

Second half dooms Little Giants to loss

BY KEVIN SHIELDS • Sports Writer • February 12, 2010

SANDUSKY -- The Fremont Ross boys basketball team has taken its share of beatings this season, but through it all, there has been no towels thrown in or quit shown in the player's attitudes.

And for much of Thursday's game at Sandusky, the Little Giants played and executed the way they needed to win.

But a 20-5 second half run and key plays in the final two minutes, helped the Blue Streaks escape with a 66-59 Sandusky Bay Conference win.

Tristen Jeffries scored 15 points off the bench to lead Sandusky (6-11), including eight in the final quarter.

Ross trailed 58-57 with 1:51 remaining and had plenty of chances to cut into the lead, but the Blue Streaks finished on an 8-2 run.

"Right there every play becomes that much more magnified," Little Giants coach Mark Gedeon said of the stretch. "They make two free throws, they go down and get a bank shot and we turn the ball over in transition and then we miss layups.

"That all turned out just to be the difference at the ending point."

Up till the ending point, the Little Giants (3-13, 1-6) played very inspired basketball. They executed their inside game early and played hard for a good 25 to 26 minutes of the game.

Shunnar Gamble poured in 12 first-half points, including eight in the first quarter as Ross led 16-14 entering the second quarter.

"We wanted Shunnar (Gamble) to get some touches by the rim," Gedeon said. "We thought he could be very effective for us inside and he did that early, but then he got away from it."

The Little Giants held serve and kept the lead much of the second quarter, but a steal and resulting layup by Cordney Strickland in the half's final

seconds sent the Blue Streaks to the break with a 28-27 edge.

Gamble went on to tally a game-high 22 points for the Little Giants, adding 13 rebounds and three assists. But he was held to just six points in the second and third quarters.

A Jeffries basket in transition gave the Blue Streaks a 36-31 lead just 2:21 into the second half. Ross responded, though, as a jumper by Greg Smith, a basket inside by Skylar Reffner and a basket off an offensive rebound from Gamble gave it a 37-36 advantage.

Then things got away.

"Up till that point, we had a done a good job of playing good position defense," Gedeon said. "The first time we played them, I thought we gave them too many opportunities by being out of position. And In the third quarter, I think we reverted back to that, being out of position and opening up driving lanes for them."

Sandusky led 47-39 entering the final quarter and quickly stretched it with a 9-2 spurt keyed by four points apiece from Damyion Smith and Jeffries.

That's when Ross called a timeout to get re-focused and nearly pulled off a great comeback.

"We had a great run there," Gedeon said. "We took a timeout with 6:06 to go in the game. We changed our defense and, more importantly, got our kids to focus again in terms of what we needed to do to be

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successful."

Leading the charge was Gamble with eight fourth-quarter points. Reffner added seven of his 13 points. Reffner also added three steals with all coming in the final six minutes.

"Skylar (Reffner) had a great game in the fourth quarter," Gedeon said.

Ross had a 15-2 run over the four minutes after the timeout.

Greg Smith added 10 points and five boards for Ross, who out-rebound Sandusky 34-30.

"We were definitely better playing this game than we were in Findlay (66-41 loss)," Gedeon said. "We're saying every time we come to practice, we want to grow and get better and we're still doing that."

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