

Rider student charged with possession of child sexual abuse material

By Caroline Haviland

Rider sophomore Ethan Byrne has been charged with possession of sexual abuse material involving a child, the Camden County Prosecutor's Office announced in a Feb. 10 press release.

Byrne, 20, could not be reached for comment when reporters knocked on his door in Olson Hall. He also did not respond to emails seeking comment.

According to university records, Byrne is a game design major.

Camden County investigators received a tip online about an account possessing child sexual abuse material, and detectives later identified Byrne as the account's alleged user, the press release stated.

Lt. Andrew McNeil of the prosecutor's office said the investigation is ongoing and he could not release additional information including the ages and sexes of the children featured in the sexual abuse material.

According to the press release, Byrne was arrested on Jan. 20 in Gloucester Township and detained in the Camden County Correctional Facility overnight. His next court appearance is scheduled for April 1. He is facing a third-degree crime.

Four other male individuals ranging from 18 to 27 years old were also arrested by Camden County officials in January for possession of sexual abuse material involving children, the press release said.

Since his arrest, several students said Byrne has been seen on campus.

Byrne's arrest and charge were not publicly detailed to the Rider community by the administration, prompting questions and concerns from other students.



Photo courtesy of Camden County Prosecutor's Office

Sophomore game design major **Ethan Byrne** was charged with possession of child sexual abuse material.

Assistant Dean of Students Keith Kemo said to The Rider News on Feb. 17 that due to the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act, the university cannot comment on any activity since it relates to a current student.

"While I am sure you can understand our need to abide by federal privacy laws, I can definitely say that we review all allegations and reports of things that may violate university policy in real time, as we become aware of things, and take appropriate action all the

time to keep the campus community safe," Kemo said.

Under the federal Jeanne Clery Disclosure of Campus Security Policy and Campus Crime Statistics Act, the university is required to report a crime if it poses a serious or ongoing threat to the campus community, and if it occurs on campus or on campus-associated property.

Junior political science major Sahmya Smith, a resident assistant in Olson said the Department of Residential Education and University Housing has not notified the building's occupants of Byrne's arrest, despite Byrne returning to the residence hall for the spring semester.

Associate Director of Residence Life Julia Cardinal said to The Rider News on Feb. 17 that she had no information to share regarding the situation.

Smith said she has been approached by her residents in the past week with questions about Byrne's return to campus, but was advised by the building's residence director to refrain from speaking about the situation due to the lack of a public notification.

However, Smith said it's not fair to students in the building, "especially since it's public information, something you can Google."

"As an RA. ... especially when you're living in a hall with some people who are underage, it's something that should be public information," Smith said. "I don't want to be the person to not share anything especially when people have to find out on their own."

Staff writer *Mary-Simone Collazo* contributed to the reporting on this story.

Brief: Open investigation on sexual assault case at Rider

By Grace Bertrand

Lawrence Police are investigating a sexual assault alleged to have happened Jan. 1 on campus, while the university was closed for the winter break, according to Rider's Department of Public Safety.

Rider issued a Timely Warning on Feb. 12 as required by the federal Jeanne Clery Disclosure of Campus Security Policy and Campus Crime Statistics Act of 1998, commonly known as the Clery Act, to inform the Rider community of crimes on campus or related to the university.

The university released little information, but shared that the two individuals involved knew each other. Their names have not been released.

Director of Public Safety Matthew Babcock said he could not give any more information to The Rider News as the investigation is with Lawrence Police.

The Rider News is awaiting comment on its request for police records from Lawrence Police.

The incident was reported to Lawrence Police, and later told to Public Safety on Feb. 2.

Lawrence Police requested Public Safety delay the Timely Warning notification "to avoid compromising its investigation," the Feb. 12 warning said.

Under the Clery Act, Rider is required to notify the

campus community when serious threats are made to the school.

The Timely Warning from Public Safety ended with instructions and resources for where sexual assault victims could go to for help, including the Rider University Counseling Center and off-campus agencies like the Yunity, Domestic and Sexual Violence Support in Mercer County.

Rider's Office of Title IX and Equal Opportunity Compliance is responsible for investigating sexual assaults that take place on campus. Dean of Students and Deputy Title IX Coordinator Christine Mehlhorn told The Rider News that the report was not made to the university, but rather to Lawrence Police directly, limiting the information that the university can share.

Mehlhorn said, "Based on the information provided by law enforcement, there is no indication of an ongoing threat to the campus community at this time."

The Title IX Department is also transitioning under new leadership, Mehlhorn said, as former Title IX Coordinator Ryan McKinney is no longer at Rider. Mehlhorn disclosed that a new Title IX coordinator has been hired and will be announced to the university community soon.



Caroline Haviland/The Rider News

A sexual assault occurred on campus over winter break and the campus community was made aware by Public Safety on Feb. 12.

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SECURITY BRIEFS

BY MADISON LEWIS

Information provided by Public Safety Director Matthew Babcock

Sopping-wet Switlik

Punctured pipes. On Feb. 11, at 8:55 a.m., Public Safety was dispatched to Switlik Hall, for the report of a water leak. Facilities Management contacted Public Safety to report that a pipe was leaking in the lounge. Upon arrival, Public Safety saw flooding from a pipe that burst due to the cold. Facilities were already in the process of making repairs and cleaning the water.

Broken gate arm

Admitted accident. On Feb. 16 at 6:25 p.m., Public Safety was dispatched to the Fine Arts Lot for the report of a vehicle driving through a gate arm. Upon arrival, Public Safety found the arm on the exit side of the lot broken. A staff member saw the incident and identified the vehicle. Public Safety contacted the vehicle's owner who admitted to the damage. This incident has been referred to the Office of Community Standards.

No-go fire zone

Towed transportation. On Feb. 11 at 10 a.m., Public Safety was on patrol when they observed a car parked in the fire lane of Fine Arts. The vehicle was issued a summons for parking in the fire zone. Several attempts were made to contact the owner of the car to have it moved, but those attempts were unsuccessful. The vehicle was towed off campus.

Sarah F. Griffin/The Rider News

New registrar at Rider looks to 'stabilize' the university

By Grace Bertrand

Stepping into his new role as registrar just two years after he became assistant registrar at Rider, Daniel Pavlick has witnessed a lot of change firsthand. More than that, he has learned to understand the weight of universitywide changes when he had to manually remove the schedules of 30 full-time faculty who were laid off in late December.

Naming emotional and logistical challenges, like the layoffs, Pavlick's short-term goal for the Registrar under his new leadership is now stability.

"Every challenge is an opportunity," he said. "There's a lot of change happening with faculty. A lot of change happening with students. And we just want to be steady as we go."

Over the years, the registrar has flip-flopped back and forth between the faculty and student sides of operations, Pavlick said, which he wants to fix. Working with Academic Affairs and Enrollment Management, Pavlick is trying to find a middle ground where the Registrar's Office can be a happy medium for both students and faculty.

Pavlick recalled what students used to call the "Rider runaround," when they had to walk to different offices in various buildings just to get one question answered. He hopes that with the registrar getting moved to the second floor of the Bart Luedeke Center, there can be one central hub for the Rider community to go to.

"It's important to me that when a student, or even an instructor or department chair, comes to one place, they get that answer," he said.

