



September 5, 2009

Ross falls short vs. Toledo Whitmer

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TOLEDO -- In the span of 56 seconds midway through the fourth quarter Friday, Toledo Whitmer sealed a 29-25 non-conference football win over Fremont Ross at Whitmer Stadium.

With the Little Giants leading 25-22 with 6 1/2 minutes left, quarterback Joe Missler marched the Panthers downfield in only three plays, covering 54 yards for the game-winning score.

Missler's 14-yard pass to Tevin Boykins set up the Whitmer QB's 38-yard TD run as 5:41 remained.

Fremont Ross coach Derek Kidwell believed Missler had help on his run.

"They didn't call holding on (Missler's) long run," Kidwell said.

Missler threw for 107 yards on 5-of-7 passing and added 94 yards on 17 carries for Whitmer. Teryl Mershon ran 17 times for 109 yards.

"I'm extremely proud of our kids because they gave us everything they had," Kidwell said. "We knew (Whitmer) is a big, physical team and they just laid on top of our defense. We don't have the biggest defense right now, but they gave us everything."

The Panthers' TD came after the Little Giants used a 14-play, 82-yard scoring drive that was capped by quarterback Cody Foos' 11-yard slant pass to Greg Brown that gave Ross a 25-22 lead with 6:37 left.

Brown, a junior wideout who verbally committed to attend Michigan early this week, ended up with three receptions for 72 yards. Foos was 10-of-21 for 157 yards with a TD and an interception.

James Aaron Spencer added 166 yards on 25 carries, including a 64-yard TD run that put Ross ahead 18-7 with 4:33 left before halftime.

"We challenged our offensive line after last week's game, and they really responded," Kidwell said. "I just told our team that teams improve the most from Week 1 to Week 2. Granted, we didn't come out with a victory, but we improved."

Whitmer coach Joe Palka was impressed with the Little Giants.

"Ross controlled the play (at that point)," Palka said. "I thought we were fortunate to be down by three at halftime. It was our goal to hang close and try to win it at the end. Even though we were able to do that, Fremont Ross didn't do anything to lose this. Fremont Ross has a great football team."

When Foos tried to rally the Little Giants, he was intercepted by Mark Meyers after the ball was tipped by Ross' Tylor Trautwein.

"We had chances to win it, but our kickoff team really hurt us," Kidwell said. "(Whitmer) had a ton of yardage in returns. We have to keep the pinned deep. I tell our kids all of the time that we have to win two of three phases. We didn't win the special teams battle, and I don't think we won the defensive

battle for four quarters."

Trautwein added a 7-yard TD run in the second quarter as the Little Giants grabbed a 12-0 lead.

"We have to make a play," Kidwell said. "We put our playmakers in position and he has to come up with that. He's caught that ball all summer."

Ross took a 6-0 lead in the first quarter after a 1-yard run by Foos. The play happened after the Little Giants recovered the first of the Panthers' two muffed punt returns.

"We adjusted a few things, like changing our formations that we ran from," Palka said. "We just tried to take advantage of where (the Ross defenders) weren't. Defensively, we played a little better in the second half because our best players were not playing that well in the first half."

The Panthers' defense remained consistent.

"We didn't give up many huge plays that went for touchdowns," Palka said. "They had some big runs and some big passes but, for the most part (Fremont Ross) had to earn what it got."

On 69 plays, the Little Giants gained 418 yards while the Panthers had 402 yards after executing 51 plays.

Trailing 12-0 in the second quarter, Micah Merritt scored TDs on runs of 2 and 1 yards as Whitmer rallied for a 18-15 deficit at the half.

Missler added a 10-yard TD strike to Mike Pfaff in the third quarter as Whitmer took its first lead at 22-18.



Fremont Ross ball carrier Tylor Trautwein slips past the tackle of Toledo Whitmer's Corey Compton en route to a 7-yard touchdown run during the second quarter of Friday night's game. (Jonathon Bird | News-Messenger)