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The Rider News

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Graphic by Grace Juarez, Photos by Pete G. Borg and Yanuel Santos

BREAKING: 107.7 The Bronc wins national award

By Cal Sutton

On Oct. 20, 21 students from Rider's radio station, 107.7 The Bronc, traveled to The Edison Ballroom in New York City for The NAB Marconi Radio Awards after being a six-time nominee within the past seven years for the nation's best college radio station by the National Association of Broadcasters.

The finalists were WHPC from Nassau Community College in Garden City, NY, WMSC from Montclair State University in Montclair, NJ , WOLF Radio from the University of West Georgia in Carrollton, GA, WRRC-FM from Rider University in Lawrenceville, NJ and WSOU-FM from Seton Hall University in South Orange, NJ.

107.7 The Bronc won the award for College Station Of The Year for the first time in station history. The Bronc regularly hosts large-scale, on-campus events during the school year. The station also hosts a multitude of live student-hosted shows year-round.

John Mozes, the general manager of 107.7 The Bronc stated that they were all "a little shell-shocked."

"College radio is really strong and thriving," Mozes said. "[College radio stations] are going to be the change makers for the industry going forward."

Mozes also noted that winning the award for College Station Of The Year was an experience that The Bronc truly did not expect, but welcomed with open arms.

Kadie DiGiuseppe, a senior sports media major and 107.7 The Bronc's student general manager, went to the awards ceremony and described the experience as "surreal."

"It was so surreal," DiGiuseppe said. "We have waited a long time for this … it was the most insane thing ever."

Assistant Student General Manager Dan Loges, a junior arts and entertainment industries management major, was the student who created the reel that resulted in The Bronc's nomination for the award and expressed great excitement following the announcement of the station's win. He said that the award was reflective of the station's hard work, not only this year, but as a radio station in its entirety.



Photo courtesy of John Mozes

The members of 107.7 The Bronc celebrate a big win at The NAB Marconi Radio Awards.

"I feel like I haven't returned back to Earth yet," Loges said. "It's such a high. We all put so much work into this, and hearing [WRRC-FM] called, it's like 'all the hard work does pay off.'"

Loges' 90-second reel was created to advertise and encompass the goals of the radio station, which was a necessary component to receiving a nomination for the award.

News Editor Brannagh Rattigan, Sports Editor Joshua Yuhas, Graphic Design Manager Grace Juarez and Copy Editor Teagan Rotella are members of 107.7 The Bronc. They had no part in the writing or editing of this story.

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CORRECTION

In an Oct. 14 article, The Rider News incorrectly stated that BroncVision was under the Department of Communication, Journalism and Media. The Rider News regrets this error.

Student Health Center inaccessible in fall 2026

By Cal Sutton

Rider students were not able to receive on-campus medical attention for the beginning of the fall 2026 semester.

Concerns grew as the semester proceeded and students were referred to outside resources, which are exceedingly difficult for students without personal transportation to access.

Inconsistencies were found in the Student Health Center's responses to students seeking medical care. On one occasion, a student was told to go to TCNJ. In another instance, a student was told that they needed to find off-campus care. Students have also been told that Rider Public Safety can provide transportation, but that option was not shared to every student who called.

Jennifer Kormuth, a medical assistant at Rider's Student Health Center, shared information on behalf of the health center in an Oct. 15 phone call. For the first half of the semester, each time students called the office, they received similar information to what was shared on Oct. 15.

"We do not have a functioning health center at the moment. We have not had a provider here since the end of April," Kormuth said. "What we can do is get you a ride to either a CVS MinuteClinic or to an urgent care if you do not have transportation off campus."

Dean of Students Christine Mehlhorn clarified in an email to The Rider News that Rider's partnership with Capital Health concluded this summer, but the statement regarding not having a provider since April was inaccurate.

"Rider's partnership with Capital Health to operate the Student Health Center ended this summer, after the spring semester," Mehlhorn said. "Capital Health medical providers staffed the Student Health Center through the end of the spring 2026 semester."

While students could not go to the on-campus health center, there were lapses in types of acute care and support they were able to receive. According to the university's website, the health center does more than just see students when they have a cold.

