

Basketball ready to tip off

Team opens up against Monmouth on Saturday

By Jared Vichko
Sports Editor

Once upon a time, in an Alumni Gym not too far away, Mario ruled the land. All who passed through his territory were at his mercy. When he left his throne last year, he did not leave his kingdom to one, but rather twelve.

This season begins year one of the Post-Mario Porter era. For the past four years, Porter was Rider basketball. His awards are too numerous to mention, and he graduated as one of Rider's greatest athletes. This year's team doesn't view his departure as a loss, but rather an opportunity to prove critics wrong.

"We have a lot of new faces on the team," said sophomore Jerry Johnson. "We are all learning more and more each day, and each day we continue to improve."

"We have a lot of young players," said junior Laurence Young. "We are going to improve with time."

One way the team can improve is to play consistently throughout the entire season, not just the second half of the schedule. Last year the team stumbled out of the blocks, but picked up their game late in the season, winning 10 of their last 11 to clinch the top seed in the MAAC Tournament to finish with an overall record of 17-11 and 13-5 in the MAAC. The team was poised to continue their run of excellence all the way to the NCAA Tournament, but they were upset in the first round by Canisius, in one of the greatest games in MAAC history.

Last season Johnson was named

Rookie of the Year and third team All-MAAC. He led the Broncs in three pointers, assists, and was second in minutes, field goals, free throws, and points scored. As this season begins, he has been named to the first team All-MAAC squad.

"Jerry obviously had a great freshman year and I feel he's going to have an even better sophomore season," said Head Coach Don Harnum.

Johnson and senior center Robert Reed are the only two starters returning. Reed was second on the team last season in rebounds and blocked shots. Harnum was pleased with Reed's efforts down the stretch last year.

"Robert was one of the reasons for our turnaround last season," said Harnum. "He's a good rebounder, but when he became a consistent scorer we turned things around."

Another impact player returning is Young. Last season Young was a sparkplug off the bench, gaining recognition as an elite sixth man in the MAAC. He finished second on the team in three pointers despite playing in only 21 minutes per game.

Other returnees include senior centers Tank Wahlmann and Vitor Goncalves, along with sophomores Robert Taylor and Armel Minyem.

"Robert and Armel are two guys with the biggest upside in our program," said Harnum. "They both have a chance to improve greatly this year with additional playing time and have outstanding sophomore seasons."

The freshman class is made up

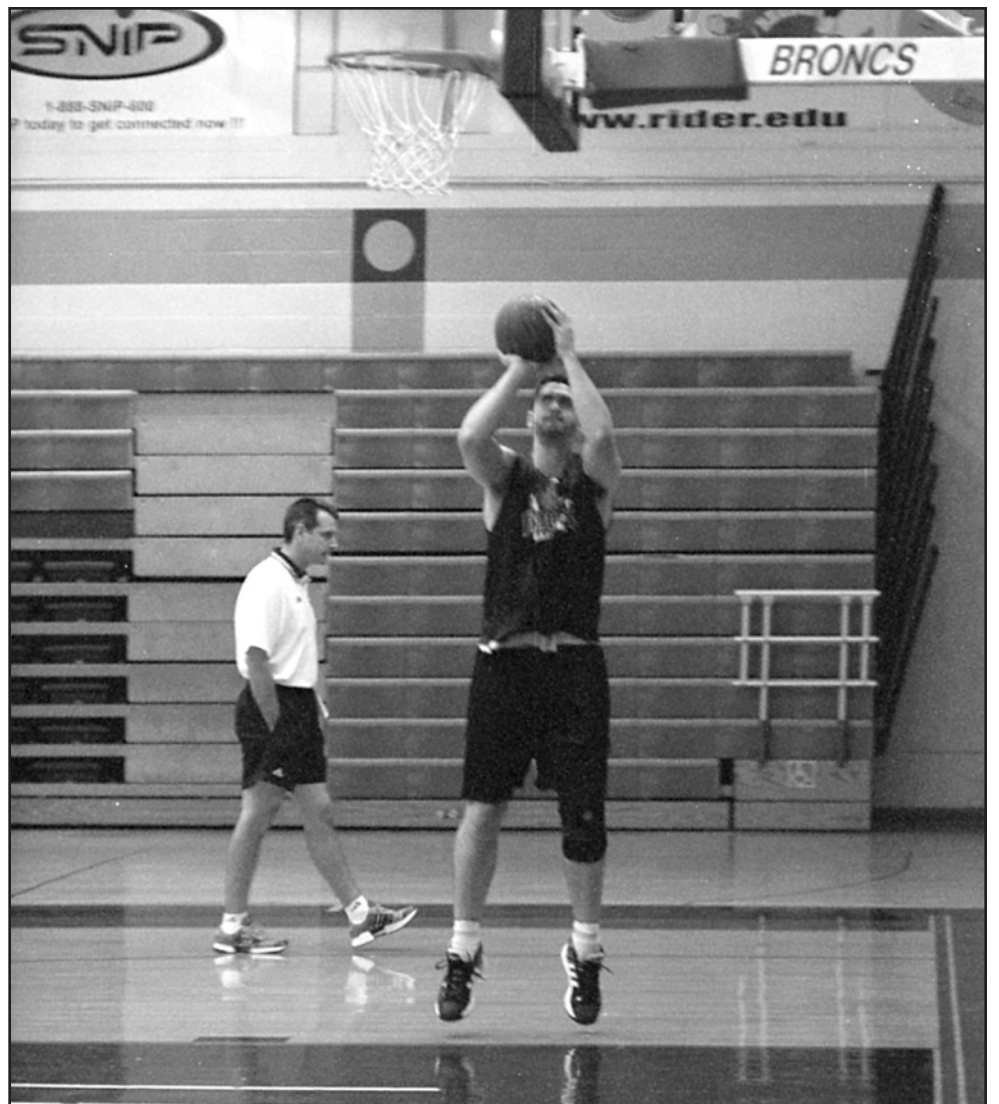


Photo by Jennifer Kuhn

Vitor Goncalves, a senior member of the basketball team, takes a shot at a recent practice. Their home opener is on Saturday at 3 p.m. against Monmouth.

of Edwin Muniz, Willie Dingle, Paul Johnson, Aaron White, and Nolan Leonard.

