

Harkins Scores 13 Points, Luehmann Adds 12, Griffins Reel Off Game's First 18 Points In Going On To 48-11 Gateway Metro Conference Win Over MELHS

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GLEN CARBON - Mary Harkins led Father McGivney Catholic with 13 points, while Charlize Luehmann added 12 as the Griffins scored the game's first 18 points in going on to a 48-11 win over Metro-East Lutheran in a Gateway Metro Conference girls basketball game Friday night at the McGivney gym.

McGivney led from the start, outscoring the Knights 14-0 in the first quarter and adding on the first four points of the second period in going on to the win over a young Metro-East team.

"For sure, I thought the girls came out, ready to play today," said Griffins head coach Jeff Oller. "We always play great defense, but offensively, we had some great ball movement, had some nice passes and some really good possessions, so it was a good game."

McGivney's pressure defense forced the Knights into turnovers that allowed the Griffins to score easy baskets at the start in their opening run.

"For sure," Oller said. "I think the pressure we were applying was very effective and it was good to get out to a lead like that."

McGivney has played well after a good showing in the Centralia Christ Our Rock Lutheran Winterfest tournament over the Holidays, and Oller felt the team had a good week, practicing and playing well despite the disruptions over the resurgence of the COVID-19 pandemic.

"I think this was a good week for us," Oller said. "We've had about four games that have been moved due to COVID. So every time we're out here getting a chance to play, the girls are looking to take advantage of it. So it was a good week for us. We played Highland on Monday, then hopefully, we've got (Piasa) Southwestern tomorrow as long as this weather holds off."

The experience of the last two years dealing with the pandemic has helped the Griffins ready for any possible schedule disruptions.

"I think the girls got a feel for it last year, dealing with it," Oller said, "and even the year before. But they've just stayed really focused, and they know that every time they get a chance to get out here, they need to take advantage of it. We got a little extra practice time in, but we've got a lot of practice time in. I think they want to play games."

The Knights are a very young team, with only one senior, Maleen Wolf, on the roster. The team plays hard every night, works hard in practice and hasn't given up the ship.

"Yeah, we still continue to play hard," said Metro-East head coach Rob Stock. "That's a positive. We still are learning to work together and run offenses and different things and just to gel as a team. It's a slow process, and they're working hard at it. But it's a little frustrating at this point, I know the girls are frustrated and we'll get through it. We just have to keep working."

Despite the loss, there were some positive things that happened to the Knights.

"We continued to work hard in the second half," Stock said. "I thought we brought a better energy in the second half. I thought we executed the offense a little better in the second half. But you know, when you're in the midst of what we're dealing with as far as the way games have gone lately, it's tough. And I thought the girls continued to battle, and I thought that was a positive."

The Griffins started off the game by scoring the first quarter's only points in going to a 14-0 lead at quarter time, then scored the first four points of the second period to take an 18-0 lead before Leticia Bennasar-Lluy scored the Knights' first basket almost three minutes in the second quarter. After a McGivney basket, Harkins and Sarah Huber traded threes to make the score 23-5, with an exchange of baskets before the half making the score 25-7 Griffins at halftime.

McGivney went on a 9-0 run to start the second half, with Julia Stobie, Luehmann and Harkins all scoring to up the lead to 34-7 before a three by Kate Jose cut the lead to 34-10. The Griffins then scored the last four points of the period to make it 38-10 after three quarters, then scored the first three points of the fourth quarter, with Karpenter Farmer hitting on a put back off a missed free throw to make it 41-10 and triggering the running clock rule. McGivney then outscored the Knights 7-1 the rest of the way to make the final score 48-11.

Along with the performances of both Harkins and Luehmann, Stobie score six points for the Griffins, while Sami Oller had five points, Libby Telthorst hit for four points and Farmer, Sophia Ivnik, Emma Martinez and Riley Zumwalt all scored two points each. Bennasar-Lluy led the Knights with five points, while Jose hit for three points, Alexandra Bozarth had two points and Cameron Williams scored a single point.

Metro-East is now 1-11 and are scheduled to play Murphysboro at home on Saturday at 1:30 p.m., then host Marquette Catholic on Tuesday in a 7:30 p.m. tip. Stock knows that the Knights are still striving, and it's a matter of time before his team turns the corner.

"It's just about learning and growing," Stock said. "Coach and I continue to remind ourselves that this is a young team, this is a team that has not a lot of varsity experience, with maybe just a couple of girls that have played any varsity minutes, and those were very sparing last year. So we're learning, we're growing and eventually, we'll get it and we'll breakthrough and that'll make it that much better."

The Griffins improve to 14-6 and are scheduled to play at Southwestern Saturday afternoon at 1 p.m., then play Waterloo Gibault Catholic this coming week before starting play at the Carrollton Invitational next Saturday, a tournament Oller is looking forward to.

"It's great competition in that tournament," Oller said, "so hopefully, we can compete. We're looking forward to it. We just want to play. They want to play," he said with a smile.

