

# ALL EYES ON RIDER

## Broncs begin title defense today as they host playoffs

By Andrew Straub  
Staff Writer

For the second time in the last three years, the Rider field hockey team has captured the Northeast Conference (NEC) regular season title. With a record of 13-4, the Broncs will now host the NEC Tournament, which runs from Oct. 31 to Nov. 2, as the top seed.

Although it is truly an honor, the team agrees that being the top seeded team has both its advantages and disadvantages.

"Earning home-field advantage is definitely an edge," said sophomore Courtney Bertos. "It gives us a great sense of confidence."

The disadvantage is that every team will be looking to beat the Broncs.

"We went undefeated in the conference, so that means that every team is going to want revenge," said junior Maddy Boulden.

"The important thing for us to remember is to not let that change our point-of-view of the game," she added.

Rider's first opponent will be the fourth seed Siena Saints (3-12). The teams originally squared off in October, resulting in a 2-0 Rider victory that was dominated by the Broncs

defense.

"We did not play our best game against the Saints," said junior Stephanie Corradino.

"We've been training hard all week to be ready for Siena," she added. "They didn't get to see what we can really do; they are in for a rude awakening."

If Rider is victorious, the team will compete against the winner of the second ranked Sacred Heart Pioneers (8-10) vs. the third ranked Quinnipiac Bobcats (7-10) game. In the case Quinnipiac wins, it will mark the third time in a row Rider will face-off against the Bobcats in the championship. In 2001, Quinnipiac defeated Rider in the NEC Title Game. Last year, as the underdog, Rider defeated Quinnipiac with a score of 2-0, marking the first time the Bobcats lost to an NEC opponent all year. This year in the regular season the two teams squared off in the most exciting game of the year, concluding in a 2-1 Rider victory in overtime.

"The game between Quinnipiac would definitely be exciting. The games are always close, and as the number one seed, you always want to play the next best team in the league," said junior Katie Conlon.

