



Photo courtesy of John Mozes

The staff of 107.7 The Bronc stands together for a picture after winning Best College/University Station under 10,000 students at the Intercollegiate Broadcasting Systems ceremony.

107.7 The Bronc wins best college station

By Amethyst Martinez

RIDER'S student radio station 107.7 The Bronc brought home two awards from the 2023 Intercollegiate Broadcasting Systems (IBS) ceremony this Saturday for Best College/University Station under 10,000 students and Best Sports Update. 20 students joined John Mozes, the general manager of The Bronc, at the award commemoration hosted this weekend in New York City.

Best Sports Update was won by junior film and television major Jake Serrano for sports radio segment, "The Overtime." The station won the award for the second year in a row, with last year's taken home by Rider alum Sean Harrington.

Out of eight nominations, the station brought home two, the biggest being Best College/University Station under 10,000 students.

Taylor Tunstall, senior broadcast journalism major and student general manager of the station, described the moment the announcer called Rider's name as "fireworks."

"We just all shot up out of our chairs, and we were screaming and in tears," said Tunstall. "I was genuinely shocked."

Mozes shared the same feeling of surprise when

The Bronc was announced as the winner of the award.

"They were shocked, I was shocked," said Mozes. "I'm really happy that The Bronc was recognized ... it was nice to win that award and bring it home and be the only college in New Jersey to do so too."

Other nominees for the award included Chapman University, North Central College, Hillsdale College, Goshen College and SUNY Fredonia.

"It just shows that all of our hard work here actually pays off," said Tunstall. "I was really excited to just win that and also experience that with the rest of the staff."

Last year, the IBS ceremony was held virtually due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the only award taken home by Rider being Best Sports Update by Harrington.

Serrano, a transfer student from Ocean County College, only joined the radio station last semester, winning the award less than a year into his time at Rider.

"I just never thought in a million years I would've gotten it," said Serrano. "I'm happy people recognize the work I'm doing,

because it's not an easy field ... It's all kind of surreal that I got it within my first two semesters."

The station's student workers and Mozes also hosted an IBS media panel during the conference, giving advice to those in the audience looking to learn more about how The Bronc is run.

Naa'San Carr, junior political science major and programming director for the station said, "We've been working really hard to be nominated and put our best foot forward for the university and for people who listen to us around the world."

Out of all of the special moments of the weekend for the station, one stood out to Mozes in particular.

"During the bus ride home, one of my students said to me, 'This is the first time I ever won anything ... and now today, I know what it's like to be a winner. Thank you for that experience,'" said Mozes. "I will never, ever forget those words, because to me, it's those engaged-learning experiences that make 107.7 The Bronc and Rider University so special."

Logan VanDine and Caroline Haviland are copy editors for The Rider News and work for 107.7 The Bronc. Neither had any part in the editing or writing of this story.

Elimination of American Studies program causes disappointment

By Kaitlyn McCormick

FOLLOWING the announcement of 17 programs up for elimination from the university's latest prioritization, many in the Rider community have expressed frustration. Mickey Hess, director of the American Studies program (AMS) for its last three years, however, is confused and citing a major drawback to the prioritization process: What happens when programs with low major declarations still have high class enrollment?

AMS brought popular courses to Rider students, such as hip-hop and American culture and Martin Luther King Jr's America. Now, with the program under the knife, Hess fears that "in many cases, an AMS course would be a student's

only option in certain categories in the gen[eral] ed[ucation] to take a course that was devoted to a Black thinker."

Information provided by Director of Communications Rachel Stengel showed that the number of students declaring first, second and third majors in AMS were declining from 2018 to 2022. While the program saw seven students enrolled in the B.A. program in 2018, only two students were pursuing the major in 2022.

Program reports and recommendations came from the Academic Prioritization Task Force, and, according to Stengel, "The final decision [to eliminate the program] rested with the president and the provost."

According to the program evaluation obtained by The Rider News, AMS scored favorably in criterions like "Size, Scope, and Productivity of the Program," "Revenue and Other Resources Generated for the Program" and "Costs and Other Expenses Associated with the Program."

The task force ranked AMS least favorably in three criterion: "External Demand for the Program," "Internal Demand for the Program" and "Quality of Program Inputs and Processes."

Despite the task force's judgment of low internal demand,



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MADE FROM SCRATCH

In six months, Rider built a women's lacrosse team from nothing.

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BLACK CELEBRITIES AND THEIR ACTIVISM

Black celebrities use their status to help their community.

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SHINING LIGHT ON BLACK EXCELLENCE

Junior reflects on his time at 107.7 The Bronc.

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SECURITY BRIEFS

BY SHAUN CHORNOBROFF

CORRECTIONS

An article published on Feb. 22 miscaptioned a photo of Safiya Hylton and the RASA executive board. An additional photo has been added. The Rider News regrets this error.

An article published on Feb. 22 incorrectly published Camryn Curnuck's major. Curnuck is a healthcare management major. The Rider News regrets this error.

Colliding Cars

Drunk driving. On Feb. 23 at 8:40 p.m., Public Safety was dispatched to the South Entrance for the report of a motor vehicle accident. Upon Public Safety's arrival, Lawrence Township Police had arrived and were speaking with the drivers involved. It was reported one vehicle had been exiting campus, while the other was entering when they collided. It was determined by Lawrence Police one driver had been intoxicated. They were arrested and escorted to police headquarters. No one involved had any affiliation with Rider University.

Bike Bandit

Missing wheels. On Feb. 26 at 5:30 p.m., Public Safety was dispatched to the front of Moore Library to meet with a student who reported their bike stolen. The student reported they left their bicycle in front of the library on Feb. 23. When they went to retrieve it, the bicycle was not there. They checked various locations around campus before contacting Public Safety. When asked if the bicycle had been locked or secured, they responded that it had not. The student was offered service from Lawrence Township Police but declined. The incident is still under investigation.

- Information provided by Public Safety Capt. Matthew Babcock

Poyda Hall to reopen for upperclassmen singles

BRONCS who love living on campus but crave a little extra privacy are in luck: the university announced that Poyda Hall will be reopening for the fall 2023 semester to accommodate upperclassmen singles.

Some may not have noticed Poyda in the lineup for recent student interest meetings, but it was hard to miss the residence life's Instagram post on Feb. 21 touting "Big news!" with five key reasons to live in Poyda next semester. Listed in cranberry and white graphic print were affordability, large rooms, parking access, air conditioning options and proximity to key campus landmarks, such as the lake, athletic fields and Canastra pool.

"Our desire always is to have more students live on campus and to benefit from the on-campus experience," said Vice President for Student Affairs Leanna Fenneberg. The idea to have more attractive room types, like singles, was "lingering in the back of our head constantly," she said.

She explained that the idea to rejuvenate on-campus living options was posed early in the fall semester, relying on input from both "focus group" style conversations with students as well as a small group of Student Government Association Leaders and Fenneberg's student advisory board, which is made up of people across various disciplines and majors.

Associate Dean of Residence Life Roberta Butler shared that in addition to the installation of window air conditioning units for one-third of the spaces, the plan is to paint and replace the flooring in the hallways.

In a written statement for The Rider News, Butler also pointed out that student numbers back

up the demand for single room access. Butler, using approximate numbers, said that the room selection process for the 2022-2023 academic year showed 330 students' indication for single rooms, while only 240 got a timeslot to select a single room and only 110 rooms were available.

Reopening the residence hall will allow for 120 more bed spaces available, with the most affordable single room options on campus. While the going rates were yet to be solidified by the Board of Trustees, Butler said that the pricing will fall several hundred dollars cheaper than other single living options with rates changing between air-conditioned and non-air-conditioned spaces.

While Poyda may have been subject to some mixed reviews from former students, many expressed excitement in an increase in options for single spaces for upperclassmen who choose to live on campus.

Though closeness to amenities like the pool and athletic complex may be beneficial to some, others

recalled inconveniences when living in Poyda. Senior film & television major Karl Stever lived in Poyda for his fall semester freshman year and thought the hall was "pretty bad" in terms of location due to it being further away from campus hot spots like Daly's and the Student Recreation Center.

"All my other friends lived in like Ziegler, Conover, Hill ... so I felt pretty secluded," Stever said.