The health center is, under usual circumstances, equipped to treat illnesses, minor injuries and prescribe medication for illnesses, if needed. While these are not all of the services which the health center typically offers, these are common and necessary to access, especially on a college campus.

Along with minor illnesses and injuries, the health center can also conduct testing for sexually transmitted infections, perform gynecological exams and refer students to specialists.

It is necessary to prioritize sexual health, and on college campuses, health centers sometimes may be the only resource students have access to.

Rider students were not notified that the health center would be non-functional for the beginning of fall 2026.

The Student Health Center relocated to the Vona Center at the end of the spring 2026 semester. That move, from its original location in Poyda Hall, was widely talked about within universitywide communications. What failed to be mentioned was that the agreement Rider had made with Capital Health had expired, and students would soon lose access to the care they expect on a campus that advertises having an on-campus health center.

Cheyenne Cope, a junior graphic design major, had an encounter with the health center early on in the semester, following a bout of sickness that left Cope needing medical attention. After calling the health center, Cope was not told that Public Safety would be able to transport students.

"When I said that I didn't have a car, they basically said, 'Oh, well that sucks' and that they couldn't help me," Cope said.

Cope also believes that Rider had a responsibility to notify students that the health center would not be functioning for an indefinite period of time, especially when students are paying for use of the facilities.

"I feel like the students should have been notified beforehand about how there was no nurse or doctor,"



Brannagh Rattigan/The Rider News

Students have not been able to utilize the Student Health Center for the beginning of the fall 2026 semester.

Cope said. "I also really think it's unfair for those that are paying the insurance fee on their tuition to not get the service they paid for."

According to Mehlhorn, Rider's Student Health Center has a nurse in office beginning Oct. 19.

"We are taking the time to find a long-term healthcare partner that will meet the evolving needs of our students. In the meantime, we have contracted with Bayada for interim care."

Mehlhorn also stated that students' frustrations are valid, noting the health center's in-office care's date to resume.

Melhorn said, "We understand that students have been frustrated by the lack of on-campus medical care this fall, and that frustration is fair. We appreciate students' patience and want them to know that support is available now and that on-campus care resumes [Oct. 19]."

Rider freshmen class chairs chosen

By Liliana R. Basile and Cal Sutton

On Oct. 7, the freshmen class was the talk of campus, along with the anticipation of who was going to be chosen as their class chair and vice chair.

Every year, Rider's Student Government Association has to say goodbye to their senior class, but also welcome the new freshmen to the university. Daniel Lanza, a freshman arts and entertainment industries management major, is a part of the most recent class, graduating in 2030, and was one of many who took an interest in what SGA stands for.

SGA's mission is to act as the student body's voice to bring together the student population with the college's administration.

"It was really streamlined and simple. There was just an email sent out by SGA saying that the positions were open and looking for new volunteers. So, I went to Bronc Nation, filled out a little form for it," Lanza said. "Then I was interviewed by Sara Ryan, a member of SGA, and after that interview, I was able to get the position."

Lanza not only had the desire to be in a leadership role, but he also had the credentials to back him up.

During his high school career, he served on his high school's SGA, along with being on the student council for the International Baccalaureate program. This gave him the ability to work independently with his own coursework, while also looking out for the needs of others.

Now, at Rider, Lanza also is an active member of Soulfege A Cappella, Arts Management Association and Broadway Green Alliance.

Junior criminal justice major Sara Ryan, oversees all of the class councils, spoke about what it is like being in SGA.