Pavlick's long-term vision for the Registrar's Office, however, is what he likes to call "tech forward." Pavlick's plan is to use the technology available to improve the staff's everyday tasks, also allowing for cross training to take place so that multiple people are equipped for various tasks.

His hope is that an overlap will begin to develop beyond the Registrar's Office and into other offices too, including One Stop Services and the Student Navigation Office, which was recently brought back to Rider after a year-long hiatus.

Provost and Senior Vice President of Academic

Affairs Kelly Bidle welcomed Pavlick into his new role in a facultywide email on Feb. 2, where she explained the work they had been doing to "streamline processes" in the Registrar's Office to benefit the whole Rider community.

She wrote in her email, "[Pavlick] sees a great deal of potential in working with our Rider community to ensure the Registrar's Office is not only the keeper of records, but a modern hub where process, procedure and technology are all seamlessly managed."

Getting to work closely with Bidle, Pavlick said they formed what he called "a dotted line" working relationship, so that he is kept up to date on the faculty side of Rider, while she is also made aware of the registrar's operations.

Senior Vice President and Chief of Staff for Student Experience Mary-Alice Ozechoski also called the relationship between the Registrar's Office and Enrollment Management "critically important," adding, "They evaluate transcripts for students coming in with course credits, approve credits for AP testers with appropriate scores and help our enrollment staff better serve students by communicating time to graduation."

Pavlick's appointment to the position comes after former Registrar Sue Stefanick, a Rider alum, retired over the winter recess, after serving 47 years at Rider.

Not having his roots in Rider as Stefanick did, Pavlick recalled wanting to pick up a bachelor's degree in Spanish with a minor in Chinese at Rider when he became assistant registrar in 2024, but decided to wait until he got more adjusted.

Pavlick's new quest has now been pursuing a master's degree in business administration at Rider as of fall 2025, which he said allows him to stay connected to the students on campus. Already having a background in computer science, engineering and possessing some musical talent, Pavlick is on his way to being a jack of all trades.

"This is very egocentric of me, but I love that I can be connected to different parts of Rider," he said.

Pavlick hopes that through his connections with the different departments at Rider, the campus will see



Grace Bertrand/The Rider News

Daniel Pavlick has been named Rider's new registrar after the departure of the university's previous registrar over winter break.

more of the personalities that live in the Registrar's Office. His goal is to "demystify" the Registrar's Office for students and faculty who only come in when they have a problem, and often do so with an intimidated look.

Starting his career as an academic adviser, Pavlick said a part of him misses getting to interact with students, but he knows that there are other people at Rider to fill in those shoes. The other part of him, however, knows the Registrar's Office is running smoothly when no students come to see him.

"It's very weird to say but I hope that people don't come see me," Pavlick said. "Most people only come here when they have a problem, so I don't want people to have problems."

'I Believe in Rider' campaign garners mixed reactions

By Cal Sutton

From yard signs to huge banners and spray painted windows, the "I Believe in Rider" campaign has quickly flooded Rider's campus and become a catalyst for mixed feelings within the community.

The campaign, unveiled on Nov. 20, was established after administration noticed alumni and students speaking out about their belief for Rider on their own.

Provost and Senior Vice President of Academic Affairs Kelly Bidle said, "[The goal] is to show a unified, positive feeling that many of us have; that we know things have been difficult," Bidle said. "But things can't stay difficult forever."

A universitywide email on Nov. 20 from the Office of the President said the campaign launched from "a phrase students and alumni started using last week on their own and that we want to encourage sharing in."

The campus community speaking out about their hopes for the university and that they "believe in Rider," helped grow and jumpstart the campaign, and with preestablished internal support for the university, the campaign was easier to push, according to the Nov. 20 email.

Jayden Humphris, a senior math major, expressed a sense of positivity following the announcement of the campaign.

"I think it's reestablished a good sense of community within the school," he said.

The campaign was felt positively by students and its hope is to increase enrollment for the coming academic years and maintain student retention, as well as bring hope to the campus community.

Despite a sense of understanding for how the university's struggles weigh heavily on the Rider community, there is also an awareness of the administration's effort toward unity, Bidle said, which

brings forth a sense of hope.

Humphris said the campaign has brought a sense of belonging to students, including himself. "I particularly like the 'I believe in Rider' because Rider believes in me," Humphris said. "I think it has helped a lot of people still feel like there's a place for them at this school."

While there is a sense of hope following the spread of the "I Believe in Rider" campaign, not every student or community member shares the same sentiment.

Some anonymous students have opened up on Fizz, an app that verifies users attend a university to be added to their university's forum, and expressed their frustration with the placement of spray paint around campus.

One post highlighted a spread of windows at the Student Recreation Center facing the Campus Mall that were covered with graffiti that read "I Believe in Rider," leading to frustration among some students.

"Now this is ridiculous," the post read. "They just ruined my favorite study spot so now instead of people watching, I'm stuck staring at an 'I.'"

The "I Believe in Rider" campaign has also been criticized in other ways, such as on a newly emerged Substack account, with the name "The Rider Crier."

The start of the article by The Rider Crier, "'I believe in Rider: A Celebration of Decay,'" read, "This campaign is a slap in the face to prospective and current students, and graduates of Rider University."

The article, when addressing Rider's administration encouraging community members to go to Middle States meetings and post on social media about it, read, "Now, trying to show support for something when it's organic is noble, but this whole thing is astroturfed and artificial."



Yanuel Santos/The Rider News

The "I Believe in Rider" campaign gained universitywide traction, following Rider's financial struggles in fall 2025.

The Middle States Commission on Higher Education is Rider's accrediting body, and recently put the university on probation because of its financial condition.

AJ Moore, associate professor of communication, spoke highly of the campaign, saying it is positive from both the community aspect and the public relations aspect of "I Believe in Rider."

"I applaud the public relations strategies," Moore said. "[The campaign] is a way of helping everybody understand what is happening in terms of an organization taking a different path."

New enrollment initiatives attempt to draw students to Rider

By Mary-Simone Collazo and Grace Bertrand

Rider's Enrollment Management Office is rolling out a series of new initiatives to show the positives of the Rider experience to encourage potential students to make the university their new home, according to Senior Vice President and Chief of Staff for the Student Experience Mary-Alice Ozechoski.

These initiatives, which are aimed at making the recruitment experience personal and expanding regional reach, have become a major priority for Enrollment Management as it looks to handle the fallout of Rider's financial obstacles in fall 2026.

"We need students to choose their own journey, right?" Ozechoski said. "Most high school students are applying to seven to 10 colleges. ... We want to make sure that every visit is important and every visit feels special."

Despite Rider's nearly \$9 million improvement in its debt, according to the fiscal 2025 audit report, news of the university's struggling financial situation has spread to prospective students, making engagement for enrollment harder.

However, Ozechoski added that these challenges may not be Rider-specific and have become an issue for higher education nationwide, saying, "There are less students across the country going to college, and there are fewer of them. ... That's why that yield becomes so important."

Due to its financial crisis, the university's accreditation status has also been put on probation by its accrediting body, the Middle States Commission on Higher Education.

