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Meet the Candidates forum guides student voters

By Cal Sutton

Rider's Student Government Association hosted a Meet the Candidates forum on April 2 to assist the student body in voting for SGA's executive board in the 2026-27 academic year.

The forum hosted candidates for student body president, executive vice president and vice president of administration and finance.

The first candidate to take the stage in the Rue Auditorium was junior finance major Peyton Gerig, the candidate for vice president of administration and finance.

Gerig is a member of Rider's chapter of Delta Sigma Pi, a professional business fraternity, and previously served as its vice president of finance. He also recently completed a co-op with Johnson and Johnson in January.

This year's Vice President of Administration and Finance Andrew Antigua, senior accounting major, kicked off the Q&A by asking Gerig how he plans to confront potential biases toward clubs and organizations.

"I want to look at every club and organization the same," Gerig said. "I want to see this as an [even] playing field, this isn't a power-level thing."

Gerig plans to judge organizations' financial requests not just by the group's size or popularity, but their individual, genuine needs.

Gerig has experience since his freshman year leading organizations and says he has strong communication skills that can help him lead in SGA.

When asked about how he plans to approach the pressures of balancing student organizations' finances while also being in communication with administration, Gerig expressed that he has no problem asking for help when necessary.

"If I need help from my finance board, I will ask," Gerig said. "If I need help, I am more than willing to ask for it."

Freshman behavioral neuroscience major Catherine Potgieter is the uncontested candidate for executive vice president of SGA for next year.



Cal Sutton/The Rider News

From left to right: Junior political science major Jaiden David, junior human resources management major Lizbeth Ortiz, freshman behavioral neuroscience major Catherine Potgieter and junior finance major Peyton Gerig at the SGA Meet the Candidates forum.

Though Potgieter is a freshman, she comes bearing knowledge and experience from before college and was involved in speech and debate for all four years of her high school career.

Potgieter is the freshman class chair and is part of the Making Connections Program. She is a member of the Gail Bierenbaum Leadership Council, Leaders in College, Rider's Baccalaureate Honors Program and is a HISPANIC role model.

Potgieter plans to make senate meetings feel more open to majors not commonly represented in SGA, such as science-related majors, to bring diversity to the group, as well as making them more casual to help the average student not feel intimidated by senate.

"I would like to see more diverse majors involved [in SGA]," Potgieter said. "I would love to be able to reach those audiences given my position in my major. ... I feel like being executive vice president would show them that [involvement] is possible."

She said she wants SGA to better help students with small tasks that may negatively impact their enjoyment of college so they can feel more comfort

in college activities.

"[Financial aid and scheduling classes] are the things that we need to be streamlining for students so that they can actually enjoy the really big things that Rider has to offer," Potgieter said.

Junior human resources management major Lizbeth Ortiz and junior political science major Jaiden David are running for SGA's student body president for the 2026-27 academic year.

David serves as the vice president of Rider's chapter of Phi Beta Sigma Fraternity, Inc. and the director of comedy and game shows for the Student Entertainment Council.

Along with Ortiz's involvement in Lambda Theta Alpha Latin Sorority, Inc. as the secretary, academic chair and Rider's delegate, she is an Equal Opportunity Program scholar and was part of All Broncs BELONG Alliance. She is also the founder and president of Rider's DominiRicans club.

If elected, Ortiz plans to connect SGA and the student body, even outside of formal settings like senate.

"This whole campaign, I have been talking to people one on one, getting to know them and having them get to know me as well," Ortiz said.

David wants to help students by connecting them with the people and things they may need to be successful and thrive at Rider, such as the Counseling Center and Academic Success Center to assist them with their emotional and academic needs.

"The Academic Success Center [and the Counseling Center] are things that need to be talked about," David said. "Students cannot use resources if they do not know what they are [or] where they are."

Gerig, Potgieter, Ortiz and David are on the ballot for the 2026-27 academic year's SGA executive board. Voting is open on BroncNation until April 9 at 11:59 p.m.

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Rider's annual spring concert leapt into the spotlight.

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Read a review of the trending new film.

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WHEELER BRINGS TEXAS TO JERSEY

Softball star Aspen Wheeler hopes to lead Rider back to MAAC tournament success.

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SECURITY BRIEFS

BY MADISON LEWIS

Information provided by Public Safety Director Matthew Babcock

Second-floor stench

Scarce source. On April 3, at 10:05 a.m., Public Safety was conducting a park, walk and talk of Olson Hall when they detected the odor of marijuana. The odor was detected on the ground floor of the building. Public Safety proceeded to check the building. The odor was strongest on the second floor A-wing, but they could not locate the source.

Smoldering scent

False fire. On April 6, at 4:06 p.m., Public Safety was dispatched to the Bart Luedeke Center for the report of a burning odor. The odor was reported by a staff member. Upon arrival, Public Safety also detected the same smell, but could not locate the source. Facilities Management was contacted and responded. The entire building was checked but nothing was found. The odor dissipated and the building was determined to be safe.

Defective detectors

Evacuation ensued. On April 6 at 11:14 a.m., Public Safety was dispatched to a fire alarm coming from Phi Sigma Sigma. Upon arrival, they found the building being evacuated. Public Safety entered the stairwell where the fire alarm was activated and found one of the smoke detectors damaged. Facilities Management was contacted, responded and made the repair. The alarm was reset and residents were allowed back inside.

CORRECTION

In last week's print edition, "SGA's race for presidential position commences," The Rider News incorrectly reported Lizbeth Ortiz's involvement in the academic affairs committee of SGA as the student affairs committee. The Rider News regrets this error.

Sarah F. Griffin/The Rider News

Rider joins Council of Independent Colleges, opening new doors for students and staff

By Samantha Clark

Rider joined the Council of Independent Colleges, an association of colleges and universities across the United States, on March 26 in an effort to expand its tuition opportunities.

Founded in 1956 to help private, nonprofit academic institutions with their quality of education, visibility and performance in administration and financial departments, admittance into the CIC allows the university to continue their commitment to excellence in higher education and student success.

Rider President John Loyack and Senior Vice President and Chief of Staff for Student Experience Mary-Alice Ozechoski are not strangers to the CIC, as all of the previous institutions they worked at were also members, supporting the idea that it is a universal assistant for private independent colleges that face shared issues.

"There's a ton of research that [the CIC] are doing that I think helps inform our work," Ozechoski said. "As a small institution, we don't have the capacity to do all of that research ... so I think that component is really critically important."

Rider's membership in the association will provide staff, faculty members and their families with educational opportunities and benefits outside of the university through the CIC Tuition Exchange Program, a process that will launch on Aug. 1.

The tuition exchange offers tuition-free enrollment to full-time employees, their spouses and dependents at the other 420 colleges in the council, spanning across

47 states and several countries.

Not only does Rider's admittance into the CIC provide benefits for university workers, but also students. With the tuition exchange program comes the introduction of new academic opportunities to Rider students through the association's online course-sharing agreement.

Provost and Senior Vice President of Academic Affairs Kelly Bidle said, "The CIC offers an online course sharing consortium which provides opportunities for students to take individual courses at member institutions."

By providing the ability to take individual courses at the institutions involved in the tuition exchange, the alliance exposes students to a broader selection of specialized courses, as the options will stretch past what Rider currently offers.