Junior communication studies major Courtney Little said that while there may have been some "gross aspects" of the Poyda Hall she inhabited her freshman year, she thinks that opting to open the residence back up for singles is a great option for upperclassmen who may not have the ability to live off campus but still want to have their own space.

On Feb. 27 students gathered in the Poyda lobby for more information on the single spaces available in the coming semester.

Junior actuarial sciences major Richard Lowther said he currently lives in a single and thinks that it is beneficial for students to be able to have their own space as a "safe, kind of cozy environment."

Sophomore biology major Maxwell Pierre was another student excited to "have a chance" at grabbing a single, citing the privacy as a huge benefit.

In addition to being more affordable, the spaces in Poyda also have the biggest standard rooms on campus, averaging at around 10 feet by 14 feet while other options fall closer to 10 feet by 12 feet.

Housing deposits are due by March 1 and students are expected to have applications in by March 10.



Poyda, which was closed for the 2022-2023 academic year, will reopen in fall 2023.

SGA to bring back in-person voting

By Shaun Chornobroff

HANGING in Student Government Association (SGA) President Andrew Bernstein's office is a copy of the front page of The Rider News from April 14, 2000. The top article of the paper is headlined, "Students break records at elections," accompanied by a photo showing students voting in person.

"The number they had here was crazy," said Bernstein, pointing out that 678 students voted at that year's SGA elections.

After two years of underwhelming voter participation, Bernstein, a senior political science major, is building upon the strategy of the successful election displayed in his office, aiming to create a more interactive experience for this year's elections that includes SGA giveaways and the option to vote in person.

"To go back to a world in 2000, where we can hit those record numbers where we could hit those record numbers and people are having a fun time voting and getting to know their fellow candidates, it just creates a different culture. One that is more inclusive and welcoming," said Bernstein.

Bernstein said he feels his team would have done a "good job" if they could eclipse 600 votes; however, his goal is to reach as many people as possible.

A total of 57 positions, on the executive, finance board, senate positions, as well as many others will be available for students to run for once applications

open on March 1. Applications close at 1:59 p.m. on April 2 and voting will last from April 3-12; however, the SGA president says it's in every candidate's best interest to apply quickly.

"To get your application done is to your advantage because then you can start campaigning, and you can start making sure that [students are] ready to get out and vote from April 3 to April 12," said Bernstein.

Trying to revamp the election process and setting a standard for growing engagement is one of the central focuses for what remains of Bernstein's tenure as president. Since COVID-19, participation in SGA elections has dipped at Rider, according to Bernstein.

"If we can set the precedent now, for all elections from here on out to be in person, [then] we should be aiming for the highest number of qualified candidates to submit their application, we should be aiming for the highest number of people to vote," said Bernstein. "That's something that can really snowball and really start to create a campus culture that values not only the organization, but the process of selecting its members more than it ever has."

Educating the community on the influence and importance SGA has on the Rider experience over the next month is a critical component of Bernstein's mission to implore students to physically show up at the polls.

As part of the effort to increase voter turnout, Bernstein set up an elections and recruitment committee dedicated to outreach. The seven person team led by Bernstein and Executive Vice President Riley Mozes has met once a week in preparation of the elections.

"We've just been trying to increase initiatives and planning strategies for elections," said Mozes, a senior health science major. Mozes said the committee is made up of three seniors, three juniors and a freshman.

Bernstein said he has three days secured for in-person voting as of Feb. 25. The process will involve going into a voting booth where a computer will already have BroncNation loaded for students to log into.

While voting in-person is certainly encouraged and welcomed by SGA, students still have the option of voting from anywhere they can access BroncNation. As candidates become eligible to campaign, Bernstein hopes that the return of in-person voting to the university is not a one time occurrence, but a ritual that the community looks forward to on an annual basis.

"What we're after is a campus event or tradition that people look forward to, that they acknowledge as important, that makes them feel like they have a part of the community and a say in the community," said Bernstein. "I think this is hopefully what we'll accomplish in the spring."

Alumna expresses dismay toward program elimination

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AMS courses had strong credit enrollment hours in various courses. Capping at 25 students per section, Hess reported that AMS 212: Multicultural America enrolled 24 students this spring semester, AMS 308: Kurt Vonnegut's America enrolled 24 students in spring 2022 and AMS 227: Martin Luther King Jr's America reached full enrollment in fall 2020.

Hess also maintained that AMS courses served various other disciplines across the university to fulfill general education requirements in the College of Arts and Sciences and Continuing Education Program.

Diversifying course offerings

While the AMS program has been slated for elimination, Provost DonnaJean Fredeen maintained that there are ways to potentially keep the popular courses in circulation, encouraging Hess to bring them to the Multicultural Studies Committee, an interdisciplinary minor program, to potentially have the courses renumbered under different departments.

Fredeen explained that one of the main focuses of the prioritization process and the recommendations by the task force was to "maximize" seats and courses offered to students.

"What ends up happening is if you have too many courses offered in a semester, they end up competing against each other, and as a consequence you end up with lower enrollments," Fredeen explained.

While there's been criticism by some involved in the program for eliminating a major that seems to align with the university's commitment to diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI), Fredeen said that Rider's focus has manifested in inserting intentional diversity

into courses across the disciplines, rather than any one specific course requirement.

"We actually should be looking at all of our courses and asking ourselves ... where we could be embedding DEI content across the entire curriculum instead of it just being a course that you take and you kind of check off a box," Fredeen said.

'I think it's a shame'

The disappointment in the task force's recommendation to eliminate the program reaches far beyond those currently at the university. Marianna Watson '17 was dismayed to hear that the program she had minored in at Rider had made it onto the academic chopping block.

"I'll be honest, the [AMS] program was not my major, and I arguably spent less time in it, but those were like the only classes that I remember still," said Watson, who had majored in English.

The alumna recalled her favorite class being Hess's Hip-Hop and American Culture class. Looking back at her college career, Watson said that the class, which she described as "impactful and cool" was "probably the class that sticks out the most."

Now working in higher education, specifically the Office of Equity, Diversity and Inclusion at Tacoma Community College in Washington state, Watson has been able to draw connections from her minor studies over six years ago to her present occupation.

"It's not that I don't remember stuff from my English degree, but it's just in my own personal life and in my own line of work I have found [AMS] to be more relevant," Watson said.

Additionally, Watson expressed grievance not only that the university would be eliminating a program that had impacted her educational and professional life, but because less students would get to experience



Courtesy of Marianna Watson

Marianna Watson at her graduation in 2017.

those same opportunities.

"I always feel like arts and humanities tends to get devalued first, and, unfortunately, when you take away those cultural and kind of global studies, you aren't giving students the opportunity to be as learned about the world as they could be, and I think it's a shame," Watson said.

New dean announced as lacking budget spurs library struggles



Amethyst Martinez/The Rider News

Librarians Sharon Whitfield (left) and Melissa Hofmann (right).

By Amethyst Martinez

SHARON Whitfield, assistant professor-librarian, referred to library faculty as the "intellectual ombudsman" of Rider's campus, representing and bringing all of the majors together. As financial stressors on Rider resulted in cuts universitywide, the library struggled, with multiple faculty and staff members leaving in the past few years without replacement, budget slashes and the merging of the Talbott and Moore Library departments.

"We're kind of lacking the leadership, we stagnate and our morale is hurting because of it," said Whitfield.

Provost DonnaJean Fredeen is seeking a replacement dean of libraries that will also serve as the associate provost, a vacancy that Fredeen said will not be filled until enrollments are seen for the fall semester.

"For a while, the library was reporting directly to me. There are a lot of people reporting to me," said Fredeen. "The librarians need someone that they can report to that can focus on that."

Matthew Stieglitz, the former dean of libraries and associate provost, left in January. Dean of the College of Education and Human Services Jason

Barr has assumed the role of interim dean of libraries until a permanent replacement can be found to also fill the associate provost role.

"In the four years that I've been here, I'm now on my third dean," said Whitfield. "I feel as though there's no one really helping drive this initiative. It's very bottom driven, rather than having any kind of leadership."

With lack of permanent leadership, the library faculty and staff are struggling to move their efforts forward with many taking on multiple roles.

"It's a lot of this invisible labor that we're doing. Each of us is just taking more and more of this invisible labor on, and that invisible labor is actually what gives you access to all of those databases, books and resources," said Whitfield.

