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Mater Dei advances with strong all-round effort

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By **STEVE FRYER**
STAFF WRITER

Mater Dei advances to semifin...



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MATT MASIN, STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER
Mater Dei's Spencer Freedman gets a quick shot off before the Centennial defense can react in the second round of the CIF-SS Open Division boys basketball playoffs at Mater Dei High.

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SANTA ANA – Mater Dei did everything right.

The Monarchs did everything well, too, in their 61-46 win over Centennial of Corona in a CIF-SS Open Division boys basketball quarterfinal playoff game Tuesday at Mater Dei.

They will have to do everything right again, and probably better, too, Friday in the semifinals. Mater Dei (27-3) plays at undefeated and national No. 1 Chino Hills.

Chino Hills (29-0) beat Inglewood, 112-78, in another quarterfinal Tuesday. Last week, Chino Hills beat Santa Margarita, 100-66, in the first round.

The season is not over for Centennial (22-7). The Huskies play at Roosevelt of Eastvale on Friday in the consolation quarterfinals.

Mater Dei got contributions from several players Tuesday.

Justice Sueing, a 6-foot-7 junior, turned the ignition by scoring nine of Mater Dei's 17 first-quarter points. He finished with a team-high 14 points.

Mater Dei sophomore point guard **Spencer Freedman** scored 13 points with four 3-pointers and five assists, and played terrific defense on Centennial's leading scorer, **Jordan Griffin**. Griffin on Friday made 9 of 12 3-point shots in the Huskies' 83-64 first-round win over Compton.

Griffin, who landed awkwardly on his right (shooting) wrist in the first quarter, was 1 for 7 on 3s, and 3 for 14 overall, for a team-high 14 points.

Monarchs senior center **MJ Cage** scored eight points with eight rebounds and three blocked shots. Cage, who signed with Oregon, battled inside against the Huskies' **Ike Anigbogu**, a 6-10 senior who signed with UCLA, and 6-10 junior **Jalen Hill**, who committed to the Bruins.

Two Mater Dei sophomores, **Harrison Butler** and **Michael Wang**, made momentum-retaining baskets in the

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fourth quarter. Wang opened the period with a 3-pointer from the top of the key. On the Monarchs' next possession, Butler drove the baseline then went up like a rocket for a tenacious dunk.

"From the start we played really well as a team," Freedman said. "(The Huskies) have everything, they've got bigs and they've got guards. We needed to come to play and definitely did that."

Anigbogu did not play Friday because of a right knee issue, and he did not appear as nimble Tuesday as he was earlier this month when Centennial played in the Nike Extravaganza at Mater Dei.

"But he was out there," Centennial coach **Josh Giles** said, "so we'd never use that as an excuse."

With Griffin's early wrist injury, the Huskies were not at full strength. That, Giles said, was not why Centennial lost.

"I'm disappointed in how we executed some things," Giles said, "but a lot of that had to do with (the Monarchs). They were really prepared and took us out of what we wanted to do."

Centennial had an 18-17 lead at the end of the first quarter. Mater Dei outscored the Huskies, 18-7, in the second quarter to build a 35-25 halftime lead. The Monarchs took a 48-37 lead into the fourth quarter.

Mater Dei coach **Gary McKnight** enjoyed the multiple contributions from his team.

"Great team effort," McKnight said. "They shared the ball really well on offense and we played great on defense."

Contact the writer: sfryer@ocregister.com

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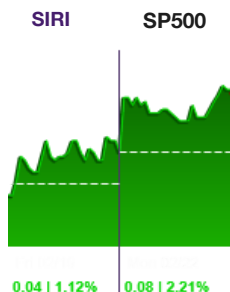
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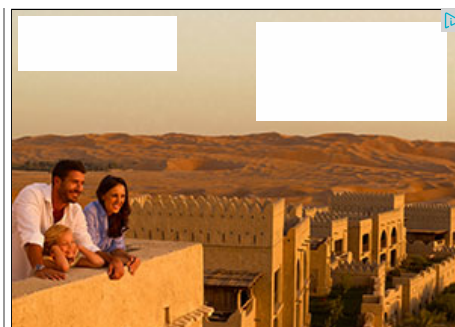
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- ☐ Eyassu Worku (Los Alamitos)
- ☐ MJ Cage (Mater Dei)
- ☐ Evan Battey (Villa Park)
- ☐ Kezie Okpala (Esperanza)
- ☐ KaVaughn Scott (Orange Lutheran)
- ☐ Spencer Freedman (Mater Dei)
- ☐ Zac Jervis (Orange Lutheran)
- ☐ Sebastian Much (JSerra)
- ☐ A player not on this list.

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