In addition, the association provides grant programs, belonging and inclusive learning, artificial intelligence readiness groups and education networks for graduate and undergraduate students.

The council promises support to independent universities and their students by providing access to these wide range of resources, which applies to students in any field, ranging from the arts and humanities to business and technology.

The university's role in the council also extends their value proposition for current and prospective Rider students, which is one that promises adequate preparation for professional success, lifelong independent learning and responsible citizenship.



Mary-Simone Collazo/The Rider News

Rider joined the Council of Independent Colleges, which allows for tuition exchange programs across the country and outside of the United States.

Ozechoski said, "We know that we teach and serve many first generation college students, so creating an environment where those students feel welcome and seen is perfectly in line with the CIC's mission, as well as Rider's mission."

Rider hosts 44th annual Gender and Sexuality Studies Colloquium: 'We've always been here'

By Caroline Haviland

The 44th annual Gender and Sexuality Studies Colloquium on April 7 brought together students, faculty and staff in Lynch Adler Hall to highlight the importance of inclusivity and representation through student presentations and a keynote speaker.

The colloquium featured two student panels titled "Considering Gender" and "Gender & Queer Theory in Policy, Athletics & the Arts." Each panel consisted of four student presentations that included topics like gender differences, queer theory and reproductive healthcare.

Director of the Gender and Sexuality Studies Program Erica Ryan led the colloquium through its numerous elements, as well as presented the two awards of the day.

Justin Burton, a music professor, was given the 2026 Ziegler-Gee Award, which "honors faculty, staff and administrators who have demonstrated exemplary support for gender equality and a focus on ending gender-based discrimination on campus in their work and in the community," Ryan said.

The 2026-27 Virginia J. Cyrus Scholarship was awarded to junior sociology and English major Carole Cobos, Ryan said, for her works that feature feminist and psychoanalytic analysis. It included a criticism on the nature of the patriarch in "Pride and Prejudice" to comparative research on Indigenous feminism in Latin America.

The mid-point of the event welcomed in Kate Okeson, the colloquium's keynote speaker, who delivered an address titled "We've Always Been Here: LGBTQIA+ Histories, Figures and Contributions Inclusive Pedagogy and Why it Matters."

Coming from an educational background of 27 years as a public school teacher, Okeson currently serves as executive director of the LGBTQIA+ youth equity commission at the New Jersey Department of Education, where she works to empower educators and school leaders to implement New Jersey's LGBTQIA+



Caroline Haviland/The Rider News

Kate Okeson spoke at Rider's 44th annual Gender and Sexuality Studies Colloquium on April 7.

inclusive education mandate.

At the start of her lecture, Okeson shared a story from a time in her youth when she came across a documentary called "The Celluloid Closet," which gives a historical account of LGBTQIA+ cinematic visibility in Hollywood over the first century of the moving picture.

"It gets into how characters who were not heterosexual and not cisgender were handled in those films ... They had to have some sort of unhappy outcome. It wasn't until the 1970s where there was at least a modicum of positive visibility around queer and noncisgender popular figures," Okeson said.

Drawing on that point, Okeson's address extensively explored the necessity of LGBTQIA+ and transgender visibility in the classroom, specifically pertaining to the

subjects of history and literature.

"A big chunk of history is certainly context and inquiry ... Historians and educators will often answer a question of why or what is the point of it with, 'Well it makes for good history,'" Okeson said. "But we can't just leave that only up to the historians. So we want to move history from that story of war, specific people in power, to a more complex depiction of all the ways that we in society are part of that history."

Offering an example, Okeson shared that the first gay-straight alliance is typically identified as taking place in 1989. However, the earliest record of such a group dates back to 1972 in Washington Heights, New York City, when high school students got an administrator and a teacher on board to join a movement concerned about the intersection of race, gender and ethnicity.

"The reason that there is one group that got named as the GSA being the first one for so long, and if we investigate it, is that it is a very white, very high level socioeconomic, private school. What did they have access to? Not only a means to make and communicate, but save to archive the historical record," Okeson said.

A majority of the address was also spent presenting creative pieces that reinterpret famous paintings, such as the painting of Napoleon crossing the Alps. The appropriation, painted by Kehinde Wiley, featured "an unarmed contemporary Black man, with neoclassical elements," Okeson said.

In the original, Napoleon is riding a horse through the Alps into battle. However, Okeson clarified that according to historical accounts, Napoleon actually rode on a mule long after his other soldiers left.

The purposeful visibility of specific figures in history and the hiddenness of others with intersecting identities was a part of the message Okeson set out to convey. The classroom, Okeson explained, should be a place where those figures are brought to light for future generations to learn about.



2026-27 

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Graphic by Gail Demeraski and Photos by N.D. Medall, Morgan Dickens and Jeff Stewart



Student dancers tell different stories in each of the six pieces featured in the 2026 Rider Dances spring showcase.

Rider Dances tell unique stories through vibrant, creative pieces in the 2026 spring show

By Stacie Hueter and Morgan Dickens

Vibrant costumes, eye-catching stunts and beautiful choreography graced the stage of the Bart Luedeke Center Theater on April 2 and 3. Friends and family arrived excitedly and brought flowers to support the dancers as The Department of Performing Arts held their annual spring Rider Dances concert.

This year's program consisted of six pieces, each with their unique style of dance, music and engaging visuals. The choreographers selected the best dancers for their pieces, ranging from jazz, hip-hop, vogue and contemporary. White masks, suitcases and bold feather boas were some of the creative costume design choices added to the dancers' wardrobes. Each dancer brought drama, passion and smooth moves needed to positively impact the dance's quality.

The choreographers coordinated with the Production & Administrative Team to color the stage a variety of hues to harmonize with the mood of the piece. They also managed the sound quality to ensure the audience stayed immersed.

Megan Mazarick, one choreographer and director of the production, is an assistant professor of dance.

She currently teaches a 100-level, a 200-level and a 400-level dance course within the department.

The program opened with Mazarick's piece, "the push pull factors." In her creative process, Mazarick shared that her piece came from "the way people choose to migrate what is pushing and pulling them out of a spot, versus what is pulling them towards a spot."

She broke the piece into three sections. It started with half of the dancers carrying suitcases and one another, and the other half executing dynamic turns and floorwork. It was to convey the act of traveling, as if trying to catch a train. Mazarick described the second act as the "dream sequence of the dance." She said that it is an abstract representation of the final destination. In the third section, the dancers carried flashlights that captured each other's movements in the pitch blackness of the theater, projecting them on the wall. This was to create the feeling of "being caught" or "trapped" in the light, conveying Mazarick's message: "What if the place that I was going to was not there anymore?"

Mazarick told the audience to come up with their own interpretation of this abstract piece, as opposed to telling them what to think.

"The framework is about this idea of bodies traveling through space," said Mazarick. "However, you perceive it as great and wonderful."

Five other pieces accompanied Mazarick's, each bringing a different level of creativity, fun and elegance.

"WYP 'What's Your Playlist,'" delivered a fun jazz number with dancers dressed in navy blue streetwear. Smooth and fluid movements paired seamlessly with the soundtrack featuring "No Sleep" by Janet Jackson. This piece was choreographed by Sophiann Mahalia Moore, a Black dancer and actress who explores African identity and body positivity through her pieces.

