

DAYTON DUNBAR 64, PORT CLINTON 50 ■ DIVISION II STATE FINAL

# REDSKINS RUN OUT OF STEAM



Jonathon Bird | News Herald

Port Clinton coach Troy Diels and Derek Colston console Allen Tigner after the Redskins' 64-50 loss to Dayton Dunbar in the Division II state final Saturday.

## Second-half surge by traditional state-power Dayton Dunbar ends magical Port Clinton season one win short of perfection

BY MATTHEW HORN  
Sports writer

COLUMBUS—Port Clinton maximized its potential and opportunities this season.

The Redskins trailed by just two early in the fourth quarter before Geron Johnson scored Dayton Dunbar's next nine points as part of a 9-2 run that gave Dunbar a nine-point lead as Port Clinton fell 64-50 in Saturday's Division II state final.

"It was a rough couple years as sophomores and juniors," Redskins coach Troy Diels said. "We learned a lot of hard lessons. They came in determined that stuff wouldn't happen (this season). They wouldn't do things to cost us. They just kept believing somebody would make that play."

That included Saturday, when Port Clinton became the state's final boys team to lose. Gahanna Lincoln, the only other unbeaten team at the start of the state tournament, fell to Massillon Jackson in Friday's second Division I state semifinal.

Dunbar (25-3) won its fourth state title and Port Clinton (26-1) made its first state tourney appearance. The Redskins had Dunbar on the ropes for three quarters.

Ryan Hicks scored off an assist from Allen Tigner and followed with a free throw a short time later for a 42-40 deficit in the fourth quarter. Johnson, however, then scored nine of his game-high 24 points for a 51-42 margin.

"I don't think there's anybody in the state that can stop this guy, especially off

the dribble," Dunbar coach Peter Pullen said.

Port Clinton's Cory Brown sank a 3-pointer for a single-digit deficit with about two minutes left and again with 1:05 remaining but the Redskins got no closer.

Derek Colston had eight of his 15 points in the first quarter, including a 3-pointer at the buzzer in the second quarter to give Port Clinton a 27-26 halftime advantage.

"He hits big shots," Diels said. "That's what he's done for us all year long. Fifteen guys on the bench knew that thing was in as soon as it left his hands. We had some momentum going in. We knew we could play with them and we had the belief we could win the game."

Pullen said, "(Colston) hit some amazing 3's in the first

half. I told (my team) their legs will wear. We've just got to attack and they'll wear down. It showed in their free throw shooting in the fourth quarter. Our opponent came out and played well. They shot the ball well and made us make adjustments at the half."

The adjustments worked. In the second half, Port Clinton made only three of 11 free throws in the second half and committed 15 of its 22 turnovers.

"We were playing with six," Redskins post Josh Francis said. "They were playing with 10. In the fourth quarter, we wore down."

"I just wasn't in rhythm (shooting free throws). I don't know what it was."

Diels liked the matchups when Port Clinton was able to get set, but Dunbar hurt

the Redskins in transition.

"We had some back-to-back turnovers," he said. "We wore down at the end and made some mistakes we typically don't ... The kids gave the team a chance to win."

Francis scored to make it 29-26 early in the third quarter before turnovers fueled an 8-0 spurt for Dunbar. Francis drove baseline and dropped in a bucket above the rim and Colston added a bucket for a 36-35 deficit late in the third quarter.

"These kids are competitors," Diels said. "They thought they could win every moment. That's what they do and why they've been so successful. They weren't in awe."

Francis, who finished with 12 points, again cut the lead to one at 38-37 but Delve Givens put down an alley-

oop dunk to make it 42-37 entering the fourth quarter.

Port Clinton's seniors started the season with matching haircuts in a show of solidarity and never stopped working together as a unit. They finished the season as state runner-up with only one loss.

"We made some crucial mistakes and (Dunbar) capitalized," Hicks said. "That's why they're champs. We're not used to this feeling."

Despite the pain of Saturday's loss, Francis already realized the magnitude of Port Clinton's success this season.

"Coming in undefeated, you want to finish undefeated," he said. "It hurts ... we have to keep our heads up. We had a great season."

