

'A great win': Carr named SGA president

By Shaun Chornobroff and Amethyst Martinez

AFTER a two-day runoff and a difference of less than 10 votes, junior political science major Naa'san Carr was announced the winner of the closest Student Government Association (SGA) presidential election in recent memory on April 18.

In an interview with The Rider News immediately after his victory, Carr said the victory was "not just a great win for me, but for the community of Rider University."

"This is different, this is change," said Carr. "I think we need change here and hopefully this will be a step in the right direction to making our campus more diverse and more inclusive."

SGA announced Carr's victory in an email to students two hours after voting closed.

"Given the steps to ensure the runoff was secure, we are confident in our results," the email read in part.

In an interview with The Rider News, current SGA President Andrew Bernstein said there were 283 votes cast during the runoff voting period from April 17 at 10 a.m. to April 18 at 4 p.m. Votes could be made both online and in person, but all were done through BroncNation.

Bernstein said SGA went through every vote and cross-referenced it with an eligible voter list.

The runoff between Carr and junior economics major Joe Tufo was determined to be required after

the election was too close to be called on April 13. The candidates were separated by a single vote, but due to SGA being unable to determine who 25 ineligible votes were cast for, an additional voting process became necessary.

"I know it was a long process for both of them, but I'm glad now that we can finalize things, be confident that everything is accounted for and that only people who are eligible to vote voted," said Bernstein, a political science major.

Only full-time undergraduate students are permitted to vote in the election and all disqualified votes fell outside of those requirements.

The first race, which saw voting run from April 3-12, had 565 votes cast. All results were revealed at SGA's weekly senate meeting on April 13, where Bernstein

said both Carr and Tufo were told of the need for a runoff beforehand.

"It was a problem that we had anticipated and it's something that we figured out through the system," Bernstein said during the April 13 meeting held in the Rue Auditorium "This is something that we knew if it was possible, we would have to go through and audit and make sure that things were accurate."

For Carr, the five days between the announcement of Rider's first presidential runoff in decades and the April 18 email cementing his victory were spent in angst.

"It's been stressful, sleepless nights. It's been nerve-racking," said Carr. "I didn't know what was going to happen with this, but I had faith in our people who were running the election and we got things done."

In his interview with The Rider News, Carr said it was a "good, healthy campaign" and was complimentary of his opponent, adding that he will ensure Tufo remains a part of SGA.

Throughout his campaign, Carr has touted himself as a vehicle for change at Rider, hoping to unify and represent a campus that prides itself on its diversity.

"I think the people have spoken and they want change," said Carr. "There's truth that we are making progress here at Rider University, to make the change for marginalized and underrepresented communities who are here at a [predominantly white institution]."

Kaitlyn D'Alessio/The Rider News



Naa'san Carr will serve as the 2023-24 student body president.

Rider's bond rating takes another hit

By Shaun Chornobroff and Amethyst Martinez

AS Rider continues its path forward, aiming for a place of financial security, Moody's Investors Service has continued to question the school's financial viability.

On April 5, Moody's, a renowned global risk assessment firm with more than a century of history evaluating organizations, downgraded Rider's bond rating for the third time since 2020. Rider's BA3 issuer rating and BA2 revenue bond rating were downgraded to a B2, meaning the university still has a non-investment grade.

Prior to its most recent downgrade, the last hit the university took was in July 2021 and before that in April 2020, when the university's revenue bonds were downgraded to junk status in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic.

"The announcement by Moody's reflects the reality that institutions like Rider University have been facing for years, such as challenging demographics and heightened competition,"

Rider's Associate Vice President for University

Marketing and Communications Kristine Brown said in a statement to The Rider News. "These financial concerns were only exacerbated by the pandemic, which unexpectedly drained our financial resources, bringing the situation to a critical point."

In its explanation, Moody's said the downgrade was "driven by the university's multi-year deep deficit of operations and rapidly deteriorating unrestricted liquidity," adding that negative cash flow will continue through at least the 2025 fiscal year.

Moody's mentioned that the university had \$111 million of outstanding debt as of fiscal year 2022. Rider's Senior Vice President for Finance and Chief Financial Officer (CFO) James Hartman emphasized that most universities Rider's size or larger have hundreds of millions of dollars in long-term debt.

Moody's emphasized that returning to stability in the near future will be a challenge given "the magnitude of projected deficits, the inflammatory environment and projected flat enrollment in fall 2023."

The drop in rating increases Rider's difficulty borrowing money, which Hartman said the school has no immediate plans to do so, and the decrease will not have a drastic effect on the university's operations.

Hartman likened the situation to someone's personal credit score changing.

"From a day-to-day perspective, rating going down doesn't change the education we deliver, doesn't change the services we deliver. We're going to continue to do the great things we're doing and trying to even do better as we move forward," said Hartman.

The CFO explained that he had multiple meetings with Moody's staff prior to the ratings, which is how the company obtains its statistics.

"We've had some significant deficits the last few years, but all that's driven by the pandemic, and now we're in a position where we've got a plan," said Hartman. "We're working on finalizing a plan over the next three years to bring us back to a surplus budget again."

Since Rider President Gregory Dell'Omo's term began in 2015, he had a contentious relationship with the school's faculty union. Rider's chapter of the American Association of University Professors (AAUP) has twice voted no-confidence, last doing so in February 2022. After contract negotiations over the summer went unresolved, a faculty strike nearly ensued before an eventual agreement on Sept. 11.

In its rationale for Rider's downgrade, Moody's said, "Governance considerations are also a key driver to this action," specifically mentioning management capability, track record, enrollment strategies and the ongoing saga surrounding the potential sale of Rider's Princeton campus, the former home of Westminster Choir College.

Professors Michael Brogan and Arthur Taylor, who both previously served as AAUP presidents at Rider and are on the union's negotiating team, said that this downgrade was not surprising, both blaming Dell'Omo's leadership.

"This entire downgrading from Moody's is just a stark condemnation of where Rider's leadership, through the board and through President Dell'Omo, has taken us," said Taylor, who called Moody's downgrade a "very serious statement."

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Andrew Xon/The Rider News



James Hartman plans to bring Rider back to a better financial standing in the next three years.

INSIDE SOFTBALL WINS FIVE STRAIGHT

After a nine-game losing streak, the Broncs have turned things around.

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CONCERNS OVER SHELTER-IN-PLACE

Students with disabilities share worries about being more vulnerable during shelter-in-place.

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DARREN RUSH DISCUSSES HIS RIDER JOURNEY

Darren Rush has a significant impact on peers across campus.

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SECURITY BRIEFS

BY SHAUN CHORNOBROFF

Bumping Boulders

Rocking and rolling. On April 13 at 8:34 a.m., Public Safety was dispatched to the Fine Arts lot for the report of a motor vehicle accident. Upon arrival, they met with a staff member who stated they struck a boulder while parking their vehicle. The boulder, which sits in the grass to prevent cars from circumventing the gate, appeared to have been struck by something else, pushing it into the parking space. When the staff member pulled into the space they did not see the boulder before their vehicle struck it. Facilities Management was contacted to have the boulder moved back into its original position.

Smothered Smoke Detector

Blocked by a bag. On April 14 at 12:07 p.m., Public Safety, along with the Lawrence Township Fire Marshal and Facilities Management, were conducting fire inspections on campus. While checking a room in Lincoln Hall, it was discovered that an occupant had covered the smoke detector head with a plastic bag. The bag was removed and the smoke detector checked to make sure it was operational. The matter was referred to the office of community standards.

Vulgar Vandalism

Double the trouble. On April 16 at 9:41 a.m., Public Safety was dispatched to Ziegler Hall for the report of graffiti on the wall. As Public Safety checked the building, they found two locations that had been vandalized with vulgar remarks. Facilities management was contacted to have the graffiti removed.

- Information provided by Public Safety Capt. Matthew Babcock

Hostile intruder trainings begin following threats to campus

By Jake Tiger

In response to the shelter-in-place on April 3, Rider is offering 10 emergency preparedness training sessions in Rue Auditorium, with the goal of better equipping the community for hostile intruder and active shooter scenarios.

A training session led by Capt. Matthew Babcock, assistant director of Public Safety, and David Burns, commander of emergency management and preparedness, was held at 2 p.m. on April 17.