The following piece, titled "Stupid Humans," shifted the energy. The piece was an experimental hip-hop-funk fusion choreographed by professional street dancer John "Comix" Barella. His piece featured multiple segments, starting with selecting an audience member to join them on stage, to flips and tricks pulling cheers and laughter from the crowd.

Bold and playful energy filled the theater for "Vogue Evolution." Vogue-style dances choreographed by award-winning ballroom and heels dancer Rylee "Prodigy" Locker highlighted the history of vogue dancing in marginalized communities.

"Timeless," maintained that upbeat energy with a groovy hip-hop piece, choreographed by street dancer Ricky "Glytch" Evans.

To conclude the night of creativity and vibrancy, "Beneath The Green," was a moving, contemporary-ballet piece emphasizing nature and its synchronicity,

choreographed by former Pennsylvania ballet soloist, Meredith Rainey.

The show closed with a roaring applause of acclamation from the audience as the dancers took a final bow.

One audience member, sophomore psychology major Vyan Datt appreciated the variety of productions the students and choreographers put together, saying "It was a mixture. It was really funny, but it's also like, really classy and talented. They're all just so talented."

Sophomore music major Tryphena Quain shared a similar feeling and added, "Each and every style was different and unique, but they all told a story, and I really enjoyed that."

Junior psychology major Ashlyn Corchado encouraged Rider students to come out and enjoy the performances she and her fellow dancers worked hard on to create a fun experience for attendees.

"It's so great to see everyone's hard work pay off, everyone had so much fun on stage," Corchado said. "There's audience participation, so everyone gets to be involved! It's really cool!"

Morgan Dickens/The Rider News



"WYP 'What's Your Playlist'" was a smooth jazz piece of the night that featured "No Sleep" by Janet Jackson and was choreographed by dancer and actress Sophiann Mahalia Moore.

Morgan Dickens/The Rider News



"Beneath the Green," choreographed by Pennsylvania ballet soloist Meredith Rainey, ended the evening with a slow-paced contemporary ballet that focused on nature.

Home Away from Home: Jacob Maya Morales finds 'warmth' in Rider Broncs

By Brannagh Rattigan

Home for Jacob Maya Morales is in Cali, Colombia, but his dedication to his personal and educational growth brought him thousands of miles away to spend his four years of undergraduate schooling at Rider.

As a freshman music production major, Maya understands that in the world of music, it is crucial to be surrounded by his passion. For him, music is everywhere, in both professional and friendly atmospheres.

"I like to make samples and beats with my friends in my free time," Maya said. "The more I do, the more I put in, the easier it is going to go in the future and the more credentials I'll have for the music industry."

Maya decided the U.S. was the right place for him to pursue higher education because he valued the opportunities to grow professionally and socially that new places bring.

"There's a lot of good friends I've made, the experiences I've had like going to New York, and most of all the opportunities I get now that I've traveled are what I love about being here — the main reason I came here is for opportunities," Maya said.

Despite all the joys of studying away from home, being away from what is comfortable is not an easy task. Maya expressed that, although he loves the experiences at Rider, like joining the rock climbing club, he still misses his life back home.

"I miss the colors of my country, in my city, and I really miss the warmth of the people," Maya said.

While it can be thrilling to experience life in a new

country at a young age, Maya communicated that being alone for the first time in his life was challenging — especially being alone in a different country.

"The culture is different, the people are different, I had to adapt in order to make friends," Maya said.

However, Maya had no trouble facing these challenges head on. Doing everyday activities on his own for the first time was a task he was ready to overcome, and Maya believes he has become a better person because of it.

He said, "I think I've grown a lot since I came here, and that was my goal, to grow as a person and find all the opportunities I want in my life."

Jackson Babino, a sophomore secondary education major and Maya's roommate, shared how Maya has impacted his life at Rider.

"Maya has made my time on campus way more entertaining," Babino said. "We go on random journeys all the time and always have a good laugh together."

Babino says that he and Maya became fast friends, as Maya has a good balance of character in all his interactions with people.

"Maya is a very colorful and humorous person, but also one who will listen to what you have to say," Babino said.

Maya plans to stay at Rider to complete a bachelor's degree and hopes to move with his family to Europe in the future.

Maya emphasized that his future plans are all because of the opportunities he had to grow and



Photo courtesy of Jacob Maya Morales

Freshman music production major **Jacob Maya Morales** is originally from Cali, Colombia.

mature into a better version of himself, and he would not trade that for anything.

He said, "All the growth I've gotten is worth it for all the things I've missed back home. I know this is necessary for my future."

This article is part of the Home Away From Home series by The Rider News to highlight international students from the OIE.



Gail Demeraski/The Rider News

Rider Pets: Copper the beagle brings paws-itive energy to university campus

By Teagan Rotella

When people picture a puppy, they usually imagine a small, energetic version of a dog. So, when Isabelle Quaid, a freshman business administration major, first met her dog, Copper, as a puppy, she was surprised by his calm and shy personality.

Despite the initial impression of a shy dog, within a few days, Copper, now a 30-pound, 3-year-old beagle, grew into the kind of playful, outgoing dog most people expect.

Before leaving for college, Quaid was worried about how an extreme change, such as going to college nearly 2,000 miles away, would impact her anxiety. Despite her concerns, she chose to face the transition on her own.

However, after a rocky first semester, Quaid reconsidered and decided that bringing an emotional support dog to campus would be the best choice for her.

Quaid convinced her parents to let her get a dog, and they found a breeder called Victory Hill Ranch located in Dime Box, Texas, that raised beagles and golden retrievers.

To make sure that they were getting a dog from somewhere that took care of their animals, Quaid and her parents did a lot of research on the breeder beforehand.

"They have three kids and live on a farm, so it's a great environment," Quaid said. "I'm glad [Copper] had a good start when he was young."

Kaiya Brown, a sophomore arts and entertainment industries management major, became close friends with Quaid after meeting through Rider Dance Ensemble, Rider's collaborative dance performance group.

Once Quaid was approved by Student Accessibility



Photo courtesy of Isabelle Quaid

Copper the beagle grew into the playful, outgoing dog business administration major **Isabelle Quaid** hoped he would be.

and Support Services to have Copper on campus, Brown wanted to meet him as soon as possible.

Now, Brown describes Copper as a loving and caring dog.

"Our favorite hobby together is snuggling up and watching any Disney movie," Brown said.

Similar to Brown and Copper, one of Quaid

and her aunt's favorite things to do together was watch Disney movies, specifically "The Fox and The Hound." Unfortunately, Quaid's aunt passed away when she was younger.

In order to honor her aunt's memory, Quaid named Copper after the hound featured in their favorite Disney movie.

Since Quaid brought Copper to campus, she has noticed a significant and positive change within herself, reinforcing that she made the right decision.

"I struggled a lot my first semester, and since I brought [Copper] up, it's gotten me back into a routine," Quaid said.

What could have been another sit-down lecture workshop was turned into what Johnson described as an event that is, "People just bringing people together."

This article is part of the Rider Pets series by The Rider News to feature pets across the Rider community.



