

# Daily Pilot

THURSDAY, MARCH 9, 2023 /// dailypilot.com

## Break-in suspect found under blanket

Costa Mesa First United Methodist leaders were filing a police report when they found the man hiding at the scene.

BY SARA CARDINE

Officials at one Costa Mesa church were stunned Sunday to arrive at the property and see evidence of a burglary and even more stunned later, while making a report to police, when the suspect was found hiding at the scene.

Rev. Matt Hambrick, a pastor at Costa Mesa First United Methodist Church on 19th Street, said the chair of the church board came to the building at 7:30 a.m. Sunday and discovered a steel security gate had been broken open and the glass door of Hambrick's second-floor office shattered.

The pastor's two-room office was ransacked, and several items were missing. Video surveillance footage showed a lone individual had forced his way into the area at around 9 p.m. Saturday.

"It was just disheveled, a mess," Hambrick said of the scene. "There was literally In-N-Out everywhere — they brought In-N-Out to the [burglary]."

Footage showed the suspect had also brought with him a blue plastic bucket, in which he built a fire, fueled by items taken from the church office. Hambrick said the man broke open a picture frame containing an engagement photo and burned the picture inside.

"You can see him [on camera] coming in and out with the bucket while it's on fire," the pas-

See **Blanket**, page A2

## Irvine sex abuse case goes to trial in Santa Ana

Terry Edward Keegan, 60, a former Homeland Security employee, is accused of molesting 3 girls, including a relative.

BY PAUL ANDERSON  
CITY NEWS SERVICE

A Homeland Security employee inappropriately touched and kissed three girls in Irvine, including a relative, a prosecutor told jurors Wednesday at the Central Justice Center in Santa Ana, while the defendant's attorney said some of the allegations are a misunderstanding and some never happened.

Terry Edward Keegan, 60, is charged with six counts of lewd acts with a minor younger than 14 and a count of continuous sexual abuse of a child, all felonies, as well as misdemeanor counts of child annoyance and destroying evidence. He could face up to 22 years in prison if convicted, according to Dep. Dist. Atty. Juliet Oliver.

One of the alleged victims has lived with Keegan since she was about 4 years old and her grandmother took custody of her, she testified. The other two alleged victims were friends of hers, Oliver said.

One of the friends told a doctor in 2016 that Keegan would pick her up and molest her when she would visit with the defendant's

See **Trial**, page A3



Photos by Scott Smeltzer | Staff Photographer

**TWO WHITE PELICANS**, who have been recovering after a year at the Wetlands and Wildlife Care Center in Huntington Beach, fly over the lake at William R. Mason Regional Park after being released on Wednesday. The two stayed at the center for 376 days.

## 'The best gift': Pelicans soar free after yearlong rehab

**TWO WHITE PELICANS** were released at William R. Mason Regional Park on Wednesday after spending 376 days recuperating at the Wetlands and Wildlife Care Center in Huntington Beach.



The birds came to the Wetlands and Wildlife Care Center last year with damaged wings and in poor health.

BY LILLY NGUYEN

From grounded birds to flying ones, two of the three American white pelicans that had been under the care of Wetlands and Wildlife Care Center were finally free to set their sights high after their release Wednesday afternoon.

The two birds initially arrived at the center with another pelican, according to officials at the center, which focuses on the rehabilitation and release of both injured and orphaned wildlife.

The trio were brought to the center in February of last year, unable to fly due to damage to their primary and secondary flight feathers on both wings, in addition to broken tail feathers.

In addition, the birds were soiled, dehydrated and in poor overall health. The third bird was able to be released after a few months of recuperation, though the remaining two stayed at the center for 376 days.

The birds were released at the

See **Pelicans**, page A2



**LISA JACOBY**, left, and **Preeti Patel**, volunteers with the Wetlands and Wildlife Care Center in Huntington Beach, release two white pelicans that have been recovering at the center for the last year on Wednesday.

## MEN'S SOCCER

## Orange County Soccer Club looks to rebound

BY MATT SZABO



James Carbone

**ORANGE COUNTY SOCCER CLUB** players participate in media day at Championship Soccer Stadium in Irvine on Tuesday. The team finished in last place in the Western Conference with a 7-13-14 record last season.

Last year was rough in a couple of ways for the Orange County Soccer Club.

A year after winning the United Soccer League Championship title, the team finished in last place in the Western Conference with a 7-13-14 record. Off the pitch, it appeared the club could lose its lease with Championship Soccer Stadium at Orange County Great Park in Irvine, before the Irvine City Council voted in September to approve a one-year extension.

