

Palisadian-Post

Serving the Community Since 1928

[HOME](#) | [NEWS](#) | [PALI LIFE](#) | [SPORTS](#) | [FOOD AND STYLE](#) | [KIDS](#) | [REAL ESTATE](#) | [WEB EXTRAS](#)

[Photos](#) | [Video](#) | [Obituaries](#)

Freedman Enjoys Dazzling Debut

*Added by **Steve Galluzzo** | Sports Editor on June 19, 2014.*

*Saved under **Sports***

Palisadian Scores 31 Points in His First Summer League Game for Santa Monica High

Before his first game as a high school player, **Spencer Freedman** seemed calm as can be.

One of the most highly-touted incoming freshmen in Southern California, the 15-year-old Palisadian knew all eyes would be on him and when it was over he had exceeded even his own expectations.

Making his summer debut for Santa Monica, Freedman ran the Vikings' offense like a fourth-year starter, dishing out assists left and right and pouring in 31 points in a blowout victory over Sherman Oaks Notre Dame in last Wednesday's Crespi Tournament opener. He was back in Encino the next day to prove his first game was no fluke, scoring 25 points at point guard against Crescenta Valley.



Samo High's Spencer Freedman takes a breather on the bench.

Photo: Steve Galluzzo

Freedman sank a three-pointer from the top of the key for the Vikings' first basket, then fired a no-look pass to a teammate under the basket for another bucket. His runner in the lane as the first-quarter clock expired extended Samo's lead to 10 points. He had 18 points in the second half, drawing oohs and aahs from the crowd, but when the final buzzer sounded he acted as if he'd just played a pick-up game with his friends.

"I guess it starts with my family upbringing," Freedman said of his calm demeanor on and off the court. "My dad is always telling me if you win, don't get too high and if you lose, don't get too low."

Although he'll soon be moving to Santa Monica with his family, Freedman has lived in the

Palisades his whole life and practically grew up at the **Palisades Recreation Center**, where he honed his skills not far from his home on **Haverford**.

“I played flag football there at the park and of course I’ve played in the basketball league since I was very young,” Freedman said. “I loved it and I was always fortunate to play on good teams. I can’t really remember being on one that lost. I won the championship with a number of teams. The Oregon Ducks and North Carolina are two that stick out the most.”



Freshman Spencer Freedman scored 31 points and missed only two shots in his summer debut against Notre Dame.

Photo: Steve Galluzzo

Freedman attended The Willows Community School in Culver City from pre-kindergarten until eighth grade, when he home schooled while preparing for a trip to Israel.

“I was in Israel for 30 days and that was the best experience of my life,” he said. “It made me realize there’s so much out there.”

Freedman played in the Maccabiah Games in Israel last summer for the USA youth team and enjoyed it so much that he opted to delay his first year of high school to study abroad. Team USA brought back the silver and later that summer Freedman won a gold medal as part of the U16 squad at the JCC Maccabi Games in Orange County.

Deciding where to start his prep career was not an easy decision. Former PaliHi head coach **James Paleno** was Freedman’s coach at Ben Howland’s Basketball Camp (Freedman’s UCLA team won the title) and he also knows the Dolphins’ current head coach **Vejas Anaya** well. He also considered St. Monica and Mater Dei before settling on Santa Monica.

“I know all of the Pali coaches and I love them,” Freedman said. “I just thought Santa Monica was a better fit. Coming from a small school I think the whole public school environment will be good for me, I love Coach [James] Hecht and the whole team.”

Freedman joins a program that won the Southern Section Division 1A championship and reached the state finals in 2012-13 and moved up to Division 1AA (the highest in the Southern Section) last season. The Vikings now boast two other talented guards in junior Jonah Mathews (last year’s leading scorer and younger brother of Cal guard Jordan Mathews) and senior Nuwr’iyl Williams.

Paleno knows what kind of player the Vikings are getting and believes Freedman can make an immediate impact. Hecht seemed to agree, for he didn’t hesitate to putting Freedman in the starting lineup in each of his first two games.

“Spencer has a great work ethic and always has,” said Paleno, who remains the PaliHi golf coach and was on campus last week helping Howland run his annual camp. “He’s always in the gym working on his game. He also has great heart and great spirit. I’m sad that I’m not going to get the opportunity to coach him.”

Freedman’s ability also left a lasting impression with Howland, whose parting words to his campers Friday were to work hard so someday they can be where Freedman finds himself now.

He came to our camp every year and he always won,” Howland recalled. “He’s a great kid and I’m really happy for him.”

No matter how far his basketball skills take him, Freedman is proud to have been raised in the Palisades and cherishes his favorite hangouts like **Noah’s Bagels**, **Starbucks** and **Cafe Vida**.