Gail Demeraski/The Rider News

“The Drama” is an unsettling dark comedy

Robert Pattinson and Zendaya have cordially invited us to one of the weirdest and most unsettling films about marriage that I have ever seen. “The Drama” is director Kristoffer Borgli’s third feature film, and follows in a similar pattern to his other two. Borgli has a certain style that is very “The Twilight Zone”-esque, in that everything on the surface feels fine and functioning, but the more you look, the weirder and worse it gets. His newest work exemplifies that, as the two main characters are quite representative of his style as a filmmaker. Pattinson and Zendaya play Charlie and Emma, respectively, a soon-to-be married couple, days before their wedding. They are a quirky couple that seem so unassuming and charming, but as the trailer alluded to, there hides beneath them a terrible secret — one so damning that it could put their relationship in shambles.

I want to offer a brief note to those that have not seen the movie, but still wish to: the first half of this review will be spoiler-free, as this film is best enjoyed with no knowledge of the core plot. The second half will then dive into a more spoiler-heavy discussion.

The film works so well at making you feel nothing but discomfort. Be it the dialogue, the weird decisions being made or the editing and sound, Borgli makes sure that the audience is squirming in their seats. The most effective tool used is the way the film is edited, oftentimes cutting in between interactions to enunciate certain things said or implied, or cut between real and imagined life; it makes for a jarring watch, and succeeds greatly. This, along with the camera work, often utilizing dutch angles and uncomfortably close or wide-angle shots of character’s faces, is amazing to see and elevates that aspect of the film.

I think, altogether, the film works very nicely, but still does have its flaws, some being minor criticisms, but others rather glaring. The smallest of flaws is that the first act is essentially just the trailer, with very little changed. It was very noticeable, and made me want to skip through the first 20 minutes, since I had already gotten the gist from a two-minute trailer. That is not to say that the first act is bad, but just poor marketing, I suppose. The second act, though, dragged in several parts, with some scenes contributing very little or restating what had already been shown. It made for poor pacing, as the first half or so is pretty quick, but then grinds to an abrupt halt for a good 20 minutes. The last act is good, however, with the ending tying things together neatly. One final thing I must mention is that, for a cast that is almost entirely just Pattinson

and Zendaya for most of the film, I thought they were just ... fine. These are two A-List actors that were nearly 90% of the attraction to this film, but once you actually see their performances, it is lackluster for what they have shown in their past work. This is especially true for Pattinson, who has a fantastic range and has been in so many shining roles in the past. In short, their acting feels replaceable, which is a pity. Zendaya had some good moments in the film, showing a wide array of emotion, but in other spots, she felt flat and out of it. This can not be said for Alana Haim, who had a starring role in Paul Thomas Anderson’s “Licorice Pizza.” She was great in that film, but even better in a supporting role as Rachel here. She was spectacular in playing the vindictive and deeply unlikeable Rachel. Every scene that featured her had my skin crawling, even boiling down to the small gestures or glares she would signal. An outstanding and unexpected standout performance from Haim.

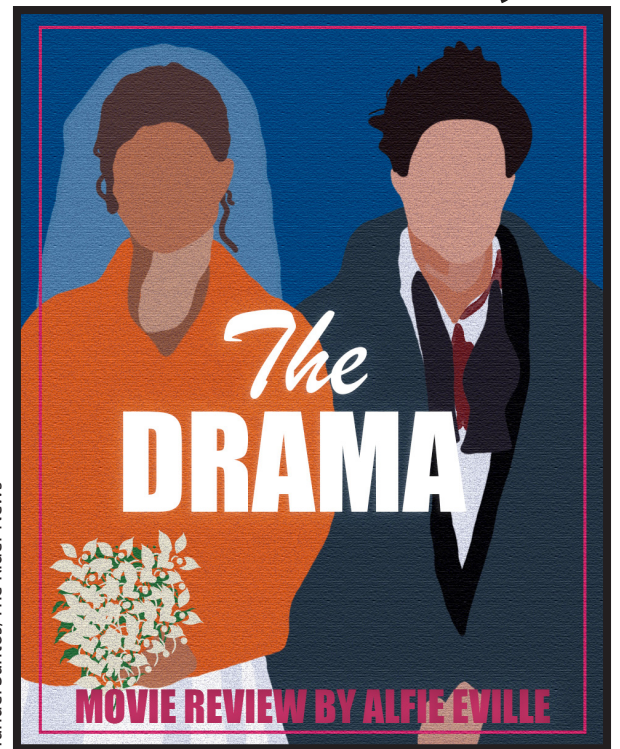
For that, I would say this film is a strong three and a half out of five stars, providing some great bits of entertainment and shock-value, but lacks substance in some other key departments.

Warning: Spoilers ahead

Now, before the next portion of this review I want to offer a brief aside regarding upcoming spoilers and content warnings: this movie’s heavy discussion of gun violence and school shootings is jarring to hear at first. The wine tasting scene is done expertly, with the reveal of Emma’s plot to commit such an act being so appalling, it caught me heavily off guard.

Some would point to the writing decision for it to be a school shooting as unnecessary and tasteless, but I disagree. I think it works very well and stirs up an interesting debate between, not only the characters, but also the audience watching. She almost did this, but then went on to change and grow, becoming a staunch anti-gun activist. Rachel is outraged and comes at Emma’s throat for contemplating doing such a thing. But, is Emma in the right? Is anyone? Is Emma a bad or dangerous person for almost doing this? Borgli makes audiences ask a very good question: Can someone be defined so much by their past, or can we accept that people are capable of change? If it were something more black and white, such as actually killing someone, then there is no room for this great philosophical discussion between theater go-ers.

With that being said, I do not think “The Drama” is trying to be overtly political or revealing — it is not



Yanuel Santos/The Rider News

“The Drama” leaves audiences feeling “nothing but discomfort.”

2002’s “Bowling for Columbine” or 2003’s “Elephant.” These heavier themes are much more in the backdrop and are a catalyst for the devolving relationship between Emma and Charlie.

*Alfie Eville
freshman history and secondary education major*



Gail Demeraski/The Rider News

THE TRUTH WILL BE TOLD THIS SATURDAY AT 11 A.M.

THE RIDER NEWS
ROUNDUP!
 THE PODCAST

Snail Mail “Ricochets” back on to the music scene

Back in high school, my best friend Lexxie put on Snail Mail’s “Pristine” one night in my 2015 Honda CR-V as we drove through our local nature reserve. Around town, Lexxie and I zipped through suburbia with our newfound independence, courtesy of my brand-new license and my mother’s keys. With her premium Spotify subscription, which I did not have at the time, she always exposed me to her fascinating music taste, and I would leave every hangout with a new tune to accompany me on my drive to school the following morning. Yet something particularly special about Lindsey Erin Jordan’s lyricism stuck with me far longer than my 10-minute drive up the road.

I felt as though I had heard the song before it even finished. To this day, when I hear “Pristine,” I am overcome with nostalgia and a deep sense of being understood. The type of understanding Lindsey Jordan can cultivate with her voice seemed like the type of validation the average midwestern 17-year-old girl longs so desperately for.

Seven years later, the 26-year-old indie phenomenon, Jordan, better known as Snail Mail, released her third, highly-anticipated studio album, “Ricochet,” following the release of “Valentine” in 2021. “Ricochet” debuted on March 27 and will be accompanied by a world tour spanning from the U.S. to Japan this year.

