Broncs ready to top MAAC

By Joe Haubrich

The Rider swimming and diving team has worked strenuously since October and now enters the championship stretch. This weekend, the team focused on its Metro Atlantic Athletic Conference (MAAC) rivals in the MAAC Championships, taking place at Hofstra. The men are looking for their second consecutive championship and the women seek their third championship in six years. Rider has developed a swimming and diving program that surpasses most of the teams in the MAAC. Being the team to beat has members of the squad looking optimistic heading into the tournament that began yesterday and lasts until Saturday.

“I believe that both of our teams can come away with championships,” said diver Chris Coles. Like all other intercollegiate teams, the Broncs have some valuable seniors after last season. The freshmen who joined the team this season have already made an impact. A lot of the team’s success has to be attributed to its unity.

“We have a great team all around,” said Coles. “We push each other to do well, we get on each other and we’ve developed strong bonds. Our coaches are great too.”

The Broncs started the season slowly, but have really picked things up lately. They have won three of their last four meets. The team also has victories at 149-82 at Loyola, 143-94 at Drexel, and 160-82 at Iona.

“We’ve been real strong,” said Coles. “We have the momentum needed to come out victorious.”

The team will face tough competition from Marist College, the other powerhouse in the MAAC. Marist’s men’s team has taken home the last nine of 10 MAAC championships. On Saturday, Nov. 6, Rider lost a meet against Marist by a score of 148-94.

“Marist always gives us the most problems,” said Coles. “[But] it’s always fun to beat our biggest rivals.”

On collegeswimming.com, Rider’s men’s team is ranked 19th out of all Division 1 Mid-Major schools, the highest ranking of all MAAC teams. Marist is ranked 25th. Coles doesn’t let the ranking affect his opinion on the MAAC Championships, though.

“It’s great to hear we’re ranked so high, but I don’t really look at that,” he said. “It all comes down to who performs best on a given day.”

The team took it easy before this weekend’s tournament, and didn’t change much in practices.

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Toughest stretch of the season
Broncs host two conference meets this weekend

By Eamon Ducey

Rider traveled to Hempstead, N.Y., on Tuesday night for an important Colonial Athletic Association (CAA) meet against the No. 11 Hofstra Pride. These two rivals have not met in the regular season since 2003 because of last year’s unexpected cancellation.

Hofstra won nine matches, including three pins. The Broncs could only earn two victories at 157 and heavyweight as they fell 34-9.

Head Coach Gary Taylor has a wealth of respect for Hofstra.

“They are one of the best teams in the country, they have ranked wrestlers and some returning All-Americans,” he said. “This team beat Lehigh, who was ranked second in the nation (at the time).”

In the 125-pound weight class, Hofstra’s Dave Tomassetti beat freshman Ryan Smith by a decision of 14-8. Charles Griffin of the Pride then won a major decision against Rider freshman Zack Cunniff at the 133-pound weight class.

The Broncs were then faced with the toughest stretch of the night, as they were to square off against four nationally ranked wrestlers in the next six matches. In what was probably the highlight match of the night, No. 7 Ricky LaForge earned a decision against No. 16 Don Fisch (sophomore) of Rider. Later on, No. 9 Jon Masa earned Hofstra six points by earning a fall by pin at the 149 pound division.

At this point, Rider was shut-out by the score of 16-0.

In one of the few highlights of the night for the Broncs, No. 11 Dave Miller (junior) at the 157-pound class was able to win a decision against James Strouse. This put Rider on the scoreboard for the first time, bringing the score 16-3.

Miller, who has had a tough season because of injury, still has had an impressive 13-1 record.

“He is at about 90 percent health right now, but there is a good chance he will be 100 percent by the conference championships.”

Hofstra quickly grabbed the momentum back when No. 14 Mike Pavrick won a decision over sophomore Ryan Cunningham at 165 pounds. At 174 pounds, senior Sean Cunningham at 165 pounds.

The Broncs entered the championship stretch. They have won three of their last four meets. The team also has victories at 149-82 at Loyola, 143-94 at Drexel, and 160-82 at Iona.

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