

## Women's basketball advances to MAAC quarterfinals



Andrew Xon/The Rider News

Andrew Xon/The Rider News

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## Title IX announces new director

By Amethyst Martinez

**T**HE Title IX and equal opportunity compliance director position has been a center of controversy on Rider's campus over the past year, with at least five directors holding the role since last March. After two interim workers have taken the position since former director Pauline Lloyd's abrupt departure in November, a permanent appointment has been given to Ryan McKinney, a past Title IX coordinator coming from Moravian University in Pennsylvania.

McKinney will serve alongside Debbie Stasolla, Title IX coordinator and vice president for strategic initiatives and planning, who served as interim director for the office of Title IX and Institutional Compliance from February to March.

Title IX is the federal law that prohibits sex discrimination, harassment and violence and requires schools to follow procedures to investigate complaints.

### Title IX coordinator

As Stasolla moves into the coordinator position, Barbara Lawrence, vice president for diversity, equity and inclusion and chief diversity officer, will no longer be involved in Title IX issues. Lawrence has served in the coordinator role since July after university restructuring.

Stasolla said, "This was distracting from the good work Barbara Lawrence is doing in her role as chief diversity officer. ... In the month that I've been doing [the director position] I can see how... oversight as Title IX coordinator requires so much time and energy. ... My portfolio is such that I can take it on and give it the attention that it deserves."

Stasolla was announced to take the position over from Lawrence on March 1 after Rider President Gregory Dell'Omo announced university

cabinet restructuring in January.

"We're going to do our damndest to make sure that nothing falls through the cracks, and that we address any complaints as soon as possible," said Stasolla. "I know that's easy for me to say ... but I got to prove myself, and so does [McKinney]."

### McKinney's appointment

With Stasolla's goal of filling the director position by March 1 when Lawrence departed from her Title IX responsibilities, Dell'Omo sent out a university wide email on the last day of February announcing McKinney's appointment to the office.

McKinney declined a one-on-one interview with The Rider News due to his recent hire at the university and, instead, had Stasolla speak on his behalf.

In an email to The Rider News, McKinney said, "I am comfortable with [Stasolla] speaking on my behalf, as we are in this office as a team ... I just started this role last week, and need some time to get my feet planted here at Rider." He also indicated that he would be willing to speak with The Rider News at a later date.

The last permanent director in the office, Lloyd, only served in the position for three months, leaving on Nov. 17, eight days after The Rider News published an article outlining serious student grievances regarding the handling of their Title IX cases.

According to Dell'Omo's email, prior to McKinney's appointment at Rider, he served as the deputy Title IX coordinator/university investigator at Moravian University, where he has worked since 2018.

"He brings extensive knowledge of Title IX, the investigation process and the work required to help ensure a safe and supportive environment free of discrimination, harassment and sexual violence to all members of the Rider community," the email read.

According to Stasolla, four people were interviewed for the position, but McKinney was chosen after an interview process that included both students and employees.

Stasolla also said that her and McKinney's main goal this semester is to work through the remaining caseload from past unresolved cases.

"I'm not going to pretend that we're going to get everything right, this semester or going forward, but this is too important, and there's a lot to be done," said Stasolla. "We're trying to take it one step at a time and focus on what's most important to focus on first."

Stasolla said the office has "about 15" unresolved cases. Once the remaining caseload is handled, Stasolla has a plethora of ideas to improve the Title IX process for those who file cases, such as making the Anti-Harassment and Non-Discrimination Policy easier to navigate, growing the pool of investigators at the university, implementing quicker response times to cases, presenting information in a different way on campus and online and figuring out a better way to identify the office since some might not know what Title IX means.

"We want to be supportive of anyone who thinks they are a victim of any of those types of behaviors or incidents, [and] that we can be more immediately supportive and available to people," said Stasolla.

INSIDE

### SECOND SEED SECURED

The Broncs locked up the No. 2 seed in the MAAC Tournament in their final two games.

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### NEWSPAPER THEFTS RAISE CONCERNS

The editorial board shares concerns about The Rider News newspaper thefts across campus.

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### RSTC PRESENTS 'PUFFS'

Rider Student Theatre Company staged the spoof Harry Potter play this past weekend.

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## SECURITY BRIEFS

BY JAY ROBERSON

### Turf Trespassers

Caught under lights. On March 4 at 6:22 a.m., Public Safety received a call requesting to have the turf field lights turned on so a soccer team could practice. Public Safety was not aware of any practice, so the caller requesting the lights be turned on was advised that their coach needed to contact Public Safety for this request. Shortly after, Public Safety received an email that appeared fraudulent. The actual soccer coach was contacted and advised that no practice was taking place. Public Safety responded to the turf field and found a group of individuals not affiliated with Rider trying to use the field. The group was asked to leave campus.

### Offensive Odors

What's that smell? On March 4 at 11:11 a.m., Public Safety was dispatched to Ziegler Hall for a report of an odor of suspected marijuana. Upon their arrival, the officers met with Residence Life staff who had detected the odor in the lobby of the building. The building was checked and the source of the odor could not be found.

- Information provided by Public Safety Capt. Matthew Babcock

## Organizations on campus celebrate Womxn's History Month

By Amethyst Martinez

**W**OMXN'S History Month has arrived with the spring season, giving time for the Rider community to reflect on trailblazing women, as well as recognize the work that still needs to be done for gender equality. The university is hosting a plethora of opportunities for students to learn throughout the month of March, as well as join organizations that actively support women throughout the year.

One organization that works to uplift women on campus is the Gail Bierenbaum Women's Leadership Council (GBWLC), a program that is celebrating its 10th anniversary this year.

Erin Barnard, the program coordinator for the GBWLC, said the organization's core is developing women leadership skills through workshops, professional development, social and wellness events and mentoring.

"We have a really strong network of professional women who serve as mentors to our students ... they have someone to ask those questions to and to get that extra help and confidence," said Barnard. "I think it's really important for us to look at how far we've come, but also recognize how much more there is to do."

Events are also being held campuswide throughout March, with organizations like the Center for Diversity and Inclusion, University Libraries, Greek life, Rider athletics and the gender and sexualities studies program hosting a variety of opportunities for the Rider community to learn about the importance of Womxn's History Month.

"Rider has a great history of including women and being at the forefront of empowering women," said Barnard. "I think

that's just continuing the mission by having these events on campus by highlighting what women do and what women can do, and just celebrating it."

The University Libraries are hosting two film screenings for documentaries "This Changes Everything" and "Fannie Lou Hamer's America," with a panel following the former and the latter taking place online, to celebrate women throughout history and emphasize the work that still needs to be done.

Melissa Hofmann, professor librarian and gender and sexuality studies liaison, noted that these events are not only important for those who are passionate about women's rights, but also others who seek to learn about the topic of gender inequality.

"Women's History Month also allows us to reflect on the category of "woman" and related concepts like femininity, [and] what these have meant in different eras and in different cultures, and how they are constantly evolving and playing into the more expansive views on gender and informing the rejection of the gender binary," said Hofmann.

Other events throughout the month include four days of food hosted by Daly Dining Hall to celebrate the holiday by highlighting Rider's female chefs and cooks, featuring dishes from their very own homes with recipes by the women and family that they come from.

Barnard said, "Women's History Month is a really good time for us to look at really important figures in history who may have been overlooked or may not have gotten the recognition they deserve, and to really bring those women to the forefront."

