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Little Giants try to right themselves in lopsided series

BY JEFF ARENZ

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FREMONT -- Cleveland Benedictine has been able to do what few football teams have done against Fremont Ross -- dominate the Little Giants.

Heading into a Week 4 matchup at 7:30 p.m. Friday at Don Paul Stadium, Ross coach Derek Kidwell believes the Little Giants must overcome a mental block to be successful.

"It's a lopsided (series) that has become a mental game (for us)," Kidwell said. "Our kids have to clear their heads and go out and play football. The last couple of years, I think we've had football players as good as they have had. But it's not a rivalry until we start beating them."

Benedictine and Ross have met 15 times on the gridiron since 1980 with the Bengals holding a 13-2 advantage in the series. The Little Giants, who were blanked 12-0 in last year's game, posted a 34-28 win in 2006 and a 16-6 victory in 1983.

In both the 1983 and the 2006 seasons, Ross qualified for the OHSAA state playoffs.

From what Kidwell has seen of the Bengals this season, Benedictine is bringing a different type of team to Fremont.

"They are a very young team," Kidwell said. "This is the youngest Benedictine team we have seen. They don't have the proven running backs they have had in the past, and their quarterback is a little smaller. Benedictine has gone to the shotgun, but they are still a power-running team."

Some other weapons the Bengals can employ are wide receiver and linebacker Mike Roberts (6-foot-4, 224 pounds, sophomore), wide receiver and linebacker Matt Wenzel (5-11, 157, senior), linebacker and center Adam Patterson (6-0, 250, senior).

The Little Giants rank second in the Greater Buckeye Conference while giving up 241 yards a game. But Kidwell would like to see more from Ross defenders.

"Our defense has to improve," Kidwell said. "We have to get off the field on third down, and we have to make stops when opportunities are there for us."

In the absence of running backs James Aaron Spencer and Tylor Trautwein, Devante Woods ran free for 187 yards and three touchdowns. Quarterback Cody Foos, who is 24-of-47 for 420 yards with four touchdowns and four interceptions, leads the league in passing yards. Wideout and cornerback Greg Brown tops the conference in scoring (24 points) and receiving yards (211).

"On offense, we have to continue to get better," Kidwell said. "Our offensive line has played well the last two weeks. I was pleased with the way Devante Woods ran the ball and with the way Cody Foos played. We need to build on those two positives and keep moving in the right direction."

Trevor Trimble, Nate Chudzinski, John Paxson, Jerome Conley, Brad Beck, Cody Curry and Cory Barron have played roles on the Little Giants' offensive line in 2009.

According to Kidwell, Spencer practiced this week and is expected to be in uniform Friday night. The status of Trautwein, who went down with an ankle injury against the Tornadoes on Ross's first series, will be a game-time decision.

Spencer, who leads the GBC with 301 yards rushing, was sidelined with a tender ankle during the Little Giants' 49-35 victory over Tiffin Columbian on Friday.



Fremont Ross quarterback Cody Foos gets wrapped up by a Tiffin Columbian defender during Friday's game at Don Paul Stadium. (Brenda Soule | News-Messenger correspondent)