With enrollment numbers and Rider's future accreditation status still up in the air, Ozechoski said she believed the combination of new enrollment initiatives, the current community and Rider's vast history will all help the university beat the odds.

"There's something really powerful about this community," Ozechoski continued. "When you hear ... faculty and staff that have been here for decades, that they're married to someone who works here, their children went here, you can't minimize that. ... It's a testament to the experiences that are provided in and out of the classroom. And that's really, really powerful."



Mary-Simone Collazo/The Rider News

Mary-Alice Ozechoski led the way to help increase enrollment.

The university is also increasing its connectivity between faculty and prospective students. Through its customer management system, SLATE, faculty and staff can now send personalized letters that highlight what makes the program they teach unique, and why students should choose Rider. This exchange is meant to create more meaningful and direct connections, Ozechoski said.

In addition, Rider is growing its recruitment. According to Ozechoski, the university completed approximately 700 high school visits last year across New Jersey. The intended next step is to see if recruiting efforts can be expanded to neighboring states like Pennsylvania and Delaware.

With 7,000 admitted students still getting admitted to Rider, Ozechoski said, specialized days such as Science Bronc for a Day, Business Bronc for a Day and Accepted Students Day have become more crucial than ever.

Accepted Students Day, formerly known as Admitted Students Day, was created with the purpose

of showing potential future Broncs the culture of the campus and giving them the motivation to commit to the university once they see what it has to offer, Ozechoski said.

Rather than keeping students in a couple spaces and relaying information to them, Accepted Students Day has become personalized to a particular student's interests, such as music, business, science or media.

The process is done by each family being paired up with a Rider tour guide based on their intended major, and that tour guide is to introduce the prospective student to various aspects of their major around campus.

Sean Haugh, a music education major and a lead tour guide at Rider, explained one way he has been able to get potential students interested in attending the university is by listing the engagement opportunities he has done because of Rider.

Getting his first internship for the education program within his first year, Haugh said he will have over eight internships and opportunities to be in a classroom before he graduates in May 2026.

"Me saying 'eight different internships' is something that the families of students on the tour are like, 'oh, that's really cool!'" Haugh said.

While touring, Haugh said he also noticed concerns expressed by prospective students' families about the university's financial situation, adding, "Recently, we've had more families asking about Rider's financial status because it's in the news, and it's something that's a genuine concern."

Although he shared a similar sentiment as students that are worried about Rider's future, with it being his third year as a tour guide and his last semester at Rider, Haugh holds more hope for the university.

"We'll know by the time graduation rolls around, whether [Rider's accreditation] is in the green or we're in the yellow, maintaining the steady level, or if we're having a little bit of a dip," he said. "I think that we're gonna get a small dip. But I don't think that it's gonna be so much of a dip that we can't recover. I believe in Rider University."

Senior Spotlight: Jasmely Dejesus

By Jasmine White

Once a timid freshman from Manhattan, New York, in a foreign area without her mother, senior psychology major Jasmely Dejesus found herself taking on new heights at Rider, blooming into the woman she is today.

“My mom had a very big influence on [what school] I chose,” Dejesus said. “Then we came to Rider and she loved it.”

Dejesus has held numerous leadership positions during her educational journey from being president of Lambda Theta Alpha Latin Sorority, Inc. from spring 2023 to fall 2025 to now being the executive vice president of Rider University Greek Life.

Lambda Theta Alpha Latin Sorority, Inc. was founded in 1975 at Kean University, being the first and biggest Latina sorority in the United States to give women in higher education a support system to lean on.

Dejesus remembers her first few weeks at Rider being tough, until being exposed to sisters of Lambda Theta Alpha Latin Sorority, Inc: her now pledge mistress and her assistant pledge mistress.

“I passed by the Greek barbecue and there were two sorority sisters that were there and they came up to me,” Dejesus said. “This was the first time that I felt seen at Rider.”

Dejesus pledged to her sorority during her freshman year in spring 2023, known in her sisterhood as “Volcanic Prophecy,” crossing solo, which made history for her chapter.

Dejesus held the position of being the Multicultural Greek Council’s public relations chair from fall 2023 to spring 2024.

Dejesus said “leaning on people who are there for

you,” such as her mother, was the key to her thriving in all of her leadership roles and being pertinent to all of her successes.

“A really big person [throughout] my entire life here [has been] my mom,” Dejesus said. “I don’t think I would be able to do half of the stuff that I am or [be] the woman that I’ve become if it wasn’t for my mom.”

Alongside her mother’s influence and support, Dejesus credits her academic adviser Michael Carlin and her sorority adviser Angelica Benitez.

Senior psychology major Wisleidy Marte met Dejesus during her sophomore year through her interest in becoming a sister of Lambda Theta Alpha Latin Sorority, Inc., stating they “grew a bond” from that point forward. Marte joined the sorority in spring 2024, taking over as president for the chapter, upon Dejesus taking on other responsibilities.

“She’s basically like a big sister to me and someone that I have the strongest connection to for my chapter,” Marte said.

Originally a commuter, Marte described how her college life consisted of her just going to class and driving straight home, until she and Dejesus “just clicked.”

“She’s very caring and a [great] listener,” Marte said. “At the time I met her I was going through some things [and] she was just someone that I could tell all my problems to.”

Outside of Dejesus’s obligations and roles in her sorority and Greek life, Dejesus is president of the Latin American Student Organization as of fall 2025 and works as a representative for the “Bronc for A Day” program, wanting “people to fall in love with Rider” the same way she did.



Photo courtesy of Jasmely Dejesus

Jasmely Dejesus credits her mom’s support as one of the biggest influences in her life.

After graduating from Rider, Dejesus plans on attending graduate school and wants to ultimately gain her doctorate degree. In the meantime, she is applying for jobs, hoping to acquire a job working as a child psychiatrist or a developmental disability psychologist in the future.

As a Latina woman of Dominican and Puerto Rican descent, Dejesus leaves the following words of encouragement.

“Don’t let your background, your ethnicity, [or] your skin complexion get in the way of you being great,” Dejesus said. “Don’t let the expectations that you are given or the standard that people say that you have to meet, let you not do what you want to do.”

Shining Light on Black Excellence: Destiny Gardner

By Sofia Santiago

Destiny Gardner does it all. As a junior entrepreneurial studies major with a dance minor, Gardner currently serves as the president of Rider’s Dance Team, president of the Nu Eta Chapter of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc., the vice president of Rider’s National Pan-Hellenic Council, on top of working as the assistant gym director at the Little Gym of West Windsor and maintaining a 3.86 GPA.

“I try to beat myself from the day before. You’re in competition with yourself,” Gardner said about her mentality.

The oldest of five siblings, she credits her family as her biggest source of motivation and energy. She explained one of her goals is to be able to give back to her family, be a role model and build a legacy for her siblings, just as she feels her mother did for her.

“My mom taught me how to be a strong woman, and [how to stay] determined through your goals and [set] the highest goal for yourself,” Gardner said.

Gardner started dancing at 5 years old, and began dancing competitively at 11 years old. Her love for dance also impacted her decision to minor in dance and join Rider’s Dance Team.

The Dance Team, having been suspended at the end of spring 2025, was able to make its return in fall 2025 in part because of the work that Gardner, along with junior musical theater major and Vice President of the Dance Team Maddie Quigley did over summer 2025.

