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LAGUNA NIGUEL, Ca. – Hitting a few Orange County gymnasiums on Saturday for tournament championship games . . .

The first stop was Mission Viejo (only about 10 minutes from mi casa), where Diablo Inferno unbeatens Santa Ana Mater Dei and Mission Viejo Trabuco Hills.

In high school hoops, of course, there are unbeatens and *unbeatens*.

And **Gary McKnight's** Monarchs fall into the latter category – as they pretty much since he took over the program 35 years ago.

Mater Dei improved to 5-0 by blitzing the Mustangs, 83-44.

And it could have been a whole lot worse if McKnight had not pretty much left the fourth quarter to deep reserves.

Seniors **Spencer Freedman** (21 points, five assists and two steals and the tournament's Most Outstanding Player hardware), **Michael Wang** (11 points and eight rebounds) and **Harrison Butler** (eight points) were among those who spent the fourth quarter as spectators.

Freshmen **Wilhelm Breidenbach** (10 points and three rebounds from his starting center slot) and **Harrison Hornery** (eight points, including a couple of 3s, all in the second half) were among those who toiled a bit in the fourth quarter.

The competition should be considerably tougher when the Monarchs are next in action in Ft. Myers, FL, for the Dec. 19-23 City of Palms Tournament.

Some 20 miles northwest on the 5 and 405 Freeways I ventured into Huntington Beach to watch a couple of games in the Jim Harris Memorial Tournament (formerly known as the Tournament of Champions dating to the mid-1970s).

ThunderRidge of Highlands Ranch in Colorado and Diamond Rancho of Pomona (in Cali) were the only unbeaten teams through pool play of the event.

But, for a reason that I'm still not sure of despite asking a few people to explain it to me, ThunderRidge played winless Los Alamitos in the 4:30 clash.

The Grizzlies cruised, 82-49.

On played in the 6 o'clock "final"

Diamond Ranch and the JSerra team (via San Juan Capistrano, which is about three miles deeper into south Orange County than my Laguna Niguel fortress) that lost to ThunderRidge by three points Friday night, that's who.

And the Grizzlies' players and coaches boarded their flight back to Rocky Mountains as the event's only remaining unbeaten after JSerra edged Diamond Ranch, 58-56.

Although the event's real "winner" wasn't on the floor, it was a heck of a game that wasn't secured until sophomore **Connor Parker** missed a 3-pointer at the buzzer.

Six-foot-10, San Diego State-bound **Joel Mensah** was, at times, overwhelming for JSerra while finishing with 29 points, 11 rebounds and three blocked shots.

Corona del Mar transfer **D.J. Rodman** (the son of you-know-who) scored 10 of his eventual 13 minutes over the first four minutes for JSerra while junior forward **Kevin White** eight of his 12 points in the fourth quarter.

Junior point guard **Coree Joseph** led Diamond Ranch with 16 points despite hitting just five of 14 shots from the floor.

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