

## Crean Lutheran and St. Margaret's welcome addition of fourth football member for Academy League



Crean Lutheran's football team, led by Coach Matt Bowman, will be part of a four-team Academy League this season. Photo courtesy Ted Rigoni

By **TIM BURT** | [tiburt@scng.com](mailto:tiburt@scng.com) | Orange County Register

PUBLISHED: August 3, 2017 at 7:46 pm | UPDATED: August 3, 2017 at 8:37 pm

0 COMMENTS

St. Pius X-St. Matthias Academy in Downey has joined the Academy League for the 2017 football season, giving the league four teams once again and two automatic berths in the CIF-SS playoffs, according to Crean Lutheran athletic director Eric Olson.

Officials in the Academy League had been working to return the league to a four school-structure after [Brethren Christian dropped its varsity football program](#) in July.

The league for football this year will include Crean Lutheran, St. Margaret's, St. Pius X-St. Matthias Academy and Orange Vista of Perris.

Thom Simmons, assistant CIF commissioner, said he had heard from officials in the Academy League and confirmed that the league will have two automatic berths in the CIF playoffs.

"Our boys and all the other boys in the league can control their own football destiny in the playoffs," said Olson. "So it's great news.

"A big shoutout goes to (athletic director) Patrick Bendzick at St. Margaret's. He did a lot of the legwork. I helped support him a little bit. We're really grateful to him."

Crean Lutheran went 7-3 last year but was denied a trip to the CIF playoffs because no at-large berths were available in its playoff division. Crean did not have a league affiliation since there were only three teams from the Academy League after Sage Hill dropped its varsity 11-man program, switching to 8-man football.

The Saints figure to have a much better chance of advancing to the playoffs this year.

"We are very happy to be in a four-team league," said Crean Lutheran football coach Matt Bowman.

Bowman credited Olson and Crean Lutheran executive director and founding principal Jeffrey Beavers for working hard to finalize the arrangements for this season. Crean Lutheran moves to the Empire League in 2018 for all sports.

"We are thrilled that the Academy League has added a fourth team," Bowman said. "I told the boys this morning and they were very excited. Once again, we control our own playoff destiny, which is not something that was the case last year.

"Our boys deserve an opportunity to earn a spot in the post season. Last year, we learned a hard lesson that sometimes in life, there are things you can't control. All we can control is our attitude, our focus, and give a Colossians 3:23 effort every day."

Pius X-St. Matthias, which is bringing back its football program after a 25-year break, was already on the schedule for Crean Lutheran on Sept. 22 but now that game in Downey will count as a league game, Bowman said.

St. Pius X will also play St. Margaret's and Orange Vista, which will be in its first year of varsity football, to complete its league schedule.

Crean Lutheran also added La Canada as a nonleague game in the 10th week of the season. The Saints bye week will be in week seven.

Crean Lutheran will be in Division 11 of the CIF-SS playoffs and St. Margaret's will be in Division 7.