In the past four years, the libraries lost six librarians: four to retirement and two through attrition, with another retiring this June, according to Melissa Hofmann, a professor-librarian.

"We thus have many areas of the university without a subject matter expert librarian of dedicated liaison support," said Hofmann. "That means there is no one in that subject area to develop the library collection, stay abreast of publication and research trends, keep current with the curriculum and, most importantly, give students and faculty the most informed research help based on all that specialized knowledge."

Hofmann said the most needed is a business librarian, since 29% of students are enrolled in the business school. There is also no expert librarian for the sciences and social sciences, according to Hofmann.

"The lack of dedicated and expert leadership for the libraries only compounds the problems," said Hofmann.

Although Barr is the interim dean, he said he plans on setting up the libraries for whoever takes his spot

succeeding him.

"I see my duty in the short term as understanding the library and really getting a good grasp on what goes on there. What are the issues? What are the strengths? How can we capitalize on the strengths and then, moving forward, understanding some of that," said Barr.

With cost-saving initiatives put into place campuswide, the library has struggled with budget cuts, one of them being poor building infrastructure issues such as poor electricity, window leaks, Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) noncompliance issues, lack of modular furniture and study rooms with no soundproofing and bad airflow, according to Hofmann.

"Administration is not investing in the library. ... The lack of support to the libraries feels like it goes deeper than financial problems," said Hofmann.

Hofmann and Whitfield both agreed that the biggest effect on students is the cut of hours, one specific instance being the library now closed on Saturday's.

"This is actually an era where more librarians are needed, not less, because there's more information out there than before," said Whitfield.

"Change and innovation needs leadership, vision and investments — all of which we need," said Hofmann.



Amethyst Martinez/The Rider News

Librarians Sharon Whitfield (left) and Melissa Hofmann (right) are looking for positive change in library leadership.



(Left to right) G. Preston Wilson performs; Sam Frisby & Friends invite audience members in praise; Samar Newsome sings an original song.

Rider 'Gospel Fest' closes out Black History Month with song

By Jay Roberson

AS February came to an end, Rider celebrated Black history and culture with one last event: "Gospel Fest." Attendees took part in an evening of music and worship on Feb. 26 in the Cavalla room with performances from Rider students and faculty as well as other guests.

Senior behavioral neuroscience major Lorinda Laube spoke about why events like "Gospel Fest" are important to her and other Rider students.

"To have people around you who ... encourage you to further your relationship with whoever you believe in, for me personally, it feels like home. It feels that not everything we do on campus is strictly business, you know, there's personal relationships with each other," said Laube.

Pamela Pruitt, Center for Diversity and Inclusion (CDI) executive director, started the event by introducing the guest speakers, president of the New Jersey council of churches Marcus Burnett and radio personality on WIMG 1300 AM Craig Hayes.

Everyone rose and sang "The Negro National Anthem" which is also known as "Lift Every Voice and Sing." This piece was originally written for Abraham Lincoln's birthday and sung by children.

Junior political science major Naa'San Carr was the first performer of the night, singing, "I Love to Praise Him." Audience members began to get on their feet and joined Carr in praising and singing.

Laube spoke about her relationship with God and what events like "Gospel Fest" do for students who may not be able to attend church every Sunday.

"If you believe in God, if you believe in a higher

power, it's an opportunity for us to care," said Laube.

Assistant professor of music education G. Preston Wilson was the next person to take the stage with, "This is the Day that the Lord Has Made." His passion shined through as he walked up and down the aisles of the audience.

Sophomore graphic design major Genesis Johnson made a comment about his favorite part of the event.

"My favorite part was the Tabernacle Baptist praise dancers. They did one of my favorite songs," said Johnson.

Nine dancers were welcomed to the stage who are known as The Tabernacle Baptist Church Dance Ministry directed by Giselle Roberts. This dance routine consisted of several costume changes and music that conveyed that the Black community is strong and resilient.

Many of the performances emphasized the uniqueness of being Black and finding power in that. Senior journalism major Taylor Tunstall spoke about her favorite parts of being Black.

"There's so many different parts that not everybody can relate to ... but there's always a sense of community coming back together in a big group like this, and everybody has their own style, their own sense of comfort and everyone just respects it," Tunstall said.

Rider alumnus '02 Samar Newsome was the next performer who sang more gospel music as well as an original song written by him titled "I FEEL GOOD." The audience was indeed feeling good and joined along once learning the words to his song.

To close off the event, Sam Frisby & Friends performed in a choir and during their last song invited anyone who wished to praise to join them. Many audience members took them up on their offer and joined in with them.

Johnson spoke about how appreciative of the Black community he is and how everyone is connected regardless of blood.

"Like if you're not related by blood, we have a friendship. We're related anyway, not just by blood," Johnson said.

Pruitt took the stage and spoke about the significance of "Gospel Fest" to her, and how the first time she hosted it only eight people attended compared to that moment when a majority of the room was filled with people.

Laube spoke about what she loves about the Black community and how "Gospel Fest" served as another way for Black students to stay connected with their community.

"It's just the fact that no matter where you are, you're gonna find ... being Black you feel the most welcomed by everyone in our community. I don't think I've ever felt a time where I wasn't welcome," said Laube.

Watch the video:



GrubHub, GET App outages cause problems for Rider dining

By Shaun Chornobroff

AMYRIAD of issues within the GrubHub food ordering system and Rider's GET app from Feb. 24 - 27 left students hungry and frustrated.

While students were still able to get food, due to the technical difficulties, a number of GrubHub orders were canceled and students who ordered food were unable to do so in a traditional manner at all the school's dining locations.

Senior secondary education major Alex Yakowenko, who said he had four orders canceled between Feb. 25 and 26th, decided to go off campus for two meals instead of using his meal plan because of the hassle it caused.

"I basically prepaid for these meals and then now I have no access to them," said Yakowenko. "It's annoying."

Rider's Assistant Vice President for Auxiliary Services Andrew Pignataro said via an email to The Rider News, "I was aware of the issues and worked with Rider OIT (Office of Information Technology) to report the issues," additionally specifying the issues were outside of the university's control.

Any transaction done on GrubHub or the GET app relies on an underlying application called CBORD to be processed. Rider's Interim Chief Information Officer and current leader of OIT Oliver Wendt informed The Rider News that this is where the weekend's challenges stemmed from.

"It has been discovered that the underlying application that GrubHub and GET relies on, called CBORD, is having errors with processing meal plan information which is affecting GrubHub's ability

to process an order transaction," said Wendt in an email.

Students were first notified at 12:01 p.m. on Feb. 24 via email that GrubHub was experiencing difficulties. Less than two hours later, another alert was sent out that the app was functioning normally.

However, many students were forced to remain patient the following day. On Feb. 25, students were still unable to secure food through the app, according to multiple students and Rider News staff members who attempted to order meals through the app.

This problem lasted throughout the day, without notice from the university, and persisted until after 7:30 p.m., when Daly's Dining Hall closes, leaving students who opted for a later meal with no option besides confusion or hunger.

Dylan Lux is a freshman at Rider who prefers to order food from Cranberry's via GrubHub rather than eating at Daly's Dining Hall and has no convenient method of transportation outside of walking. The absence of GrubHub put Lux in a difficult position.

"It did have a profound impact. On the weekends especially, Crans is where I get my food," Lux, a secondary education major, said. "I'm always hitting up Crans, so I like to order ahead of time. Since the system was down, and I didn't have any money, I couldn't do anything."

Lux eventually decided to dine at Daly's, where he normally uses the GET app, a mobile form of student identification, to enter. Upon arriving, he discovered the app was plagued with similar problems to

GrubHub, and the worker at Daly's took down his name and student ID before he entered.

The uncertainty surrounding GrubHub continued into the night, well after Daly's closed. While unable to place orders, students had to go to the cashier for Cranberry's and on a sheet of paper, write down their order and bring it to the individual restaurant.

No communication from the university was sent out until 5:12 p.m. on Feb. 26 regarding GrubHub being unavailable, although an email was sent out at 5:53 p.m. that the app was functioning normally. However, The Rider News is aware of multiple students whose issues persisted into the following day. Junior finance major Zach Fernandez said he was unable to order from GrubHub until the afternoon of Feb. 27.

