

## 52 minutes: how Rider's shelter-in-place transpired

By Amethyst Martinez and Kaitlyn McCormick

What can only be described as a moment of mass fear for those on Rider's campus, a 52-minute shelter-in-place after an active shooter threat on April 3 has made faculty, students, and staff ponder the reality of events like these in educational settings, as well as question the preparedness of the university after the variation of responses during the lockdown.

The frightening event prompted the university to announce an immediate review, which could include safety upgrades to buildings and classrooms, according to Rider President Gregory Dell'Omo.

### The first announcement

Just six minutes after many students started their 1:10 p.m. classes, Rider sent out a university-wide alert, notifying the community of a shelter-in-place. Many thought it was another possible weather-related warning after four tornadoes touched down in New Jersey over the weekend, prompting a shelter-in-place order on April 1 due to severe weather.

Texts and emails on April 3 instructed faculty, staff and students to stay or move inside and stay away from windows and doors.

The second alert, two minutes later, cautioned the university community of an undisclosed threat made to campus and informed them that Rider Public Safety and the Lawrence Police Department were investigating.

When the initial order went out, English professor Megan Titus knew that the odds of continuing to teach were low, but as she and the students in her Theories of Writing and Tutoring class continued to receive what she described as "cryptic" updates from the university's alert system, she recalled wondering, "How real is this?"

At 1:21 p.m., the university disclosed that it had



Amethyst Martinez/The Rider News

Rider students shelter in place after receiving alerts of a potential shooter on campus.

received a threat of a potential active shooter: "This is not a drill."

Sophomore actor major Emily Porter Seigel, who uses they/them pronouns, was in an English class in the Fine Arts building at the time. They described the alert stating the active shooter threat as the moment it got "real" for them.

"I struggled to comprehend why they didn't start with that," said Seigel. "We were kind of shell shocked. We didn't know what to do."

By this time, multiple students reported taking precautions in their classrooms or dorm rooms, including closing blinds, locking doors and barricading doorways with tables and chairs. Many hid, reaching out to their family and friends, telling them they loved them. Other students described feelings of anxiety and distress, and some remembered classmates crying.

"It was surreal, and that's really the only word for

it," said Siegel.

Titus described what was going through her mind as she eventually instructed students to sit together in the corner of her third-floor Fine Arts classroom, before then making the group decision to utilize the room's tables and chairs as a barrier between the locked door and the people inside.

"I think I shut off the projector at that point, and then when it was clear that this was a situation that was not going to resolve itself quickly, and that it could be a very dangerous situation, that was when I kind of made the decision that we should move the tables just to be on the safe side," Titus said.

Other students reported that some faculty members teaching their classes didn't take the alerts seriously, and continued to teach.

Rachel Segierman, a junior arts and entertainment industries management major, said although her professor took the shelter-in-place seriously, she described seeing Instagram posts from students in continuing classes.

"People [were] saying, 'How would you expect me to literally sit here and concentrate and take notes when there could be something dangerous on campus and we're not being protected,'" said Segierman. "I mean, how do you expect us to sit here and still learn and concentrate?"

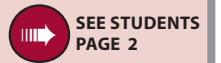
During the lockdown, Segierman also said that a student was pulled out of her ethics classroom and questioned by police officers.

She said that police stated that the student was not in trouble, but wanted to question him.

Segierman said, "We're all looking at each other like, 'What the heck is happening?'"

Other students were in different locations across the university, such as dorm rooms, bathrooms, and public spaces, but fear was present regardless of their locations.

Aileen Pujols, a sophomore



## Carr and Tufo: meet the candidates for SGA president

By Amethyst Martinez and Jake Tiger

As the university faces a pinnacle point since its inception, from mass faculty retirements within the next two years, financial difficulties and major program cuts, to controversial topics such as Title IX and diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI), the Student Government Association (SGA) opened their annual elections on April 3 with two candidates taking the ballot for student body president.

The options, junior economics major Joe Tufo, and junior political science major Naa'san Carr, have a variety of different ideas and initiatives to put in place during their win-dependent tenure next year, with voting opening up on April 3 and closing on April 12.

In addition to a debate open to the public on March 30, The Rider News conducted interviews with both candidates on April 3, where they were given 30 minutes to answer a variety of questions on topics such as SGA's role on campus, DEI, communications with the student body and the relationship between SGA and the administration.

### Leadership experience

Carr and Tufo have both served in all levels of SGA during their three years at the university, from senators, to committee chairs, to their current positions on the executive board.

"It's really important to be able to bring experience from all three levels from SGA," said Tufo. "You can kind of get some insight into how members of all three of those levels kind of see themselves in terms of what SGA is able to accomplish throughout the year."

Tufo, who also has a political science minor, currently serves as vice president of student affairs and oversees all of the DEI initiatives made by SGA. Outside of SGA, he is a tour guide for the Office of Admissions, a Student Conduct Board member and a brother of Sigma Phi Epsilon, serving as its academic and outreach chair.

Carr is currently serving as vice president of class connections. Outside of SGA, Carr is a member of the Black Student Union, a public relations chair in Black Men Unified (BMU), a student worker at the Center for Diversity and Inclusion (CDI), a member of Rider Democrats and Rider's Political Science

club and on the executive board of 107.7 The Bronc.

"I want to enhance the experience here," said Carr. "Being involved in all these clubs has given me knowledge as to what I can do to enhance the student experience through the clubs, because they are a big part of what SGA is about."

### Mission as SGA president

Carr and Tufo have varying visions as to what they'd like to accomplish as SGA president in the next school year.

Carr's plan heavily revolves around implementing more justice, equity, diversity and inclusion (JEDI) initiatives at Rider, from LGBTQIA+ Safe Zone and disability training, to having resource guides for "cultural identity-based communities," outlining certain groups and businesses on and around campus to assist students.

"This will be getting local shops in the area, whether it be beauty supply stores, barber shops, places to eat, so we can harvest what we have here," said Carr.



INSIDE

### BIG-GAME BRUINTJES

Junior forward Sofie Bruintjes stepped up in the MAAC Tournament, making her first-ever start.

PAGE 11



### NAA'SAN CARR FOR PRESIDENT

The editorial board endorses Naa'san Carr for SGA president.

PAGE 8



### PET-A-PUP EVENT BRINGS ANIMAL LOVERS TOGETHER

Students work with EASEL animal shelter to raise money for animals.

PAGE 6



# Students and faculty recall when fear set in

CONT'D FROM PAGE 1

acting major, hid underneath her bed in her dorm room alone for the almost hour-long shelter-in-place. During the lockdown, Pujols reached out to friends and tried to explain to her family, whose first language is Spanish, the situation she was in.

“Having to explain that to your parents in a different language, while also receiving this information and trying to figure out what to do with it...was really hard for that hour,” said Pujols. “Of course, everyone understands the words active shooter.”

Sophomore acting major Kelly Chavez-Menjinvar was taking a shower in her dorm building at the time of the first alert, and came back to her room, hiding with her roommate until the lockdown was over.

“I was just thinking the worst, because you never know now, unfortunately, in this country,” said Chavez-Menjinvar.

Mass shootings have become a hot-button issue across the United States, especially in educational settings. One of the latest, a shooting in Nashville, Tennessee, that took the lives of three children and three adults in a school, happened just 7 days prior to Rider’s active shooter threat.

“It’s never real until it happens,” said Siegel. “I go to school every day knowing that there is a chance that I could die, quite frankly.”

Brianna Ortega, the sister of a Rider student, called the university to try and get more information about the threat after hearing that her sister, junior elementary education major Megan Ortega, was sheltering in place in the Fine Arts building.

