for Buffalo. Many reporters are slow to shy away from the significance of the double-bye. ‘People are telling me that because we didn’t get the two-round bye that our finish isn’t important,’ said Harnum. ‘Not in my mind and not in my [players’] minds.’

Rider silenced some of these critics last Saturday when it hosted top seeded Niagara at Alumni Gym and beat them in overtime by a final score of 113-106. It was the highest combined score in Rider basketball history and it was the most points that Niagara scored in a losing effort.

In a game that included 20 ties and 28 lead changes, Johnson came on strong at the end as always, while the team also got valuable contributions from Taylor, junior forward Edwin Muniz and Thompson. After starting out slow and only scoring 11 points by halftime, Johnson took over the game by compiling 28 points, including five three-pointers and seven assists. With a little under two minutes left in overtime, Johnson hit a three-point field goal to break the 2,000 career point plateau. He became the second Bronc and only the tenth player from a Division I team from New Jersey to reach that milestone.

Johnson approaches the accomplishment modestly. ‘I don’t want to sound like it’s nothing because it’s an accomplishment, but winning the championship is more important than 2,000 points,’ said Johnson.

The Broncs and Niagara went into overtime tied at 93. Johnson and Taylor, two veterans who make up one of the best backcourts in the MAAC, then took over. Taylor’s steal and rare slam-dunk put the finishing touches on the game and the regular season. ‘It can’t get any better than this,’ said Taylor. ‘I got my first dunk of my college career. Coach told me to do something that would inspire my teammates and the crowd.’

Tiring a career high 23 points with eight assists, five rebounds and a vital steal certainly can be deemed inspirational.

Rider’s game against Niagara could be a preview of the tournament finals, but it will never be forgotten. This bout was the last regular season game for one of the most talented senior classes in Rider history. Johnson, Taylor, Arnel Minym, Steve Castleberry and Andre Pereira will be missed.

‘I wanted this to be a game for the seniors,’ said Harnum. ‘I knew they would step up. I really wanted them to have this opportunity to win a championship.’

Rider is set to play Saturday at 7 p.m. It will face the winner of the Canisius-Mast round-robin game played tonight. The Broncs go into Buffalo ready to legitimize their regular season finish.

‘We’re champions just as much as Niagara is,’ said Johnson.

Taylor feels that this season is an almost magical run. ‘We’re confident about ourselves right now,’ said Taylor. ‘Coming into the season you could kind of feel that [this was our year]. I have never felt as good about a team as I do this year.’

The Broncs are hoping to get as much practice, rest and studying as possible in before their game on Saturday.

‘Who we play is not really in our control right now,’ said Harnum. ‘We’ll try to control as much as we can and play our best on Saturday.’

Although age may not be there, the experience that some of the juniors and sophomores possess make up for it. Freshman outfielder Tiffany Day-Neutill says that this leadership is more than helpful.

“We have a lot of leaders,” she said. “We learn something new everyday.”

Day-Neutill impressed in her collegiate debut by getting two hits in her team’s 4-2 loss to Campbell on Friday. The Broncs played well, as they held a 2-2 lead going into the bottom of the seventh against Campbell, already playing its 25th game of the season, got a walk-off two-run homer to win the game. Junior pitcher Heather Beintema struck out eight in the losing effort.

After a frustrating 9-1 loss to Miami of Ohio on Friday, Rider suffered another loss in the seventh inning, this time to host, University of North Carolina-Charlotte, on Saturday. It was a scoreless tie going into the seventh inning, when the 49ers pushed across a run without a hit. Freshman Jessica Holland went the distance in a dazzling debut where she gave up only five hits the entire game.

“We lost two of our games in the seventh inning,” said Day-Neutill. “We didn’t capitalize on some situations.”

The Broncs bounced back on Sunday and traveled home with their heads up high as

---

**Varsity baseball covers all of the bases**

By Eamon Ducey

After a mediocre season in which Rider missed the playoffs, the Broncs are picked to finish seventh in the Metro Atlantic Athletic Conference (MAAC) behind the top three of Le Moyne, Niagara and Marist. Le Moyne, according to a poll made by head coaches in the MAAC, was picked to finish first after winning the last two MAAC championships. Head coach Barry Davis hopes to prove all of them wrong.

“I don’t know what to expect from the teams in our league,” Davis said. “I know we are picked to finish seventh, but I think we have a chance to surprise some people.”

Returning position players like senior infielder Jon Rehm and junior first baseman Gene Crimoli will have to improve on their strong 2004 seasons. Rehm was second on the team in hits and steals, while batting an average of .324. Crimoli led the team in RBIs and was second on the team in homerun and fielding percentages.

The pitching staff will need senior Joe Monotone to improve his win total of four, which was second-best on the team, he was also second in innings pitched with a 2.3 strikeout-to-walk ratio.

“Morneo pitched well the other day,” Davis said. “If he continues to work [hard] he should be very good this year.”

Davis is in his inaugural season as head coach of the baseball team. He is replacing 34-year head coach Sonny Morello, who retired at the end of the 2004 season with 766 wins and 10 Coach of the Year awards.

“I am glad to be a part of a"See ‘Bases’ page 10"