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Football: Wide receiver injury to affect Ross line up

BY JEFF ARENZ

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FREMONT -- Fremont Ross wide receiver/cornerback Greg Brown could have a pivotal role when the Little Giants line up against Tiffin Columbian on Friday night at Don Paul Stadium.

Ross coach Derek Kidwell announced Wednesday that Justin Hines, another starter at wide receiver and at cornerback for the Little Giants, could miss as many as six weeks after suffering a broken arm.

"Without Justin, we have a starting cornerback that's off the field," Kidwell said. "We have to replace what he does for us because he's also a wideout and on special teams. I hate to see an injury to a senior that is as gifted and has worked as hard as Justin. But it gives someone an opportunity to step up, get playing experience and make the best of a bad situation."

Kickoff for this non-conference football rivalry game is scheduled for 7:30 p.m. Friday.

Brown, a junior who has verbally committed to attend Michigan, leads the Little Giants with five catches for 96 yards and a touchdown. Hines has three receptions for 24 yards while running back James Aaron Spencer has made three grabs for seven yards. If Brown draws double-teams from the Tornadoes' defense, Brett Mierke (1 reception-20 yards), Kyle Damman (2-28), Mikel Stanley (1-19, 1 TD) and Skylar Refner (1-15) must step up for Ross.

Columbian coach Steve Gilbert has circled Brown as a Little Giant of interest.

"The big thing is that we need to find out how they're going to cover us," Gilbert said. "We're going to go with a lot of three and four wide receivers. We want to find out where Brown is playing on both sides of the because that's going to be critical."

Still, Ross has another weapon it can employ. Spencer is averaging 158 yards per game after rushing for efforts of 150 and 166 yards, respectively, this season.

"We have to be sound in our running game and we have to dictate the tempo," Gilbert said. "The biggest change over the last couple of years is Ross's ability to run the football. It makes their offense much more dangerous because they're not one-dimensional."

When the Little Giants use their passing attack, quarterback Cody Foos is 16-of-35 for 215 yards with two touchdowns and four interceptions. He has also ran for another TD.

Tornadoes' quarterback Ryan Tittle, running back Tyler Ward and wide receiver/kick returner Derek Kneeskern are players Ross is looking to hold in check.

"Our defense has to reward itself by getting off the field after third down by allowing our special teams to make a donation to the game and getting our offense on the field," Kidwell said. "While we're on defense, we have to watch out for Kneeskern, who is an outstanding football player, for Ward, who had a very good game against Madison and is very scatty, and we have to take care of getting to the quarterback (Tittle)."

During a 39-23 home win over Mansfield Madison on Friday, Kneeskern ran back a kickoff 99 yards for a first-quarter TD after the Rams took a 7-0 lead. Ward scored three touchdowns (two rushing,

one receiving) versus the Rams while running seven times for 140 yards.

Tittle is 12-of-22 for 229 yards with three touchdowns and three interceptions this season. Ward adds 10 carries for 151 yards and three TDs (two rushing, one receiving) while Kneeskern has made three catches for 120 yards and two touchdowns.

Columbian could also be without several players -- linemen Eric Brown (shoulder) and Cole McClung (dislocated elbow), Caden Chapman (torn anterior cruciate ligament), Ryan Koerper (torn anterior cruciate ligament) and Kimp Patillo (shoulder) -- who are nursing injuries.

Ross, which won last year's game 28-6 at Frost-Kalnow Stadium in Tiffin, leads the all-time series against Columbian 35-17-2.



Fremont Ross High School's Greg Brown turns the corner for a gain during the second quarter of a football game against Toledo Whitmer on Sept. 4. (Jonathon Bird | News-Messenger)