“I was getting ready to drive over there,” Brianna Ortega said, recalling that she was trying to find updates online. She said that the person who answered the phone was also under shelter-in-place orders, and instructed her that the Rider alert system would give her and her sister the most updated information.

Another update came at 1:31 p.m., informing the community that the Lawrence Police Department and Rider Public Safety were investigating the threat.

At this point, students remained where they were: in classes, dorms, or any shelter they could find across campus.

Junior musical theater major Nicole Duffy said that her class ultimately found itself locked in the windowless dressing rooms of the Spitz Theater in the Fine Arts building.

“It took me a while...for the fear to hit me, and I did definitely cry,” Duffy said. “We were holding hands. I was very thankful that I was in a space with people that

I all knew.”

The next alert came seven minutes later at 1:38 p.m., stating that the Main and South Entrances of campus were closed to entering and exiting traffic, the shelter-in-place still ongoing.

“I feel like all the information from the university had been horrifically vague,” said Siegel.

Students and faculty continued to follow the alert system and police scanners, waiting for results and relying on information from friends in other buildings.

According to John Bochanski, department chair of Rider’s Department of Computer Science and Physics, a police scanner mentioned Hill Hall during the shelter-in-place. Multiple students reported a high police presence at Hill Hall as well.

At 1:53 p.m., the Rider alert system informed that there was no confirmed active shooter, but faculty were instructed not to dismiss classes and the campus to continue to shelter in place.

The shelter-in-place was formally canceled 15 minutes later at 2:08 p.m., with no active threat to campus.

Siegel described the moments after leaving their classroom, being met with a “gorgeous sunny day” when they walked out the doors of the building.

“I look around and the people around me are pretending that nothing has happened,” said Siegel. “I felt crazy.”

Duffy, like many, decided to leave campus as soon as she was able, following the all-clear.

“There was a huge line to get off campus because people just wanted to be nowhere near here,” she said.

## Updates in the aftermath

The university published a follow-up to the shelter-in-place order: “We are currently gathering more information to share with our community as soon as possible,” it read.

Later in the day, the Lawrence Police Department determined the active shooter threat to be a “swatting event.” Swatting is a prank call to emergency services in an attempt to draw a large armed police presence to a specific location.

At 4:21 p.m., Rider Provost DonnaJean Fredeen sent a message to faculty via email, thanking them for protecting and keeping students calm during the shelter-in-place.

While Fredeen said classes would be able to meet for the remainder of the evening, she urged faculty to “be as flexible as possible in regards to [their] attendance

policy” in the case that students may have opted to not attend.

According to a universitywide email from the Office of the President following the shelter-in-place, “Even though it was determined that there was no credible threat to campus, we understand the need to shelter in place can cause feelings of anxiety and stress. Please know that assistance is available for our students, faculty and staff.”

The next day, Dell’Omo sent an email to all students, faculty, staff and parents, assuring the community that the university was taking a “thoughtful and collaborative approach” to its campuswide after-action review, assessing what worked well and where improvements could be made.

The email mentioned that the university was “immediately assembling” a team to review “every aspect” of the prior day’s events, and the group’s related actions could involve “mandatory training, safety upgrades for buildings and classrooms, enhanced communication tools and more.”

“We have also heard from members of our community expressing a variety of concerns that should be evaluated,” Dell’Omo wrote. On social media platforms, numerous students and parents expressed concern or anger about classroom doors that couldn’t be locked from inside or whose large window-walls offered no place to hide.

## Re-living the lockdown

During and after the order, many students took to social media to share their thoughts and views from their classrooms while sheltering in place. Many photos showed doors blocked by tables and chairs, students huddled together in dark corners and behind desks on the floor.

As classes continued the next day, many expressed still feeling shaken by the shelter-in-place and the fear they had experienced.

Titus opted to offer her April 4 night class online, saying that she didn’t feel safe being on campus at night, but also didn’t want her students to have to grapple with the decision of whether or not to come to class given the circumstances.

Pujols said, “Going back to class and everything resuming as normal was super difficult, because it felt like the world just keeps on turning, even though a really scary thing happened.”

# Candidates talk initiatives, from diversity to discounts

CONT'D FROM PAGE 1

Carr hopes to charter a NAACP college chapter for Rider during his time as president.

Outside of JEDI initiatives, Carr’s overall hope is to enhance the student experience on campus.

“Students always come first,” said Carr. “It’s the reason why we’re here, it’s the reason why Rider is here.”

When asked what he wanted to be known for personally, Carr stressed his overall mission statement of changing the world.

“I just want to be ... known as someone who made a change, and a good change, so just putting my best foot forward and getting things done,” said Carr

Tufo’s main draw as a candidate is his proposed shadowing program for incoming freshmen, allowing them to receive mentoring from current Rider students in their desired field.

“This would be a really great way to get first-year students to be able to experience our sense of community that we have here at Rider,” said Tufo. “This would also be a really new and interesting mentorship opportunity for our current students here on campus as well, to be able to interact with new students from the moment that they step onto campus.”

Along with his shadowing program, Tufo plans to implement a discount program that would give students special offers at local businesses, as well as a biweekly newsletter to improve and encourage communication between SGA and the student body.

“I’m sure all of us have been ... finding it, sometimes, a little bit difficult to be able to

Andrew Xon/The Rider News



Naa'san Carr and Joe Tufo speak about their goals if elected as SGA president.

afford the full college experience here at Rider,” said Tufo. “My goal with that is it’ll still encourage students to be able to explore the outside community off campus, but also kind of keep killing the bank account in that process.”

## SGA’s role on campus

Both candidates agreed that the primary goal of SGA is to serve Rider students first and foremost.

Carr described SGA as the “roots on trees,” for its responsibility to the student body.

“We’re rooted, we’re grounded, we’re intertwined,” said Carr. “Whatever affects one of us really affects us all...The role is really to serve students and elevate their voices to talk to administration.”

Tufo expressed a similar sentiment, restating the fact that SGA and the priorities of the president are specifically student oriented, acting as the student body’s “voice,” and the “liaison” between students and administrators that orchestrates change.

“The main priority of SGA is to enhance the

student experience on campus, in all different areas,” said Tufo. “It’s really just trying to be that sort of channel that students can go to, and to bring those issues to faculty and to administration. We are sort of the acting voice of the student body in real time.”

Voting for the SGA student body president, executive board members and select board representatives closes on April 12. Votes can be cast on BroncNation or in-person. In-person voting will be held April 6 at 12:30 p.m. at Cranberry’s, April 7 at 11 a.m. in the Student Recreation Center (SRC) and April 12 at 3 p.m. in Daly Dining Hall. Results will be announced on April 13 at 11:15 a.m. at the SGA Senate Meeting held in Sweigart Hall 115.



Learn more about SGA presidential candidates Naa'san Carr and Joe Tufo.

# Interim head of OIT acknowledges technology faults

By Kaitlyn McCormick and Shaun Chornobroff

**A**FTER Rider's decision last summer to outsource its Office of Information Technologies (OIT) generated problems and faculty complaints throughout this academic year, Rider's Interim Chief Information Officer (CIO), Oliver Wendt, admitted the university's technology is underperforming.

In an email sent to faculty and staff at 12:16 a.m. on March 24, Wendt provided an official judgment in the interest of being "open and transparent on the state of classroom technology."

"I too share your frustration with the state of technology and wholeheartedly agree that current classroom systems do not meet the needs of Rider University or most importantly, our students," Wendt wrote. "I want to be clear on the current state of classroom systems. Most classrooms are beyond equipment end-of-life and end-of-support."

