



Father McGivney Catholic's Second Place IHSA Class 1A Baseball Team Members Saluted As Athletes Of Month For Griffins

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GLEN CARBON - Father McGivney Catholic's storied 31-7 season and second place in the IHSA Class 1A State Baseball Tournament is one that will live in the school's halls and hearts of Griffins' players for years to come.

The Father McGivney Catholic baseball team finished its historic second varsity season with a narrow 4-2 loss to Farina South Central in the IHSA Class 1A championship game at Duffy Bass Field on the campus of Illinois State University in Bloomington-Normal. However, the team brought home a massive second-place state baseball tournament trophy that will be positioned forever in the McGivney trophy case.

The Father McGivney Catholic baseball team members are the Riverbender.com /Edglentoday.com Male Athletes of the Month for the school.

The team was welcomed home with a parade and packed gymnasium. All of the emotions that could be felt were on display at the ceremonies.

"I feel excited and sad and elated in all the same breath," said Griffins head coach Chris Erwin that day. "We wanted to win this one, and I feel sad for the seniors, we were that

close. It was incredible, and I'm so proud of every single player and every single coach for their hard work, dedication, and commitment to this team."

The team's pitching was one of the strong points of the season, and it started with sophomore Jackson Rodgers, who went 9-0 in the season, with four complete games, an ERA of 0.94, allowing 19 walks while striking out 90. Senior Drew Sowerwine went 7-1 on the year, with a 1.86 ERA, completing three games and walking 16 while fanning 66.

"Our pitching has been strong all season," Erwin said, "and we could legitimately allow four starters all season."







The hitting was very good as well, as the Griffins got key hits in key situations all season. Senior Matthew Gierer hit .429 with four homers, the most on the team, and 22 RBIs, while Gabe Smith hit .495 with two homers and a team-leading 51 RBIs. Jacob McKee played a key role for McGivney with two homers and 30 RBIs before he was hurt in the state semifinal against Newark. Freshman Nathan Terhaar came off the bench and had a big hit and RBI in the semifinal, and ended up with three RBIs on the season.

"Our hitting has been primarily more consistent than I thought it would be all season, just because we're so young," Coach Erwin said. "But the kids battled and took good approaches in the state tournament and all season long. We knew we were facing really tough pitching, and that's why teams are there. But we came up with the big hits at the right time."

The defense also came up with important plays to help the Griffins stay in many of their games. In the final against South Central, Matthew Gierer came up with a pair of big plays up the middle to stop a Cougar rally, and James made a diving play to save two runs in the fifth inning, where South Central took the lead for good.

"Gabe made two diving plays, and Matthew made a diving play," Erwin said, "and defense was what we preached all season. We knew we could throw it and we could field it, and that gave us a chance to win the whole thing."

Erwin, a former player in the Texas Rangers organization, had a very good feeling at the start that the Griffins could do some very special things.

"This is going to sound silly, but I thought we could win it at the start," Erwin said. "I really did, and I thought we had the right group. I knew we were deep in our pitching and in our lineup."





The Griffins seniors - Austin Callovini, Luke Deakos, Matthew Gierer, Christian Logue, Jackson Podshadley, and Sowerwine - overcame much during the previous two seasons,

having won only four games in the Griffins' first varsity year in 2019, and having the 2020 season canceled due to the COVID-19 Pandemic.

"They are the reason why this season happened," a very proud Erwin said, "coming off a four-win season in their sophomore year, and the canceled season last year. Their commitment never wavered."

It was an incredible season, and the Griffins fan base and school community turned out in droves to welcome the team home.

"Two, three more runs, and it would have been an even sweeter season,' Erwin said with a laugh. "but my heart is full of joy for this team. I couldn't be more proud of these young men."

The second-place finish in the state tournament is a big milestone for the entire Griffins athletic program, and it gives the school more name recognition as well.





"I think it was a great season, and a great run by the baseball program," said McGivney athletic director Jeff Oller. "It was a big accomplishment, something that they really aimed for, and we're really proud of them. I think it continues to put our school on the map and it shows the potential of what our athletic programs can accomplish."

Oller is also very proud of the fact that the families, friends, and fans could also come back to attend games during the summer season, which helped the team immensely.

"It does, and I think that this year, we were able to have fans back at those games and be a part of that run," Oller said. "There was a lot of school spirit and pride."

Both Oller and Erwin believe that this is the first step into establishing the Griffins as a prominent baseball program in both the Metro-East and the entire St. Louis area.

"I think that baseball isn't a one-hit-wonder," Oller said. "It's here to stay."

The success of the Griffins is the goal of the entire McGivney athletic program, being able to compete at the highest levels of the state and contend for IHSA championships.

"I'd say that's the goal of all our programs is to be state contenders," Oller said. "and we know that's not easy to do. But there's a lot of committed people, our students, and stakeholders, that are working to do what it takes at this level."

As far as the 2022 season goes, the Griffins will return six starters and will move up to Class 2A, but it's the same goals for the team.

"We'll compete in Class 2A next year,' Erwin said, "and we'll give it everything we've got."









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