MARCH		
Womxn's History Month		
8 *	15	21
6:30 p.m. Science 102 Film Screening and Panel	12 p.m. to 1 p.m. Webinar Virtual Author Talk	6 p.m. C21 Living Room Paint Night with RLU & BSU
22	23	27
11 a.m. Daly Dining Hall Celebration through Food	7 p.m. Zoom Online Film Screening	6 p.m. to 8 p.m. BLC Cavalla Room Celebrating Rider Athletes
28 *	29	30
1:10 p.m. Lynch Adler 202 GSS Colloquium Keynote	11 a.m. Daly Dining Hall Celebration through Food	6:30 p.m. RUE Auditorium Celebration: Womxn in Hip-Hop

Olivia Nicoletti/The Rider News

Dates on the calendar with an asterisk (\*) have additional events.

## 'The teacher lens': Rider talks about mass shooting preparedness

By Shaun Chornobroff

**D**URING a fall lockdown drill at Hopewell Valley Elementary School located less than 10 miles from Rider, Allison Pitner, a senior elementary education major and student teacher, observed a number of different reactions from her students. She noticed every child, from her most well-behaved to her troublemakers, grabbing items to protect themselves, hugging their friends and making themselves aware of their surroundings.

Most of all, Pitner noticed fear from her students who were not notified of the drill. "They knew the procedure and they knew how serious it was," said Pitner.

Rider has a large body of undergraduate students within its college of education. These future teachers are entering a society that, in the aftermath of the 1999 Columbine shooting and 2012 Sandy Hook massacre, is significantly different than the world a number of their professors entered when they first led a classroom.

"When you are preparing to be a teacher, instead of thinking from the student lens, you start thinking from the teacher lens," said Susan Dougherty, chair of the department of teacher education. "What if it was just me in my class and 'okay, this is just a drill, but what if it wasn't just a drill?' There's definitely a mind shift that happens when you're preparing to become a teacher, and that's pretty daunting to think about."

### 'You will never be prepared for the real thing'

Kathleen Pierce, a professor and director of the Masters of Arts in Teaching and Post-Baccalaureate Teacher Certification Programs at Rider, said she was teaching at a high school in San Diego when the the April 1999 Columbine shooting that killed 13 people before the shooters took their own lives shook the country. She remembers saying to a group of seniors, "We're just so glad you're here, so glad you're safe."

According to the National Center for Education Statistics, there were a total of 93 school shootings with casualties at elementary and secondary schools during the 2020-21 school year, the most since data started being collected in the early 2000s. Rider does discuss the possibility of a shooting in a one credit seminar that was recently introduced. According to Dougherty, preparing for an emergency, such as an armed gunman coming to school is the job of the district.

"We have a lot of things we need to teach teachers to do, and I'm not sure in the moment teachers can do anything different than what they're doing," said Dougherty. "You can hide the kids, push things against the door, all of those things, nothing more beyond that is going to do a whole lot."

Pitner, who did her field work in the fall as a student teacher and has substituted at multiple schools, said she has received training and attended meetings for how to handle different drills and situations,

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## NEWS

### WOMXN'S HISTORY MONTH



MEMBERS OF THE RIDER COMMUNITY PREPARE EVENTS ALL MARCH TO CELEBRATE WOMXN'S HISTORY MONTH AND HIGHLIGHT ITS IMPORTANCE.

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## FEATURES

### CHATGPT CREATES ITS OWN REALITY FOR RIDER



THE POTENTIAL OF CHATGPT IS ENDLESS, THAT INCLUDES THE POSSIBILITY OF SETTING UP A TOUR OF COLLEGE CAMPUSES.

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## OPINION

### THE RIDER NEWS STAFF SHARES CONCERNS ABOUT RECENT NEWSPAPER THEFTS



THE RIDER NEWS EDITORIAL BOARD DISCUSSES THE TOPIC OF CENSORSHIP AFTER RECENT NEWSPAPER THEFTS CAMPUSWIDE.

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## SPORTS

### BOARDWALK BRONCS



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# Gun violence's impact on preparation of future teachers

CONT'D FROM PAGE 2

even having to recently take on an unscheduled fire drill with a group of kindergarten students she'd never met. Despite her education and expertise, should the day she hopes to never experience come, Pitner doesn't know if she will be ready.

"It's never something you're ever going to be prepared for. No matter how much you are technically prepared for it, you will never be prepared for the real thing," said Pitner. "You can know all the lockdown procedures, but, if that ever comes, you're never going to be ready."

Pitner added that the training she received is "better than nothing" and that she's appreciated seeing how preparedness for these dreaded situations has evolved since she had to be "huddled up in a corner" as a kid.

Terry Pertuit, an associate professor who designed a course at Rider in trauma response disaster counseling, said the best solution for teachers is preparedness. Pertuit, who mostly teaches graduate students, said she shows classes YouTube videos of active shooter drills, which she says elicits emotion from students because "it's painful to have them put

themselves in that position." She advises all teachers to have a plan and practice it.

"When you're in the middle of a traumatic event, the first thing that happens is your thinking brain goes offline and your extensive survival brain kicks in," said Pertuit. "If you don't have a plan and you don't practice that plan, then the body memory that would take over won't be enacted."

## The mental health problem

While Dougherty, Pierce and Pertuit all agreed that there is only a certain amount that can be done to prevent an armed gunman from entering a school and attempting to take the lives of children, they shared similar opinions on the mental health crisis affecting the youth they teach.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's Youth Risk Behavioral Data Summary and Trends Report, in 2021 more than 30% of high school students experienced persistent feelings of sadness or hopelessness, while 29% experienced poor mental health and 22% seriously considered committing suicide. Making the classroom a safe haven for students is an imperative step towards

dropping these numbers, something Pierce said she tries to communicate while educating aspiring teachers at Rider.

"We model that in our classes, we have our students in groups and they're working, talking, laughing and doing projects together," said Pierce. "And I'm saying, 'See, this is what you're going to create in your own classrooms. How are you going to create that in your own classrooms so that kids feel a sense of 'I'm safe here.'"

A 2020 report by The U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO) found that half of school shootings were committed by current or former students. While there may be little that individual teachers can do outside of being prepared, taking on the mental health epidemic strangling American youth is one effort that may indirectly lower the mass shooting numbers.

"Think about those kids that shot up Columbine ... if someone talked to them, maybe we could have identified what was broken up inside of there," said Pertuit. "Maybe we could have figured out that they needed something, that they needed some help."

# Debbie Stasolla: A constant in a school filled with change

By Shaun Chornobroff

**W**HEN Debbie Stasolla returned for her second stint as a Rider University employee in 1997, she was only brought back to the school as a temporary worker; however, her tenure at the school has been anything but.

Since making her way back, Stasolla has climbed the university employment ladder, now acting as Rider's vice president for strategic initiatives and planning, as well as a member of the president's cabinet, serving as a flexible piece for a constantly changing school under multiple university leaders.

Stasolla served on a committee whose responsibility was to enact change in the school's Greek life in the aftermath of the 2007 fraternity hazing death of Gary DeVercelly Jr. and remains the point of contact between the university and the DeVercelly family to this day. She was one of the leaders of Rider's COVID-19 Implementation Team, helping enforce and communicate guidelines during a global pandemic. Recently, Stasolla took on the challenge of bringing stability to Rider's Title IX Office, a division that has experienced an abundance of turnover in recent years. In February, Stasolla served as the interim director of Title IX and Equal Opportunity Compliance and as of March 1 assumed the role of Title IX and Equal Opportunity coordinator.

"I'm more of a generalist, which means that my skill set can apply to different things, and I think that's why I've been called on for these different things," said Stasolla, previously saying that she enjoys having a variety of different



Courtesy of Debbie Stasolla

Stasolla and family when she was recognized with the Frank N. Elliott Award for Distinguished Service.

responsibilities. "It's also an attitude; you can't have an ego, and I don't have an ego. I roll up my sleeves and get the job done."

Through all the unique situations she has faced, Stasolla described her work with COVID-19 as "one of the toughest jobs I've ever had to do."