This verdict comes on the heels of many instances of classroom technology failing the university's faculty and students. This year, many professors were affronted by faulty services that disrupted and delayed their lesson plans while awaiting repairs.

However, in an email to faculty and staff on April 4, Rider's Senior Vice President for Finance and Chief Financial Officer James Hartman announced a planned remedy: "Our goal is to begin installation of the new classroom technology this summer to have a majority

of our classrooms outfitted before the start of the Fall semester."

Hartman's email also pledged, "Essentially, the new [classroom] technology will include flexible and mobile options for faculty to utilize based on their preference" and that the school "will also be working collaboratively on an updated process to replace faculty and staff computers on an ongoing basis, essentially no later than every five years."

Hartman also announced the university expects a permanent head of OIT will join Rider early next month, replacing Wendt.

Professor Emre Yetgin, an executive committee member of Rider's chapter of the American Association of University Professors (AAUP), said that while it is not an official title, he serves "more or less" as a liaison between the union and the OIT department to communicate issues specifically relating to classroom technology.

According to Yetgin, faculty across the university have waged complaints including, but not limited to, faulty projectors and audio system issues.

In an email to its bargaining-unit members obtained by The Rider News, the AAUP Executive Committee noted that during labor negotiations throughout the summer that the administration accused the union of exaggerating the prevalence of these issues. "Six months later, the administration admits that 'Most classrooms are beyond

equipment end-of-life and end-of-support' and that the technology in the classroom is 'breaking down at a rate faster than we can immediately provide any relief,'" the email read.

Outside of concerns of physical technology, faculty have also expressed problems with practices such as the university's new two-step verification, which English professor Megan Titus said often eats into class time. There have also been non-physical issues relating to lacking software updates and Canvas malfunctions that have impacted students and professors alike.

Yetgin recounted the experience of one undisclosed professor from a compilation of faculty complaints who couldn't log into their



Kaitlyn McCormick/The Rider News

Professor Emre Yetgin relays common OIT complaints from faculty.

classroom computer, tried calling the help desk and was halted by a dead classroom phone.

The issue, Yetgin said, boils down to a lacking budget and infrastructure.

As Wendt communicated with faculty and staff in his email, "Unfortunately, effort is not a factor when it comes to equipment lifespan and functionality," and as technology is breaking down at a rate faster than OIT is equipped to handle even on a temporary basis, "All classroom spaces must be reengineered, with substantial investment to provide the most basic levels of service."

Yetgin made it clear that neither he nor the AAUP blame Wendt or OIT personnel directly for these problems, rather the overall impacts of inadequate allocation of university resources.

"I want to make it clear that there is not an issue regarding the efforts OIT has supported. We really appreciate the ongoing and extensive efforts of OIT trying to fix, and, when it's not possible, somehow maintain the classroom technology, and we know that they are working really hard. We also appreciate their openness and transparency about these issues," Yetgin said.



Rashe Mishra/The Rider News

Plans have been announced to remedy Rider's technology crisis.

# Nonbinary Broadway performer talks gender in the arts

By Jay Roberson

**T**HOUGH they have been on Broadway in shows such as "CATS" and "Bob Fosse's Dancin,'" Kolton Krouse, who goes by they/them pronouns, noted that their gender identity made it difficult to participate in the audition process, as a majority are split into male and female categories. Krouse spoke about their experiences being a nonbinary performer on April 4 at 7:30 p.m. in the Yvonne Theater in the "Conversations in the Arts" speaker guest series.

Krouse began by explaining how there have been improvements in spaces for nonbinary actors and characters, but there still needs to be improvements to accommodate those who don't exactly fit in the binary.

"It's great that we're starting to get more representation like that on Broadway, but it's still slowly but surely. I've had conversations with the creative team in my show because when I'm not on, the fact is binary, they separate it male and female, which is confusing to me and I think to everyone," said Krouse during their presentation.

After a short introduction to their background as a performer, Krouse opened up the floor to audience members to ask them questions.

Senior musical theater major Joe Love spoke about why he found the speaker to be so engaging and relatable.

"I loved the raw personality and really encouraging everyone to be themselves, just like at the point of showing who they are and bringing not only industry knowledge, but also personal knowledge

gained," Love said.

As Krouse answered questions about being nonbinary and being on Broadway, the audience was captivated and spent the hour asking them about their career. Krouse spoke more about their relationship with gender and movement.

"The internal dialogue I always had was playing with the masculine and feminine ideas of movement which I think is really fun, and everyone can do that. When I think of movement, I almost think of the duality of how can it be masculine and how can it be feminine at the same time," Krouse said.

In the show "Bob Fosse's Dancin,'" Krouse was given a nonbinary track. A track is all the performer's actions and movement on stage, more particularly for ensemble roles. This role was a step forward for Krouse, but, they said, there are still many ways that Broadway can be more inclusive.

"It's just hard, because there's not as many [nonbinary] characters. They don't want to tell that story so when I did get this, I actually get to tell the story of the character. It's great that I get to do that, but also in a way the industry isn't really changing that much," said Krouse.

Krouse told the audience the different ways they deal with ignorance regarding their gender, which is mostly self-advocating. They encouraged non-gender-conforming performers to always be that advocate for themselves, even though they shouldn't have to.

"Unless they're being held accountable, they won't try. Because it doesn't affect them in their everyday life. ... So you just have to be a spokesperson for yourself, which sucks. A lot," Krouse said.

Some nonbinary audience members were particularly touched by Krouse's presentation because they could see themselves in what they were saying. Junior musical theater major Grace Bradbury, who uses they/she pronouns, explained why they thought having these discussions involving gender identity is important not only to performers, but to every person.

"I've been here for three years now ... Like I've never had to have these conversations. Especially gender identity and how that intertwines with the industry, and also just like the way we exist in the world," said Bradbury. "That's really important for us as performers, and also just us as individuals because, you know, more representation is better."



Jay Roberson/The Rider News

Kolton Krouse talks about their nonbinary identity.

# Organizations holding events for Asian/Pacific American Heritage Month

By Jake Tiger

As campus blooms into life, Rider University celebrates those with eastern roots during Asian/Pacific American Heritage Month, a month-long celebration of the culture, traditions and history of Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders in the United States.

“The number of Asian students is increasing,” said Associate Dean Lan Nyugren. “We need to recognize that and make them aware that there is a community here for them, so they have a sense of home.”

Congress designated May as Asian/Pacific American Heritage Month in 1992, but Rider chooses to celebrate in April due to “the abundance of activities surrounding Commencement,” according to the university.

The festivities begin on April 5 at 11 a.m. with a celebration through food, as Daly Dining Hall’s menu will include dishes from Asian and Pacific cultures, each voted on by Rider students. Subsequent culinary celebrations will be held on April 12 and 26.

“I think it’s even more important that we take advantage of Asian/Pacific American Heritage Month, for Rider to celebrate our culture, to make people feel like they’re heard,” said Nyugren.

The Asian American Alliance (AAA), with the help of the Office of International Education (OIE) and the Center for Diversity and Inclusion (CDI), will also be hosting an Asian and Asian American culture awareness event in an effort to further educate the community and increase representation. It will feature entertainment, games and prizes, and will take place on April 6 from 5-7 p.m. in the Mercer Room of Daly’s.

“There are a lot of myths around Asian and

Asian American culture, so we want to use this event as an opportunity to increase the awareness,” said Nyugren, a member of AAA who helped organize the awareness event. “We want to invite the communities over to really make them feel their identities are valued and appreciated, and their culture is recognized.”

