
BASKETBALL — 1/23/2016

Freedman leads Mater Dei comeback over St. John Bosco

Jack Nelson | Californiapreps.com staff

Mater Dei 65, St. John Bosco 56

By Jack Nelson

The Mater Dei Monarchs trailed for most of the game but rallied to beat the St. John Bosco Braves, 65-56, in a key Trinity League game.

Mater Dei finished the first half of their Trinity League schedule with a 5-0 record and a 1 game lead over the Orange Lutheran Lancers who defeated the Santa Margarita Eagles 62-61 Friday night.

St. John Bosco came in and was ready to spring an upset against host Mater Dei especially when Mater Dei star center and all CIF player [M.J. Cage](#) was not available to play in tonight's game (reason unknown at game time).

Mater Dei never got its first lead in the game until there was only 3:18 to play in the fourth quarter, which was 17 seconds after Bosco's [JJ Watson](#) fouled out.

Mater Dei (18-5, 5-0) starting five for coach **Gary McKnight**: 6-2 Sr. **Bailey Stout**, 6-1 Soph [Spencer Freedman](#), 6-9 Jr [Miles Brookins](#), 6-5 Soph **Reagan Lundeen**, and 6-5 Soph [Harrison Butler](#).

St. John Bosco (15-5, 2-3) starting five for coach **Matt Dunn**: 6-4 Jr. **Alpha Okoli**, 6-3 Jr. **JJ Watson**, 5-11 Fr. [Makani Whiteside](#), 6-0 Sr **Tarreon Brown**, and 6-7 Soph **Jojo Bush**.

Mater Dei controlled the opening tip but Bush rejected Lundeen's layup attempt and Brown scored on the other end on a layup for a 2-0 Braves lead at the 7:22 mark. Butler tied the game at 2 when he scored on a layup with an assist to Stout. But on that play Stout sprained his

ankle and never returned to action. His prognosis has not been determined at this time.

Stout was replaced by 6-2 Sr. **Hayden Burke**. Whiteside then scored on an assist by Okoli to give them Bosco a 4-2 lead. Lundeen scored on an inbound pass from Freedman under the basket to tie the game at 4-4. That would be the last tie of the game.



Nikko Hall gets fouled by Hayden Burke

Photo by Lou Collazo

Watson hit a three pointer from the left wing to give St. John Bosco a 7-4 lead. On an inside out assist, Brookins got the assist and Butler the 18 ft jumper from the right wing and Bosco's lead was down to 7-6 at the midway mark of the first quarter.

Watson was fouled while shooting and made both free throws for a 9-6 lead. Then on a great play by Watson, he caught a hard pass from just several feet but hung on and sidestepped 6-9 Soph **Michael Wang** and drove halfcourt for a slam dunk with authority and a 11-6 Braves lead.

Freedman then hit Mater Dei's first three of the game from the top of the key with an assist from 6-7 Jr. **Justice Sueing** and the game tightened to a 11-9 Braves lead. Watson made a 3

point shot from the left wing to make it 14-9.

6-7 315 lb Jr **Wyatt Davis** made what would be his only shot attempt of the game but he muscled it in on a bank underneath and it gave St. John Bosco a 16-9 lead and that could have been a great story tonight if St. John Bosco had won the game by two points.

Wang then scored on a drive to the hoop to make it 16-11. Watson finished out his sensational first quarter with a three pointer from the top of the key that gave St. John Bosco a 19-11 lead at the end of the first quarter. Watson had outscored Mater Dei by himself, 13-11.

6-2 Soph **Nikko Hall** was fouled and had a pair of free throws could have given St. John Bosco a double digit lead but Hall missed both freebies and it remained 19-11. But Bush scored on a layup to give St. John Bosco the double digit lead at 21-11.

Mater Dei was clearly missing Cage in the lineup, especially on the defensive end where his specialty is blocking opponents' shots without fouling them. The last Bush layup was just the first of three successive layups for him that were just interrupted by two free throws from Butler. After Bush's third basket on a putback St. John Bosco had a 25-13 lead.



Harrison Butler lays one up against defender JoJo Bush

Photo by Lou Collazo

Freedman was having his problems getting untracked although he was doing his best to get something going. On one possession he missed a three pointer, then a 2 pointer, then was fouled and missed the front end of a one and one. Then after Mater Dei got the rebound to get another chance, Freedman turned the ball over. But his time would come, luckily for the Monarchs.