"The biggest piece to come out of this whole incident that happened was the educational component, and that's what we recognized right away," Babcock said during the training. "We approved these 10 sessions right away. The plan is to get these into all the new employee orientations ... present the same information, as well as new student orientations."

During the session, Babcock and Burns broke down the "Run, Hide, Fight" approach, "trusting your gut" and having a "survival mindset" in the time it takes for law enforcement to arrive and neutralize the threat.

"Basically, what we're saying is prepare for the next 10 minutes," said Burns. "Protect your own safety and security, develop a survival mindset and be aware."

More information on the "Run, Hide, Fight" method can be found on Rider's website within the Emergency Response Tips page.

The officers also covered Public Safety's three phone numbers and their purposes, including the department's Bronc Safety Services, non-emergency and emergency lines.

During on-campus emergencies, Public Safety

stressed the importance of calling its emergency line (609-896-7777), not 911, and to never assume that someone has already called in the emergency.

According to Burns, 911 calls go through multiple redirections before they reach the local police department, resulting in a slower response time compared to Public Safety's emergency line, which goes straight to Rider's dispatch center.

"If you're going to use your cell phone to call 911, there will be some time delay," said Burns. "If you have to call 911 in an emergency, use the 7777 number, which comes right into public safety."

Babcock stated that Public Safety's dispatch center received 257 calls during the 52-minute shelter-in-place. Burns added that the phone lines became "locked up" due to the volume of calls. Going forward, the department plans to be better equipped for emergency situations and influx of calls they coincide with.

"We don't want to miss any valuable information because it's difficult for us to pick up the phone and utilize that PA system," said Burns. "That's one of the areas we recognize we need to develop, and we're working on getting more telephone lines into our dispatch center to free up the phones when we need them."

According to Burns and Babcock, Rider plans to hold a hostile intruder/active shooter drill during the second week of January 2024 to better prepare the community for situations like the shelter-in-place on April 3.

Public Safety is looking for 150 students, staff and faculty to volunteer for the drill next January, but as

of now, the drill is still being planned. Later this year, Public Safety plans to send out an informational email about the drill with ways to volunteer.

"[We have] large-scale drills coming up," said Babcock. "We do plan on building out the training component of this, much larger than what you're seeing here. This would just be phase one."

The next training session is on April 20 at 10 a.m., with four more to follow in the final weeks of the semester. Online registration is required.



Photo courtesy of Rider University

Matthew Babcock leads the hostile intruder and active shooter training session.

Model United Nations team wins outstanding delegation

By Kaitlyn McCormick

AFTER five days of negotiation, diplomacy and sleep deprivation at the National Model United Nations simulation in New York City, the Rider University Model United Nations Team (MUN) has brought home its 14th Outstanding Delegation award, the highest award of the conference.

Senior health care policy major Katy Timari, head delegate of the team, expressed her pride in the group as they represented the country of Armenia on a handful of committees.

"Rider has a really long standing history of MUN. We've had a team for 56 years, and we've been "Outstanding Delegation" pretty consistently from the beginning of our team until now, so to carry that legacy is definitely something that I take a lot of pride in as head delegate and I know our team takes a lot of pride as well," Timari said.

Junior global studies major Bobby Barbero and junior political science major Maria Castillo, who worked in the International Atomic Energy Agency committee, also won a Position Paper Award at the conference.

At an April 18 teach-in in Sweigart Hall 118, the members of Rider's MUN team educated interested audience members of their experiences throughout the simulation. When asked what the most challenging part of the competition was, many chuckled when the answer was almost unanimously "staying awake."



Photo courtesy of Barbara Franz

Rider Model United Nations wins Outstanding Delegation in New York City.

Team members who were partnered in committees spanning from general assemblies to those focused on environmental refugee or atomic energy concerns shared the skills that they learned and developed not only through their time in the competition but their training leading up to the New York City stay.

Angela Rizzo, a senior elementary education major, shared how asserting herself amongst competitors will help in the future as an educator.

"I thought it was such a great experience being able to lead a team," Rizzo said. "I would definitely recommend [it] if you're an education major [or] if you want to go into more of a leadership role to

definitely join MUN."

Over the course of the teach-in, students from all disciplines of year and major recounted their experiences, from challenges to positive takeaways.

Junior political science major Cecilia Simon said that as the team entertains a full itinerary, especially on what many members referred to as "Hell Wednesday" which lasts from 8:30 a.m. to 10:00 p.m., keeping up endurance and decorum can be difficult.

"Keeping your energy up and keeping the quality of your work up, the quality of your speeches up and the quality of your diplomacy is not easy," Simon said. "It is very difficult to come in on the last session with the same energy, the same drive and the same motivation."

Senior political science major Devon Shaw, one of Rider MUN's team leaders, shared her experience watching both first-time and experienced delegates grow throughout their preparation.

"Something that I'm really proud of is being able to see the team transform," Shaw said.

She explained that the team starts in the fall with try outs and interviews, but it is also a class.

"It's really interesting seeing these delegates transform from that first week of classes when they don't even know wording from the speeches," said Shaw. "We've taught them from basically nothing up until this whole semester how to become true MUN delegates."

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STUDENTS WIN UNDERGRADUATE RESEARCH FUNDING



Rider awarded its annual Undergraduate Research Scholar Award to five student projects for the next school year.

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FEATURES

CEC CELEBRATES CARNIVAL STYLE



Council for Exceptional Children welcomes community members to their annual end of semester celebration.

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OPINION

STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES MORE AT RISK FOR EMERGENCIES

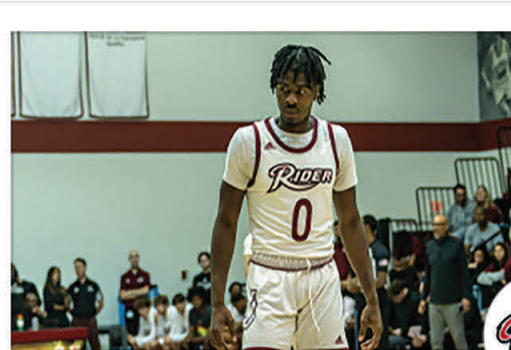


Disabled students express concerns about their safety after the shelter-in-place on April 3.

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SPORTS

TRANSFER PORTAL DEPARTURES EAT AT RIDER'S DEPTH



The transfer portal took a toll on men's basketball with five players leaving the program.

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Rider funds undergraduate research projects

By Jay Roberson

FOR the past 20 years, Rider has selected five students for a \$5,000 Undergraduate Research Scholar Award (URSA) annually, giving students the opportunity to work independently or under the supervision of a faculty member on a research project of their choice. This year, five different projects have been selected, with six students being recognized.

For the 2023-24 academic year, sophomore cybersecurity major Daniel Poinsett, sophomore health sciences major Britt Morris, junior sociology major Jessica Ridge, junior criminal justice major Diorys Jimenez, junior global studies major Paola Carlesso and freshman political science major Reuben Williams will benefit from the scholarship. Carlesso and Williams will be sharing the award and working collaboratively on their project.

Ridge spoke about the process of planning out her project with her adviser, professor of sociology Richard Zdan. She will be researching community building and radicalization online, but, more specifically, she will be talking about a group named “incels,” which is short for involuntary celibates, a group that posts negative rhetoric aimed at women.

“I ended up writing up five different drafts. It took me a while to come to a conclusion about the nature of online incel communities. I went back and forth trying to find patterns in the community that would expose some sort of commonality in their behavior,” said Ridge.

Poinsett will be working with professor of computer science Duo Lu on developing a technology that recognizes handwriting with a finger sensor and allows people to write in the air. In order for this to successfully happen, however, the user’s handwriting needs to be already entered in the database.

“What I was wondering was how can you say the database has no prior knowledge of the writing, your handwriting, how can it recognize it’s you? So we’re going to work together to create a way to do word recognition in the air,” Poinsett said.

Jimenez is going to analyze the American perception of Latinx immigrants and talk about the reasons people immigrate to America, like political instability and violence, with assistance from professor of sociology and criminology Jim Wojtowicz.