Junior communication studies major Jaina Daclan, president of Rider’s Asian American Students Association (AASA), said that AASA has other celebrations planned for later in the month that aren’t featured on the schedule released by the university, including a cultural showcase and talent show on April 7 from 7-9 p.m. in the Bart Leudeke Center’s Cavalla Room.

“A lot of outside schools are going to be coming too, like people coming to show off what they have: singing, dancing, whatever it is. It’s gonna be a fun time,” said Daclan. “We’re going to have desserts, of course.”

Later in the month, AASA has additional plans for a movie night on April 20 from 6-9 p.m. in room 209 of the Science and Technology Center, but the movie has yet to be decided.

AASA is also hoping to hold a teaching kitchen where assistant professor and AASA Advisor Yoshinori Tanokura will show attendees how to make curry, but there is currently no set date, time or location. AASA will be providing updates for all events on their Instagram: @rider\_aasa.

“It’s hard to find representation here, and a lot of people don’t realize this is a predominantly white institution,” Daclan said about her experiences at Rider. “I want to give them a chance and an environment to be like, ‘There’s a place that’s safe for you, and you belong.’”

APRIL

ASIAN PACIFIC AMERICAN HERITAGE MONTH

5

11 a.m. Daly Dining Hall

EXPLORING HERITAGE THROUGH FOOD (Day One)

6

5-7 p.m. Mercer Room (Daly’s)

CULTURAL Awareness Event

7

7-9 p.m. Cavalla Room (BLC)

CULTURAL Showcase & Talent Show

12

11 a.m. Daly Dining Hall

EXPLORING HERITAGE THROUGH FOOD (Day Two)

20

6-9 p.m. SCI 201

AASA Movie Event

26

11 a.m. Daly Dining Hall

EXPLORING HERITAGE THROUGH FOOD (Day Three)

Eric Buckwalter/The Rider News

Events Rider is holding for Asian Pacific American Heritage Month.

# SGA officially brings back in-person voting



SGA in-person voting table at an event for 107.7 The Bronc.

By Jay Roberson

As the semester comes to a close, the Student Government Association (SGA) is holding elections to appoint new officers for the 2023-2024 academic year. In recent years, these elections were held virtually with students being able to vote through BroncNation. This year things are changing as in-person voting sessions were held on April 3 and 4, with upcoming days scheduled for April 6, 7 and 12, in addition to the traditional online format.

Senior political science major and SGA President Andrew Bernstein spoke about past elections and why SGA took measures to place voting in person rather than just online.

“Especially the year of COVID and coming out of COVID, I think it was more so just encouraging people to go on BroncNation, which is effective. But I think it’s better when you have that physical presence to make it more fun,” Bernstein said. “People want to be able to feel like they’ve contributed rather than just going on the computer and signing on and being done with it.”

Sophomore political science major and Sophomore Class Council Vice Chair Christina Natoli explained that in the past there were big voting turnouts, but since the switch to online, it hasn’t been the same.

“I believe that there was a pretty big in-person voting presence, like pretty far back in the past. But then for convenience, SGA switched to only putting

voting on BroncNation,” said Natoli. “I think the motivation to change to, or at least to provide an in-person option to diversify the options students have and make them feel more involved in the voting process.”

Throughout the voting period, SGA will be in different locations that students frequent most often. On April 6 students will be able to vote in Cranberry’s from 12:30-3:30 p.m., on April 7 voting will be open in the Student Recreation Center (SRC) from 11:00 a.m.-1 p.m. Lastly, students will be able to cast their ballots at Daly Dining Hall on April 12, the final day voting is open, from 3-4 p.m.

Since students tend to get busy at the end of the semester and forget about elections, SGA is hoping that the physical placement of voting booths will encourage participation.

“If they haven’t heard about it, you know, going on BroncNation, or a friend or a classmate, they’ll see us, or have to run into us and be like ‘Maybe I do want to do that,’ whereas before, they might not have heard about it,” said Bernstein.

Another way that SGA is making voting more fun and interactive is by giving out pins and pens to students who vote in person.

“This at least provides them a little bit of outlet to physically do it and then once they do we have like SGA ‘I voted’ pins and little pens and all that. It’s going to get more engaging hopefully and more exciting,” Bernstein said.

Junior film and television major Jacob Serrano emphasized how important it is for students to recognize SGA’s role on campus and why their vote matters.

“When we go back into the past and think about things we’ve upgraded like facilities and the SRC, those are things that SGA has done. Create the Zen Den, we do actual work here on campus,” Serrano said. “I think it’s important that students know that it’s not just a position ... Once you’re in [SGA] you have a voice.”

Natoli noted that she is excited for students to get more involved in the voting process and hopes that students see SGA’s presence is important on campus.

“Something that I’m personally excited about

is not only to get more students to vote, but also to show like the legitimacy of the election and of SGA,” Natoli said. “I hope that the in-person voting is an option that stays with students.”



Andrew Xon/The Rider News

SGA President Andrew Bernstein pioneered in-person voting’s return.

## Read Online:

**Rider Musical Theater, WCC stage spring opera**

By Julia Train



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**PANTRY**

# Pet-A-Pup event attracts animal lovers

By **Tristan E. M. Leach**

**T**HERE aren't many things that will motivate college students to leave the comfort of their dorms on a chilly March morning. Luckily, the reward of getting to pet some adorable puppies was just the motivation needed for Rider students.

Pet-A-Pup, as the event was named, was put together to raise money for EASEL Animal Shelter. The non profit organization works to keep unwanted dogs and cats from being killed. Many "no kill" shelters reserve euthanasia for sick animals whereas EASEL does not.

The event was the idea of four students in a class led by associate professor Mark Promislo. The students were given the task of putting together a fundraiser, in this case, Pet-A-Pup, an event that was new to Rider's campus.

Sherrie Manalo, a sophomore digital marketing major, was one of the students behind the project. Manalo and her group were inclined to choose a non profit organization that they connected to on a personal level.

"Myself, as a dog lover and my other team members are as well, we were able to connect to that charity [EASEL]," said Manalo. "When we found more information about EASEL and being so close to campus, we found that it could be the best opportunity

for us to work with them."

EASEL was happy to collaborate with the group, and on March 27 an email was sent to students inviting them to sign up for 10 minute sessions to pet and play with puppies. In order for this to happen, students were required to pay a \$5 fee for the event, donated to the charity. Within a few hours, all spots had been filled and the anticipation of the event filled the air.

At promptly 11:30 a.m. on March 31 the first students arrived on the Campus Mall. Framed gorgeously by the Broncs bushes, four black and two brown puppies frolicked with happy students, volunteers for EASEL supervising the play.

Many of the animals that find a home with EASEL have experienced trauma and were unwanted.

Tiffany Bates, a senior entrepreneurial studies major, was in the group of students that put together the event.

"[The event] just means a lot because everybody loves pets and dogs and cats. They are so sweet and cute," said Bates. "To be here and raise money just feels so amazing because they're a great organization and what they stand for is amazing."

The students were happy to give some love and joy to the animals and the students received the same from the puppies. Smiling students pet, hugged and

fed treats to the yappy four-legged creatures.

The event was healing for students and prompted many to think about fostering and adopting in the future. This included students like Emma Zatkowski, a sophomore arts and entertainment industries management major.

"The reason I came is because I fostered and adopted my dog out from a rescue shelter back in January. I wanted to come and see other shelter dogs," said Zatkowski.

As the event carried on, the puppies excitedly rushed from person to person. Students talked excitedly to their friends. Manalo and her fellow group members looked on. The event had been the success they had all hoped for.



Andrew Xon/The Rider News

A brown puppy looks into the crowd.

