

Sage Hill suffers first Academy League loss in three years, falls to second



By **David Carrillo Peñaloza**

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IRVINE — Much of the Sage Hill School baseball team's success against Crean Lutheran since 2015 has been because of pitcher Brett Super.

The Lightning went into Tuesday's game at Crean Lutheran having won the past five meetings. During the winning streak, Super has picked up three wins and a save.

Out of those outings by Super, the biggest came in last year's CIF Southern Section Division 6 final at UC Riverside, where he tossed a three-hit shutout in a 9-0 win against the Saints.

In the first game between the Lightning and Saints this year, Sage Hill sent Super out to the mound in a battle of two undefeated Academy League teams. Once again, the Saints found it hard to score on the right-hander.

Super had not given up a run to Crean Lutheran since 2015, and it appeared the senior would extend his scoreless innings streak against the Saints to 23.

Super had Matt Mazzagatte where he wanted him in the bottom of the sixth inning. With two outs and runners in scoring position, Super had the count in his favor at 0-2.

Super went to his best pitch, a curveball, and it hung enough for Mazzagatte to single to center field and drive in two runs. The hit was all Crean Lutheran needed to get past Super, beating the Lightning, 2-0, to clinch at least a share of the league title.

Behind a dominating nine-strikeout and two-hit shutout by Josh Richter, the Saints became the first team in league to knock off the Lightning in three years. Sage Hill's 33-game winning streak in league ended, and the timing couldn't have been better for Crean Lutheran.

With one game to go in the regular season, the Saints are alone atop the league at 11-0. Sage Hill's run at going perfect in league for the third straight year is over, yet the defending league champion can still share first place by beating Crean Lutheran at home on Thursday at 3:45 p.m.

"That's what we're going to do," Sage Hill coach Dominic Campeau said of splitting first with the Saints, and if that happens, a coin flip would determine the league's No. 1 entry into next week's Division 3 playoffs. "We got Ashwin Chona, who [has thrown] four no-hitters, [starting on Thursday]. We feel really confident having him at home."

Sage Hill (21-3-2, 10-1 in league) must have felt just as good with Super throwing against the Saints on Tuesday.

Super had never lost a game in league since Crean Lutheran beat him three years ago. Just as Super had some control issues in that start as a freshman, he walked four Saints and hit one again.

Defense helped Super (9-3), who allowed four hits and struck out three, get out of trouble in half of his six innings.

In the first, Sage Hill turned a 4-6-3 double play to end the inning, stranding two runners. In the second inning, Super gloved a line drive to leave a runner on second. The Saints left runners on the corners in the third inning, as Michael Helton short-hopped a grounder to third base and fired to first.

Richter got support from his defense as well. First baseman Hank Schineller dove to his right twice to make catches, robbing Matt King of a hit in the third and Conner Hatz of a hit in the seventh.

The only batter to get a hit off Richter was the left-handed hitting Super, who singled twice. Richter was throwing in the mid- to high 80s, and other than in the first, when the junior right-hander walked leadoff hitter Jack Pelc, and then Pelc's brother, Edward, Sage Hill only had a runner in scoring position one other time, in the fourth.

“I figured it would be [a duel between Super and Richter],” Crean Lutheran coach Jake Haney said, “but a lot of times you get in these games, and you’re like, ‘The first one to score wins,’ and then you end up with an 8-7 game, or something weird.”

For Sage Hill, it was odd for it to lose in league, let alone get blanked in league for the first time in six years.

Academy League

Crean Lutheran 2, Sage Hill 0

SCORE BY INNINGS

Sage Hill 000 000 0 – 0 2 2

Crean Lutheran 000 002 x – 2 4 0

Super and Hatz; Richter and Mazzagatte. W – Richter. L – Super. 2B – Horn (CL).

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