

Father McGivney basketball team reflects on first season; looks ahead to promising future

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GLEN CARBON — It's always been said that to for a long journey to start, you have to take that first step.

For the boys basketball team at **Father McGivney Catholic**, the 2016-17 season, the Griffins' first year of varsity, that first step has been quite the learning experience. And

both players and coaches have learned much during this maiden voyage, one that will produce much success down the road.

“Overall, I think the experience has been good,” said **Griffins coach Rich Beyers**. “Just like them, it’s my first year coaching at this level, so there’s some things that we can take away as coaches as well.”

Part of that is helping his players find another level that will help them improve their game.

“We’ve definitely got another gear we can find on the floor,” Beyers said, “and we’ve got to figure out exactly what makes each kid get to that gear. We’ve had four of the kids for three years now, including this year, and the rest of them are all new. So we’re still trying to figure those guys out, and figure out what makes them tick, and hopefully be able to pull out the best, the most we can out of them in the future.”

Beyers felt the biggest thrill of the opening season thus far was the Griffins’ first ever varsity win over Ramsey at the Vandalia Holiday Tournament, described by him as a “tough tournament, a lot of good teams up there.

“By far, our biggest thrill was our first victory,” Beyers said. “Getting that first win was very important to the boys. Nobody wants to go through an entire season without a single win. At least you can hang your hat on something, and that would be the single most important thing to happen to us this year.

“For us to get that victory really meant a lot,” Beyers also said.

For junior forward/guard Logan Shumate, the first season presented him with a big opportunity for him.

“I feel like it’s a real opportunity for me,” Shumate said. “Just going from JV to varsity, it’s a huge change. You think you’re good, but then, you realize, once you go to varsity level, there’s people that have been working more than you, and you realize that you need to put in more work.”

Shumate recognizes the accomplishments the Griffins have had during the season, but he also knows that there’s much more ahead for his team.

“I’d say so far, it’s good to get two wins under our belt,” Shumate said. “There’s been a few games we should have had a grasp on, but we just let slip away. But hopefully, in

the next few games, we can steal a couple, especially during regionals. And then next year, we want to increase our win total, increase our record from this year. We don't want to go backwards, always head forward."

"I think the future's bright," Beyers said about the years ahead for his team. "(The boys) have played hard all season long. They've never given up. Even tonight, whenever we weren't executing, weren't doing the things we wanted to do, at the end of the game, they're still getting after it, wanting to play. And that's part of what we're trying to instill in them, is that, we've got to come out at the beginning of the game and have that intensity, not at the end."

The Griffins are a very well-conditioned team, which Beyers said is an asset to the club.

"I have no doubt that the boys are in good shape," Beyers said. "We play seven guys, and for the most part, we really play five or six, so they're well conditioned, they push hard all season long. I hope that they don't dwell on the negatives from this year, and they turn around and find the positives out of this season."

And despite the problems, there's no doubt about the Griffins' efforts, which will serve them well down the road.

"It's very easy for teams to get down and quit, and for kids to walk away," Beyers said. "We've had some of that this year, and winning cures all, as they say. So if you win, you don't have these problems, and you find out the character of a lot of kids. And our team has a lot of character."

As for a personal take away from the season, Beyers looked at a way he can help improve his team.

"I'll take the fact that we've got to get stronger to compete at the varsity level," Beyers said. "The difference between the kids we're playing against and our kids every game is our strength. We just don't have the strength to grab that loose ball. We reach for the ball instead of running for that ball because we don't want to take that hit. That's, I think, the difference between us and other teams is that they get their nose in there and they're not afraid to get dirty. If they get a bump or a bruise, they're used to that. And our guys aren't used to that, and we've got to somehow get them used to that over the summer."

Beyers is very proud of his players and how they come out to play hard every night, even when things don't go well.

“I just want to give a compliment to all the players for being patient with us as coaches,” Beyers said. “We haven’t always made the right call all season long, but we’ve learned a lot about each other, and I appreciate them continuing to fight throughout the season when it would be very easy to say the heck with this. I’m not going to go to practice and push myself hard every day — we’re just going to lose. That could be the attitude that a lot of kids have on a lot of teams that suffered what we have suffered this season. We can’t move in that direction. And that’s the one thing I’ll hang my hat on this season is we never lost the team this whole season. They continue to fight, they continue to show up to practice every day, work hard and get better.”

That’s the same attitude Shumate bring to his team as a player.

“We win as a team, we lose as a team,” Shumate said. “If one person is having a bad night, other people are picking him up, whether it be offensive rebounds, or just shooting the ball. We come together as a team, and that is one element that is very important to high school basketball. We come together as a team in order to have success.”

Indeed, the future for the Father McGivney Griffins boys basketball team looks very



promising.