

CM-Father McGivney meet, Eagles again showcase talent in win, Griffins display tenacity

by Colin Feeney, Contributing Sports Writer
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GLEN CARBON — It's early in the inaugural varsity season for the boys' basketball team at **Father McGivney Catholic** and while it hasn't been easy, McGivney is showing good things for the future to come.

Witness Tuesday night at the McGivney gym, where **Civic Memorial** used a balanced scoring attack and a high-pressure defense to take a 82-31 decision over the Griffins. Civic Memorial has been playing solid basketball throughout the season and Tuesday night was just another example.

Despite the score, McGivney played a very hard 32 minutes that will help them as the season goes after the game, that if "we would have played as hard as we did in that game against some of the other teams they had played this year, we may have actually gotten a victory this year. So I was very happy with the effort," said **McGivney head coach Rich Beyers**.

"There's just some certain things that I think we have to learn to play," Beyers continued. "We had those moments in the game, but we've gotta have more of those moments. We've got to make those moments just the way that we play the game, so that every time that we step on the floor, we don't have moments or flashes of being a good

team, but we're just a good team, because that's what we do. We execute, we do the things that we're supposed to do on the offensive and defensive end, and then they'll see a drastic improvement."

The Eagles were able to execute their game plan flawlessly, which spelled the difference.

"The boys played hard, executed our game plan," said **CM junior varsity coach Ross Laux**, who was running the team in the absence of **head coach Doug Carey**. "I thought defensively we really got at it, and offensively, I thought we generated a lot of stuff off our defense, and we got out and scored on them."

Laux gave much credit to the Griffins for their effort.

"We didn't really know what to expect; we hadn't had a chance to look at them," Laux said, "but I think their coach does a real good job with the program, he's got their boys playing really hard. And I think in a couple of years, they'll be tough. They've got a learning curve right now, their first year on varsity, but hats off to them. I thought their boys played really hard, and I think their coach has them headed in the right direction."

The Eagles scored the first 10 points of the game, getting baskets from **Jaxsen Helmkamp and Jaquan Adams** early before Logan Shumate hit on a lay up for the Griffins first points. After trading baskets, the Eagles went on a 17-4 run to finish the quarter, getting baskets off turnovers thanks to a high pressure defense that forced McGivney into turnovers. There was a sequence near the end when the Griffins had three chances to score, but couldn't.



Early in the second quarter, the Griffins had another good sequence when they had good looks at the basket, but again weren't able to score, a problem that has plagued them much of the season.

“That's kinda been our problem this year, is scoring,” Beyers said. “But (CM) is a good team, I mean they had 49 points on us at halftime too. They shoot the three really well. We've got to do a better job closing out, getting to shooters more quickly, not given driven by so easily. And I told them that's where I want to see improvement is on the defensive end. If we can improve our defense from where it is today by the end of the year to where we want it to be, then we'll see a huge improvement without the scoring necessarily. That'll hopefully come as the boys get a little stronger and are able to finish some of those layups.”

The Eagles continued to pull away, getting baskets from Bryce Zupan, Adams, David Lane and Zach Williams to open up a commanding lead. The Griffins kept battling, getting a lay in from Alex Loeffler from a nice feed, and another score from Shumate. The Eagles went into the halftime break leading 49-15.

The start of the second half saw Eagle dominance continue, as Helmkamp and Cayden Clark hit the opening baskets of the half. The Griffins didn't back down, however, as Dan Jones and Loeffler scored. But the Eagles continued to increase their lead with points off turnovers, taking a 64-26 advantage at three quarter time. The final term saw the Eagles continue to increase their lead, outscoring the Griffins 18-5, led by a pair of threes from Kaleb Denney. The final siren saw the Eagles ahead by the final 82-31 score.

The Griffins will play in the Vandalia Holiday tournament, and Beyers feels that this will give his team a very good test.

“We have four days of practice here, and (the tournament) is not easy,” Beyers said. “A lot of teams with kids that have a good basketball IQ, and they get after it, they play hard, and some talented kids. I told them that every game up there is a dogfight, because everybody want to go home with some hardware from that tournament. And everyone feels like they can win it. It's gonna be a challenge for us, but I think it'll prepare us. I'm very happy about that.”

The Eagles will play in the Columbia-Freeburg Holiday tournament, one of the oldest of its kind in Metro-East. They'll play Dupo at 10:30 am on opening day.

“We’re giving them tomorrow off, and we’ll get back at it on Thursday and Friday,” Laux said. “Those morning games, they can be kind of tricky, so these next two practices are pretty critical in getting them ready.

“Oh yeah. You gotta love ‘em,” Laux said about the morning tip off with a smile.

The Eagles do go into the tournament with some momentum built up.

“We’re on a four-game winning streak right now,” Laux said. “Our boys are starting to get it, they’re starting to get a little better each day in practice, and it’s carrying over to our games, so hats off to our boys.”

And Beyers is very happy with his team’s efforts as well.

“I’m just proud of the boys,” Beyers said. “They played hard, and as long as we keep playing hard, you can’t be frustrated as a coach. The execution and all that stuff will come.”



[Dan Brannan also contributed to this story.](#)