

Third-quarter run sends CM past McGivney 51-42

by Brent Feeney, Sports Writer
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BETHALTO – Things were staying pretty close between McGivney Catholic and Civic Memorial in their non-conference boys basketball game in Bethalto Tuesday night.

Until the Eagles got on a roll in the third quarter and went on a 12-2 run to take a 35-24 lead on the Griffins; while McGivney managed to get back to within three of the Eagles, CM found ways to hold off the Griffs to take a 51-42 win to go to 7-3 on the season; McGivney fell to 2-6 on the year with the loss.

“Their zone gave us some problems tonight,” said CM coach Ross Laux. “Their press slowed us down; they didn't let us get on a run like we wanted to, and I thought that when we got the opportunities to get out and push it, we were already in a tempo of slowdown – we didn't get out and push it well.

“That was a good job on them; they came out and it really slowed the game down for us and their zone gave us problems, and when we're not making them from the outside like we weren't tonight, that really hurts you.”

When the Eagles finally got on that third-quarter run that put them ahead, Laux credited senior Kaleb Denney for giving the Eagles the pick-me-up they needed. “One of our seniors really stepped up,” Laux said. “Kaleb really stepped up, picked up the team energy-wise; he came out after halftime and lived up to what he was talking about - he really gave us a spark. The rest of the team kind of built off of it; we got on a little run there in the third.”

“I think the guys played hard,” said Griffin coach Rich Beyers. “We had a good practice leading up to this; that's key with us – we don't have the luxury of being able to let down at any moment. We have to practice every day like it's a game day; we did that, we had a good preparation.

“The good thing is that I got through to them; from the East Alton-Wood River game (which the Griffins dropped Friday night), we made big strides. Hopefully now, the rest of the year, they understand – it's still a learning process for them because we haven't got to experience the fact that we can play with people; last year was pretty much a blowout every game.

“I think the boys did a great job tonight of believing that they could win the game.”

Beyers acknowledged CM did provide some problems for his team. “They've got good players everywhere on the court,” Beyers said. “They're a tough team to guard man-to-man, so that's why we went with our zone and we did a good job; our guys did everything we asked them to do and whenever we do that, whenever we execute everything we put into place, we're going to be in every game.”

Things got out to a bit of a slow start before both teams got going about midway through the opening quarter, CM getting ahead 10-7 at quarter time; it stayed fairly even though the rest of the first half as the Eagles took a 23-20 lead into the long break. After the Griffins pulled to 23-22 to open the third, Denney, Jaquan Adams and Geoff Withers led the way for CM as they expanded their lead to 35-22; McGivney shook it off and fought their way back, Logan Shumate scoring some key baskets to pull the Griffins to 37-32 near three-quarter time.

The Griffins managed to pull to within 43-40 with about 3:30 to go in regulation before the Eagles put the game away with some big scores from Adams and Wil Buhs to help put the game away. Adams led CM with 18 points, with Bryce Zupan adding 11, Caden Clark eight and Withers six. Shumate led McGivney with 18 points, with Kellen Weir adding 12 and Alex Loeffler eight on the night.

Next up for the Eagles is Waterloo Gibault in the Columbia-Freeburg Holiday Tournament at 4 p.m. Dec. 27, while the Griffins next meet up with Hillsboro at 6 p.m. Friday on the road, then are off until 7:30 p.m. Jan. 3 when they head to New Athens.

