

IN THE THICK OF THINGS

Men's basketball beats Manhattan, climbs out of the MAAC basement

By Paul Szaniawski

Everyone knows a basketball game does not end until the final buzzer, but the men's game against Manhattan on Wednesday was over at half-time.

Edwin Muniz received the game ball for scoring his thousandth point for the Broncs in December shortly before tipoff of one of his greatest first-half performances at Bronc Zoo this season.

"After I got the ball it was over with and I went to work," he said.

He did just that. Muniz capped off his 17-point first half with a three-pointer at the buzzer, giving the Broncs their largest lead, 38-21, which practically ended the game.

"I guess it was a lucky shot more than anything," he said. "I looked at the clock; then I heaved it up."

The 75-66 win was one of the only games in the past two weeks in which Rider didn't commit its notorious sin of falling to double-digit deficits at halftime.

"Defensively I thought it was a good first half," said Head Coach Tom Dempsey. "Whenever you want to get off to a good start, it starts with your defense. That was a big focus in the pregame. Their slow start was a product of good defense."

It was Manhattan's worst first half this season since its 18-point performance against #23 nationally ranked Syracuse and their lowest total game score, according to Manhattan Head Coach Bobby Gonzalez.

"We thought Rider was better than their record and tonight they showed that," Gonzales said. "Where we struggled we just couldn't score the ball."

Manhattan was forced to play the Broncs without its highest scorer, 6-foot-6-inch sophomore forward and guard C.J. Anderson, who was suspended from the team indefinitely.

"If you take a Ke Ke Clark off Saint Peter's or you take Stevie Bird off Iona or you take Jared Jordan off Marist or Jason Thompson off Rider or Antawn Jordan off Siena or you go to any team in our league and you take the top player off the team, they're not going to be the same," said Gonzalez. "That aside, that's the only thing I'll mention; I don't want to make excuses. Rider deserves credit, they outplayed us."

Anderson, who has averaged nearly 19 points a game this season, also did not face the Broncs last season in his team's twenty-nine point blow-out loss.

"We can't control who shows up," said Dempsey. "We show up and whoever gets off the bus that's who we play."



Photo by Matt Freedman

Senior Aaron White goes up strong with the ball in a green sea of Manhattan defenders.

Terrance Mouton had 19 points and 5 assists against Manhattan and continued his great play with 14 points and 3 assists in Rider's following game, a 81-62 win against Canisius. Sophomore forward Jason Thompson added 26 in that game and scored 21 in the Broncs' last game, a 84-70 loss to Niagara.

The Broncs have won three of their last five division games and have found themselves back in the thick of MAAC competi-

tion, building up steam before the playoffs. Rider is one game away from being in the middle of the division.

"[Last] Tuesday against Manhattan and Friday against Canisius were definitely two of our better performances of the year," said Dempsey during the Rider Basketball Radio show Tuesday.

Tonight the team will have its second-to-last division game away from the Zoo of the regular season against Fairfield at home.

"We're going to have to go up there and match their intensity, especially in the first half because we've been getting off to some slow starts," Dempsey said during Tuesday's radio show.

With hopes set on the MAAC playoffs, the men's team will have to quit its worst habit of the season cold turkey. Dempsey summed it up.

"You don't make a living coming back from 18, 19, 20 points down," he said.

Wrestling team back on path of destruction

By Paul Mullin

Of all the sports teams at Rider, the one that receives the least recognition is the wrestling team. Ironically, it has been one of the more stable and outstanding teams to compete, and this year has been no different.

After compiling an 8-5-1 record thus far this season, the wrestling team moves to take on Clarion tomorrow in a home match that Assistant Coach John Hangey feels will be a good match for the Rider team.

"They're having a rough year," said Hangey. "We have a good history against them, and we are much more balanced and confident."

The team continues to be successful this season despite several injuries in its start-

ing lineup. Head Coach Gary Taylor said this will be a major concern against Clarion.

"If we can have more people healthy we'll be all right," said Taylor. "We've been a little banged up this year."

Thanks to two freshman wrestlers stepping up their games, the Broncs have stayed in the game this season.

Doug Umbehauer (174 lbs), named the Colonial Athletic Association (CAA) Rookie of the Week on Tuesday, and Mike Kessler (149 lbs), who received the honor last week, have had strong showings all season long.

"Their success says a lot about them, coming right out of high school," said Hangey. "It speaks volumes about their ability."

Taylor also credited the



Photo by Matt Freedman

Sophomore Ryan Smith prepares to escape a hold against Rutgers' Ricky Ringel. Smith went on to pin his opponent in less than six minutes. Rider won 26-15, losing only four matches.

team's success despite injuries to the solid group of wrestlers he has

"We're not a bad team,"

Taylor said. "Even [when] we're not at full strength, we are still a very solid team."

At the CAA Duals held at

George Madison University on Friday, Jan. 20 and Saturday, Jan. 21, the Broncs went 4-0-1 against five division opponents. According to Hangey, this sort of success was not a surprise for the team.

"We expected to be number one or two," said Hangey. "We usually fight Hofstra for it. We just have stronger traditions and expectations. And that's what gets you to nationals."

Despite the injuries the team has suffered, Hangey maintains that the lineup will remain the same for tomorrow's match at home.

"You'll be seeing the same lineup as we had against Columbia," he said. "We don't like to move them around much."