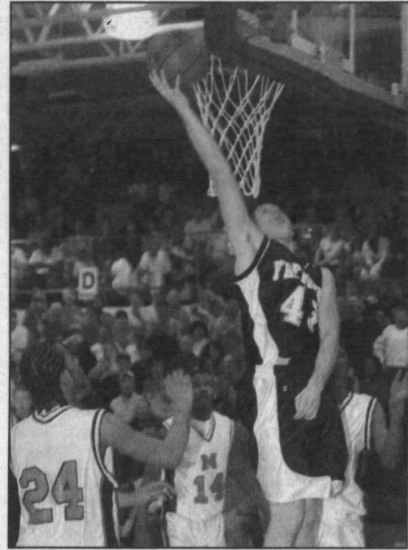
It was Miller's only basket of the night and Fremont's only 3-pointer in the contest.

On Fremont's next possession, Gries powered his way for his only two points of the second quarter and Clayton added another basket to give the Little Giants an 18-14 lead, capping a 9-0 run.

"When you have all that time when Adam doesn't even get a shot for a long time, it hurts," said Ross coach Mark Gedeon. "We were definitely a little tentative at times tonight."

Gries led Fremont (16-6) with 14 points, playing in his final game with seven other seniors.

Mansfield responded with a big run of their own, scoring seven unanswered



News-Messenger/Jennifer Young-Bower

ROSS'S RYAN OTTNEY goes up for a shot against Mansfield Senior on Thursday. The Little Giants lost.

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# Ross falls to Mansfield

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points, led by Reed who finished the game with 15 points.

With just two second remaining in the half, sophomore Ryan Croudup drove through the lane and scored two of his eight points as he was fouled.

Croudup missed his free throw attempt and the Tygers had a 24-22 half-time lead.

Croudup and Gries each tallied baskets to keep the Little Giants in the game at 26-26 before the Mansfield defense took over causing several Fremont miscues.

Gedeon attributed the loss to Mansfield's defensive intensity as Fremont collapsed under Mansfield's defensive prowess.

"It was a big difference," Gedeon said of the Tygers' defense. "We knew that was their strength, their quickness and the intensity that they bring.

"Unfortunately, the way the game was called, that was not to our liking. We've

got to be able to dribble unimpeded there and my definition of 'unimpeded' is a little bit different for myself, as opposed to some other people here."

Reed dropped in a 3-point shot and Jarmel Sutton dropped in two buckets to spark a 14-0 run spanning most of the third quarter and the Tygers found themselves up 40-27 entering the final quarter.

After opening up a 19 point lead on a right-handed dunk by Sutton the Tygers knew they had the game in check.

Clayton, Croudup and Gries each mustered two baskets in the final quarter but to no avail.

"Gries is a tough player," Collins said. "To contain him at all, you have to put more than two players on him."

Clayton's fourth quarter buckets brought Fremont to within 11 points at 52-41 with about three minutes left but that would be the closest the Little Giants would get.

Seniors Aaron Opelt and Wolverton each finished with two points in the game.