With the Dance Team performing on game days, which are usually Thursday through Sunday, Gardner and Quigley choreograph routines and lead practices on weekdays. Much of the work Gardner does in practice is teaching the team the choreography.

“I definitely learned patience,” Gardner said. For her, teaching the routines is not just about the movements. It is also breaking moves down to help others understand how things should be executed, and communicating her expectations in a way that everyone can understand.

As a leader, “I always make sure that my energy is always up to par when I walk into practice, even if I’ve had a bad day, because my energy affects the entire room,” Gardner said.



Photo courtesy of Destiny Gardner

Destiny Gardner developed her interest in entrepreneurship during COVID.

Her experience as a competitive dancer brought her a love of performing and taught her discipline and dedication, which she carries into other aspects of her life.

Serving as the president of the Nu Eta Chapter of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc., and as the vice president of Rider’s National Pan-Hellenic Council, Gardner excels in leadership positions and at effectively managing her busy schedule.

Kylah Frazier, Gardner’s friend, vice president of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc. at Rider and sophomore musical theater major, commented on Gardner’s resilience.

“She has a lot on her plate, and she still goes above and beyond to make sure all of our events are top tier and up to standards,” she said.

An essential part of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc.’s mission is to be of “Service to All Mankind.” Gardner recalled recent service events with Emiija’s Hope, a nonprofit mentoring program for teenage girls located in Trenton, including hosting a toy drive, Christmas party and activities with the young girls in the mentoring program.

“It really was amazing, to build those intimate bonds with them, but also serving in the community,”

Gardner said.

Gardner’s professional interests also involve giving back to the community. After starting her own business in high school upon receiving a Cricut, a machine used to print designs on fabric, she realized that becoming her own manager and running a business was the right path for her.

In the future, Gardner hopes to travel and perform as a dancer, either for music artists or the Royal Caribbean cruise company, and later open her own dance studio. She also would enjoy owning a clothing line, highlighting her love for fashion. Her most ambitious goal, however, fits more in line with the service that she is currently doing.

“When I was younger, I would see those huge warehouses in Philly that were just abandoned. There’s so many people on the streets that have no warmth and no home to go back to. So I would love to fix one of those up and just create a home, a nice home for homeless people or those who don’t have one ... I want to be able to gain enough to give back, like a lot, to the community,” Gardner said.

When asked how she would describe herself and her diverse goals, Gardner said, “I feel like I’m 100 different people.”

Frazier added, “Working with [Gardner] makes [my work] very easy because 10 times out of 10, she has everything handled before you even ask. Sometimes I’m just like, ‘when do you find the time in your day to do this?’”

This article is part of the Shining Light on Black Excellence series by The Rider News to showcase impactful Black figures on campus in honor of Black History Month.

SHINING LIGHT ON
BLACK
EXCELLENCE

Logo by Maggie Kleiner/The Rider News

Rider Pets: Striper the Cat pounces into stardom

By Teagan Rotella

Her striking blue eyes and mesmerizing features were not the only reasons Striper the cat captured the hearts of many residents in Moore Hall.

Striper, a 7 pound, 7-year-old Lynx Point Siamese cat, was welcomed by residents instantly for her enchanting appearance and was later loved for her feisty personality, according to Olivia Teitelbaum, a junior musical theater major and Striper's caretaker.

It was love at first sight when Teitelbaum saw a picture of the cat on Facebook stating that she was up for adoption last year. However, it took Striper a lot longer to warm up to her.

"She would always hide from me. Every time I would pet her, she would smack me and run away," Teitelbaum said.

One morning, Striper suddenly changed her mind, finally showing Teitelbaum affection for the first time by standing on Teitelbaum's legs, purring and rubbing her face softly against her.

Since then, Striper and Teitelbaum have formed an inseparable bond,

causing Striper to hate the thought of being away from her.

One of Teitelbaum's roommates told her that after she left for class, "[Striper] was

Photo courtesy of Olivia Teitelbaum



Striper lounging.

standing outside all of [their] doors meowing because she was upset [I was] gone," Teitelbaum said.

Teitelbaum also noticed that Striper gets sad even when she simply goes to the bathroom. Whenever Striper waits for her to finish showering, she meows impatiently right outside the door.

"I'm definitely her emotional support human more than she's my emotional support cat at this point," Teitelbaum said.

Last year before she adopted Striper, Teitelbaum's

therapist recommended getting a cat to help her regulate her emotions, especially after seeing how happy she was when talking about her family pets.

During that time, Teitelbaum was struggling with post-traumatic stress disorder and was missing her pets at home, so she believed this was a perfect idea for her.

At home, Teitelbaum's family pets include another Lynx Point Siamese cat named Luna, a Cavalier Poodle mix dog named Mac and a 13-year-old Cavalier Poodle mix named Chloe.

After sending documentation to Student Accessibility and Support Services, Striper was approved to live on campus with Teitelbaum.

Since then, Striper quickly won over Teitelbaum's roommates. Sometimes when Teitelbaum is busy, they make Striper one of her favorite foods: boiled chicken, along with a quarter cup of kibble every morning.

With a packed schedule, Teitelbaum relies on her roommates to accompany Striper while she is gone.

One of Teitelbaum's roommates, Siwon Lee, a senior arts and entertainment industries management major, hangs out with Striper often, earning her trust more and more each day.

Typically, Striper only sleeps in Teitelbaum's bed; however, on Feb. 10, Striper slept in Lee's room for the first time.

After that night, Lee realized that having a pet was not as easy as it seemed, as she kept "waking up almost every two hours" to check on Striper because she was "afraid of kicking or hitting her," causing Lee to lose some sleep.

However, it remains Lee's favorite memory with Striper, as it brought them closer than before.

Striper is also very sneaky and demanding, always testing Teitelbaum's roommates' patience and never being afraid to test boundaries.

Teitelbaum said one of Striper's favorite things to do is sneak into her roommates' boxes.



Photo courtesy of Olivia Teitelbaum

Olivia Teitelbaum is Striper's caretaker.

One time, Striper jumped to the top of Teitelbaum's roommate's 7-foot dresser to get to a box and knocked it down. Luckily, her roommate caught the box in time before it hit the floor.

Striper also loves to be pet while she is eating, which she demands by meowing and making sure Teitelbaum follows her to the kitchen.

"She wants what she wants, when she wants it," Teitelbaum said.

After reflecting on her decision to have Striper on campus with her, Teitelbaum said she is grateful she had the opportunity to, despite the reasoning behind it.

"I think PTSD is one of those things that people don't talk about enough ... For me, it was really alleviating to be diagnosed ... I think it's not something that people should be ashamed about, it's just how your brain responds to trauma ... Also, it's not your fault if you go through something really bad," Teitelbaum said.



Logo by Gail Demeraski/The Rider News

Exploring Black history through trivia and clothing

By Madison Lewis

During rounds of Black History Month-themed bingo and trivia, muffled whispers and the sound of shushing echoed through the NJM Room, followed by triumphant yells of excitement, accompanied by applause.

The Making Connections Program hosted an event called Black History Month Celebration: Dress to Honor, where students elected to dress as Black historical figures like Serena and Venus Williams, Malcolm X and Little Richard.

