

# Columbia Leads The Whole Way To Win Sectional Title – McGivney Drops Just Second Game Of The Year In Season Finale

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BREESE – The IHSA Class 2A baseball Sectional Final between Columbia and Father McGivney had all the makings of something special.

Two red-hot, 30-plus win teams, throwing their top guys in a win-or-go-home scenario.

The Eagles (32-4) wore their home blue uniforms and batted second Saturday afternoon at Breese Central High School. Pitching first, and nearly going the whole game was Kansas-commit Dominic Voegele.



He threw six and  $\frac{2}{3}$  innings with the first four frames putting up zeros. He struck out 12 on the mound through a mixture of his top-speed 95-mile-per-hour fastball and his lethal sinking curveball.

“In big games, you kind of give him the ball and get out of his way,” Columbia head coach Neal O’Donnell said about his ace. “He’s just a competitor. I’ve never seen somebody compete and will his team to win. He’s definitely a special player.”

On the mound for the Griffins (37-2) was Ole Miss signee Gabe Smith. He pitched five innings of work, giving up four runs while fanning five.



“I’ve been to a couple of showcases with Gabe,” Voegele said. “We’ve seen and met each other before, and it was a good battle between us.”

After giving up a leadoff single from Jackson Rodgers and then hitting Daniel Gierer with a pitch, Voegele proceeded to get out of the jam by striking out the next three batters in the top of the first.

Voegele kickstarted the offense in the home half of the first with a one-out single. He’d eventually get thrown out when Alex Schreckenberg hit into a fielder’s choice. Schreckenberg stole a couple of bases to get to third and was batted in from Tyler Rosecrans’ single to make it a 1-0 ballgame.

Smith eventually got the strikeout to end the inning, but Columbia did some more damage in the third.





Schreckenberg was hit by a pitch and then stole second. On his way to stealing third, he forced a wild throw at the bag and then scored to double the lead. Aidan Gaither's RBI single would bring in Brody Landgraf to make it 3-0.

The Griffins didn't win 29 games in a row this regular season by giving up, and they of course didn't in the Sectional title game.

In the top of the fifth, Rodgers got things going with a one-out walk. Gierer singled sending Rodgers to third before Smith hit an RBI single bringing him in to make it 3-1. With the tying runs on the corners, Voegele got a strikeout and flyout to get out of the situation.

Voegele hit a lead-off single in the bottom of the fifth and then immediately stole second. Schreckenberg singled, sending Voegele all the way around to score and make it 4-1.

Still, the Griffins weren't going down without a fight.

Kannon Kamp drew a walk to start off the sixth. After Nick Franklin struck out, up stepped freshman Isaac Wendler.

He hit a high fly ball out to deep left that had just enough to get over the fence for a two-run homer, his third of the season.



The big hit brought life to McGivney's dugout as they only trailed by a run 4-3.

Unfortunately for them, Columbia slammed the door shut in the bottom of the sixth.

Jack Steckler hit a two-run double scoring Brennan Weik and Reed Drabant to boost the score back up to 6-3 and put McGivney's backs against the wall in the seventh.

Voegele struck out two batters before being given a curtain call with just one batter left. He nearly pitched a complete game if it wasn't for his high pitch count after the fifth and sixth innings.

Brady Mathews came in to get the groundout ending the game and McGivney's season.

"It was a great game," Voegele said. "Everyone hit good, we played good in the field. You couldn't ask for a better game."

Columbia outlasted McGivney in what Erwin thought was a complete game of momentum.





“We kept giving the momentum back,” he said.

“We’d score a couple of runs and then we’d give the momentum back; that was the tough part. We needed to keep the momentum, but every time we scored, they scored. And that’s a credit to for being a great team, just couldn’t ever get on top of it.”

The complete opposite for O’Donnell and his Eagles.

“When they scored, we came back and matched that in the fifth and sixth inning,” he said.

“One of our mantras is getting off to a good start. When you score a run in the first inning, that takes a little pressure off. You knew both pitchers were going to settle in.”

It was no surprise to Voegle and his teammates to be winning a Sectional title this season.

“We knew we were going to be up here,” he said. “When we saw the bracket, we figured it would come down to this game and I felt like we prepared pretty good for it.”

Voegle, arguably the best pitcher McGivney has seen this season, was still tested by the Griffins’ bats throughout.

“I thought we could hit him,” Erwin said. “He’s a great pitcher and I’m not taking anything away from him, but I thought we could hit him. We have a really good lineup, and we have guys that are focused and ready to go. I don’t think they were overmatched.”

“I thought it was going to be a really good game but at the end of the day we made a couple of mistakes there that really cost us.”

Columbia moves on to the Super-Sectionals where they will play Nashville (30-6) on Monday, May 29<sup>th</sup> at 2 p.m. in Carbondale.