# Rain or shine: Relay for Life walks again



Kaitlyn D'Alessio/The Rider News

Members of **Delta Sigma Pi**, a co-ed business fraternity, pose for a group photo at Relay for Life.

By **Hannah Newman and Bridget Gum-Egan**

**R**IDER raised over \$30,000 for the American Cancer Society (ACS) during the 2023 Relay for Life, taking place on campus over the weekend even through inclement weather precautions.

The primary goal of ACS is to raise money for cancer research, along with assisting families and patients with transportation and living expenses while coming together as a community to honor those who are fighting, survivors and those who have courageously lost their lives to cancer.

"For six hours every spring, it is able to unite students, faculty, staff, and others from every corner of the Rider community in the fight against cancer," said senior human resources major and co-chair of Relay for Life, Jenna Muller in an email interview. "Everyone comes out and has a great time, under the same cause, and it is truly amazing to see the work everyone puts into the event. I am so proud to have been able to bring this event back onto campus after COVID, and to see the success we've had in the last two years."

The event began with survivors taking the first lap around the track, followed by those who are participating.

This event included a variety of different activities such as board game tournaments, a pie-eating contest, a dodgeball tournament and a scavenger hunt. There were also performances by the Rider Pep Band and Dance Team, as well as from freshman liberal arts major Toby Trish and sophomore film major Will Dusingberre.

This year's theme was board games in which, "Knock Cancer off the Board" was the slogan that displayed how the theme correlated to the cause. Another fun and unique element to this event is where teams can set up a "campsite" and decorate their

designated area to match their individualized creation of the theme. Every team created a banner of their board game and some even dressed up like candy canes in representing the game "CandyLand."

A variety of different clubs and organizations across campus participated in the event, all contributed to the successful total raised for ACS, including club sports, Greek Life, academic clubs and beyond.

Not only did each team raise money independently and donate through the different activities that were provided to participate in, but there were other opportunities to fundraise. The "Go to Jail" section allowed participants to send their friends "to jail" after making a donation, and the person who is sent to jail has to raise double the amount that the person who sent them in donated in order to be released.

Each year there is a survivor speaker, who speaks at the event about the battle they fought. This year's Provost DonnaJean Fredeen shared her story and touched the lives of many after tears crept down the faces of those listening.

Senior marketing major and co-chair for Relay for Life Kayla Wagner, in an email interview, said, "In looking for guest speakers, we really wanted to have speakers who our campus community would feel connected to. I'm very grateful that Provost Fredeen was so open to and excited about sharing her story as our survivor speaker at the event."

While explaining her role in the making of Relay for Life, Wagner explained her ambition to work hard for the cause and the personal effect it had on her world outside of college.

"Cancer has affected the lives of my family and friends in various ways. Personally, my mom is a thyroid cancer survivor, but my personal connection to this cause really comes from my drive to help and unite others in this fight and make a difference," said Wagner. "I would just want to emphasize that cancer, unfortunately, is something that has, in some way, impacted all of our lives, regardless of how large or small that impact may be. I am passionate about Relay for Life because it is a way for all of us to come together with our desire to make a difference and take action in the fight against cancer in common."

While the event opened with a guest speaker, it also ended with the inspiring words of a "Fight Back Speaker," which is someone who encourages the reasons to fight and the personal impact this cause had on their life.

Vice President of Strategic Initiatives and Planning Debbie Stasolla was the 2023 Fight Back Speaker.

Muller said she knew that Stasolla would be a

match when she was seeking a candidate speaker for this part of the event.

"I personally have gotten to know Debbie throughout my job on campus and the various activities I participate in, and when I saw that she was signed-up to participate in Relay, I reached out to her right away to see if she would be interested to speak at the event," said Muller. "The purpose of this speech is to motivate the crowd even though we have done so well with fundraising, the work will not be over until we find a cure."

One other closing element to the event is the Luminaria Ceremony, where participants can purchase luminaria bags, bags that can be decorated and lit to honor loved ones affected by cancer, and light up the walking track with them.

As a final event of the night, students walked the track that was lined with lights in silence as they honored those whom they fight for. The closing ceremony brought out the most tears and embracing of one another as the six-hour night closed with the feeling of recognition among all who participated.



Kaitlyn D'Alessio/The Rider News

Provost **DonnaJean Fredeen** spoke at this year's Relay for Life.



Kaitlyn D'Alessio/The Rider News

Brothers of **Sigma Phi Epsilon** sport their jerseys in front of their flag which was carried during the event.

# 107.7 The Bronc's Eggscellent Egg Hunt photo gallery



Kaitlyn D'Alessio/The Rider News

"Easter" bunnies were a highlight of the petting zoo.



Kaitlyn D'Alessio/The Rider News

A pony made an appearance in the petting zoo.



Carolo Pascale/The Rider News

Excited students stand at the edge of the egg hunt area, counting down the minutes until they can look for the big prizes.



Kaitlyn D'Alessio/The Rider News

AJ the Bronc and the Easter Bunny hangout on the Campus Mall.



Carolo Pascale/The Rider News

Students check their eggs to see what prizes they won.

Watch the video of the Eggscellent Egg Hunt!  
By Bridget Hoyt



Carolo Pascale/The Rider News

Students excitedly discuss the egg hunt.



Carolo Pascale/The Rider News

The sign with the list of animals featured in the petting zoo.

# The Rider News endorses Naa'san Carr for SGA President

**W**ITH a plethora of hot-button issues at the forefront of the Rider community's mind, voting season has begun for the 2023-24 Student Government Association (SGA) student body president. This year's roster features two candidates: junior political science major Naa'san Carr, and junior economics major Joe Tufo. After interviews with both candidates conducted on April 3, The Rider News editorial board has decided to endorse Carr for the next SGA student body president.

## Diversity, equity and inclusion

A major topic that has garnered not only attention from students on campus, but nationally, has been diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) in higher education settings. Carr's knowledge on DEI is expansive due to his various involvements on campus, such as being a part of the Black Student Union (BSU), a public relations chair in Black Men Unified (BMU), a student worker at the Center for Diversity and Inclusion (CDI) and being a member of Rider Democrats and Rider's Political Science Club. As student body president, one of Carr's main initiatives is implementing JEDI (justice, equity, diversity and inclusion) on campus, which he says will "enhance the experience" for students at Rider. Carr plans to do this by adding diversity training for topics such as LGBTQIA+ Safe Zone and disability awareness, along with creating resource guides for "cultural identity-based communities" at Rider and chartering an NAACP college chapter.

"I just have a wide variety of being with our identity-based clubs or faith-based clubs here on campus to really gauge on what the community needs and what it has to offer for everyone here at Rider," said Carr.

## Past roles in SGA

Along with his high involvement in the campus community, Carr has held positions and served in all levels of SGA during his three years of time at Rider: his freshman year in a senate position, his sophomore year as equity and inclusion committee chair and this year as vice president for class connections. This allows him to play a crucial role in the understanding of all positions in SGA and each of their uses.

He hopes to implement monthly meetings for the student body to attend outside of normal weekly senate meetings for SGA to air their thoughts, as well as sending out emails to students after senate meetings to reflect on the work that was done.

Carr also mentioned that he sees SGA's role on campus as "roots on trees," intertwined together with issues affecting the entirety of the campus community.

## Big plans for communication with students

A significant problem posed to the university has been a variety of issues taking place over the past few years, with confusing topics that many students struggle to navigate and understand. From moving Westminster Choir College to the Lawrenceville campus in 2020, to the possibility of a strike looming over student's brains last semester, the university is no stranger to confused members of the community struggling to understand huge institutional change in all sectors of Rider.

