COLLEGE EFFECTS

High school players weren’t the only ones struggling to hit the long ball last season.

At Stanford, the Cardinal swatted 27 home runs — their lowest total since 1977. Across the San Francisco Bay in Berkeley, Cal hit 31 home runs, its lowest total since 1983.

That local sample mirrored data collected by the NCAA after the 2011 season. According to the NCAA, each team hit an average of .52 home runs per game, almost half the 2010 average. Teams’ batting averages and run production decreased as well, the report stated, while the collective earned run average was the best since 1980.

At Cabrillo College, the bats have played little part in the Seahawks’ inability to hit home runs. The Seahawks have hit one home run in each of the past three seasons at their spacious Aptos park.

FIELD DIMENSIONS

SCHOOL | RIGHT-CENTER-LEFT
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MVC | 300-350-300
Soquel | 300-350-300
Aptos | 310-350-310
SLV | 310-350-310
Watsonville | 312-365-326
Pajaro Valley | 312-365-312
St. Francis | 315-365-315
Habor | 315-340-315
Santa Cruz | 315-350-318
Scotts Valley | 330-350-318

OTHER PARKS OF NOTE

PAL Stadium, S.J. | 320-380-300
San Jose Muni | 320-390-320
Cabrillo College | 335-390-335
Sollecoito Park | 355-360-305
Washington Park | 345-345-325

As a result, Cabrillo is going to bring in the outfield fence in by as much as 20 feet this offseason. The field’s dimensions are currently 335 feet down the foul lines, 385 feet to the gaps and 390 feet to straightaway center.

“Players have got to be rewarded for good ball contact,” Cabrillo coach Bob Kittle said, noting his team has been robbed of at least a dozen home runs at home.

“To get the ball out, you’ve gotta kill it,” he said. “Sure, you’ve got to adjust to the equipment, but we have a cavernous park and we need to adjust [the dimensions].”

That said, Kittle said his players have come to grips with not homering at home. But during road games and in smaller parks, he notices his players altering their swings. He backs his observation with the fact his team is batting .290 at home and .230 on the road.

“The players think, ‘I’ve got to add stuff to the swing,’ and it’s breaking down the swing,” he said. “They think, ‘I gotta swing’ and they start using their shoulders and end up not hitting the ball as consistently.”

— JIM SEIMAS