Watson was fouled by Butler and he made both free throws to give St. John Bosco a 27-13 lead with 3:16 to play in the first half. The 27-13 lead would end up being the biggest lead of the game. Freedman did finally hit a floater in the lane to make it 27-15 and Burke made one of two free throws to make it 27-16.

Hall was fouled and missed both free throws but the rebound went off a Monarch and Brown scored on a layup with an assist to Whiteside and St. John Bosco had a 29-16 lead with 1:55 to play. Butler scored on a nice up and under move and it was 29-18. Brown hit his 4th FG in 5 attempts on a jumper from the right wing to make it 31-18. Butler made a nice dribble drive for the last score of the first half, which ended at 31-20.

First half stats kind of told the story. Mater Dei's weak shooting helped put them in the hole. They made 8-23 from the field for 34.8%, including just 1-8 from beyond the arc and were only 3-10 for 30% from the free throw line.

St. John Bosco wasn't shooting much better but they had a huge 25-15 margin on the boards and had 10 offensive rebounds to 2 for Mater Dei. Bush got his 3rd foul right at the start of the 3rd quarter and that seemed like a break for Mater Dei. The freshman PG Whiteside hit an outside jumper but it was within the arc for 2 points, but that gave the Braves a 13 point lead at 33-20.

Lundeen was fouled and made one of two free throws and St. John Bosco led 33-21. Then Butler grabbed the rebound of the missed free throw and scored to make it 33-23. Sueing got Mater Dei back to single digits with a nice 8 ft floater in the lane to make it 33-25. Hall made a pair of free throws to make it 35-25.

Brookins scored on a putback and Mater Dei was back to single digits and playing very aggressively. Right then came what seemed to be the play that gave Mater Dei the momentum they needed to mount a comeback. Sueing got a steal and then a hard dribble drive from mid court for a thunderous slam dunk which evoked the biggest ovation of the game and also cut



Justice Sueing with the slam!

Photo by Lou Collazo

But then 6-5 sr. **Eduardo DalleTorre** gave St. John Bosco the momentum back when he made his only bucket of the game and it was a huge one that made it 9 point margin at 38-29. At the 4:00 mark of the 3rd qtr, Sueing was fouled and made both free throws to cut the lead to 38-31.

Butler went diving for a loose ball on the floor and called time out. When play resumed Butler found an opening and drove in for a thunderous slam dunk from the right wing but whoopsie do, that ball missed the hoop by two feet. And to really make it a rally killer, St. John Bosco went to the other end and Whiteside made his only three pointer of the night. Instead of Mater Dei trailing by 5 points the Brave now led by 10 at 41-31.

Weyand missed a layup but while attempting to tip in he drew a non shooting foul. He went to the free throw line for an important 1 and 1 and he made the first but then missed the second but Mater Dei was back to a single digit deficit at 41-32.

Butler was fouled by Davis and made both free throws and the lead was down to 41-34 with 1:43 to pay in the third quarter. Then a real momentum changer again when Freedman hit a

three pointer from the left wing and St. John Bosco's lead was down to 41-37.

Monarch fans were on their feet but St. John Bosco sullied the moment when Hall lofted a high arching three pointer from the right wing and whoosh, nothing but net and it was back to 7 point lead at 44-37 with 50 seconds to play.

Butler then got fouled and went to the line for a 1 and 1 and he hit both ends to make it 44-39. Boy has this soph been improving by leaps and bounds in this month of January and if he continues to improve his game that quickly, he holds the key to how far this team can go in the playoffs. He has the most athleticism of any player on the team and he has certainly got it more under control game by game.

While St. John Bosco was going for last shot, Freedman came up with a steal and assist to Sueing for a layup and Mater Dei had gotten back in the hunt, as they trailed just 44-41 at the end of the third quarter.



Left to right: Nikko Hall, Miles Brookins, Eduardo DalleTorre

Photo by Lou Collazo

Hall scored on a layup to draw first blood for Bosco at 7:29 of the 4th quarter but then Sueing came back and made a play that you can hang a star on. He made a falling down layup and was fouled and converted the free throw to make it 46-44 and this was as close as Mater Dei had been since they trailed 7-6 in the first quarter.

Watson, the Bosco star, made a driving layup to give the Braves a 48-44 lead. He came back and hit a three pointer from the top of the key and St. John Bosco was back on top by 7 points at 51-44.

Butler came thru with a big rebound and putback to cut the lead to 51-46 with 5:54 to play. Then Mater Dei forced another turnover and it was **Freedman Time**, as he made the first shot of the quarter that will go down in Monarch history as one of the greatest clutch performances. His three pointer from the top of the key made it 51-49.