“When you think of the United States, you see how we needed immigrants to create the foundation and what our society embodies, the traditions we build our foundation off of,” said Jimenez. “We had such a positive view then of immigrants because we essentially needed them because we didn’t know how to do it.”

Carlesso and Williams are working on an analysis on housing in the cities of Trenton, New Jersey, and Medellín, Colombia, due to their high immigrant populations. They will both be working with advisers: professor of political science Micah Rasmussen

Jay Roberson/The Rider News



Paola Carlesso (left) and Reuben Williams (right) will receive funding for their project.

and professor of global studies Frank Rusciano “It’s basically going to be a counter analysis between Trenton and Medellín ... which are both posed to big populations of immigrants, and kind of analyze in terms of housing, what is the housing situation? What are the housing challenges?” said Carlesso.

Morris declined an interview with The Rider News, but will be working on a project with their adviser, professor of biology James Riggs.

Students who received this scholarship have shown a great appreciation for the award. Senior English major Shamiya Ford, a previous URSA recipient, reflected on her experience working on her independent study over the past year and how it helped her grow as a student.

“Prior to doing this independent study that I’ve been doing, it was kind of just like, ‘Oh, well. I’m just a student, I’m just in school.’ But now I kind of see it as this being the beginning of my career,” said Ford.

Sophomore acting and English major and 2022-23 URSA recipient Emily Porter Siegel, who uses they/them pronouns, said they are grateful for the scholarship because they were able to combine both of their majors in one project.

“I really wanted to make my project interdisciplinary. So we decided first semester I would be studying different songs, poems, books, plays, etc. based on metamorphosis and writing a big old paper about it. Then this semester, I devised a theater piece out of the works,” said Siegel.

Though many students apply for the scholarship, there is a lack of applications in the College of Education and the College of Business. Professor of English and URSA committee member Kelly Ross spoke about this concern.

“We get hundreds of students from the college of arts and sciences, that’s most of our submissions. We try to do outreach to the other colleges and really encourage people from business and education to submit, but we’re still working on that,” said Ross.

Ross hopes in the future more education and business students apply for the scholarship because it has proven to be a wonderful opportunity for other students.

“Having my faculty and friends supporting me as I try to answer questions that are always floating around in my head, it’s just such, it just motivates me to get up everyday and be a better person,” Siegel said. “It’s just so incredible to have this outlet and the support of my university to further enjoy the things that I love.”

Rider faces another drop in bond rating

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Brogan specifically blamed Dell’Omo’s failed policies for the continuous downgrading of Rider’s bond status.

“The most recent Moody’s report sends a clear message to the board of trustees, all of whom have successful careers in business, that Greg Dell’Omo needs to go” Brogan said via an email to The Rider News. “We need to seriously consider demanding the resignations of all administrators responsible for this situation.”

Since reaching a high with its 2017 freshman enrollment class, the university has seen a steady decline in its student body since. Moody’s said the school has had a 16% decrease in enrollment from fall 2018 to 2022, citing regional demographics, heightened competition and the pandemic as reasons. Moody’s called the factors a “societal consideration” and “driver of this rating action.”

In his interview, Hartman emphasized that the university is seeing a positive increase in its incoming class, a crucial development in the university’s intended journey to financial stability with more than 90% of Rider’s revenue projected to come from “enrollment-related activity” under the university’s business model.

“All the indicators are this is a hot place to be,” said Hartman. “The indicators are showing us that the enrollment is moving up; that’s a key part of the plan.”

Hartman said he has a positive outlook on the university’s financial future and that over the next few years, should things change, he expects the ratings to reflect that.

“A lot of things [are] on the upswing here,” said Hartman. “From Moody’s perspective, they just need to see it happen.”

Classroom tech to be mended by fall

By Shaun Chornobroff

AFTER a school year plagued by a myriad of issues with Rider’s outdated classroom technology, plans are in place for a majority of the university’s classrooms to be updated with new technology over the summer.

In an April 4 email to faculty and staff, Rider Senior Vice President for Finance and Chief Financial Officer James Hartman said a bulk of classrooms will be outfitted before the 2023-24 school year commences.

In an interview with The Rider News on April 14, Hartman said while he did not know precisely how many classrooms will be uplifted, the school is mostly focusing on the “small-to-medium” sized rooms that make up most of the university.

“It’s really sort of a domino effect,” said Hartman. “If we can get these done now, this summer, that’s going to address the majority of the classrooms. It’s just the large classrooms that we’re still working through and how we’re going to address those.”

Hartman said the new classroom applications will be much simpler for teachers, quipping that “you almost need an advanced degree to work the technology,” the school has currently.

The upgraded equipment will be leased, allowing the university to replace it every five years, which Hartman described as a more affordable option.

“We’re going to lease all of these things so that we’re rolling every five years with the newest technology instead of spending all the money now,” said Hartman. “Then it sits there and five years from now, ‘Oh, heck, how are we going to afford to replace all this stuff?’ So if you’ve kind of built those leases in your budget, year after year, you’re constantly replacing them and have the finances to do so.”

In an April 3 interview with The Rider News, Emre Yetgin, a member of the executive committee for Rider’s chapter of the American Association of University Professors (AAUP) detailed the abundance of technological challenges professors have faced this year.

“It’s not just affecting us internally, but it’s also starting to make us look bad to be honest,” said Yetgin.

While a number of programs will be able to function properly on technology upgraded every five years, specialty departments reliant on cutting-edge software, will have their own individual standards set, according to the email.

Among these programs is Rider’s game design major, which has become one of the university’s fastest-growing since its development in 2019.

Wil Lindsay, an associate professor and director of the game design program is one of the members of Rider’s Academic Affairs IT Committee (AAIT), overseeing the implementation of the new technology.

“Teaching in our field means we’re continually learning when new software comes out, we have to learn the whole new batch,” said Lindsay. “So, it’s not a hardship to wait a year. But it’s definitely noticeable, it absolutely changes how I deliver content.”

For the freshmen and sophomores in the game design major still learning the basics of design on programs like Adobe Photoshop and Illustrator, the outdated technology does not pose a major threat to their education, Lindsay explained. As the students rise into upperclassmen, learning the intricacies of game design, updated software and technology become a necessity, potentially impacting students’ portfolios.

“A clean portfolio definitely gives students self esteem in their work,” said Lindsay. “Most people who work in the field are cognizant of how fast things change.”

Rashe Mishra/The Rider News

rider fashion

Take a look at what Broncs are sporting on campus!

C.



What's an accessory you always have on?

"My rings, I always have my rings on!"

Bailey Poe, 21

Senior Musical Theater Major

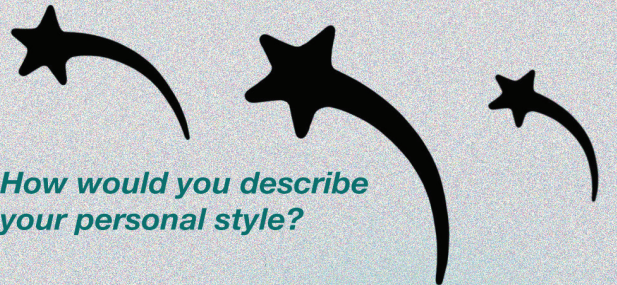
Poe describes her style as "colorful, expressive and creative." She pulls fashion inspiration from Sky High's Layla Williams and as of late loves the color-block scarf trend.

A.



B.

"I wear the clothes, I don't let the clothes wear me"



B.

Allure, who uses they/them pronouns, likes to dress in earth tones and finds that they lean toward a more masculine style. They like to dress in colors that give calming and open vibes. Allure loves to layer, as they enjoy the subtle details that it adds to their outfits.



A.

Bri Allure, 19

Freshman Business Administration Major

C.



Ebenezer Abreu, 19

Freshman Accounting Major

A.



Abreu goes for a style in the middle of laidback and serious. He opts for baggy jeans with almost every outfit, and it's currently his favorite fashion trend. Fashion influencers like @wisdm8 and @doctorgarmentz on TikTok are some of his style icons.

If you were a cartoon character, what would your "repeated outfit" be?

Baggy Jeans



Plain Hoodie



Margielas

"My Margielas because that's just my grill, probably these jeans, and a blank hoodie."



