



Crean Lutheran's 'terrific journey' ends with loss

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CLAREMONT Not only did a lengthy postseason run seem out of the question after the first month of the regular season, it was darn near foolish.

Crean Lutheran's boys tennis team dropped its first five matches, including three to squads it would likely see in a theoretical playoff run.

With the midseason addition of several multisport athletes coinciding with the recovery of a few injured bodies, the Saints showed tremendous grit over the second half of their schedule, playing their way into the school's first CIF-Southern Section tennis final.

The run came to a halt Friday when Crean Lutheran ran into Arcadia, falling to the Apaches, 13-5, in the Division 2 championship at the Claremont Club.

"It's been a terrific journey," Saints coach **T.J. Reynolds** said. "We really had a rough start. ... I just give a lot of credit to these guys for not being discouraged early on, and finishing strong."

To earn their place in the finals, the Saints avenged regular-season losses with consecutive postseason victories over Diamond Bar, top-seeded Santa Margarita and fourth-seeded San Clemente.

Arcadia appeared to be playing at another level, though, dominating the singles for eight points, and earning a few critical doubles points in the first round.

The **Jonathan Figueira-Subham Dikhit** tandem rallied for a 7-6 (3) tiebreaker point in the No. 2 doubles slot, giving the Apaches a commanding 5-1 lead after the first round.

Saints top singles player, **Jae Min**, was forced to retire after the opening round, suffering a hip injury midway through his first set.

"It's always a little disconcerting when your No. 1 guy gets hurt," Reynolds said. "You could see the energy drop a little bit. Everybody played 100-percent though.

"You can't take anything away from Arcadia. They have particularly strong singles players. Solid in doubles. It was just a great match."

Crean Lutheran earned four of its five points on the doubles side. Twins **Even** and **Bret Kittelsen** went 2-1, as did **Luke Barnard** and partner **Allen Thornes**.

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