Wrestling sends four to nationals

By David Hurka
Staff Writer

Now comes the hard part. While the Rider wrestling team did finish fifth overall at the Colonial Athletic Association (CAA) finals this past weekend, they are sending four of their very best wrestlers to the NCAA Tournament, held this year in Kansas City.

The four grapplers that are going are senior Derek Jenkins, senior Greg Sawyer, junior Carmelo Marrero and freshman Bobby Sinson.

Both Jenkins and Sinson won their respective weight classes, while Marrero placed second and Sawyer finished third.

For Jenkins, the finals match in the 157 pound weight class was a chance to avenge the only loss in the CAA he had suffered all year when he squared off against freshman Mike Patrovich of Hofstra, who was ranked 11th in the nation. The match was even throughout, but it was Jenkins who won the day, as he scored a sudden victory in the finals to claim his second CAA title and make his fourth straight trip to nationals.

After the match, Jenkins talked about his drive to beat Patrovich after their first encounter.

“The day after Patrovich beat me, I got up at 8 a.m. in the morning and started training to do to the things I needed to do to get better and beat him and make the Nationals,” he said. “He’s a good wrestler, but I’m a senior and he’s a freshman and I wasn’t going to lose to a freshman.”

Sinson’s toughest match was not the finals, but the semi-finals against the second ranked Andy Bricker of Campbell. The two naled throughout and it was Sinson who was victorious, winning the match 2-1 on a tie breaker.

He carried his motivation with him to the finals, easily defeating Aaron Suranofsky of George Mason 8-2, and earning himself a trip to Nationals, as well as some praise from his Head Coach, Gary Taylor.

“The way Bobby wrestled in his final match was very impressive and exciting to watch,” he said.

The other two Broncs that will be going to Nationals, Marrero and Sawyer, may not have won their weight classes, but put up very impressive showings nonetheless. Marrero defeated the number two seed in the Junior Heavyweight division 5-3 in the semi-finals. He could not take the title, losing to the top seed 4-1 in the finals. He gained a trip to Nationals anyway.

Sawyer also advanced to the semi-finals, but was pinned by the top seed there. He took out his aggressions in the third place match, where he defeated his opponent 11-4 to earn the third place for the 197 weight class and the right to go to Nationals as a wild card.

Taylor was very impressed with not only these four men, but the team as a whole. The Broncs improved their standings by three places on the second day of the tournament, and Taylor sees that as the first step to next year.

“In a year where we weren’t at full strength, our performance on the second day is certainly something to build on for next year,” he said.

Taylor also talked about the four wrestlers going to Nationals.

“It can be a little intimidating wrestling in front of 15,000 people, but they’re ready to go. All four are very competitive and can make a mark in the tournament,” he added.

The Nationals will take place in Kansas City on March 20-22.

Head Coach Gary Taylor

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Jared Vichko
Reflecting on a long season

It seemed too good to be true. Could it be that finally a break was going to go our way? For once this season, it seemed that the basketball gods were going to smile upon Rider.

And why shouldn’t they? All season long, we believed that somehow, some way, the Broncs could pull off the big win. But sadly, just like finding out about Santa Claus and the Easter Bunny, the truth hurts. And the truth, no matter how sad and cruel it may be, is that the season is over.

From the start of the season, questions about the team were more common at Rider than grease at Daly’s. How will they play without Mario Porter? Will Jerry Johnson be able to handle the pressure of being in the spotlight? What kind of impact will the four freshmen have on the team? The loss of Porter can’t be put into words. For four years, he was Rider basketball. He left a bigger impression here than Dr. Phil on a waterbed. Luckily for the Broncs, it was clear who Porter was passing the torch to—Johnson. From the beginning of the season, Johnson let Rider know, as well as the rest of the MACC, that this team was his.

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Rider fans knew at the beginning of the season that Johnson was church. He delivers more than UPS. But it was the emergence of sophomore Robert Taylor and freshman Edwin Muniz that provided the most surprises.

With Taylor and Johnson, the Broncs have two car quick blink—and-I’m-gone guards. Muniz earned his way into the starting lineup midway through the season, and has punished opponents with his combination of size and speed.

The team teased us all season, playing well one game then poorly the next. This inconsistency was brutal on the fans, who went...