COLD, COLD ENDING
Cianfrani named MVP, but hockey falls

By Andrew Straub
Staff Writer

The Rider ice hockey team concluded the 2003-2004 season on Saturday afternoon with a second-round playoff loss to Princeton.

After finishing the regular season with a record of 19-12 and an impressive 8-4 win over William Patterson in the first round of the playoffs, it looked like the Broncs were headed to its fifth straight appearance in the M.A.C.H.A championship. But the Princeton Tigers had other plans for Rider, as it outplayed the Broncs to a score of 14-5.

Friday night William Patterson hoped it could pull off some first round magic and upset the Broncs, who had beaten them in two previous meetings.

But Rider popped that bubble of hope, muscling its way to a decisive 8-4 win. William Patterson’s defense kept the game close early on in the first period, but then fell victim to its nemesis all season long: the Princeton’s defense.

Unfortunately, the win did not extend into Saturday’s season-ending loss to Princeton. The Broncs held tough for the first few minutes but then fell victim to its nemesis all season long: the Princeton’s defense. Plagued by costly penalties, the game was never in Rider’s grasp as it exploded to an early lead.

The Broncs went from bad to putrid, never in Rider’s grasp. The game went all Princeton’s way as it exploded to an early lead. The Broncs held tough for the first few minutes but then fell victim to its nemesis all season long: the Princeton’s defense. Plagued by costly penalties, the game was never in Rider’s grasp as it exploded to an early lead.

“Mike is pound for pound the best player I’ve ever played with.” - Junior Ted Hynes

monumental for Rider’s Ice Hockey program because it marked the most wins (20) in a season by any hockey team in Rider’s history.

“We really wanted the win to carry over into the second round. It was our motivation to play well,” said freshman defenseman Chris Peer.

Unfortunately, the win did not extend into Saturday’s season-ending loss to Princeton. The defeat left a bitter taste in Rider’s mouth, as rumor was that the Tigers played some of their D-1 red shirts.

“We played well,” said junior defenseman Ted Hynes. “Princeton had at least four D-I ringers on their team that were allowed to drop down for their last remaining games. I don’t want to sound like a sore loser, but they cheated.”

Whatever the case was, the game went all Princeton’s way as it exploded to an early lead. The Broncs held tough for the first few minutes but then fell victim to its nemesis all season long: the Princeton’s defense. Plagued by costly penalties, the game was never in Rider’s grasp as it exploded to an early lead.

However, after the loss, a ray of sunshine peaked through the dark clouds that floated over the Broncs’ heads. Senior center Mike Cianfrani was awarded the M.A.C.H.A MVP award for the entire season.

The award is a nice career send-off as Cianfrani had already captured Rider’s team MVP award all four years he played here.

“Mike is pound for pound the best player I’ve ever played with. That kid has moves on top of moves,” added Hynes.

Although the team could not extend its streak of appearance in the M.A.C.H.A finals, it still can be proud of its successful season. Next season, the team will have a different look with a few key senior starters graduating this year, including MVP Cianfrani.

But with a promising recruiting program, and the emergence of this year’s large freshman squad, the Broncs will certainly be league favorites next season.

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Jared Vichko
Shaky ground

When they take the court this afternoon, the terra firma they walk on will be somewhat less than solid. The legs they walk on will be a bit limp. When the men’s basketball team begins play at the fifth seed in the MAAC Tournament, it will be arriving void of all forms of momentum or consistency.

This season, the team has been in a constant struggle for identity, never sure which way to play, when to run, slow down, get the ball inside or swing it around the perimeter.

The make of the team appeared to be different at first glance. Throughout the first few games, the offensive burden wasn’t squarely sitting upon the shoulders of Jerry Johnson. Center Steve Castleberry was scoring down low, drawing in the defense and allowing for more openings on the perimeter.

But as the games began to pile up, too, so did Castleberry’s minutes, and he began to become worn down midway through the season. His defense, which was never his strength, went from bad to patrid. Rob Thomson of Fairfield torched him in both losses and all season long he has been a step behind in his defensive rotations.

Johnson, who began the season more generous than a dinner host, began to revert to his old ways. His lack of trust in his teammates became more prevalent, and Johnson often retreated to his old ways. If he’s hot, this strategy can work. But if he’s having an off night, like he did in the loss to Iona, when he was held to a season low seven points on 3-17 shooting, the team struggles.

Harnum said that in order for the team to win, the big three have to play well at every game. This means Johnson, Castleberry and Edwin Muntz. If all