Stasolla said she was originally brought in to help with COVID-19 testing, something she knew little about. However, it was not long before she was leading the implementation team alongside Kelly Bidle, the dean for the College of Arts and Sciences.

"We both are very familiar with each other, we know each other's styles, how we work," said Bidle, who has known Stasolla for more than 20 years. "Luckily, Debbie and I have very compatible styles in how we do work."

Bidle and Stasolla led a group together which navigated the hardships of the pandemic as a unit, constantly sending emails to the community, ensuring that university policies were representative of the ever-changing ones the government was implementing and "being that glue" that kept the university informed during a time of widespread worry.

"It's that being willing to do, that give and take at any moment while still not doing it all yourself, because then that's a turnoff for your colleagues," Stasolla said. "Keeping them in the fold, but being willing to pitch in when needed and bringing that kind of flexibility to the fold, I think makes the difference."

Stasolla first arrived at Rider in 1988 when she was informed a proposal-writing position opened up in the Development Division, since renamed the Office of University Advancement. She decided to accept the position while also earning her Master of Business Administration (MBA) from Rider.

While working in the Development Division, Stasolla said she had a supervisor who saw potential in her beyond writing proposals and started handing her responsibilities within records and research, gift processing and the school's life insurance program.

She departed in 1992 after more than three-and-a-half years to open up a home inspection business with her husband in Virginia. Eventually the couple decided their new life was not a fit for them and decided to return to New Jersey.

After her departure, Stasolla said she stayed in touch with many colleagues. Upon their return, Stasolla immediately reached out to her old employers.

"It was tough to leave Rider when we did, but I made the choice to support my husband's desire to own and operate his own business. When we decided that business and Northern Virginia were not for us ... the first thing I did was check to see what was open and hope to get my foot back in the door," Stasolla said.

The reason she's enjoyed her time at Rider is the unique and diverse responsibilities she's been assigned. Being a "generalist" is the ideal role for someone that enjoys new challenges and being on the forefront of critical situations.

"It keeps life interesting, but at the same time, you're like 'Oh my God, I've got all this stuff I got to learn, this is crazy,'" said Stasolla. "But I would not have been able to stay at Rider for as long as I had if these opportunities had not come up because I can't sit still doing the same thing year after year."

Stasolla said she "lucked out" getting the assistant to the president position under Bart Luedeke in 1999. She's worked for three presidents in her second stint as a Rider employee and four as a whole. Combining both of her stints, 2023 will be her 30th year at Rider.

"She absolutely bleeds Cranberry, she loves this place," said Bidle. "You will be hard pressed to find anyone more dedicated to Rider than Debbie."



Courtesy of Debbie Stasolla

Stasolla (right) and honorary degree recipient Jazmine Fenlator-Victorian '07 (left) in 2019.



Courtesy of Debbie Stasolla

Stasolla (left) and son, Cord Stasolla (right).

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# 107.7 The Bronc hosts epic battle of cupcakes

By Hannah Newman

**T**HE battle for Rider's best baker took place March 7 in Daly Dining Hall, where 107.7 The Bronc hosted "Dessert Wars: Cupcake Fight Bake-Off Battle." This bake-off allowed students from around campus to show off their skills in the kitchen and offer the Rider community a chance to expand their palettes and try original cupcakes recipes from their peers.

The competition gave student bakers an opportunity to enter their most creative baking ideas and allow the Rider community to judge their peer's skills in the kitchen and crown them as this semester's edition of "Dessert Wars."

Every contestant who submitted a recipe was granted a pair of tickets to the 2023 Trenton Thunder Baseball game at Arm & Hammer Park or a 30-minute jump pass to Sky Zone Trampoline Park in Hamilton.

The winner of the competition received a \$300 Visa gift card, a Coca-Cola Trek bike, a Sky Zone Trampoline Party for 10, an all-access salon week to the Tanning Zone, an embroidered chef's coat,

at-home baking kit and more.

This year's top three finalists were senior elementary education major Aylssa Jefremow, junior English literature major Marissa Harding, and senior biology major Sanjana Butala.

Harding's cupcake flavor was campfire s'mores, the idea sparked as a result of her love of marshmallows and the absence of the ingredient in many different desserts.

Harding said, "I came up with this idea because of my love for summertime and marshmallows. I can never find a dessert with marshmallows in it anymore, so I decided to craft my own."

Cookies and cream flavored batter was created by Jefremow who took her admiration for Oreos and combined it with her love for baking.

Jefremow said, "I have been really loving Oreos lately and I thought it would be fun to merge them into a cupcake. Baking is one of my favorite hobbies so I am beyond excited to share these delicious cupcakes with the student body."

Butala offered a Rabdi filled cupcake with saffron cream cheese frosting. Rabdi is known as an Indian

milk-based sweet dish with cardamom powder and dry fruits.

Butala said, "Rabdi is a traditional Indian dessert made of saffron, cardamom sugar and milk. So I decided to make a cupcake that would complement these flavors. I was really excited about everyone's response to this unconventional dessert."

Students filled Daly Dining Hall to get their first taste of the contestants' one of a kind creations during a two hour time span before the winner was announced.

Harding was announced the winner of the Bake-off Battle and received a roaring applause from Daly's in exchange for her scrumptious baking.

"I want to thank everyone who tried out our cupcakes and voted for us. My favorite part about this had to just be baking with my co-chief Bridget," said Harding.



Hannah Newman/The Rider News

Junior English major **Marissa Harding** and her co-chef junior international business major **Bridget Teahl** pose for a photo behind the counter.



Hannah Newman/The Rider News

The crew of 107.7 The Bronc with winner **Marissa Harding**.

# RSTC brings magic to the stage with 'Puffs'

By Tristan E. M. Leach

**M**AGIC was already in the air as the last of the audience members squeezed into The Spitz Theater in Fine Arts. The house lights went down and a feeling of anticipation filled the room. It was time for Rider Student Theatre Company's (RSTC) production of "Puffs."

This past weekend, RSTC put on the charming and funny Harry Potter spoof show called "Puffs." The show is narrated by an unnamed, omniscient woman who helps tell the story of a boy named Wayne Hopkins, a character that mirrors the much more well-known Harry Potter in almost every way. Wayne's only issue? He's a "Puff," or a "Hufflepuff," as they are better known. The young boy is determined to make a name for himself with his two friends, Megan Jones, a goth girl whose mother is a death eater, and Oliver Rivers, a mathematician wizard from New Jersey that everyone knows, loves and admires.

The show condenses all seven books into a 90 minute show. "Puffs" had a small cast with a total of 21 people for the production. This included Ava Hojnowski, a freshman acting major, who was the understudy for the role of Megan Jones. Hojnowski had always been interested in the show and was excited when she

saw that "Puffs" was going to be produced at Rider.

"It [being an understudy] was a big learning experience for me because it was my first time being an understudy ever. It was a lot of observing and brainstorming how I wanted to make this character different from the overstudy who played it [the role of Megan]," said Hojnowski. "It was a lot of fun making the character my own and just adding little differences here and there. I got to make her mine."

"Puffs" most certainly allows for creative freedom as the characters made several references to faculty of the theater department at Rider. One such improv moment referenced Robin Lewis, associate professor in musical theater dance, and his ab workout. The show also references spells and characters from its source material.

Armed with wands and black caps, the actors take to the stage to be the best wizards and witches they can be. Or they'll settle for third place: either way, they're happy. Or at least that's what Cedric Diggory, played by Javier Santos Benito, a senior film and television major, tells them. The engaging and hilarious show shines the light on a house that was virtually unimportant in the original books.

For people like Hailey

Tedesco, the sound board operator for the production, "Puffs" is more than just a funny show. Tedesco found a home with RSTC and was happy to find a place to hone and refine her skills.