Each of the record’s 11 tracks distinctly remind longtime fans of the melancholic album, “Lush,” but also bring about a new type of maturity to the table with its folk-like elements and expansive orchestral sounds. The record kicks off with the song “Tractor Beam,” bright and cheery in tone, which details the cessation of a romantic relationship, as noted within the song to be “doomed from the beginning.” I have always appreciated the sheer irony within her sound, for she remains masterful in pairing beaming instrumentals with her solemn lyricism. Jordan may be describing “the end of the line,” but you better believe her compositions will lure you in for more with the hope of a happier ending.

Directly after “Tractor Beam” listeners are met with “My Maker,” a nihilistic story that begs the question: if we all are destined for the end, what is so wrong with starting over? However, that debate does not last long when she surrenders herself to the metaphorical “maker” in the song’s chorus. In a recent interview by Kayla Sandiford with the online London-based music magazine “THE LINE of BEST FIT,” Jordan noted that this song was the “lyrical jumping off point for the record.” In the same interview, she discussed the creation of the song’s music video, where she is featured skyward-bound in a hot air balloon. “I wanted the video to reference the lyrics about mortality, but also the freedom that comes with realizing fate is out of your hands,” Jordan stated.

“Light On Our Feet” particularly stuck out to me, as it is a violin-based tune with a slightly militant drum-based beat. Keeping in theme, this track discusses the upside of that formerly nihilistic world-view. It is a grade-A love song complete with themes of yearning and reminiscence throughout. To me, the album’s fourth track, “Cruise,” is most like her past songs in sound, yet this time with further elevation. The track features an instrumental break, complete with trumpet backed by her original indie orchestrations. “And just for an instant, there’s nothing to lose, forget our existence, and we can just cruise.”



Grace Juarez/The Rider News

Indie artist Snail Mail asks deeply existential questions over complex instrumentation in her new album “Ricochet.”

The fifth song, “Agony Freak,” takes the cake for my personal favorite song on the album. I have found it particularly pleasing to run to, with its bouncy backup sounds and slight guitar slashes. I feel that the album’s audio engineer Aron Kobayashi Ritch’s artistic vision clearly shines through the brightest here, with its striking similarities to past projects, such as the band “Mamma’s” song “Rodeo.”

Following “Agony Freak” is the record’s first released song, “Dead End.” The song hit the charts earlier this year in January and was the basis for the album’s anticipation. For her first released single since her hiatus, “Dead End” had me more excited than ever for her return. The song, complete with electric guitar, bass, drums, piano and heavy distortion, established Snail Mail’s return to the scene seamlessly and had fans eager for more.

The seventh track, “Butterfly,” feels like an ode to her past discography. It references feelings of entrapment and growth, like that of the two-winged insects. “Butterfly, they wanna keep you trapped inside a jar, to be near you, and the suit is just another grifter with a card to revere you.” Lyrically, “Butterfly” is one of her strongest on the album despite its brief structure of two verses, a once-repeated chorus, and an outro. “Nowhere,” which proceeds directly after “Butterfly,” continues similarly in theme but with added layers of rejection in romantic relationships, ultimately contributing to the resolution of one’s relationship. “And when I get back there, the crater from my dream, I’m going nowhere, you’ll never catch me.”

Clearly, we are not exactly going “nowhere” with three more songs left on her artistic journey; listeners are met with the album’s ninth song, “Hell,” which resurrects her prior musings on the afterlife as referenced in “My Maker.” In the song “Hell,” Jordan shares her fear of death through the lyrics, “Oh, bouncer in the sky, let me in, I’m scared to die.” Upon the album’s announcement, and my first listen, I was decently surprised to see such vast philosophical and religious references from within. Spanning from her earlier works to now, through her vocals, we have experienced the tumultuous ins-and-

outs of her coming-of-age and her experiences with fame and relationships, but what I believe sets this album apart so drastically is her ability to coincide these various themes into one record. Jordan has begged a myriad of questions far more mature than her earlier works, solidifying her as one of indie music’s most impressive songwriters of our generation. I appreciate her intellectual growth so deeply and am elated that she chose to invite fans onward into this journey through her music.

The title track, “Ricochet,” is a song of surrender and change. She describes someone she once knew, possibly even loved, as a “little cliché.” This tune discusses the advancements of one’s fame and the strains that their relationships may suffer from. Ultimately, she stands firm in her feelings of affection towards this person as she sings, “No matter what, or come what may, I bounce right back to ya, ricochet.” The album concludes with its eleventh track, “Reverie,” which provides humorous moments within its lyrical journey. In addition to this, “Reverie’s” lyrics debate her internal feelings of idolization within the music industry. “I’m older, now I’ve realized all my heroes are nothing more than socialites.” I particularly enjoyed her discourse on this topic and I hope in albums to come that her stance on various industry-driven issues present themselves through song. She has a rare ability of intense relatability through her lyrics. Through these bursts of musician-based conversation, she

lends a concrete hand to the listener’s side, almost as if she is reminding her listeners to stay critical of their consumption while appreciating the artists they adore.

I feel honored to have been a fan for as many years as I have. She has grown with me just as much as I have grown with her in my ear. From the melancholic voice I heard in my high school Honda, to the woman I saw on the Stone Pony Summer Stage, Jordan’s discography is a rare breed that stands the test of time. From youth to adulthood, I am delighted to snag my tickets to her upcoming tour and see what deeply existential question she pairs with upbeat indie orchestrations next.

I give this album four out of five stars!

*Marissa Dingess
senior musical theatre and journalism major*

Gail Demeraski/The Rider News



Aunt Chubby's offers great vibes and good food

Hopewell is a quintessential New Jersey town; it is the kind of place that, when I drive through it en route to another destination, I admire the view and exclaim, "Wow, this town is so cute!"

Located just off of Main Street and across from the historic train station is Aunt Chubby's Luncheonette. Just like Hopewell, Aunt Chubby's offers a quaint, welcoming atmosphere that shines with a sense of community.

The property on which Aunt Chubby's is found, has been home to businesses that have been feeding the town's residents and its visitors since the late nineteenth century. As a mainstay in the township, the building's rich and extensive history is well-documented, and a timeline of its ownership is proudly linked on the luncheonette's website.

Acquired by Carol "Chubby" Montello and Rose Sponholtz in 1979, the business was called Rose and Chubby's, and was renamed Chubby's in 1991. In 2012, the restaurant went out of business and after extensive renovations by the owner's nieces, it reopened seven years later. An article from the Hopewell Valley History Project notes its location as being the town's "heart" for over three decades.

Aunt Chubby's, as a luncheonette, is open Tuesdays through Sundays from 7:30 a.m. to 3 p.m. and specializes in breakfast and brunch selections.

Following a recommendation made by an acquaintance who is a Hopewell resident, I went to Aunt Chubby's Luncheonette with my longtime friend from high school. I was initially worried that the environment would make my friend and I stick out as non-locals, but upon entering the already packed establishment. I realized that it would prove an excellent setting to catch up with my friend. The homely vibe made it easy to speak comfortably as we reminisced about our high school days.