Viewing in Bronc Vision: students behind the scenes

By **Tristan E. M. Leach**

RIDER'S students, staff and faculty work to find ways to ensure that students have firsthand experience in their chosen field of study. From student teaching to 107.7 The Bronc, there is an opportunity for all. Now, thanks to the athletics department and some passionate faculty members, there is an opportunity to expand the horizons of broadcast and sports media.

For the first time this semester, a class that focuses on Bronc Vision, the broadcasting of Division I sports at Rider, is being offered to students. The class was the idea of several Rider employees, including Anthony Corbi and Shawn Kildea. Corbi, assistant AD for video and live event production, graduated last semester and found that Bronc Vision had prepared him for the world of sports media and broadcasting.

"I've always wanted to make [Bronc Vision] more of a student-driven experience," said Corbi. "I'm hoping next semester and in the next academic year that I can get more students involved in not just broadcast, but other aspects of multimedia."

Until this semester, Bronc Vision was purely an employee-based organization, and student workers made a salary. While this is still true, the class has expanded the amount of workers and the amount of coverage. Unlike other schools that can afford freelance broadcasters, Rider relies on their students to cover games. In 2018, Rider got an ESPN production trailer where work is done for the live broadcasting of the games. This, along with the passionate students and faculty such as Corbi, allowed for the organization to expand.

"The idea is that we're moving away from the outside help and more training students to be able to do not just camera but also how to work in the production truck," said Corbi.

Students in the class learn how to operate the

cameras and a playback machine and how to make graphics appear on the screen of those watching at home or looking at the jumbotron. The class requires that all students cover a minimum of nine events throughout the semester. While these students are not paid, the experience makes up for it. The class allows students to learn broadcast skills that they could use to become freelance broadcasters.

There is also hope that students of the class will want to work for Bronc Vision as an employee. Students like Kimmy Sokol, a senior sports media major, joined Bronc Vision her freshman year and found that she loved it. Sokol has since then enhanced her skills through the opportunities that Bronc Vision has provided her.

"That's the great thing about Rider. You can get involved here from day one," said Sokol.

Sokol initially wanted to be in front of the camera when it came to working games but found that the behind the scenes opportunities prepared her just as well for the job she wanted.

"If you put in the work more opportunities will be granted to you. My freshman year I had no experience in this field. I kept working really hard and showing up. Last year all the hard work paid off and I got to go Atlantic City and be a part of the crew for the MAAC [Metro Atlantic Athletic Conference] Tournament," said Sokol.

It is opportunities and experiences like Sokol's that appeal to students and steadily, more have become interested in the class and Bronc Vision as a whole.

Emily O'Connor, a freshman film and television major, found herself interested in the class and the fieldwork component. O'Connor had never had the opportunity to work behind the camera in a live production environment.

"I am learning a lot and I'm gaining so many valuable skills. I think [Bronc Vision] is a really good

community. Tony [Corbi] is there for us and cares. He sees potential in us and the opportunities that come with this could open a lot of doors," said O'Connor.

Bronc Vision has opened the doors for students like O'Connor and Sokol, and alumni like Corbi. The hope is that Bronc Vision will grow and the students along with it.

Andrew Xon is The Rider News' photo editor and is a student in the Bronc Vision class. Xon had no part in the writing or editing of this story.



Photo courtesy of Emily O'Connor

Freshman film and television major **Emily O'Connor** gains new experience through the Bronc Vision class.



Photo courtesy of Diane Casale-Giannola

Community members gathered at the Council for Exceptional Children's (CEC) end-of-semester celebration for a night of music, food and fun.

Council for Exceptional Children celebrates carnival style

By **Jay Roberson**

AS community members arrived at the Mercer Room on April 14, they were handed tickets and given the opportunity to earn more by playing carnival games like ring toss and bean bag toss. Each semester, the Council for Exceptional Children (CEC) hosts an end-of-semester celebration and invites individuals who have disabilities to participate in a night of music, food and fun.

Community members filled the room and sat at tables with mask scratch art, board games and popcorn. Sophomore elementary education major Cassidy Petrone said one of her favorite parts about CEC events was the new connections formed.

"I love to see how happy the community members get. I think they love to talk to new people, and we're new people for them," Petrone said.

Each community member received more tickets with each activity they participated in, and their assigned Rider buddy helped them keep count of the tickets so they could cash them in for prizes at the end.

Professor of education and advisor of the CEC Diane Casale-Giannola emphasized that the CEC aims to make everyone feel included and Rider

students can do this just by having conversations with community members.

"I think the Rider community steps up and supports families in the community with special needs. Everyone is welcome, special needs or not. We [students] are their typical peers because we're young adults like they are," said Casale-Giannola.

Junior elementary education major and CEC President Kayla Kanarkowski talked about the process of planning its events and how the executive board decides on what activities to include in each event.

"The party we had last year had a lot of responses where everyone loved it. We were like, 'Why not implement it again?' We added even more activities, so we kind of tried to implement old events and different activities," Kanarkowski said.

Everyone took a break from playing carnival games when pizza was being served. After eating, the guests were back on their feet to compete with each other for the prize of 25 tickets. Attendees were put into pairs and played a game of ring toss, but the challenge was to keep moving farther and farther away.

"[The event] provides inclusion to everyone, it doesn't matter who they are ... It's just so much

fun to have a nice night with everyone together and everyone getting along," said Kanarkowski.

The night ended with group pictures, the selection of prizes and the long-standing tradition of a dance party. Junior elementary education major and Vice President of the CEC Kruti Rawal talked about her favorite part of the night.

"We have a dance at the end, a little dance party. So those are usually my favorite parts because we all just get together at the end and let it all out," said Rawal.

Casale-Giannola explained that many people tend to forget individuals with disabilities when it comes to inclusion. These events are aimed to be fully inclusive by giving community members an outlet for making new friends and socializing.

"Events like this are really important to campus, especially in this climate," Casale-Giannola said. "Like diversity, equity and inclusion, but everybody forgets that inclusion was a word we used for special education historically to include individuals with special needs in the general population."

Peter G. Borg/Rider University



Senior criminal justice major **Darren Rush** hosted R Factor, Rider's Got Talent and Cranberry Fest.

Senior Spotlight: Darren Rush and his impactful involvement

By **Hannah Newman**

WHEN creating his college experience, the opportunity to work for the highest level of law enforcement stood as the measure of growth for senior criminal justice major Darren Rush.

Rush is a first-generation college student who left high school wanting to recreate himself, hoping to become a more involved and outgoing individual. He has taken advantage of Rider's tight-knit community to make that vision a reality.

"Having a small community gives you a lot of resources for campus involvement that can help guide you and just help you grow as a person. You know you're not just a number; people know you by your first name, and people get to make those connections that will lead them to the right path," said Rush.

Rush has made a plethora of connections at Rider that have impacted the student body. He's involved in the Student Government Association (SGA) as campus life committee chair, a lead tour guide, an orientation leader, a member of Alpha Phi Sigma, the criminal justice honors society, Omicron Delta Kappa National Leadership Honors Society, a member of the criminal justice club and president of Rider University Veterans Association.

Rush is also a part of the Leadership Development Program, which allows him to graduate with a certificate of leadership.

Two of the most impactful positions that Rush has held on campus have been an orientation leader and a tour guide. Rush mentioned that the gratitude he has received from students he mentored made him feel accomplished in his mission to leave his mark on the Rider community.

"Darren truly made a huge impact on my Rider experience before coming here in the fall. He helped me navigate my ways around the school and also gave me great tips on which classes would best fit my needs," said freshman marketing major Amanda Larosa, a student from Rush's orientation group. "Besides helping me understand how classes and the campus works, he would try to make a connection with all of us."

As a result of Rush's efforts to individualize the orientation experience, he was the reason that many students not only came to Rider, but had an urge to be involved.

Senior Assistant Director of Undergraduate Admissions Hannah Ford recognized Rush's influence on students after hearing that many who applied to be tour guides mentioned him as the reason they decided to.

"Darren has made a huge impact on our current tour guide team and he is continuing to leave his legacy by helping to recruit the next group of Rider tour guides," said Ford. "While interviewing new tour guides this month, several of them mentioned Darren as the reason why they want to be a tour guide."

