



## Interceptions lift Crean Lutheran to school's first playoff victory

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IRVINE – The moment called for an all-out celebration, but the Crean Lutheran football team acted like it had been there before, even though it hadn't.

With its 21-6 win over St. Anthony of Long Beach in a CIF-SS East Valley Division playoff game Friday night, Crean pulled off what few thought was possible after enduring a 1-9 season just three years ago in **Brian Mertens'** first year as coach:

Crean Lutheran won a playoff game for the first time in school history.

"It's a great feeling," said senior running back **Garrett Cox**, who carried 26 times for 88 yards. "We've always had to build to get where we wanted and it's just a special time for us."

Crean (8-3) intercepted three first-half passes by St. Anthony quarterback **Jack Graham**.

The first was by **Patrick Mcnerney**, the second by **Aaron Fink** and the third, and most important, was a touchdown-saving pick by **Zach Macadam** just before halftime to preserve Crean's 7-6 lead.

"The turnovers were big," Mertens said. "St. Anthony had so many good athletes, so we just wanted to try and gut it out and be there late in the game with a chance to win."

Crean gave itself a chance to earn that win with a 10 play drive that lasted 5:15 and resulted in a 23-yard touchdown pass from Gavin Folsom to Nick Ellwein, giving the Saints a 14-6 lead midway through the third.

The Crean defense then stepped up again St. Anthony's next drive as Graham completed a pass to Logan Gamble, but a couple Crean defenders were able to pop the ball out of the receivers hands as he tried to extend the play.

Four plays after the fumble recovery Crean was in the end zone again on a 33-yard run from Tanner Atkinson at the 3:59 mark of the third, giving Crean the eventual 21-6 game winning margin.

Folsom went 8 of 13 through the air for 156 yards and two touchdowns. Ellwein finished with five receptions for 106 yards and a TD.

Crean Lutheran moves on to play Calvary Murrieta of Murrieta next Friday.

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