



Crean Lutheran a happy bunch despite losing final

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SANTA ANA – Two pairs of players from Crean Lutheran’s girls basketball team joyfully hugged as they took the court for the final time Saturday night at Godinez.

Top-seeded Heritage Christian of Northridge had victory clinched in the final seconds of the CIF-SS Division 5AA final, but one Saints duo merrily spun before play resumed. Another player picked her teammate off the ground.

They knew there was much to celebrate.

Crean Lutheran won just four games last season but recovered to reach its first section final. And with the title within their grasp, the Saints refused to quit.

Heritage Christian used a record-setting 3-point shooting barrage to finally dispatch Crean Lutheran, 59-46, in a game settled in the final four

minutes.

“Our team is everything to us. We love each other,” said Crean Lutheran senior guard **Erin Koyamatsu**, who scored 10 points. “Last year, we had a rough season, so just the fact that we were here, we were just so thankful.”

Crean Lutheran (18-11) trailed twice by 18 points in the first half and was down, 37-22, at half after a 3-pointer from **Sam Ducharme** with five seconds left.

But Crean Lutheran trimmed its deficit to nine points entering the fourth and trailed, 50-44, after a 3-pointer by **Allison Reed** with 3:59 left off an assist from Koyamatsu.

“All year long we’ve been fighters,” said Crean Lutheran coach **Kelsi Walker**, the Saints’ founding coach who returned to the helm this winter. “This group worked really hard.”

But Heritage Christian (24-9) responded with a familiar weapon. Senior **Amanda Tirado** sank a 3-pointer coming out of a timeout and added another about two minutes later to extend the Warriors’ lead to 56-46.

“There was a little bit of panic in me,” Tirado said of her 3-pointer coming out of the timeout. “(But) I knew I’d pull it out.”

Heritage Christian finished with a Division 5AA record 11 3-pointers. Tirado (15 points) and Ducharme (16 points) each made four apiece while **Cynthia Fuentes** added three.

Mason Busler paced Crean Lutheran with 12 points and six rebounds while freshman **Shannon O’Malley** added nine.

“Last year, God was preparing us for this year,” said Saints senior center **Kylie Needham**, who scored six points.

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