

# Griffins Hold Off Belleville East's Late Push - Explorers Fall To Hosting Eagles In Columbia Tip-Off Classic

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November 14 2023 9:10 AM



**FATHER MCGIVNEY 47, BELLEVILLE EAST 37**

COLUMBIA - After a quick start led to a 20-point lead at halftime, the Father McGivney Griffins had to settle for a 10-point win after a late Belleville East push.

Senior forward Emily Johnson put the first four points on the board for McGivney as senior guard Sami Oller added the next three as the Griffins went up 7-2 early. Sophomore guard Natalie Beck found some space for a buzzer-beater to extend her team's lead to 9-4.

In the second quarter, the Lancers began to turn the ball over and commit fouls quite frequently, and the Griffins made them pay.

Oller went four-for-six from the free-throw line in the second quarter and Johnson made both of hers in that frame as well.

It all led to McGivney outscoring East 18-3 in the second quarter and extending to a 27-7 halftime lead.



But this was very much a tale of two halves.

It was McGivney constantly giving the ball back to East in the second.

The Griffins had a combined total of 25 turnovers, most of them in the second half.

"I think there was definitely some differences between the two halves," head coach Jeff Oller said with a grin postgame.

"The focus in the second half was to reduce turnovers and not reach, and that's something we need to improve on because we didn't do a great job of it."

"But the effort was there," Oller added, "and I think they trusted the offense, which is something that comes with experience I think."

The Lancers began to close the gap in the third, cutting the deficit to 35-22 after three.

After a long McGivney scoring drought, East pulled the game to within seven points after an and-one play from junior guard Aury Brierton to make it 35-28 with five minutes left.

That drought finally cleared when junior guard Devin Ellis drilled the game's first three-pointer. She hit another one with 1:49 remaining in the game to push McGivney's lead back to 10 with the score at 42-32.

"Those were huge shots," coach Oller said, "especially when we were in a scoring drought, partly because of the turnovers we had. To make those shots was huge for her."

The Griffins held out the remaining seconds for a 47-37 win, moving on to face the hosting Columbia Eagles, 51-27 winners over Marquette Catholic, in the tournament's second round.

Brierton led Belleville East with nine points. Junior guard Daja Smith scored eight and freshman guard Abi Monroe added seven.



Leading the Griffins with a big scoring performance was Sami Oller with 19 points, 11 of which came from the foul line. Johnson added 12 points.

As a team, the Griffins went 17 of 36 from the line.

"We've got to put them in," coach Oller said. "Last year they were able to seal some games from the free-throw line, but we'll get there."

Last season, McGivney won the consolation side of the bracket in the Columbia tournament after a second-round loss to Althoff.

"I think the girls came in with the goal to compete in it and you never know what can happen," coach Oller said about this year's tournament odds.

"It's the beginning of the year for everybody."

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## **COLUMBIA 51, MARQUETTE CATHOLIC 27**

COLUMBIA - In a rematch of last year's season opener, the Columbia Eagles hosted the Marquette Explorers in the opening round of the 13th Annual Tip-Off Classic.

Columbia capped off a 9-0 to open the game with junior forward Jordan Holten's three-pointer, forcing Marquette into a timeout.

Not much changed coming out of the break as the Eagles went up 21-2 after the first quarter and 35-7 at the half.

The Explorers played better in the second half, but unfortunately for them, Columbia started to heat up from three-point land.

The Eagles dropped in four three-pointers in the third quarter, including back-to-back-to-back shots to grow the lead to 49-13.

Marquette didn't just roll over though, outscoring Columbia 9-2 in the fourth quarter, but it was too little, too late for the Explorers.

Sophomore forward Allie Weiner had seven points for Marquette. Sophomore guard Laila Davis added five and senior guard Meredith Zigrang had four.

The Eagles had a big night from Holten who scored a team-high 19 points including four threes. Junior guard Ava Langhans added 13 points and junior guard Sam Schmuke had nine.

The Explorers take on Belleville East in the consolation bracket in Columbia on Wednesday at 6 p.m.