"Frankly it was really annoying," said Fernandez. "I understand the timing of it was really bad, obviously GrubHub's down, compounded with the fact that it is the weekend. ... I was a little upset with the way the school responded, they waited until Sunday to say GrubHub's down, when I know the students, we all knew almost immediately."

According to Wendt, the university is already making steps toward a solution.

"OIT has facilitated a support call with CBORD and they're actively reviewing their system for root cause analysis and resolution," Wendt said. "We will continue to monitor and remain vigilant as well as facilitate the support needed to bring this matter to resolution."



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Photo courtesy of Emily O'Connor



The crew of 'The Bounce' smiles for a picture on set. The show highlights the work and excellence of students on campus such as athletes and artists.

Student-run network gives look into world of film and television

By **Tristan E.M. Leach**

THE cameras start rolling. The actors take a minute to compose themselves. The producers give the cue and the lights go up. It's time for Rider University Network, or RUN, to film another episode.

RUN was founded in 1996, but like many other organizations, was shut down by COVID-19. Since Rider started to return to a more open, normal campus, the station has been working to make a comeback.

The club is made up of dedicated members from a range of majors and is overseen by Scott Alboum, video technologies coordinator for Rider. RUN is completely student organized; from the creation to the uploading of the show, students facilitate and participate in the entire process. RUN used to be joined with 107.7 The Bronc until recently when it separated from the station.

Emily O'Connor, a freshman arts and entertainment industries management major, is co-president of RUN. O'Connor decided to join RUN in hopes of gaining experience but also getting more involved on campus.

"I went to the first meeting, and me and one of my friends pitched an idea for a show. We got to do it, and I just kept going and kept staying. I was so deep into producing a show, and I really liked the atmosphere, the vibes and the willingness that the students had," said O'Connor. "The overall experience of you being able to create something and people not really giving you restrictions ... just having that creative freedom as an artist."

The creativity is abundantly clear through the variety of shows that are currently being produced by members of the network. In total, there are currently three shows being produced: "Broncs Box Office," the longest running show to date, "Baking with the Broncs," a new show, and "The Bounce," a student entertainment show. Each show focuses on a selected interest or interests that the creators of the show have.

"Broncs Box Office" is a movie review show. The show is currently being reworked but has seen great success since it began. "Baking with the Broncs" is a show in which students, faculty and staff bake a treat and answer questions related to Rider. "The Bounce" is the third show that is currently running,

which highlights students at Rider such as athletes, performers and artists.

Each show is fully created, produced and released by a crew of dedicated students, with people like O'Connor doing more than one job at a time. The experience not only allows students to see where their talents may be best, but also allows them to gain experience in a number of different roles.

The type of experience was what got freshman psychology major, Nia Violette, hooked on the network. Violette was looking for the chance to gain more experience in film and television production.

"I hadn't really had that kind of opportunity in high school. I thought that the network would be a great way for me to get that experience, especially considering my major and the fact that psychology and film don't necessarily go together," Violette said with a breathy chuckle.

Violette became a member of "The Bounce" and started doing a segment called "Hit or Miss." At first, the segment was intended to be on pop culture, but grew far past just that. The segment now does pieces such as ranking or comparing coffee drinks from campus and much more.

As the students work tirelessly to get their episodes out for the already existing shows, they also work to create new segments and shows in general. Violette and three of her friends, Mekhia Gwynn, a freshman film and television major, and Jayla Price and Zoë Jones, sophomore film and television majors, are currently working on creating a game show called "You Gussed It."

For O'Connor and Violette, the chance to make and create is what pulls them in and keeps them coming back for more. Both expressed their excitement to see what is next for RUN and how they can be a part of it.

"I plan on staying with the network for the foreseeable future and really building on the skills that I have now, refining them and adding on some new ones as well," said Violette. "[RUN] is making me rethink how I might do my job in the future. I might try to incorporate some aspects of visual media into my job."

O'Connor said, "Coming to Rider, I never thought I'd be having a leadership position my second semester my freshman year. ... I'm just really hoping

to push RUN into the potential I think it can be. To make it [RUN] what I think it needs to be and give students the opportunity that Scott gave me to be a leader and really have fun."

Caroline Haviland is a member of RUN and a copy editor for The Rider News. Haviland had no part in the writing or editing of this story.

Photo courtesy of Emily O'Connor



A group of dedicated students pose for a picture in the studio.

Scan the QR code to watch the shows produced by RUN



'Clean Slate: A World Premiere Musical' comes to Rider

By **Hannah Newman and Tristan E. M. Leach**

FROM Feb. 24 to Feb. 26 "Clean Slate: A World Premiere Musical," a co-production between Rider and Passage Theater was showcased in the Yvonne Theater.

With a book by David Lee White and music and lyrics by Kate Brennan, the musical tells the story of a group of teenagers who are no longer satisfied with their authority figures, and are sent to a rehabilitation camp that could potentially be haunted by former members of the camp who have mysteriously disappeared.

"Clean Slate" is the second show in a trilogy. The first show is called "ALIEN8", and has had several fully staged productions. Before COVID-19 hit the world, "Clean Slate" went into workshopping. The show was initially brought to Rider by C. Ryanne Domingues, a professor and artistic director for

Passage Theater. Domingues conjured up the idea of a joint production that would teach students about the development and production of a brand new musical.

Nicole Duffy, a junior musical theater major, played Dion in the musical, and discussed the process of creating and developing a show up until the minute before showtime.

"It's even originating this character at the show and like setting it in what it will be for perpetuity and there's been a lot of changes. I mean, like we were still changing lines up until a few days before the show opened," said Duffy. "More songs that were added. There were songs that were cut, there were songs that were flipped around and changed."

Passage Theater is a professional local theater company who has been delivering entertainment for over thirty years.

Domingues said, A lot of our work has to do with

social issues that our community members and our audience are familiar with. And like I said, we do all new work, so anywhere from the first to the fifth production."

Senior theater performance major Benjamin Simonetty who is also an intern at Passage Theater said, "I think for me the purpose of the show is that it's okay to be different from people and that you don't necessarily have to love everyone, but showing empathy and caring about everyone is something that I think our society is forgetting. You don't have to necessarily be personally invested in someone to show empathy towards them, so I think that's what the show means to me."



Peter G. Borg/ Rider University

Cast members dance as an original song by **Kate Brennan** is performed.



Peter G. Borg/ Rider University

The cast of "Clean Slate" search for the lost campers.

Shedding Light on Black Excellence: Naa'san Carr

By **Hannah Newman**

THE concept of involvement has translated into action for junior political science major Naa'san Carr whose journey began with a single dream: to change the world.

"I'm just a man who's trying to find his way, and I'm leading my way," said Carr.

From the time he stepped foot into high school, Carr knew that he wanted to dedicate his life to transforming the world into a better place for everyone. He knew that college would be the time to magnify that goal as a result of higher education's ability to break students out of their limited knowledge.

"This is the primary season where people are finding themselves either spiritually or just gaining knowledge in anything to find who you want to be and the things that will shape the rest of your life," said Carr.

Early into his freshman year, Carr was approached by one of his professors who told him he had a "great radio voice" and should consider taking on responsibilities at the campus radio station, 107.7 The Bronc.

After meeting with John Mozes, the general manager of The Bronc, Carr's desire to be a part of the station evolved into him creating a new show written and hosted by him called "Black Love, Inspiring Black Culture," which spotlights faith-based inspiration and important conversations within the Black community, such as colorism, racism, diversity, inclusion and history.

The purpose of the show is to be a voice for the Black community. Carr has featured many different organizations on campus, including: the Black Student Union (BSU), Black Men Unified (BMU) and Rider African Student Association (RASA). This first show aired Feb. 4, and is currently streamed every Wednesday from 7-9 p.m.

"He's very unassuming, very quiet, but people on the staff look up to him how he reacts to a situation, and he really does it whether it's something very urgent at the radio station, or not so urgent. He always does it [reacts] with calmness, always," said Mozes.

Carr has served as program director for 107.7 The Bronc ever since his freshman year.

After winning the 2023 Intercollegiate Broadcasting Systems award for Best College/University Station under 10,000 students, Mozes explained that this achievement was made possible with the immense efforts of Carr throughout his time at the radio station.