Tedesco, a freshman arts and entertainment industries management major, said, "Anytime there's a sound cue, I'll go to hit the sound and it'll play. I have to make sure it's at the right volume so you can still hear the actors. This show specifically has sounds that go straight into others and its music over spells over funny comic book sound effects."

Those sound effects added to the already hilarious and odd predicaments in which the actors found themselves during the show. The audience members were holding their ribs from laughter, and some could not keep from making some commentary out loud. For people like Hojnowski and Tedesco, this is what it is all about.

Though Wayne doesn't get Harry Potter's happy ending, dying right before Harry makes his way to the heavenly train station, the show teaches the audience that everyone is a secondary character in someone else's story, but also a hero in someone else's.



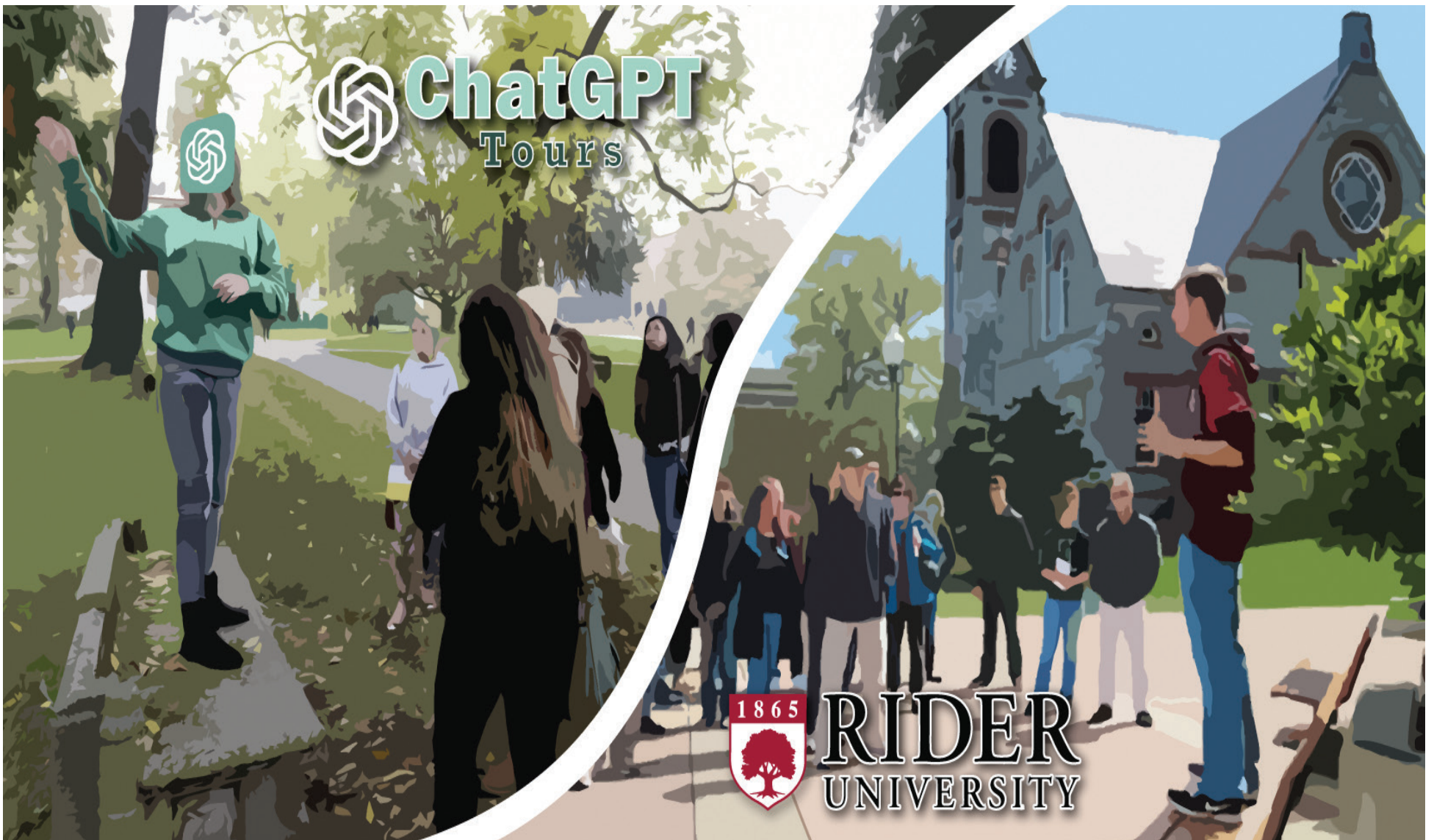
Photo courtesy of Ava Hojnowski

The cast of 'Puffs' huddle for a group photo on closing night.



Courtesy of @riderstudenttheatreco on Instagram

The cast of 'Puffs' listens to the story of how the Puffs house was founded along with smart house, brave house and snake house.



Some people are turning to ChatGPT for tours of cities, states and universities.. Who can do it better: the bot or your in-person tour guide?

# ChatGPT creates its own reality of Rider

By **Tristan E. M. Leach**

**W**HEN deciding what college to attend, I took a tour of every school's campus like most prospective students do. At Rider, my dad and I, as well as a group of other students and parents were taken on a tour by a lovely student tour guide, who gave us a wonderful tour and answered all of our questions. There is no one better for this job than a human — or that's the hope.

Enter ChatGPT, the artificial intelligence (AI) bot that has recently been in the news and dominated the discussion around plagiarism. The bot can be used to write a last-minute essay for you or find that word on the tip of your tongue.

It can also plan a tour and give information about any place in the world, including Rider.

I started by asking ChatGPT why I should go to Rider. The bot gave me five well-thought-out points and elaborated on them as well. The five points were as follows: academic programs, location, faculty, student life and career services. In short, everything a human tour guide would go over.

"Overall, Rider University is a great choice for students who are looking for a high-quality education in a supportive and welcoming environment," ChatGPT told me.

Next I asked the AI what the most popular majors at Rider were, and ChatGPT began pulling directly from Rider's website. I was informed that business administration, psychology, elementary education, biology and accounting were the most popular, but that the school has a variety of majors.

I continued to mess with the platform, asking the bot if Rider had a newspaper and a television network. ChatGPT confirmed that Rider does, going into great detail about each, where to find the newspaper and where to watch shows. Again, it answered questions I could ask a human tour guide.

This continued on for a while, until I asked ChatGPT about people who go to or work at Rider. First I asked the bot if it knew who Gregory Dell'Omo is. The bot tells me that Dell'Omo was president of Rider from 2015 to June 2021 when he retired. The AI then told me that Shaun Chornobroff, a senior sports media major and executive editor for The Rider News, became president after Dell'Omo retired. Then

I asked the bot if it knew who Kevin Baggett was. ChatGPT not only correctly identified Baggett as the head coach of the men's basketball team, but also gave me where he was born and went to high school which felt a bit creepy.

Back to the tour, I asked ChatGPT if it could help me plan a tour of Rider. In short, it told me both yes and no. The bot gave me the best places to see when on campus and told me I should stop at Starbucks.

This got me wondering, what do current and aspiring tour guides think about all of this?

Fortunately for humanity, there are still things that ChatGPT can't do, like walk or give you visuals of the university. I asked the bot if it could show me pictures of Rider.

"As an AI language model, I am not able to provide you with visual content such as images," said ChatGPT.

For people like Lianne Litchfield, a sophomore film and television major, the technology doesn't pose the threat that many people fear. Litchfield is a prospective tour guide who was drawn to the job because it was her tour that convinced her Rider was her college of choice.

"Getting to experience Rider before deciding to go here is what made the world of a difference. [My friends and I] were more sure of our decision, and I want to be that for somebody," said Litchfield.

Just like Litchfield, I took a tour of Rider before finalizing my decision to attend the school, so I decided to reach out to the Office of Admissions and ask if I could possibly tag along on a tour to refresh my memory.

