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Struggling Ross takes on GBC foe Lima Senior

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FREMONT -- A pair of struggling Greater Buckeye Conference football teams will meet Friday night in Lima.

Fremont Ross (4-4 overall, 0-3 GBC), saddled with its first three-game losing streak since 2005, travels to play Lima Senior (2-6, 0-3), a team that has dropped four consecutive games this season and has lost six of its last seven contests.

"Our defense hasn't been able to get off the field on third downs," Little Giants coach Derek Kidwell said. "We played a great first half against Napoleon, and they ran it down our throats in the second half. We're just playing bad collectively as a team and we need to get it fixed."

The Wildcats held a 300-61 advantage in rushing against Ross in Week 8.

The losing streak has caused some Ross fans to grumble and speculate about internal issues within the Little Giants' program. Kidwell believes the best thing for his team is to fight through adversity.

"Fans can buy their tickets and register their complaints, but anything that's going on internally is going to stay internal," Kidwell said. "We're not going to make excuses. Everything's not always going to be perfect. We're trying to teach our kids when they have adversity staring them in the face, they're going to have to fight through it. We're trying to fight through it now."

After a 4-1 start this season, the Ross skid has come entirely in GBC -- versus Findlay (43-40, 3OT), Marion Harding (21-0) and Napoleon (28-14). Lima Senior won games in Weeks 1 (Celina, 49-14) and 4 (Dayton Meadowdale, 38-14), but its losses have come against Gahanna Lincoln (59-7), Middletown (61-7), Cincinnati La Salle (48-7), Sandusky (47-21), Napoleon (34-7) and Findlay (33-7).

The Little Giants' offense has been held to 14 points the last two weeks and is averaging 25.5 points per game, leaving Kidwell disappointed with the Ross offensive line.

"They just need to stay with their blocks and keep their rules consistent," Kidwell said. "(We can't have) holding penalties. Simple elementary stuff. We don't have big kids. Our kids are giving us maximum effort. They're just making mental errors. Sometimes, it does come down to physical. Our guards can get out-strengthened. They've got to stick to the rules and play as one unit. They're playing as five individuals, and they should be playing as one unit."

Quarterback Cody Foos has regressed from his statistics of 2008. He's completed 77-of-166 passes for 1,032 yards, but his touchdown-to-interception ratio has taken a severe hit. In 2009, Foos has 9 TD passes and 8 interceptions after throwing 20 TDs and 5 INTs in 2008 and 15 TDs and 8 INTs in 2007.

"We need better play out of our quarterback," Kidwell said. "He's a three-year starter, and it would help us if he could find receivers and keep us in positive situations. But it's a team game. No one individual has put us on a skid. It's on me as a head coach. I'm responsible for it all."

Lima Senior features running back Keithie Lasenby (108 carries, 590 yards, 4 TDs), quarterback Adrian Hutchins (47-of-103, 540 yards, 6 TDs, 5 INTs) and wideout David Densenberg (14

receptions, 168 yards, 3 TDs). With 74 carries and 184 yards, Hutchins also contributes to the Spartans' ground attack.

"They're athletic and fast on the perimeter," Kidwell said. "Their running backs are quick and elusive. We have to stay in our lanes and play the gaps. We're going to try to get our running offense kick-started with James Spencer and Tylor Trautwein. Our offensive line has to play well. We think we match up pretty well with them in the interior."

Spencer leads the GBC in rushing yards (763 on 131 carries) and has scored 8 TDs. He second in the league in scoring with 56 points. Wideout Greg Brown tops the conference in receiving yards (430 on 24 catches) and has hauled in 6 TD passes.

The Little Giants still have an opportunity to finish 2009 with a strong showing. After traveling to Lima on Friday, Ross plays at rival Sandusky in Week 10.

"(I want our kids) to play for pride and play for a winning season," Kidwell said. "6-4 is a lot better than 4-6 or 5-5. Hopefully, our kids will take pride in putting on the Fremont jersey."
