Cabrillo

puts stamp on crown

Hawks seek perfect conference mark

By RYAN SILAPAN

APTOS — The Cabrillo College men’s basketball team has been dominating its Coast Conference South opponents all season.

It only seems fitting, with a chance to claim back-to-back conference titles and their fourth conference title in six seasons at home against visiting De Anza, that the Seahawks would put their stamp on it.

In fact, they did it with a blowout 76-53 victory over De Anza on Friday night.

"It feels good [winning] back-to-back championships," said the sophomore Velasez. "We have a really good team this year that likes to spread it out and let it go through the whole team, and that makes it a lot harder to guard us. We are focused on winning out conference games and getting into the playoffs and going deep."

Cabrillo has two games remaining. The Seahawks host Gavilan on Wednesday at 7 p.m., in their final home game of the regular season before wrapping up conference play on Feb. 17 at Monterey Peninsula College.

After building an early lead in the game, Cabrillo allowed the Dons to stay within striking distance through the first 14 minutes of the half.

Cabrillo coach Timy Maricopulos called for a timeout, and the Seahawks came out fired up going on a 14-2 run in the final six minutes. Velasez punctuated the run by stealing De Anza’s in-bounds pass with under six seconds to go, dribbling twice and nailing a 30-footer just as the halftime buzzer sounded to help the Seahawks take a 41-24 lead into halftime.

"This team is a lot different than [the championship teams in the past]," Maricopulos said. "We play a different style this year. We didn’t zone with those other teams. This team is a lot bigger, but we don’t shoot the ball quite as well as the others have. I don’t think if we always play right, but it seems like we pretty good results right now."

Cabrillo [23-3, 18-3] has now won 12 straight dating back to nonconference games against Merritt and Foothill.

The Dons had trouble getting into any real rhythm against the Seahawks’ 2-3 zone defense that forced 22 turnovers, 18 of which were steals.

Along with Velasez’s six steals, fellow sophomore guard Aaron Short chipped in five while filling up the stat sheet with six points, three rebounds, three assists and a blocked shot.

“We could ask for a better start in conference,” said Short. “We kind of slipped up a bit with three losses early in the season, but we feel we could get them. We want to continue with the energy we’ve had with this winning streak and just finish it out with two more wins going into the playoffs.”

Cabrillo kept up the defensive intensity in the second half as the Dons were not able to get within 15 points the rest of the game.

De Anza [13-11, 5-5] was led by Don Washington, who put up 10 points, nine rebounds and five steals. Denzel Cope and George Henderson each added nine points and Jameera Biggins added eight.

Thomas Pierce had 10 points and Frank Rogers added 14 points and three blocks. C.J. Grigg added six points and Justyn Searle added seven rebounds, four points, two steals and two blocks for Cabrillo in the victory. In all, 10 Seahawks made at least one shot.

“It feels great winning with all these guys. I know it’s not going to last forever, but we’re just trying to enjoy every second we can together,” said Rogers, who has committed to play at the University of San Francisco next season.

“We’re just trying to win as many games as possible and see where it takes us.”