Winning streak stopped at SBA
By Mike Caputo

The gates at the Sovereign Bank Arena (SBA) have proven to be a trap door for Rider basketball over the past few seasons. Coming off of an emotional 78-73 nationally televised conference victory over Saint Peter's in front of an energetic packed house at Alumni Gym last Saturday, the Broncos lost a heartbreaker to Iona 67-66 on Monday in front of thousands of empty seats at the SBA. Head coach Don Harnum did not think that the change in atmosphere between the two games had an effect on his team’s mental approach to Monday’s game.

“I was concerned that we were going to be emotionally flat. That was not the case,” he said. “I thought we were very ready to play.”

Readiness was not a question for the Broncos, as they went into the locker room with an 11 point lead at the half. Defense staled the show in this game for both sides, but Rider’s was superior in the first half as it held the Gaels to only 10 points in the first 14 minutes of the game. Then the trouble started. Foul trouble that is. Lead scoring senior guard Jerry Johnson, junior forward Paul Johnson and senior center Steve Castleberry found themselves in early foul trouble, wreaking havoc on substitutions and defensive aggression. Although Rider still held on to a 51-40 lead with under 13 minutes remaining, it immediately disintegrated. Harnum felt the excess of fouls caused problems for the Broncos on both ends. “I think it hurt us on offense more than on defense,” he said. “Jerry was playing really well tonight, but his minutes [were] interrupted by foul problems.”

All of a sudden, Rider found itself down 52-51 after a 12-0 surge by Iona. The Broncos not only had to deal with foul trouble, but also had to play catch-up. Rider took a 64-59 lead with 2:24 left after freshman forward Jason Thompson put in a lay-up.

The remainder of the game was a battle at the charity stripe, as Thompson hit two free throws with 17 seconds to go to put the Broncos up by one. Great pressure defense put on by the Broncos left Iona guard Steve Burtt with virtually no options as time was running out. Unfortunately for Rider, junior forward Edwin Muniz was called for a questionable foul with 2.7 seconds to go, sending Burtt to the free throw line.

“We had him in a no-win situation and, to be honest with you, I thought the foul was on Burtt when the whistle blew,” said Harnum.

Burtt iced the game by hitting two free throws to tie the game up in the end, but Rider still held the lead with 1.7 seconds remaining. Iona played the ball out of bounds and then inbounded it to senior guard Robert Taylor who took a shot from about 15 feet away, but the ball clanked off the rim.

Senior guard Robert Taylor falls back while sinking a three point shot on Saturday against Saint Peter’s. The Broncos shined in the national spotlight during the 78-73 victory over Saint Peter’s, but fell to Iona 67-66 two days later at the Sovereign Bank Arena.

Ice hockey still has shot at playoff berth
After rough start, Broncos can make postseason with a strong finish

By Joe Haubrich

Despite inconsistency, the Rider ice hockey team finds itself with a realistic shot of nabbing the sixth and final playoff spot in the Mid-Atlantic Collegiate Hockey Association (MACHA) tournament. Currently, the Broncos (12-16-1, 5-10 MACHA) own the sixth seed, only mere points ahead of Lafayette (4-10 MACHA). Three of the season’s final four games determine whether or not the squad gets a nod or an extended vacation.

Three of these games are against MACHA opponents. It’s hard for the team to begin thinking of the playoffs with such a mountainous challenge looming ahead of them. “Right now we’re trying to make the playoffs,” said assistant captain Sean Levin. “We can’t look ahead because we’re playing for the first round. If we make the playoffs, we’re going in with nothing to lose.”

The team battled a lot of injuries earlier in the season and had to lean on freshmen to pick up the slack. “They don’t consider me a rookie anymore,” said freshman forward Mike Carlucci. “They look at me as one of the competitive guys that you can call on when needed.”

Rider ended the first semester disappointed and it seemed as though key players’ injuries had affected the team’s morale. “The team was forced to make changes and shift players around. “We started looking for production from guys we [hadn’t] looked to before,” said Carlucci. “It took a little while for us to develop into the players we are now.”

Once back from vacation, the team emerged refocused. “We’ve improved as a team,” said Carlucci. “Guys came back from injury and we have scored a lot of points.”

Losing was something new that the team needed to cope with this season. For a franchise so used to victory, veterans saw an unfamiliar side of the game this year. “It was hard to adapt to at first because no one likes to lose,” Levin said. “It’s good to see that no one quit, and to see that we’re still fighting for that last playoff spot.”

The team made adjustments to their style of play in order to rebound from such a negative first semester. “We shifted our gameplan from offensive-minded to defensive-minded,” said Levin. “We knew we had to beat teams 2-1. We weren’t going to blow teams out anymore.”

Points are what the Broncos need to gain the playoff spot, and it was points they got last Friday against Seton Hall.