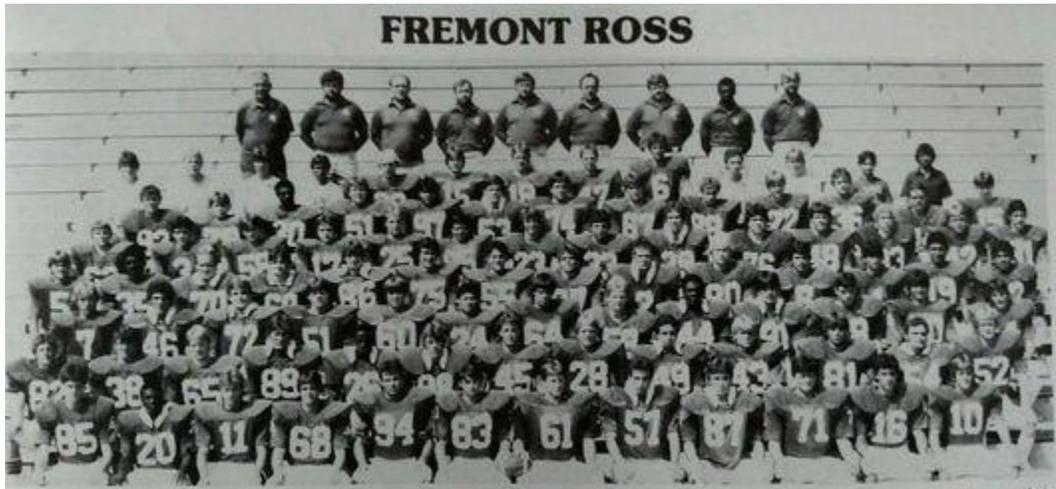


Ross' win on ice-cold field in 1983 is frozen in time

Matthew Horn Published 11:36 a.m. ET Aug. 17, 2018 | Updated 3:33 p.m. ET Aug. 17, 2018

Little Giants' only postseason victory was 7-0 defeat of Sandusky



(Photo: Submitted)
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Fremont Ross' football team didn't have any stars in the senior class in 1983.

Instead, senior Brian Lenz might epitomize the group. Every player's role was important to coach Pete Moore and the team's success.

And it was the only Little Giants team in program history to win a postseason game.

"Coach counted on him for a good scout look," senior tight end/defensive end Jerry Manahan said of Lenz. "He didn't want to let the team down."

Lenz rarely played on Friday.

"I wasn't the talented guy," Lenz said. "Typical scout-team role. Every time we ran a reverse or counter, he wanted me. Some teams (Sandusky) had that as their bread-and-butter.

"I was in the huddle with sophomores. Everybody knew I was getting the ball after he yelled, 'Counter.' I did my best. He had that respect for me and that was my role. There were rewards."

Lenz was 5-foot-11 and 150 pounds. Moore often thanked him.

"We ran power-I," Lenz said. "I had to clean out a linebacker. I knew that. My job was important no matter who was in the game. When you got in you had to go to the best of your ability."

"We were a bunch of guys with average athletic ability who were close-knit. Close to 30 guys hung out. Pete used to say we were average but smart and we executed. We didn't have a superstar."

Manahan, the team's largest lineman at 6-4 and 200 pounds, was second-team all-Buckeye Conference on both sides of the ball. Senior defensive back Jim Hufford, defensive lineman Rod Lanning and guard Adam Calabrese and junior linebacker Derek Isaman and defensive end Chris Simmons were first-team.

Senior offensive lineman Terry O'Farrell, quarterback Kevin Wilhelm, running back Jeff Gentry, linebacker Stacy Swaisgood and defensive back Gene Simmons were second-team.

Manahan, Chris Simmons, Hufford, Calabrese and Lanning played both ways. Hufford had eight interceptions.

"Having two linebackers who played in the Big Ten is huge," junior offensive lineman Ryan Brant said of Isaman and Chris Simmons, who continued their careers at Ohio State and Michigan, respectively.

"It was a team effort. We were loaded on the defensive side. It was incredible."

The Little Giants allowed only 45 points, with six shutouts, before a 35-3 setback to Cincinnati Princeton in the state semifinals.

Defensive back Mike Wolf and Calabrese were captains in 1983. Calabrese played the clarinet in the concert band and played the lead role in the senior play, "Fiddler on the Roof."

Shawn McCarthy was Ross' placekicker as a sophomore and quarterback his final two years. He punted for New England in the NFL, but the standout memory of his career is an extra point to beat Lorain Admiral King.

"We were truly little giants," Manahan said. "We weren't bigger, stronger and faster, but it was a team concept playing together as one. It was a group of great guys but there wasn't a (Rob) Lytle or (Charles) Woodson.

"Isaman and Simmons were juniors. We didn't have the individuals."

Narrowly missed postseasons

Manahan's older brother, Scott Manahan, graduated in 1981 after the Little Giants narrowly missed qualifying for the playoffs his final two years. Ross was 3-7 in 1982, although the junior varsity was 8-0.

"That was un-Fremont-Ross-like," Brant said. "We lacked leadership in the senior class in 1982. The seniors took the bull by the horns and said we're better and we're going to turn it around.

"Everybody rallied around 3-7 being a fluke for Fremont Ross football."

The seniors sat down as a group several times and decided to be successful.

"That wouldn't happen again," Manahan said. "That wasn't acceptable. We felt we let a lot of people down doing that. Everybody worked hard in the offseason. Everybody came together.

"The offense didn't have to make too many plays. Just make enough and don't turn it over."

Ross finished 10-1-1, including a 7-7 tie with visiting Toledo St. Francis in Week 3. Hufford caught a late touchdown pass.

The Little Giants beat Sandusky 7-0 in Week 10 to clinch the Buckeye Conference and regional crowns and a spot in the postseason, when only the top two teams in each region qualified. Scott Manahan was filled with pride, and a little jealousy.

St. Francis was ranked ahead of Ross in a newspaper poll following the regular season, despite Ross winning the region. The Little Giants used it as motivation.

Ross hosted Sandusky in Week 11, and again won 7-0 as Todd Beatty scored the touchdown on a frozen field.

"Beat them once, you love it," Brant said. "Beat them twice and it really makes your year."

The members of the 1983 team don't want to be a solo act any longer.

"We've discussed that," Manahan said. "We'd love to see a Ross team go a long way. We're alumni. We'd love to see that happen. We hope people come to the reunion and come back for the postseason.

"We're proud, but we don't need to keep that. We'd love to have other teams be more successful."

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