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Fremont Ross faces Findlay

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FREMONT -- As Findlay and Fremont Ross begin the Greater Buckeye Conference football season, both squads are eyeing a league championship.

The Trojans (1-4), the defending conference titlists, and the Little Giants (4-1), the favorite to claim this year's crown, meet at 7:30 p.m. Friday at Don Paul Stadium as Ross celebrates its 2009 Homecoming.

Little Giants coach Derek Kidwell knows his team will not have any trouble focusing on Findlay.

"Our kids and our programs respect each other, but there isn't any love lost between us," Kidwell said. "We remember walking off the field last year feeling defeated and knowing that we lost some of our goals. We will be ready to go Friday."

After 86 meetings, the Little Giants hold a 52-31-3 advantage in the all-time series with Findlay. But this game has become a decent rivalry in recent years.

"For Ross and for us, the league race gives us an opportunity to regroup after playing against some good nonconference schedules," Trojans coach Mark Ritzler said. "We have to put our first five games behind us because winning the GBC is based on what we do right now. With all of Fremont's returning players, they are thought of as the (GBC) favorites ... as well they should be. We were able to pull it out last year and we would like to defend that title."

Findlay has played a rough nonconference schedule again this season. The Trojans have lost to Toledo St. John's Jesuit (28-9), Toledo St. Francis DeSales (14-7), Cincinnati Bishop Moeller (49-7) and Columbus St. Francis DeSales (56-26). Findlay's only win was a 24-7 decision against Upper Arlington.

Bishop Moeller (5-0) is ranked No. 3 in the latest Division I poll while Toledo St. Francis DeSales (5-0) is rated No. 5 in Division II.

In 2008, the Trojans were 1-4 before running the GBC table to capture an undefeated league championship during a 6-4 season.

Kidwell would like to see the Little Giants play with more consistency, but has seen Ross improve in many areas.

"It's been an inconsistent season but, luckily for us, we have playmakers that make plays that put points up on the scoreboard," Kidwell said. "By no means have we been consistent. But our defense is getting better, our younger guys are getting on the field and growing into their positions and our special teams coverage has improved."

Still, the Little Giants lead the GBC in total offense at 340.5 yards per game and stand second in the league in total defense at 256.5 yards per game. On Friday, a consistent rushing attack could propel Ross to victory.

"(Findlay) has struggled to stop the run and we're going to see if that holds true," Kidwell said. "We're

going to give them a heavy dose of Aaron Spencer, Cody Foos, Greg Brown and Tylor Trautwein. We want to run the ball to see if it will set up some passing opportunities."

The Trojans have allowed 255 yards per game against the run and have yielded 348.25 total yards per game this season. They will be facing a Little Giants' rushing offense that averages 195 yards per game and is led by Spencer, who leads the GBC with 502 yards and five touchdowns on the ground.

Foos, who has rushed for 124 yards and three TDs, guides a passing attack that has completed 53 of 99 attempts for 753 yards with seven touchdowns and seven interceptions. Brown has been Foos' best wideout after hauling in 16 catches for 308 yards and five TDs. In recent weeks, Mikel Stanley (12 catches, 180 yards, 1 TD) and Kyle Damman (8 catches, 113 yards, 0 TDs) have also emerged as targets.

The Trojans have regrouped from losing a talented senior class in 2008 with a younger lineup this season.

Senior Michael Alexander has 159 yards rushing and one TD on 40 carries this season while sophomore Ben Kupferberg adds 165 yards and one TD on 46 carries. With an average of 96.75 yards rushing and an average of 185.25 total yards, Findlay ranks last in the GBC in both categories.

"We have shown to be a run-first team," Ritzler said. "When we have been able to run the ball well, we're going to keep it on the ground. If we have to throw the ball, we would like to do it 10 or 15 times a game."

Sophomore quarterback Matt Price has completed 12-of-21 passes for 85 yards with no touchdowns and three interceptions. Senior Zach Crawford has hauled in 25 receptions for 208 yards and two TDs and junior Cody Ramsey adds 14 catches for 138 yards and two TDs.