E-mail Matthew Horn at mhorn@gannett.com

### COMING MONDAY

Look for a complete recap of Saturday's game, a commemorative team poster and much more in Monday's edition of the News Herald.



### INSIDE

■ Fans in Columbus and at home cheer for their Redskins | PAGE 2  
■ Looking back | PAGE 2  
■ More photos | PAGE 6

### ON THE WEB

For photo galleries from every big game, follow-up coverage and more on the Port Clinton boys basketball team, visit [PortClintonNewsHerald.com](http://PortClintonNewsHerald.com).

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## DAYTON DUNBAR 64, PORT CLINTON 50 ■ DIVISION II STATE FINAL



Jennifer Young-Bower | News Herald correspondent

Carole Schau, left, and friends watch Saturday's game at Bell Mell Tavern on Saturday.

# Hoop watching



Jonathon Bird | News Herald

Young fans fret during the second half Saturday in Columbus.

## Thousands make trip to Columbus

BY KEVIN SHIELDS  
Sports writer

COLUMBUS — Port Clinton Superintendent Pat Adkins called the players who advanced to the school's first basketball state final heroes.

"We are so proud of our kids," Adkins said. "To come here and represent Port Clinton, the SBC (Sandusky Bay Conference) and Ottawa County the way we did, we couldn't be prouder."

The Redskins lost 64-50 to Dayton Dunbar in the Division II state final Saturday in Columbus, but didn't lose the support of the community and surrounding region.

As the team walked off the court and over to its bench following the postgame handshakes, the Port Clinton faithful gave them a standing ovation as they sat down to accept their medals as state runners-up.

"The community really did a wonderful job for these kids," Adkins said. "It's tough for these seniors right now, but I'm sure a little bit later they'll understand how historic this run was."

But the run did come to an end, giving Port Clinton a final record of 26-1. On the way, the Redskins had their first undefeated regular season and first regional championship.

"It was big for our community to experience it," coach Troy Diels said of the run. "But I'm so, so happy

these seniors got to experience it."

Fans couldn't have been disappointed out of what they saw from seniors Cory Brown, Allen Tigner, Ryan Hicks and Josh Francis either. The four and their Redskin teammates hung right with the Wolverines, a perennial Division II power, throughout — even leading 27-26 at halftime.

Dunbar may have had a little more energy and some more athletes, but they didn't have more community and school pride.

"This has been a new level for us, as far as school spirit and what we've been able to see," Adkins said. "It's always been a tight group from being a small community and I've never seen anything like this."

Though the younger and current generation of Port Clinton students may have gotten a lot more experience out of the Redskins' historic campaign, the run was also a great experience for older graduates. Terry Kokinda, class of '68, enjoyed the game from the upper levels with other 1968 graduates Jim Bergman and Dean Rotharr and 1969 graduate Paul Ihnat.

Kokinda was born and raised in Port Clinton, but now lives in Tennessee. He made the trek to Columbus to witness history.

"I came up for the Thursday night

SEE TRIP | 4 AND 5

## Alums, PC residents proud of their 'Skins

BY ANDY OURIEL  
News Herald  
correspondent

PORT CLINTON — Dorothy Ostling considers Saturday's Division II state final a top moment for Port Clinton — even though her Redskins lost.

The Port Clinton boys basketball team fell 64-50 to Dayton Dunbar, but the 1941 graduate said the event transcends the score and will be recorded as a historic event for the city.

"It's very exciting to see something that has never been done before and Port Clinton seems to be hyped up," Ostling said. "(The city) needed something to get excited about and we have it."

Decked in a red blazer with a white top, Ostling participated in cheers and rooted loudly for the Redskins with family at McCarthy's.

Port Clinton Councilman Mike Snider, Ostling's grandson, said Saturday's game united the city. With windows painted in team colors and signs hanging from buildings stating their support for the team around Port Clinton, Snider said the game contained multiple meanings for the area.

"It's amazing to be able to see the community come together and support one thing and one cause and great kids that have worked hard," he said. "It's just an amazing experience for the whole community."

Snider, a 1989 Port Clinton High School graduate, said the loss won't be considered a negative.

"The worst-case scenario is there's going to be a banner hanging in the gymnasium forever that will still say 'state runner up,'" he said.

Saturday's game also served as a homecoming for some graduates.