Students have also verbally expressed their appreciation for Rush's efforts, which has motivated him to continue his work in leadership.

"Watching them connect to other students and envision their next four years with a friend group is the best part of being an orientation leader; just knowing I left my mark," said Rush. "I remember at orientation a student came up to me and said 'You were my orientation leader. You changed my life, thank you,' and that gave me the chills a little bit, but knowing that I helped someone make a decision for the rest of their life was the best part about it."

A factor that influenced Rush's desire to be involved was the COVID-19 pandemic when lack of communication was a major obstacle.

"You don't really realize what you have until it's gone, and when the pandemic hit, it was hard to collaborate with people, whether that be family, friends, classmates, professors; anything like that. So collaboration is something that I learned to strengthen and become stronger with before coming back to college," said Rush.

On top of his obligations to serve the organizations, Rush has helped out with the Student Entertainment Council (SEC), hosted season 13 of R Factor, along with Rider's Got Talent and Cranberry Fest.

Associate Dean of Campus Life Nicholas Barbati, who has grown close with Rush over the years, said in an email to The Rider News, "Darren has been such a wonderful role model for students from literally their first days at Rider through his work as a tour guide and an Orientation Leader and has extended that impact throughout the entire campus community. Through his many leadership roles, Darren is truly a kind, welcoming student that embodies the community spirit of Rider University."

Rush's goal has been to be a special agent or detective since he was a child, and is currently in the hiring process with a federal government entity for a special agent position, although, he was not allowed to disclose any further information.

Rush is in his second semester with the New Jersey Attorney General's Office under the criminal justice division, where he works with the police training commission with investigators, training staff and curriculum development staff. He works in conjunction with all 530 police agencies and 16 police

academies in New Jersey.

"It doesn't feel real that I am living up to my dream yet," said Rush.

Victor Thompson, professor and criminal justice chair, was pleased with Rush's performance over the years and the dedication he has put into his future.

"I think he's really been an asset to the department at the student level so hopefully he'll keep in touch with us when he leaves," said Thompson.

When given the chance to say one piece of advice that he would like to leave the Rider community with, Rush promoted the concept of the unknown to be healthy in the midst of building one's best self.

"Try different things; that's what I would recommend to everyone that's coming into college," said Rush. "Just to open yourself up and make yourself uncomfortable in order to grow."

This mindset is what brought him to achieving his goal in college that he will continue to do for the rest of his life.

"I value making a difference," said Rush. "That is what I've wanted to do my whole life, and I don't know to what capacity, but I've always wanted to leave a mark and make a difference in the world somehow."

This article is part of the Senior Spotlight series by The Rider News to showcase the college experience and future plans of seniors on campus.



Photo courtesy of Darren Rush

Rush smiles for a photo on his day off.

Students with disabilities more at risk for emergencies

AS I'm sure is true for many, the shelter-in-place issued on April 3 was a terrifying and traumatic experience for me. While I was trying to make myself as small a target as possible in my wheelchair, I cried and texted family and friends that I loved them. As soon as the order was lifted, I sped back to my dorm, locked the door and went on TikTok while waiting for my mother to drive me home.

Throughout my black hole scrolling experience, I stopped on a video from a special education teacher who worked in Nashville, Tennessee, where another school shooting recently occurred. After that shooting, the teacher realized that the students in her class were potentially the most vulnerable to a shooter. Since many of her students have assistive devices, they are naturally the largest and easiest targets, not to mention the fact that since they use these devices, they were unable to run from a shooter quickly, if at all. Some of her students have severe cognitive or intellectual disabilities and the teacher also noted that those students may not know or understand the severity of the situation or react appropriately, so they are also an easy target.

I was shocked. I just sat there as the video continued on an endless loop, repeatedly being bombarded with these scary and depressing facts. Not only have shootings become a normal part of life in the U.S., but I was one of the most at-risk people. At first, I was thankful that I was never in this situation before where it was not a drill, but still, the realization that I was a target completely froze me. I suddenly realized that I had no clue what I was specifically supposed to do as a person with a physical disability if a shooter had come into my class.

I decided to reach out to my Rider community to see if they had thought of the horrific scenario. Marlene Brockington, a junior communications major, recounted her experience during the shelter-in-place. She had been in class on the third floor of the Fine Arts building, which she mentioned was already small and challenging to maneuver with her power wheelchair. All of the other students immediately huddled against the wall and in a corner, leaving no real room for Brockington to hide.

"Eventually, the class made enough space for me ... I became in the middle of this circle with everyone fitting around me on the floor," Brockington said.

Unfortunately, Brockington had previously been in a similar situation at her high school, but said that it never gets easier to deal with. Due to her previous exposure, Brockington has since begun working with Children's Specialized Hospital to come up with an individualized safety plan in case of a shooter, but ultimately realized that there wasn't much she could do. When asked about the plan she had gotten from the hospital staff and safety officials, Brockington revealed a disheartening conclusion.

"They [safety officials] always say, 'oh, well, we never thought about it,' and they try to come up with an answer," she said. "Or they're like, 'Basically, you're at the will of a good samaritan.'"

Despite the two of us swapping jokes about being shot immediately or being burned to a crisp during a fire, the reality is serious. After our morbid jokes died out, Brockington turned quiet.

"It makes me feel vulnerable, you know?" she said. "Like, what really are we supposed to do?"

Aaliyah VanCooten, a freshman psychology major, went through a similar experience during the shelter-in-place. VanCooten's class happened to be canceled that day, and she went to Cranberry's with some friends to relax and have fun. Unfortunately, neither of those things happened. VanCooten was going through complete shock when she read the text about a potential shooter on campus.

"I was just sitting there and I guess I was just out of it," she said. "At that point, I kind of disassociated and I wasn't really focused on what was going on around me."

Eventually, a worker at Cranberry's grabbed her by the arm and dragged her behind the counter at Wendy's. VanCooten, who uses a walker, was behind the counter, but couldn't sit on the floor, similar to Brockington, making her quite a large target.

VanCooten was determined to make a difference and decided to become a member of the Student Government Association (SGA). Again, when discussing emergency protocol at SGA meetings, she was met with ambiguous answers and no real solution. VanCooten said she also expressed her frustration with a lack of a plan.

"It obviously does, it feels dehumanizing because it's like how could you possibly not acknowledge people with disabilities?" she said.

At VanCooten's high school, they had an emergency plan and a specific one for students with disabilities that they reviewed each year, so she believes better emergency protocol is possible.

Both Brockington and VanCooten felt that there is no clear-cut solution they could provide to the university or safety officials at the moment, but agreed that the best first step would be to include people with disabilities in the discussions of emergency planning meetings. That kind of experience is something that is missing from most planning sessions and is something that can't be expressed by anyone but the individual with the disability.

Neither Brockington, VanCooten nor I knew of any plan or protocol from the university that was specifically for people with disabilities. Being at the will of a good samaritan is not a plan and it is definitely not sufficient or appropriate. This issue at Rider highlights a much larger issue affecting the disabled community. Many abled people consider our quality of life as less than due to our limitations and challenges. As such, it can be seen as not worth it to check the areas of refugees during a fire or helping a person with a disability to safety during a shooting. Unfortunately, the mentality is too often: Why bother saving a person with a disability? Their life isn't worth it.

*Bridget Gum-Egan
junior English major and copy editor*

Raashee Mishra/The Rider News



**DIVERSITY, EQUITY
& INCLUSION**
@ RIDER UNIVERSITY

Students express concerns about those with disabilities sheltering in place.

The Rider News

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SENIOR SPOTLIGHT

Puppy roommates: fostering dogs in college

KNEW I wanted a dog. Now, I know what you may be thinking: “She has no idea what she’s getting herself into.” And yet, I had thought of getting one for a while. My family has dogs, and I thought my semester schedule would be perfect, given that I only had one in-person class. The small “what if” idea had grown over the months into a steady flame of interest. After looking around online, I saw a meet-and-greet opportunity from a nonprofit called Animal Rescue Farm (ARF) of Mercer. So, one Sunday afternoon, I rounded up my sister and a friend, and off we went to PetSmart. I went on my way with a burning flame of optimistic naivete only a 20-something-year-old could carry. Needless to say, that flame was quickly extinguished by ARF volunteer, Sandra, who listened to my current situation and said “absolutely not.”