"The end of last year was a strange time ... but the turnout of the fans was extraordinary," OCSC President of Business Relations Dan Rutstein said at the club's media day on Tuesday. "Two of our last three games were sold out. When I say sold out, I mean sold out, not just 'soccer team' sold out but you actually couldn't get a seat. It was incredible."

Orange County Soccer Club has a chance to build on that momentum headed into 2023, its

See **Club**, page A3

# THE COACH HOUSE

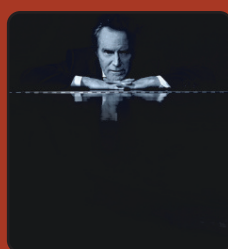
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THU, MAR 9  
**ALBERT CUMMINGS**



FRI, MAR 10  
**JD SOUTHER**



SAT, MAR 11  
**THE SMITHEREENS**



THU, MAR 16  
**HOT CLUB OF COWTOWN**

- 3/9 **ALBERT CUMMINGS**
- 3/10 **JD SOUTHER** *ALL THE HITS. SOME OF THE STORIES.*
- 3/11 **THE SMITHEREENS**  
*WITH GUEST VOCALIST ROBIN WILSON*
- 3/16 **HOT CLUB OF COWTOWN AND TYLER HILTON**  
*PERFORMING ELVIS PRESLEY'S SUN STUDIO RECORDINGS*
- 3/17 **THE FENIANS**
- 3/18 **SERGIO MENDES**
- 3/19 **GLENN MILLER ORCHESTRA**
- 3/23 **PETTY CASH**  
*(JOHNNY CASH & TOM PETTY TRIBUTE)*
- 3/24 **SUPER DIAMOND** *(NEIL DIAMOND TRIBUTE)*
- 3/25 **GENE LOVES JEZEBEL / BOW WOW WOW**
- 3/26 **BIG MOUNTAIN**
- 3/31 **BEATLES VS STONES - A MUSICAL SHOWDOWN**
- 4/5 **DUANE BETTS & PALMETTO MOTEL**
- 4/6 **COLIN HAY ACOUSTIC / LAZLO BANE**
- 4/7 **G. LOVE & SPECIAL SAUCE**
- 4/8 **WILD CHILD** *(THE DOORS TRIBUTE)*
- 4/13 **ISRAEL VIBRATIONS**
- 4/15 **THE 5TH DIMENSION**
- 4/16 **HERMAN'S HERMITS** *FEATURING PETER NOONE*
- 4/21 **BRITAIN'S FINEST** *(BEATLES TRIBUTE)*
- 4/28 **SKELETON CREW** *(GRATEFUL DEAD TRIBUTE)*
- 4/29 **CREAM OF CLAPTON**
- 4/30 **STEVE DEAN / JAMES KELLY BAND**
- 5/2 **BETH HART**
- 5/3 **MORGAN JAMES**
- 5/5 **OINGO BOINGO FORMER MEMBERS**
- 5/7 **METALACHI**
- 5/12 **QUEEN NATION** *(QUEEN TRIBUTE)*
- 5/14 **HALEY REINHART**
- 5/19 **JOHN CAFFERTY & THE BEAVER BROWN BAND**
- 5/21 **LET'S HANG ON!**  
*(FRANKIE VALLI & THE FOUR SEASONS TRIBUTE)*
- 6/3 **JUDY COLLINS**
- 6/8 **BLACK SABBITCH** *(ALL FEMALE BLACK SABBATH TRIBUTE)*



SUN, MAR 19  
**GLENN MILLER ORCHESTRA**



SAT, MAR 25  
**GENE LOVES JEZEBEL**



SUN, MAR 26  
**BIG MOUNTAIN**



WED, APR 4  
**DUANE BETTS & Palmetto Motel**

- 6/9 **AL DI MEOLA**
- 6/16 **AL JARDINE AND HIS ENDLESS SUMMER BAND**
- 6/17 **AMBROSIA**
- 6/18 **PURE PRAIRIE LEAGUE**
- 7/1 **MICK ADAMS & THE STONES**
- 7/15 **SHINE ON - PINK FLOYD EXPERIENCE**
- 7/19 **THE JERRY DOUGLAS BAND**
- 7/22 **Y & T**
- 7/28 **SPACE ODDITY**  
*(DAVID BOWIE TRIBUTE)*
- 7/29 **KIDS OF CHARLEMAGNE**  
*(STEELY DAN TRIBUTE)*
- 8/4 **PABLO CRUISE**
- 8/18 **SPYRO GYRA**
- 8/19 **MADELEINE PEYROUX**
- 9/22 **AL STEWART / THE EMPTY POCKETS**
- 10/7 **RONDSTADT REVIVAL**  
*(LINDA RONDSTADT TRIBUTE)*
- 10/15 **JOURNEYMAN**  
*(ERIC CLAPTON TRIBUTE)*



