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Little Giants fall at home

BY JEFF ARENZ

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FREMONT -- Running back Brandon Hummer carried Napoleon to a 28-14 Greater Buckeye Conference win against Fremont Ross on Friday night at Don Paul Stadium.

Hummer, who had 30 rushing attempts for 182 yards, scored three fourth-quarter touchdowns for the Wildcats, who trailed 14-7 entering the final period.

"All the credit goes to our offensive line, because I didn't have to do any work," Hummer said. "It was all on them for opening up the holes and pushing back the Ross defenders."

Hummer scored on runs of 2, 4 and 6 yards. He was part of a Wildcats rushing attack that outrushed the Little Giants 300-61 and outgained them 341-139 overall.

"We can't keep our defense on the field," Ross coach Derek Kidwell said. "In the second half, it was all about execution and our offense was horrible. Our offensive line didn't show up because we let (Napoleon's) defensive linemen get free and we couldn't sustain anything in our running."

After amassing 113 yards of total offense in the first half, the Little Giants (4-4 overall, 0-3 GBC) were held to 26 yards and punted four times during the final 24 minutes.

The Wildcats (7-1, 3-0) pressured Ross quarterback Cody Foos with defensive lineman Joel Spurgeon, who sacked the Little Giants signal-caller five times in the contest.

"When you struggle to give your running back lanes, you're going to struggle offensively," Kidwell said. "Our offense put our defense in a bad situation in the second half because they were on the field constantly."

With 11:56 left, Hummer capped a 10-play, 51-yard Napoleon drive that ended with a 4-yard TD run and tied the game at 14. On fourth-and-1 at the Ross 12 near the end of the third quarter, he kept the Wildcats' possession alive with an 8-yard run.

After Napoleon forced Ross to punt on its next possession, Hummer and John Weaver, who had 83 yards on 12 carries, guided Napoleon's ground game during a five-play, 52-yard drive. Weaver advanced the ball to the Ross 14 after running for 9 yards and picking up a Little Giants' personal foul penalty.

Three plays later, Hummer's 2-yard TD run gave the Wildcats a 21-14 lead with 7:52 left. Napoleon extended its lead to 28-14 when Hummer ran around the right end for a 6-yard TD as 2:52 remained.

"One of my college football coaches, Denny Phillips, who was at Bluffton University for about 20 years, was here tonight," Napoleon coach Tory Strock said. "When we came out after the half, I said, 'Coach Phillips, what do you think? Do you think we're okay?' He said, 'Are you kidding me? Your team is tougher.'"

Strock said when he conveyed that conversation to his players, they responded with high intensity.

This season, the Wildcats have outscored their opponents 90-3 in the fourth quarter.

Punt returns set up both Ross TDs. Greg Brown's 22-yard return in the first quarter put the Little Giants on the Napoleon 41. In two plays, James Aaron Spencer ran for gains of 26 and 15 yards, which put Ross ahead 6-0 just 1:44 into the game.

After the Wildcats' grabbed a 7-6 lead on quarterback Nick Rettig's 15-yard second-quarter run, Tylor Trautwein's 47-yard punt return handed Ross a short field at the Napoleon 28.

Facing a third-and-9 at the Wildcats' 16, Foos passed for 14 yards to Spencer as Ross converted for a first down. The toss set up Spencer's second TD run -- this one from 2 yards out -- with 40 seconds left before intermission.

The Little Giants led 14-7 at halftime after Foos connected with Spencer for a 2-point conversion. Spencer led the Ross offense with 85 yards on 15 carries. Foos passed for 78 yards on 9-of-16 attempts while Mikel Stanley made four catches for 35 yards.



Cody Foos, of Fremont Ross, is sandwiched by two tacklers during Friday night's Greater Buckeye Conference game against Napoleon. (Doug Hise | News-Messenger correspondent)