Men take 1st, women 2nd in MAAC

By Mike Caputo

Championships have been a common occurrence for Rider's swimming and diving team (RUSDT) over the last few years. What made the 2003-2004 Metro Atlantic Athletic Conference (MAAC) Championship stand out from past years was that it was the RUSDT men’s squad that attained the championship while the women’s side earned a second place finish in the competition held at Loyola College on February 21.

“This championship is the first MAAC title for the men’s squad and its first conference title since it won the Metropolitan Conference in 1993,” said Head Coach Stephen Fletcher. “The fact that our depth swam well is the reason our men beat Marist.”

It was definitely not an easy victory, as the Rider men edged out Marist by a slim total of nine points (877-868) with Loyola finishing in a disappointing second place. The Broncs were unable to follow up their women's championships in 2001 and 2003.

“I don’t think we were as disappointed because we were so overwhelmed and excited about how well everyone did in the races, but obviously there is still a little disappointment,” said senior captain Melissa Morrissy. “We were also so excited that they [the men] won.”

Head Coach Stephen Fletcher earned the MAAC Men’s Coach of the Year. Other honors included second year sophomore walk-on Chris Coles gaining the MAAC Championship Most Outstanding Diver Award and freshman Lauren Urbanski achieving co-MAAC Championship Outstanding Award status. Coles won the 3-meter dive and finished second in the 1-meter. Urbanski won the 200 butterfly.

“The conference recognized those standouts [Coles and Urbanski], but as always, I recognize the team first,” said Fletcher. “The fact that our depth swam well is the reason our men beat Marist.”

The Broncs’ finish at the MAAC Championship was a team effort that won the title.

“Success at the conference was a true ‘one swim at a time’ to become overall champions. This is the largest team we’ve had in the history of Rider men’s swimming. It was such a close meet all the way through,” said freshman Jeff Dixon. “If we dropped lower than we did that would have been pivotal to the outcome.”

After its accomplishments, a portion of the RUSDT headed out tpthe University of Pittsburgh to take part in the Eastern College Athletic Conference (ECAC) Open Swimming and Diving Championships. This meet encompassed regional teams from conferences such as Big East, Ivy League, MAAC and the Northeast Conference. Some of the competition includes Boston College, Georgetown, Seton Hall, St. John’s, Pennsylvania, Columbia, New Hampshire, Marist and Binghamton.

“This is the largest team that we [took] to the ECAC,” said Morrissy. “The Broncs finished in the top ten at the ECAC meet.

Freshman swimmer Lauren Urbanski was named the co-winner of the MAAC Championship Swimming Award. The men came in first place and the women came in second at the MAAC Championships last weekend. Last season the men placed second and the women came in first.