On Sunday morning we were met with a cozy aroma of coffee, bacon and syrup. The wait time for a

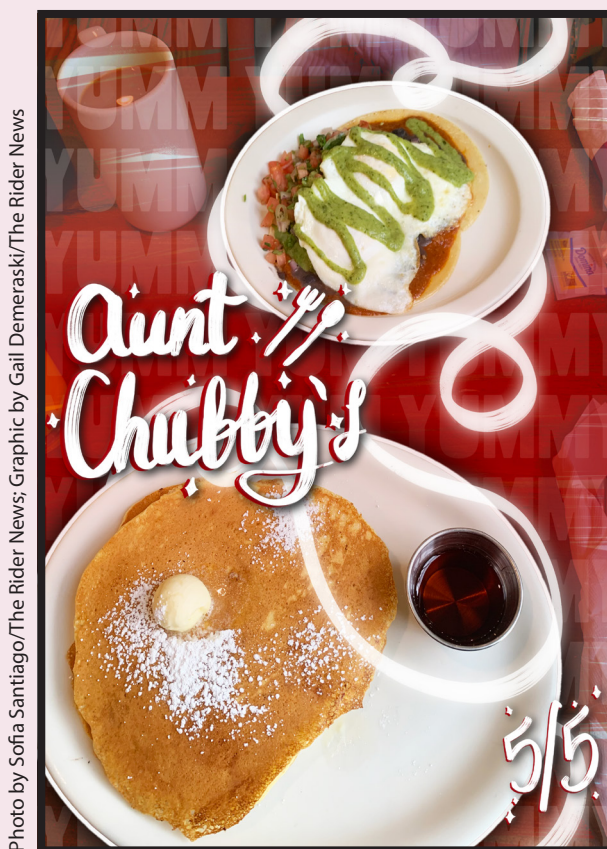


Photo by Sofia Santiago/The Rider News; Graphic by Gail Demeraski/The Rider News

Aunt Chubby's Luncheonette is a favorite local brunch spot in Hopewell.

table for two to open was barely four minutes despite the place being full with customers. Even larger parties were able to sit down after no longer than 15 minutes, and there was an ornate wooden bench for people who were waiting.

An elderly couple that came in at around the same time as us sat down on the bench, and as the manager walked by, a seemingly common occurrence at Aunt Chubby's, she offered them a coffee during the wait. Soon, my friend and I were chatting with the couple as they sipped their steaming-hot coffee, before we were

led to our table that was situated beside a window.

Through the window, we could see the luncheonette's outdoor seating also starting to get full. Flowers and colorful eggs decorating the table and windowsill completed the bright view.

While my friend ordered hot drip coffee which includes free refills, I made the less economic choice and ordered a large glass of orange juice. Although I was initially put off by the price, once I got the drink I understood: this juice had been made in the kitchen with some of the sweetest oranges I had ever tasted. It was also more than enough to last the whole meal.

The menu offered breakfast, which is served all day, lunch, starting at 11 a.m., seasonal specials and weekend-only items.

Staples of American breakfast — omelettes, toast, waffles and pancakes — all made an appearance in the breakfast section, along with more unique items including breakfast tacos and croissant bread pudding. For lunch, the expected comforting sandwich and burger options were available along with shrimp tacos, a quinoa bowl and apple salad. The specials radiated with fruit, pastels and a sense of spring with options such as a lemon ricotta and berries waffles dish and applewood smoked ham and gruyere omelet.

I ordered buttermilk pancakes, which were extremely dense and excellently filling. They came with the option of regular maple syrup and pure maple syrup for two extra dollars.

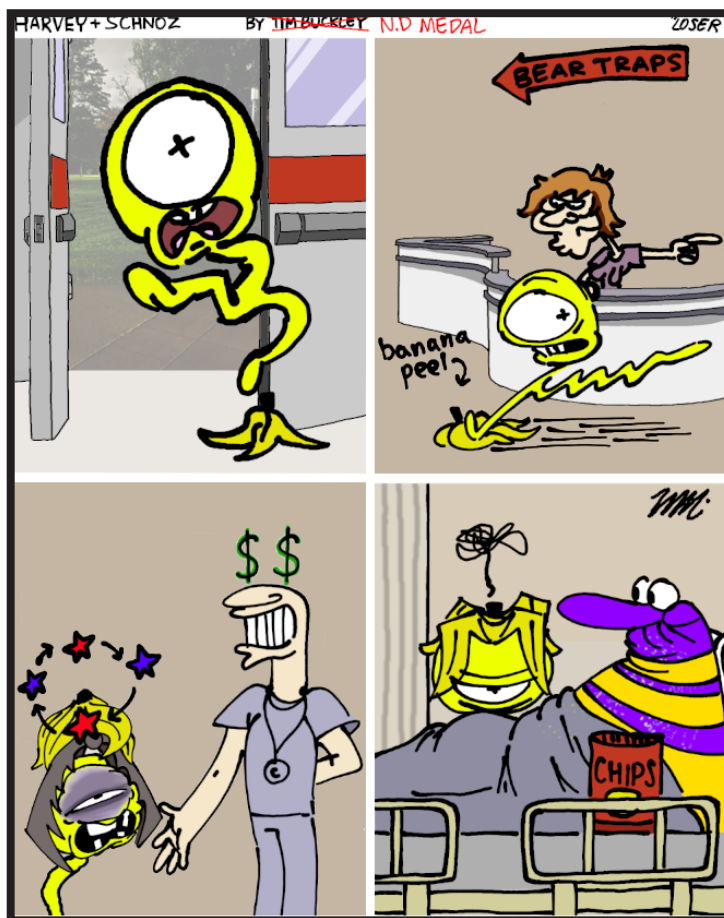
I would recommend the restaurant for the great vibes and appetizing food.

I give Aunt Chubby's Luncheonette a perfect five out of five stars.

Sofia Santiago
sophomore English and Spanish major

COMIC: Harvey and Schnoz

By N. D. Medal



Broncs secure two wins in Marist matchup, remain MAAC leader

By Benjamin Shinault

Rider baseball played important games when they welcomed Marist University to Sonny Pittaro Field. Heading into the game, both teams were fighting for the top spot in the Metro Atlantic Athletic Conference standings, but by the end of the series, the Broncs created a bit more separation between the Red Foxes and picked up a series victory.

Rider then faced the New Jersey Institute of Technology on April 7, but fell on the road, 11-1.

'It's huge'

The three-game series began on April 2 with cool and cloudy conditions. Senior pitcher PJ Craig, coming off an eight-inning showcase against Canisius University on March 27, spun the ball well once again against the Red Foxes.

Craig, who tossed his first ever complete game, threw 126 total pitches, struck out nine batters and allowed just four hits.

"He wasn't really stressed throughout the game," Acting Head Coach Barry Davis said about Craig's performance. "He did the job, he gave us a chance, he kept us in the game."

Craig now sits in the top 10 for ERA, opposing batting average and strikeouts in the MAAC.

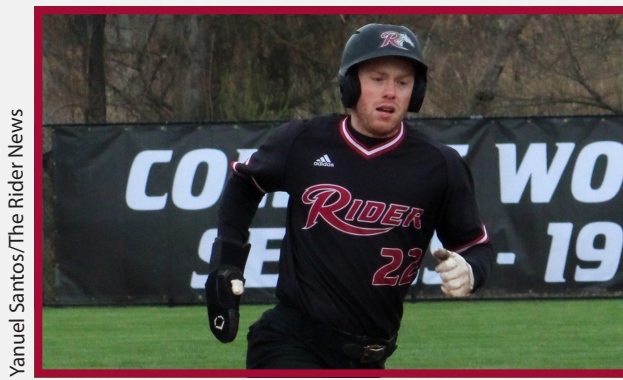
The Broncs were able to get onto the Red Foxes early with an RBI single from junior catcher Nick Shuhet in the first inning to make it 1-0.