Current SGA President Andrew Bernstein has made huge leaps in communication to students, but Carr plans to take these initiatives a step further, emphasizing that he wants to meet with the student body frequently.

Carr's said his hope is that, if elected, he will be remembered for making a change.

## The Rider News' opinion

Carr had very clear points about Justice, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (JEDI) because of his strong connections with the CDI. Because of these connections, The Rider News believes he can bring more diversity training for a variety of topics.

Carr also said he wants to create a feeling of community not just in Rider but also in Lawrenceville, New Jersey, and students feel that there is currently a disconnect within the community. If Carr could make a stronger relationship with the Rider and surrounding community, then students could feel a greater sense of care and pride.

There isn't just a disconnect within the town, but also within Rider. Carr is determined to connect more students with SGA by having more one-on-one conversations with them, and that could help create a bond between the students and SGA.

Carr is truly adamant about creating change whether as SGA president or as another position on the SGA board. Making change is a dream of his, and The Rider News endorses his efforts of making that dream come true.

*This editorial expresses the unanimous opinion of The Rider News Editorial Board. This week's editorial was written by Managing Editor Amethyst Martinez and Opinion Editor Felicia Roehm.*

*Amethyst Martinez*  
*Felicia Roehm*



Andrew Xon/The Rider News

Junior political science major Naa'san Carr speaking with The Rider News.

## **THE** Rider News

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SENIOR SPOTLIGHT

# How life has changed after the COVID shutdown

**EXPERIENCED** an immense amount of nervousness and excitement coming to Rider, the normal occurrence for every college freshman. I was living on campus and ready for some independence. I made wonderful friends very quickly, and we all looked out for each other.

That's probably why it was so hard to say goodbye.

I remember sitting at a table in Cranberry's surrounded by my friends when we received an email saying that our spring break was going to be extended a week because of the COVID-19 pandemic. There had been talk of the school closing because of the virus, and I was dreading an email like this. "It's just two weeks," I thought. "And then all of this will be over." Other people were not so naive, and I remember seeing someone buy an entire pizza in an effort to use their BroncBucks before it was too late. It was like watching the end of the world. Little did I know that it would be the end of the world, or at least the life I had come to know and love.

"We are extending spring break for an additional week through March 27," said the university wide email sent through University Communications on March 10, 2020. Only three days later, we were sent an additional email from the university telling us that our classes would be moved to remote instruction for the duration of the spring semester, and additional emails were sent the following week that solidified this decision.

I was devastated. I was told that college would be the best four years of my life, and even though it had been living up to my expectations, the pandemic had other plans for me. I felt like I was being robbed of the happiest years of my life, and no matter how much I tried to recreate that freshman-year experience in my later years at Rider, it was never the same. Even in my junior year when most students were vaccinated and we could finally go back to in-person instruction, there were so many activities that still had to be canceled or modified to minimize the spread of COVID. As much as everyone tried to make my college experience the best that it could be and as close to "normal" as possible, it was never the same. And it never could be the same because the pandemic changed so many things, including me.

Three years later, when we have finally reached that conventional idea of a normal school year, one without masks and social distancing, I still find myself impacted by COVID in unexpected ways. I was sitting in the bleachers at a Rider men's basketball game this past March, shoulder-to-shoulder with people, tucking in my knees to keep them from touching the back of a stranger, when all of a sudden I was hit with a pang of anxiety and a wave of guilt. I was so close to so many people, breathing the same air, and I had no idea if any of us were sick.

This wasn't the only time I've found myself thinking these intrusive thoughts. Sometimes I have to remind myself that I'm safe, I'm vaccinated and I'm doing everything that I'm supposed to be doing to keep those around me safe while still living my life, but the fear of COVID still haunts me sometimes.

We've spent so much time waiting for the world to return to normal that we've changed in the process. Sitting in a crowd of people felt normal for me three years ago, but now, not so much. I've spent so much time thinking about mitigating the spread of COVID that it's become hard to stop.

I still feel the effects of the pandemic. Sometimes it's only in small ways, like how my boyfriend doesn't enjoy eating outside anymore, claiming that during the pandemic he ate outside enough to last a lifetime, but sometimes the impact is larger, like how working remotely was normalized.

I've continued to take a few classes online since the pandemic, and as an English major, I've noticed that a lot of jobs in the publishing field have been moved to remote. When I started college, I had this picture in my head of what my career would look like, and regardless of the job, I pictured myself sitting in an office somewhere, but now, working from home is a very real possibility for me and many of my peers.

Other times, it wasn't COVID itself that changed my life, but the time that it took from me and how it altered significant events in my life.

My grandfather passed away on March 24, 2020, close to the beginning of the shutdown, and while his death wasn't deemed as being COVID-related, it still felt like the virus took him. There were strict limitations on visitors in the hospital, and even though he had so many friends who wanted to say goodbye, only immediate family could go to his funeral. He deserved so much more.

Within these past few years, my mom was diagnosed with liver disease, making common colds even more threatening because of the limited medications she can take. For her, the masking and the social distancing isn't over.

While some of these changes were directly caused by the pandemic, some are merely just the product of time passing, but the feeling of loss is only intensified by the time I lost because of lockdowns and remote instruction. I loved my time as a freshman and consider it to be the happiest time of my life, but that time was cut short, and no matter how much I tried to recreate that experience in my junior and senior years at Rider, it was never the same. It's been three years since I said goodbye to my friends for a spring break that never ended, and so much has changed since then, but I have come to accept that we will never go "back to normal" because what is normal is always changing.

*Michelle Pellegrino*

*senior English major and copy editor*



Eric Buckwalter/The Rider News

Senior English major **Michelle Pellegrino** looks back on her time at Rider.

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

# The importance of preparation in an emergency

**AFTER** the shelter-in-place on April 3, many emotions went through my head. The two I felt the most; fear of what could have happened and anger at how this was able to happen. What yesterday proved is how unprepared and unsecured Rider University is.

Most professors were unaware and unprepared for the worst. From what I was told by many of my peers, many students had to lead the lockdown measurements to protect themselves, because Rider does not properly educate the faculty on what to do when the worst happens.

This marks a stark contrast to my time in high school where it would be out of the question if teachers were not trained for an active shooter. I was given more training at my job at a grocery store for this kind of event than Rider faculty apparently were; training that I have to repeat every year.

The lack of actual security on campus is embarrassing, and it is not the fault of Public Safety. If the issue is not being able to afford proper security, what is the point of having security at all? Even now, after a shooting threat and an hour-long lockdown, it's terrifying that there is still a lack of security.

Many students I have talked to expressed that they would feel safer if campus security was raised in the days or weeks afterward. The fact that we had a major event the day after this lockdown when it could have been moved to its rain date is gravely concerning. Another point to be made is the fact that our international students were extremely unprepared for this event. Many of them did not receive the messages sent by Public Safety. Messages that, notably, were very unclear which led to further fear and mass confusion among the faculty and students.

One thing that should happen is to make security training mandatory for students and faculty. An increase in Public Safety and resources for them to better protect Rider is needed. Better security in our dorms is needed. Even the entrances themselves need better protection. The bottom line is resources needed to be better allocated to Public Safety. I truly hope Rider never has to go through this again but I hope that we are more prepared if it does.

*Thomas Guzzo*

*senior political science major*



Photo courtesy of Thomas Guzzo

Senior political science major **Thomas Guzzo** shares concerns over lack of preparation for emergencies.

SOFTBALL

# Broncs losing streak extends to seven



Carolo Pascale/The Rider News

Freshman pitcher **Fallyn Stoeckel** pitched 3 2/3 innings against Princeton on March 29.

