



September 24, 2009

## Ross faces Michigan powerhouse

*BY JEFF ARENZ*

*Sports writer*

FREMONT -- When the Fremont Ross football schedule was unveiled this season, few fans of the Little Giants knew anything about Week 5 opponent Bloomfield Hills, Mich., Lahser.

In previous years, Ross played Lorain Southview during Week 5. But after that series was not renewed, the Little Giants went looking for a fifth non-conference opponent. Ross found the Lahser Knights.

"We have scouted Lahser twice in Michigan," Ross coach Derek Kidwell said. "We feel like we have two good scouting looks at them and we have exchanged film with them. It's not anything that is unfamiliar."

On Friday, the Little Giants (3-1) and the Knights (2-2) will square off in the first gridiron meeting between the two teams. Kickoff is scheduled for 7:30 p.m. at Don Paul Stadium.

The city of Bloomfield Hills is 30 miles northwest of Detroit. Lahser's trip to Fremont on Friday will cover 115 miles.

"The biggest challenge here is to play against a team that you would never typically play," said Lahser coach Dan Loria. "It's exciting to see something different. The whole process of us coming down to Fremont on Thursday night, staying over and getting prepared to play a football game in front of a big crowd will be a challenge."

The Knights compete in the Oakland Activities Association Blue Division. With an enrollment of 946 students, Lahser is considered to be a Division II school by the OHSAA, according to assistant commissioner Henry Zaborniak Jr. Should Ross win Friday night, the Little Giants will receive 5 1/2 first-level computer points.

In Michigan, the Knights play nine regular-season games. Since Lahser is the smallest school in its conference, eight of the Knights' nine opponents have enrollments that are the same size as Division I schools in Ohio.

According to Zaborniak, if Ross overcomes Lahser, the Little Giants will also be awarded 6 second-level points for each victory the Knights have against Division I-equivalent schools in Michigan this season.

In his ninth season, Loria has guided the Knights to a 67-27 record. Lahser has won five conference titles (2002-2005, 2008) and has appeared in Michigan's state semifinals three times (2002, 2005, 2008) under Loria.

"The atmosphere we have here in Ohio is a lot different than the way they play football in Michigan," Kidwell said. "We have our music (from the band) being played loud and our fans right up on the field. I think it might be an intimidating factor at the onset, but it's going to be our job to take the punch to (Lahser) early."

Key offensive players for the Knights include quarterback Terrence Haynes, running back Nicholas Woods-Gibbey and wide receivers Jacob Hatchett, Christopher Brown and Brandon Rump.

Lahser defenders include linebackers Drew Stokas and Tiaan De Nysschen, who are both three-year starters, defensive lineman Emery Phillips and linebacker Nick Roth.

Kidwell said he's found Lahser in 48 different offensive formations.

"They have real good size," Kidwell said. "They have very athletic, skilled kids with Haynes being very elusive. Defensive, they give teams multiple-set looks (5-2, 4-2, 4-3). Their perimeter guys aren't the same caliber of the defenses we have seen. On film, it doesn't appear that they have covered too many spread teams."

The Little Giants will counter with three Greater Buckeye Conference statistical leaders -- quarterback Cody Foos (38-of-74 for 580 yards with 6 TDs and 6 INTs), running back James Aaron Spencer (63 carries, 382 yards, 4 TDs) and wide receiver Greg Brown (15 catches, 308 yards, 5 TDs).

Brown and Spencer rank second and fourth, respectively, in the GBC scoring race. Mike Showman heads into Week 5 as the second-best punter in the league at 36.4 yards per game.

Linebackers Travis Maynard (two) and J.J. Moreno and safety Brett Mierke have made interceptions this season for Ross.

The Little Giants lead the league in total offense with 340.5 yards per game and are second in total defense with 256.5 yards per game.

---