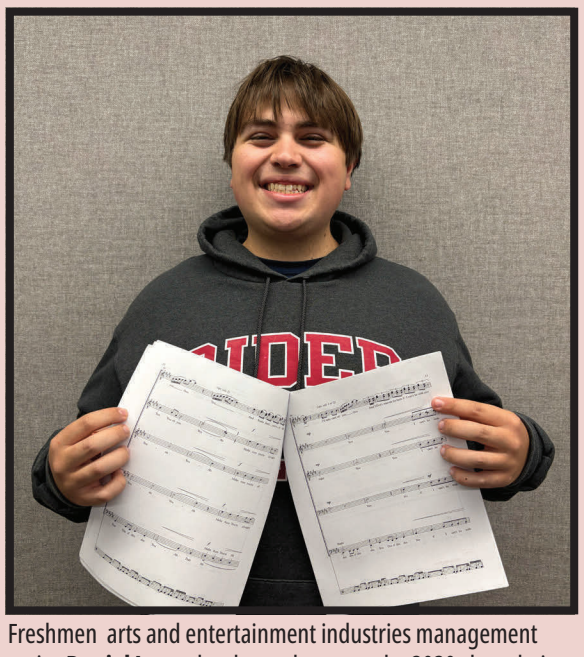
"Lots of planning, communicating and collaboration go into all of the councils in general, whether with each other or other groups outside of SGA," Ryan said.

The class chair and vice class chair are responsible for planning events, communicating problems their class experiences on campus to SGA and pitch any ideas for campus changes.

After Ryan went through the student applications and interviews, it was decided that Lanza would be the class chair for the class of 2030.

Lanza expressed that he feels honored to have this position so early and happy that he gets to meet all of his classmates. He also has expressed his want to keep improving Rider, SGA and connecting different parts of the school in ways that have not been done before.

"I came into this school; obviously, I knew no one. I only have one member of my [high school] class who is here and one from a prior class, so I didn't really have that backing, but I've been able to kind of become acquainted with the school and get this position," Lanza said. "It's all about getting out there. Shoot your shot even if you don't know what's gonna happen."



Cal Sutton/The Rider News

Freshmen arts and entertainment industries management major **Daniel Lanza** has been chosen as the 2030 class chair.

Lanza wanted to spread the message that anyone can do great things if they put in the work. Quoting Marty McFly from "Back to the Future," Lanza said, "If you put your mind to it, you can accomplish anything."

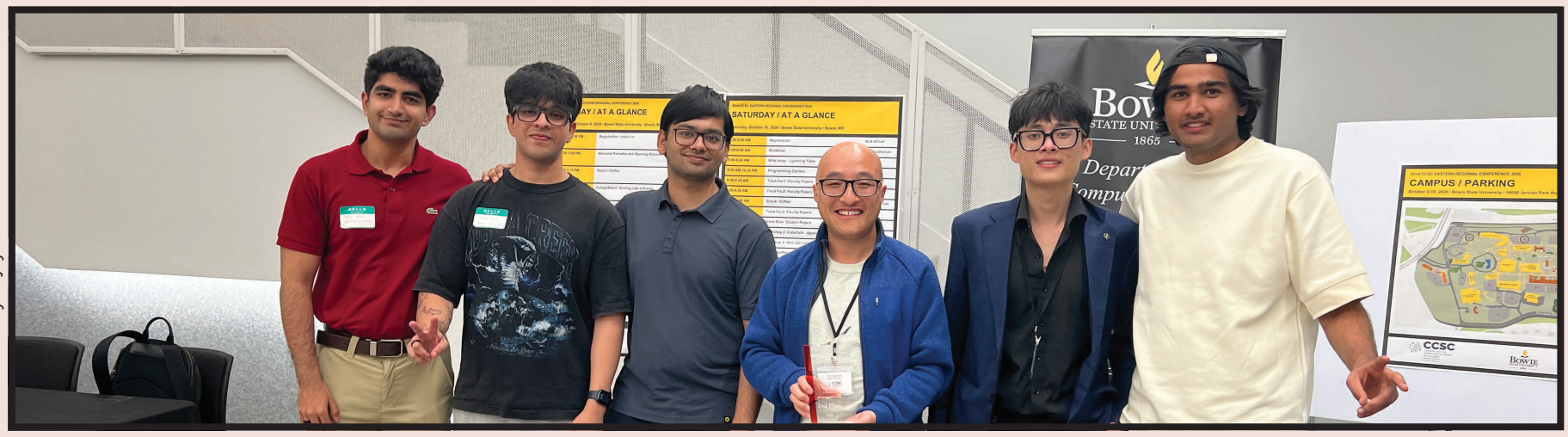


Photo courtesy of Jay Luo

The Rider team, made up of five seniors, placed second in the coastwide Capture the Flag cybersecurity competition.