By **Andrew Smolar**

**R**IDER softball's early season struggles have now stretched into the month of April, dropping seven straight games in a 13-day span.

The Broncs began their week with a pair of difficult losses at the hands of their neighbors from Princeton on March 29, the Tigers taking the first game of the day 3-2 and the second game 3-1.

Rider's slide continued with two more losses to Metro Atlantic Athletic Conference (MAAC) rival Iona on March 2. The Gaels won the first game 1-0 and the second game 5-3.

Rider wrapped up their week with two more losses to Fairfield on March 3, dropping both games by just one run: 8-7 and 3-2.

"I am pleased with our ability to fight back when we're down," Head Coach Davon Ortega said in an email interview. "However, something that has been frustrating for us is that we aren't rising to the challenge until the last two innings of a game when it's a little too late to fully catch up."

**Notable performances**

Despite losing all six games this past week, some performances from the Broncs stood out from the

dismal stretch. There were three outings that stood out from the rest for softball, coming from junior outfielder Laneya Wright, sophomore pitcher Kathryn Schmierer and freshman pitcher Jadeyn Merrill.

Wright had herself a quality performance in the first game on March 29, with a pair of hits in three plate appearances and the only RBI for the Broncs.

Schmierer pitched a great game against Iona, allowing only four hits over six innings of one run ball. She also went on to allow no runs or hits in her inning of work in the second game.

Merrill had a productive game one against Fairfield at the plate, getting two hits in three plate appearances with a pair of RBIs.

**What went right**

Late inning rallies have been a mainstay in Rider's games. Despite falling behind 3-0 in the first game of the day on March 29, the Broncs did not falter. Rider scored a run in both the fifth and sixth innings to cut the lead to one before eventually falling short in seven innings.

The Broncs again showed their late inning

resolve in game two on April 2 against Iona, getting three hits and three runs in the sixth inning before eventually falling 5-3. Their late-inning magic was on display against Fairfield as well, with two runs in the sixth inning of game one and a run in the sixth inning of game two.

Another major part of Rider's games has been the success of the relief pitching.

Over the two games on March 29, the bullpen was perfect. In game one, freshman Fallyn Stoeckel pitched 3.2 innings of only allowing one hit and no earned runs.

In game two, freshman Jadeyn Merrill pitched a clean one inning of work with no hits allowed or runs given up. Their work against Iona on April 2 was also clean as Schmierer and Stoeckel combined for 2 2/3 innings of no runs allowed.

"All four of my pitchers are the reason we have stayed in so many games this season," Ortega said. "I always tell the pitching staff that my job is easy in terms of changing pitchers, when I know what to expect from the person behind them."

**What needs work**

The biggest factor that faulted the Broncs over this tough stretch has been falling behind early.

Rider fell behind 3-0 in the first game on March 29, which ultimately proved too much to overcome.

They allowed Princeton to score the first run in the second game of the day. Despite Rider immediately responding to tie the game, the Tigers scored runs in the two innings after to put the game away for good.

They also went on to allow Iona to get the first and only run in game one on April 2 and fell behind 5-0 in game two.

The Stags scored the first two runs of game two on April 3.

Consistently playing catch-up has been a problem the Broncs have not been able to overcome as of late.

**Looking ahead**

After getting a small taste of conference competition, the Broncs will make the trip down to South Orange, New Jersey, for a pair of games against in-state rival Seton Hall on April 5 before welcoming Morgan State to campus for a pair of games on April 11.




Rider currently has a record of 6-20 on the season, and sits 10th place in the MAAC standings at 0-4 in conference play.

**THE Rider News**

BASE = BASEBALL  
SOFT = SOFTBALL  
T&F = TRACK AND FIELD

■ = Home  
■ = Away

**RIDER UNIVERSITY ATHLETICS**  
**WEEKLY RIDER SPORTS SCHEDULE**

April 5	April 6	April 7	April 8	April 9	April 10	April 11
<p><b>SOFT</b> VS SETON HALL 2 P.M.</p> <p><b>SOFT</b> VS SETON HALL 4 P.M.</p> 		<p><b>BASE</b> VS SIENA 11 A.M.</p> <p><b>BASE</b> VS SIENA 3 P.M.</p> <p><b>T&amp;F</b> VS HURRICANE ALUMNI INVITATIONAL</p>	<p><b>BASE</b> VS SIENA 12 P.M.</p> <p><b>T&amp;F</b> VS HURRICANE ALUMNI INVITATIONAL</p> <p><b>T&amp;F</b> VS TCNJ INVITE</p>			<p><b>BASE</b> VS NJIT 3 P.M.</p> <p><b>SOFT</b> VS MORGAN STATE 2 P.M.</p> <p><b>SOFT</b> VS MORGAN STATE 4 P.M.</p>



Junior forward **Sofie Bruintjes** made her first-ever start in the MAAC Tournament, stepping in for junior forward **Raphaela Toussaint**, who was announced as out moments before tipoff.

## WOMEN'S BASKETBALL

# Bruintjes offers 'glimpse' of her ceiling

By Jake Tiger

**W**ITH a hole in the starting lineup ahead of the Rider women's basketball's biggest game of the season, Head Coach Lynn Milligan turned to her biggest player for the first time ever.

"For me, it was really a no-brainer," said Milligan. "It's really about the player's mindset, and I just felt like she was in a really good place for what was coming that week."

Junior forward Raphaela Toussaint had been a staple in the Broncos' starting lineup all season, being a driving force behind their late-season resurgence. She ranked first for Rider in rebounding by far with 5.3 rebounds per game, and second in scoring with 12.3 points per game.

But on March 7, due to a non-COVID-19 illness, the Broncos were without Toussaint for the first time in over two years, just moments before a do-or-die meeting with Marist in the Metro Atlantic Athletic Conference (MAAC) Tournament.

Mere minutes before Rider had to take the floor of Jim Whelan Boardwalk Hall, Milligan called upon her 6-foot-5-inch junior from Zwolles, Netherlands, who had yet to register a start in her collegiate career.

"It was, literally, probably 20 minutes before the warmup started," said junior forward Sofie Bruintjes. "I thought Raphie [Toussaint] was going to show up eventually, and then right before warmups started, Coach [Milligan] grabbed me and said, 'Hey, I need you to step up today.'"

During the 2022-23 regular season, Bruintjes spent most of her time on the bench, making spotty contributions as needed with an average of 6.8 minutes per game.

Still, Bruintjes always made her presence known to everyone in attendance, often seen dancing and cheering on her teammates from the sideline with unparalleled effervescence.

"If I'm not the one that can do it on the court, I have to make sure that I'm still celebrating the people that are," said Bruintjes. "Basketball is a team sport, and I know I signed up for a team sport. There's going to be games and days where it's not me in the spotlight."

But for the first time in her career, Bruintjes found herself — rather abruptly — thrust into the

brightest spotlight MAAC basketball has to offer.

After a zealous entrance during introductions, Bruintjes got her first run with the starters. The junior simply held her own for most of the first half, but soon drew the arena's attention with a sequence of plays only she could make.

With about five minutes left in the second quarter against Marist, Bruintjes flashed her guard-like versatility, sinking a catch-and-shoot three from the top of the arc to give Rider a 22-15 lead.

On defense 20 seconds later, Bruintjes stepped into the paint and swallowed up a rushing Red Fox, burying them with a vicious rejection.

"I was waiting for an opportunity, and it came on a pretty big stage, and I think I was just very lucky to be able to do that," said Bruintjes. "I wasn't nervous at all. It was actually very fun."

Players of Bruintjes' size are often forced into a mold, only being asked to score below the basket, rebound and protect the rim, but the 6-foot-5-inch forward is not one for being shoved into a box.

