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Mater Dei breezes as Bol stars in debut

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By DAN ARRITT
CONTRIBUTING WRITER

ORANGE – Gary McKnight has seen a few prospects in his 35 years as coach of the Mater Dei boys basketball team.

None have stood out like **Bol Bol**.

The 7-foot junior center made his debut with the top-ranked Monarchs on Friday night, finishing with 21 points, 10 rebounds and three blocked shots in just 17 minutes of the Monarchs' 85-64 Trinity League victory at Orange Lutheran.

His height certainly catches attention and his name might ring a bell too. His father was **Manute Bol**, who played in the NBA from 1985-95 and was best remembered for his extreme height. Listed at 7-7, he remains one of the two tallest players ever to reach the NBA. Manute Bol died of kidney failure in 2010 at the age of 47.

Bol Bol, who turned 17 in November, spent his first two high school basketball seasons at Bishop Meigs High School in Shawnee, Kan. McKnight didn't want to discuss the specifics of Bol's move to Southern California, but confirmed he arrived with his mother, **Ajok Kuag**.

McKnight said his first exposure to Bol was viewing a YouTube video in which Bol was dribbling through his legs and behind his back, then throwing down slam dunks with his forehead above the rim.

Bol enrolled at Mater Dei on Jan. 3 and was cleared to play Thursday. In between those dates, McKnight learned there was much more to Bol's game than fancy dribbling and flashy dunks.

"He's very athletic," McKnight said. "Long arm span, blocks a lot of shots and alters a lot of shots."

Bol showed his skill-set during one sequence in the fourth quarter, when he blocked a shot at the rim, recovered the loose ball, passed it ahead to a teammate and then sprinted down the court, catching a lob pass and throwing down a powerful dunk.

"Defensively, he changes everything for us," said point guard **Spencer Freedman**. "It deters other people from going to the basket."

McKnight has coached dozens of blue-chip players over the years, but not many elite centers. Of his former players, McKnight said Bol most reminds him of **Jamal Sampson**, who stood 6-11 when he led the Monarchs to a state title in 2001.

Bol has a broader skill-set than Sampson, however. Namely, a solid perimeter shot.

"He can make a 15-footer on in," McKnight said. "I mean smooth."



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Mater Dei's Bol Bol delivers a slam dunk during his debut with the Monarchs on Friday. (Photo by Paul Rodriguez, Orange County Register/SCNG)

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Freedman added 14 points for the Monarchs (21-1, 5-0). [Chris Williams](#) had 21 points for Orange Lutheran (11-10, 2-3).

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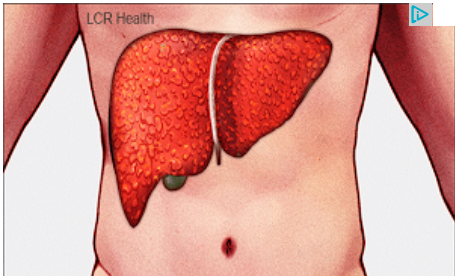


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