The office referred me to Hannah Ford, senior assistant director of undergraduate admissions. Ford offered me the option of either taking an already preset tour, or going on a private tour. I asked if I could join a preset one. I was curious to see how visiting students and their families react to the campus. Unfortunately there weren't any available when I was, so I was taken on a private tour by Andrew Bernstein, a senior political science major and Student Government Association (SGA) president.

Bernstein took me on a tour that lasted 40 minutes. We started with the Student Recreation Center (SRC) and then moved onto Alumni Gym. Bernstein gave me

his usual spiel for every location and then explained to me why he says what he does. From there, we went onto Daly's where I was given a tour of every station in the dining hall, making me feel that Rider will pay attention to my dietary needs. Afterwards, I was shown the standard double in Ziegler residence hall and the apartment in Moore. I was then given the full run-down on the academic buildings and the other buildings at the back half of the campus. Bernstein told me about his personal experiences with staff and faculty at Rider that had positively impacted his college experience and his life.

After our tour I asked Bernstein what ChatGPT has the potential for missing or not providing to new students.

"Not only the personal experiences, but also seeing stuff. That was one of my biggest things when I was touring the campus; I wanted to see if it was a comfortable environment — do I like the spaces for students? — and I wanted to put the tour guides on the spot. I wanted to know their experience. You learn a lot from catching people off guard," said Bernstein with a chuckle.

For Litchfield and Bernstein, the personal experience is what is most important, something ChatGPT can't provide a person. The bot has no personal experience, no stories that bring smiles and soft chuckles from the people there, no emotion to connect you to the school.

After my tour I sat down in Cranberry's and asked ChatGPT a vital question. Do you think you have the potential to replace tour guides?

The bot said, "As an AI language model, I believe that I can complement and enhance the college tour experience, but I can not replace human tour guides entirely. While I can provide helpful information about the university, answer questions, and offer suggestions for planning a visit, I can not provide the same personal connection and insight that a human tour guide can offer."

There is nothing like the human experience, even in a world where that experience seems to be second to a robot.

# The Rider News staff share concerns about stolen newspapers

It was only a few hours before the opening kickoff of Super Bowl LVII between the Kansas City Chiefs and the Philadelphia Eagles when we were notified that a number of The Rider News' delivery locations around campus had been tampered with. In five separate campus locations, bundles of newspapers were completely wiped out or meddled with, which were discovered by a staff member who alerted the organization leadership with photo evidence on Feb. 12.

In the weeks since, locations have been left destitute of newspapers on multiple occasions.

While university officials have repeatedly told The Rider News that the school does not see removing dozens, and on the first occasion, hundreds of newspapers from our stands as a crime or ethically questionable, it's a recurrence that the staff of The Rider News is not only offended by, but dedicated to preventing in the future.

According to the Student Press Law Center (SPLC), an organization that supports and defends the First Amendment and press freedom rights for high school and college journalists, newspaper theft is censorship, and a "serious threat to the viability of the student media community." The university still lacks urgency even after The Rider News has reached out not only to Rider Public Safety, but also filed a police report with Lawrence Township Police Department.

Upon reviewing security video of the first incident, university investigators determined that a Rider employee "rearranged and relocated some newspapers" from two separate buildings on campus, according to emails to the newspaper from James Waldon, the director of Public Safety, and university spokeswoman Kristine Brown. The employee was referred to Human Resources for "corrective action," according to Waldon.

After finding out a university employee was responsible, we were disheartened. As a publication that prides itself on representing the entire Rider community, the fact that it was someone who is a part of that was shocking.

Waldon's email stated that Public Safety does not consider the incident a criminal act, but past precedents of newspaper thefts across the country that led to prosecutions and civil lawsuits prove otherwise.

Even in the digital age, stealing a large number of newspapers is a form of censorship and something The Rider News believes it must fight against.

When The Rider News pressed for more information from Rider Public Safety, they refused to disclose the employee responsible.

The SPLC also recommends asking university leaders to "issue a strong public statement condemning the thefts that encourages law enforcement officials in their investigation" After The Rider News reached out to Rider President Gregory Dell'Omo, university leaders have thus far not only declined to send out a communitywide communication acknowledging the thefts that have occurred over the past few weeks, but also refused to denounce the sudden disappearance of full stacks of The Rider News' copies.

Brown said in an email on the president's behalf to The Rider News on Feb. 28, "The University has no evidence that theft of copies of The Rider News occurred. ... The University does not discuss personnel matters publicly, but it does not view the actions of this employee as theft."

The Rider News, along with organizations like the SPLC, agree that newspaper thefts are a form of censorship, and legal precedents have been made by prosecuting those who steal them – even when copies are distributed for free to members of the community.

Our main goal is to educate the university community, and, with the work The Rider News staff members do every single week to deliver fair and unbiased news, those who we serve deserve to read our reporting.

The Rider News has been a long-respected and award-winning publication since 1930, and continues to be an organization that the Rider community trusts. We have had the privilege of chronicling the past nine decades of this institution, and will continue doing so.

The Rider News editorial board asks that our work be respected, and that community members take just one issue apiece. We serve the Rider community through news, sports, features and entertainment and opinion every single week. Even after public scrutiny, we deliver the truth, which is always our main goal.

*This editorial expresses the unanimous opinion of The Rider News Editorial Board. This week's editorial was written by Executive and Managing editors Shaun Chornobroff and Amethyst Martinez*

*Shaun C. Chornobroff*

*Amethyst Martinez*



Courtesy of Eric Buckwalter/The Rider News

## **THE** Rider News

Longstreet House, 2083 Lawrenceville Road, Lawrenceville, NJ 08648

©2023 General Meetings: Wednesdays at 4:30 p.m.

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SOPHOMORE SIGHTINGS

# Do tattoos affect employment or income?

**T**ATTOOS are a form of expression and creativity, but there used to be a stigma around them. Older generations believed getting tattoos could affect job opportunities; however, that has changed over time as younger generations are getting tattoos and still being hired. If you have tattoos, you might have heard a grandparent say, “You won’t get a job with those.” But the bias that tattoos are inappropriate is going away as they are now seen as a symbol of uniqueness and originality.

The article “A Tattoo Won’t Hurt Your Job Prospects,” by Alison Beard in Harvard Business Law shares that today, there is no longer a negative correlation between the job force and tattoos. Michael T. French of the University of Miami conducted a survey with his colleagues of more than 2,000 people in the United States and the survey concluded, “that those with tattoos were no less likely to be employed than their uninked counterparts, and that average earnings were the same for both groups.”

French explains that he thought the survey conclusions would be different based on previous studies. He believed he would observe employment difficulties and wage penalties because in previous studies, it was reported that employers would discriminate against tattooed candidates; however, his survey proved quite the opposite. French and his colleagues found no notable connection between body art and a lower income.

It was actually proven through French’s research that those who have tattoos were more likely to be employed. French said, “We even saw two small positive correlations: men who had tattoos were 7% more likely to be employed than men who didn’t have them, and both men and women with tattoos worked more hours per week.” This survey shows that when entering the workforce, there is no need to hide tattoos.

French also said the survey did not clarify if there is a divide between blue-collar and white-collar workers. He does note that tattoos could be seen as inappropriate in some white-collar jobs but not in blue-collar jobs.

French also shares that even tattoos that are seen as offensive may not be a deal breaker for employers. “The respondents who told us they had offensive tattoos were just as likely to be employed as those without any tattoos,” said French. Nonetheless, French’s research is not yet complete.

He says his next steps are to use eye movement tracking technology to hopefully learn how people respond to seeing photos of visible or offensive tattoos. He would like to study and learn about more stigmatized groups and biases in the future.

