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## Ross bounced in triple-overtime thriller

### Findlay stuns Little Giants for second straight season

*BY JEFF ARENZ*  
*Sports Writer*

FREMONT -- The Findlay Trojans left Don Paul Stadium on Friday night with more than a Greater Buckeye Conference victory.

For the second straight season, Findlay (2-4, 1-0) left Fremont Ross (4-2, 0-1) and its fans in shock after defeating the Little Giants 43-40 in triple overtime.

Matt Spragg's fifth touchdown pass went for 20 yards to Cody Ramsey, who made his third TD grab of the game, on the first play of the Trojans' final possession. It came during the third extra drive for each team after Victory Layton made his fourth field goal of the contest -- from 28 yards -- to hand the Little Giants a 43-37 lead.

"(This loss) hurts because this was a great high school football game and that someone has to come up on the short end of the stick," Ross coach Derek Kidwell said. "Two years in a row, it has been us."

In 2008, the Little Giants dropped a 37-34 decision to the Trojans at Donnell Stadium in Findlay.

Findlay coach Mark Ritzler gave credit to his assistant coaches for their play calling.

"Our assistant coaches said, 'Let's go for it,'" Ritzler said. "We were very close to going for a 2-point conversion at the end of regulation, but we thought we may have had an advantage in the kicking game. The assistant coaches made a lot of great calls."

In the extra sessions, the Trojans ran eight times on their first nine plays with Alex Henry, who had 79 yards on 23 carries, before Spragg connected with a TD to Ramsey for the second time in the game. The Findlay wideout caught seven passes for 144 yards.

Tied at 31 after regulation, the game turned into a battle of field goals. Findlay kicker Eric Schaible connected on field goals from 20 yards in overtime and 28 yards in double overtime after hitting a 31-yarder in the third quarter and missing from 27 yards 4:05 into the second half.

"Eric has a back injury that gives him pain every time he kicks," Findlay coach Mark Ritzler said. "He's hurt but he's been stepped up for us."

For the Little Giants, who missed the 2008 OHSAA postseason with an 8-2 record, their second loss of 2009 was tough to swallow.

"There are no excuses and you have to give Findlay credit," Kidwell said. "They took a big step toward winning the GBC tonight. It's a tough pill to swallow because I think we have a pretty good football team. We just haven't played up to expectations this season."

Spragg was 21-of-40 for 368 yards with TD passes going to Henry (25 yards, second quarter), Ramsey (65 yards, second quarter; 32 yards, fourth quarter and 20 yards, triple overtime) and Brock

Romantic (7 yards, fourth quarter).

"He's struggled at times this year," Ritzler said of Spragg. "He's a new player at that position and we may have seen a kid grow up here in a big game."

The Little Giants had a 3-0 lead after Layton hit a 33-yard field goal at the 8:26 mark of the first quarter.

Ross extended its lead to 24-14 at halftime after quarterback Cody Foos ran for a 3-yard TD and James Aaron Spencer scampered 6 yards for another touchdown in the second quarter. But the Little Giants big blow came when Foos threw a 66-yard TD strike to Greg Brown (8 catches, 121 yards) during a 74-second, second-period scoring frenzy as 3:37 remained in the first half.

Two plays and 52 seconds later Spragg hit Ramsey for a 66-yard TD strike before Tylor Trautwein's 79-yard kickoff return set up Spencer's 6-yard TD with 2:27 left in the first half.

Schaible's 31-yard, third-quarter field goal cut the Findlay deficit to 24-17.

With 6:18 left in regulation, Spragg's second TD pass to Ramsey gave the Trojans a 24-all tie before Brett Mierke hauled in a 25-yard touchdown pass from Foos, his second TD strike of the game.

But in the final 34 seconds of regulation, the Trojans used an 8-play, 59-yard drive that was capped by Spragg's 7-yard scoring pass to Romantic.

"I'll take the blame for this loss because I didn't have our kids prepared well enough," Kidwell said. "I shouldn't have went for it on fourth-and-1 at midfield. I had confidence in the offensive line and they didn't come through."

With 9:37 left in the game, the Little Giants failed to convert a first down on fourth-and-1 at the Findlay 45, where Trautwein was stuffed for a 2-yard loss.

But Kidwell was disappointed in the Ross defense.

"We have a sign that we hit before we leave the locker room that says, 'Defense wins championships,'" Kidwell said. "We can't give up 43 points and expect to be a championship-caliber team."

The Trojans trounced the Little Giants in total yards (514-287) and in first downs (23-15). Although Findlay held a 146-123 edge in rushing yards, its 368-164 advantage in passing yards was a key factor in shredding the Ross defense.

Foos finished 11-of-28 for 164 yards while Spencer, who had a 64-yard run in the second half, gained 83 yards on 18 carries.

Ritzler said his players showed more confidence than their coach.

"It seemed like the entire time that our kids had the look in their eyes that they felt confident that they were going to win in the second half and overtime," Ritzler said. "They looked more confident that I was. They just knew it."

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Ross' Tylor Trautwein stiff-arms Findlay's Eric Schanbl during a second-quarter kickoff return Friday night in Fremont. (Doug Hise | News-Messenger correspondent)