"We are quick on the ball and we play good pressure defense," said Young. "On offense, we can run and we have good shooters. It's all a matter

of playing together and growing more comfortable with each other."

Unity will be the key to their success this year. Even though last season success seemed to be out of a fairy tale, there's no reason the magic can't happen again.

Wrestling takes hold of competition

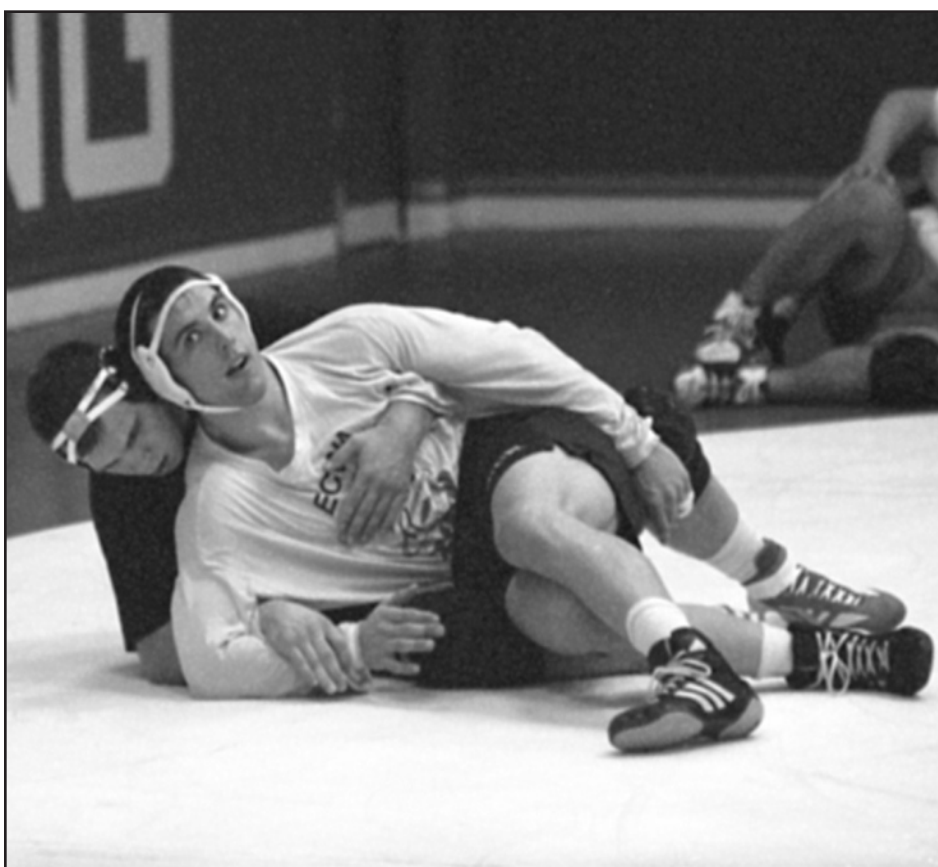


Photo By Jennifer Kuhn

Seniors Nick Catone (left) and Greg Sawyer (right) grapple on the mats at a recent practice. The team will contend for the top spot in the MAAC.

By David Hurka
Staff Writer

The Rider wrestling team is set to make their mark once again on the national wrestling scene, with several ranked grapplers returning and one of the top recruiting classes in the country coming in.

Following up an average 2001 season, Rider has been predicted to place third in the Colonial Athletic Association (CAA). The Broncs have seven wrestlers ranked in the top four of their weight classes in the CAA, and one of them is nationally ranked.

The leader of the team is Derek Jenkins, a senior from Schnecksville, Penn. Jenkins advanced to the fourth round of last year's NCAA championships, where he was seeded 11th in the 157 pound weight class. This year, Jenkins has been ranked ninth in the country in his weight class to start off the season.

Jenkins is not the only weapon on this highly potent team this year. Also returning are seven other letter winners who are looking to make a higher impact this season. Senior Vinny D'Agustino is ranked third in the CAA Heavyweight

division.

Other CAA ranked wrestlers include sophomores Jason Smith at the 133 weight class and Mike Robinson at 184. Seniors Nick Harrington at 165, Greg Sawyer at 197 and Jenkins will be looked at for leadership and experience this year, as all three qualified for the NCAA Tournament last season.

Head Coach Gary Taylor is keeping an eye out for the seniors to be team leaders.

"Those three seniors provide leadership and good examples through their experience," he said.

The entire team will be looked upon to provide leadership to what many believe to be one of Rider's best recruiting classes ever.

Rider recruited some of the top high school seniors in the nation this year, and that accomplishment gave them the 18th overall recruiting ranking by *Wrestling USA Magazine*. Heading up the class are four high school All-Americans, including two from N.J. Bobby Stinson, a Camden native, completed his goal last year, winning the

See "Wrestling" on Page 10