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## Little Giants win shootout

*BY JEFF ARENZ*

*Sports Writer*

FREMONT -- Fremont Ross was able to overcome injuries and nonconference rival Tiffin Columbian 49-35 on Friday at Don Paul Stadium.

The Little Giants, who played without running back James Aaron Spencer, and wide receiver and cornerback Justin Hines, benefited from large contributions from Greg Brown and Devante Woods.

Brown caught touchdown passes of 39 and 29 yards while finishing with three grabs for 98 yards. Woods ran for three TDs, including an 80-yard scamper in the second quarter and runs of 5 and 2 yards in the fourth quarter. He ended up with 12 carries and 187 yards.

"Greg is so versatile that he can hurt an opposing team in so many different ways and we're going to take advantage of that," Fremont Ross coach Derek Kidwell said. "We were excited to see Tylor Trautwein run the ball, but he went down with an injury during our first series. We tell our kids to step up and seize the moment, and Devante did that."

According to Kidwell, Spencer sat out with tenderness in his ankle. Hines could be sidelined for five more weeks after suffering a broken arm.

Tied at 14 in the second quarter, the Little Giants gained momentum after Aaron Gonzales recovered Derek Kneeskern's fumble at the Ross 40. Quarterback Cody Foos responded by leading a five-play, 60-yard drive in the final 65 seconds of the first half that culminated in a 39-yard TD strike to Brown.

"I feel like I always have to step up," said Brown, who has verbally committed to attend Michigan in fall 2010. "If I step up, then there's a good chance we're going to win."

Ross had a 7-6 lead after the first 12 minutes, but was being outplayed by Columbian, which held an 82-38 edge in total plays, a 496-435 advantage in total yards and a 22-11 edge in first downs in the game.

Kneeskern hauled in the first of two touchdown catches on a 43-yard pass from Ryan Tittle at the 7:34 mark of the first quarter, but missed the point-after kick. The Tornadoes' wide receiver had seven receptions for 149 yards in the game.

Tittle threw four TD strikes and piled up 332 yards on 25-of-36 passing, but was the victim of Travis Maynard's 85-yard interception return for a touchdown about 5 1/2 minutes later. Victor Layton's kick gave the Little Giants a 7-6 lead at the 1:50 mark.

However, pressure from the Little Giants' defense knocked Tittle out of the game in the fourth quarter. When he was replaced by Nate Burns, the Tornadoes' backup went 1-of-5 for two yards, including an interception.

After Kneeskern's 38-yard field goal attempt hit the right upright early in the second quarter, Woods ran 80 yards for a touchdown on Ross's next play as 10:58 remained in the first half.

But the Tornadoes proved to be resilient throughout the game.

Running back Tyler Ward, who ran 22 times for 113 yards, did most of the work as Columbian went on a 14-play, 75-yard scoring drive on its next series. His 14-yard TD run came before Tittle connected with Austin Bentz on a 2-point conversion pass that knotted the game at 14 with 5:47 left before halftime.

That was until Foos and Brown untied the contest with 2 seconds left in the first half.

"I challenged our varsity team at halftime," Kidwell said. "As a coaching staff, we weren't pleased and we had no business leading 21-14 at half. I told our team to go out there in the second half and win personal man-to-man battles. And for the most part, we did that."

The game went back-and-forth throughout the third quarter as both teams each scored twice in the final three minutes of the period.

The Tornadoes forced a 21-all tie when Jordan Coger caught a 17-yard pass from Tittle at the 2:47 mark. But Ross answered 90 seconds later on Foos' second TD pass to Brown.

With 46 seconds left in the third quarter, Tittle and Kneeskern hooked up for a 70-yard touchdown. But Foos countered that with a pass to Mikel Stanley that put the Little Giants on the Columbian 1-yard line. On the next play, the Ross quarterback ran into the end zone for a 35-28 Little Giants lead.

Columbian coach Steve Gilbert was proud of the effort put forth by the Tornadoes, who were also playing without several key players.

"We had six starters out, but our young kids stepped up by playing a great game," Gilbert said. "I'm really proud of the effort. We just came up a little short on the scoreboard."

Foos ended up with 198 yards on 7-of-11 passing while Stanley caught two passes for 96 yards.

Tittle's last TD pass went to Jordan Price for 17 yards with 11:09 left. But Brown gave Ross a 64-yard kickoff return before Woods scored from 5 yards out only 27 seconds later.

The Little Giants won the battle of return yardage 216-78.

Woods sealed the Ross victory with a 2-yard TD run with 4:40 left.

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Fremont Ross ball carrier Greg Brown gets outside during Friday night's game against Tiffin Columbian. (Brenda Soule | News-Messenger correspondent)