FRI, APR 7  
**G. LOVE & Special Sauce**



SAT, APR 15  
**THE 5TH DIMENSION**



SUN, APR 16  
**HERMAN'S HERMITS**



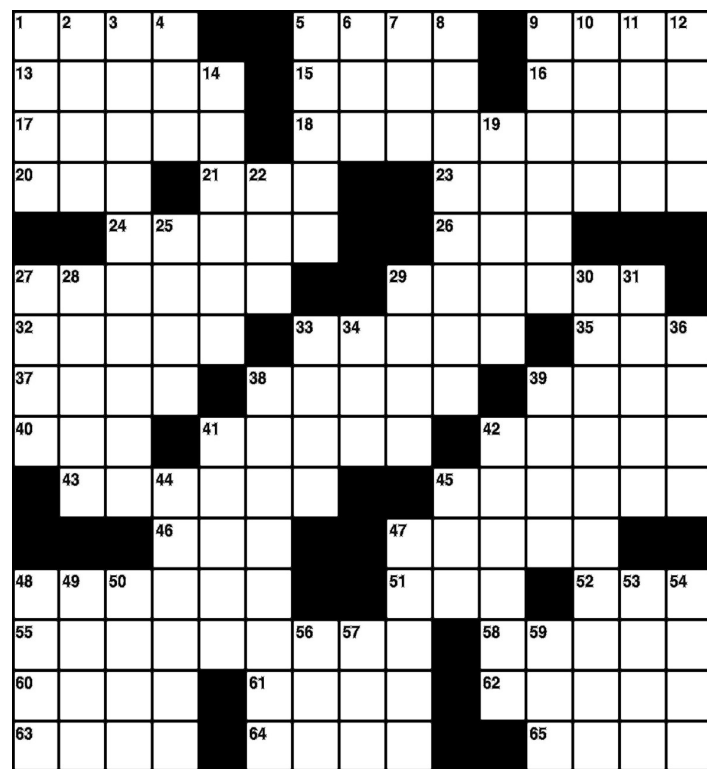
SUN, MAY 14  
**HALEY REINHART**

## THE DAILY COMMUTER PUZZLE

By Jacqueline E. Mathews

### ACROSS

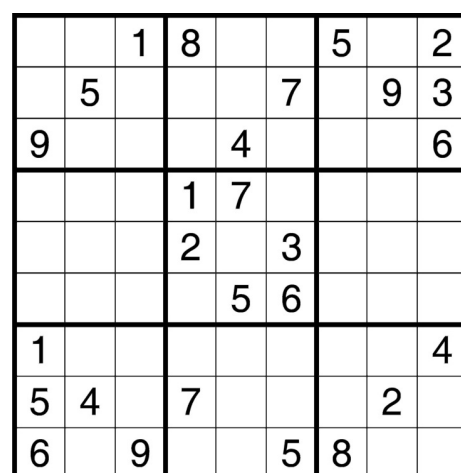
- 1 Jack or deuce
- 5 Singer/pianist Domino
- 9 Dull in color
- 13 Minds
- 15 Leo or Simba
- 16 Midwest state
- 17 Actor Tim
- 18 Severs
- 20 TV's Kathie \_ Gifford
- 21 Arctic seabird
- 23 Two-footed creatures
- 24 Racket
- 26 Spelling contest
- 27 Head Hun
- 29 Bathroom feature
- 32 Water sources
- 33 Reddish horses
- 35 Soft drink
- 37 Jungle animals
- 38 Part of YMCA
- 39 Cook the surface of
- 40 "You betcha!"
- 41 Funny folks
- 42 Dishwasher cycle
- 43 Think highly of
- 45 Paul McCartney's age
- 46 Feel miserable
- 47 \_ Carta; charter of liberties
- 48 Chubby
- 51 Part of summer: abbr.
- 52 Org. for Jets & Giants
- 55 Careless mistake
- 58 Albert or Murphy
- 60 Waiter's offering
- 61 Tidy
- 62 One-on-one battles
- 63 Dead \_; cul-de-sacs
- 64 Costly stones
- 65 Tributes in verse



## SUDOKU

By the Mephram Group

Complete the grid so each row, column and 3-by-3 box (in bold borders) contains every digit, 1 to 9. For strategies on how to solve Sudoku, visit [sudoku.org.uk](http://sudoku.org.uk).