Rider students place second in coastwide cybersecurity competition

By Samantha Clark

Five Rider seniors finished in second place among 11 teams across the eastern United States in the Oct. 9 Capture the Flag cybersecurity competition hosted by the Consortium for Computing Sciences in Colleges Eastern.

The team consisted of computer science majors Druhv Sethi and Nakul Mittal, cybersecurity majors Ritvik Sajeev and Tanmay Agarwal and computer science and cybersecurity double major Phan An Nguyen, who fell just a few seconds behind the first-place champions after three hours of solving challenges.

The CTF competition was held at Bowie State University in Prince George's County, Maryland and invited teams to find hidden text strings, or "flags," in vulnerable online programs and systems.

"A capture the flag challenge is a series of different challenges that's tested in a virtual environment, so you have different topics like cryptography, algorithms, reverse engineering and other genres of cybersecurity," Sethi said. "You have nine points for each category, so the more questions you complete, the more points you get. … At the end of the three hours, whichever team accumulates the most points, wins."

With this being the first time Rider students were involved in the competition, the team went into the process blind, but their preparation is what ultimately led them to their great success.

To do so, the team researched the five major topics for the competition and had two students become well versed in each.

"If one person, you know, is struggling with the challenge, you could pass it on to the other person, so we could work together better as the team," Agarwal said.

In addition to their lengthy preparation, the team members already knew each other before their work at the competition, allowing them to build on the preestablished sense of camaraderie.

Assistant professor in the Department of Computer Science and Mathematics Jay Luo, who aided the team throughout the competition, is a committee member of the conference, placing him close to the organization.

In his role, Luo organizes meetings, proposes ideas and oversees the conference's programming, so having his students pull off this notable feat was a true accomplishment for the department as a whole.

"We are so excited about this achievement. When the students first talked to me, I did not expect that they would get any kind of the rewards at the beginning, to be honest," Luo said. "It's really a surprise for me, and I'm so proud of them."

Zeta Tau Alpha raises over $7,000

By Brannagh Rattigan

During their annual Mr. Pink pageant, Zeta Tau Alpha raised over $7,000 toward their national philanthropy, the breast cancer education, awareness and research foundation.

Hosted by ZTA in partnership with the American Cancer Society and Breast Cancer Research Foundation, Mr. Pink is a charity pageant in which social fraternity members compete to be crowned "Mr. Pink," although this year included more than just Interfraternity Council and National Panhellenic Conference participants.



Photo courtesy of Presley Balmer

Through their charity pagaent, Mr. Pink, Zeta Tau Alpha was able to raise over $7,000 toward Breast Cancer Awareness.

Senior ZTA president and digital marketing major, Presley Balmer, shares the significance of having participants outside of IFC and NPC.

"We tried to get much more engagement and include everyone, as opposed to just focusing solely on NPC and IFC," Balmer said. "We had a [Delta Sigma Pi] participant this year, which was something different, and we invited anyone from any chapter to participate."

Leading up to the pageant, ZTA's philanthropy committee focused on creating more promotional activity to gain more fundraising.

"We have increased a lot of our promotional activities toward the events and did a lot more to raise hype and awareness about the events," Balmer said. "[The philanthropy committee] were pretty tactical in planning a week of activities for the boys to do before competing in the pageant."

Their most notable method of fundraising was a dare board; each contestant was set up with a personal fundraising page through Crowd Change, which made it easy for them to personally promote themselves to people in their lives.

Senior business administration major Stella Crowley is the community service chairman of the philanthropy committee. She additionally expressed the success of the dare board and staying modern with fundraising ideas.

"We have a lot of new ideas for next year, but the dare board specifically is something we'll definitely be keeping because it was so successful," Crowley said.

In all of their promotional events and the pageant itself, ZTA was able to raise a significant amount of money to put toward their philanthropy, which Balmer shared to be very personal to each sister.

"It's important to our sisters because number one, we're an organization of women, so it's nice to support a cause that is so relevant to women and will impact our futures to keep us educated and safe," Balmer said. "A lot of us have personal connections and our families and friends have been impacted by breast cancer, so it's nice to all collectively be working toward a cause that has impacted us all in some way or another."