Art Lemmerman, a 1965 graduate, said today's game is the city's best moment ever. It's the reason why he

traveled from Florida to watch the game with friends at Bell Mell Tavern.

He said the atmosphere trumped watching the game on TV hundreds of miles away from his old school.

And the loss didn't leave a bitter taste in Lemmerman's mouth.

"(I'm) just real proud of the city," he said.

Even fans who didn't attend Port Clinton High School emphatically hoped the Redskins could secure the team's first state title.

"It's still huge they made it to the finals," Pizza House owner Eric Halbisem said.

Halbisem is an ardent follower of the Redskins. Never missing a game — attending home games or listening to road games on the radio — Halbisem said the team's first loss this season is still a win.

"It's history," he said. "It's awesome."

Debbie Conte, a 1978 graduate, agrees the game went beyond a team playing on a Columbus court for 32 minutes.

"I just think it's great Port Clinton has achieved this height or this level," she said while watching at the tavern. "It's the greatest ever."

The game also allowed people to forget about the economy, job losses or any other negatives plaguing the city for a period of time.

"This is a shot in the arm," Conte said "This is a good-news feeling that we needed in Port Clinton."

Barb Erickson, manager at Bell Mell, said this event eclipses the popularity of the Super Bowl or any Ohio State game. Erickson said Port Clinton now has statewide recognition because of basketball.

"I'm just proud of our city," she said. "I'm proud of our high school and I'm proud of all the people living in this town and supporting the high school like they are."

### T-SHIRTS FOR SALE

T-shirts commemorating the team's championship run are available at The Pizza House for \$5 at the Pizza House. A new T-shirt will be made stating the team's runner-up finish in the final game. It will be available Monday afternoon for \$10, according to owner Eric Halbisem.

## Team met challenges time and time again

Port Clinton's boys basketball players were already famous in a small town.

The program's first unbeaten regular season and state trip will do that.

And after winning a game in Columbus to advance to the state finals, the boys are sure to become royalty.

Allen Tigner made the shot that every young basketball player dreams of when he hit

a soft little floater from

nearly behind the backboard with three seconds remaining, ultimately providing the

winning points in the state semifinals against Zanesville on Thursday.

"He's going to make a play in that situation," Redskins coach Troy Diels said. "Either for himself or somebody else. He made that play himself."

Tigner's 7-footer was obviously the highlight of the season, but far from the only outstanding, memorable or special moment.

"We've had lots of those," Diels said.

Tigner scored seven points after returning to the game with four fouls midway through the fourth quarter against the Blue Devils.

Port Clinton trailed Sandusky Perkins 39-36 midway through the fourth quarter of a sectional final before Josh Francis returned with his fourth foul and the Redskins scored 11 straight points.

Derek Colston swiped a steal and converted a three-point play with an assist from Tigner to give Port Clinton the lead from then on.

The Redskins fell behind against Mansfield Madison 17-7 early before regrouping to advance to the district finals. Bellevue then led Port Clinton by one entering the fourth quarter before Tigner dished to Ryan Hicks and Francis for buckets and the Redskins never trailed again.

Port Clinton led from the first quarter on in a regional semifinal victory over Defiance, but the contest was not decided until the final seconds. Francis, again playing with four fouls, capped the Redskins' scoring after an offensive rebound.

Zanesville led Port Clinton 40-28 in the third quarter Thursday before Cory Brown buried a three-pointer to cap 13 consecutive points for the Redskins. The Blue Devils re-established a 48-41 advantage before being outscored 10-2 to close the game.

Ryan Hicks scored a game-high 19 points, including the 1,000th of his career as Port Clinton toppled Celina to advance to state for the first time.

Tiffin blizzed the Redskins in the season opener before Port Clinton rebounded for a victory.

"We were down 10 points in our first two games," Diels said. "Nothing has fazed them since."

The Redskins beat Bellevue by only two midway through the regular season, although the Redmen connected on a three at the final buzzer.

They were challenged in consecutive regular season wins over Perkins, the second of which clinched a Sandusky Bay Conference title, before edging Fostoria by two in Game 19.

