Pittaro, Hussong honored

By Jared Vichko
Sports Editor

Rider has had the privilege of having great coaches throughout the years. This year is no exception. Sonny Pittaro, the men’s baseball coach, and Lori Hussong, the field hockey coach, have both recently been honored. The Trenton Select Committee is honoring Pittaro, and Hussong is being inducted into the Cinnaminson High School Hall of Fame.

Hussong began her career at Cinnaminson, where she earned four varsity letters in field hockey, three in softball, and two in basketball. From high school she went on to play at Trenton State, where she became an All-American. She led them to the NCAA Division III championship in 1981 and 1983, while coming in second in 1982. Hussong then worked her way up to the NCAA All- decade field hockey team for the 1980s. After graduating in 1984, she went on to have success coaching at West Windsor- Plainsboro, winning nine league titles and three Central Jersey Group 4 titles, and amassing a 192-57-12 record.

When she was hired at Rider, the program had struggled the previous years, but she was determined to make a change.

“The team had a lot of potential when I arrived,” said Hussong. “I just tried to instill a family atmosphere that would make everyone on the team feel comfortable.”

“She does everything to make us feel at home,” said junior Karen Perryjohn. “She extends herself to be there for you. She makes the team your family away from home.”

Other teammates feel the same way.

“She is very nice and open and easy to talk to,” said sophomore Katie Conlon. “She finds a balance between being our friend and being our coach.”

That very balance is one of the things that makes her a great coach.

“She is our number one fan, but also our number one critic,” said Courtney Bertos. “She wants nothing but perfection. The more she demands from us, the more we demand from ourselves.”

This family atmosphere and concept of striving for excellence produces results, as the team is poised for another post-season run. They are currently in second place and will have to win the rest of their games to retain that seed.

Pittaro began playing baseball at Trenton High School, where he graduated in 1956. After graduating, he attended Brown University, where he played shortstop and second base. When he left Brown, he attended a try-out, which resulted in a contract with the Washington Senators, and spent three years in their farm system. Though he stopped playing in 1962, he coached American Legion and also worked with a consulting educational firm, which helped students with reading problems and things of that nature.

“I always had a desire to coach one day,” said Pittaro. “I get the greatest satisfaction knowing that after college, young men are turning into adults and contributing in our society.”

That attitude has had a great impact on his players.

“He always tells us to give back to the community,” said Casey Long. “He tells us we’re a part of something bigger; we’re not just athletes.”

This idea of giving back is put into use each year, as the team volunteers at a local soup kitchen.

Players mention that they feel privileged to play for both coaches. The more privileged ones are not just the players, but our entire university.

By Jared Vichko

Home field disadvantage

Like most Rider students, I attended Midnight MAACness last Friday. It was very exciting to see most of the student body there, all of us sharing our enthusiasm for Rider. It was school spirit to the fullest, and everyone had a great time cheering on our teams.

The sad reality is that very same enthusiasm and amount of people are missing from most sporting events. The lack of fan support at our school is pathetic. This past weekend there were numerous home games for several teams, but attendance was scarce. I guess if someone isn’t getting dunked on or tackled, people don’t care about that sport.

It really is a shame that some students don’t realize how our teams are doing, or even care for that matter. If ignorance is people’s excuse, let me get them caught up to speed on some sports.

Our field hockey team almost made history last Sunday in a 9-3 win over St. Francis-PA. The nine goals were the most since Rider’s very first Division I game, which took place in 1982. Freshman Courtney Bertos is having a terrific year, as she has been named the Northeast Conference Rookie of the Week three times so far. Sophomore Christina Ang has been recognized as well, as she has been named the Player of the Week twice this season. The team is currently in second place and hope to remain there when the playoffs begin.

If field hockey isn’t your thing, you can watch men’s soccer. The team has been playing competitively all season and is just a game under .500. Earlier this season they recorded a monumental win over Princeton, only their third in the last 18 meetings. Last week they won a game 2-1 on a goal that came as the final buzzer sounded.

Despite the women’s soccer team struggling, Sarah Artale is having a fine season. She has broken the school scoring record and has 26 goals in her career, 12 this year. Only a junior, she has been named the Player of the Week twice this year. The team is currently second in conference and hope to maintain that position.

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