To be fair, she was justified. You see, she had a son who got a dog when he was in college, and like me, thought it was a great idea. Unfortunately, in the process of finding a job and starting his “adult life,” Sandra ended up taking care of the dog which ultimately ended up as her own. “But,” she said, “Have you ever considered fostering?” Fostering? Now that was an idea. “You can help socialize the puppies, learn about dog care and only be responsible for them for about 2 weeks, or until they get adopted,” said Sandra.

A few weeks later, our first guest was delivered. Blue was a 50-pound, 5-month-old Harlequin Great Dane — so much for a slow transition. The hefty pup came bounding up to our one-bedroom apartment only to be stumped at the challenge he faced at the door. You see, we live in a second floor apartment and “little” Blue could not for the life of him gather the courage to tackle the feat. So, for the first few days, he received the royal treatment of being carried up and down the stairs, a lovely experience at three in the morning, I assure you. What a sweetheart he was. Blue was a big goofball who loved stealing all the couch space and playing with a purple monkey stuffed animal we called “Mr. Monkey Man.” Blue often visited campus and was willing to hangout on the Student Recreation Center (SRC) patio enjoying the sun. After a few weeks, he found a loving home, and soon enough we had a new guest at Hotel Frazier.

Bundy was a black-tan Coonhound German Shepherd mix whose litter was named after serial killers — interesting, but who am I to judge? Regardless of his name’s backstory, the only thing killer about him was his cuteness. Bundy loved to cuddle and explore outside. After a week or so, little Bundy needed to take care of some business — getting neutered. So, while Bundy was getting neutered his littermate Judy, named after Judy Buenoano, came for a stay.

Judy had an eventful first night. Coming from the farm where many of the newly rescued puppies are held, Judy was in need of a bath, which is not out of the ordinary. What was out of the ordinary were the over two dozen ticks she was covered in, which we later learned was most likely from the fresh deer they are fed on the farm. One short bath turned into the ultimate spa experience for the shy girl until she was squeaky clean and tick free. Judy was a bit different from the other pups we had cared for — bless her heart, she could not seem to walk in a straight line and often stumbled about. This did not stop her from always carrying a puppy smile and holding the textbook definition of puppy-dog eyes ensuring any accident she had was easily forgivable, surely such an adorable pup could do no wrong, it must have been someone else’s fault.

Our most recent pups included Waffles, an 8-month-old Dutch Shepherd mix

with lots of energy, and Alita, a 4-month-old Australian Shepherd with a sassy personality. Waffles was fun because she was at an age where she could learn tricks. By the time she left us, she had mastered the ability to sit, lay and high-five. Alita was our longest guest, staying for almost a month. A popular campus visitor, Alita enjoyed all of the attention Rider showered her with.

Fostering puppies certainly provides an array of learning experiences. Patience is a must: often the pups are scared and confused when they first come to stay. It takes a few days for their true personalities to come out. For some, housetraining was not a learned skill yet, so you had to be on the watch at all hours of the day, even at three in the morning. Of course accidents happen, but it is important to forgive and forget as they are trying their best to adapt just as you are trying to. Diligence is also necessary. Puppies have lots of energy and need to be walked often regardless of your schedule or mood. I actually found the walks to be a great mindfulness exercise, particularly the ones late at night. I would finish up my day’s activities and then take the pup for a walk around 10 or 11:30 p.m. After which, sleep came easy for both the dog and me.

People often ask, “Isn’t it hard giving them up?” To some degree, yes, but for the most part, no. Ultimately, these puppies are going to great homes that can provide them the love and space they need to be happy. I am happy with the part I play in the process. While our time together is short, I can provide the pups a caring environment where they learn to socialize and play. Realistically, a one-bedroom apartment is too small for the types of dogs we have looked after (the zoomies, a burst of energy, have taken out a bookshelf or two). I have found real joy in looking after these dogs and feel a sense of pride whenever we return them to get adopted. They come to us shy and nervous and leave happy and playful — perfect for their new life.

While it’s initially not what I had planned, fostering turned out to be a great opportunity. I highly recommend college students who have the facilities to consider trying it. There are always puppies in need of a home. If you are interested in fostering or adopting, I encourage you to reach out to ARF of Mercer on Instagram or via email (arfofmercer@gmail.com). Using donations and adoption funds, the nonprofit works to fight dog and cat abandonment by neutering/spaying, chipping and finding homes for the animals. The rescue ensures the animals go to a fitting home by extensively vetting each applicant to find the right fit for both the potential owner and the animal.



Photo Courtesy of Lillian Frazier
Lillian Frazier’s current foster dog Alita who has been with her for a month.

Lillian Frazier
senior economics major

SOPHOMORE SIGHTINGS

History of WrestleMania near Rider

THIS past month marked the end of WrestleMania season, the most exciting time to be a wrestling fan as wrestlers took the “Grandest Stage of Them All” and gave their biggest performances of the year. Wrestling fans at Rider have something to look forward to, as WWE’s WrestleMania XL will be the closest the event has been to campus in five years. The 40th Showcase of the Immortals will take place on April 6 and 7 at Lincoln Financial Field in Philadelphia. This will mark the 10th of 40 events to take place in the New Jersey area, in close proximity to Rider’s Lawrenceville campus.

The first WrestleMania famously took place in Manhattan’s Madison Square Garden in 1985. This historic event was headlined by a tag-team spectacle of Hulk Hogan and Mr. T facing off against “Rowdy” Roddy Piper and “Mr. Wonderful” Paul Orndoff. Madison Square Garden has also been home to two more WrestleMania events throughout the show’s history.

WrestleMania X was headlined by the new generation as Bret Hart defeated Yokozuna to win the WWE Championship. WWE returned to the venue again in 2004 for WrestleMania XX, an event remembered for featuring John Cena’s first-ever WrestleMania appearance.

WrestleMania 2 notoriously took place in three separate venues, one of them being the Nassau Coliseum in Long Island, New York. The highlight of this event was when Mr. T defeated “Rowdy” Roddy Piper in a boxing match. Philadelphia has hosted one previous event, WrestleMania XV. This show was headlined by “Stone Cold” Steve Austin, who defeated The Rock to win the WWE Championship in the first of a series of three massive ‘Mania bouts between the two superstars.

New Jersey has been home to four WrestleMania events, the most recent of which was 2019’s WrestleMania XXXV. This event was historic as it featured Becky Lynch defeating Ronda Rousey and Charlotte Flair for both the Raw and Smackdown Women’s Championships, the first time ever in which women had main-evented the event. This event shares a venue with 2013’s WrestleMania XXIX, both taking place at MetLife Stadium. WrestleMania 29’s main event saw John Cena defeat The Rock to win the WWE Championship for a record-breaking 11th time. I was personally lucky enough to attend both of these events, and they were two unforgettable experiences.

Atlantic City, New Jersey, is the first and so far the only city to host WrestleMania two years in a row, each event taking place at the famous Boardwalk

Hall. WrestleMania IV took place in 1988 and featured a one-night WWE Championship tournament in which “Macho Man” Randy Savage defeated “The Million Dollar Man” Ted DiBiase in the finals to win his first world championship. The next year’s WrestleMania V saw the “Macho Man” defend his championship in the same venue against “The Immortal” Hulk Hogan, with Savage coming up short.

The area surrounding Rider has a rich history in professional wrestling, and the legendary WrestleMania events are just one example of how important New Jersey is to the sport. Next year’s WrestleMania XL will be a 45-minute drive from campus, the closest the event has been to Rider in twenty-five years. While countless Rider students have surely attended numerous shows, it will be easier than ever next year for student and faculty fans to involve themselves in the massive two-day event.

WrestleMania is always an unmissable event, and next year will be no different.

Elijah Nevlin
sophomore marketing major



Photo Courtesy of Elijah Nevlin
Elijah Nevlin attended Wrestlemania XXXV in 2019.

TRACK AND FIELD

Broncs leave Princeton with historic 4x100 finishes

By Jake Tiger

WITH three weeks left before the Metro Atlantic Athletic Conference (MAAC) Championships, Rider track and field competed in Princeton's Larry Ellis Invitational on April 15 and 16, a showing highlighted by historic performances from both the men's and women's teams in the 4x100-meter relay.