According to Director of MCP Kyle Houser, the program is designed to ensure student success in science courses "by providing some resources, some financial support, and some academic support."

Houser also mentioned that he helps coordinate events to "create a community, especially for people in science, but also just more broadly amongst the university."

At the beginning of the event, students swarmed the substantial selection of delicacies, perched along the right side of the room. There was macaroni and cheese, fried chicken and collard greens, accompanied by soda and Hawaiian Punch. Attendees opted to grab seconds as they completed the crosswords scattered around the table.

The competition started to heat up when bingo was mentioned, especially with attendees hearing that they would receive a prize for winning.

One bingo card was passed out to each table, all with descriptions of Black historical figures. Throughout the game, the host would call out names for the players to match to the descriptions on their boards.

The victorious team received bags full of assorted candies, including Fun Dip, Laffy Taffy and Skittles.

Next on the agenda was trivia. Each table was given a whiteboard to write down their answers, and each

Madison Lewis/The Rider News



Students show off their outfits inspired by famous Black figures.

group of questions was separated into categories like sports or music.

When the answers eluded some students, they would shout out hilariously incorrect answers.

At one point, the question posted on the screen was, "Who was the first Black quarterback to win a Super Bowl?" While some attendees strategically raised their answer boards and rushed to hide them from other players, one student yelled, "Kendrick Lamar," which was met with audible laughter and questioning comments.

The real answer was Doug Williams for the Washington Commanders, formerly known as the Washington Redskins, in 1988.

Student Director of MCP and senior health science major Camilla Williams highlighted the importance of rejoicing in Black history in interactive and entertaining ways, all while dressed as American

basketball player Jared McCain.

"It's Black History Month, and we just think that it's important to give Black people that ... stage that we need for our history to be learned, and to bring students together as well, to just learn," she said.

Dressed as Robert Beck, best known as Iceberg Slim, a writer famous for his memoir and fiction novels, was freshman health science major Calvin Barchue.

Barchue is also involved in MCP and elaborated on why it was important to learn about Black culture in February and beyond the commemorative month.

"This month celebrates everything that Black people went through to get to where we are today," he said. "We're more free than we ever were, even though we're still fighting for change. So I think it's more important ... to know about how far we came."

A year without Amazon — ‘easy enough’

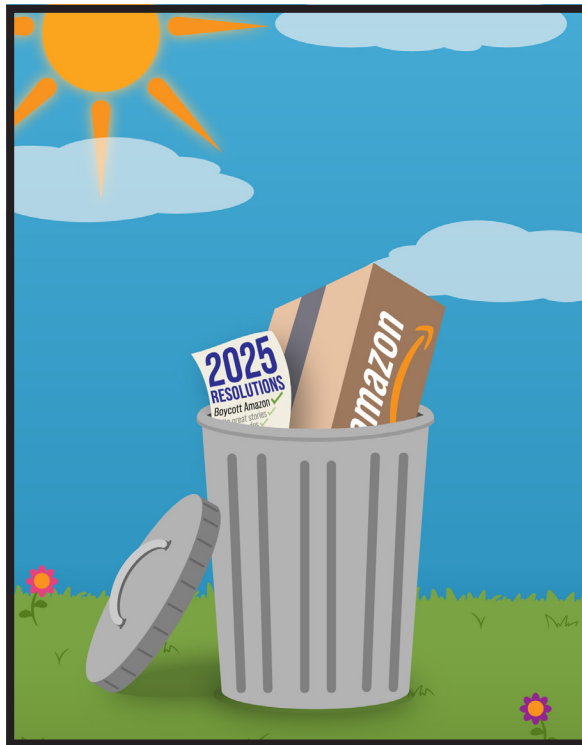
Amost exactly a year ago today, a piece I wrote about my 2025 New Year’s resolution was published in The Rider News. In this piece, I shared my resolve to boycott shopping on Amazon.com for the year. Today, I will briefly share how I kept that resolution and where I plan to go from here with it.

To begin, yes, I was successful in my resolution. In 2025, I did not make a single purchase from the domineering online retail giant. Overall, I am grateful and proud of myself.

To be fully transparent, this accomplishment was easy enough and did not shake my life up too drastically, as many people think their resolutions will. Originally, it did not feel like much of an accomplishment at all, to be honest. Yet, upon further reflection of my feat, I have come to be proud of it. I was able to avoid the temptation of the overbearing and incessant commercials and advertisements for all the different products and services the company “conveniently” offers — the question worth asking being: convenient to whom? The answer certainly is not convenient to the delivery drivers working overtime in the icy cold to deliver your packages and it is certainly not convenient to Mother Earth either.

I must admit, though, that I did visit the Amazon website a few times. However, my infrequent visits to the website were purely for research purposes as I wanted to compare prices to gather some statistics on how much money I was really “losing” by purchasing my items elsewhere. While I did not purchase anything, it is unfortunate that I gave their website traction — and my cookies, whatever those are anyway — by my browsing through the select products I was comparing.

In my “research” of sorts, I did discover that some



Gail Demerski/The Rider News

Boycotting Amazon helps work toward a sustainable future.

items I elected to buy elsewhere, most often in person, were marginally more expensive than their list price on Amazon.

That is not to say that I view spending the extra \$5 on my new computer charger at an in-person store as a “loss.” If anything, it is an investment. I am investing those extra few dollars in a more sustainable future, higher quality items and, of course, a personal piece of mind that I am sticking to my commitment. Overall, I found that \$5 differences here and there were worth it

so as to not compromise my values.

As I have stated before, I do generally find New Year’s resolutions to be a bit arbitrary in nature, as people tend to not stick to them or take them too seriously. Who said that resolutions have to be restricted to a year-by-year basis? Who said that you have to make a new resolution every single year? I challenge you to ask yourself these types of questions and consider picking back up old resolutions, or continuing to keep up on previously held resolutions as I have going into this upcoming year. Nothing new needs to be set, just continue on with what you have been working toward already.

Going forward, I do not see myself ever shopping on Amazon again. To put it quite frankly, I can manage just fine and pretty much the same without it than I did with it in my life. In the way my life is currently structured, I have come to realize that I do not need Amazon. Nor do I want it.

While I recognize some limitations that many individuals face, as I did in my previous article, I urge you, if you can, to dump Amazon like a toxic ex. Try exploring what life might look like without it. Not just for you, but for the environment and the betterment of society as a whole.

It is time to flip the script and make it so that when you search “What is Amazon?” on the internet, the rainforest is at least in the top five search results.

Libby D’Orvilliers
senior psychology major

Joyce Manor shares pop, punk and heartbreak in new album

The first time I heard Chase Knobbe’s guitar wail in “Constant Headache,” I knew I would be spending my part-time hostess paycheck on Joyce Manor concert tickets the second that deposit hit my bank account. The Southern California-based pop-punk group has since become a constant in almost all of my Spotify playlists.

After a COVID-19 pandemic-induced hiatus from recording, the trio has recently released their seventh studio album, “I Used To Go To This Bar,” from Brett Gurewitz of Bad Religion’s record label, Epitaph Records. Manor recorded the nine-song record at Dave’s Room Recording Studio, formerly Mama Jo’s in Northern Hollywood, known for housing artists such as Bob Dylan, Marilyn Manson and Meghan Trainor.

