

Too many easy points doom Little Giants to loss

BY KEVIN SHIELDS • Sports Writer • February 22, 2010

TIFFIN -- The hardest points to defend against in basketball are the free points given up at the foul line.

For the second straight game, Fremont Ross let the opposition's freebies cost it a chance to win. The Little Giants allowed Tiffin Columbian a chance to get to the charity stripe 28 times Saturday in a 74-68 non-conference loss.

Of those 28 shots at the foul line, the Tornadoes converted 21, out-scoring Ross (7-of-12) at the foul line by 14.

"We need to make sure we're solid offensively and defensively so things add up," Ross coach Mark Gedeon said. "We can't have some of the reaching fouls we're taking or be trying to always block shots. Marion (Harding) out-scored us by 18 from the line and we lost that game (Friday) by 16.

"And on the flip side, we only drew nine fouls tonight, so it shows our kids need more experience being aggressive and being assertive in the paint."

Derek Kneeskern shot nine free throws for Columbian, knocking down seven of his game-high 25 points there. He added five rebounds and four steals to lead three Tornadoes in double digits. Cole Williams tallied 22 points and 11 rebounds, while Jared Kuhlman poured in 10.

Ross trailed 18-15 after a quarter, but thanks to an early 11-2 second-quarter run, the Little Giants grabbed a 26-22 advantage with 4:06 until halftime. Shunnar Gamble sparked the run with six of his 12 first-half points during that four-minute span. The run gave the Little Giants their fifth lead of the half, as the lead switched sides 10 different times.

But just as Ross did, the Tornadoes made a run of their own. Tiffin scored 12 of the next 16 to lead 34-30 at the break. Much of the run was keyed by the Tornadoes' inside game and the ability to drive to basket and draw fouls.

"We feel we have a good outside and inside game,"

said Columbian coach Bill Beaston, a former Ross assistant. "Generally, we're taking what the defense gives us and getting the best shots possible."

Three buckets by Darien Spann got Ross within one three different times during the third quarter, but Columbian held serve and led 46-39 entering the fourth.

Spann was one of the four Little Giants who reached double figures, recording 11 points. Skylar Reffner led the way for the second straight contest, pouring in 21 points and grabbing seven boards and four steals. Gamble and Jake Heistand finished with 12.

"Skylar (Reffner) was great again," Gedeon said. "After having 23 points (Friday), he has 21 points tonight and it was against much taller players too."

Reffner tallied 13 of his 25 in the final quarter. He grabbed a steal and took it in for a lay-in on Columbia's first possession of the fourth. But a big shot by Coleman off an offensive rebound got the Tiffin lead back to seven, before Jonah Boyer made it 50-41 on the next trip down.

"That gave them that comfort zone from that point on," Gedeon said. "We could make a little run and maybe get it to five, but we had to extend our pressure out and their players showed their experience passing the ball and getting lay-ups."

Shortly after Boyer's points, Kneeskern swiped a ball away from a Ross ball-handler and took it all the way in for a basket and foul to up the Columbian lead to 55-43, the game's largest margin.

"I finally relaxed there a little bit," Beaston said. "But give credit to Fremont and its young kids, they came right back got another score, and we could never put them away on the defensive end."

Spann and Hiestand both got Ross as close as six on 3-pointers in the final three minutes. But despite another trey from Hiestand in the final seconds, the Tornadoes put the game away at the line. Hiestand finished 4-of-5 from behind the arc.

In the junior varsity game, Columbian pulled out a 55-53 win in a double overtime thriller. Trent Stout led the Little Giants with 15 points, while the Tornadoes, were paced by 17 points from Tim Wiggins.