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December 20, 2015

Mater Dei edges Ayala in OT for NOC crown

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Mater Dei 72, Ayala 68 (OT)

By Jack Nelson

In what coach **Gary McKnight** aptly called "A great high school basketball game," his Mater Dei squad withstood a furious Ayala rally to prevail in overtime and win the North Orange County Tournament championship, 72-68.

Ayala (8-1) overcame a 9-point 4th quarter deficit and sent the game into overtime when President President hit a game tying three-pointer as time ran out. But Mater Dei (11-0) scored the last four points on free throws in the overtime to pull out the win.

Tonight's game featured one of coach McKnight's former player's coaching against him. **Edgar Mounce** was a Monarch player who graduated from Mater Dei in 1986.

For the 11th straight game Mater Dei used a different starting 5. Tonight's starters: 6-7 Jr. **Justice Sueing**, 6-1 So **Spencer Freedman**, 6-9 So **Michael Wang**, 6-2 Sr. **Hayden Burke** and 6-5 So. **Harrison Butler**.

With **M.J. Cage**, **Matt Weyand** and **Bailey Stout** out with injuries again, Mater Dei was down to a 7 man rotation like in many other past years. The other two rotation players were 6-9 **Miles Brookins** and 6-5 soph **Reagan Lundeen**.



Photo by Lou Collazo

Harrison Butler attacks the rim

Ayala does not have a roster listed on MaxPreps and even their scorebook keepers had just numbers and first names for the players. We were able to verify two last names and a third, John Edgar, we're guessing is the same player that was on last season's MaxPreps roster for Ayala.

Ayala starters: **John Edgar**, **Austen Awosika**, **Miles President**, **Oscar**, and **Sean**. **Mike** was the only reserve who played so Ayala played with a 6-man rotation.

Both teams missed opportunities in the first minute but President and Edgar eventually led Ayala to a 5-0 start by the 6:13 mark. Mater Dei did not get on the board until Freedman made a pair of free throws to make it 5-2 at the 5:45 mark.

Wang got the first Mater Dei basket when he scored on a putback and Ayala's lead was down to 5-4. President scored on a putback to make it 7-4. Butler threw down a thunderous dunk on an assist by Sueing to get Mater Dei to within 1 point at 7-6.

President hit a three-pointer from the right wing to give Ayala a 10-6 lead. Edgar hit a three pointer from the top of the key to give Ayala a 13-6 lead at the 3:00 mark for their largest lead of the game.

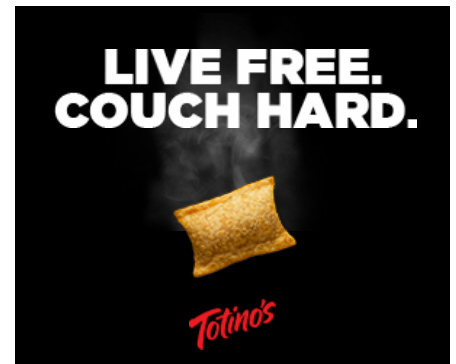
A driving layup by Sueing was the start of a 9-0 run for Mater Dei. Sueing hit a 3 Pt shot from the left wing to cut the lead to 2 points at 13-11. Then Lundeen made a nice move in the post with a twist and turn to tie the game at 13 all with 34 seconds left in the first quarter.

With 10 seconds left, Sueing tipped in a miss by Lundeen and Mater Dei had their first lead of the game at 15-13. But it did not last long as Burke fouled Edgar on a jumper from the right wing with 3.8 seconds left and the shot went in. So did the ensuing free throw and Ayala led, 16-15 at the end of the first quarter.

President scored on a layup for Ayala to open the 2nd quarter. Sueing made a three point play that tied the game at 18. Butler popped in an 18 ft jumper from the left wing to give Mater Dei its second lead of the game and Mater Dei was not headed again until midway thru overtime.

After Butler's score that gave Mater Dei a 20-18 lead was the first salvo in a 6-0 run, with Freedman hitting a nice floater in the lane and then dishing to Sueing for a bucket and a 24-18 lead with 4:20 to play in the first half.

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Ayala came right back, as President made a nice reverse layup for two and then a 3 pointer from the top of the key. Mater Dei's lead was down to 24-22. Butler made a nice putback to make it 26-22. A putback by Edgar closed Ayala to 26-24. Then Freedman, who had made 20 three pointers for Mater Dei in the first 4 games of this tourney, made his first in two attempts in this game when he nailed one from the left wing to give Mater Dei a 29-24 lead.

President was fouled by Lundeen and made both free throws, and then the first bucket of the game for Oscar closed the gap to 29-28. Sueing scored on a nice assist from Butler, as Mater Dei went on a 6-0 run to end the half.

Butler was a factor on every score in this run. He scored on a putback and for the final points of the first half in what was the play of the night, Harrison threw a long pass to Freedman streaking to the Monarchs' goal and he not only saved Butler from a turnover by catching up to it, he also banked the ball in the basket while laying on his back. I sure hung a star on that one and this was certainly Mater Dei's "Play of the game." Score at halftime: Mater Dei 35, Ayala 28.

Ayala had not shot a good pct on 3 pointers in the first half, making only 2-11 but they did a whole lot better in the second half. Mater Dei's shooting stats went down and at the end of the third quarter Ayala had outscored Mater Dei 13-10.

Three of Ayala's buckets in the 3rd quarter were three pointers. President had 2 three pointers from the top of the key and Sean made the first one of the third quarter from the left wing. Freedman made the last shot of the quarter on a nice drive while falling to give Mater Dei a 45-41 lead going in to the final quarter of regulation.

