

# **Freand brace, stout defense pushes Panthers to 2-1 soccer win over Griffins**

by Colin Feeney, Contributing Sports Writer  
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**GLEN CARBON** – Senior striker Wyatt Freand had a brace (two goals), while the defense held firm throughout as Jersey defeated Father McGivney Catholic 2-1 in a boys soccer match played Thursday night at McGivney.

Freand's two goals came in a span of three minutes late in the first half as the Panthers won for the seventh time in eight matches. And if not for a penalty kick goal conceded in their last match against Mascoutah, Jersey would be undefeated.

"We're happy with where we sit right now," said Jersey coach Scott Burney. "We had the one tough loss at Mascoutah, where on the penalty kick. Otherwise, it's a 0-0 game, and who knows what happens in the overtime and PK's. Our defense has been really good all year long, and they were big again tonight. They had three kids who could put it in the net anytime they wanted, and we really did a nice job. The last two minutes, we let loose of the one guy that can hurt you if the ball gets on his foot, that being (Diego) Pacheco, and he finished the ball there. I think we were starting to get worn down a tad bit, but we did bend a little, but we didn't break."

The Griffins battled throughout the match, finally getting the Pacheco goal in the 78<sup>th</sup> minute, but couldn't find the equalizer.

"We fought back in the second half, we just got that first goal a little too late," said McGivney coach Tim Vance. "We had some chances early in the second half to cut the gap in half; the ball just didn't bounce our way to finish it.

"That's the way soccer goes sometimes," Vance also said.

Both sides had some good chances early on. In the 23<sup>rd</sup> minute, the Panthers had a good through ball go towards goal, but was covered up by the Griffin defense. A couple of good shots taken by Brandon Munoz didn't find the target, and in the 34<sup>th</sup> minute, Freand had a great opportunity, but was stopped.

Freand and the Panthers had the breakthrough in the 35<sup>th</sup> minute. A mix-up in the box lead to Freand getting a loose ball, going through and easily putting the ball in the open net to give Jersey a 1-0 lead. Sam Bartles received an assist on the play.

Three minutes later, Zachary Schaeffer fed Freand a brilliant through ball, came in and slotted the ball into the back of the net to double Jersey's lead at 2-0 after the halftime whistle.

"Wyatt's a tough player," Burney said. "He doesn't stop. He loves to score goals, the guys like feeding the ball, they do a really nice job of putting him in the position to score, and when he gets the chance to do it, he often does so."

The Griffins came out in the second half and had the better of the play early on, but couldn't finish. David Means made a nice run in the 46<sup>th</sup> minute, but his shot hit the upright. Two minutes later, Jersey had two very dangerous chances, both from Nishal Biddela, but couldn't score. The Panther defense, meanwhile, held firm against the Griffins, while in the 77<sup>th</sup> minute, Freand had a chance for a hat-trick go wide to keep the score 2-0.

McGivney finally broke through in the 78<sup>th</sup>, as Pacheco found a loose ball in the box and fired it into the upper right corner of the goal to make it 2-1. The Griffins had one last chance, but a Means shot went over the top, and the final whistle sounded to give the Panthers the win.

The Griffins dropped to 6-2, but overall, Vance likes the way his side have been playing.

“I think the boys are playing very well,” Vance said. “We didn’t have a very good first half, which is uncharacteristic of us. It’s probably our worst half of the season, but we bounced back and responded well.”

The Griffins next host Staunton on Saturday morning at 10 a.m., then host Freeburg on Tuesday and Breese Central next Thursday in 4:30 p.m. kickoffs. Vance approaches each game equally.

“Every game’s a big game,” Vance said with a smile. “Saturday’s a big game. We gotta get back.”

But as the season goes along, Vance hopes to see the Griffins keep improving and playing well.

“Doing well,” Vance said. “We’ve gotta get more composure in the box, and finishing our chances.”

As for the Panthers, they face three games in a row this coming week, with back-to-back Mississippi Valley Conference road games at Waterloo on Monday and Triad on Tuesday before hosting East Alton-Wood River on Wednesday. Burney is very optimistic about his side’s outlook as well.

“I like our chances to continue right now; we’re playing pretty well,” Burney said. “Tough to go to Waterloo on the turf and beat them, then we’ve got to turn around and go to Triad, and then, third night in a row, we get Wood River at home, which is starting to score a lot. Great effort all around as a team tonight.”





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