But whoa, not yet. Watson looked like he would not be denied as he had taken this team to the brink of what would be its first victory in history over Mater Dei, which would be cause for jubilation on the SJB campus. Watson took a step-back three point shot that hit nothing but net and St. John Bosco was up 54-49 with 5:11 to play.

But here came Freedman who made a drive in traffic and got Mater Dei back to a three point deficit at 54-51 with 4:44 to play. Freedman came up with a steal and he was fouled but he is generally money in the bank at the free throw line and again he was, as he nailed both of them. Mater Dei was now only one point down at 54-53.

Hall came back with a clutch basket for St. John Bosco and he was fouled by Burke. The bucket had given he Braves a 56-53 lead but he missed the free throw.

Freedman scored on a layup to get Mater Dei back to a one point deficit again at 56-55 with 3:44 to play. With 3:35 to play, what happened was the most important call of the game for both teams. Watson was called for a offensive foul and that was his 5th foul and he had to leave the game. He took with him 23 points (5-10 from downtown), 5 boards and 3 assists and his team in the lead 56-55.



Spencer Freedman is defended by Makani Whiteside
Photo by Lou Collazo

Freedman wasted no time in making a 12 ft jumper from the right wing that gave Mater Dei its first lead of the game at the 3:28 mark.

St. John Bosco never scored again and Freedman was sensational. He hit two three-pointers, sandwiched around two free throws by Weyand. The first was from the left wing and the final one from way down in coffin corner where I could not even see him, but i saw the ball go thru the hoop to make it 60-56.

Then the finale with 30 seconds left when Freedman hit one from deep in coffin corner on the left base line for another 3 pointer that gave him 17 points in that 5 minute span and that was truly a STANLEY JOHNSON type performance to pull out a clutch victory, 65-56. It was a tough loss for St. John Bosco. They are certainly a well coached team, I was very impressed with coach Matt Dunn's knowledge and demeanor.

Mater Dei ended up making 22-53 from the field for 41.5%, including 5-18 from beyond the arc. Freedman made 5-11 from three point land while the rest of the team was 0-7. Mater Dei made 16-27 from the free throw line for 59.3%.

Freedman made a game high 26 points, with of course 17 big ones in the final 5 minutes of the game. He stole the player of the game away from Braves star JJ Watson who sure did everything he could tonight. Freedman really put the finishing touches on his performance with JJ watching from the bench. It would have been greater to see them both out there going head to head in the final minutes.

St. John Bosco made 21-48 from the field for 43.8%, including 8-21 from downtown and was 6-14 from the free throw line for 42.9%.



JJ Watson soars to the rim.

Photo by Lou Collazo

Mater Dei stepped up its rebounding in the second half as both teams ended up with 34. Butler had 7 and Sueing 6 for Mater Dei while Bush, Brown and Watson each had 5 for St. John Bosco.

Weyand had 3 of Mater Dei's 9 assists, while Watson and Whiteside had 3 each of St. John Bosco's 10. Mater Dei had 12 steals with Sueing having 4 and Freedman and Brookins had 3 each and Weyand had 2 while St. John Bosco had 5 steals with 6 ft Jr **Gil Fernandez** having 2.

The key to the Mater Dei win can be told in this next sentence. Mater Dei in the second half made 21 points off turnovers (0 in the first half) and St. John Bosco made a total of 2 points off turnovers and those were in the first half.

So no matter what aspect you look at, in the end that was definitely the winning formula for Mater Dei but it was a scintillating 4th quarter performance by Spencer Freedman that will long be remembered in this game.

Scoring by Quarters:

St. John Bosco---19-12-13-12 = 56

Mater Dei-----11-09-21-24 = 65

St. John Bosco (56): Watson 23, Hall 9, Brown 8, Bush 6, Whiteside 5, DalleTorre 3, Davis 2.

3-pt FG: Watson 5, Hall, Whiteside, DalleTorre.

Mater Dei (65): Freedman 26, Butler 18, Sueing 11, Lundeen 3, Brookins 2, Weyand 2, Wang 2, Burke 1.

3-pt fg: Freedman 5.

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2	Najee Harris	RB	Alabama
3	Trevon Grimes	WR	List
4	Josh Kaindoh	DE	Maryland

5	Isaiah Wilson	OL	List
6	Tyler Shelvin	DT	LSU
7	Dylan Moses	LB	List
8	Lamont Wade	DB	List
9	Jeffrey Okudah	DB	List
10	Josh Myers	OL	Ohio St.

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