

Avoid: Lenfestey keeps Griffins afloat

Continued from Page D-1

game in the final 3½ minutes, but couldn't overtake the enigmatic Blue Griffins, who advance to face No. 3 Mora in the AA quarterfinals at 3 p.m. Tuesday in the Santa Ana Star Center.

"We play picture-perfect basketball," said Prep head coach Dennis Casados. "We actually run a clinic, and all of a sudden, we go flat."

But thanks to Will Lenfestey's gritty effort, the Blue Griffins (23-6) did not flatline. He scored nine of his 15 points in the final eight minutes, none bigger than a jaunt to the basket with fewer than two minutes left to stem the tide.

The Steers' Miles Parscal appeared to be in position for the charge, but the Prep sophomore had enough body control to avoid bowling over the center. Parscal was whistled for the personal on Lenfestey's bucket. Lenfestey didn't finish the three-point play, but still gave the Blue Griffins a 57-54 lead with 1:58 left.

A little later, Lenfestey drew a double team and hit a cutting D.J.

been doing it all season."

Playing in their first tournament game in 17 years, the Blue Griffins came out jacked. Dan Van Essen drew a rare four-point play two minutes into the game, as his team sprinted out to a 18-10 lead inside Prep's electric, cramped confines.

Lambert fed off the crowd's energy most, popping four 3s in the first half to rudder Prep to a 42-24 edge at the break.

And then came the third-quarter lull, one that was eerily similar to the one that hampered the Blue Griffins against district foil Mora in the 2AA championship.

Prep didn't score for the first 2½ minutes of the quarter, before Ryan Evaldson canned a triple. Lenfestey's bucket a minute later was the Griffins' final points of the quarter over the final 4:44.

And like stone masons, Magdalena (18-11) chiseled away.

Marksman Dre Montoya entered the contest with 65 3-points on the season.

set Magdalena in motion.

The Steers outscored the Griffins 16-5 in the third, the final points coming from Montoya's off-balanced trey before the third-quarter buzzer to bring it to 47-40.

"We came out at halftime really relaxed, and we just took our foot off the pedal," Lenfestey said.

Prep eventually reapplied its foot, pushing back with a 6-2 burst that once again gave it a double-digit lead.

But the dogged Steers wouldn't wave the white flag, as Montoya swished his final 3 to make it 55-54 at 2:10.

"That's been our MO forever," Steers head coach Jory Mirabal said. "They're not going to roll over. We got ourselves in a hole, and we dug ourselves back."

Just not fast enough.

With Lenfestey a steadying force, Casados didn't tear out his hair or call timeout.

"I don't have much to tear out," he said. "And I didn't want to take a timeout because I didn't want them to