For answers to the crossword and Sudoku puzzles, see page A3.

### DOWN

- 1 Heating fuel, for some
- 2 Suffix for do or tax
- 3 Bound and determined
- 4 Change colors
- 5 Unreliable person
- 6 Objective
- 7 Blouse or shirt
- 8 Treating with contempt
- 9 Bottom cover
- 10 \_ learning; memorization
- 11 Gobsmacked
- 12 Striped \_; Atlantic Ocean fish
- 14 Garden intruders
- 19 Stadium levels
- 22 Selena's nation

- of birth: abbr.
- 25 Eliminates a squeak
- 27 Put \_; store
- 28 Sioux shelter, once
- 29 24 Hours of Le \_; annual race
- 30 Generous
- 31 Cut of pork
- 33 Hotel booking
- 34 Ump's cry
- 36 Hunter's victim
- 38 Giving in
- 39 Omen
- 41 Equestrian's controls
- 42 Fore-and-aft \_ vessel; sloop, e.g.
- 44 Zodiac sign
- 45 Dijon water
- 47 Damon & Dillon
- 48 European capital city
- 49 GE appliance
- 50 \_ bar; pour drinks
- 53 Emery board
- 54 Smaller amount
- 56 Seventh letter
- 57 Easter entrée, perhaps
- 59 Sonny & Cher, once

Tribune Media Services

## PELICANS

Continued from page A1

William R. Mason Regional Park.

"To be able to set them free again is the best gift we can give them," executive director Debbie McGuire said in a statement announcing the release on Tuesday.

According to the National Audubon Society, a nonprofit dedicated to bird conservation, American white pelicans are primarily migratory birds, though they are considered to be relatively common to the California coastline during the winter. They are also one of the largest birds in North America, with a wingspan of roughly 9 feet, and are larger than brown pelicans.

Officials said care for the birds was provided by volunteers, a dedicated veterinarian and wildlife technicians, an all-in-all process that was financed by donations from the public. The average daily cost to care for a pelican is about \$45, according to the Wetlands and Wildlife Care Center, so the costs associated with caring for just the three that arrived together total more than \$30,000.

Donations can be made at the center's website, [wccoc.org](http://wccoc.org).

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## BLANKET

Continued from page A1

tor said, indicating a spot outside where the plastic bucket melted into the brickwork. "He could have burned the whole place down."

Hambrick, who'd arrived at the church at around 8 a.m., did a quick damage assessment of his office as he and other leaders made a report with Costa Mesa police officers before the 10 a.m. Sunday service.

"That's when things got weird, he said.

"There was a man down on my chair covered in a blanket," he said. "I said, 'Officer, there's a man in here.' He was trying to hide."

CMPD officers detained the suspect — later identified as Nicolas Alexandro Briones, 27, of San Dimas — and booked him on charges of trespassing and obstruction of a peace officer. Church officials estimate he caused several thousand dollars of mostly structural damage.

Briones was cited and released on Tuesday shortly before noon and is scheduled to appear in court on April 4, according to an online inmate locator maintained by the sheriff's department.

Hambrick and fellow pastor Brian Tipton on Tuesday afternoon were out at the site, which is undergoing construction. They both initially thought



Courtesy of Matt Hambrick

A GLASS door leading to a pastor's office at Costa Mesa First United Methodist Church was broken Saturday.

Costa Mesa First UMC had been politically targeted for its open stance on supporting the LGBTQ community.

While it was a relief to realize that was not likely the case, the incident got them thinking about mental health issues, the topic of a sermon Tipton recently delivered.

"Often, in church narrative, if you have some sort of mental health issue, you don't have enough faith," Tipton explained. "My sermon was about issues beyond faith, about literal dis-ease, mental health dis-ease — it's not that people

need faith, they need support."

Hambrick mentioned the incident in his own sermon on Sunday, saying church members prayed over Briones, who had not yet been identified.

"This is not an enemy, this is a person who needs help," Hambrick explained. "We prayed for him individually on Sunday, and we continue to pray for him daily. These next steps in his life are going to be difficult."

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**GIRLS' BASKETBALL**

## Marina captures CIF State SoCal Regional crown

**BY ANDREW TURNER**

SAN PEDRO — A senior-laden Marina High girls' basketball team has many enjoying the ride of their lives in the final season of their prep career.