Crowley shared a similar sentiment toward being able to fundraise such a notable cause as their national philanthropy.

"I think it's super impactful being able to raise money for a cause that affects so many. Just the hope that one day there is a cure and the fact that I'm able to be even a very small part of that is very rewarding," Crowley said.

Beyond Mr. Pink, ZTA does activities all month long in October to raise awareness to the ZTA foundation, which supports the Breast Cancer Research Foundation.

They began the month with Flags for Fighters, where they decorated the campus mall with miniature pink flags, forming the shape of the breast cancer ribbon.

Additionally, every day of October, ZTA is tabling outside of the Student Recreation Center from 11 p.m. to 1 p.m., where they collect donations.

Samantha Clark is the Vice President of Philanthropy and Service for ZTA. Clark had no part in the writing or editing of this story.

RIDER PETS

Rogue the dog and Riley, finally home at Rider

By Jenna Munswami and Teagan Rotella

Weighing in at 45 pounds, Rogue stands tall to protect her handler, Riley Lerner.

Lerner, a junior psychology major, goes through her day with Rogue always by her side. The 8-year-old Norwegian elkhound and shetland sheepdog mix is a certified emotional support animal, but that is not all there is to her.

"Very goofy," is how Lerner described her dog's personality. Rogue displayed a relaxed demeanor during the interview, but when given the opportunity, she shows off her more playful side.

"I'd say the best [anecdote] about her being playful would either be her rolling around on my carpet in my room after I take her vest off [from] walking her out for the day, or [when] she'll bark at her dog siblings and run and hide underneath a camper or a car to avoid them," Lerner said.

When Lerner was in sixth grade, Rogue was brought home at six weeks old and they clicked right away.

"She was supposed to be a family dog. We only had four others at the time, and we wanted another one," Lerner said. "I just remember thinking that she was going to be goofy because she was a puppy. I absolutely loved her right away."

The summer before sophomore year, Lerner decided to start training Rogue to become her service dog after struggling with anxiety during freshman year at her previous university.

"Honestly, when I came to Rider, there was no question if she was going to be on campus or not. I knew I wanted her on campus. My one coach helped me get everything together … and she's been on campus since the second week of school," Lerner said.

Around campus, it is almost impossible to find Lerner without Rogue by her side.

"She goes everywhere with me," Lerner said. "She'll go to practices with me, she will travel with me when I start training her to go on a plane and go to the airport."

Since coming to Lawrenceville, the two have been inseparable, save for when Lerner works her shifts as a lifeguard at Coppola Pool.

Otherwise, Rogue can be seen with Lerner throughout any point in the day. Whether it be at early morning wrestling practice — which Rogue is not always ready to get up for — or simply being outside, the duo's favorite activity.

Aaliyah Gonzalez, a junior psychology major, said she first met Rogue in September on the way to practice with Lerner.

"My favorite memory with Rogue was when we went to eat at Daly's and I fed her all my fries," Gonzalez said.

"She definitely gets some treats from my teammates and I," Lerner said. "It's really funny. She absolutely loves french fries."

Both Gonzalez and Ainsley Weber, a junior political science major and a fellow teammate, described Rogue as sassy, on top of all of her other loveable traits.

Weber initially met Rogue at the team's first wrestling practice. The love for Rogue is strong from Lerner and her friends.

"She is so sweet and soft, and always up for a pet," Weber said.



Photo courtesy of Riley Lerner

Riley Lerner trained Rogue to be her service dog.

Weber even said that her favorite memory of Rogue was any time she would lay down for belly rubs, adding on to say, "It makes my day every time."

Lerner said, "[Rogue is] a very sweet dog, and if anyone sees us walking around campus, feel free to come up and say hi. Just wait for me to give her the command."

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

Rider's Crystal Henderson-Napoli takes her voice to the national stage

By JC Church

For the last four years, Crystal Henderson-Napoli, '23, has spent her Sunday mornings behind the microphone at Rider's 107.7 The Bronc, sharing music, artist stories and moments of nostalgia with listeners. Now, the host of "Crystal Clear" is reaching beyond the university airwaves as a competitor in iHeartRadio's 2026 Top Host contest.