"In my high school program, we didn't have positions. We all played one through five," said Bruintjes, who went to high school in Amsterdam. "We did guard workouts, we did post workouts with everybody. I think, luckily for me, being in those programs really set me up to be a super all-around player."

Through cerebral passing and outside shooting, Bruintjes' floor-stretching skill set breaks the traditional center's mold in a way that is uniquely valuable to the Broncos.

In 21 minutes against Marist, Bruintjes tied her career high in points with six, along with six rebounds, two blocks and two assists in a stellar starting debut. Bruintjes logged all of her points and rebounds in the first half alone.

"It was a lot of fun," said senior center Victoria Toomey after starting next to Bruintjes for the first time. "Sofie was ready to get the start and she played really well."

After helping her team to a 63-50 win over Marist, Milligan awarded Bruintjes the starting spot again in the Broncos' quarterfinal matchup with Niagara, in which she contributed five points and two blocks in 21 minutes.

Across 129 minutes during the regular season, Bruintjes didn't register a single block. In her 42

minutes during the MAAC Tournament, her rock-solid rim protection provided four.

"There wasn't like this extra pressure she was putting on herself to be something that she wasn't," said Milligan. "She didn't need to be Raphie; she just needed to be Sofie."

Bruintjes' six-point and five-point performances were her highest marks of the season, and while neither display matched up to Toussaint statistically, the budding Bronc believes she merely offered a peak into her full potential.

"I think what I showed in those two starts was only a glimpse of what I'm used to doing as a basketball player," said Bruintjes. "I think that I finally felt confident enough to actually show everybody."

On April 3, Toomey announced that she had transferred to Scranton for her graduate year, leaving Rider's starting center spot wide open.

Bruintjes has the tools and tenacity to not only claim a spot in the starting lineup next season, but excel in her role in a way that very few can.

She is still unrefined and has a ways to go in terms of maximizing her skill set, but if anyone on the Broncos can reach their ceiling, it's Bruintjes.



**Bruintjes** uncorks a 3-pointer against Marist in the MAAC Tournament. She hit a three in each of her two starts.

# Sports

ONLINE

## NIAGARA FALLS TO RIDER

Check out photos from baseball's weekend series sweep over the Niagara Purple Eagles.

FIND THE GALLERY ON [THERIDERNEWS.COM](http://THERIDERNEWS.COM) OR SCAN THE QR CODE



BASEBALL

# Run barrage launches Rider over Niagara



Carolo Pascale/The Rider News

The Broncos scored a total of 52 runs in six MAAC games against Quinnipiac and Niagara, including back-to-back 13-run performances to rout the Purple Eagles.

By Benjamin Shinault

**D**ESPITE the Broncos participating in doubleheaders the last two weekends, Rider baseball still managed to make quick work of the Niagara Purple Eagles, scoring 31 runs over three games.

The series was filled with loud contact, electric pitching and complete domination all around the diamond. With the three wins over one of their Metro Atlantic Athletic Conference (MAAC) rivals, the Broncos have scored 52 runs in their first six conference games. The Broncos then defeated Villanova on April 4 to move on to the finals of the Liberty Bell Classic, and will play at Citizens Bank Park on April 18.

### 'He's throwing strikes'

Fresh off a good series win against the Quinnipiac Bobcats, the Broncos opened up a new can of figurative worms and took on the Niagara Purple Eagles on March 31. Senior pitcher Dylan Heine was the man on the rubber for the Broncos looking to keep his excellent season rolling.

Heine's final line at the conclusion of the series opening game was seven innings, four hits, no earned runs and seven strikeouts.

"He's throwing strikes and pounding the zone, and as of right now, he's kept us out using a bunch of other guys," said Head Coach Barry Davis.

Offensively, to the surprise of everyone, the Broncos started out slow. They scored their first run of the game in the sixth inning. Senior infielder John Volpe got the scoring started for the Broncos with a single to left field to even the score at one. Right after Volpe came junior catcher Brian Skettini, who followed up Volpe's single with an RBI single of his own making it 2-1.

The scoring didn't stop there, with senior catcher Socrates Bardatsos having a two-run single making it 4-1. Then, in the eighth inning, Skettini came up again and launched a ball over the fence, cementing the score at 5-1 and giving the Broncos the win in game one of the series.

### 'Good things will happen'

With severe storms and rain in the forecast forcing

Saturday's game to be canceled, it was time for the Broncos to play yet another doubleheader. Graduate student pitcher Frank Doelling got the start for the Broncos in the opener.

Doelling's final line was four innings pitched, four earned runs, three walks and seven hits. After Doelling departed, multiple bullpen arms such as freshman Christian Aiello and Gavin Hawkes, as well as senior Alec Sachais, all helped the Broncos stay within striking distance.

Down six runs through the first five innings of the ball game, Davis talked with the team. According to Volpe, Davis told them, "Don't try to be someone you're not, don't try to go up there and hit a home run, just stay to yourself."

Those wise, yet simple words from Davis must have clicked something deep within the Broncos because after that, Rider went off for seven runs.

It all began in the sixth when Bardatsos and senior infielder Jack Winsett both walked, allowing two runs to score making it 6-2. Freshman infielder Will Gallagher singled to right center which brought in two runs.

Volpe then came up later in the sixth, and hit a sacrifice fly which made it 6-5. After that, the Broncos weren't done in the inning as they tied the game at six with an RBI double from senior outfielder Scott Shaw. After the double from Shaw, it was all Broncos after that as they took the second game of the series 13-6 with 13 unanswered runs.

### 'We just want to keep winning'

After game one of the doubleheader took longer than anticipated, the start time was moved to 2:30 p.m. This pushed back time had absolutely no effect on the steaming hot Broncos offense, as the umpires for this game called it after seven innings, with Rider up by 10 runs and were ready to continue to pour it on.

Before the Broncos found the gas pedal, it started out shaky with sophomore Brian Young on the mound. In Young's first inning, he allowed two walks, two doubles and two earned runs.

In spite of the left-hander's tough inning, Young finished his day on the mound strong by going six

innings, only allowing three more hits and striking out seven Purple Eagles.

After the Broncos trailed early in the second game of the doubleheader by a score of 2-0, they did not sit on the bench for long. In the bottom half of the first inning, they snagged the lead right back and went up two runs making the score 4-2.

One of the many big contributors from the huge rubber match victory was Skettini. Skettini had himself a day against the Purple Eagles, with three runs, two hits and two runs batted in with one of his hits being a home run to right center.

Not only did he have a productive day for the team, he also reached a personal milestone of 100 career hits.

After the game, Skettini described the milestone as "exciting," saying, "Honestly, I didn't even realize that I was that close to 100."

Skettini wasn't the only Bronc to achieve 100 career hits as Bardatsos also achieved the milestone as well.

With a couple more runs being scored later in the game, the umpires called the game early and the Broncos secured the series sweep with an astounding win, 13-3.

### Bring on the Wildcats

After making quick work of the Purple Eagles of Niagara, the Broncos moved on to the semi-final of the Liberty Bell Classic series to face the Villanova Wildcats.

The Broncos already played the Wildcats this season and fared well taking two of the three games. Rider continued their dominance against the Wildcats as they won 11-7, advancing to the final and set to play at Citizens Bank Park, home of the Philadelphia Phillies.

It wasn't all sunshine and rainbows as their final score may portray. The Broncos trailed by five runs after the second inning due to the Wildcats exploding for seven runs in the second.

But thanks to a big day from Volpe, who accounted for three runs and a great diving play to turn a tough double play, the Broncos get to play in a big-league stadium on April 18 against Delaware.