While the group is most known for their contribution to the emo revival scene, “I Used to Go to This Bar” drives itself into the world of pop punk, joining the ranks of Blink-182, Neck Deep and others alike. The record blends the slight hardcore elements of their first self-titled album, with melodic indie acoustic guitar, making it increasingly more diverse as the band heads for more mainstream audiences. Personally, upon release, this had me a bit bummed, knowing yet another American punk group was becoming more commercialized. However, the record speaks for itself and steers frontman Barry Johnson into the spotlight he deserves.

The first released song, “All My Friends Are So Depressed,” was taken to radio and eventually made its way onto Billboard’s Alternative Airplay Chart upon release. The song details heartbreak, depression, songwriting and the mechanisms used to cope in dark times. While I enjoyed this tune, I did not find it very Manor-esque.

When the album’s first track, “I Know Where Mark Chen Lives” was released I remembered exactly why I had fallen in love with these California legends in the first place.

“I Know Where Mark Chen Lives” was on repeat in my car for days. The isolated vocals toward the end of the song, where the chorus repeats itself, “Train coming down the track and it almost gave me a heart attack,” had me yearning for future evenings spent at the Stone Pony Summer Stage, screaming my heart out at a concert along the boardwalk. Luckily for fans, the group is set to open for Hot Mulligan in Asbury

Park this June.

“Falling Into It,” the album’s second song, blends technical synth elements with a lighter guitar melody before it peaks towards the end with their usual punk flair. The fourth track, “Well, Whatever It Was,” reminds me of early 2000s pop punk fused with a bit of a “Sugar Ray” like influence, again perfect for the warmer months ahead.

The title track is bright in tone, despite its melancholic lyrics, where Johnson reminisces on his days at what can be assumed to be a dive bar where he regularly hung out amidst a younger heartbreak of his. He opens up about the common downfalls in young love and how the halt that it brings hits you disastrously hard. It is the type of heartbreak you experience young, when it is impossible to believe you will find the counterpart likely to suit you far better in the future. Spoiler alert: you will, and so did Johnson celebrating his four year marriage anniversary with his wife, Allie, later this year.

The record’s sixth song, proceeding after the title track, is similar in theme; Johnson’s lyricism plucks you from your heartbroken state and provides you with the hope of finding someone new in your post-dysfunctional and single world. “But I’m through feeling blue, and it’s all because of you, and all that you put me through,” Knobbe’s guitar line in “After All You Put Me Through” backs up these words seamlessly, providing an uplifting background to the frontman’s lyrical woes.

By the time you have made it to the seventh track, “The Opossum,” Johnson’s lyrics indicate his freedom from his aforementioned lover’s clutch: “I’ve fallen farther from your heart, your song of despair won’t even tear me apart.” “The Opossum” opens with some good old-fashioned thrashing from drum kit legend Joey Waronker, who has performed with Oasis on their most recent 2025 stadium tour, BECK and R.E.M., further solidifying the group’s keen ear for alternative sound.

The second-to-last track, “Well, Don’t It seem Like You’ve Been Here Before,” is a personal favorite of mine, opening up with Johnson’s layered vocals, which has always been a guilty pleasure of mine. If I love your sound already, of course I want to hear from a pre-recorded secondary slice of your soul. Plus, when I sing along in the car, I can pretend we are screeching

out the jam together. A simple tactic I have always adored, one that makes fans feel as though they are a part of the crowd.

Finally, the record concludes with “Grey Guitar,” which takes home the silver trophy for my second-favorite song on the album. The song details the passing of a friend and the grief imposed by such circumstances. The listener is taken on a constant journey of remembrance and past trauma observed through the lens of Johnson’s libretto.

Through tangible yet striking vignettes of heartbreak, loss, friendship and nostalgia, Joyce Manor lyrically advances itself further than ever before, inviting the audience into their world, leading into their hearts, earning a four out of five star rating from this long-time fan. “I Used To Go To This Bar” propels this American punk trio into the realm of mainstream acclaim with its popular music influences, vast instrumental arrangements and intimate portrayals of love and loss. I sincerely hope we, as an audience, are granted another glimpse into Johnson’s world for future albums to come.

Marissa Spencer
senior journalism and musical theater major



Kamayah Jenkins/The Rider News

“I Used to Go to This Bar” was released on Jan. 30, 2026.

Letter to the editor: Welcome to rock bottom

As I sit here typing this letter to The Rider News, reflecting on the Rider men's basketball team's latest embarrassing loss, this time to Merrimack College by a whopping 26 points, I cannot help but ask myself: "Is this rock bottom?" With a university bogged down by recent layoffs, audits and budget deficits, would it not be nice to have something to rally behind such as a competitive men's basketball team? For better or worse, men's basketball has been one of, if not the biggest and most popular sport this university has to offer. However, the on-court product has been nothing short of abysmal.

Another alumnus recently wrote a similar letter to The Rider News about this topic in April 2025 and described the program as "content in its mediocrity." It is now safe to say we are past this point and have entered the stage of just being plain bad. Within the last five years we have witnessed the likes of Fairleigh Dickinson University, another small, private New Jersey school, shock the world by upsetting a No. 1 seed in the National Collegiate Athletic Association tournament; the Metro Atlantic Athletic Conference's

very own Saint Peter's University, received national attention by having a Cinderella run to the Elite Eight. So, it begs the question: why not us?

Do not get me wrong, the current state of college basketball is difficult to navigate. Between Name, Image and Likeness, and transfer portals, having a successful program is harder than ever. But it is clear this current program has no clear plan or direction on and off the court. It is time to stop being content with early conference tournament exits and losing seasons and to start asking the question: why not us?

David ZH

Rider B.S. in business administration Class of '12



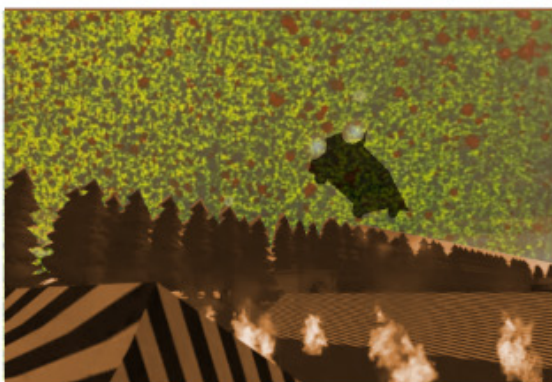
Gail Demeraski/The Rider News

Rider men's basketball has fallen short of expectations.

COMIC:

Harvey and Schnozola

By N. D. Medal



The Rider News

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Broncs split at home as MAAC Tournament approaches

By Joshua Yuhas

With the Metro Atlantic Athletic Conference Tournament rapidly approaching, Rider women's basketball remains 11th in the MAAC standings as of Feb. 16, after splitting a pair of games in Lawrenceville. The Broncs suffered a 42-40 loss in a pivotal Saint Peter's University Peacocks matchup before bouncing back and defeating the Marist University Red Foxes, 56-43.

Only so many second chances

After each side turned the ball over to open the game on Feb. 12, graduate student forward Kristina Ekofo backed down her defender in the post for a layup to start the scoring against Saint Peter's.

