Women’s hoops to sneak attack MAAC

Optimism is brewing as Harrison takes helm after last year’s 5-23 record

By Joe Haubrich

The Harrison Comparison

| 1991 Coppin State | 6 wins |
| 1992 Coppin State (with Harrison) | 22 wins |

2004 Rider - 5 wins
2005 Rider (with Harrison) - 11 wins

Recent MAAC Tournament exits:

2004 - Quarterfinals (fifth seed)
2003 - First Round (seventh seed)
2002 - First round (second seed)

All teams ranked eighth and above appear to have a shot at the conference championship in this year’s open MAAC field. Games that will be circled on Rider’s calendar are the match-ups against No. 2 ranked Fairfield and No. 6 Saint Peter’s.

The No. 2 Stags, who swept the season series, including when they manhandled the Broncs 65-40 at Sovereign Bank Arena last February. The team returns big center Rob Thomson.

The No. 6 Peacocks, who swept the season series from the Broncs, including the conference match-up, return one of the top scorers in the nation, Keydren Clark.

Attacked Preeason MAAC Player of the Year Honors at Media Day.

There are several teams in our league that can possibly win the [championship],” said Johnson.

Other notable players that had significant playing time last year were senior guard Robert Taylor, senior forward Andre Pereira, junior forward Paul Johnson and sophomore guard Terrance Mouton.

Castelleberi insists that the team has built itself into a championship contender that will produce come playoff time.

“We all know our role this year and we improved tremendously the offseason,” said Harrison.

“Very positive and they have a lot of fan support this year,” said Moore.

“We need a lot of fan support this year.”

After last year’s 5-23 record, confidence is running high because of the team’s success.

This year, Leanne Moore. “She’s taken a new playbook, work ethic and discipline that new head coach Tori Harrison brings to Alumni Gym.

Coach Harrison possesses a long history of success in basketball as both a player and a coach. As a player at Louisiana Tech University, Harrison led her team twice to the NCAA Women’s Basketball Final Four. Harrison first took on the role of assistant coach at Wake Forest (1987-88). She then went to Alabama (1988-89) before returning to Wake Forest (1990-91). She next assisted at Clemson (1991-92).

Harrison’s only experience with head coaching was at Coppin State (1992-1997) Harrison was named the Mid-Eastern Athletic Conference (MEAC) Coach of the Year in 1993 by winning 22 games with a team that won only six games the year before. After Coppin State, she had assistant coaching stints at the University of Minnesota (1997-1999) and at George Washington University (1999-2004). Harrison aid ed in the NCAA Tournament appearances of both George Washington and Clemson.

Coach Harrison definitely knows what she’s talking about,” said senior forward

Leanne Moore. “She’s taken a team to the Final Four and you can tell by the way she conducts practices that she knows the game of basketball.”

“Our new coaching staff is very positive and they have a whole new game plan,” senior guard/forward Katie Hall said.

Harrison’s experience and new game plan will be complemented by the play of Rider’s “big three,” senior players. This “big three” includes Moore, Hall and guard Becky How er.

Hall and Hower are 1,000-point scorers, and Moore was Rider’s 2004 Female Athlete of the Year. A lot will be asked of these veterans this year, even though they have assumed a similar role on this team in years past.

Hower believes that the team will look to improve upon last year’s five-win season.

“We’re going to be a lot better this year,” said Hower. “We’re going to surprise a lot of teams.”

Hall agrees with her running partner.

“I think we’re going to do a lot better than previous years,” she said. “You’re not going to turn your whole program around in one year, but I think it’s going to be fun to play and fun to watch us [this season].”

The other seniors on the team include 2003 Metro Atlantic Athletic Conference (MAAC) Player of the Year Tami Coyle, who returns to the court after bringing her soccer team to the MAAC finals, and guard Kim Petro, who missed all of last season with a back injury.

“All the seniors have to provide leadership and keep people positive,” said Hower.

Also returning for the Broncs are junior Tami Trimming and sophomores Kara Borel, Kate McInerney, Denise Moore and Monica Wellborn.

Hall spoke highly of the sophomore returners.

“The sophomores will have a lot more playing time this year, and I think they will help us out tremendously because they [already] have experience at this level,” she said.

Bronc newcomers this season include junior transfer Christine Catalanotto and freshmen Janelle Henderson, Heath er Landins and Jen Towers to complete the Rider women’s squad.

“The freshmen look solid,” said Moore. “They’re really good.”

The team looked good in practices and scrimmage games, but adapting to a new style of play may take some time. The players believe fan support will help with the transition.

“Fans are always a big part of games,” said Hower. “They get the team hyped. We need a lot of fan support this year.”

The difficult season starts with seven straight road games, the first of the season being at Rutgers on Saturday, November 20.

“Our first game against Rutgers, who is ranked 17th in the nation, is a tough opener, but I think we can deal with it pretty well,” said Hower.

Moore is not worried about the daunting schedule ahead.

“I don’t care who we play. I’m ready to beat everybody,” said Moore. “I’m not scared of anybody.”

The Broncs’ home game is not until December 18, but the women are up to the challenge of a tough rebuilding season.

“We need to stay positive,” said Hall. “The season’s are up and down. We’ll have to overcome when things are down.”

The team heads into the season with a new coach, a veteran core of players and a fresh start. The way things look, there may not be many rough things to overcome at all.

From worst to almost first

Men’s soccer has proven over the last two seasons that one should never count a team out until it is mathematically eliminated, especially in the Metro Atlantic Athletic Conference (MAAC). On paper, it shows that the men’s soccer team has had two outstanding seasons including a semifinal appearance in 2003 and a championship appearance this year. It would be hard for someone on the outside to believe that the Broncs had won only seven games combined in these two seasons.

This does not show a weakness, or a strength for that matter. It really proves that the Broncs’ soccer team had talent all along and that it was demonstrated at the right moments, which deserves success just as much as anything else. The Broncs went 0-9 in non-conference play this season, meaning that all of their five regular season wins came from MAAC opponents, therefore providing them a good enough record to secure a spot in the conference’s postseason tournament.

The reason that the 2003 team (2-15-3 overall) was in the postseason, is because the MAAC Tournament invites all 10 teams every few years.

Depending on the playoff structure of the particular sport, the regular season appears to have differing degrees of relevance. When a sport has a four-team playoff like most instances in the MAAC, the regular season has slightly more meaning. This is especially true since national polls are rarely a factor in the MAAC.

Another reason is that the percentages are much less to be one of the top four teams out of 10 in a conference, as opposed to the 100 percent chance of landing a playoff spot in sports such as MAAC basketball. This playoff disparity is evident in professional sports, such as