

Harvard-bound Spencer Freedman wants to take Mater Dei basketball to the next level



Senior point guard Spencer Freedman, a Harvard commit, is playing in this week's Fairfax summer tournament for Santa Ana Mater Dei. (Eric Sondheimer / Los Angeles Times)



By **Eric Sondheimer**
Varsity Times Insider

JUNE 29, 2017, 2:00 PM

With a 4.2 grade-point average and the ability to think clearly and make wise decisions in pressure situations, senior point guard Spencer Freedman of Santa Ana Mater Dei fits the mold of a future Harvard student.

“One of his goals is to be president of the United States,” Coach Gary McKnight said. “I would have voted for him this year without a doubt.”

Freedman is not quite ready to put the weight of the world on his shoulders. He'll settle for making Mater Dei the best basketball team in California, and that's very much a possibility. The Monarchs are playing in this

week's Fairfax summer tournament and will take on Pasadena in a semifinal matchup on Friday at 7:30 p.m.

Freedman is still receiving congratulations for his commitment to Harvard three weeks ago. He had scholarship offers from Pac-12 Conference schools [Washington](#) and USC, among others, but decided he didn't need to stroke his ego or fear heading to the East Coast.

"I definitely feel it's the perfect fit," he said. "Academically, it's an incredible place and the basketball is tremendous as well. The Ivy League is an up-and-coming league. Of course, getting to stay home and closer to L.A. is a little tempting, but having the opportunity to go to a place like Harvard is something I've always wanted."

Freedman was the Trinity League player of the year as a junior. His outside shooting has become so good that earlier this week, he'd throw up a three-pointer, it would swish, and he hardly took time to watch the ball go through the net before heading back on defense. He's playing with great confidence and at a comfort level that is difficult to disrupt.

It makes me reminisce about the game that exposed Freedman and his Mater Dei teammates like none other. It and Chino Hills defeated the Monarchs, 102-54, in Freedman was overwhelmed going against future

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In hindsight, it was a hard but necessary teaching moment in letting Freedman know what he needed to do to compete against the best.

"It was a big lesson," he said. "It wasn't a great game and pretty tough on us, but having the opportunity to play a team that was so good and getting the chance to see what it's like to be on the court with players of that caliber ... it's just been a really good lesson for me to see how I have to improve and see where I need to be at to be at my best."

"Afterward, I analyzed it for a little while and just realized I have to improve and we as a team have to improve. But seeing what level they were at and how good they were was a good measuring stick what we wanted to be like."

Last season, Freedman and Mater Dei defeated Chino Hills, 83-80, in overtime before a sold-out crowd at Galen Center in one of the most entertaining games of the season. And the schools are set to meet again in the featured game of the Nike Extravaganza on Feb. 3 at Mater Dei. People might want to start lining up now for tickets to that one.

Freedman enjoys being the player who gets the ball to 7-foot-2 Bol Bol, who is expected to be the No. 1 center in California this coming season.

"It's a lot of fun," he said. "He makes it real easy. He's as tall as they come. He's fun to play with."

Freedman received good preparation for college this last season going up against the likes of Torrance Bishop Montgomery, Chino Hills and Chatsworth Sierra Canyon. Many of the players on those teams we'll be watching on television in the coming years.

"It was so competitive," he said. "Coach McKnight tells us there's never been a year like that before. It was special to be a part of that."

Freedman plans to study business at Harvard, but don't expect him to become a lawyer like his father, Bryan.

"I'll leave that to my Dad," he said.

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