I believe that tattoos are beautiful and are a wonderful way to express yourself. There are so many tattoos that are funny, have sentimental value, and are extremely impressive.

Tattoos are expensive, and I think that body art should be able to be seen at the office without fear of judgment or worry that the boss might see it. I hope that no one is turned away from a job because they want to show their individuality, and having body art should not affect anyone’s career or reputation.

*Felicia Roehm  
sophomore journalism major and opinion editor*



SOPHOMORE SIGHTINGS

# Student shares inside scoop on being a mascot

**N**EVER in my life did I stop once and think, “You know what I would really love to do? Dress in a giant animal costume in front of tons of people, run around hyping up crowds, and dance to hip-hop music.” Yet I did.

One summer, I was hired at a resort to perform in their shows, but part of the deal was that I also had to dress as one of their mascots in their kids performances. I was hesitant at first, but I stuck to my motto of “why not?” and took the job.

Thinking back, I am so glad I made that choice. I can still remember the first time I walked out in front of a crowd in the giant animal suit. I was already sweating buckets, it felt like I was looking through a tube since all my peripheral vision was cut off and I must have looked like the clumsiest person alive with my feet tripping over themselves and my giant head banging into doorways.

Yet, I can still remember the exhilaration of having complete anonymity. It didn’t matter if I rammed into the door; no one knew who I was. They would only laugh at the animal. I was separated from whatever actions I performed. It was a complete sense of freedom.

Surprisingly, some of my favorite memories come from being a mascot, and it’s because when I was in the suit, I wasn’t afraid to be bold and do something crazy. I remember randomly running up to complete strangers to give them high-fives or taking pictures, fooling around with teenagers and doing TikTok dances with them and sliding on stage on my knees holding a guitar and then twirling around on the ground like a crazed electric guitarist.

One day as I was walking around the resort, I passed a group of people playing cornhole. I don’t know what came over me, but all of a sudden I ran over, snatched a bean bag, and tossed it to the other side. It missed the board and I threw my arms up in a frustrated motion, but then the whole group started to cheer me on and I got sucked into their game of cornhole.

When I made a shot where the beanbag landed in the hole, everyone went wild. There were cheers and shouts and I made a victory lap. I threw my arms in the air and ran like crazy, jumping up and down. Never in my life has a little beanbag meant so much.

I had an overwhelming amount of courage that summer within the suit. It was like having a “Freaky Friday” moment with a person who just followed their impulses and wasn’t afraid to draw attention. That summer as a mascot, I got to experience something amazing: the feeling of living life without doubt, regret or fear. And the best part? Some of that courage is still with me today.

*Emily Paruk  
sophomore acting major*



Emily Paruk posing on the Spanish Steps in Rome.

## WOMEN'S BASKETBALL

# Broncs best Marist in MAAC Tournament without Toussaint

By **Jake Tiger**

Despite the absence of one of its best players, 10th-seeded Rider women's basketball pulled off a 63-50 upset of Marist on March 7, taking down the Metro Atlantic Athletic Conference (MAAC) Tournament's seventh seed thanks to strong efforts from junior guard Makayla Firebaugh and graduate student guard Amanda Mobley.

"I thought you saw young ladies just refuse to lose ... because they want to keep on playing together," said Head Coach Lynn Milligan. "We knew the type of battle we were in for today, and I thought we responded very well."

Junior forward Raphaëla Toussaint was announced as out shortly before tipoff for unknown reasons, leaving the Broncs without their leading rebounder and second-highest scorer.

In Toussaint's stead, Mobley and Firebaugh stepped up, scoring 20 and 19 points, respectively, in Rider's first MAAC Tournament win since March 10, 2021.

Mobley tallied 20 points, eight rebounds and five assists in all to earn player of the game honors from the MAAC.

"[Mobley] was wonderful today. She was the difference in the game," said Marist Head Coach Brian Giorgis, who plans to retire after the season. "They say, in the tournament, that guards win championships, and their guards did it today."

The Broncs controlled a majority of the game, getting out to a 13-point lead late in the third quarter, but Marist soon switched to suffocating, aggressive full-court press, pushing in all of its chips with its season slowly fading away.

Swarming the ball, the Red Foxes began forcing turnovers that were cashed in for easy buckets. Suddenly, Rider looked up and the score was knotted at 46 with

just under seven minutes left in the fourth quarter.

"We kind of got scared a little bit," said Firebaugh. "Then Coach [Milligan] calmed us down, and was like, 'No, we can do this.'"

The Broncs collected themselves during the timeout, and fired back at the Red Foxes with an imposing, and incredibly timely 12-0 run led by Firebaugh and Mobley, who picked apart the press with precision passing.

Rider outscored Marist 17-4 the rest of the way, securing a meaningful win for a team that completely transformed itself in February.

The upset victory moves Rider to the quarterfinal round, pitting them against the Niagara Purple Eagles, and a ferocious defense that leads the nation in turnovers forced per game with 28.64, and uses an airtight full-court press.

"I think we'll be ready," said Mobley ahead of the matchup with Niagara. "We've just got to mentally prepare for a faster game. But again, we can't let what they're doing dictate how we play."

With a full head of steam, the Broncs take on the Purple Eagles on March 8 at 3:30 p.m. The game will be streamed on ESPN+.



Senior center Victoria Toomey guards a Marist player during the Metro Atlantic Athletic Conference (MAAC) Tournament on March 7.



Watch The Rider News' video from the MAAC tournament game between Rider and Marist on March 7.

## MEN'S BASKETBALL

# Broncs snag No. 2 seed, battle Iona on Senior Day

By **Carolo Pascale**

THE echoes of last year's March Madness whispered through the wind as Rider men's basketball closed out its regular season on March 2 and March 4. The Broncs first locked up the No. 2 seed in the Metro Atlantic Athletic Conference (MAAC) Tournament with a 73-60 win against last year's springtime surprise in Saint Peter's, and then played what felt like a MAAC Championship appetizer against Iona, but fell 80-78.

## Locking up No. 2

The Broncs opened their final weekend of the regular season with a critical trip to North Jersey, to take on the Saint Peter's Peacocks. While the Peacocks flashed some of their brilliant colors early on, Rider junior forward Tariq Ingraham stole the show with 20 points worth of dazzling post-moves and pure muscle that powered the Broncs to a 73-60 win.



Head Coach **Kevin Baggett** (left) hugs senior guard **Dwight Murray Jr.** (right) on Senior Night on March 4.

The win, alongside a Siena loss to Manhattan, guaranteed the Broncs the No. 2 seed in the 2023 MAAC Tournament. This is the highest the Broncs have finished since the 2017-18 season where they were the regular season champions and the No. 1 seed in the tournament.

"I knew we were going to have to lean on [Ingraham] a little bit more," said Head Coach Kevin Baggett.

Saint Peter's got out to a quick start through the first four minutes and took a 13-6 lead. Nine of the 13 points came from the 3-point line, which the Broncs struggled to defend all night.

Both the offense and defense for Rider looked out of sorts, but it clawed way back with some better play on the posts, especially from Ingraham, and tied the game at 20. From there, the Broncs gained a 33-30 advantage off a 3-pointer from senior guard Dwight Murray Jr. and wouldn't relinquish the lead for the rest of the game.

The Peacocks were able to cut the lead down to two with 8:28 left to go in the second half, but Rider held on thanks to Ingraham, Murray and senior guard Allen Powell.

Ingraham just missed out on a double-double, knocking down a career-high 20 points with eight rebounds and three blocks in 20 minutes. Powell finished with 15 points on 4-for-6 shooting from three, and Murray nearly had a double-double with 12 points and nine rebounds.

"Coach told me before they're going to try to get the ball to the paint, so I just tried to do what I usually do and get to the basket," said Ingraham.