Tigner, Francis, Hicks, Brown, Colston, Josh Graves, Robert Fravel, Eric Reynolds and Diels have provided me with an exciting brand of basketball covering their games. I thank them for the relationships, talent and fun.

Their victory over Zanesville was probably the best game I've covered in any sport for its suspense, stage in the season and historical significance.

Port Clinton had no let-downs through an entire season, and a single setback to Dunbar in the state final did nothing to change that.

## COMMENTARY



MATT HORN

Matt Horn is a sports writer for the News Herald. He can be reached at mhorn@gannett.com.

## Colston's big opening half kept hopes alive

BY KEVIN SHIELDS  
Sports writer

COLUMBUS — It may have been a different sport and a different situation, but when Port Clinton needed someone to step up Saturday, it looked to its quarterback.

Derek Colston, the Redskins signal-caller on the gridiron, stepped up when others struggled Saturday.

The junior guard finished with 15 points, going 6-of-10 from the field and 3-of-7 from 3-point range in the Redskins 64-50 loss to Dayton Dunbar. He was one of just five Redskins to score and one of three in the opening half.

"He hits big shots," Redskins coach Troy Diels

### Seniors were heart of squad

BY MATTHEW HORN  
Sports writer

COLUMBUS — The seniors who comprised Port Clinton's core played their last high school basketball game Saturday.

The Redskins will have to find new players to fill essential roles with the departures of Josh Fran-

cis, Ryan Hicks, Allen Tigner and Cory Brown.

"I've been around for five years and they've been around for four of them," Redskins coach Troy Diels said. "It's been four of the best years of my life being with those kids."

SEE SENIORS | 3

said. "It's what he did for us all year and he did it again tonight."

With Dunbar guarding Redskins Josh Francis and Ryan Hicks hard, Colston was the odd man out on

many occasions. He set up shop on the wings and wouldn't miss many of his opportunities to knock down a key shot.

His 3-pointer with 33 seconds left in the open-

ing quarter cut the Wolverines' edge to 14-12. It was part of eight first-quarter points for Colston.

With time waning down in the second stanza, though, and Port Clinton trailing 26-24, his 3-pointer from the left wing pushed his team to a one-point halftime lead. It also got Redskins fans thinking they might be seeing something special.

"We had some momentum going in," Diels said. "We knew we could play with them and we had the belief that we could win the game."

Wolverines coach Peter Pullen acknowledged how big a difference Colston was in the first half.

"(Colston) hit some amazing 3's in the first half," Dun-

bar coach Peter Pullen said.

Colston's lone basket of the second half cut Port Clinton's deficit to 36-35 late in the third quarter. Out of air and with depth a problem, Colston's efforts weren't enough however. Dunbar went on a 22-10 run over the final six minutes after the Redskins cut the Wolverines edge to two.

For Colston, the Redskins lone return starter next season, it was an experience that is sure to pay him and coach Diels many benefits. Port Clinton would've preferred one more victory, but Colston helped the Redskins give new meaning to the phrase "go deep."

Email Kevin Shields at kshields@gannett.com.

**SENIORS FROM 2**

Port Clinton's rudder will graduate with Tigner. The point guard provided guidance as the team's ball handler, decision maker and defensive stopper.

It will be harder to find the Redskins' pulse with Francis gone. Francis almost invariably provided his team with a first-quarter boost and thrived when

playing with energy. Gone will be Port Clinton's Cal Ripken as Hicks was Mr. Consistency. Hicks, Division II co-player of the year in the Northwest District and first-team all-Ohio, was very reliable in averaging a double-double.

Derek Colston, the team's mechanic as a junior, does whatever needs to be done to make it work.

Port Clinton will also lose

it marksman in "Downtown" Cory Brown. "They're not teammates," Diels said. "It's more than that — they're family, they're brothers."

"They played together

since they were young. ... They've done everything as a group. Each one means a great deal to me."

E-mail Matthew Horn at mhorn@gannett.com



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**TRIP FROM 2**  
 game and watched that and then I had to be in Kentucky (Friday)," Kokinda said. "Then I drove back here this morning — I wouldn't miss this for the world."

Area coaches also like the representation the Redskins have provided for them, and showed their support in return.

