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Ross, Sandusky rivalry to resume

BY JEFF ARENZ

Sports writer

FREMONT -- There is a new twist in the football rivalry between Fremont Ross and Sandusky.

The Little Giants and Blue Streaks meet at 7:30 p.m. Friday at Strobel Field in Sandusky. The game has been designated as a contest in the Great American Rivalry Series.

"This game is deserving, being its the 104th meeting," Ross coach Derek Kidwell said. "It's a great rivalry and, hopefully, both teams come out and play up to their expectations. In a rivalry like this, you hope both teams will respect one another by playing clean, hard-nosed football."

The Great American Rivalry Series is sponsored by the United States Marine Corps and iHigh.com. Select schools from around the nation are picked to participate in the series. These schools have had a traditional rivalry, going back many years.

Sandusky leads the all-time series 52-43-8.

According to iHigh.com, The Great American Rivalry Series not only celebrates high school football, it embraces its excitement, traditions and history. A donation is given to the host team for their football program as well as two college scholarships awarded to a player from each team in the rivalry.

"This is one of the best rivalries in the state, if not the country," Sandusky coach Mike Franklin said. "Everyone is excited and I am grateful that we were able to put this together for this game. This rivalry has a great tradition and it's nice to see the teams come together year after year."

Both teams bring positive momentum into Week 10.

Ross (5-4 overall, 1-3 Greater Buckeye Conference) ended a three-game losing streak with a 45-17 win at Lima Senior last Friday. Despite dropping a 30-0 decision at Napoleon in Week 9, Sandusky (4-5, 3-1) has won four of its last six games.

"Winning cures a lot and our kids felt pretty good leaving Lima on Friday and pretty good during practice this week," Kidwell said. "You can't go back and get what is already gone and we've talked about that. The only thing we can do is learn from it and move on."

On offense, the Little Giants (290.33 yards) and Blue Streaks (258.89) are first and third, respectively, in the GBC.

The Ross attack features running back James Aaron Spencer (140 carries, 802 yards, 8 TDs and 14 catches, 127 yards, 1 TD), quarterback Cody Foos (93-of-183 passing, 1,216 yards, 10 TDs, 8 INTs and 97 carries, 212 yards, 5 TDs) and wideout Greg Brown (26 catches, 440 yards, 6 TDs and 23 carries, 128 yards, 1 TD).

Devante Woods has also emerged in the Little Giants' backfield (31 carries, 408 yards, 5 TDs) while Mikel Stanley (16 catches, 217 yards, 1 TD), Kyle Damman (12 catches, 181 yards, 1 TD) and Brett Mierke (10 catches, 140 yards, 1 TD) are also threats as receivers.

"Ross has very good specialty players at quarterback (Foos), running back (Spencer) and safety (Mierke)," Franklin said. "Our goal is to stop the big play. We want to make them drive the field. That may be the difference."

Sandusky will counter with quarterback Zak Esposito (87-of-189 passing, 1,171 yards, 12 TDs, 12 INTs and 46 carries, 16 yards, 1 TD), running back Cordney Strickland (149 carries, 663 yards, 5 TDs and 20 catches, 87 yards, 1 TD) and wideout Davion Caston (24 catches, 209 yards, 3 TDs and 20 carries, 98 yards, 0 TDs).

Other key Blue Streaks include Mike Drake (13 catches, 115 yards, 0 TDs) and Tristen Jeffries (10 catches, 257 yards, 3 TDs).

"They're very big on the offensive and defensive lines and they use two tight ends," Kidwell said. "With our undersized defense, we're going to have to shoot our gaps and be on the move. We can't be stationary and we have to make tackles."

On defense, Ross (260.00 yards) and Sandusky (285.44 yards) are second and third, respectively, in the GBC.

The Little Giants are second against the run (129.22 yards) and third against the pass (130.78 yards) in the league while the Blue Streaks are third against the run (154.56 yards) and fourth against the pass (130.89 yards).

Mierke leads Ross defenders with 4 interceptions while Travis Maynard has 2 pick offs in 2009. Damyion Smith tops Sandusky with 3 interceptions and Drake adds 2 pick offs.