There is now one game left for the Vikings' 10 seniors, and for a group that has gone where no Marina team has gone before.

Senior guard Tiana To scored a game-high 19 points, as visiting Marina upset San Pedro 51-43 in the CIF State Southern California Regional Division V final on Tuesday night.

Marina (21-15), the No. 8 seed in the Southern California regional, will face Angels Camp Bret Harte (25-7), the No. 3 seed from the Northern California regional, in the state championship game. The final will tip off at 10 a.m. on Saturday at the Golden 1 Center in Sacramento.

The Vikings poured out onto the court and embraced each other after the clock ran out. It had been a clinic in applying defensive pressure, as the Vikings created turnovers and dived on the floor for loose balls.

"Once we get going, we don't stop," said To, who added five steals, five rebounds and three assists. "All gas, no brakes."

Marina coach Daniel Roussel called To the hardest worker that his program has had since Katie Nguyen, who earned Daily Pilot Girls' Basket-

*Photos by James Carbone*

**THE MARINA** girls' basketball team hoists the CIF State Southern California Regional Division V plaque on Tuesday. The Vikings defeated San Pedro 51-43.

ball Dream Team Player of the Year honors in 2019.

"She tried out her freshman year with no basketball experience," Roussel said of To. "She has worked so hard to get to the skill level that she is at and the confidence that she's gained through these playoffs. I'm not one bit surprised at the way she played tonight."

During its state playoff run, Marina overthrew top-seeded Cerritos Gahr 49-33 in the second round. The Gladiators had handed Marina a 39-38 loss in the Southern Section Division 5AA semifinals en route to a runner-up showing in the bracket.

Only senior guard Kim Nguyen had ever been a part of a playoff team before — a first-round exit her freshman year. Nguyen drained a three-pointer from the right corner to start the fourth quarter, a critical basket that answered a 7-0 run for San Pedro and reestablished a 44-34 lead for Marina.

"This year, I didn't even think we would do that, get as far as we did," Nguyen said. "Beating Gahr is another one of our goals that we set, and it was like, 'Wow, we could really do this.'"

Marina had just four points five minutes into the game, and it trailed

12-10 after the first quarter. Rylee Bradley's finish through contact following a steal by To gave the Vikings a 14-13 lead with 5:23 on the clock in the second quarter.

To's transition layup, off another successful scramble on the defensive end, extended Marina's lead to 40-28 with 2:34 left in the third quarter, the Vikings' largest lead of the game.

Bradley, a freshman guard, had 14 points, five rebounds, three steals and three assists for Marina. Sophomore center Sydnie Smith had nine points and 10 rebounds. Senior forward Mia Grasse also pulled down 10 rebounds,



**THE VIKINGS** celebrate winning the CIF State Southern California Regional Division V final against San Pedro.

and sophomore guard Maria Tejeda chipped in with four points and three steals.

"I'm really happy with how my team played," Grasse said. "Mostly, I'm just happy for the rest of the seniors like me that get to experience this championship, get to win. We did not do a lot of winning last year, so I'm really happy that I can be a part of that for the rest of the seniors."

Marina went 6-20 overall last season. Now, the Vikings seek the program's first state crown.

Junior guard Noelani Raigans contributed 13 points, seven rebounds and five assists for San Pedro (24-9), which beat Chatsworth 52-51 in overtime in the Los Angeles City Section Division II fi-

nal, marking the program's first section title since 1986.

Junior forward Shalia Coleman and freshman guard Madison Adrid each had nine points for the Pirates. Junior forward Maia Wooldridge had eight points, 11 rebounds and three blocked shots, and senior forward Aliesha Fizer chipped in with four points, 13 rebounds and three steals.

"We are truly the underdogs in this whole thing," To added. "That's what I felt from the beginning. ... We've always been overlooked, especially because of the past, but we're a new team. We've rebuilt our team chemistry and our culture."

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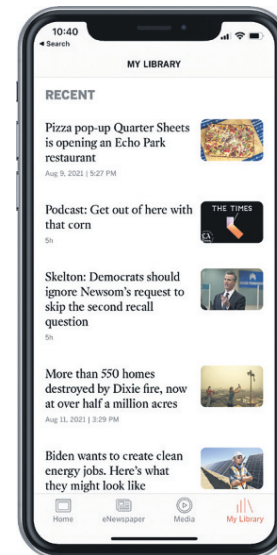
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**BOYS' BASKETBALL**

# Pacifica Christian books spot in state title game

BY MATT SZABO

ORANGE — Pacifica Christian Orange County High boys' basketball sophomore EJ Spillman missed the front end of a one-and-one opportunity in the closing seconds, leaving the door open on Tuesday night.