A 3-pointer from junior guard Aliya McIver and a bucket off an offensive rebound from sophomore guard Emmy Roach gave the Broncs an early 7-6 lead.

With strong ball movement, Ekofo found junior guard Deb Okechukwu in the paint, but a scoreless drought followed, leaving just a four-point lead for Rider after one quarter.

Okechukwu drove from the corner for a layup to open the second, and after a trio of steals, freshman guard Alena Cofield drove for another.

A back-and-forth run led by second chance points for the Broncs gave a 25-20 lead heading into halftime.

With shooting struggles for both teams, Rider carried the five-point lead due to their 12 offensive rebounds in the first half.

"I just knew I had to crash the boards, give my teammates shots," Cofield said. "I just tried to facilitate and not just depend my game on scoring and try to use my defense."

The third quarter was one to forget, as Saint Peter's made just two of their 14 attempted shots and Rider did not make a single field goal in the quarter, leaving a 28-28 tie heading into the final quarter.

Fighting off foul trouble with Okechukwu and Roach reaching four fouls, the Broncs took control on 3-pointers, including one from freshman guard Aina Perez Mesquida and two from Cofield.



Sophomore guard **Amany Lopez** ended the Broncs' drought with a clutch 3-point shot, bringing love to the Alumni Gym on Feb. 14.

Fouls continued to haunt Rider as Ekofo reached her fourth and Okechukwu fouled out of the game, allowing the Peacocks to take the lead in the final minute of play.

Despite heavy defense from the Broncs, they went scoreless for the final three minutes, resulting in a 42-40 loss.

Cofield ended the night with her first career double-double, with 10 points and a team-leading 12 rebounds.

Foul trouble for Roach, Okechukwu and Ekofo hurt the Broncs in the end, providing a challenge for Head Coach Jackie Hartzell late in the game.

"That was very frustrating for us because those were players that we felt like we needed to have on the court, especially at the end of the game there," Hartzell said.

Strong finishes

On a quick turnaround, Rider remained in the Alumni Gym on Feb. 14 for a showdown with Marist.

An early Cofield layup along with a steal and score from Roach gave Rider the lead before they went scoreless for the next couple minutes.

Through free throws and a bucket in the paint, McIver got the Broncs back on track for an 8-6 lead into the first timeout.

A 9-0 run from the Red Foxes over the following four minutes pushed all momentum their way, until sophomore guard Amany Lopez drilled a stepback 3-pointer from the left corner to close the opening quarter.

After shooting just 26% as a team in the first quarter, Rider flipped a switch in the next 10 minutes of action.

For each Marist possession, Rider had an answer. Starting with Ekofo's 3-pointer, to Lopez's driving layup, to McIver backing down from the right post to the paint for the and-1.

McIver ended the half with a buzzer beater score off an offensive rebound, finishing the half with 12 points. Ekofo scored eight points alongside McIver, but the story of the second half was the defense from the Broncs.

The Red Foxes' first basket of the third quarter did not come until halfway through the quarter, as the Broncs carried a 13-0 run to start the half.

While the Red Foxes went on a 7-1 run over the following three minutes, Rider once again, closed a quarter strong with a 3-pointer by Okechukwu.

After a layup from Marist to open the final quarter, each team went scoreless for the next three minutes.

The Broncs then later held the Red Foxes scoreless for another three-minute run, holding a comfortable lead until the final buzzer, 56-43.

McIver led the Broncs with 19 points and Ekofo ended with 17 points, making the Alumni Gym crowd proud.

"I loved it. I saw the support. I didn't know a lot of people were going to come, so I'm happy that everybody came," Ekofo said.

Following the split at home, the Broncs are two games back of a MAAC Tournament slot and travel to upstate New York for a 6:30 p.m. matchup against Niagara University on Feb. 19 and Canisius University on Feb. 21 at 2 p.m. Both games will be broadcast on ESPN+.

Broncs drop two, officially eliminated from MAAC contention

By Samantha Clark

The Broncs hosted the Mount Saint Mary's University Mountaineers, falling 65-55 after a close first half, and later lost on the road, 86-75, to the Sacred Heart University Pioneers, officially becoming ineligible to compete in the Metro Atlantic Athletic Conference tournament for the first time in program history.

'We're right there competing'

Tipoff against the Mountaineers on Feb. 13 began with a layup from sophomore guard Flash Burton after a minute and a half of unsuccessful play from both teams.

A steal from sophomore forward Cole McCabe allowed for a fastbreak layup from senior guard Zion Cruz, followed by a jumpshot a minute later.

The Broncs then went scoreless for three minutes, giving up five points on the other end of the court and allowing the Mountaineers to take the lead early in the first.

After multiple free throws from Burton and senior forward Daniel Helterhoff, the Broncs' first field goal after seven minutes was another jumpshot from Cruz, setting the Broncs back by just three points.

"We'll just keep competing, keep coming to practice, keep defending and try to always stay positive," Cruz said.

Sophomore forward Davis Bynum hit two layups in a minute, quickly picking up four of his seven points of the night.

Continuing to fight on all ends of the court, Cruz splashed another layup and put up a 3-pointer to head into halftime trailing 28-21.

Leading into the second, Burton hit the first field goal for the Broncs with a layup and quickly followed with a jumpshot in the paint, Cruz doing the same just 30 seconds later.

After three minutes of unsuccessful play, a layup from junior guard Caleb Smith snapped the drought. Freshman guard Jamir McNeil followed with a

jumpshot, picking up his first field goal since the home win against Saint Peter's University on Feb. 1.

Helterhoff drove through the post for the and-1 layup, but after a jumpshot from Cruz, the Broncs did not find a successful field goal for the next seven minutes.

Free throws from Bynum, McNeil and Cruz slowly added points until Smith, once again, broke the scoreless streak with a fastbreak jumpshot.

Cruz cashed in a 3-pointer, and after two layups from senior forward Shemani Fuller, the Broncs were down at the final buzzer, 65-55.

"We did some good things," Head Coach Kevin Baggett said, "We need to finish some of those layups, but we're right there competing."

Officially out

The Broncs went on the road to face Sacred Heart on Feb. 15, which kicked off almost immediately with a jumpshot from Burton.

Fuller quickly followed by tipping in his own missed shot, giving the Broncs the lead early into the half.

A jumpshot from Bynum was the last successful shot for the Broncs for the next two minutes, until McCabe laid one up and in.

Rider then continued on another four minute drought, which was broken by a pair of free throws from Smith. For the first field goal in six minutes, Burton splashed a layup, Cruz following with the same.

Cruz and junior guard Antwan Wilson cashed in a pair of jumpshots in under a minute to cut the deficit to less than 20 points. Bynum and Burton did the same to set the Broncs back 49-30 heading into the break.

Rider opened second half play with layups from Bynum, Cruz and Smith in the first three minutes, but struggled to get one up for the following three minutes.

Burton and Cruz snapped the streak with three quick baskets to close the gap to 15 points.

Driving through the lane, McCabe laced a jumpshot in the paint, followed by another fastbreak layup from



Senior guard **Zion Cruz** matched his career high of 22 points for the fourth time this season in the Sacred Heart matchup on Feb. 15.

