

Oller happy with how Griffin girls stand at holiday break

by Brent Feeney, Sports Writer
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GLEN CARBON – When McGivney Catholic's girls basketball season got under way in November, there were many high hopes for the Griffins as they started their second year of varsity competition.

Following Friday night's 50-5 win over Valmeyer, first-year Griffin coach Jeff Oller has been pretty much pleased with how things have gone for McGivney as they go into their holiday break (the team is not playing in a holiday tournament this season, but hopes to in the near future).

“We've had our ups and downs,” Oller said of the 7-6 Griffins. “We started off really well, but have had some injuries here and there that kind of hurt, but we have a young team and we kind of expected there were going to be some ups and downs, but we're happy with where we're at.”

The injuries have had a silver lining for McGivney; it's given for other players to step up and show what they can do on the varsity level. “Those injuries have helped give some of our other girls an opportunity to get some experience and that's what it's all about,” Oller said.

McGivney has lost sophomore point guard Macy Hoppes for three games with concussion and junior Faith Robbins to a knee injury for various times so far this year; both have returned to the lineup. “Faith has been out since late November; we just got her cleared to return tonight,” Oller said. “We've had a couple of ankles; we've got a girl on crutches right now.

“We're happy with how things have gone; the girls have put forth the effort and we've had some good practices,” Oller said. “We've really grown in practice and they're starting to see that if they work hard in practice, there's going to be better outcomes to the games.”

When the season started, Oller and his coaching staff (Dale Mullen and Beckie Palmer) talked about what they wanted to expect from the team going into the season. “We didn't know what we were going to be,” Oller said. “We were happy with the girls that we've had; as far as win-loss and that kind of thing, we really didn't have any expectations – we just wanted to go out and compete.

“We've been able to do that, so we're definitely happy.”

With the Griffins standing at 7-6 at their holiday break – a mark most teams will take at this stage of the season – Oller hopes to build off that mark when play resumes at Metro East Lutheran at 7:30 p.m. Jan. 4.

“There are some things we need to shore up on,” Oller said. “Turnovers being one of them, rebounding being another thing – those are two controllables that we can really improve on if we work in practice on it.”

One big addition to the team has been freshman Anna McKee, who arguably is one of the top newcomers to the Metro East area this season; she currently leads the team in scoring with a 17.7 point-per-game average and has shot 39.1 percent from the floor – 31.1 percent from behind the three-point arc – and 56.5 percent from the free-throw line. “We knew she was going to be a good player, but she works so well with the team that we have,” Oller said. “I don't think we expected the chemistry to be there so quickly.”

As far as the remainder of the season goes, Oller hopes to see the Griffins cut down on the turnovers and improve the rebounding. “Those are the two big ones,” Oller said. “If there's injuries in there, it's got to be a next-man-up type of mentality; I think the girls have really come along in that.”