Later in the fifth inning, senior third baseman Will Gallagher added on with a two-run home run to left field, his second long ball of the season, to make the score 3-0.

The Red Foxes broke the spell that Craig put them under with an unearned run in the sixth inning to make it 3-1.

The Broncs then went on to score six unanswered runs, taking a commanding 9-1 lead.

A large chunk of the runs came from the bat of senior outfielder Anthony Paskell who launched a



Yanuel Santos/The Rider News

Senior outfielder **Anthony Paskell** launched a three-run home run against Marist University.

three-run home run over the left field wall.

"Other guys came up big too, just getting some guys on and then, the three-run shot was definitely good," Paskell said.

Paskell is among the MAAC leaders in many categories, standing at sixth in runs scored, seventh in RBIs and fourth in home runs.

Leading 9-1 to enter the ninth inning, Marist was able to score a run off a bases-loaded walk, but that was it, as Craig closed the door and secured the win in game one, 9-3.

Game two for Rider started well, as Gallagher reached on a fielder's choice to take a 1-0 first inning lead.

From there, Marist scored seven unanswered runs to lead 7-1 by the end of the eighth inning.

Rider scrummaged up two more runs from a Paskell RBI single to center field and a sacrifice fly from Shuhet, but Marist tied up the series 1-1 after an 8-3 victory.

The Broncs' bats were still hot from the day before, as the team out-hit the Red Foxes 14-10, but left many baserunners stranded.

In the rubber match, senior pitcher Clayton Poliey got the start and ran into some early trouble, letting up five hits and three earned runs.

Before Poliey could finish the first inning,

Davis pulled him and slotted in senior pitcher Christian Aiello.

Aiello, from there, had his way with the Marist hitters, as he finished with six and two thirds innings pitched, allowed just two hits and struck out seven. The pitcher also scooped up his MAAC leading seventh win in the process.

"Aiello came in and did a great job to get us out of the first inning," Davis said. "Then he proceeded to pitch shutout baseball the rest of the way."

Down in a 3-0 hole through three innings, Rider broke free in the fourth inning and put up a run from a wild pitch.

Trailing 3-1, the Broncs crushed the ball in the seventh inning, as they scored eight runs.

During the seventh inning, sophomore infielder Eliot Medlock hit a two-run home run and freshman catcher Demetri Bardatsos hit his first career home run to put the icing on the cake.

Up 9-3, freshman pitcher Conner Flynn pitched two scoreless innings to close out the game and the series.

"It's huge," Davis said. "But you know, the magnitude will not show up until later in the season, so then we will really know how big it was."

A game to forget

On April 7, the Broncs took on the New Jersey Institute of Technology for a midweek road matchup.

Toeing the mound for Rider was freshman pitcher Dylan Kane. Kane ran into some early trouble as he gave up four earned runs in his two innings of work.

Down 8-0 in the sixth inning, the Broncs were able to score a run, but the damage was already done.

NJIT would add three more runs to make the final score 11-1.

The Broncs will put the NJIT matchup in their rear view as they look toward the semi-final round of the Liberty Bell Classic against Saint Joseph's University on April 8. First pitch will be at 3 p.m. in Philadelphia.

Rider rallies to pick up three out of five wins in and out of MAAC play

By Samantha Clark

Rider softball had a winning week, prevailing in three out of five total games against the University of Pennsylvania Quakers and Saint Peter's University Peacocks, while falling in a doubleheader against the Siena University Saints.

The home prevail

The Quaker battle on April 1 opened by putting the Broncs in an early hole, 1-0, until junior catcher Abby Cruz quickly responded by delivering a single and driving home sophomore utility Keegan St. Cyr, knotting the matchup at 1-1.

Immediately after, junior catcher Kendall Reda-Feshal hit a double to left field, allowing Cruz to bring another run to the board, putting the Broncs up 2-1 at the end of the first inning.

To start the second, senior pitcher Fallyn Stoeckel only allowed one hit and zero runs, then picked up a hit of her own to open the bottom of the inning.

Junior infielder Kiersten Buchanan walked to first, and after a single from sophomore infielder Aspen Wheeler, the Broncs added two more back-to-back runs, pulling out of the second inning on top, 4-1.

The Quakers added another late run in the third, but Rider followed with the same to put the score at 5-2 after a Buchanan RBI triple allowed sophomore first baseman Emma Morgan to cross the plate.

Rider got right back into the swing of things in the bottom of the fifth when senior outfielder Maddie Luedtke drove a single down the center of the field, advancing all three Broncs on base.

A throwing error from the Quakers then allowed freshman infielder Melissa Purcella and Buchanan to continue to advance, pushing the Broncs up 7-2 to give them a win after a similar sixth and seventh innings.

"Our early resilience offensively was great but came as no surprise. ... It's allowed us to gain confidence knowing that we can let up a few runs early ... and still be able to bounce back and score more," Head Coach Davon Ortega said.

Pair of losses

The Broncs then took on a doubleheader on April 4, which added two more losses to their record.

The first of the two was extremely slow, with runs scored until the bottom of the seventh inning.

The Broncs struggled at the plate, not securing a hit until the top of the sixth, after St. Cyr doubled to center field. Reda-Feshal followed in the seventh, getting the Broncs' only hit of the inning, with a single.

"It's all about staying confident and calm in those moments. I trust the work I've put in and remind myself that my team has my back no matter what," St. Cyr said.

To round out the first of the two-game afternoon, the Saints brought home the first and only run, handing the Broncs their 1-0 loss.

The second game of the day began at a slower pace, with the opening two innings seeing zero runs. In the third, though, Buchanan smacked an in-the-park home run to bring in the Broncs' first run of the game and day.

The Saints' bark was heard later in the fifth, when a fielding error allowed them to bring home three consecutive runs, setting Rider back 3-1. Without faltering, they racked up five more runs in the next inning, the Broncs seeing no luck at bat.

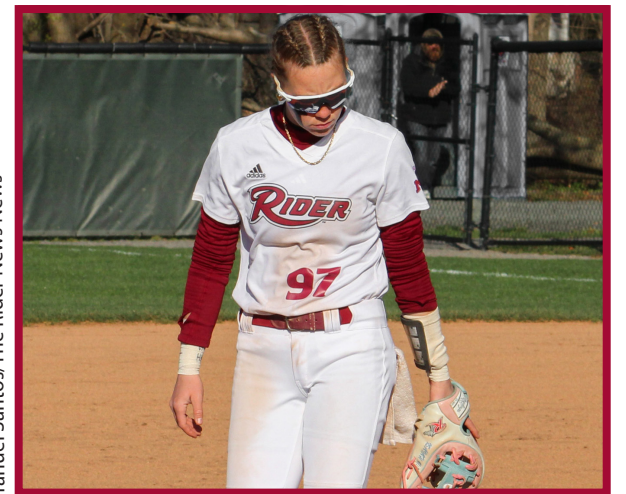
A home run from Reda-Feshal garnered Rider's final run of the matchup, losing at 8-2.