Cruz, contributing to his career high of 22 points, reaching that mark for the fourth time this season.

Picking up six points in less than a minute, Burton hit back-to-back 3-pointers, but the Broncs continued scoreless for another two minutes.

A steal from Burton sparked an 11-1 run over four minutes with a layup from Helterhoff and shots beyond the arc from Cruz, Burton and freshman guard AB Coulibaly.

However, Rider faced another three minute drought, allowing a 10-0 run from the Pioneers. Burton splashed another 3-pointer to break the spell, and a layup from Cruz in the final two seconds of play rounded out the matchup with the Broncs down, 86-75.

Despite their inability to compete in the MAAC tournament, the Broncs will continue to keep their heads up when they return home for the final times this season to host the Canisius University Golden Griffins on Feb. 20 at 7 p.m. and the Niagara University Purple Eagles on Feb. 22 at 2 p.m. Both games will be streamed on ESPN+.

A DISSAPPOINTING HOME OPENER

Lacrosse welcomed in their home crowd to Ben Cohen field, but suffered a loss to the University of Rhode Island.

READ EMMA GEREMIA-HARTIGAN'S ON THERIDERNEWS.COM



Sports

BASEBALL

PREVIEW: Recharged Broncs hungry for redemption



Graphic by Yanuel Santos, Photos by Josiah Thomas and Destiny Pagan /The Rider News

After winning the Metro Atlantic Athletic Conference regular season title last season, the Broncs are now looking to take home a MAAC championship instead.

By Benjamin Shinault

Rider's 2025 baseball team was historically good: it clinched its first Metro Atlantic Athletic Conference regular season title in 10 years off a walk-off, three-run home run. The team also held the MAAC Player, Reliever, Pitcher and Coach of the Year.

After such a fairytale regular season, it was only fitting to think the Broncs could go all the way and win the MAAC Championship, right?

Unfortunately, the Broncs came up just short in the championship game, ending their NCAA tournament hopes.

One thing was left for certain: a fire was lit under the team and the Broncs' 2026 baseball team are hungry for redemption, with some new and familiar faces.

Fresh, young talent

Much of the Broncs lineup will look the same when it comes to the hitters, but in the rotation and the bullpen, some new names are looking to bring the heat.

Three new freshman pitchers have been added to the mix: Conner Flynn, Dylan Kane and Noah Heath.

Flynn, the 33rd-ranked right-handed pitcher in Pennsylvania, can bring the heat with his fastball that reaches over 90 mph with ease.

Junior outfielder, Kyle Neri, likes what he has seen so far from the freshman flamethrower.

"He gets up there, he's kind of a fireballer," Neri said.

Neri also added the Broncs are bringing in a two-way weapon with Heath. Coming from Hummelstown, Pennsylvania, the newcomer can both pitch and roam the infield.

Kane, a New Jersey native, is ranked just outside of the top 100 right-handed pitchers in the state.

Stepping off the mound, Rider is also bringing in two freshman catchers.

Demetri Bardatsos from Mansfield, New Jersey, the younger brother of former Bronc Socrates Bardatsos, '23, can deliver behind the plate, but also in the batter's box, as he held a batting average of .419 in his senior year of high school.

Nick Filippini, also from Mansfield, is ranked as the 22nd best catcher in the state.

Currently on the Rider roster is junior catcher Nick Shuhet, who is coming off a superb sophomore campaign, but with Filippini and Bardatsos, Shuhet can get some more rest this season from behind the plate.

Rider dips toes into portal

The Broncs are not strangers to bringing in some talent via the transfer portal, and this year, they have brought in four new transfers.

Graduate student Daniel Chun is one of the four transfer players this season. While he did not get a ton of starts at New York University, he is trying his luck in Lawrenceville.

The Broncs' depth at the catching position got even stronger with the addition of junior Dillon Jennings, who spent a season at Frederick Community College and played well enough to land on a Division I team.

Another transfer, sophomore infielder Eliot Medlock, was ranked as the sixth best player in the state of New Hampshire and is looking to show his full potential at second base after only playing 17 games for the Bryant University Bulldogs last season.

The Broncs' fourth and final transfer is junior right-handed pitcher Alex D'Ambrosio, who spent the last two seasons at Seton Hall University, where he accumulated 18 strikeouts in just 23 innings pitched. D'Ambrosio is now hoping to receive the ball more this season and be a solid inning-eater for the Broncs.

Running it back

Much of the Broncs' success last season came from the offense, and lucky for Rider most of the starting lineup is returning to Sonny Pittaro field.

"I believe that we have a very mature team this year," Neri said, "I think what you see in practice now is a group that not only knows how to play together, but also a group that's been together for quite a while now and trusts each other."

Senior hitters like Will Gallagher, Erich Hartmann and Anthony Paskell hope to make one more lasting impact for the Broncs this season.

Last season, Hartmann was among the leaders in the MAAC for batting average, runs scored, hits and fielding percentage.

Between Gallagher and Paskell, they combined for 85 hits, 44 runs batted in and 47 walks.

Neri, now entering his third season with Rider baseball, will look to continue bringing his five tools to the plate.

Neri was named to the All-MAAC first team last year and was named to the Preseason All-MAAC team on Feb. 5.

With there being 12 seniors on the roster who have spent all four years at Rider, their knowledge and experience trickle down to the freshmen who are starting their collegiate baseball career.

"You see guys who want to work, you see guys who want to be a part of something, and they have really taken in the culture that we have here ... I think that is something that is from this older group passing it down," Neri said.

Acting Head Coach Barry Davis, who spent 20 seasons with the Broncs and is now subbing in for Head Coach Lee Lipinski, states that this is a golden opportunity for Hartmann, Paskell and Neri.

"If I'm them, I want that, you want that expectation and we will see what they can do," Davis said.

Davis also said that, with having most of the starting lineup back, expectations are high.

"It does help having experienced guys, I feel like that's a bonus for us this year ... so, expectations are pretty high," Davis said.

'We have a pretty deep staff'

Much like the starting lineup for the Broncs, most of the starting rotation and parts of the bullpen will be returning also.

Seniors PJ Craig and Clayton Poliey will once again take a bulk of the starts for the Broncs, while younger arms hope to eat some innings as well.

"We have a pretty deep staff in terms of numbers," Davis said.

One of the many stars of the Broncs last season, senior Gavin Hawkes, who won MAAC Reliever of the Year, will miss the entire 2026 season as he continues to recover from Tommy John surgery.

Other pitchers like sophomore Kyle Batt and juniors Jack Ruditzky and Jake Dorety hope to deliver for the Broncs this year as well.

Batt, who showed flashes of what he could become for Rider last season, is a name to look out for.

"Usually when you are a freshman and able to contribute the way he did, you want to be able to improve on that and I think he will," Davis said, "He's got a good attitude, a good work ethic."

Batt will be one of the starters in the Broncs' opening weekend as they head down south to Asheville, North Carolina, on Feb. 20 to face off against the University of North Carolina Asheville Bulldogs. First pitch will be at 3 p.m.

The quest for another MAAC regular season title will begin for the Broncs on March 6, when they take on the Pioneers of Sacred Heart University. However, this team has their eyes on a bigger prize: a MAAC Championship and a ticket back to the NCAA tournament.