

# Father McGibney's boys basketball team poised for future success

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**GLEN CARBON** — For the boys' basketball team at **Father McGivney Catholic High School**, it's the inaugural season at the varsity level. And as can be expected, there's a learning curve for the players and quite a few bumps in the road can be expected, along with a few eye opening experiences as well.

"It's been a learning experience," said **Griffins coach Rich Beyers** in an interview before their game Tuesday night against Civic Memorial. "I think the boys have come a long way from where we were in our first game of the year."

It was against longtime power Nashville. And the Griffins were "a little bit shell-shocked," according to Beyers.

"They're a perennial powerhouse in our level," he said. "That was a little bit of an eye opener for them. I think that they thought they were better than what they were, going against the JV every day. And then you get that first test when you get out there and get to play the real competition, and it really kind of opens your eyes to maybe some things that you're not doing right in practice and working as hard as you possibly can."

"This year, I think the most important thing is that our guys learn," Beyers continued. "We're gonna make mistakes; that's gonna happen. The big thing is that we can't continually make the same mistakes, and that's what we're trying to get is to get to that point where we don't make the same mistakes over and over again."

In some ways, the first varsity season can be compared to the first season of an expansion team playing in a professional sports league, such as what will happen in 2017-18, when the **Vegas Golden Knights** joined the **National Hockey League**.

"I think it's very similar to that," Beyers said. "You've got a lot of kids that played together, but not for years and years like they have at a public school. Last year, they had a pretty good season, so they were feeling pretty good about last year. This year, it's kinda been not so great to start the year. But like I've told them, it's not where we are in December. It's where we are in February. That's where our ultimate goal is — to improve and be in a better position than what we are today."

The rosters for both the varsity and JV reflect the youth on the team. A total of 11 freshmen are on the roster, along with two sophomores and three juniors. There's only one senior, Derek Shearer, who helps keep things positive on the club. And it's also been an eye opening experience for him as well.

“Even though it has been early, it’s definitely been an eye opener for the varsity team,” Shearer said. “I know a lot of them hadn’t exactly expected it, but we actually, to my surprise, are holding up better than I thought. Even though it’s early in the season, we definitely have a lot of room for improvement.”

The Griffins played a JV schedule last year and compiled an 18-7 mark. So far at the varsity level this season, the Griffins are 0-8. With the success at the JV level and such a young team, it is obvious Father McGivney is poised for future success.

Shearer keeps things going on a positive level, encouraging the underclassmen.

“We are just more or less staying positive and giving them positive feedback,” Shearer said. “They need it most of the time, because when we’re down by 10 points or something, we need somebody to get out there and help them out.”

Beyers did single out Shearer for his work ethic and what he brings to the table every night.

“He actually played for me the first year I coached here,” Beyers said, “and then took two years where his dad got transferred down to Texas. So he was gone for two years, didn’t touch a basketball, played football, and now he’s back for his senior year. He’s a tremendous asset in the fact that he’s a hard worker. He’s not the most skilled basketball player, but he’s a hard worker, and hard-nosed. If we could get some of our more talented basketball players to play as hard as he does, we’d be in a lot better shape.”

As for building for the future of the program, Beyers has some very simple goals for his players.

“I hope that our boys get more confidence,” Beyers said. “A lot of the problems that we have stem from confidence, and not having confidence in their abilities. Confidence comes from putting in time, too. The one thing that I hope to accomplish this year is to help the boys realize how much time they have to put in to compete with teams like Civic Memorial, Columbia, Nashville, Wesclin and all these different school that we’re playing.

“Those kids don’t just come and show up for basketball season and turn into great basketball players during the course of the season,” he continued. “They put in a lot of time during the off-season, and they may play other sports, but they also continue to work on their basketball or whatever other sport it is that they’re playing throughout the

year. And then, when basketball season shows up, that's the time when we learn plays and stuff like that. You're not gonna improve that dramatically during the basketball season as an individual."

Despite the growing pains, Beyers is proud of his player's efforts in the Griffins' maiden voyage.

"I think the boys are doing well," Beyers said. "They've fought through some adversity. We've had some good practices this week, and I expect them to play well tonight and compete."







