

Broncs Turning the Tide

Team goes 4-1 after seven-game losing streak



Photo courtesy of Pete Borg

Freshman Edwin Muniz goes up for a shot against Niagara. His excellent play of late has brought the Broncs out of their drought and helped them win three games in a row. They play tonight at fellow MAAC opponent St. Peter's.

By David Hurka
Staff Writer

The men's basketball team has shaken off its winter chill with an impressive three game winning streak against tough conference competition. The Broncs defeated Marist, St. Peters and Siena in games that reflected a new, more aggressive style of play.

Against Marist on Jan. 29, Rider got revenge for an earlier home loss by never letting up from the tip-off. Utilizing excellent shooting, Rider bolted out to a 27-5 lead in the first 15 minutes of the game. Sophomore Robert Taylor put in 10 points during the opening run, and freshman Edwin Muniz added eight as well. Marist cut the lead down in the second half, but could never get closer than seven points. Taylor finished with 22 points and Muniz with 12 to lead Rider to an inspiring 73-60 win.

Next up for the Broncs was St. Peters on Saturday, Feb. 1, as part of Rider Athletics Hall of Fame Day. Rider started out slower than they did against Marist, but continued to put the pressure on St. Peters. After holding a nine point lead at halftime, Rider went on runs of 13-5 and 8-0 during the second half to put St. Peters away.

Once again, the Broncs let part of their lead fall, only to hold on for another victory. Johnson led the surge with 19 points and Muniz remained consistent with 16 points as Rider won its second straight, 80-76. St. Peters has not defeated Rider in their last seven meetings.

Their toughest challenge of the

week came on Monday, Feb. 3, at Siena and its impressive freshman Michael Haddix. The Broncs were trailing 30-29 at the half, but stormed back in the second half, led once again by Johnson and Taylor. Johnson took the team on his back early in the second half, scoring all 11 points in an 11-2 run that gave the Broncs the lead for good.

When Siena closed the gap to 51-49 halfway through the second half, it was again the combination of Johnson and Taylor leading the way in a 19-5 run to close the game. The Broncs' foul shooting sealed the deal, as they made 19 of 24 foul shots in the final four minutes of the game. Johnson finished with 25, Taylor had a career high 23 and MAAC Rookie of the Week Muniz added another 12 before fouling out. The final score was 87-77 and was the highest point total for Rider this season.

Head Coach Don Harnum believed that this win was one of the most important of the year.

"We'd never won at Siena. They have a tremendous home field advantage and they're in the upper half of the league. It was our most complete game of the season," he said. "Everyone was mature and we got the result that we wanted."

Coach Harnum has been pleased with the recent improvement of the Broncs after the seven game losing

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Wrestling getting things back on track

Team dominates opposition at CAA Duals

By Jared Vichko
Sports Editor

After any sporting contest is over, the two teams that were competing retreat to their separate locker rooms. The winner's locker room is jovial, the post-game speech is normally much shorter and the players are very excited about the win. In stark contrast, the loser's locker room is much more quiet, as the player's miscues and mistakes are magnified and they ponder why they lost the game. The point is that athletes learn more from a loss than from a win, and the same is true with Rider wrestling.

Heading into the break, the Broncs had an impressive showing at the Beast of the East Tournament, placing first out of 15 teams and sending six wrestlers to the finals.

Senior Derek Jenkins, ranked in the top 10 in the nation, won all of his bouts, and defeated George Carter in the finals, who was ranked eleventh.

The 125-pound finals featured two Broncs, freshmen Bobby Stinson and Jim DiCicco, who won all three of their bouts but opted not to wrestle each other in the finals. Stinson's accomplishments did not go unnoticed as he was named the Colonial Athletic Association (CAA) Rookie of the Week.

At the Midlands Championships, a little over a week later, Jenkins and Harrington placed sixth and eighth, respectively. The showing was very impressive, seeing that the only losses were suffered to wrestlers ranked in the top 10 in the nation.

At the Virginia Duals, the losing streak began with losses to tenth ranked Penn State and North Carolina. The losing continued through their next three matches as well, losing to Drexel, Clarion and Rutgers.

"We had a huge letdown against Drexel and Rutgers," said senior Joe Pollard. "We didn't wrestle well as a team."

"The losses were obviously discouraging," said Jenkins. "They showed us what our true character was and what we had to do to get things back on track."

Like any true athlete does when they are faced with adversity, the Broncs responded with a dominating performance at the CAA Duals, defeating Campbell, Old Dominion, and George Mason. Jenkins, Stinson, Harrington, and Pollard all won twice in the tournament to put the Broncs in the drivers seat in the CAA.

"We had our best performance at the CAA Duals," said Pollard. "We came together as a team and it showed."

The Broncs gave an encore performance against Binghamton, winning eight bouts to win 31-9. Rider was again led by Jenkins and Harrington, who are currently both ranked nationally (Jenkins eighth, Harrington nineteenth respectively). DiCicco, senior Bob Pizzuto, senior Greg Sawyer, and

sophomore Carmelo Marrero all won for the Broncs.

Jenkins is happy with the confidence that the team has gained with the last few wins.

"Everyone is focused now and we're all back on track," said Jenkins. "Hopefully we can stay focused for the remainder of the season."

If the team remains focused, the silence of the losing locker room will be a memory instead of reality.

Rider Broncs v. James Madison University
on
Saturday, Feb. 8
in the
Alumni Gymnasium
at 7 p.m.