

Weir Scores 14, Mersinger, Rodgers 12 As Father McGivney Gets New Year Started Off Right With 57-32 Win Over Mulberry Grove

by Colin Feeney, Contributing Sports Writer
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GLEN CARBON - Kellen Weir, only one of two seniors on Father McGivney Catholic's boys basketball roster, led the way with 14 points, with freshmen Ashton Mersinger and Jackson Rodgers each scored 12 as the Griffins started the 2020 portion of their schedule off with a 57-32 win over Mulberry Grove Friday night at the McGivney gym.

McGivney after trailing very early on, took the lead at the end of the first quarter, and kept building it throughout in what was very much a team effort to gain the win in their first game since the Vandalia Holiday Tournament.

"Real happy with the boys," said McGivney head coach Rich Beyers. "With the energy, we didn't have to coach any energy at all, they were just ready to go, they got after it, they fought through a little bit of adversity to start the game, but it was a complete team effort. And that's the thing we've been preaching to them all season long, is that it's gotta be a team effort. If it's a team effort, we're going to be in most games, and we're going to have an opportunity to win a lot of games."

It's very much a young team, with Weir and Clayton Scott being the Griffins' only seniors. and although the record doesn't reflect it, the players have been working hard all season, and the team was rewarded for their efforts on the evening.

"It was," Beyers said. "It was good to start 2020 off with a victory. So, the Vandalia tournament wasn't kind to us, but to the boys' credit, they really stepped up in practice these last few days, and understood what we were talking to them about that, that they were going to have to start pushing themselves a little bit harder in practice to prepare for those games. And they did it. And it showed tonight, because it was just, like I said, they got after it and they pushed themselves all the way through to the end of the game."

The Griffins were aided by very good three-point shooting, which helped the team build their lead and made it difficult for the Aces to mount a charge.

"It really did," Beyers said. "And our best three-point shooter couldn't even get going in the first half," Beyers said with a smile. "So in the second half, though, he comes out and hits two right away. So the good thing there is that he didn't hang his head. He's a freshman, which could happen. You push through that, and came out and played a great game. So that's what I'm talking about. That's what we want to see them do, and they answered the bell tonight."

The two seniors, both Weir and Scott, set the tone for the game with their leadership and encouragement, and the Griffins battled the entire game, making plays with hustle and determination.

"You know what? Our seniors, they set the tone tonight," Beyers said. "They really did. All the seniors, Kellen and Clayton, were both up to the challenge, they got the boys fired up, their positive attitude in the locker room before the game, and in warmups, I think, it bled out into the rest of our guys, and they all just played a great game."

It was Mulberry Grove who jumped out in front first, as the Aces got baskets from Wyatt Criner and Brayden Mosley to take a very early 4-0 lead. The Griffins then scored the next nine points behind a three and a basket from Weir, another three from Rodgers and a free throw from Darren Luchetti to take a 9-4 lead. After a free throw and basket from Criner to make it 9-7, Rodgers hit another three to make it 12-7, with a free throw from the Aces making it 12-8 for McGivney at the end of the first.

The teams traded baskets to start the second period, but then a free throw from Justin Wenos and a three from Mersinger increased the Griffins' lead to 18-10, all part of a 14-0 run for the Griffins. By the time the run was over, Weir hit on another basket and a three, and Mersinger hit a three to push the McGivney lead to 26-10, forcing the Aces to call time out with 2:32 left in the half. Criner scored on a three-point play to break the run, then scored again to cut the lead to 26-15, but Weir took a nice pass inside to score to make it 28-15. A three from distance by Brant Peterson at the buzzer made the score 28-18 at halftime.

As the second half started, Jacob Huber hit on back-to-back threes to lift the Griffins to a 34-18 advantage, and it sparked the Griffins, as McGivney outscored Mulberry Grove the rest of the way 9-7, helped out a basket from Weir, another three by Mersinger and a basket from Scott to make it 43-25 after three quarters. In the fourth quarter, Huber hit another three and Scott hit a short jumper to help the Griffins increase their lead to 48-25, and from there, McGivney outscored the Aces again 9-7, with Rodgers and Scott helping to lead the way as the Griffins went on to their 57-32 win.

Besides Weir, Mersinger and Rodgers, Huber had nine points, all on threes, Scott scored six points, Luchetti had three, and Wenos scored one. The Aces were led by Criner with 16 points, Peterson had eight points, and Jackson Isringhausen, Blake Scoggins, Mosley and Elias Gooden all had two points each.

The Griffins improved their record to 4-9 and face a couple of games next week, going to Hillsboro on the road on Tuesday, and then hosting Metro-East Lutheran next Friday and Roxana next Saturday, with all three games starting at 7:30 p.m. Beyers is especially looking ahead to the game at Hillsboro on Tuesday.

"It's going to be another big challenge, another big school for us, a (Class) 2A school," Beyers said. "So we're going to have to do a great job in preparation this week to get ready for them."

A confident Griffin team is ready to forge ahead with the second half of the season, and Beyers agreed that the team may surprise a lot of observers.

"I agree," Beyers said. "We told them tonight if they understand the game plan, and they go out there and execute it, we're not going to give them a game plan that won't give them a chance. And that's what they did tonight; they took every single thing that we put in the scouting report in the game plan, in the preparation, and they put it into action tonight, and they were able to come away with the W. Hats off to the guys; they executed exactly perfectly what we needed them to do, and they did it as a team which makes it even better.

"I appreciate all our players, and I really do enjoy being here," Beyers continued, "and being a part of the program, and watching them grow. So we just hope it continues to grow."



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