

Griffins Hold On To Beat Brownstown For Program's Second Regional Title

by Bradley Piros, Reporter
February 17 2024 7:28 AM



MT. OLIVE – For the second time in its relatively short existence, the Father McGivney girls basketball team is regional champions.

The Griffins, seeded No. 3 in their sub-sectional, took on and beat the No. 3-seeded Brownstown-St. Elmo Bombers Friday night at Mt. Olive High School by a score of 47-45.

It was McGivney's first time winning a regional title since the 2019-20 season when it went all the way to a sectional championship as the No. 1 seed.

"I told them this is the first time anybody's accomplished this since before Covid," McGivney head coach Jeff Oller said.

"It's been a while; we've had some tough ones. We had a really good team that Covid year. Obviously, getting back and winning a regional championship is something they should be proud of."

In the last two seasons, the Griffins made it to the regional final but both times lost to Carlyle. The year before that there was no postseason due to the ongoing pandemic.

Carlyle got bumped up to Class 2A, making McGivney's path a little easier.

Friday night against the Bombers, Sami Oller got things going early on for McGivney. She scored back-to-back baskets to go ahead 4-2, but it was quickly canceled out by Dayana Haslett's three-pointer and another basket as Brownstown went ahead 7-4.

McGivney tied the game back up at seven, but Lexi Seabaugh's three right before the buzzer gave the Bombers a 10-7 lead after the first quarter.

The second quarter saw opposing runs. The Griffins, sparked by Sami Oller's three-point play and then three-pointer, started the quarter on an 11-3 run, Brownstown's points coming from another Haslett triple.

McGivney led by eight at 21-13, but then the Bombers answered with a run of their own; a 16-point run to be exact.

Seabaugh got the run started with a basket as she contributed 10 points in the span of just a few minutes. The Bombers erased an eight-point deficit and now led by eight at 29-21.

McGivney's Natalie Beck hit back-to-back shots as McGivney closed the half on a 6-1 run to cut the score to 30-27 at halftime.

The Griffins didn't change much at the break.

"Little tweaks, but the main thing we told them was to get back to basics on defense," Oller said. "We were kind of scattered in transition. But in the second half, we did a better job of stopping the ball and running our defense the right way."

Thanks to some better defense and some untimely misses from the Bombers, McGivney outscored Brownstown 20-15 in the second half.

“Right before their run, we went on a run,” coach Oller said regarding the second quarter. “I thought this might be a game like that. The second half was not like that, it was very low scoring, but we’re happy where it ended up.”

The Bombers allowed McGivney back into the game after missing three of four free throws and a back-court violation to open the second half. Oller made them pay with a couple of free throws before Devin Ellis’ basket tied it up at 31.

Ellis grabbed a steal and an easy layup to take the lead at 33-31 but Haslett made two free throws followed by Seabaugh’s basket to go back ahead. Finally, Jada Zumwalt netted a floater to tie the game at 35 heading into the fourth.

Emily Johnson swished a couple of free throws to go ahead again, right before Addie Sasse tied it back up. Then McGivney pulled away thanks to an eight-point run.

Oller made a free throw followed by a basket and then a three-pointer from Beck.

“Those were huge,” coach Oller said about Beck’s two clutch shots.

“That’s what we said in the locker room, it’s a tight game and you’ve got to make big plays in big moments and those were certainly two big ones.”

After Johnson’s putback, the Griffins led 45-37, but the Bombers didn’t go quietly into the night.

Seabaugh drilled a three to make it 45-40 with 29 seconds left, causing the final 30 seconds to feel like an eternity for McGivney.

Beck made a single free throw before Madi Miller went the other way and scored. Ellis was fouled and made a single free throw before Haslett darted down court and splashed a three to make it 47-45 with two seconds left.

The Bombers got some help from the officials who added two seconds to the clock and then some more help from McGivney who turned it over, touching the ball out of bounds.

Brownstown had a baseline inbound and needed a basket within four seconds. The pass came in cleanly, but Haslett had no other choice but to put up a heavily contested three-pointer for the win that missed the mark as the buzzer sounded.

The Bombers' season ends at 26-8. Seabaugh and Haslett each scored 18 points.

"They made some big shots, but the girls made plays when they needed to make plays and that's big this time of year," coach Oller said.

Sami Oller led the Griffins with 16 points while Beck added 11 and Ellis had nine.

McGivney moves on to the Nokomis Sectional semifinals where it will take on West Central (17-12). The two teams did not meet in the regular season. The Griffins and Cougars will play on Tuesday, Feb. 20 at 6 p.m. in Nokomis.

West Central upset top-seeded Hardin Calhoun 46-45 in the Concord-Triopia Regional 46-45 Friday night.

The second sectional semifinal is between No. 3-seeded Carrollton and top-seeded Okawville. The Nokomis Sectional championship is set for Thursday, Feb. 22 at 7 p.m.