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Santa Margarita surge isn't enough to catch Mater Dei

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By STEVE FRYER
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RANCHO SANTA MARGARITA – Again, Santa Margarita got close to Mater Dei in the fourth quarter. Again, Mater Dei pulled away to win.

Mater Dei went from a 12-point lead to start the fourth quarter to a two-point lead before beating Santa Margarita, 59-51, Wednesday in a Trinity League game at Santa Margarita.

The Monarchs, ranked No. 1 in the Register's Orange County top 10, are 21-3 overall and 8-0 in league. They are closing in on what would be their 33rd league championship in Coach **Gary McKnight's** 34th season.

No. 4 Santa Margarita is 15-8 overall and 5-3 in league.

Sophomore guard [Spencer Freedman](#) led Mater Dei with 16 points. He was 6 for 6 at the free-throw line, including 4 for 4 in the fourth quarter.

Senior center and Oregon-signee [MJ Cage](#) scored 15 points for the Monarchs, who also got 13 points from junior **Matt Weyand** and 11 points from junior [Justice Sueing](#).

Santa Margarita junior [Kaden Rasheed](#) scored 14 points, including two 3-pointers during the Eagles' fourth-quarter run. [Colin Ferrier](#) also made two 3s in the fourth quarter for Santa Margarita.

When the teams met Jan. 15 at Mater Dei, Santa Margarita trailed by one point in the fourth quarter before the Monarchs went on to win by nine points.

[Adrease Jackson](#) of Santa Margarita made a 3-foot turnaround shot to cut the Mater Dei lead to 49-47 with just under two minutes remaining. At the other end, Cage, taking a nifty pass in the lane from Freedman, dunked, was fouled and made the free throw for a 52-47 lead with 1:33 remaining.

Freedman made four free throws in the final minute to keep the lead secure for the Monarchs.

McKnight liked the multiple contributions from his roster.

"Cage stepped up to the plate," he said, "Sueing got in the same and did some nice things and Freedman hit some big shots. This is a big win for us."

Mater Dei has two back-to-back games Friday and Saturday at the Nike Extravaganza games in its home gym. The Monarchs play Friday against Shadow Mountain of Phoenix, Ariz., and Saturday against state No. 4 Foothills Christian of El Cajon.

They conclude the regular season next week with league games against Orange Lutheran and St. John Bosco.

Santa Margarita plays Etiwanda at the Nike Extravaganza on Saturday. The Eagles conclude the regular season next week with league games and Servite and Orange Lutheran.


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