Much of the second day was canceled due to inclement weather, but a handful of Broncs from both teams left lasting impressions before the rain rolled in.

"The key is getting to [the MAAC Championships] healthy, confident and ready to roll," said Head Coach Bob Hamer in an email to The Rider News. "We will be focusing on that over the next few weeks, and putting in the final preparations in training so we can compete at our highest level when it matters the most."

Men's team

The men's performance at Princeton saw the team set a Rider record in the 4x100-meter relay with a time of 41.01 seconds, beating the previous time of 41.11 seconds set in 2004.

"The 4x100 relays have been strong for us over the last few years, and on Saturday, you had the right ingredients for success," said Hamer. "When you get great weather, great competition and great handoffs, you can run a really fast 4x100."

The historic effort placed fourth at the meet and was produced by four sprinters: freshman Braeden Haines, sophomore Freddie Haynesworth, graduate student Jerome Boyer and junior Artie Burgess.

The time was fast enough to qualify for the Intercollegiate Association of Amateur Athletes of America (IC4A), according to the team's Twitter account.

"I was thrilled with the 4x100-meter team," said Boyer, the team's captain, in an email to The Rider News. "My teammates and I were expecting it because of how good of an outdoor season we are having so far. I believed in each and every one of my teammates to deliver."

Meanwhile, sophomore distance runner Noah Taylor put up the sixth fastest 1,500-meter time in Rider history at 3:50:57, good enough to qualify him for the IC4A Championships, according to the team's Twitter account.



Graduate student **Jerome Boyer** helped Rider to its record-setting finish in the 4x100-meter relay.

Women's team

The women's team also showed out in the 4x100-meter relay, posting a time of 47.11, the second best time in Rider history and third fastest at the meet. The time qualified for the Eastern College Athletic Conference (ECAC) Championships, according to the team's Twitter account.

"We all had high hopes for this event," said sophomore sprinter Hailey Palmer in an email to The Rider News. "The 4x100-meter women's relay record was broken last year, and now we just earned No. 2 all-time in Rider history. I also knew that the confidence that the men's team was bringing would allow them to run well and break the school record, which I was super excited to see them do."

The relay consisted of sophomore sprinter's Raisa Thunig, Hailey Palmer, sophomore jumper Mariah Stephens, and graduate student sprinter Alenys Morales, who was a last-second addition to the event after a teammate went down with an injury before the race.

"I honestly was not expecting a historic performance in our 4x100-meter relay because we had to switch one of our legs last minute, unfortunately, due to an injury," said Stephens, who

helped set the Rider record in the 4x100-meter relay last spring with a time of 46.94 seconds, in an email to The Rider News. "This just shows how versatile we are and are ready to compete no matter what the circumstances are, and I couldn't be prouder of my teammates for stepping up."

In the field events, junior thrower Samantha Kamara set a personal record in the hammer throw at 50.94 meters, the seventh farthest throw in Rider history and enough to qualify her for the ECAC Championships, according to the team's Twitter account.

Sophomore jumper Savanna Marcantonio also excelled in the field, soaring 1.7 meters in the high jump to tie the second-highest jump in Rider outdoor history.

Due to inclement weather, the back half of the competition's second day was delayed multiple times and was eventually called off entirely. Of the 31 events scheduled for the second day, 14 had to be canceled.

The Broncs will compete at home on April 22, hosting the Rider University Invitational from 11 a.m. to 6:30 p.m.

Baseball photo gallery

Check out more photos on theridernews.com or scan the QR code



Andrew Xon/The Rider News



SOFTBALL

Softball flourishing with five straight wins

By Logan VanDine

AFTER a bleak start, Rider softball's luck turned around, winning all three of their games against Monmouth and Manhattan, bringing their win streak up to five. The Broncos defeated the Hawks 11-7 on April 13, then beat the Jaspers 1-0 and 4-1 in a doubleheader on April 16, moving their record to 11-22 on the season.

'We made some progress today'

In an offensive slugfest, the Broncos extended their win streak to three, defeating the Monmouth Hawks 11-7 on April 13.

The Broncos started the scoring in the bottom of the second courtesy of an RBI single by junior infielder Jessica Niegocki followed by a second run that was driven in by freshman outfielder Julia Harsche, who drew a walk with the bases loaded to bring in a run.

The Broncos then took advantage of five Hawk errors en route to scoring 11 runs total, giving Rider an 11-7 victory. All nine starters scored at least one run.

"For the second game in a row, I liked our use of the small ball to jump start our offense. We made some progress today by finishing and closing the game after getting a lead," Head Coach Davon Ortega said.

A near no-hitter

In a tightly-contested pitching duel, Niegocki got the better of the Manhattan Jaspers, nearly pitching a no-hitter to lift the Broncos to a 1-0 win in the first game of a doubleheader on April 16.

The game was held scoreless through the fourth

inning until the Broncos broke the ice when graduate student infielder Gianna Epps laced an RBI single that made the score 1-0.

The main story of the game was Niegocki as she was just as good in this start as she was previously on April 4.

The junior pitched her second straight complete game, striking out 10 over seven innings and flirted with a no-hitter until it was broken up in the seventh on a Manhattan leadoff double.

Niegocki went on to retire the next three batters to secure the win.

"She was rested, she was fresh and she's been adjusting to her game, so she understands how to step up her game a notch, and I think she did that today," said Ortega.

Niegocki, who picked up her fourth win of the season, gave her input on her outing, and offered kudos to the defense behind her.

"My defense was phenomenal behind me tracking down every flyball that was out there, and I am still striving for that no-hit," Niegocki said.

'Starting to hit our stride'

In the second game, the Broncos used both their bats and dominant starting pitching to sweep their doubleheader against Manhattan.

Sophomore pitcher Kathryn Schmierer was on the mound for the Broncos and was greeted rudely in the top of the first, giving up a solo home run that gave the Jaspers an early 1-0 lead.

But Rider struck back in the bottom of the first, as sophomore infielder Oliva Burroughs sailed a two-run home run out of Herb and Joan Young Field



Kaitlyn D'Alessio/The Rider News

Junior pitcher **Jessie Niegocki** struck out 10 batters against Manhattan on April 16.

that gave the Broncos a 2-1 lead.

"I was just looking for a good pitch to hit hard. I never go up thinking to hit a home run, I just got out there looking to hit something hard, and luckily it was served over the middle," Burroughs said.

Looking to add insurance, the Broncos supplied two more runs in the bottom of the third and made the final score 4-1.

"We are finally starting to hit our stride, we were kind of late bloomers," said Ortega. "It took a while for us to get together as a team ... but now we are starting to see our consistency."

The Broncos will look to make it six straight when they travel to West Long Branch, New Jersey, to take on Monmouth on April 19 at 3 p.m.

MEN'S BASKETBALL

Transfer portal eating at Rider's depth

By Carolo Pascale

OVER a month after Rider's Metro Atlantic Athletic Conference (MAAC) quarterfinal loss to Saint Peter's, men's basketball Head Coach Kevin Baggett is still recovering.

The Broncos were the No. 2 seed in the tournament and had realistic championship aspirations.

"It was the best team that I've ever had," said Baggett. "That was ... devastation, disbelief. It was hard to put closure to a year that I didn't see that happening. We let a lot of people down, and I wanted this team to finally get over the hump because I felt they deserved it."

Now, six weeks after the defeat, the aftermath is taking its toll on the Broncos, as eight players have moved on from Baggett and the Broncos via the transfer portal and graduation.

Portal problems

Last season, Rider had arguably the most depth of any team in the MAAC. The Broncos had a strong supporting cast behind senior guard Dwight Murray Jr. and graduate student forward Ajiri Ogemuno-Johnson, who has since graduated, that helped them land the No. 2 spot in the conference.

Those players included junior forward Nehemiah Benson, sophomore guard Adetokunbo Bakare, senior forward Tyrel Bladen, senior guard Allen Bertrand and players waiting in the wings like freshman guard Kami Young, who missed the season with an injury.

But a new era of collegiate basketball has players entering the transfer portal left and right, and now, all five of those Broncos are no longer with the squad.