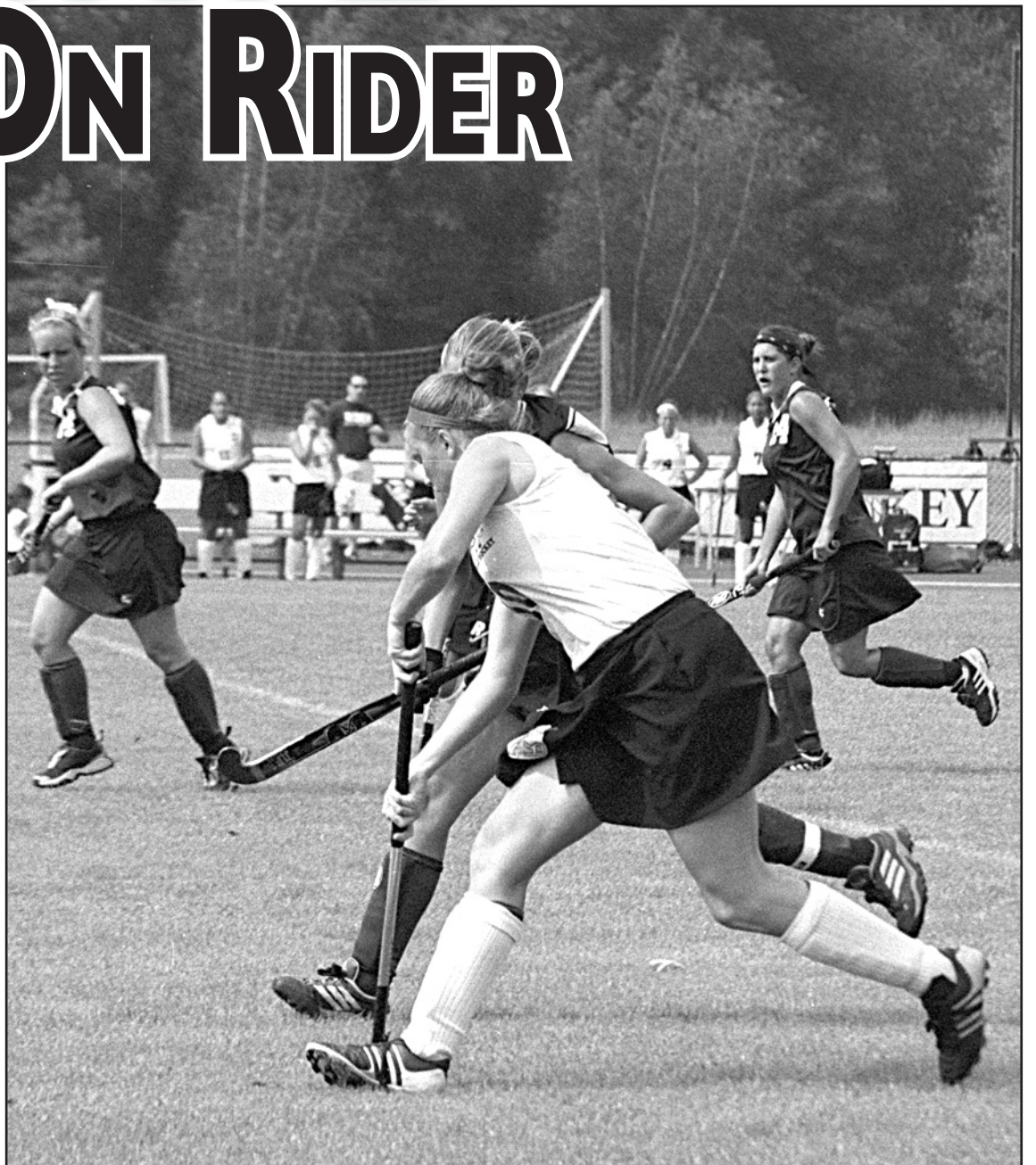


Photo by Jennifer Kuhn

Junior Maddy Boulden looks to advance the ball in a game earlier this season. The team will host the NEC playoffs today, beginning at 11 a.m. Rider enters the tournament as the top seed.

With a whole week to refine its game plan, the Broncs are poised to once again play in the NCAA tournament.

"We've been extremely anxious the whole week of practice," said Bertos. "This is what the season is all about; we are pouring everything we have into these last few games."

### Rider Field Hockey History

**2000 NEC Champion**  
**2001 NEC Runner-Up**  
**2002 NEC Champion**  
**2003 To be determined**



Photo by Jennifer Kuhn

Senior Lauren Niewender is set up by a teammate during a match earlier this season. The team is now 10-14.

## FALLING FAST

### Volleyball drops fifth straight

By Mike Caputo  
Staff Writer

Success may come in threes, but for the volleyball team, losses can come in fives. Expectations and dreams hovered around the minds of the hopeful Rider women's volleyball team after a successful non-conference portion of the 2003 campaign.

The Broncs held a 10-9 overall record going into its MAAC schedule, which already tied for highest win total over the past five seasons under the reign of head coach Emily Ahlquist.

"After we started playing the MAAC it [the season] went downhill," said senior Amy

Householder.

Householder, along with fellow seniors Lauren Niewender and Erica West, have experienced a collegiate career full of losing seasons. Householder said that this will not affect the effort of the last four matches of the season.

"A little of the fun has been lost, but we are looking forward to finishing out on a good note," she said.

Playoff hopes were all but shattered for the Broncs after a defeat at the hands of the Siena Saints last weekend by the count of 3-1. This dropped the team's conference record to 0-5 (10-14 overall).

"As a team, we are trying

to figure out what our mistakes have been and how to improve on them," said Niewender. "We have been playing tough. We just have not been pulling through in the end."

Disappointment has not affected the optimism of rising star Stefanie Lombardo.

"Of course, we have nothing to lose. Who knows what can happen?" she said. "Also, our future is looking bright even though we are losing our center [Niewender], but with a couple of new recruits we can get the program turned around," she said.

Offensive excellence dis-

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