"I think there are a lot of reasons we won last night. But one of them I'm going to say is the efforts of Naa'san and how he schedules meticulously," said Mozes.

As his work at the radio station flourished with time, so has Carr's leadership positions around campus.

Carr serves as Student Government Association (SGA) Vice President for Class Connections, BSU Public Relations Chair, Rider Resource Pantry Advisory Board and is a student worker at the Center for Diversity and Inclusion (CDI).

With his long-term goal of becoming the president of the United States, Carr has begun to lead his community by making the change he wished to see in the world by taking advantage of the opportunities provided to him as a college student.

He has even created his own slogan that he ends each of his shows with, hoping to guide others in the process of guiding himself.

"I'm a brotha' man with a plan holding onto God's unchanging hand leaving my footsteps in the sand," said Carr.

This article is part of the Shedding Light on Black Excellence, a February series by The Rider News to showcase impactful Black figures at Rider University.

Logan Van Dine and Caroline Haviland are copy editors for The Rider News and works for 107.7 The Bronc. VanDine and Haviland had no part in the editing or writing of this story.



Photo courtesy of Naa'san Carr

Junior political science major, **Naa'san Carr**, smiles for the camera in a yellow turtle neck.

Black celebrities advocate for their community

RECENTLY, LeBron James surpassed Kareem Abdul-Jabbar's record of basketball's leading scorer. While most profiles about James were centered around his talent and skills on the court, few mentioned another side to him: his activism and philanthropic efforts.

James chooses to fight for and support the Black community through his platform. Unfortunately, the Black community has been through a lot of prominent social issues relating to police brutality in the past few years with the Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement, as well as other injustices and inequalities. These issues are very contested and dividing, which occasionally cause immense backlash against James, as well as other Black celebrities who bring attention to these causes.

James is not the only celebrity to give to charities or speak out against social issues. Back in 1967, Abdul-Jabbar and other famous Black individuals got together for an event, The Cleveland Summit, to show their support for Muhammad Ali, a famous boxer who had been barred from boxing because he refused to fight in the Vietnam War.

Following in Abdul-Jabbar's footsteps, James and many of his Miami Heat teammates tweeted out a photo of them wearing hoodies obscuring their faces with their heads down to highlight the anger the Black community felt after the fatal shooting of Trayvon Martin, a Black teenager who was shot by a member of the neighborhood watch when he was walking home in 2012, dressed in a similar hoodie.

However, athletes are not the only ones who use their platforms for good. Singer-songwriter Lizzo recently won a People's Choice Award, and instead of the typical acceptance speech where artists talk about their lives, feelings and hard work, Lizzo used that time to honor activists. Among the 17 activists she brought on stage and introduced was Tamika Palmer, the mother of Breonna Taylor, who was killed during a police raid of her home. Palmer has since become heavily involved in the BLM movement in order to seek justice for her daughter and others who are victims of police brutality and violence.

While these celebrities use their spotlight for good, fame can be a double-edged sword. All of these above-mentioned celebrities and others who are involved in activism and philanthropy receive heavy scrutiny. Many of them are often told to "stay in their lane" or simply "do their job" and that they have no authority to speak on these matters. Nevertheless, these celebrities continue to expose these issues to their fan base.

Though college is in a much smaller arena, there are students at Rider who help educate and support their communities. One is Abraham Ohiokhai-Benson, a junior business analytics major and thrower on Rider's track and field team. Ohiokhai-Benson is also secretary of Rider African Student Association (RASA) and treasurer of Black Men Unified (BMU). RASA's goal is to spread education about African culture and dispel its negative connotations. Similarly, BMU works to bring Black men together and fight against negative stereotypes, according to Ohiokhai-Benson.

"I feel like when you're watching a movie you see like, someone Black doing something bad or ... gang violence," said Ohiokhai-Benson when speaking about negative stereotypes. "In Africa, people just refer to our countries as dirty ... but there are a lot of beautiful countries and places in Africa."

While Ohiokhai-Benson wouldn't refer to himself as an activist because he believes that title carries weight and should be attributed to those who do more work for their communities, he is involved in these clubs and works with them to create a better-educated Rider community. He also has a fairly substantial following due to his involvement in track and field which he uses to bring attention to the events these clubs put on.

Ohiokhai-Benson expressed his amazement by how Black celebrities such as James have used their platforms to help their communities. Even though Ohiokhai-Benson does not believe he will go into the sports industry professionally, he hopes that he will become involved with philanthropic or activist organizations and efforts.

"I had a single mom and the way she is, like I've never seen someone so giving, and honestly that is embedded in me from her," he said. "And no matter what I have and no matter what place I am in life, I would always want to give to others."

Ohiokhai-Benson does see the potential backlash for speaking out or supporting certain organizations; however, he views it as "one of those red flags that we basically [have to] ignore because unfortunately, there's always a dark side to everything."

Using one's platform to bring attention to the topics they choose to discuss is very useful because it reaches a large audience. However, that also can bring severe ridicule and judgment. Everyone is entitled to their own opinions, but when celebrities voice their opinions, it wields greater influence. Shouldn't it be used to highlight important social issues and do good for others?

*Bridget Gum-Egan
junior English major*

Raashee Mishra & Adrienne Unfreed/ The Rider News



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SOPHOMORE SIGHTINGS

In 'Clean Slate,' everyone gets a second chance

EACH year, thousands of new musicals are piloted at theaters around the world. Some move onto the next stage of development, while others fail and are never produced. One musical hoping to become a hit in the future began its journey Feb. 24 at Rider's Yvonne Theater. "Clean Slate: A World Premiere Musical," with music and lyrics by Kate Brennan and a book by David Lee White, is a co-production with the Passage Theater in Trenton, both assisting with the development process.

World premiere musicals are risky because there are so many things that could go wrong. Passage Theater artistic director C. Ryanne Domingues decided to take a risk and produce the show; however, after attending the first-ever performance of "Clean Slate," I can report that the show is already far along in its formation. Its unique combination of teenage angst — think Tony winner "Dear Evan Hansen" — and spookiness — like TikTok sensation "Ride The Cyclone" — are a winning recipe in a competitive musical market.

The show centers around five campers at a wilderness rehabilitation center — protagonist Andi, played by junior musical theater major Ellie Pearlman; a fierce Leo, played by senior musical theater major Tiffany Beckford; a geeky Iggy, played by junior musical theater major Maclain Rhine; a wild Dion, played by junior musical theater major Nicole Duffy and a silent August, played by junior musical theater major Ricky Cardenas. Clean Slate, the camp where they have been sent for various legal offenses, is haunted by spirits of campers who came before them, including their counselor, Hercules, played by senior musical theater major Kaedon Knight.

At night, ghosts journey through the camp played by six echoes who come out from behind the set. One of these campers is Cassie, played by junior musical theater major Rylee Carpenter. The two have conversations each night until, (after many plot twists), it is realized that Cassie is a lost camper from a previous establishment and is actually the true mother of Andi, who has been in the foster care system since birth. After reconnection, Cassie is thrust into another life, but all ends well as the two get back together at the conclusion of the show.

Because this show is so new, it would benefit from a significant amount of polishing, fine-tuning and cutting. White's book has a complete plot so there are portions of the show where 10 minutes have gone by without any music. In order to create a more balanced musical, portions of the book should be reworked so the same story can be presented with less detail. On the contrary, Brennan's score has much potential to succeed as the show competes with other teen dramas. Pop-rock scores are all the rave right now, and Brennan succeeds at mixing an appropriate number of anthems, ballads and group numbers to balance the score.

From the act one group opener, "Slow Down," to Cassie's act two ballad "River Lethe," this score has something for everyone who enjoys a good, modern musical. Rider musical theater students always produce top-notch performances, and this show was no exception. The chemistry between Carpenter and Pearlman, first as a friendship, then evolving to the discovery of a true mother-daughter relationship, was convincing even though the two actors are the same age. Pearlman played an Andi who desired any sort of human connection, and

Carpenter, a Cassie who just wanted to be rescued after years on her own.

If this show continues beyond its initial stint, the pair should be considered as the Andi and Cassie to propel the show forward. Beckford, Cardenas, Duffy, Knight and Rhine also delivered performances that stayed true to the personalities each of these actors possess.

