

Harkins Hits For 13, Oller Scores 12, Carlyle Rallies In Fourth Quarter To Take 52-46 Win Over McGivney In Class 1A Regional Final

by Colin Feeney, Contributing Sports Writer
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EDWARDSVILLE - Mary Harkins led Father McGivney Catholic with 13 points, while Sami Oller added 12, but Carlyle rallied from six points down in the third quarter to defeat the Griffins 52-46 in the IHSA Class 1A girls basketball regional final Thursday night at Hooks Gym at Metro-East Lutheran High School in Edwardsville.



The Griffins were eliminated with a school-record 29 wins, while the Indians won their second straight regional title and advance to the Jacksonville Routt Catholic sectional next Tuesday, where they'll play Hardin Calhoun, a 42-40 winner over Winchester West Central in the final of the Calhoun regional.

The game was a very physical match in which both teams played tough and hard, but in the end, Carlyle made the plays that sent them on to the win.

"Yeah, definitely tough to take," said McGivney head coach Jeff Oller. "We wanted the girls to have success in this game. They played really hard, though. We probably had too many turnover, for sure. But they battled until the end, so it's a really special group, they had a heck of a year. I know it probably hurts a lot right now for them, but I hope they can look back on a season and see everything they accomplished. It was a really special year."

The physicality of the game was something the Griffins expected and had played many times during the season. The Indians came up with the plays to advance.

"Yeah, I mean, we knew it was going to be physical," Oller said. "Carlyle knew it was going to be physical. We knew what type of game it was going to be. It was going to be who handled it better. We played a lot of physical games this year and it's something

that we've improved on. But it was a tough one tonight and I'm just proud of how the girls battled through."

The record 29 wins is a great accomplishment for the team and it's an indicator of how far the Griffins program has progressed since the early days of the team.

"For sure," Oller said. "It's a short history, but one of our teams had 27 wins in 2019-2020. They've accomplished a lot, two tournament championships, a conference championship. We weren't able to get the regional championship and it hurts right now, but hopefully they can look back at everything else."

The Griffins graduate six seniors that have meant so much to the school's program, but return Oller for 2023-24.

"We have six seniors, so year, we will miss them," Oller said. "They're a special group. They went through a lot; they were on that first team that went 1-27, then we got that COVID year. We had to battle back from that. It just feels like we really got our program back on the right track, this group did."

The physicality established itself early on, as both teams played very scrappy defense that led to many jump balls, with alternating possession ruling the first quarter. The sides exchanged baskets to make the early score 4-4 before the Griffins took their first lead on baskets by Emily Johnson and Julia Stobie to take an 8-4 lead after the first quarter. Ella Rolfingsmeyer cut the lead to 8-6 at the start of the second, but Harkins nailed a three and Johnson converted a three-point play to give McGivney a 14-6 lead. Both sides traded threes before a three from Sophia Hoffmann and an Emma Meyer basket cut the lead to 17-14, while free throws extended the Griffin lead to 20-16. The Indians got a pair of free throws from K.J. Meyer and a basket shortly before the buzzer from Lera Schmeink to cut the McGivney lead to 21-20 at the interval.

A basket from Stobie and a three up top by Harkins extended the Griffins' lead to 26-20 at the start of the third quarter, but a three from Hoffmann and a free throw, sandwiched around a Stobie basket, cut the lead to 28-24, then Hoffman hit in the paint to cut the Griffins advantage to 28-26. The teams exchanged baskets to give McGivney a 30-28 lead at three-quarter time. When the fourth quarter started, an Oller basket and a Johnson free throw extended the lead to 33-28, with the Indians going on a 6-0 run, climaxed by a Jacie Persing basket giving Carlyle the lead at 34-33. The lead exchanged hands to make it 36-35, with Emma Meyer scoring to make it 39-36. Oller converted a three-point play to tie the game 39-39 with 3:19 left in regulation, with a Hoffman three with 2:49 left giving the Indians a 42-39 lead.

The Griffins stayed in the game, managing to cut the Carlyle lead on an Oller basket to 44-41, but Hoffmann converted four critical free throws to extend the lead to 48-41 with just over a minute to play. Claire Stanhaus hit a three in the final minute to make it 48-44, but the Indians hit their free throws down the stretch to take the 52-46 win and the regional title.

Hoffmann led the Indians with 12 points, while Emma Meyer had 11 points, Rolfingsmeyer and Persing each scored nine points, Raelyn Harris and K.J. Meyer hit for four points each and Schmeink had two points. To go along with Harkins' 13 points and Oller's 12 points, the Griffins saw Johnson and Stobie each hit for eight points apiece, Stanhaus scored two points and both Emma Martinez and Alexis Bond had one point each.

Carlyle is now 27-5 and goes on to the sectional semifinal against Calhoun Tuesday night at the Jacksonville Bowl in a 7:30 p.m. tip-off. with the winner going on to the Sweet Sixteen game in the final against the winner of Okawville, who took their own regional with a 50-10 win over Nokomis, and the winner of the Greenfield Northwestern regional winner, either Carrollton or the host Rockets, next Thursday night at 7 p.m. The Griffins season ends at 29-4, a school record for wins in a season.

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