Successful sweep

Despite a slow first inning in the first of two games on April 7, the Broncs immediately picked up steam in the second, getting seven total runs after just five hits.

After a single to left field from Buchanan, Reda-Feshal crossed home plate to bring in the first run for the cranberry. Next at bat was Purcella, who wasted no time on the clock and launched a grand slam advancing the Broncs to 5-0.

Following in her teammates footsteps, Luedtke hit another home run to score herself and St. Cyr, adding seven total runs to the scoreboard in just one inning.



Yanuel Santos/The Rider News

Sophomore infielder **Aspen Wheeler** continued her hot hand with three RBIs against Saint Peter's University.

The Broncs continued to dominate in the third, with singles bringing home sophomore pitcher Gabi Rodriguez, Reda-Feshal, Purcella and Wheeler and a fielding error allowing Luedtke and St. Cyr to collect the last of Rider's runs.

The fourth and fifth innings were silent for both teams, ending the game with the five-inning mercy rule and handing the Broncs the 13-0 win.

The latter of the doubleheader saw the same success for the Broncs, who kicked off play with a single from Luedtke, allowing a run from St. Cyr. The next three innings, although slow, saw impressive pitching from Stoeckel, who let up just two total hits.

At the bottom of the fifth, Cruz picked up her 100th career hit, allowing St. Cyr to score once again for the Broncs.

Wheeler reached on a fielding error to advance Stoeckel, who brought in the Broncs' final run of the day, sweeping the Peacock series with the 3-0 win.

Rider hopes to continue their winning streak when they head to Poughkeepsie, New York, to take on the Marist Red Foxes on April 11 and 12.

Sports

ONLINE

UNLUCKY NUMBER 13 FOR LACROSSE

After dropping games to both Fairfield and Niagara University, Rider lacrosse has now lost 13 straight games.

READ JOSHUA YUHAS' STORY ON [THERIDERNEWS.COM](https://www.ridernews.com)



Photos courtesy of Aspen Wheeler and Peter G. Borg, Graphic by Yanuel Santos/The Rider News



Sophomore infielder **Aspen Wheeler** is currently leading the Broncos in both batting average and hits this season.

Lone Star State talent brings southern edge to Rider

By Benjamin Shinault

In the small town of Lampasas, Texas, where grazing cows and horses might outnumber the residents, you might also hear the sound of a metal bat cracking against a neon green softball.

Growing up on 100 acres of land was sophomore infielder Aspen Wheeler of Rider softball, a four-time All-District player in high school, a member of the USA Softball Regional team and a member of the Texas Blaze Fastpitch.

Wheeler's Texas home might be a 25-hour car ride away, but she surely found her home away from home at Herb & Joan Young Field at Rider.

'We are not the sport, we are people who play the sport'

Growing up on her grandfather's land, Wheeler reminisced about her two brothers, Cole and Cale, feeding goats and horses.

In a small town like Lampasas, Wheeler had a huge support system through her high school coaches, family and teammates, something that helped her tremendously in her quick softball development.

Having two brothers growing up, Wheeler did not have the average childhood as a little girl, as she spent most of her time outside, playing sports and getting dirty.

Wheeler and her parents knew she had a knack for playing softball. At the age of four, she was already hitting off the tee. Wheeler then skipped a year or two of development and went right into facing pitching when she was only 7 years old.

"My process was sped up. I was always playing with bigger kids and my parents said that I might as well get into it right away and they always taught me that adversity builds character and it allows you to grow," Wheeler said.

Wheeler's parents always had their voices in their daughter's ear to teach her that anything is possible if she puts in the time and work.

"I've always been the underdog. I've always been one of the smallest people on the field, little 5-year-old Aspen is playing with a bunch of 8-year-olds," Wheeler recalled. "I've kind of learned, even if your talent and skill isn't there, your dedication and hard work will push you over that hump."

That same 5-year-old dominating older competition continued to develop and hone down her hitting.

In all of her four years at Lampasas High School, Wheeler was named the team's offensive most valuable player and was named to the All-District team all four years.

Wheeler also was a member of the Blaze, a select softball team that develops some of the best softball talent in Texas.

In her time with the Blaze, Wheeler learned something beyond how to hit the softball harder and further.

"I really just learned to have fun," Wheeler said. "It reminded me of how we all were once little 5-year-olds running around, just caring about the snacks at the end of the game. It just humbled us, once again, we are not the sport, we are people who play the sport."

With a stacked high school resume and time playing with the Blaze under her belt, Wheeler then committed to play softball at Rider in November 2023.

'They had faith in me'

Wheeler also faced a lot of adversity during her high school career, tearing both ACL's and her shoulder over two years. With injury after injury, the star-studded infielder began to lose a lot of interest from other schools. However, one school stuck around.

"Three surgeries is a lot, and a lot of coaches said, 'you're accident prone,' and I came to accept that. [Rider] were really the only ones after everything that happened to continue to have faith in me and believe in me," Wheeler said.

Head Coach Davon Ortega knew Wheeler was special and had the "it" factor.

"She came in ready to earn a starting position and to make an immediate impact," Ortega said. "On her recruiting visit, she said to me that she wanted to be a part of a program where she could be a star, and she has proven that every day by her actions in practice and in games."

The injuries would not stop there for Wheeler, as she suffered a torn meniscus in fall 2024. But when Wheeler suffered setbacks in the past, her support system was always there. When she came to Rider, the new team and coaching staff was there to help her out.

"I was a little nervous after that happened because

of all my surgeries and my past, but once again, here at Rider, as a community, the softball team in general had my back, which was great because it was all I really knew," Wheeler said.

After quick recoveries and successful surgeries, Wheeler did not miss a step. In her first season with the Broncos, she led the team in batting average in Metro Atlantic Athletic Conference action, was a member of the MAAC All-Rookie team and recorded six multi-hit games.

Not only did Wheeler enjoy a successful regular season, but she also experienced a magical run all the way to the MAAC Championship elimination round.

After an upset of the third and second seed in the tournament to a no-hitter, Wheeler still gets chills across her body to this day.

"It was insane," Wheeler said. "I think it's good that I experienced that in my freshman year, because I don't know anything other than that, especially our team being pretty young this year, it builds another resolve and a sense of grit."

A sophomore superstar

Wheeler, in just her second season, has dominated. This season, so far, Wheeler ranks top 10 in the MAAC for batting average and hits.

Wheeler has also recorded 12 multi-hit games, already doubling her total from last year.

"Aspen is special in how she plays the game so naturally and in her uncanny ability to play instinctive and raw and to ball out," Ortega added.

However, it is not just Wheeler who has swung a hot bat, as the Broncos have the second-best team batting average. The last time Rider was ranked in top three for batting average was in the 2022 season.

"Offensively, we're insanely good, I don't think our bats have been this hot in a very long time," Wheeler said.

Looking back on what the team completed last season, Wheeler has full confidence that the team can get back to being deep within the MAAC tournament.

Wheeler said, "With the taste that we all had last year, I think everybody has that same mindset and same goal, same drive in their mind, I think that we are really motivated and it's the best word to describe our team."