Part of making a character so authentic and believable is becoming them, and each of these actors did exactly that throughout the show, from Beckford's bossy Leo to Rhine's nerdy Iggy. Another element that made these characters so successful was that they were being played by actors not much older than the campers; therefore, they were not too far removed from age 17.

Perhaps the most impressive part of the show, however, was the scenic design, curated by senior theater design and technology major Bella Mazzoni. The set, made up of several hanging platforms that looked like tree stumps, stones and rocks, created an image of a remote, wooded environment. It was entirely designed by Rider students, which is impressive because of the intricate details of tree rings produced by the student painters. The set helped tell the story of the show and was used to its fullest potential throughout to help carry the message.

While "Clean Slate" still needs a bit of development to assist in the competitive musical market, I believe that with the right fine-tuning, it can become something with potential for regional theaters or licensing in the future. If you missed "Clean Slate" at Rider, you have a second chance to see it at Trenton's Mill Hill Playhouse March 10-12. Hopefully, this is not the last we see of the relatable show.

*Zachary Klein
sophomore journalism major*



Courtesy of Peter Borg

The "Clean Slate" cast performing in the Yvonne Theater.

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

The meaning behind 'the paddle' in Greek life

MANY members of Greek organizations, at Rider and beyond, are familiar with 'the paddle.' You can buy them online or even make your own, but generally, the members of today's Greek community see the decorative paddle as a symbol of friendship and pride. Many fraternity and sorority members decorate their paddles with their organization's colors, letters and even fun extras. But what is the lesser-known history of the paddle?

Paddles are traditionally seen as a form of hazing and punishment, tracing their roots back to English sailors who used them as a form of punishment for those who left their post, according to FraternalLaw.com, a law firm dedicated to legal issues that impact fraternities and sororities. The paddle slowly evolved throughout time, with American slave owners using the same practices to punish their slaves.

American slave owners were said to use the paddle to avoid the physical scars left by whips, as scars on the backs of slaves deteriorated their value when being sold. Fast forward a few hundred years: as Greek organizations grew and American troops returned from World War II, reports of hazing grew exponentially through the late 1980s, with the paddle being a predominant tool for these organizations to use during the initiation phase.

As fraternities and sororities began to get a bad reputation for harming and even killing new members, paddles found their place as a more decorative gift, something members give each other as a way of commemorating their friendship or honoring their organization.

But we have to ask ourselves a key question: given all this history, why continue to embrace the gifting of paddles if its primary use isn't the same as it was years ago? If you didn't know this history, my hope is that you will reconsider decorating that paddle for your big brother or sister, and even tell your friends to avoid the practice of giving paddles in the first place.

There are other meaningful ways for Greek organizations to demonstrate friendship and pride without ignoring the long history of paddles in America; items such as wooden plaques and jerseys are prime examples of this; they still show your Greek pride and allow you to give a meaningful gift to your brother or sister, and they prevent confusing a symbol of abuse with one of friendship.

We've come a long way in anti-hazing efforts in Greek organizations, but

the burden is on us to take the extra steps to fully realize that vision. Greek organizations provide a way to connect with our college and build friendships that last long beyond our undergraduate years, so let's strengthen our bonds and ditch the paddle.

Embracing the connections our organizations provide in a more positive, supportive way is a goal we can all strive toward. I think Rider's Greek life organizations are a positive force for good on campus, much different than organizations across the country, but there's always still progress to be made.

Bernstein is a member of Rider's chapter of Sigma Phi Epsilon fraternity and Student Government Association (SGA) president. This article is Bernstein's opinion as a student, and does not represent the view of any student organization.

*Andrew Bernstein
senior political science major*



Courtesy of Andrew Bernstein

WOMEN'S LACROSSE

Rider women's lacrosse builds 'from the ground up'

By Carolo Pascale

DURING the spring sports season at Rider University, Ben Cohen Field mostly lies dormant. In the fall it plays host to packed bleachers for games of men's soccer, women's soccer and field hockey. Barring a few spring soccer games, the Broncs-themed field sits barren, asleep and alone. When Spring 2024 rolls around, however, Ben Cohen Field will awaken from its wintery hibernation with a new team and program ready to make its Rider debut.

On Aug. 23, Rider announced the addition of a women's lacrosse program to its current 20-team roster. The announcement, made by Rider Athletic Director Don Harnum, gave a rundown of why this was important for the school and how it fits with the other programs.

"We are excited to be adding women's lacrosse to our portfolio of sports offerings for women," said Harnum in a press release. "Women's lacrosse is a sport that continues to grow and thrive, both nationally and in the Metro Atlantic Athletic Conference (MAAC), and fits extremely well into our geographic recruiting footprint."

When asked why women's lacrosse, Harnum said it was for two specific reasons: enrollment and Title IX, which guarantees equal athletic opportunities and scholarships to female athletes.

"The one thing that we've noticed over time is our athletic enrollment has grown. I call it the hook of the sport. The sport will get kids," said Harnum. "From a Title IX perspective we have a larger portion of women at Rider than we do in athletics. So to add 35 more women was a positive step for Title IX as well."

But most importantly, the Aug. 23 announcement included when the first games of the new program will commence: spring 2024.

'Something I couldn't pass up'

Focusing on the foundation of the team, the announcement of the program's first ever head coach came on Oct. 19, placing Evan Mager at the helm of the program's construction and first season.

Mager has a long history in the lacrosse world. A lacrosse player himself, he played at Fairleigh Dickinson University, Florham (FDU), earning an Andrew Helgeson Memorial Award for dedication and commitment to his team.

"When I was younger, I knew I always wanted to be coaching. I got to see a lot of different avenues of starting and playing, coming off the bench and not playing. Just a lot of different things, and it kind of helped me build some coaching mentalities," said Mager. "My FDU connections and my history at FDU was a lot of what has gotten me here today."

Mager originally wanted to be a boy's and men's lacrosse coach, but after volunteering at Morristown High School while student-teaching there, the women's lacrosse position opened up, and he got it. With the help of the FDU women's lacrosse head coach at the time, Mager was able to learn the women's game, which he described as a very different game than the men's.

After coaching at Morristown, Mager wanted to coach at the college level, and the spot at his alma mater was available for him to fill.

In just three seasons, he manufactured an



Carolo Pascale/The Rider News

Junior midfielder **Katie Walsh** was named the first-ever captain of the new Broncs program.

impressive 34-7 record, including two separate coach-of-the-year awards from the Middle Atlantic Conference (MAC) and the Intercollegiate Women's Lacrosse Coaches Association (IWLCA) in 2021.

Once Rider announced that they were planning on adding women's lacrosse, Mager decided to try to step into the Division I world.

"In the interview process, seeing the support not only from the administration in athletics, but the university as a whole, and plans for the future and current, it was just something I couldn't pass up," said Mager. "All of my coaching opportunities have been unique, but none of them have been built from the ground up with nothing there."

Harnum, who let his department spearhead the head coach search, could tell that Mager was the guy right from the get-go.

"His enthusiasm came through loud and clear, and it's already, in my mind, paying dividends," said Harnum.

After Mager was hired, he had to pick his assistant coach and start recruiting. Mager already said that his connections and time at FDU got him here, and it did the same for his assistant coach, Tristan Konen.

Konen's journey to be the first assistant coach has some similar notes to Mager's story. The Bridgewater, New Jersey native grew up playing lacrosse and decided to go to Montclair State University (MSU). Once at MSU, she started coaching club lacrosse during her freshman year. It became something that she wanted to pursue after her time in college ended.

"Coaching was something that made me so happy, and just to be able to spread the game to younger girls and teach them what I know was just super cool to me," said Konen. "I knew that that was something that I wanted to keep doing."

As for how she wound up at Rider, she called it "crazy and hectic."

"I had graduated from Montclair in May and then expected to go to FDU and learn from Evan and be his graduate assistant. I think I started in July, and then I was there through fall ball through October, so I was there for the fall season," said Konen.

As the fall season was coming to a close over at FDU, Mager gave Konen the news that he was leaving to take the head coaching gig over at Rider. On top of that, he offered to take her along to the home of the Broncs.

"He sat me down and told me he was leaving to go to Rider, and I was so shocked. But then he asked me if I would want to go with him, and it was a no-brainer for me because he's such an amazing coach, and to be able to learn from him and grow this program was going to be such a great opportunity," said Konen.