The Tritons were up by a single point in the CIF State Southern California Regional Division II championship game. Following the free throw miss, back-to-back timeouts were called with 4.6 seconds left, as host Orange Lutheran tried to set up a play to win the game.

When play resumed, Spillman helped slam that door shut.

He cleanly blocked Orange Lutheran sophomore Zion Paleo's three-point attempt on the game's final play, helping Pacifica Christian earn a dramatic 52-51 win in front of a capacity crowd estimated at 1,500 people.

Coach Jeff Berokoff's Tritons (27-9) have advanced to their first CIF state championship game in just their seventh year as a program. Pacifica Christian will play Northern California champion Fresno San Joaquin Memorial (25-9) in the state Division II title game on Saturday at 4 p.m., at Golden 1 Center in Sacramento.

San Joaquin Memorial beat Fairfield Vanden 67-61 in overtime Tuesday in the Northern California final.

Pacifica Christian was the No. 9 seed in the regional playoffs after losing to La Mirada in the semifinals of the CIF Southern Section Division 2A playoffs. Clearly, they've relished their chance to keep the season going.

In winning the regional final on Tuesday night, the San Joaquin League champion Tritons beat No. 3-seeded Orange Lutheran



**PACIFICA CHRISTIAN'S** EJ Spillman (32) makes a game-ending block on Zion Paleo on the last shot to secure the win Tuesday.

**PACIFICA CHRISTIAN** players celebrate after beating Orange Lutheran in the CIF State Southern California Regional Division II title game on Tuesday night. The Tritons won 52-51, sealing a trip to their first CIF state championship game.

Photos by Don Leach | Staff Photographer

(23-12) for the second time this season. Both victories came by a single point.

"It's crazy," Spillman said. "It shows everything that we worked for all year. The whole time I'm just thinking about all my guys, what we went through, how much work we put in to get here. We weren't losing that game."

"We're a smaller school, and everybody else counted us out. We came in as a No. 9 seed and we're going to go win it."

Sophomore Logan Stewart led the Tritons with 15 points and seven rebounds off the bench on Tuesday. Spillman, as well as junior Alex Stewart, scored 10

points each. Balanced scoring has been the name of the game all season for Pacifica Christian.

"Our game plan is to get everybody involved," Spillman said. "We feel like it's more fun to play like that. Everything is together."

Northwestern-bound senior standout Parker Strauss was quiet with four points, though he did stand out on defense with three steals — and by taking three charges on Orange Lutheran players.

"We trust each other a lot, obviously," Strauss said. "Coach preaches that when the ball moves, good things happen. I mean,

really it's hard to guard us. Anybody can get it going.

"It's great to see coach Berokoff's emotion. I mean, he's been building this thing for seven years. I bought into it, a lot of people have and a lot of people have reaped the benefits. He's one hell of a coach, and this is one hell of a group."

Pacifica Christian built a 38-25 lead midway through the third quarter on a put-back by Logan Stewart. But the Lancers clawed back. Three straight triples, one by junior Andrew Nagy and two from senior Javon Smith, brought Orange Lutheran within four points in just more than a min-

ute's time.

Orange Lutheran took a 50-48 lead with 2:50 left in the game on a three-point-er by senior Cannon Potter, who led the hosts with 15 points. But a nice pass from Spillman found Alex Stewart to tie the score.

After a free throw by Potter, Logan Stewart made the eventual game-winning basket for Pacifica Christian on a short jumper with 1:20 left.

Spillman rebounded an Orange Lutheran miss inside with nine seconds left, setting up the final chain of events.

"We beat Tesoro by one [in the regional semifinals] and it felt great," said Lanc-

ers coach Daniel Dunbar, whose team, like Pacifica Christian, was playing in its first regional final. "Today, we're on the other side of it, we lose by one and it's tough ... Without a senior group like we have, this doesn't happen. This is a player-driven program, and those seniors did a great job of leading us all the way to this point."

Berokoff was among those who celebrated the hardest for Pacifica Christian. Only a handful of teams throughout the state each year can say they ended their season with a win, and the Tritons have put themselves a win away from that enviable position.

"My kids truly love each other," Berokoff said. "They didn't want their season to be over. They just wanted one more day, and we just kept preaching love in our program, and being together as a group. I know it's cliché, but they really do love each other, and I think it shows by how we play."

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