The previous 4 baskets by Mater Dei were by Butler on an assist by Sueing, a floater by Freedman, a hook shot in the lane by Wang and a putback by Butler.

Sueing scored on an assist by Freedman and Freedman made a pair of free throws to extend Mater Dei's lead to 8 points at 49-41 in the first minute of the final quarter.

It looked like Mater Dei might take their first double digit lead of the game when Wang had the ball down low in the key but then Oscar stole the ball and went the length of the floor for a layup to cut the lead to 6 at 49-43. President was fouled and that looked like another sure two points for Ayala but President missed the second one for his only miss of the night at the free throw line. Mater Dei led 49-44 with 4:40 to play.



Photo by Lou Collazo
Miles President shoots in front of Michael Wang



Photo by Lou Collazo
John Edgar and Miles Brookins battle for position

Then Mater Dei got back to back scores. Freedman scored on a layup and Butler scored underneath on an inbound pass from Burke. Mater Dei came as close as they had or would come to a double digit lead in this game with the score now 53-44.

But then Ayala started on a 6-0 run with President having a one and one and he hit both to make it 53-46. Another Monarch turnover led to a layup by Oscar. Edgar made an 8 ft baseline shot and that closed the gap to 3 points at 53-50. Sueing missed the front end of a 1 and 1 and Ayala came up the court with a chance to tie the game.

Burke made a great steal near midcourt and drove for the hoop where he was fouled. He hit two free throws to give Mater Dei a 55-50 lead with just 41.8 seconds left. But I said to the guys sitting around me, I have a feeling that President will hit a three pointer and make this very interesting.

Those words had barely left my mouth when he stopped and hit nothing but net from the top of the key to make it 55-53. Sueing got fouled with 20 seconds left and he made both free throws. Mater Dei had a 4 point lead with

under 20 seconds to play.

Awosika made a three point shot from the baseline to make it 57-56. Mater Dei got the ball in the hands of its best FT shooter, Freedman, and he got fouled with under 10 seconds to play. He made two FTs and Mater Dei led by three, 59-56.

This is where the *Nelson Rule* comes into play, which is to not let a potential tying three point shot attempt when the clock is below 10 seconds, but instead foul and let them shoot two free throws.

The game clock was at 7.7 seconds but Mater Dei let Ayala's top three point shooter President get one off and he hit nothing but net to send the game into overtime.

About 75% of the time, the team that gives up the tying three pointer at the end of the game loses the game in overtime but tonight Mater Dei was able to beat the odds.

Burke scored first basket of OT for 61-59 lead. President was fouled and went to the line for a one and one and made both shots to tie the game at 61. Sueing made a powerful drive from the left wing to put Mater Dei up 63-61. Ayala countered with a big three-pointer to give Ayala its first lead since the first minute of the second quarter.

Sueing came right back with a nice left hand bank shot that gave Mater Dei a 65-64 lead at the 2:24 mark. Back and forth it went as Edgar scored to put Ayala back on top 66-65. Sueing was fouled and missed the first but made the second to tie the game at 66. President drove in and scored on another beautiful reverse layup for a 68-66 Ayala lead.

Wang tied the game with a shot down low with 1:05 to play that made it 68-68. After a stop Mater Dei got the ball and Wang made two free throws to give Mater Dei the lead for good, 70-68. Ayala failed to score and fouled Sueing. He clinched the game with a pair of free throws and Mater Dei had survived its first real scare of the young season with a final score of 72-68.



Photo by Lou Collazo
Reagan Lundeen

Mater Dei shot 27-52, including 2-11 from downtown, with Freedman just 1-3 and Sueing 1-6 from long range. Mater Dei made 16-20 free throws. Ayala was 25-63 for 39.7 % and 9-11 from the free throw line for 81.8%.

Mater Dei pulled down 41 rebounds to just 20 for Ayala. Sueing and Wang each had 11 rebounds for Mater Dei and Edgar had 8 for Ayala. Awosika had 6 of the 7 assists for Ayala and Sueing had 6 of Mater Dei's 13. Wang had 4 of Mater Dei's 16 turnovers with Edgar, Awosika, Oscar and President each having a pair accounting for all 8 Ayala turnovers.

Burke had 2 of Mater Dei's 4 steals while Oscar had 4 of Ayala's 11. Ayala made 18 points off 16 Mater Dei turnovers while Mater Dei made just 4 points off the 8 Bulldog turnovers. Mater Dei had 10 second chance points to 6 for Ayala.

All in all it was a very exciting championship game and it looks like coach Mounce has a team that is flying below the radar, which is understandable when they are from the same area as one of the nation's most talented high school teams that resides in the same city of Chino Hills.

Spencer Freedman was the tournament MVP and Harrison Butler and Justice Sueing were named to all tournament team.

The team will have 8 days now to heal their bruises and get ready for the big time national tourney at Myrtle Beach S.C. from 28th to 31st of December. If they should win their first three games down there, they would most likely play the #1 ranked team in the nation, Montverde Academy from Florida in championship game.

Scoring by quarters:

Ayala-----16-12-13-18-09 = 68

Mater Dei---15-20-10-14-13 = 72

Ayala (68): President 30, Awosika 15, Edgar 11, Sean 6, Oscar 6.

3-pt FG: President 5, Sean 2, Awosika 1, John1.

Mater Dei (72): Sueing 23, Freedman 19, Butler 12, Wang 12, Burke 4, Lundeen 2.

3-pt FG: Freedman, Sueing.



Photo by Lou Collazo

NOC Tournament Champions: Mater Dei

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