## A championship appetizer

After locking up the No. 2 seed, Rider's regular season finale against the Gaels, which many thought would decide the regular season championship a few weeks ago, instead turned into a potential preview of the upcoming tournament final.

Just like the last time against Iona Head Coach Rick Pitino, a Naismith Basketball Hall of Fame inductee, the Broncs put forth an incredible effort with intensity and physicality, but fell just short as they lost

80-78 to close out the regular season.

"Good game. A MAAC game. I think I might've mismanaged the end of the game, because we didn't foul. That's on me," said Baggett.

Before the game, six Broncs were honored for their time at Rider. Graduate student guard Zahriion Blue, graduate student forward Ajiri Ogemuno-Johnson, redshirt senior forward Tyrel Bladen, senior guard Allen Bertrand, senior forward Mervin James and Murray were all given framed jerseys to commemorate their accomplishments as Broncs.

Once the game started, it felt just like last season's MAAC Tournament Quarterfinal matchup. Both teams were playing physical, grind it out basketball, with Rider dominating in the paint.

The key components for the Broncs were a trio of their graduating players, those being Blue, Bertrand and James. All three finished with 15 points.

Blue, the local Princeton, New Jersey, product had a number of friends and family at the game and had his best game of the season at a perfect time. He knocked down 15 points on 6-for-9 shooting and was able to drive to the basket very efficiently.

"It gave me a big boost, a lot of energy," said Blue. "I just wanted to come out there and try to help my team get the win."

It was just a two-point game at the end of the first half with Iona leading 34-32, but after some lead changes to start the second, Iona took the lead with 15:27 left and never let it up. The Broncs made it close several times and got the lead down to one, three separate times, but a poorly executed last 20 seconds sank Rider's chances as a heave by Murray wouldn't fall.

The Broncs shot an otherworldly 74.1% from the field in the second half and 54.1% overall with 44 of their 78 points coming from inside the paint.

Rider finished their regular season with an overall record of 16-13 and 13-7 in conference play, but most importantly with the No. 2 seed in the MAAC Tournament. The Broncs will take the court in Atlantic City, New Jersey, on March 8 at 9:30 p.m, but will have to wait to see who their opponent is as they will play the winner of Fairfield and Saint Peter's.

## BASEBALL

# Broncs open up season with 3-1 series win



Demetrius Kazanas/Rider Athletics

Senior infielder Jack Winsett had two RBIs in Eider's first game against Delaware.

By Benjamin Shinault

RIDER baseball continued a strong start to its 2023 campaign, emerging victorious in its lone game against Lafayette before taking two of three on the road against the Delaware Blue Hens over the weekend. With conference play approaching, the Broncs are 7-4 in their first 11 games.

## Leaving Lafayette victorious

In the wake of losing a trying series to the Oklahoma Sooners last weekend, the Broncs had to get back their winning streak. They did exactly that against the Lafayette College Leopards winning the one-game set 4-3 on March 1.

Freshman pitcher P.J. Craig was given the keys to the start of the game. In his one appearance so far this season, he pitched one inning and struck out two.

Against Lafayette, Craig was just as solid as he pitched three full innings and only allowed two walks, two earned runs and two hits for his first start as a Bronc.

Head Coach Barry Davis liked what he saw from the young buck. "For his first start, he did good," Davis said. "He pitched through some adversity."

On the offensive side for the Broncs, junior infielder Jordan Erbe, who earned Metro Atlantic Athletic Conference (MAAC) Player of the Week, was a force to be reckoned with as he had three of the

team's eight hits and a run scored.

"My approach going into the game was really to simplify and center myself," said Erbe. "Being aggressive, while trying to hit each pitch where it was pitched."

The game ended up going into extra innings tied at three but with senior outfielder Brendan O'Donnell at the plate with the bases loaded, Leopards pitcher Trace Florio allowed a walk which scored the winning run for the Broncs.

## Bashing the Blue Hens

Coming off their extra-inning win, the Broncs drove west to take on the Delaware Blue Hens in a three-game set.

The expectation heading into this one was to take it one game at a time and they did just that, winning two out of three.

## Game 1

The blustering winds were present in Newark, Delaware, for this out-of-conference game between the Broncs and the Blue Hens. Although, it seems as if the winds only helped the Broncs' starting pitcher, senior Dylan Heine.

Heine received the start, marking his third of the season. Heine was pitching a shutout through the first six innings but gave up a two-run shot from in the seventh. This was the conclusion to Heine's start, but the damage was already done. He finished with four strikeouts and only two earned runs. "Dylan [Heine] threw strikes, commanded his off-speed well, he was as good as ever," said Davis.

Offensively, the Broncs were just as electric, as they finished the game with 11 hits and seven runs. Senior infielder Jack Winsett was responsible for two of those runs after he had a swinging bunt to short in the seventh inning which allowed a run to score and shortly after, in the ninth, Winsett brought in another run through a single.

Winsett, being a veteran at the plate, knew what the Blue Hens were going to attack him with at the plate during game one, saying "They like to attack hitters with fastball, so I knew I had to be aggressive early."

Winsett and others were key to winning the first game by a score of 7-6.

## Game 2

Succeeding an elite pitching performance from Heine, the Broncs got another dominant showing in the second game of the series, this time at the hands of graduate student pitcher Frank Doelling.

Doelling pitched a no hitter through the first five innings and then gave up a triple to right center field which allowed two Blue Hens to score. But outside of that one hiccup, Doelling was a force to be reckoned with when it came to his abilities.

"It was a big lift for us," Davis said of Doelling's performance.

Despite the 10-strikeout game from Doelling, the Broncs offense wanted to impress and they ended up scoring 10 runs. A bulk of the 10 runs came in the sixth inning when the offense chalked up four runs on the scorecard. Winsett got the party started in the sixth with a single that scored junior infielder Brian Skettini. Senior infielder John Volpe followed up with a sacrifice fly to center to score another Bronc and then senior outfielder Scott Shaw got a single of his own.

The party continued the following inning where the Broncs put up another four runs. Erbe singled to left field which allowed two Broncs to score.

With the offense flourishing and Doelling making easy work of the Blue Hens lineup, the Broncs won 10-2 with the potential for a sweep.

## Game 3

The series sweep did not happen. Game three was tough for the Broncs as they lost 13-2. The team allowed 10 hits and nine walks.

Sophomore Brian Young got the start for the Broncs making his third start of the season. Young has run into trouble this year and his early season struggles followed him to Delaware as he allowed six earned runs.

At the plate, it was just as disappointing as the Broncs only tallied up five hits and two runs. The two runs came from a sacrifice fly from Erbe and a grounder from Volpe in the second.

The Broncs, despite the loss, had a successful weekend of baseball and look to continue that trend when they face Fairleigh Dickinson on March 8 at 2:30 p.m.

## WRESTLING

# Laird wins MAC Championship, Broncs finish fifth

By Logan VanDine

In an up-and-down effort, Rider wrestling placed fifth overall at the Mid-American Conference (MAC) Tournament and graduate student Ethan Laird was crowned conference champion along the way.

## 'We need to regroup and finish strong'

On the first day of the MAC Tournament, the Broncs did not perform as Head Coach John Hangey had hoped. After the first day, the wrestling team found itself sitting in seventh place out of 13 teams



Peter G. Borg/Rider Athletics

Graduate student **Ethan Laird** won his first-ever MAC Championship at 197 lbs on March 4.

with 59 points on March 3.

"We need to regroup and finish strong. Definitely wasn't the day we were hoping to have today," Hangey said.

If there was any silver lining in the Broncs' disappointing showing, they did have two wrestlers reach the final. Redshirt senior Richie Koehler, who was the third seed entering this tournament, reached the finals as he looks to repeat as the MAC champion at 133 lbs where he squared off with Gable Strickland of Lock Haven.