As of Oct. 20, Henderson-Napoli is ranked first in her group on the contest's official website. She is competing for a prize package that includes $25,000, the opportunity to host a six-episode podcast produced by iHeartRadio and a guest appearance on "On Air with Ryan Seacrest."

Henderson-Napoli did not begin her journey with a traditional plan to become a radio host. Her professional background is rooted in the arts, and she has worked at Princeton University's Lewis Center for the Arts for 20 years. With interests in acting, dance, theater and visual arts, the opportunity to host a program at Rider offered a new way to explore her creativity.

That opportunity became "Crystal Clear," a music program inspired by her name and her love of songs from the 1980s, 1990s and present day. While the show frequently features music from those decades, Henderson-Napoli also plays songs from earlier eras, creating an eclectic mix that reflects her wide-range of taste.

But, "Crystal Clear" is about more than revisiting favorite songs. Henderson-Napoli uses the program to introduce listeners to the stories behind the music, offering background on artists, song origins and the history of familiar tracks.

"Sometimes [younger listeners] hear clips from TikTok, and they may not know the origin of that song that they're listening to," she said.

Henderson-Napoli entered the Top Host contest because she saw a chance to take her broadcasting experience to a larger audience.

The potential financial award is also meaningful. On her official Top Host profile, Henderson-Napoli explains that winning $25,000 would provide financial breathing room, help her 80-year-old mother and allow her to give back to 107.7 The Bronc.

Even with the contest's growing attention,



Photo courtesy of Crystal Henderson-Napoli

"Crystal Clear" airs Sundays at 11 a.m. on 107.7 The Bronc.

Henderson-Napoli remains surprised by how far she has progressed. She described herself as an ordinary person who comes to the station for an hour each Sunday because she enjoys it. She never thought filling out a short online questionnaire as an application would propel her this far.

"To think that I even got in the contest itself and to be in the top 20 in my particular group out of thousands, I don't know," she said. "It's kind of surreal, actually."

Henderson-Napoli's story is also one of persistence. After initially enrolling in college following high school, she returned home and began working. Years later, she decided she was ready to resume her education and finish her degree at Rider.

It took her 12 years to complete her studies. During that time, she was diagnosed with breast cancer and underwent treatment while continuing to work toward graduation. She ultimately graduated summa cum laude, an achievement she remains proud of.

That experience shaped her perspective on pursuing goals despite setbacks. She hopes others will understand that education, career development and personal fulfillment do not have to follow a single timeline.

"You shouldn't give up, and it doesn't matter what age you are," she said. "Do what you love."

Henderson-Napoli also hopes her program can make a difference in listeners' everyday lives. Some songs carry memories of joy, while others touch on loss and grief. Whatever the subject, she hopes that sharing music and its stories can help someone feel understood or simply brighten their day.

"If I can touch just one person and make them smile during their day, I think that's very important," she said.

Henderson-Napoli does not present herself as a conventional radio personality. Instead, she sees her background, family life and unconventional path as part of what makes her perspective different.

Whether she advances to the next round or not, she credits Rider and The Bronc for opening doors, introducing her to new people and giving her a platform to grow.

"I'm just grateful for that opportunity," she said. "It's opened up so many new things for me."

For now, Henderson-Napoli is continuing to share her love of music with Bronc listeners while competing for the chance to take her voice nationwide. Her experience offers a reminder that pursuing a new passion does not require a perfect plan or a conventional timeline, but, sometimes, it begins with simply showing up, turning on the microphone and giving something new a try.

John Mozes, general manager of 107.7 The Bronc and executive director of the Student Media Center at Rider, said he was ecstatic when he learned Henderson-Napoli had advanced in the Top Host competition.

Henderson-Napoli brings positve energy to the station.

"I think she's got a passion for music, and I think that comes across in the songs and themes she chooses for her show, I think it comes across every time she opens the mic," Mozes said.

Beyond her broadcasting skills, Mozes said

"She just has this warmth about her. She has this kindness about her," Mozes said.