Assembling the team

After the new team found their head assistant coaches, both Mager and Konen got right to work to start recruiting players for the program. Konen's way to get to Rider might have been "crazy and hectic," but that would be an egregious understatement for how wild the recruiting process has been for the two

and the program.

"Typically you're recruiting one class, evaluating another class, but we're recruiting transfers, we're recruiting fifth years, we're recruiting 2023's, 2024's and evaluating 2025's. So we're kind of in this five-class spin right now," said Mager. "From a recruiting standpoint, it's very different from other sports. It's not necessarily going to local high schools and things like that. Like we have very specific events and event timeframes."

Mager continued by listing off some of the places they've been so far, those being the rest of New Jersey, Maryland and Texas.

Part of the recruiting for the program again traces its roots back to FDU. Rider's first-ever signee, incoming freshman defender Mackenzie Kiernan, was actually committed to play at FDU, then decided to come to Rider because of a strong prior relationship with Mager.

"I knew Evan from third grade because I used to be on one of his travel teams when I was younger," said Kiernan. "He's such a good coach and a good person that I knew that that's the kind of person that I want to be on a team with."

More of the recruiting comes back to the FDU connections as five of the nine mid-year transfers that the Broncs have added to the team so far are coming from the program at FDU.

One of those transfers being former FDU captain, junior midfielder Katie Walsh. She will pick up right where she left off at FDU, being named the first captain of Rider women's lacrosse.

"Being a captain and being on and leading a new program, it's good to be in the history of Rider and being a good example for the upcoming future here," said Walsh.

At the start of the spring semester, all nine transfers were able to meet for the first time and get acclimated with Rider's campus. They have now been practicing and training together three times a week, in what's become a surreal feeling for Mager and the entire program.

"I think the most exciting thing was just how quickly everything came together," said Mager. "Getting nine players here so quickly was not something necessarily we thought could happen, but it happened and we're excited about it."

As for what Mager has planned for the inaugural season of the program, he doesn't know how good the team will be yet, but he at least wants to instill good culture, communication and competition in the first season.

"Instilling that right away at Rider at a Division I level is extremely important because if the players are comfortable and they want to be in that culture that you're creating, they're going to want to perform as well," said Mager.

With the first game in program history a year away, the constructors of the team don't know what to expect yet, but the consensus belief from all of them is that the team can only go in one direction.

"Where our starting point is, I have no idea," said Harnum. "But wherever it is, we're only going up."



Carolo Pascale/The Rider News

Head Coach **Evan Mager** was named the program's first head coach on Oct. 19.

WOMEN'S BASKETBALL

Broncs summit Mount in 'Kid's Day Out' thriller

By Jake Tiger

THE Broncs brought the drama; the kids brought the juice.

With a crucial Metro Atlantic Athletic Conference (MAAC) win on the line, Rider emerged victorious on Feb. 23 in a 68-59 overtime thriller against Mount St. Mary's in Rider's "Kids Day Out" game on ESPNU.

"I definitely think, even beside the basketball, this was definitely the most fun game we've had this season," said graduate student guard Amanda Mobley after the win.

For the nationally-broadcast game, the bleachers of Alumni Gym were packed with students from seven local elementary and middle schools sitting shoulder to shoulder, hooting and hollering over every dribble.

"It was an amazing atmosphere. I mean, there wasn't a gap [in the energy] anywhere," said Head Coach Lynn Milligan. "It was so fun to see the kids. ... I hope a lot of them come back because I think we put on a good show."

Before the game, it became immediately clear that the gaggle of kids would make their presence felt when they clambered through almost the entirety of the national anthem.

The murmur soon grew into a high-pitched roar when the game began. The Broncs scored first and were treated to an ear-piercing explosion from their home crowd.

But the Mountaineers quickly fired back on their first possession, and, strangely, were greeted by similar encouragement from the kids.

"When Mount scored their first bucket, I heard them cheer and I was like, 'OK, got to fix that,'" said Milligan. "We scored the next couple and I think they caught on and they were like, 'Oh, yeah, we cheer for the team in the white.'"

Rider and Mount traded baskets for much of the first half, feeling more like a high-level chess match.

The Mountaineers were up 23-21 when a timeout was called halfway through the second quarter. Both teams huddled tightly at their sidelines,

carefully strategizing their next move while 1,200 children screeched every word of the "SpongeBob SquarePants" theme song.

The duel continued into halftime, and Rider entered the locker room trailing 29-27.

While the Broncs regrouped, senior forward Mervin James and junior guard Corey McKeithan of Rider men's basketball hosted a series of activities at midcourt, including musical chairs with kids from the audience and a dance competition between the visiting teachers and players from the men's basketball team; the teachers won after a vicious Dougie.

The halftime festivities came to a climactic end when James led the Rider faithful in a passionate, fiery rendition of "Baby Shark" — a spiritual moment.

The battlecry powered Rider through the second half, eventually taking a 53-48 lead with one minute left in the fourth quarter, its largest advantage up to that point.

However, a series of self-inflicted wounds allowed the Mountaineers to worm their way back in, and after capitalizing on an offensive foul by the Broncs, the game was tied at 53 with 21 seconds remaining.

"I think that the common theme has been that we can shoot ourselves in the foot sometimes," said senior center Victoria Toomey.

Rider had a chance to take the lead, but its layup rolled off the rim and into the hands of the Mountaineers, who then called a timeout with 1.4 seconds left, enough time for one final shot.

Out of the timeout, an inbound Mountaineer lobbed a pass over the defense and into the paint.

Slivers of seconds ticked away; 1,200 children screamed their little hearts out.

The Mountaineer entrusted with the ball backed down Mobley, pivoted toward the basket and lofted a falling baseline floater as time expired.

The shot swished through and the Mount bench, just feet away, erupted in celebration. Upon review, however, the game-winning shot was a tenth of a second too late, and both teams played on.

"We were pretty confident that the refs were going



Kaitlyn D'Alessio/The Rider News

Junior guard **Makayla Firebaugh** soars over the Mountaineer defense.

to come back and say it was no good, so we kind of just moved on to the next five minutes," said Toomey, who finished with 16 points, six rebounds, five assists and four blocks.

The Mountaineers struck first in overtime to go up 55-53, but from there, it was almost all Broncs.

Rider ripped off five straight points, and finished the extra period with a 15-4 run. Junior guard Makayla Firebaugh sank 6-of-6 free throws in the final minute to ice the Mountaineers.

Earlier in the season, Rider fell to Mount 74-52. The Broncs have certainly grown up since then.

"The way regulation ended, we could have allowed that to kind of knock us down," said Milligan after the 68-59 win. "We just got back in that huddle, we said 'That's done, we've got to move on.'"

With an upward trajectory, Rider has two final chances to hone its skills before the MAAC Tournament on March 7.

The Broncs first head north for a meeting with Manhattan on March 2. The game begins at 7 p.m. and will be streamed on ESPN3.

MEN'S BASKETBALL

Despite mixed weekend, Rider snags first-round bye



Andrew Xon/The Rider News

Graduate student forward **Ajiri Ogemuno-Johnson** swats a Siena shot.

By Carolo Pascale and Matthew LoPuzzo

THE Broncs saw highs and lows in their penultimate weekend of the regular season, first earning a first-round conference tournament bye in a tightly contested 69-66 win against Siena on Feb. 24, and then falling to Mount St. Mary's 63-58 on Feb. 26.

'Rider basketball at its finest'

It was set up as the biggest game of the regular season — Rider versus Siena on national television, the winner holding the No. 2 spot in the Metro Atlantic Athletic Conference (MAAC), and did it ever live up to those expectations.

After what felt like a precursor for the MAAC Tournament, the Broncs were able to hold on and marched the Saints back to Siena with a gutsy and hard-fought 69-66 win on Feb. 24 giving them the second seed in the conference.

"I know we kept everybody on edge," said Head Coach Kevin Baggett. "But it is the MAAC and it is Rider basketball at its finest."

Senior guard Allen Powell was the backbone of the win, knocking down a season-high 24 points on 9-for-15 shooting from the field. Powell, who's had his fair share of ups and downs in his time at Rider, has been on a heater as of late, scoring 10 points or more in four straight games.

"I always believe in my game," said Powell. "I still got the same confidence coming into every game."

