



Photo by Al Vicedo

The Broncos swim in a practice freestyle drill on Tuesday afternoon. The teams are preparing for the MAAC championships in two weeks at Loyola.

Swimmers and divers emerge from depths

By Mike Caputo

There is a strong chance that the men's and women's swimming and diving teams will both win the title this year, according to confident junior diver Chris Coles.

The confidence of Coles has been reflected upon the entire team since the onset of the season. This is a surprising notion, considering the defending men's conference champions started the season with a disappointing 2-7 record, while the women lost its first nine meets, including a frustrating defeat to arch rival Marist in early November.

Coles admitted that both sides had suffered a few unex-

pected "setbacks" earlier on in the year that had to do with the uncharacteristically slow start.

"We had a lot of people out and now we have a lot of people healthy," said Coles. "Things have been falling together."

Senior captain Briana Cohen said that the competition this year was much different than it was in 2003-2004.

"We swam with different teams this year and that factored into it," she said.

Rider's annual winter training trip to Florida in January seemed to be just what the team needed to make a turnaround. Cohen agrees that it was successful, but doesn't think much changed when it came to attitude and work ethic.

"We are a lot stronger than

we were [in November]," she said. "We all practiced real hard [in Florida], but we have done the same thing all year."

The men (5-8) and the women (3-10) have both won three of their last four meets, including two Metro Atlantic Athletic Conference (MAAC) victories going into the conference championships on Feb. 17.

Rider's first MAAC victory came in an impressive fashion at Loyola on Jan. 15, the site for the conference championships. The men stomped the Greyhounds 149-82 while the women coasted to a 136-107 victory. In the meet, sophomore Andy French stood in the spotlight by emerging victorious in the 1,000 and 500

free. Other winners for the men included senior Sam Engle (200 backstroke), senior Bobby DeSandre (200 breaststroke) and junior Dan Burgess (100 free). Sophomore Courtney Clark stole the show for the women by winning the 1,000, 500 and 200 frees. Also, sophomore Lauren Urbanski placed first in the 200 individual medley and the 200 butterfly, while Cohen won the 100 free.

"That meet pulled us together and let us know that we can do it," said Cohen. "It was special, especially since it was the pool that we will be swimming at the [MAAC] Championships."

The Broncos went on to sweep Drexel at home 143-94 (men) and 131-105 (wom-

en), but then were swept by a powerful University of Pennsylvania squad (108-133 men and 93-147 women). Rider capped off an outstanding end to the regular season with another MAAC road sweep, this time over Iona (160-82 men and 150-91 women).

In the Iona meet, Coles won both the 1 and 3 meter dive and Clark placed first in the 1,000 and 500 free. Rider also won the men's and women's free and medley relays.

Led by motivational head coach Steve Fletcher, Rider should head into the MAAC Championships with a sense of renewed confidence, but it won't. It was confident the whole time.

'SOAR' from page 12

of which were in overtime, including a victory in the quarterfinals of last season's MAAC Championship tournament.

Even though Saint Peter's is not currently nipping at the Broncos' heels in the MAAC, these teams have an indisputable dislike for each other. The Peacocks will be seeking redemption for dropping a 95-86 home loss to the Broncos early in January. Clark was held to only 14 points in that particular defeat.

On the "Don Harnum Radio Show," hosted by Daryl Fein, senior center, Steve Castleberry, summed up his focus for tomorrow.

"I'm not going to get into it with their players," he said. "I'm just going to try to get into a rhythm and play my game."

Harnum doesn't want his team to be overwhelmed with the pressure of performing on ESPN2, in front of a national audience, but Castleberry couldn't help feeling a bit excited.

"A game like this is definitely more exciting for me," he said. "It's a chance for my family [across the country] to watch me play."

Fans should also enjoy watching two of the premier players in the MAAC take care of business. Johnson and Clark were both named to the Preseason All-MAAC First Team.

Harnum attributes a large portion of the team's spot on top of the MAAC to Johnson's veteran leadership.

"Jerry's allowing other guys to step up," said Harnum. "He trusts his teammates and has become so much more of a complete player. His scoring might be down, but his assists are up and the other guys' scoring is up because Jerry is allowing for it."

Rider has finished all of its non-conference games and can focus all of its attention on the teams that determine where the Broncos will place in this year's MAAC tournament, hosted in Buffalo. The regular season champion gains an automatic bye to the conference semifinals, a place where Rider has not been as a member of the MAAC.

Even in first place, Harnum is concerned about the rest of the competition in the MAAC.

"I think there are a lot of teams that can win [the MAAC]," said Harnum. "The teams that beat us played us tough and we played well in both losses."

Wrestling pins Pitt, Rutgers

By Eamon Ducey

Rider had won three in a row when it rolled into Pittsburgh, but was without junior defending 157 lb. conference champion Dave Miller because of his second injury of the season. But this victory over Pittsburgh was because of another phenomenal performance by the freshmen, which is a reflection of this season's success.

The Broncos were able to win six matches, all by freshmen. The Broncos came out strong and won the first four matches. Freshman Ryan Smith impressed with a first period pin in the 125 lb. weight class.

At the 133 lb. weight class Tim Harner earned his 20th victory of the season with a 4-3 decision against Pittsburgh's Mike Ciotti.

In an upset victory, sophomore Don Fisch beat the No. 5 in the nation Ronald Tarquinio by a 2-1 decision. This was able to give Rider a 12-0 lead.

Yet another freshman, Michael Palma, was able to step up big by gaining a major decision in the 149 lb. weight class, leading to a 16-0 score.

"It is a great feeling for us to win the first couple of matches," Smith said.

The Broncos gave up their first points by virtue of a forfeit because of Miller's injury in the 157 lb. weight class, closing the score to 16-6. Rider continued to give up the lead when Pittsburgh's Justin Nestor and Zachariah Doll won their matches, cutting Rider's lead to 16-15.

Freshman redshirt T.J. Morrison was able to halt Pittsburgh's momentum when he won a closely contested match at the 184 lb. weight class. Rider was able to seal the victory when freshman redshirt Jeff Black pinned Lou Thomas at the 2:19 mark.

"We had two key pins at 125 and 197 lbs.," said Taylor.

Pittsburgh's Zach Sheaffer won the heavyweight class by pin but it was not enough for the Panthers as the Broncos were victorious by a score of 25-21.

"When you can beat a major university like Pittsburgh, it is big," said Taylor.

This season's success is largely due to Harner and Smith, who are first and second, respectively, on the team

in wins.

"As freshmen, they have been able to adjust quickly and have shown a tremendous amount of toughness," said Taylor.

Smith attributes his early success to his teammates.

"There are so many good people around this team it allows for me to become a better wrestler," Smith said.

Despite the team's recent success, injuries have plagued the team all season. There is some hope that the team can heal before it resumes its conference schedule.

The team has missed Miller along with his 12-1 record for most of the season.

"Miller was injured from November through December, but came back and had several key victories in January," said Taylor. "He is able to pin, which excites everybody on the team."

Rider blew away Rutgers on Wednesday by a score of 31-7, winning eight of 10 matches. Smith (fall), Fisch (major decision) won along with junior Chris Marold, sophomore Ryan Cunningham and Morrison.

Rider travels to Clarion for a match-up tomorrow at 1.