JC SOFTBALL

Seahawks win back-to-back to advance

Cabrillo travels to Sierra College for Super Regionals Friday

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APTOS — The Cabrillo College
Seahawks don’t give up.
The team didn’t matter that they were down
1-0 in the best-of-three series, and
allowing a grand slam in Game 2 to fall be-
hind didn’t matter much either.
The No. 6-seeded
Seahawks simply gritted their teeth, shook it off and ex-
hausted every re-
source available to win back-to-back
games Sunday evening against No. 11 Butte College and advance to the
Super Regional round of the California
Community College Athletic Associa-
tion playoffs. They won Game 2 11-6
and shutout Butte 4-0 in Game 3 to
win the series.

After dropping Game 1 to the visit-
ing Roadrunners 5-0, the Seahawks had
their collective backs against the wall
but showed no signs of quitting.

Case in point, freshman outfielder Kristina Mio. Twice she took a painful
blow from the ball. Once to her elbow

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The Cabrillo Seahawks crowd around Michelle Firebaugh (11) to celebrate her solo home run during their CCCAA Regional playoff game against Butte College Sunday in Aptos.

Tony Nunes/Register-Pajaronian

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while at the plate and the other
— a blistering line drive — thud-
ing off her ankle while on third
base.

But the petite, 5-foot-1-inch
Watsonville High product
thoroughly handled it.

“It hurt in the moment,” Mio
said, “but pain only last moment-
arily. I just thought, ‘my team
needed me.’

And that attitude was a prod-
uct of the entire Seahawks team.

Down 5-3 going into the fifth
inning of Game 2 after Butte’s
Allison Taylor homered a
grand slam off All-State, and
Coast Conference South Pitcher
of the Year Taylor Tessier in the
third, Cabrillo rallied for three
runs to take the lead for good.

Two of those scores came
courtesy of Cassidy Knowles’
two-run triple. The sophomore
from Sonoma rounded third
and was nearly tackled by head
coach Kristy Rosinger, who
daringly waived in Alexandra
Nabarrete to home plate.

Nabarrete slid in safely to tie
the game at 5-5 and send the
Cabrillo fans into a frenzy.

“It was do or die time,” Ros-
ing said. “You had to go all out
or go home.”

And the Seahawks weren’t
ready to let their season end.

Just a few minutes later
Knowles scored the go-ahead
run on a Butte infield error.

But the game, and series,
wasn’t over until Michelle Fire-
baugh came to the plate to lead-
off the seventh inning.

With Cabrillo nursing an 8-5
lead, Firebaugh crushed a pitch
from Butte’s All-State pitcher
Jessica Salsbury over the left
field fence to put her team up
by four. The bomb sucked the
life out of the Roadrunners and
Cabrillo tacked on two more
runs before the inning was over
using the speed from the top of
its lineup.

“It was like icing on the cake
because they put in their No. 1
pitcher and said, ‘ok, we’ll shut
them down now,’ but Michelle
(Firebaugh) hits a bomb right
off her,” Rosinger said.

The slappers were all over the bases
with their speed. We just shut
them down, emotionally too.

For as much as Firebaugh’s
career-imposed run resulted in the series,
it was her pitching that sealed
the deal. The freshman Apts
alum was thrown into the circle
in the bottom of the fifth inning
with one out and two runners
in scoring position but didn’t
panic. Instead, she promptly
retired the next two Roadrun-
ers to get out of the inning with
Cabrillo’s one-run lead intact.

“I believe in my defense so
much and I knew they would
have my back 100 percent,”
Firebaugh said. “I really wasn’t
worried. I was really relaxed.”

And that’s how she was for
the following nine innings. After
closing out the final 2 2/3 innings
of Game 2 while allowing one
earned run, she turned in seven
more in the Game 3 and kept
Butte scoreless. She allowed
only five hits and was only in
trouble during the second inning
when the visitors loaded the
bases with only one out.

But Firebaugh did not waver
and struck out the next two
Roadrunners to get out of the
inning.

“Definitely had faith in
(Firebaugh),” Rosinger said.
“We have no problem when
(Tessier) starts to slip a little
bit. They definitely have each
other’s backs.”

Cabrillo scored twice in the
first inning of Game 3 and added
one in the fourth and another in
the fifth. Nabarrete was 2-for-3
with two RBIs in the decisive
Game 3. Elise Amend had a
double and an RBI and Mikal
Cuelar was 2-for-3 with two
scored runs and a stolen base.

In Game 2, Knowles had four
RBIs, Mio was 2-for-4 with three
scored runs and three stolen
bases and Cuelar finished 3-for-5
with two scored runs and two
stolen bases.

Cabrillo now focuses on
the double-elimination Super
Regional round. It will start off
with a game against No. 4 Con-
sumnes River College Friday at
Sierra College in Rocklin. Also
in their bracket, No. 1 Sierra
College and No. 12 Shasta Col-
lege.

Rosinger said she hopes the
Seahawks are reaching their
peak when Friday comes
around.

“If we’re not on top of our
game and it’s not just a fluke on
one day and we carry it through,”
Rosinger said, “because we’ll be
unstoppable if we can keep that
aggression at the plate.”

Coming into Sunday it looked like the Seahawks had possibly
levered off. They had dropped
three in a row, including two
one-run contests to keep them
away from winning their sec-
ond conference title in three
years. But it didn’t matter what
had happened before, Cabrillo
wasn’t ready to put its season
rest Sunday.

“We didn’t care about the first
game,” Mio said. “We couldn’t
lose 10-4 and we still couldn’t
come back like we did today.”