Allen's production was assisted by 17 points from fellow senior guard Dwight Murray Jr. and 14 points from senior forward Mervin James.

Siena jumped out to a quick lead, but Rider took it for itself and made it as large as 10 points as the first half ended in a 37-27.

Siena powered back to take the lead again as the Broncs started to falter, but Murray and Powell were undeniable, as they made it a shot-for-shot game with four minutes left. It stayed that way until James was fouled with 13 seconds left.

James made both crucial free-throws, and then Powell was fouled. He only made one, which gave Rider a three-point lead, and Siena a chance to tie the game. Murray had other plans, however, as like a football safety, picked off a sailing pass and drove to the hoop for the game-sealing shot.

"[Murray and Powell] grabbed everybody. I saw it down the other end when they were on the free throw line. They got in a huddle; whatever they said, they did it," said Baggett. "It's not Coach Baggett, it's these guys, and I'm riding along with them."

'A very inconsistent team'

On a weekend where Rider took down the second ranked team in the MAAC, the Broncs got brought back down to earth with a 63-58 loss to Mount St.

Mary's on Feb. 26.

The Broncs honored the 1993 Northeast Conference (NEC) Championship team that qualified for the NCAA Tournament. Rider's current team came out flat and it was ultimately their downfall against the Mountaineers.

"The game was lost in the first half," said Baggett.

The Broncs started the game with their bread and butter: attacking the paint. James got things started for the Broncs, contributing seven of their first nine points.

With a couple pretty reverse layups for the Mountaineers, Rider found themselves in a tied ball game and did not see the lead the rest of the way.

"We didn't want to play physical, they did. So we settled for shots today," said Baggett.

The Broncs fell into a nine-minute scoring drought midway through the first half, and Murray's appeared visibly frustrated.

Coming off a win against Siena, emotions were running high, but the honeymoon phase hit the Broncs and went into the locker room at half down nine points, shooting 30% from the field and 1-of-10 from three.

"We've been a very inconsistent team. Do I want to wait to come back? Absolutely not," said Baggett.

James tried his best to help the Broncs with a pull up jumper, finishing with another stellar performance of 14 points and nine rebounds.

"Come back to practice, do everything we did before and lock back in together," said James.

Rider had its chances to win this game and shot themselves in the foot with 10 missed free throws and the inability to grab a late rebound.

The Broncs have a chance to get back on the right foot on March 2 against Saint Peter's before having first-place Iona travel to the Broncs' Zoo for the regular season finale on March 4.

Sports

ONLINE

NEW HEAD COACH RETURNS HOME
Rider field hockey announced Alicia Govannicci as its next head coach on Feb. 28.

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WOMEN'S BASKETBALL

PREVIEW: Broncs emerge as MAAC Tournament dark horse



Eric Buckwalter/The Rider News

Despite a rocky start to the season, Rider women's basketball has rebounded with a much-improved stretch, winning three of its last five by attacking the paint.

By **Jake Tiger**

AFTER a 62-49 loss to Fairfield on Feb. 4, the team's sixth straight, Rider women's basketball plummeted to 2-11 in Metro Atlantic Athletic Conference (MAAC) play, its worst start since the 2015-16 season.

But between the Broncs' bus ride home from Fairfield, Connecticut, and their next game on Feb. 9, something seemed to click.

The Broncs halted their losing streak with a pivotal, imposing win over Marist, and since then, they've managed to win three of their last five games by adopting a brand of fundamental, hard-nosed basketball.

A new offensive identity and improved defense have 5-13 Rider's stock rising ahead of the MAAC Tournament, but questions of strength and legitimacy still impede the path to the ultimate goal.

Paint ball

For Rider, the beginning of MAAC play was defined by an inability to consistently hit and defend the 3-pointer.

While some of those issues persist, particularly on the defensive end, the Broncs have gradually shifted their focus away from the perimeter and toward the paint, playing an inside-out style of offense.

"We know what we want our identity to be," said Milligan. "I think our players understand what makes us successful."

This type of offense has proven to be more effective and consistent, forcing the Broncs into high-percentage shots under the rim, rather than relying on streaky outside shooting.

At 40.9%, the Broncs are fourth in the MAAC in field goal efficiency and are one of four teams shooting over 40%. In their 3-2 stretch, though, they have been even better.

Since Feb. 9, Rider's new offensive mindset has earned it a field goal percentage of 43.9%, which would be second in the MAAC, and it has found 152 of its 301 points in the paint, just over half.

A major part of Rider's renaissance in the paint has been junior forward Raphaela Toussaint, who's post-scoring artistry has netted her 12 straight games with double-digit points.

"I think [Toussaint] is one of the toughest [players

to guard] in the league," said Milligan. "I think her versatility is terrific. She's playing with confidence now. ... She knows her teammates want to give [the ball] to her. I think her teammates are putting her in successful situations and she's coming through."

In that 12-game span, Toussaint is averaging 12.3 points and 6.9 rebounds per game and has posted double-doubles in three straight games.

"She always makes that big play," said senior center Victoria Toomey of playing beside Toussaint. "We've been able to really build a high-low game. We're pretty good at knowing where the other person is going to be without really seeing them."

Toomey has been another beneficiary of the Broncs' new scheme, seeing a noticeable uptick in her scoring. On the season, she's averaging 8.7 points per game, but in her last five showings, Rider's captain put up an average of 12.8 on 60.5% shooting.

Thanks in part to the dominance of Toomey and Toussaint, graduate student guard Amanda Mobley is still by far the best playmaker in the MAAC this season, according to the numbers. In her final season, she sits at the top of the conference in assists per game with 6.1 and total assists with 166 in 27 games.

The closest player to Mobley is Iona's Ketsia Athias, who averages 4.9 assists per game and has 133 total assists in the same number of games.

"[Mobley's] been with us when we've been at our highest and she's been with us when we haven't been the highest," said Milligan. "She understands the grind of the MAAC better than anybody. She understands what it takes to win in the tournament."

With some consistent contributors on offense, Rider is moving in the right direction and may be peaking at the perfect time, but the Broncs themselves are still far from perfect; they are 5-13 for a reason.

Unfinished, unproven

Perimeter defense remains the biggest crack in Rider's armor, a season-long flaw and the culprit of numerous losses.

Conference opponents are shooting an average of 42.8% against the Broncs, the second-highest mark in the MAAC, and from three, opposing players are hitting a league-high 36.2% of their shots.

Rider hit rock bottom on Jan. 19 in a 90-62 loss to Iona, in which the Gaels shot 16-of-18 from three, the

most efficient long-range shooting display in NCAA women's basketball history.

"We've just been consistently inconsistent," said Milligan. "We had games where we were giving up 80, 90 points, which is something traditionally we don't do."

In its 3-2 stretch, the Broncs have shown improvement, holding teams to 34.1% from beyond the arc, but that number would still place them last in the MAAC.

This stat is especially troublesome given the strength of Rider's recent opponents, or lack thereof. The Broncs are yet to beat any of the MAAC's top-six teams this season, all five of their wins coming against lesser competition.

But sixth-seeded Manhattan is next on the schedule, and with the Broncs playing their best basketball of the season, the matchup on March 2 could allow Rider to make a statement ahead of the MAAC Tournament.

Seeding scenarios

After Manhattan, Rider could be looking at back-to-back games with seventh-seeded Marist. The Broncs take on the Red Foxes for their regular season finale on March 4, and are slated for a rematch in the first round of the MAAC Tournament on March 7.

However, some key matchups in the final week of the regular season could shake things up.

As they have for most of the season, the Broncs (5-13) currently rank 10th in the MAAC, only ahead of winless Saint Peter's (0-18) and just behind Canisius (6-12) and Mount St. Mary's (6-12).

On March 2, Canisius and Mount St. Mary's face off, giving Rider a chance to jump the loser in the standings and play the winner in the first round. Regardless of the opponent, a first-round victory in Atlantic City, New Jersey, is a real possibility for the Broncs, something they could not achieve last season.

A win in the quarter finals is far less likely for Rider, but the MAAC is no stranger to dark horses.

"We've had our ups and downs this season, there's no question about that," said Milligan. "I think it's pretty obvious that we're not where we want to be. But I think it's [about] keeping your team and your players locked in on what the ultimate target is, where the ultimate destination is."