ORANGE COUNTY NEWS

Crean Lutheran delivers in ninth inning; wins, 1-0 over Ocean View in CIF playoffs

Josh Richter (left) pitched the first eight innings and Gavin Folsom had the game-winning hit for Crean Lutheran in a 1-0 victory over Ocean View Thursday. Tim Burt photo

By **TIM BURT** | tiburt@scng.com | Orange County Register May 18, 2017 at 10:18 pm

Crean Lutheran's baseball team had the right batter up at the right time Thursday afternoon in the opening round of the CIF Division 3 playoffs.

The Saints had one of their top hitters, Gavin Folsom, at the plate with the bases loaded and one out in the bottom of the ninth inning.

Folsom delivered an RBI single to right field to lift the Saints to a 1-0 extra inning victory over Ocean View at Crean Lutheran, sending the Saints into Tuesday's second round game against Peninsula (a coin flip determines the home team).

"Gavin is probably the toughest out in our lineup," said Crean Lutheran Coach Jake Haney. "You never know in baseball."

"Honestly, I was just trying to get something elevated and get something I could hit deep to get whoever was on third in," said Folsom, who had two singles and a walk. "I just wanted to come up clutch for the team because that's what we needed. Not all of our balls were falling, but that one fell in. It felt good."

Academy League champion Crean Lutheran (24-4) had its chances through the first eight innings but stranded 10 runners. Ocean View starting pitcher Gavin Kennedy blanked the Saints through eight innings, before being relieved in the ninth. Kennedy allowed four hits, striking out five and walking five and hitting two batters and kept battling out of numerous jams.

But in the bottom of the ninth, Matt Mazzagatte walked to open the inning. Derek Wu reached on a fielder's choice and Mazzagatte was thrown out at second.

George Erwin followed with a double to put runners on second and third with one out.

Ocean View elected to walk Will Choi to load the bases and set up a possible double play.

But Folsom delivered a deep fly to right field which the outfielder was unable to catch and it was ruled a base hit. Regardless, if the outfielder had caught the ball it would have been deep enough to score the run.

"We talked before the game that you don't know how it's going to go, you just picture how it could go," said Haney. "We said before the game, 'we will do whatever it takes; it doesn't have to be pretty. It just has to get done.'
"The only column on the scoreboard that matters is the far left one. We will figure out a way to score one more run than them, and fortunately that's what we did today."

Crean Lutheran got a remarkable performance from starting pitcher Josh Richter who allowed three hits through eight innings. The junior struck out nine, walked three and hit one batter before coming out because he reached the pitch limit for a game (110).

He struck out five of the six batters he faced in the sixth and seventh innings. Sean Horn pitched a scoreless ninth inning to get the win.

"For a kid who came into the season as our number two guy, and for a kid who works as hard as him, he's earned everything he's gotten," Haney said of Richter. "He looked shaky in innings one and two. At one point I thought if he can just get us through four innings, we will piece it together. But once the fourth inning hit, it was game over."

"The first inning was a little rough, I walked two and they ran into an out," Richter said. "In the first inning, my back was kind of hurting. I came out and stretched in the dugout. The second inning was a little better and the third inning was where I really started progressing."

It was Crean Lutheran's first CIF playoff game in Division 3. Last year, the Saints reached the finals of the CIF Division 6 championship game before losing to Academy League rival Sage Hill.

"We have so much confidence in our team," Richter said. "Coach Haney tells us we're just as good as any other team."

It was the second playoff game for Ocean View, which defeated Bellflower, 4-3 in a wild card game on Tuesday.