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## Gorman loses in overtime to California's Mater Dei High at Tarkanian Classic

By *Jesse Granger*

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Bishop Gorman's basketball team once again proved it is one of the most talented squads on the West Coast on Monday night at the Orleans Arena.

As they headed to the locker room at halftime, the Gaels led Mater Dei High of California (ranked No. 5 in the country) 41-31.

But Bishop Gorman also showed again that it hasn't quite figured things out yet this season.

Mater Dei stormed back in the second half and defeated the Gaels 86-79 in overtime to move on to the Tarkanian Classic championship game.

"We have to play a full game," senior Chuck O'Bannon Jr. said. "The problem we've been having this year is we'll play a good first quarter or a good half, but then we just can't put it together to finish out the game."

Bishop Gorman built its lead early in the game from behind the 3-point arc.

The Gaels hit eight 3-pointers in the opening half but could only manage three in the second.

"We didn't come into the second half the way we did in the first half," said O'Bannon, who was playing in his third game since returning from injury. "We kind of let them back into the game and lost it from there."

O'Bannon finished with a solid 17 points, 11 rebounds and six assists, but 11 of the points came from the free-throw line, and O'Bannon struggled from the floor.

"Absolutely," O'Bannon said about being rusty from missing time. "Sometimes it goes in and sometimes it doesn't, but tonight it just wasn't feeling good at all."

Christian Popoola Jr. carried the Gaels with 16 second-half points, and scored the final eight points in regulation and overtime for Bishop Gorman.

“I really wanted to lead my guys into it,” Popoola said. “They were finding me, I was getting the ball and I was going to the rim trying to get fouled. I really wanted to pull the win out for my team.”

Junior Spencer Freedman led the comeback for Mater Dei with 19 points in the second half and 26 total.

The undersized guard hit a 3-pointer from way beyond the arc midway through the second half to cut Bishop Gorman’s lead to 3.

“We missed a couple of big layups where there was some momentum changes, and those turned into baskets on the other end, so those were four or five point switches,” Bishop Gorman coach Grant Rice said.

The Gaels have struggled to hold onto leads throughout the season, losing to Santa Margarita after leading late and barely holding on to beat Coronado after leading by more than 20 points.

“Honestly, we are a really young team, so we are still trying to put together pieces down the stretch. We haven’t necessarily gelled the way we would like to,” Popoola said. “We have to come together and find a way to pull off those close ones.”

Bishop Gorman will host Roosevelt High tomorrow in the third-place game, while Mater Dei will face fellow California powerhouse Chino Hills in the championship game.

“We are right there,” Rice said. “We can beat anyone on any given night, and some nights we can also not show up and play as well as we should.”

The Gaels will still have another chance to capture wins against national opponents in the Beach Ball Classic in Myrtle Beach, S.C. on Dec. 26-31.

“We know we can play with anyone in the country,” O’Bannon said. “With that being said, we have to play a full game. It’s as simple as that.”

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