



September 3, 2009

Ross, Whitmer looking to pass test

BY JEFF ARENZ

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FREMONT -- The Fremont Ross and Toledo Whitmer football teams are using their Week 2 clash as a early-season measuring-stick.

Both the Little Giants (1-0) and the Panthers (1-0) carry high expectations coming into Friday's 7 p.m. kickoff at Whitmer Stadium, where a lot of computer playoff points could be on the line.

"I know its early in the year, but I think this game could have a playoff atmosphere," Whitmer coach Joe Palka said. "Both teams have a chance to have great years and it will be game that will show us the level we're both at right now."

Ross quarterback Cody Foos is looking to rebound from a 6-of-14 passing effort in Week 1, when he threw for 57 yards, a TD and three interceptions.

"Cody has been sore, but he's practiced all week and hasn't missed anything," Kidwell said. "He leads by example and he'll be anxious to go Friday night. With the competitor that Cody is, anytime that he has a bad game, he's eager to prove himself."

Foos has wide receivers Greg Brown, Justin Hines, Brett Mierke and Mikel Stanley at his disposal. The Panthers will counter by rushing defensive ends Kenny Hayes, a 6-foot-5, 240-pound junior who committed to Ohio State on Tuesday, and Chris Wormley, a 6-5, 250-pound sophomore.

"I think our wideouts are a little ahead of Whitmer's secondary right now, but the Panthers have a great defensive line," Kidwell said. "Their rush ends are very impressive with both of them being big, tall, lanky kids. Our offensive tackles -- Trevor Trimble and John Paxson -- have to play extremely well for us to have a chance to be successful on offense. They have to protect our quarterback when we throw the ball and give James Aaron Spencer avenues when we run the ball."

Spencer ran 21 times for 150 yards during a 24-7 Ross win over Toledo Start on Friday.

Quarterback Joe Missler accounted for 246 yards (112 yards rushing and 134 on 5-of-10 passing) during Whitmer's 35-7 win over Tiffin Columbian on Friday. The Panthers had 405 yards from scrimmage and held the Tornadoes to 195 yards.

"We strive to throw the ball as much as we run it and would love to have equal yardage in both areas," Palka said. "What usually happens is we'll take what the defense is giving us. We're a spread team that will line up in power formations, run some option and are just trying to find the right plays that will really hurt the opposing defense."

The Little Giants held a 254-185 yardage edge against Start. The Ross defense forced nine punts, produced six sacks, intercepted a pass that set up a TD and recovered a fumble for another score.

"Whitmer is a spread team like we are, but counter and keep the ball in the hands of the quarterback," Kidwell said. "The Panthers have some big, physical running backs and their offensive line does a real nice job of getting out on linebackers. We want to keep (Missler) contained by not letting him rip off any long runs. They've shown a little inconsistency in their passing game. But, I'm sure, they have worked on that this week."

Micah Meritt added 73 yards on 13 carries while Teryl Mershon piled up 76 yards on 12 carries for Whitmer in Week 1.

Palka said Whitmer has not had a lot of success against Ross.

"I'm impressed with the speed and the physicalness of Ross's secondary," Palka said. "That is as good of a secondary that we're going to see. The Little Giants are not big on the defensive line, but I expect their movement to be a real challenge. Their linebackers -- Tylor Trautwein is really athletic and active and Nate Barnard is a real physical kid who is a great run-stopper -- have caught our attention."



Fremont Ross ball carrier James Aaron Spencer looks for yardage in last week's 24-7 win over Toledo Start. (Doug Hise | News-Messenger correspondent)