

Father McGivney girls capture Dupo title, off to 3-0 start with talented team

by Colin Feeney, Contributing Sports Writer
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MARYVILLE - Father McGivney's girls basketball team appears to have made great strides going into 2017-2018, opening with a championship win over Waterloo Gibault 40-39 Saturday in the Dupo Cat Classic.

Waterloo Gibault always sports a competitive team in girls and boys basketball, so the Father McGivney win was a huge boost for the girls program. McGivney dropped Madison and Roxana in other games and stand 3-0 going into a game tonight against Bunker Hill on the road.

Freshman sensation Anna McKee poured in 21 points in the title matchup and finished the tourney with a total of 52 points. Faith Robbins added eight points in the championship.

McGivney's girls were 7-17 last year.

The inaugural varsity season for the girls basketball team at Father McGivney Catholic in 2016-17 was one where the players gained very valuable experience.

And that experience will come in handy as the Griffins are set to embark on their second campaign.

“Experience is the big one,” said Griffins coach Jeff Oller. “We had a lot of underclassmen playing that last year; we still have a lot of underclassmen playing, but they have a year of varsity under their belt. We got that summer all in, a good offseason. I think we're a lot more experienced, we know what to expect from varsity basketball, but also, they're just better skill wise, and they've developed athletically as well.”

It's still a young team, as the majority of the roster are freshmen and sophomores. Two of the sophomores, Madison Webb and Macy Hoppes, along with freshman McKee, are three of the key players for the Griffins this season.

“Those three girls have really bought into our program, in what we're trying to build,” Oller said. “Along with the rest of the team. We have some upperclassmen with some great leadership as well.”

And that leadership will come from three juniors — Robbins, Nicole Luchetti and Caitlyn Pendall – and the team's lone returning senior, Zena Pendall. All four were key contributors to the Griffins last season.

In addition, two other seniors will play on the team; Pauline Coppins and Abbey Bloodworth. Other players expected to see time are sophomores Bridget Weeks, Sophie Kienstra and Mariah Starnes, and freshmen Sierra Williams, Rachel Maller and Frannie Traubitz.

When it comes to a playing style, Oller boils things down to three things: Defense, rebounding and hustle.

“Defense is a premium,” Oller said. “We like to play physical on rebounding, and defense, we want to control the pace of the game. We're definitely more athletic, but we still want to control the pace of the game with our defense, and take care of the ball offensively.

“That's something we harp on, is defense, rebounding and hustle.” Oller continued. “Those are our three keys, those are all controllable, we think, so those are three things we're going to focus on in games, and we practice as well.”

The Griffins have added White Hall North Greene and Valmeyer to their schedule. They will also face many of the Prairie State Conference schools such as Staunton, Vandalia and East Alton-Wood River.

The Madison game “will be a good early season test, to see where we're at,” Oller said. The entire schedule is “a good mix of 1A and 2A schools.”

And as for the future of the Griffins' program, Oller is optimistic about what he would like his teams to be known for.

“We just want to be known as a really hard working team,” Oller said. “Fundamentals, solid, play defense, and really good kids within our program. I think we're on track for that.”

And as for this season, it's continuing to build the program, play hard, and have fun doing it as well.

“Absolutely, that's the whole point, we'll be out there to have fun,” Oller said. “But these girls have a mind set, we're trying to get better every day. Last season, we did it, this summer, we did it, and keep taking steps in the right direction is the whole point. We're excited.”





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