"It's great," said Fremont St. Joseph Central Catholic athletic director and girls basketball coach Gary Geller. "And I think it's great because it's a lot different when a town like Port Clinton has a team down here, unlike Dayton who has so many teams."

Genoa boys basketball coach Jeff Overmyer was another coach happy to see Ottawa County get the showing it got from the Redskins.

"It's great to see an Ottawa County team play for a state championship," Overmyer said. "It's a real credit to coach Diels and how hard they've worked. Everyone in Northwest

Ohio is proud of what they're doing." "They've clearly had the best crowds down here all weekend," Overmyer added.

One member of that

crowd was Port Clinton graduate Tracy Colston, who was watching his son Derek play in a game he never could've dreamed

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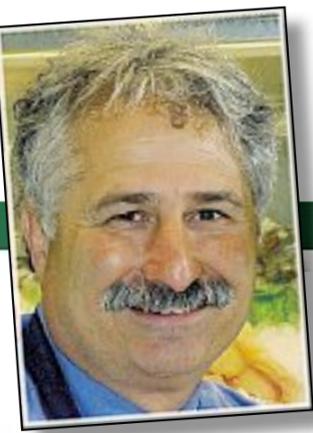
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**TRIP FROM 4**

about experiencing. The elder Colston played on some great Port Clinton teams in the 1970s, but he never had this kind of post-season experience. "I started three years in high school and played in three total tournament games," he said. "So it's been a great experience and I'm very happy for my son and all the kids he's grown up with." Colston, like many others there, said how great it was for his hometown. "The way this team came together has been awesome for the community," Colston said. And basketball was just one of the great memories the town now carries with it. "We've been very gifted to have a wonderful season this year," Adkins said. "And it wasn't just basketball that had a good year — swimming got a championship from McKenzie Stewart too. It's been a wonderful year for our school district."

E-mail Kevin Shields at [ks Shields@gannett.com](mailto:ks Shields@gannett.com)

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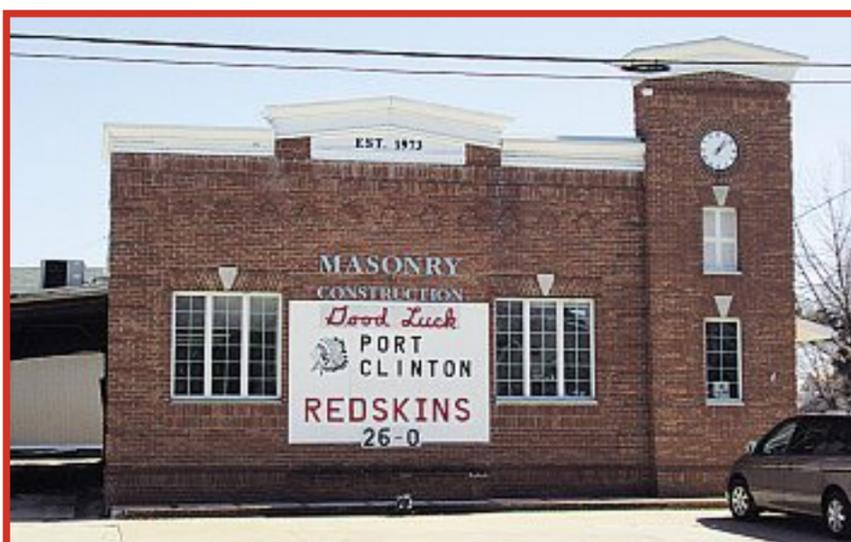
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Jonathon Bird | News Herald

Port Clinton's Derek Colston tries to inbound the ball under pressure from Dayton Dunbar's Gary Akbar during the first half of Saturday's Division II state final.

Dayton Dunbar's Deonte Hawkins comes down on Port Clinton's Josh Francis during the second half.



# A VIEW OF THE FINALS

## DAYTON DUNBAR 64, PORT CLINTON 50

DIVISION II STATE CHAMPIONSHIP  
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Jonathon Bird | News Herald

Port Clinton's Allen Tigner is trapped by two Dayton Dunbar defenders.



Jonathon Bird | News Herald

Port Clinton's Cory Brown defends during the second half.



Doug Hise | News Herald correspondent

Port Clinton's Josh Francis goes up for a dunk during Saturday's Division II state final.