

Griffins give good effort, but lose to Brussels 42-29

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GLEN CARBON — If there's one thing that's been consistent for the inaugural varsity season of **Father McGivney Catholic's boys basketball team**, it's that the Griffins have played hard and kept hustling, no matter what.

That effort was certainly on display on Friday night at the McGivney gym, where the Griffins battled for the entire 32 minutes, but eventually lost to Brussels 42-29.

Griffins coach Rich Beyers an illness that swept through his team during the week caught up with his young team.

"It was one of those nights," Beyers said. "We had a lot of illness this week, there's a lot of distractions in practice this week, and I think that it that showed up out there on the basketball court. What we put into effect just didn't get executed tonight, and it was a tough go.

"Hats off to Brussels; they played really well," Beyers continued. They challenged us on every possession, and made life difficult for us tonight. My hat's off to them, but for our team, I think that we've got to take it as another opportunity to learn and get better, and hopefully develop and start building. We've got the postseason left, but we keep talking to them that we're building not just for the next game, but for the future as well."

As for the Raiders, the win couldn't have come at a better time as the postseason fast approaches.

"We've had a few bad games in a row, but we came out with a little more intensity tonight and got a win," said **Brussels assistant coach Dave Schleeper**.

The game plan for the Raiders was the same one that's been employed for the last few games.

"Same thing that we've been trying to do here lately, really try to move the ball around the perimeter," Schleeper said. "Our post play hasn't been very good lately, but we just knocked down more shots tonight than we have recently."

The Raiders started out strong, scoring the game's first 12 points, led by Reese Kiel, Brady Ellis and Darren Klaas. The Griffins got on the board, thanks to a pair of free throws and a three-point play by Logan Shumate, and cut the lead to 16-8 at quarter time, thanks to a three at the buzzer by Dan Jones.

McGivney cut the deficit to 16-12 at the start of the second term, behind a pair of baskets by Alex Loeffler, who followed a missed free throw for the first and fought through the defense for the second. But the Raiders outscored the Griffins 8-3 for the remainder of the quarter, getting baskets from Kiel and from both Darren and Hunter Klaas, to extend the Raider lead to 24-15 at halftime.

It was practically all Brussels in the third period, as the Raiders outscored McGivney 12-2 in the quarter, including the quarter's first five points. Loeffler did hit a lay-in off a nifty feed from Shumate to make it 29-17, but the Raiders went on a 7-0 run for the remainder of the term, thanks to a three from Kiel and baskets from both Hunter and Darren Klaas to extend the lead to 36-17 at three-quarter time.

The final term saw the Griffins fight back, thanks to the efforts of Loeffler and Shumate, who led a late charge after Brussels opened with four of the term's first six points. The two combined for 10 of the Griffins' 12 points of the quarter, with Shumate scoring a very impressive lay-in by fighting through the Raiders' defense to score.

"Yeah, he did," Beyers said when a reporter asked about Shumate's game. "He got into foul trouble, which, that's kinda been his MO this year. He leads our team in fouls, by double of anyone else," he also said with a laugh.

"But he's always in there," Beyers continued. "He's always trying to take charges, sometimes he does get some fouls that he shouldn't. But he's been pretty consistent all year, he's had his games this year when it's slipped. We've relied heavily on our three

juniors, Dan, Logan and Alex, and it seems like at every time, every point that we've needed to, one of them stepped up this year. And Logan was the one tonight. I've told them all year long, you know, if we ever get all three of them playing together in the same game, that's when we win. That's what's happened in our two victories this year, is that those three guys have all played well."

The final week of the regular season is at hand, with the IHSA Class 1A playoffs starting the week of Feb. 20. Both teams hope to build some momentum as the postseason begins.

"We've got two more games before the regionals," Schleeper said. "Hopefully, we come out and have a strong showing there, and continue that into regionals."

The Griffins also have two regular season contests left, Tuesday at home against Marissa and a road test next Friday at Freeburg. Beyers' goal for his side is a simple one.

"We want to keep playing hard," Beyers said. "I'd like to finish the season with a couple of victories; that would be great." he also said with a laugh.

"But the important thing is that they play hard," Beyers also said. "Because it's hard; we've talked to them about it. It's hard every night in varsity basketball. No one is going to just lay over and let you win. We've talked to them about that, and they've done a good job. I think we slipped a little bit tonight, we took a step backward from where we want to be. I think Brussels did a great job, so again, hats off to them.

"For the postseason, I think we drew Mt. Olive in our first game, at Mt. Olive, so that's going to be a tough environment," Beyers continued. "But it'll give them their first taste of the postseason. I'm anxious for all these firsts to get under our belt, and move on to bigger and brighter things down the road."



