Cabrillo off to a fast start with veteran pitching staff and flashy defense

By Jim Seimas
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Cabrillo College baseball coach Bob Kittle has a long history of fearless postseason predictions. This season, he’s holding off making bold statements — like winning state — but that doesn’t mean it’s a down year in Aptos.

Cabrillo — ranked 12th in the NorCal preseason poll by the California Community College Baseball Coaches Association — improved to 6-2 with a 7-6 pre-season win over Feather River in Marysville on Saturday.

“This is not a Kittle overesti-
mate,” the sixth-year Seahawks coach said earlier in the pre-
season. “Since I’ve been at the JC level, this is by far my most tal-
ented team. And all my coaches would agree. But talent only goes so far. You actually have to do it.”

The team lost all-state pitcher Nic Haney to UC Davis and gradu-
nated several others to the four-
year level, but it still returns plenty, especially to the pitching staff. The Seahawks return six pitchers, including 5-8-4 sophomore right-hander Ryan Capozza and 6-2 sophomore Matt Paleazzo, and three players of an infield that’s so polished, Kittel said he’s starting four NCAA Division II players “defensively.”

It’s not a complete stretch con-
sidering third baseman Scout Ak-
rop was already at that level.

IF YOU GO

THIS WEEK
Wednesday: Cabrillo at De Anza, 2 p.m.
Thursday: Delta at Cabrillo, 2 p.m.
Saturday: Cabrillo at Delta, 1 p.m.

MORE INSIDE
Cabrillo outlasted Feather River 7-0 Sat-
urday during the Gary Togniken Memorial Tournament. For more, see Local Roundup, p.2.

Baseball

FROM PAGE 1

Sequoia High alum returns home after redshirting at San Jose State last season. Rounding out the in-
field is first baseman Lu-
cas Hewitt, a Harbor High alum, second baseman An-
gel Sanchez and shortstop Matthew Valdez.

“I think we’re looking good to go,” said Capozza, who is called “Gelo” by teammates, a reference to the insurance company’s star gecko and Capozza’s small stature. “Hopefully we can make a run in con-
ference so we can host the playoffs.”

Cabrillo has advanced to postseason play the past four years under Kittel. Capozza, who counts a baseball, older and chugun in his arsenal, was key in last season’s success. “The kid is a great com-
petitor,” Kittel said. “He did some big wins for us games. During crunch time toward the end of the year, he was our best pitcher.”

Another four-year kick-
back includes pitcher Devin Leonis, a 6-1, 415 out of Cal State who played at University of San Francisco. He joins Capozza, a Valley

Christian grad, and Pala-
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Catching was Kittel’s big-
gest concern heading into the season, but Aptom alum Houston Roberts emerged from a three-freshman competition that included Sequoia alum Michael Mine and Chris Ortiz of Sequoia High to earn the starting role.

“He looks like a seasoned catcher already,” Kittel said. “He hitting and blocking and arm have improved. He’s taken an-
other step. It was the big-
gest question of the year and it has turned into a strength.”

The outfield will feature a four-
man rotation between XJ Rokoska, Mark Ortsi, Zane Greenberg and Lake Tokun-
gega. Kittel called the bench speed and athletic.

In addition to Capozza and Roberts, Kittel pushed about Valdez, a sophomore shortstop out of Arizona. Valdez averages between six to seven assists a game and most are of the high-
light variety.

“He does stuff you can’t teach,” Kittel said. “He was a little bigger and a lit-
tle faster, he’d be a top-10 round draft pick. He throws from several arm angles ac-
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Cabrillo College shortstop Matt Valdez fires into home to score for the Seahawks as the ball gets past Laney catcher Marcus Valencia during Cabrillo’s 7-3 home-
opening victory Feb. 5.

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