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CIF SS Open Division player profile: Spencer Freedman



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MARCH 5, 2017

For the starting point guard of Mater Dei High School's CIF Southern Section Open Division finals basketball team, Spencer Freedman, the goal of each day is to simply be great.

Originally from Santa Monica, the 11th grade basketball phenom stands at 6-foot-1 and is nationally regarded as one of the nation's top guards due to his shooting, ball handling, and passing abilities. He brings the same intensity academically as he does on the hardwood, possessing a 4.3 GPA while taking AP Calculus.



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Spencer's favorite color is blue, he idolizes NBA legend Steve Nash, and doesn't participate in much social media. He wants to major in Business, Political Science, or Law, and has visions of one day becoming president of the United States. The current Irvine resident is interested in colleges such as Harvard, Gonzaga, Stanford, and others, drawing inspiration from his father's work ethic. He wears the No. 12 jersey, simply because he likes it. Freedman is methodical and focused, working to continually improve in all aspects by blocking out distractions.

Spencer attended Santa Monica High School his freshman year and was named 1st team all league. Freedman decided to transfer to perennial national powerhouse Mater Dei after 9th grade, and has dominated in the classroom as well as on the floor from his first day on campus. Last year, during his sophomore season, he won Trinity League MVP honors and was named to the Open Division's All CIF 1st Team.

This year for Mater Dei, Freedman has continued his success averaging 15 points and 5.9 assists per game. Spencer's team has followed his lead, entering Saturday night's CIF Finals clash against Bishop Montgomery with a 31-1 overall record. Freedman led Mater Dei to an impressive 83-80 victory over favored Chino Hills in the SS Open Division semis last week, pouring in 17 points.

Saturday night's matchup against Bishop Montgomery requires a great deal of concentration for Spencer and his team. Freedman starts game day off by eating some oatmeal for breakfast, and then gets right into his game mindset.

"I'll watch some film, and then go up to Mater Dei to get shots up for about 60 to 90 minutes," he said.

On the bus ride to Honda Center, the site of Saturday night's battle, Spencer gets inspired to succeed by checking out quotes.

"All the time I see quotes on social media, or someone will text me a quote that gets me motivated," he said.

On the court, Freedman sports red and white Nike socks, along with Kyrie 3 shoes.

"We wear Nike socks, and I like to wear red ones that coach gave us at the beginning of the year," he said. "For the entire playoffs I've been wearing the Kyrie 3's, so I'm definitely going to keep that going."

Among many, Spencer has one superstition in particular that stands out.

"Before the start of every game, right before tip-off, I shoot an imaginary shot on our side so that I'm facing the basket we're going to," he said.

Heading into the championship game, Freedman and his team are conscious of what they need to do.

“Preparation wise, we know that we just have to play together,” he said. “Defensively we must play solid, because they have a lot of great scorers and players.”



Spencer at center court for the captain's meeting, just before tip. Blake Atwell/ LA Times HS Insider

As tipoff nears closer and closer, Spencer gets shots up at game speed, with great intensity. Freedman goes into some ball handling drills, taking several dribbles across Mater Dei's half of the floor to polish his game right before everything goes live. He shoots his imaginary shot, and the action begins to ensue.

Spencer scores the first basket of the CIF Southern Section Open championship game for his team, getting off to a quick start. Mater Dei and Montgomery find themselves tied at the end of the first quarter, and Spencer has 2 points. Montgomery instigates a run in the first minutes of the second quarter to go up by five, however Freedman stops their momentum with a crucial basket. As the first half of play winds down, Spencer is doing his best to control the team's pace, displaying true leadership on the floor. With Freedman keeping things in check and then knocking in a three, Mater Dei takes a 31-29 lead into halftime. He has a solid 8 points, and looks to stay consistent in the second half.

Freedman does just that to start the third quarter, keeping his team in front throughout the period. Taking a 44-38 advantage into the final quarter, Spencer and Mater Dei are extremely close to snatching a CIF title. With three assists to just one turnover, Freedman takes care of the ball for his team which gives Mater Dei an essential advantage.

Down the stretch, Spencer stays aggressive and Mater Dei follows his lead. Bishop Montgomery's Ethan Thompson begins to bring his team back, and with just over four minutes remaining the score is 51 to 51. Thompson wows the crowd with a nasty dunk over Mater Dei's 7-foot-2 Bol Bol, and Jordan Schakel knocks in a three to make it 56-51 Montgomery. While Spencer continues to play his heart out, Mater Dei falters down the stretch as a unit and suffers a 70-55 championship loss.

After a crushing defeat, in which Freedman scores 10 points, he still is able to put forth a positive attitude as the leader of Mater Dei's team.

"I just think we have to get better, obviously." He added, "I just think they made more shots than us."

Spencer and his team will get the chance to redeem themselves very quickly, as the state tournament begins this upcoming week.

"We just have to improve," he added.

Even in the face of defeat, Freedman displays solid professionalism, which is one reason why he is the leader of one of the top high school basketball teams in the country.

While Spencer and Mater Dei stumbled in the CIF SS finals tonight, they will be back. With the state tournament looming, Spencer Freedman and the Mater Dei Monarchs will look to redeem themselves by capturing a state ring.



Freedman drives to the basket for Mater Dei. Blake Atwell/ LA Times HS Insider.

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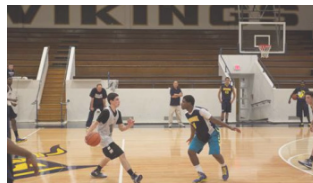


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