



December 5, 2009

## Ross falls short in closing seconds

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FREMONT — Guard Kenny Penn didn't have the answer the Little Giants were looking for in the final seconds.

Penn fought his way through a double team but missed a 3-point attempt as Oregon Clay held off Fremont Ross 52-49 in the season opener for both schools Friday at the Purple Pit.

"We had a chance to blow out this team and we didn't take advantage of it," said Penn, who scored a game-high 17 points for Ross (0-1). "Instead of it being really close, we missed a lot of opportunities. Then, it wouldn't have come down to a final shot."

Despite being outrebounded 29-22, the Little Giants failed to capitalize on their 11-5 advantage on the offensive glass by shooting 33 percent (18-of-54) from the field.

The Eagles, with four starters (Bruno Marotta 6-foot-4, Taylor Schabel 6-4, Jordan Wamer 6-6 and Doug Waldmanstetter 6-6) larger than Ross's tallest players (Shunnar Gamble and Greg Smith, both 6-3), shot a torrid 56 percent (19-of-34) from the field.

Trailing 45-42 with 4:30 left, Schable led a 9-2 Clay run with a trio of baskets. His baseline drive gave the Eagles a 51-47 lead as 51 seconds remained. Schable finished with 14 points.

"Our inside play toward the third and fourth quarter came through," Clay coach Rob Belegrin said. "We ran a couple specials and we tried to pound it down low. We had a couple mismatches, we took advantage of our size and it worked out for us."

Ross coach Mark Gedeon said the Little Giants failed to execute at the defensive end. "We picked a poor time to have a defensive letdown," Gedeon said. "I think (Clay's) last five field goals were shots from the paint, layups, post feeds and one on a homerun pass. We can't let teams get inside the paint that easy on us because we know we're at a disadvantage size-wise."

Waldenstetter scored 5 points, but pulled down a game-high 10 rebounds.

The Little Giants drew within 51-49 on a pair of Penn free throws, but the Ross guard missed a driving layup that would have tied the contest in the final 35 seconds.

"We had some opportunities for some layups and some open looks that we didn't cash in," Gedeon said. "We didn't execute our plays as crisply as we want. In varsity basketball, when it comes down to crunch time, we have to be precise in what we do."

A Penn layup gave Ross a 36-34 lead with 3:31 left in the third quarter. It was the Little Giants' first lead since a 7-6 edge midway through the first period before Clay's 10-2 second quarter run gave the Eagles their biggest lead (23-14) with five minutes left in the first half.

"In the second quarter, we were mixing up our defenses, trapping in different areas and we got after it with a lot of energy," Belegrin said. "We have a lot young kids with inexperience, but I think we used their energy wisely."

Clay guard Ross Achter scored 8 of his 10 points in the first half, including a 6-point first quarter.

Gamble drained a 3-pointer as Ross took a 39-35 advantage in the final minute of the third quarter and his putback of a missed shot midway through the fourth quarter put the Little Giants ahead 45-42. He finished with 13 points.

Allen Lewis added six points for Ross, which hosts Toledo Waite at approximately 7:30 p.m. today.

The Little Giants won the junior varsity contest against Clay 53-31.

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Fremont Ross's Darien Spann drives down the court during a game Friday against Oregon Clay. (Jennifer Young-Bower | News-Messenger correspondent)