Hoop Dreaming
Quest for title begins tonight
By Mike Caputo

Five is a common number whenever the Rider men’s basketball team is mentioned. Whether it is because the Broncs have been picked to finish fifth in two consecutive preseason polls, or because the team finished fifth in the regular season last year, it “does not have any effect” on the team according to head coach Don Harnum.

At the Metro Atlantic Athletic Conference (MAAC) Basketball Media Day held on Wednesday, Nov. 3, Rider was picked to finish fifth once again. This is not a surprise considering the tough competition that the MAAC provides, along with its disappointing quarterfinal exit against Saint Peter’s in last year’s tournament.

“We don’t put a lot of stock into this,” said Harnum. “The real one is in March. That’s the one that really matters.”

With the return of many starters, a run at the conference championship is a strong possibility. Seniors Jerry Johnson (point guard) and seven foot center Steve Castleberry, along with junior forward Edwin Muniz are just a few names that provide the talent and experience to make such a possibility. Muniz are just a few names that provide the talent and experience to make such a possibility. Muniz.

Harnum says that he is “prepared for the challenge, this team and I believe we have what it takes to make this happen.”

“We are a team that knows what it means to win a championship,” said Muniz. “We have a lot of guys who know what it takes to win with experience and that [the MAAC] is a tough conference,” said Muniz.

Johnson agrees that experience is an important ingredient to victory, but young talent is just as essential.

“We have a lot of guys back, and we got good new additions in Kamron [Warner] and Jason [Thompson],” said Johnson. “Our expectations are high.”

In the Broncs’ tune-up 93-47 exhibition victory over Division III squad Susquehanna, freshmen Warner and Thompson impressed in their Rider debut by combining for 33 points and seven rebounds.

“We think they can come in and do a lot to help,” said Muniz.

Harnum says that he is happy with the progress of the two freshmen so far, and plans on utilizing their talents.

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Surprising soccer scores and slips in mud
Men’s soccer upsets undefeated Loyola in rain, but falls in final.
By Joe Haubrich

The men’s soccer team proved a lot this year by reaching the Metro Atlantic Athletic Conference (MAAC) Championship, a feat that looked impossible after starting the season on the wrong foot. The team has nothing to be disappointed about because they played sensationally down the stretch.

A 2-0 loss in the finals to the No. 3 seeded Marist cannot overshadow what it took the men’s soccer team to get as far as they did in the first place.

“I’m proud we made it this far, and I’m proud of my teammates [who] never gave up,” said senior Sandro DeCristofaro.

The Broncs ended the regular season with a 5-1-3 record, but more importantly with a 5-4 conference record that sealed fourth place in the MAAC Tournament.

Whoever thought it was a fluke that the team made it to the playoffs and that it would make a quick exit from the tournament after being matched up with undefeated top seed Loyola was certainly mistaken.

In the rainy 3-1 semifinal win over Loyola, DeCristofaro scored a hat trick by banging in all three goals. One of these goals came as Loyola goalkeeper Justin Chelland slipped in a large puddle as DeCristofaro tapped it into the net off of an assist by junior Brian Laurinaitis.

“I was just glad to contribute,” he said. “I owe a lot of the credit to our great defense and [goalkeeper] Dan Riverso.”

Senior Steve Castleberry is about to dunk in Rider’s 93-48 crushing of Division III Susquehanna in a tune-up exhibition game last Saturday. The Broncs travel to play Bucknell tonight at 7 p.m.

Riverso answered Loyola’s attack with six saves in the victory.

After the big upset, Rider was set to face the Marist Red Foxes (11-7) who had beaten No. 2 seeded St. Peter’s College in the semifinals.

Rider allowed a goal a little bit more than three minutes into the game and were forced to place catch-up for the rest of the contest.

“We started slow, allowed an early goal, picked it up and made a good game out of it,” said DeCristofaro.

Despite the Broncs’ best efforts, they just ran out of the magic that had worked to their advantage late in the season.

“We were on our heels, playing from behind,” said senior forward Lee Tomasso.

“We couldn’t find the net.”

Sophomore Dylan Matlack attempting a shot on goal as sophomore Adam Bailey rushes the net during Sunday’s final.

After the game, head coach Russ Fager collected his team and told them that there was no reason to hold their heads down.

Volleyball makes history
By Eamon Ducey

History is a powerful force in sports, and Rider has not had a strong one in volleyball, but that has changed this season as the Broncs earned their first ever Metro Atlantic Athletic Conference (MAAC) Tournament berth this weekend.

“The team is very excited about the [MAAC] championships,” said head coach Emily Ahlquist. “They have worked hard to get there.”

The team had a tough road to get into the MAAC postseason. They had to beat struggling Siena and Marist last weekend and get a couple of other games to break its way.

On Friday night, Rider visited Marist (2-5) and was ready to play. Many Rider players knew the threat this team posed because they possessed the identity as “spoiler” as recent as last season.

The Broncs did not dominate any one particular game, but were able to sweep the match winning games 30-27, 30-26 and 30-26.

Senior outside hitter Jaclyn Levi led the Broncs with 15 kills and 13 digs, but it was the contribution of the freshmen players that added to the defense. Setter Jennifer Lane had 55 assists and 12 digs and Nastasha Avramovic contributed with 19 digs.

Saturday, the Broncs came out and played with a killer instinct that has not been present so far this season. They were able to sweep Siena, winning each game by a wider margin than the previous game (30-24, 30-23, 30-22).

The Broncs had some strong individual performances, including Levi, who had 13 kills and 12 digs, junior outside hitter Stefanie Lombardo, who added 10 kills and 15 digs and Lane with 45 assists.

Lane and Avramovic were rookies that stepped up this weekend as much as the veterans did. Ahlquist expects this from everyone.

“I expect the freshmen to play as well as anybody on the team,” said Ahlquist. “I expect all my players to play the best ball they can no matter their age.”

Lane has been a big success story this season.

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