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To the State Finals!

By Michael Sakoda



Scott Chen

The Campolindo boys' basketball team advanced to the CIF Division III title game after sneaking past Drake, 50-44, in the Regional finals on March 21. They will face Damien (28-5, No. 8 in CA) of La Verne, the winners of the SoCal bracket, at Haas Pavilion in Berkeley March 27.

In the match-up against Drake, the game had a slow start.

Trailing 17-18 in the second quarter, senior captain Scott Chen found Sean Yamamoto who knocked down a three. Moments later, Chen stole a Drake pass, split free throws, and gave the Cougars a 21-18 lead with 1:16 in the half.

Campolindo clung to a 23-22 lead at the half.

"We average 23 a quarter," said head coach Matt Watson of the slow pace. "It felt like it was going to be whoever's going to make a shot first."

Drake hit back-to-back three-pointers to start the third, taking a 28-25 lead, and it was time for the big man to go to work. The third quarter belonged to senior captain and DFAL Player of the Year Chris Hansen, who scored six straight for the Cougars and eight of his game-high 22 in the period.

"He's been unbelievable all year," said Watson of his 6'7" center. Hansen also had 17 rebounds in the game.

With 4:12 left in the game, Campo led 39-38, and Chen blew past three Pirate defenders, scoring a basket and finding himself at the line again. He finished the three-point play, and it looked as if Campo might finally pull away.

The Pirates responded to take a 44-42 lead with 2:25 to play.

"It felt like that was a big momentum shift," said Watson. "I [told] the guys, 'We didn't lose anything yet, all we have to do is get the ball to the big man and let him go to work.'"

Yamamoto split a pair of free throws with 2:06 left, cutting Drake's lead to 44-43, and then the Cougars defense buckled down.

Chen stripped a Pirates' guard, and Austin Clarke split another pair of free throws on the extra possession. Tied at 44, with 1:04 left, Clarke grabbed Campo's second steal in the final two minutes, and Hansen knocked down two free throws, giving Campo the lead with 37 seconds left to play.

"We knew we had the fouls to give, so we were being very aggressive (on defense)," said Watson.

Campo forced three turnovers in the final two minutes, propelling the Cougars to a 50-44 win.

Reach the reporter at: sportsdesk@lamorindaweekly.com

[back](#)

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