

# Crean Lutheran loses in regionals to Murrieta Mesa, ending its history-making season

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By [STEVE FRYER](#) | [sfryer@scng.com](mailto:sfryer@scng.com) | Orange County Register

March 10, 2018 at 8:57 pm

IRVINE – Crean Lutheran's season of unprecedented success in boys basketball ended Saturday with a 53-50 loss to Murrieta Mesa in the second round of the CIF Southern California Division III Regionals at Northwood High.

Crean Lutheran this season won its first CIF-Southern Section boys basketball championship, the CIF-SS Division 3AA title, and qualified for the first time for the CIF State basketball tournament.

The Saints (24-10) got their first CIF State tournament win Wednesday when they beat Orange Glen of Escondido.

Saints coach Josh Beaty after the loss was disappointed but not sullen.

"We missed layups, didn't block out, didn't do the things we should have done to win," Beaty said. "But yet I'm so happy with what we accomplished. It's a very weird combination of emotions right now."

Murrieta Mesa (26-9) will play at Bishop Amat of La Puente (29-6) in a regional semifinal Tuesday.

It was the Saints' fifth consecutive playoff game decided by four points or fewer. Crean Lutheran had won those previous four close ones, including a 62-61 double-overtime win over Knight of Palmdale in the CIF-SS 3AA championship game.

The Saints had chances to win Saturday.

They led Murrieta Mesa 35-27 in the third quarter. The Rams from there outscored Crean Lutheran 15-0 to create a 42-35 lead midway through the fourth quarter.

Drew Yezbak's 3-pointer from the corner with a half-minute to go reduced Murrieta Mesa's lead to 51-50.

The Rams' Jonah Zandi made two free throws to make it 53-50 with 17 seconds left.

Crean Lutheran got two chances to tie it, but Maximus Bo and Chris Swardstrom, who had made many clutch 3-point shots this season, missed 3-point efforts before time expired.

Sophomores Yezbak and Isaiah Johnson led Crean with 13 points each. Shamar Wright's 21 points led Murrieta Mesa.

The game was played at Northwood to meet a CIF State-mandated minimum seating capacity of 1,200 required for a Division III second-round game.



## Steve Fryer

Steve Fryer covers high school sports at the Orange County Register. He writes a weekly column on the county high school sports scene and also covers games and writes features. Steve also writes a weekly column that covers pro and college sports, and other topics. Steve does concert reviews for the Register, too, when time permits. Steve's first byline appeared in the Register in 1979. He was in the inaugural class inducted into the Santa Ana Unified School District Sports Hall of Fame. Steve also is in the Southern California Interscholastic Basketball Coaches Hall of Fame, and was the first journalist to receive the Contribution to Education award from the Orange County Department of Education. Steve was honored as Champion for Character by the CIF-Southern Section.

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