The transfer portal has become its own form of free agency, with 2023's transfer numbers setting records. On March 13, the first day the portal opened, 173 players entered their name, a new record. As of April 18, 1,499 players have entered the portal, according to VerbalCommits.

As for the Broncos, Bertrand, who started in 25 out of 30 games for Rider, still opted to leave the Broncos. Bertrand filled a crucial need as the only wing option and brought some extra toughness and physicality with his 6-foot-5-inch, 200-pound frame.

Alongside Bertrand was Bakare, who was lined up for a bigger role next season. The Newark, New Jersey, native was a plug-and-play shooter who stepped up in the Broncos' win over Iona on Jan. 15, and was a spark plug for Rider throughout the season.

Bakare announced he was putting his name into the portal on April 13 via Twitter, citing his mental health as a driving factor for the decision.

"I had a meeting with my coach," said Bakare in an interview with The Rider News. "I told them how I felt during the overall season. It was a lot of stress on me because I'm in my third year of college, and I feel I haven't made my mark yet in the college basketball world."

Compounded by the stress during the season, Bakare said that the decision came after an honest conversation with Baggett.

"He didn't think I was gonna play that much next year. He basically asked me to enter the portal," said Bakare.

Baggett said that it wasn't personal, and that there just wasn't going to be a bigger opportunity for him.

"In all fairness to all my players, if I don't think that there's going to be an opportunity for their roles to grow, I give them the opportunity to enter the portal," said Baggett. "I try and look out for what's best for each and every one of our guys that wants to play."

Who's still around

Coinciding with the loss of the five transfers, the Broncos are losing Murray, Ogemuno-Johnson, and graduate student Zahrion Blue, who are all graduating.

However, according to Baggett, senior forward

Mervin James will be returning next year for his final year of eligibility. James, nicknamed "Mr. Consistent" by scoring double-digit points in 24 of 30 games, is a contender for preseason player of the year, as the MAAC as a whole was decimated by the transfer portal.

Also returning to the Broncos are senior guard Allen Powell and junior forward Tariq Ingraham, providing much-needed experience and leadership.

Junior guard Corey McKeithan will be returning to the Broncos as well and will most likely slot into a starting role with the departure of Murray. Three freshmen are returning as well.

Alongside the seven returning players, Baggett plans on bringing in freshmen and transfers to flesh out the rest of the roster.

"We want to make sure we have some experience and youth, and that's just kind of the way we built our roster," said Baggett. "I just want to make sure that we bring in the right pieces and hopefully make another run at this."



Carolo Pascale/The Rider News

Sophomore guard **Adetokunbo Bakare** played in 22 games for the Broncos, averaging 2.4 points per game.

Sports

ONLINE

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Men's and women's track impressed in the 4x100-meter relay, with the men setting a Rider record.

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BASEBALL

Broncs ground Griffins; win Liberty Bell Classic



Andrew Xon/The Rider News

The Broncs pose at homeplate after winning their first Liberty Bell Classic since 2015.

By Benjamin Shinault and Carolo Pascale

THE last time Rider baseball lost a series was against the Oklahoma Sooners in late February. Since then, it's been pure sovereignty for the Broncs. From April 14-16, the Broncs took down the reigning Metro Atlantic Athletic Conference (MAAC) Champions, the Canisius Golden Griffins in a three-game set, now winning seven consecutive series.

Coming off yet another conference series win, on April 18, the Broncs had the opportunity to play at Citizens Bank Park, the home of the Philadelphia Phillies against the Delaware Blue Hens in the Liberty Bell Classic Final. Just like their success in conference play, the Broncs handled the major league pressure with ease, winning the Liberty Bell Classic 8-3.

A smack in the face

The Broncs have only lost in back-to-back games once this season and it was to the Sooners and with the loss to NJIT on April 11 and the Broncs dropping the first game of the series, the streak came to a halt.

At a sunny 83 degrees, the weather conditions were ideal for the Broncs, but it proved to be an off day for Rider, offensively and defensively. Senior pitcher Dylan Heine was the man throwing the ball on the mound for the Broncs. Heine had his worst start of the season, only pitching 3 2/3 innings, allowing 10 hits, seven earned runs, while walking two and only striking out one batter.

The Broncs struggled just as much at the plate, amounting only four hits and two runs.

One of the two runs came from junior infielder Jordan Erbe, who hit a home run to left center. Erbe made an immediate impact, returning from a muscle injury that sidelined him since March 26.

'Can't ask for any better'

The Broncs were supposed to play at Trenton Thunder Ballpark on April 15 against Canisius, but with heavy rain and thunderstorms in the forecast, both athletic departments agreed to cancel the game and make it up as a doubleheader the following day.

The Broncs in their seventh doubleheader this year, and won the first game 2-1.

The game was a certified pitching duel between graduate student pitcher Frank Doelling and Canisius starter Chris Pouliot. It was safe to assume that Doelling won the duel since his final line was five innings pitched, two hits and one earned run.

"Five innings, one run, can't ask for any better than that I guess, in the sense that the result is good," said Head Coach Barry Davis.

The successful result of the game wasn't an easy one since Pouliot was painting the corners well and not allowing the Broncs to string anything together.

In the bottom of the fourth, the Broncs showed life with sophomore designated hitter Matt Shepherd, who doubled down the left field line, scoring senior catcher Socrates Bardatsos. That double by Shepherd gave the Broncs a temporary lead with the Golden Griffins knotting the game back up at 1-1.

The game was tied in the sixth until freshman outfielder Erich Hartmann popped one up near foul territory in shallow left field. The outfielder was unable to field it cleanly, leaving freshman infielder Will Gallagher to score the game-winning run.

It wasn't an easy victory, but graduate student Danny Kirwin calmed the nerves of the 304 Rider fans in attendance with three innings of zero run ball, cementing the final score at 2-1 in the Broncs favor.

'That's a big series win'

After a slim victory and little offense the game before, the Broncs looked on to the final game of the series and doubleheader. The game was packed with action. The Broncs totaled 11 hits, eight runs and seven walks, ultimately leading to Rider's win of 8-6. Adding on to the excitement and the more entertaining aspects of the second game was senior outfielder Brendan O'Donnell's grand slam.

Sophomore pitcher Brian Young got the start for Rider and continued his stretch of dominance. In his past two outings, Young has struck out 14 batters. In the game against Canisius, Young earned an extra seven, giving him an astounding 21 strikeouts over three games.

Young compared his performance at the beginning of the season versus now as, "night and day."

"Lately I've been working with someone that has helped me a lot mentally," said Young.

The Broncs offense was electric Sunday with tons of hard hit balls, grounders that beat the shift and balls into the gap. The offense lit the flame in the bottom of the first with a grand slam from O'Donnell.

With two outs and the bases juiced, O'Donnell knew he had to start up the offense and walked through what his mental approach was at the plate.

"Bases full there and nowhere to put you, less than two outs, you are looking something up to drive and he left a changeup out over the plate and I was able to stay through long enough, keep it straight and hit it out," said O'Donnell.

Liberty Bell Classic

After getting revenge against Canisius, the Broncs had the opportunity to play in Citizens Bank Park, against Delaware in the Liberty Bell Classic Final on April 18. Rider left Philadelphia with a title in tow as they dominated the Blue Hens, winning 8-3.

The victory is the second time that the Broncs have won the Liberty Bell Classic, with their first win of the mid-season tournament coming in 2015.

Bardatsos played like a professional in the MLB ballpark, registering four hits, two runs, and an RBI. Three other Broncs registered two hits.

The Broncs got on the board quickly with four hits in the first inning, giving them a 3-0 lead.

From there, pitching was the story for the Broncs as freshman PJ Craig threw a superb opening five innings, registering six strikeouts and only allowing three hits against 23 batters.

The Broncs used three other pitchers: freshman Clayton Poliey, senior Alec Sachais, and Kirwin. Meanwhile, the Blue Hens couldn't figure it out on the mound as they used an outlandish eight pitchers.

The rest of the Broncs' runs came in the final two innings, scoring one in the eighth and matching their first inning total of three in the ninth.

The Broncs will have little time to celebrate, as the Princeton Tigers make the drive to Lawrenceville, New Jersey, on April 19.