Another key wrestler that was able to advance for the Broncs was Laird, who entered the tournament as the top seed at 197 lbs.

Despite his showing, Laird shared the same disappointment as Hangey.

"Overall the team did poorly. We were expecting to win a conference team title and have six or seven NCAA qualifiers. Instead, we were fifth and had two qualifiers," Laird said.

Despite standout performances Hangey thought his team "stunk" on day one.

"It's just the conference is tough, it's very balanced and everybody is going there to punch their ticket to the NCAA Tournament and we just fell on the short end of the sticks sometimes," Hangey said.

## Laird wins MAC Title

In a much improved effort, the Broncs saw two wrestlers clinch spots in the NCAA Tournament, as they finished in fifth place overall with 86 points on March 4 at George Mason.

With both huge wins in their respective bouts,

redshirt junior Quinn Kinner and Laird were able to clinch spots in the NCAA Tournament along with their teammate, Koehler, clinching on the first day of the tournament.

The biggest story for the Broncs during the tournament was Laird defeating Ohio's Carson Brewer, the final obstacle on his path to being MAC Champion.

"You can always count on Ethan [Laird], he is the same guy who goes out and does his job and that consistency is going to help him in two weeks when we get to the NCAA Tournament," said Hangey.

Hangey was complimentary of his other stars as well.

"Richie's [Koehler] experience was valuable yesterday and today because he has been there before ... he knew what to deal with, how to manage it and all that stuff to help put himself in that position to win those matches," Hangey said. "Quinn Kinner is the same, he's a returning conference champ, he hit a speed bump yesterday in the quarterfinals but he rallied really well and ended up finishing a really strong third.

Laird is excited to make the NCAA Tournament, but has his eyes set on the prize of winning the whole thing.

"The NCAA tournament is ... always exciting when it's coming up. But just being in the tournament isn't the exciting part, winning the tournament is," he said.

The Broncs will prepare for the NCAA Tournament, which is scheduled for March 16 in Tulsa, Oklahoma.

# Sports

ONLINE

## MAAC BETS ON ATLANTIC CITY

The MAAC announced on March 6 that its basketball tournament will stay in AC through 2026.

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MEN'S BASKETBALL

## PREVIEW: Broncs, Murray want to 'win the whole thing'



Eric Buckwalter/The Rider News

Rider men's basketball heads to the Metro Atlantic Athletic Conference (MAAC) Tournament with a chance for a title.

By **Carolo Pascale**

Flashback to the night of March 11, 2022. Rider men's basketball had just lost in the semifinal round of the 2022 Metro Atlantic Athletic Conference (MAAC) Tournament, falling to then conference foe Monmouth 72-68 despite senior guard Dwight Murray Jr. putting up 20 points.

Immediately after the loss, Murray issued a guarantee: "We're going to win the whole thing next year."

With the 2023 MAAC Tournament now here, Murray and the Broncs look to hold true to his statement and secure their first MAAC title in program history.

### A core built for March

After getting to the semifinal round last season, the Broncs have an experienced core that knows what it takes to make a deep run in the MAAC Tournament. The core revolves not around a classic basketball big three, but an extremely rare big five, where a plentiful amount of Broncs can drive production. Those players include: graduate student forward Ajiri Ogemuno-Johnson, senior forward Mervin James, junior forward Tariq Ingraham, senior guard Allen Powell and Murray.

Starting with Ogemuno-Johnson, he's been a stalwart in the paint for the past five years. He broke the program record for games played on Feb. 26 in his 134th game and finished the 2022-23 regular season with 136. His post presence, rebounding and leadership qualities have been a critical part of the team's success this season. Ogemuno-Johnson has been mostly the six man in the second half of the year, but he averaged at least 6.5 points and almost six rebounds in the final eight games off the bench.

"We feel confident. I think the guys know what's at stake," said Ogemuno-Johnson on how the core feels going into the tournament. "We've been here, we've done this. We've broken down the wall last year, now we just need to do it again and push forward."

Next is James, who earned All-MAAC second team honors for his performance in the regular season. The 6-foot-7 forward has been Rider's "Mr. Consistent," scoring over 10 points in all but six of his 29 games this season and averaging 12.9 points, 6.9 rebounds and a team-leading 15 blocks this year. He finished

as the MAAC's fifth best rebounder and used his athleticism and bang-and-crash style to get boards. He also has a great offensive touch around the rim and can drive to the net with finesse and power.

The third part of the core is Ingraham. He's the newest member of the core, this being his first season as a Bronc, but it has gone well for the Wake Forest transfer. This is the first full season that the forward has played after battling injuries, and he's been able to average 6.4 points and 3.6 rebounds, scoring a career-high 20 points on March 2. He earned a starting role in the second half of the season, with his big and bruising play style matching up well with Ogemuno-Johnson's coming off the bench.

Up next is Powell, who has hit his stride at a perfect time. The sharpshooter has had some ups and downs this season, but has turned it on as of late. The senior scored double-digit points in nine of the last 13 games and exploded for a season-high 24 points against Siena on Feb. 24. He averaged 10.8 points and 2.1 assists per game. If Powell can continue his hot streak, the Broncs will be able to expand their use of 3-pointers and long two's in the tournament.

And lastly comes Murray. He's the home run hitter. The superstar point guard, dubbed the "Iona Killer" by James, has been the backbone of the Broncs ever since he stepped foot in Alumni Gym. He earned his second All-MAAC first team honors unanimously for his incredible efforts in the regular season. He averaged 15.9 points per game and only scored under double figures six times in 28 games. Murray does it all for Rider: driving to the hoop, making clutch threes, yanking down rebounds, lockdown defense and leadership.

### Dominance in the paint

A large part of Rider's success this season has come from the ability to score in the paint. The Broncs have been one of the best teams in this aspect for the season, only being outscored in that area two times and tying one other in MAAC play.

The Broncs averaged 35 points in the paint this season, scoring 700 total points from around the rim. It's been the Broncs' bread and butter throughout the year, and with players who can get offensive rebounds, drive hard to the net and use the body like the core can, they can do real damage against weaker post

teams in the tournament.

Players like Ingraham, Ogemuno-Johnson and James have shown that they can do lots of damage against some of the MAAC's best players, a prime example being the regular season finale against Iona. Rider clobbered the Gaels in the paint with 44 of their points from that territory. Iona only managed 28 on the other side, a 16-point swing.

"We were scoring in the paint, we were dominating in the paint," said Baggett. "If it's not broken, don't fix it."

If Rider can keep that level and consistency with the in-the-paint scoring throughout the tournament, they are primed for a deep run.

### A path to the championship

With the MAAC Tournament now upon them, the Broncs have as good a path as any to make it to the final. As the No. 2 seed, they will play No. 10 Saint Peter's in the quarterfinals. If Rider wins, they could play No. 3 Quinnipiac, No. 6 Manhattan or even No. 11 Marist in the semifinal, which bodes well for the Broncs.

Rider has never won a MAAC title, but has claimed a conference three times, last winning while a member of the Northeast Conference (NEC) in the 1993-94 season. Despite never winning the tournament while in the MAAC, the Broncs have been to the finals two times, those being the 2004-05 and 2007-08 seasons. In both those seasons Rider was the No. 2 seed just like this year.

If the Broncs end up making the final, they could have a date with destiny against the dreaded No. 1 Iona Gaels, coached by Naismith Basketball Hall of Fame inductee Rick Pitino, which would be a dream scenario matchup for the MAAC.

"If [Pitino] was going to throw blow to blow, we were going to throw blow to blow," said Baggett after the regular season finale against Iona. "They wanted to set a tone and we wanted to send a message back that if this is going to be two teams that could potentially play next week, this is what you're going to see again."

Rider's quarterfinal game against Saint Peter's will start at 9:30 p.m. on March 8 and will be streamed on ESPN+.