

## Crean Lutheran turns back late rally by Woodbridge to win 77-71 for second tourney victory



Crean Lutheran Saints' Drew Yezbak and Woodbridge High opponents try to gain control of the ball Mon., Nov. 27 in the second round of the AutoNation Toyota Irvine Invitational. The Lutheran school won 77-71 at home in Irvine. (Photo by Cindy Yamanaka, Orange County Register/SCNG)

By **TIM BURT** | [tiburt@scng.com](mailto:tiburt@scng.com) | Orange County Register  
November 27, 2017 at 10:24 pm

Crean Lutheran's boys basketball team held off a pesky Woodbridge team to capture a 77-71 victory in the second round of the AutoNation Toyota Irvine Invitational Monday, Nov. 27, at Crean Lutheran.

The Saints (3-0) led from the start and held a 46-43 lead after three quarters.

Crean Lutheran was led by sophomore Isaiah Johnson (22 points, 12 rebounds) and junior Maximus Bo (21 points). Aiden Gilbert and Drew Yezbak added 11 points each for the Saints.

Senior Sebastian Momdjian had 27 points and Daniel Thatcher added 13 to lead Woodbridge (0-2).

Despite the win, Crean Lutheran coach Josh Beaty thought his squad, 2-0 in the tournament, could have played better.

"Once again, we were very sloppy," Beaty said. "We didn't take care of the basketball. It's a younger team and we don't have any seniors. Our leading scorers are both sophomores. At times we go through stretches where it looks a little chaotic.

"We started making shots early and things went really well, so we just really let up on defense and kind of let them get going too."



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Final seconds of Crean Lutheran's 77-71 victory over Woodbridge as the Warriors were trying to put together a comeback in the AutoNation Toyota Irvine Invitational at Crean Lutheran.

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Crean Lutheran held a 19-14 lead after one quarter but Woodbridge (0-2) chipped away and cut the lead to 36-35 at halftime.

Woodbridge is playing without senior Nick Nash, the quarterback who hurt his knee in the playoffs and Ryan Palacio, who injured his knee Saturday in the opening game of the tournament. Two other players, Jacob Nash and Kyle Hurry are getting into basketball shape after playing for the football team.

"We've come a long way in 48 hours," said Woodbridge Coach John Halagan. "It's just frustrating because we have a couple football guys running around out there who have had three (basketball) practices under their belt from last summer.

"I told the guys, 'you can't control your experience until you get some,' and you're going to get some in this tournament because every team is good and right now, we're giving up a lot of physicality and we're trying to do it all on the fly. I thought our guys acquitted themselves well tonight in terms of focus and energy and effort.

"At least we gave ourselves chances, but there were critical breakdowns at key times and a couple of missed free throws and we had a couple good open looks late."

Woodbridge opened the tournament with a 62-49 loss to LaSalle on Saturday.

"I'm not happy being 0-2," Halagan said. "Nobody feels sorry for us. All they want to do is pin another loss on us. If our guys aren't careful, we will be 0-5 by next Saturday. I don't schedule easy games. That's the only way we have a chance to get better."

Crean Lutheran opened the tournament with a 48-46 victory over LaSerna on Saturday.

The Saints, ranked ninth in Orange County, will be out to have a successful week in the tournament, which continues Thursday, Nov. 30 and wraps up on Saturday, Dec. 2.

"I'm trying to have a good practice tomorrow and fix some things," Beaty said. "Then we play Beckman (Wednesday). We're trying to prepare for them because their very good."

The tournament resumes Wednesday and concludes on Saturday at Crean Lutheran. The championship is Saturday, Dec. 2, at 7:30 p.m.