JC BASEBALL PLAYOFFS

Cabrillo takes first game of regional

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No. 7 seed Cabrillo College used a three-run, eighth inning to break up a pitchers’ duel and upset host Santa Rosa 3-1 in Game 1 of the NorCal Super Regionals on Friday.

Right-handed pitcher Matt Palazzo shined with a complete-game outing for Cabrillo.

If the Coast Conference-champion Seahawks (24-16) can beat No. 3 Santa Rosa (27-12) on Saturday at 1 p.m., they will advance to the Sectional tournament, which begins May 16. The Seahawks will send Pacific Division MVP Nat Hamby — a Soquel High alum who will

CABRILLO » PAGE 2

NORCAL SUPER REGIONALS
CABRILLO 3, SANTA ROSA 1
Series: Cabrillo leads, 1-0
Saturday’s Game 2: Cabrillo at Santa Rosa, 1 p.m.
Sunday’s Game 3*: Cabrillo at Santa Rosa, noon
* if necessary

FROM PAGE 1

pitch for UC Davis next season — to the mound in Saturday’s Game 2.

The Seahawks’ confidence is high right now, said third baseman Scott Mercer.

“It’s huge,” he said. “Any time we give Nat the ball, we have the utmost confidence in him. But we have a tough task. We still have unfinished business to take care of. We need to pitch, play defense and the hits will come.”

If Santa Rosa — the runner-up to San Joaquin Delta in the Big 8 Conference and the 2005 state champion — prevails, a decisive Game 3 will be played Sunday at noon.

Palazzo primarily threw a fastball and changeup that he spotted well, Seahawks coach Bob Kittle said. The transfer from Cal State-Stanislaus allowed just four hits and one unearned run in the sixth inning. He walked two batters and struck out five.

“It was a quick game,” said Mercer, who finished 3-for-4 with an RBI. “When I blinked and looked up, it was the seventh inning. It was a pitchers’ duel, for sure. And when we finally got through in the eighth, it was over.”

Santa Rosa starter Brandon Hagerla, a 6-foot-2 sophomore right-hander, entered with an 8-2 record and 1.70 ERA. He allowed three runs on seven hits. Only one of the runs was earned.

Cabrillo’s Lucas Hewitt doubled to lead off the sixth and scored on a bunt by Josh Thorpe that was thrown errantly to first base. With expansive foul territory, Thorpe was able to advance to third on the error.

“He’s been so good for us in the playoffs,” Kittle said of Hewitt, a Harbor High alum. Naz Thibodeaux and Mercer followed with RBI singles.

“Mercer came up with a clutch hit for the biggest run of the game,” Kittle said, “because that gives us a 3-1 lead and a little breathing room.”

Santa Rosa first baseman Weston Bryan was 2-for-3. Matt Locco scored the Bear Cubs’ lone run and Dane Erbst had an RBI.