Friday, February 27, 2004

**Madness**

FROM PAGE 12

“We had some breakdowns defensively [against Fairfield],” said Castleberry. “I couldn’t stop [Rob] Thomson.”

The senior center, Thomson, led the way for the Stags as he scored 23 points in a victory over the Broncs 76-59. It was the second time in the last two weeks that the Stags upstaged Rider.

On Tuesday, Rider continued its road stretch as it headed up to New Rochelle, NY, to take on the Iona Gaels. The Broncs previously dominated the Gaels 88-67 at Alumni Gym on Dec. 5. About two and a half months later in the second match-up, however it would be Iona emerging victorious by the score of 78-56. Once again, Rider played well in the first half as the team went into the locker room down by only three points. Iona ended up going on an 11-0 run to take a controlling 35-25 lead and never looked back.

“We allowed too many easy baskets,” said Harnum. “We didn’t play with crispness on defense.”

After two rough outings on the road, the Broncs had an opportunity to put an end to criticism as the defending MAAC champion Manhattan Jaspers at the Sovereign Bank Arena (SBA). The Jaspers have gained a level of national respect and was down only 33-32 at half-time, but faltered in the second half.

To add to the already daunting task, the Broncs had to face the Jaspers in front of the historic SBA. Last night’s victory is the first this season for Rider in the SBA. Its last win there came last season against Princeton. The victory should give the Broncs some momentum as it travels to Saint Peter’s this weekend.

**Champs’**

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(ECAC) Open Swimming and Diving Championships. This meet encompasses regional teams from conferences such as Big East, Ivy League, MAAC and the Northeast Conference. Some of the competition includes Boston College, Georgetown, Seton Hall, St. John’s, Pennsylvania, Columbia, New Hampshire, Marist and Binghamton.

“This is the largest team that we will be taking to the ECAC,” said Morrissy. “Two years ago there were four of us and this year there are about 11 going, I think we are going to step up and be in the top ten.”

**Waters’**

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elon of the NEC, it has won two conference championships and placed second twice. The nationally ranked wrestling team, yes, that’s right, nationally ranked, finished the dual meet season in the CAA a perfect 9-0 to boost its record to 15-3. It will host the CAA championships next week but I would be highly surprised if the gym was full. The field hockey team hosted its championships this past year as well, and there was a good turnout, but anyone can come to a championship game. Real fans are there for the Wednesday afternoon games, not just the title game.

But when it comes to men’s basketball, that’s a different story. Despite putting a slightly above average product on the court this season, home games are always packed. I love Rider as much as the next person, but the truth is that the basketball squad, which is probably the most popular team on campus, is, at best an above average team in the MAAC. But if Harnum could produce a winning team like that, they would rename the gym after him.

I’m not asking to buy tickets to swimming in the Olympics or attend a U.S. field hockey game. But it should be our duty, as students, to support our athletes. Our school is different than that of Michigan or UCLA, where athletes are often regarded as unouchable and only make appearances when they have a game. At Rider, they are athletes, but they are also our friends first. We eat with them, attend classes and see them at parties.

Don’t punish them by not acknowledging and supporting their efforts. Regardless of whether we support them or not, the swim team will still compete and still vie to be the best. But if they do make a splash, it’s wrong that no one will be there to get wet.

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