Local talent continues to power Hawks

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APTO — The doors are open and locals continue to walk through it.

Whether they come from Watsonville or Aptos, local athletes continue to show up and continue to impress for the Cabrillo College Seahawks football team and the 2014 season is no different.

“You always want to have your doors open and your arms open to the local kids,” said Cabrillo head coach Bill Garrison. “Whether it’s their first year out or whether they choose to go to a four year [college] and return for whatever reason.”

Two of the major projected contributors on the Seahawks team are 2012 Watsonville High graduates Lamar Cowans and Fabian Serrano.

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As a Wildcat Cowans scored 10 touchdowns on the ground and racked up 761 yards on just 109 carries while playing quarterback his senior year. The 6-foot, 175 pound slot receiver played for the Seahawks the year following his graduation and turned heads with his speed and hands. After a stellar freshman year (58.2 yards per reception and three touchdowns) had a few offers lined up from colleges, but they pulled away following a torn retina in his right eye which forced him redshirt last season.

Since then he’s worked to prepare himself for a chance at helping the Seahawks win the Coast Conference title like they did his freshman year.

“We have a lot of returners coming back,” Cowans said. “Honestly, I feel like there’s a lot more chemistry. I feel very comfortable with the offense and defense. I feel like it’s going to be a great year.”

Serrano plowed his way to the Seahawks starting running back spot last season by running for 480 yards on 108 carries while learning the ins and outs of how to play at the next level and the differences between the high school and college game.

“The players are a lot faster,” the 5-foot-10-inch, 180-pounder said. “Guys want to come out and hit you.”

He found that out the hard way. In the second game of last season Serrano leaped up to make a snag and was nailed in the ribs. Turned out that hit fractured one of his ribs.

It didn’t matter, however, as he continued to split carries and run the ball for the Seahawks for the remainder of the season.

Along with bracing himself for the bigger hits at the college level, he changed his diet and the way he trained in the weight room.

Serrano could miss the first two contests with a turf toe injury that happened just a week before the Seahawks Black and Blue scrimmage.

“We have the cards that we are dealt,” Garrison said of Serrano. “Right now he’s not one of those cards. He’s going to rehab. He’s going to do everything that he can to get back.”

Along with Cowans and Serrano, locals Jonathan Carmona (St. Francis Central Coast Catholic), Alex Marquez (Aptos), Aidan Daly (St. Francis C.C.C) and Roger Contreras (Watsonville), among others, will also play for the Seahawks this season.

“We’re very excited with the quality of the local kids that we have and also the supplement athletes we get outside of the area and outside the state,” Garrison said.

From out of the area Cabrillo found a gem in starting linebacker Darrian Williams (Alabama) and outside threats Jon Jon Moore (Orlando) and Yoshio Hasegawa (Washington), along with their starting quarterback Brandon Layne, who comes from Texas.

Last season he made five starts in relief of Lucas Romanski, who suffered multiple injuries throughout the year, and with every time he, now, sophomore was on the field he continued to get better.

He recorded 15 touchdowns with a 56.6 completion percentage and totaled 1,362 yards through the air.

The 5-foot-10-inch 180 pound signal caller said that the entire sophomore class has made a huge jump not only in the physical department, but also in the mental aspect of the game.

“We have a lot of physical ability,” Layne said.

“We have a lot guys that can catch the ball and hit and everything, but it’s all mental when you get to this level. We just have to stay healthy.”

Cabrillo starts their season by hosting Contra Coast College Sept. 6 at 7 p.m. at Carl Connelly Stadium.