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Mater Dei shows why it reigns in Trinity League

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By **STEVE FRYER**
STAFF WRITER

As usual, there is a good distance between Orange County's No. 1-ranked boys basketball team and the other teams.

Mater Dei proved that Wednesday with a 78-67 win over Santa Margarita in a Trinity League game at Santa Margarita High.

Mater Dei is in its usual position at the top of the Orange County top 10. Santa Margarita is at No. 2 where the Eagles are tied with Esperanza.

Mater Dei has another league game against Santa Margarita, on Feb. 7 at Mater Dei. Mater Dei would only play Esperanza this year if the teams meet in the CIF-SS Open Division playoffs.

Mater Dei, No. 4 in the CalHiSports.com state top 20, is 20-1 overall and 4-0 in league. The Monarchs' loss was to Chino Hills on Dec. 20.

Santa Margarita is 13-5 overall and 2-2 in league. The Eagles, ranked No. 18 in California, lost a league game last week to JSerra.

Like a top distance runner, the Monarchs took an early lead and continued to expand it until the competition was well in their control. They led by two points at the end of the first quarter, by nine points at halftime and by a game-high 15 at the end of the third quarter.

Justice Sueing, a 6-foot-7 junior forward, scored 31 points with nine rebounds, both team highs. The 31 points was his season high. Sueing went into the game averaging 17 points.

Spencer Freedman, a 6-1 junior point guard who was All-County first team last season, scored 18 points with five assists and three very long 3-pointers. The longest of those 3s was a 35-foot, buzzer-beating running bank shot at the end of the second quarter.

Freedman seems to do everything well. He can shoot, dribble-drive and dribble though traps and presses, and can thread a cross-court pass to a teammate for an open 3-point shot. When a Mater Dei coach called for an offensive set Wednesday, many times Freedman had already just called it.

Coach **Gary McKnight** has had plenty of outstanding point guards in his 35 years coaching the Monarchs. He has been impressed by Freedman's versatility, leadership and endurance.

"He's very well-rounded," McKnight said. "He never comes out and just plays the whole time."

Santa Margarita's **Adrease Jackson**, a 6-8 senior forward who committed to Dartmouth, scored 33 points with 10 rebounds, six of which were offensive rebounds. Sophomore forward **Jake Kyman** added 15 points for the Eagles.



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Mater Dei's Spencer Freedman is fouled by Santa Margarita's Jake Kyman during a Trinity League boys basketball game at Santa Margarita High School in Rancho Santa Margarita on Wednesday, January 18, 2017. (Photo by Matt Masin, Orange County Register, SCNG)

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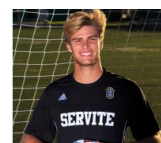
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Mater Dei pushed its Trinity League winning streak to 62 games. The Monarchs' most-recent loss was more than six years ago – to Orange Lutheran on Jan. 7, 2011.

It was a tough shooting night for Santa Margarita guards [Pearson Parker](#) and [Kaden Rasheed](#). They combined to go 4 for 22 from the field, including 0 for 8 on 3-pointers. Still, Rasheed, who had six assists, and Parker maneuvered through the Mater Dei defense often enough to create some havoc and get the ball inside to Jackson.

To McKnight, it was too much maneuvering through the Mater Dei defense.

"We didn't stop their dribble penetration very well," McKnight said. "I thought in the first half we played pretty well defensively, but in the second half we didn't top that dribble penetration as well as we should have."

Also in the Trinity League:

No. 5 JSerra 58, No. 9 Orange Lutheran 49: [Joel Mensah](#) and [Sebastian Much](#) scored 14 points apiece for the host Lions (13-5, 3-1).

In the Garden Grove League:

Bolsa Grande 54, La Quinta 44: [Isaiah Moore](#)'s 13 points led a balanced-scoring attack for the host, league-leading Matadors (14-5, 3-0).

In the South Coast League:

Tesoro 70, Aliso Niguel 47: [Willy Duggan](#) and [Justin McCallop](#) scored 22 and 21 points, respectively, for the host Titans (14-5, 1-1).

El Toro 71, San Clemente 60: [Demetrius Jackson](#)'s 24 points led the host Chargers (15-6, 1-2), and [Maxx Hazely](#) added 16 points.

In the Sunset League:

No. 4 Edison 72, Los Alamitos 56: [Randall Walker](#) scored 38 points for the host Chargers (16-3, 4-0).

Contact the writer: sfryer@scng.com

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- ☐ I like it a lot. This is a better system than the old one.
- ☐ I hate it. They ruined the playoffs.
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- ☐ I love the football playoffs. The best teams get in. The best teams win.

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