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12:46 p.m.



BASKETBALL



By ERIC SONDHEIMER

Mater Dei seeking its 23rd Southern Section basketball title Friday under coach Gary McKnight

It's been largely an under-the-radar season for Santa Ana Mater Dei. The departure of Bol Bol before the season and early losses left many dismissing the Monarchs as championship contenders this season.

Underestimate coach Gary McKnight at your own risk, however. On Friday night, Mater Dei will bid for its 23rd Southern Section title since McKnight became head coach in 1982-83. The Monarchs (22-6) will play Sierra Canyon for the Open Division title at 8:30 p.m. at the Pyramid in Long Beach.

Harvard-bound point guard Spencer Freedman, a two-time Trinity League player of the year, will get to test himself against Sierra Canyon's outstanding guard group. Mater Dei has lots of size, led by Michael Wang.

Most interesting is that Mater Dei has not won a section title since 2014. That equals the longest drought without a Southern Section title in McKnight's coaching career.