Cabrillo College shut down Los Medanos

No. 15 Seahawks advance to face No. 2 San Mateo

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APTOPS — Kevin Hatch, Josh Rodriguez and the rest of Cabrillo College’s No. 15 baseball team proved three things with their decisive, 5-1 victory over No. 18 Los Medanos of Pittsburg on Tuesday in a play-in game for the Nor Cal playoffs:

Hatch, a designated hitter nursing a hamstring injury, is ready to return to his spot in the outfield.

Rodriguez allowed one run in 7 1/3 innings. He scattered six hits, struck out three batters, walked two and beaned two.

“I was pretty calm,” Rodriguez said. “I just had to stick with my game plan. I didn’t want to let my adrenaline get the best of me.”

Rodriguez said he felt his grandfather by his side in the win.

“I could feel his presence with me. It was very special. It’s a bittersweet moment. You lose the person, but he’s here in spirit. It’s been a very peaceful week.”

SEE CABRILLO ON D3

Cabrillo College shortstop Matt Horton tips his helmet to his teammate after scoring a run against Los Medanos on Tuesday.

CABRILLO

Continued from D1

Rodriguez’s outing impressed Kittle.

“Josh has been so good all year,” he said. “Some [college] is going to get a good pitcher out of him. That guy is tough. He may be a little guy, but he pitches like a big guy. He’s got heart.”

The Seahawks [22-15], who took third place in the Coast Conference Pacific Division, showed they belong in the playoffs.

By beating Los Medanos, the Seahawks advance to a best-of-three series that begins Saturday against host College of San Mateo, the No. 2 seed.

“We’ve totally belonged here from Day 1,” Hatch said. “I like our matchup. We played them tight our first time. Our hitters are finally coming around and our pitchers have been great all year. It should be a tight series.”

Cabrillo last played San Mateo on March 22 and fell 4-2. It’s the teams’ only meeting this season.

The teams play Saturday at 1 p.m. and Sunday at 11 a.m. If the teams split, a decisive third game will be played Sunday following Game 2.

Cabrillo is hoping for the showing it produced against Los Medanos [21-15-1], the second-place finisher in the Bay Valley Conference.

In addition to a solid effort from Rodriguez, the Seahawks got to use their dominant bullpen. Julian Garcia and Mike Murano each threw to preserve the win.

In all, the Seahawks turned three double plays to escape jams. Their defensive highlight came in the first inning though, when center fielder Trevor Fabing fired a strike to catcher Sanchez at home plate to catch Cody Stephens trying to score from second on a base hit.

“[Rodriguez] had pretty good command of his stuff,” Stephens said. “We were swinging at some high pitches. He was leaving a few pitches up in the zone that we chased. But his off-speed stuff had some bite.”

The Seahawks finished with 11 hits on offense, including three triples. No. 9 hitter Jamie Vega also tripled and scored in the sixth.

Kittle said his Nos. 7-9 hitters will be key in the outcome this weekend.

“We need to execute two pitches on the hill, and on offense we’re going to have to manufacture runs,” he said. “The bottom of our batting order will be key because [San Mateo] isn’t going to throw to our 3-4-5 hitters. They don’t want to face them. They’re three of the best hitters in our conference.”

Players from both teams said the pressure of winning to play-in game and take on the No. 2 seed Bulldogs this weekend was a non-factor.

Cabrillo College pitcher Josh Rodriguez frustrated Los Medanos hitters, throwing eight innings of six-hit, one-run ball on his way to getting the win.

CABRILLO 5, LOS MEDIANOS 1

He legged out two triples and scored twice for the Seahawks to kick start a pair of two-out rallies. Cleanup hitter Sergio Sanchez followed with a pair of RBIs singles each time.

Rodriguez, a 5-foot-9 lefty out of Stockton, showed again that he’s a bulldog.

His 92-year-old grandfather Thomas passed away on Saturday, but the sophomore was a rock on the mound.

Sunday, the Seahawks qualified for the playoffs with an at-large berth and Rodriguez was named the starter. He made good on coach Bob Kittle’s decision.