Readers can support Henderson-Napoli in iHeartRadio's national competition by voting for her on the Top Host website. Voting for the Top 15 round closes Oct. 22 at 10 p.m.



Photo courtesy of Lexi Vaksdal

Rider Club Softball is composed of new and experienced players from across a variety of majors, encouraging friendships that were unlikely to occur otherwise.

Club Softball creates family on and off of the field

By Sofia Santiago

The journey to Rider Club Softball for many of its members has not been straightforward, just like the history of the team itself. A few years ago, the club was struggling with attendance, trying to stay afloat. Today, the team is sailing ahead thanks to the culture created by the players themselves, centered around a genuine love for the sport and for each other.

Junior acting major, catcher, Captain and President of the Club Softball team Lexi Vaksdal came to Rider for acting and stayed for softball.

Softball was Vaksdal's life until she enrolled in a performing arts high school, after which she had to walk away from the sport.

"For the first time in my life, I wasn't an athlete anymore," she recalled. The club softball gave her the chance to reconnect with what had been a big part of her life for so long.

"I got here and I got softball back, so I was able to live the best of both worlds. Now I don't have to choose anymore," Vaksdal said.

Aviana Rissmiller, a sophomore sports management and marketing major, is a pitcher and the secretary of the club softball team. Similar to Vaksdal, Rissmiller grew up playing softball. Although she did not want to give it up, entering college meant putting academics first.

"When I came here, I thought I never was going to play softball again," she said. Rissmiller discovered the team through meeting Vaksdal.

"I came to a practice, and I was like, 'you know what? I don't have to give it up. I get to do what I love, and it's whatever you make of it,'" Rissmiller said.

Like Rissmiller, many of the members initially found out about the club from their friends who were already on the team and encouraged them to try it out. Even Vaksdal joined through this avenue.

"I brought my softball gear on a whim that I was gonna be able to play softball here, I didn't know that we had club softball or anything, but I brought it just in case," Vaksdal remembered.

On move-in day, one of the Bronc Buddy volunteers helping Vaksdal unpack was senior psychology major and now Vice President and shortstop of the team, Dayaniris Rivera.

Rivera has been playing softball for over 14 years and has been a part of the club team throughout all four years of her time at Rider.

"[Rivera] saw that I had softball gear in my car, and she was like, 'Softball gear? We have club softball. You should come to practice.' And then I went to the first practice, and I have never looked back," Vaksdal said. Now the pair are close friends.

Composed of long-time players, like Rissmiller, Rivera and Vaksdal, complete newcomers and girls who have just been playing for fun, the team makes anyone of any skill level feel that they belong.

"We welcome girls. Let's say tomorrow you were like, 'Wow, I really like this. I want to come.' You could come, not pay dues and just pop into practice," Rissmiller explained.

Junior acting major Abby Bufis was introduced to the team through her already existing friendship with Vaksdal. Completely new to the sport, Bufis was hesitant to join the team before attending her first practice. However, after the practice was over, the team's encouraging environment put her worries to rest.

With one year of club softball under her belt, this semester Bufis is on the starting line up of the team.

Bufis admitted, "I'm not athletic, whatsoever. And like I feel like you really couldn't even tell that from [watching the practice today]. You would think that I've been playing for a couple years already. It was my dear friend and the want to be an athlete that made me come, but it was the community and the work that they put in that made me stay."

Sophomore criminal justice major Taika Antoine's story is yet another example of the success of the club's positive environment. Antoine is completely new to softball and found the club after searching for more ways to get involved on campus. Trying a new sport was daunting for her, but she credits her teammates' attitude as what convinced her to commit to learning.

"Honestly, [it's] the girls. If they were mean, I would not come back every day," Antoine said.

To officially join the team, members must pay $40 that go towards the team uniforms and the club's budget for paying umpires, replacing equipment and booking fields.

Practices are located at the indoor practice facility in the back of campus and are two hours, two or three times a week, and the team plays around four doubleheader games throughout the semester. Recently, the group has also started to do optional team lifts at the gym once or twice a week.

At the end of the spring 2026 semester, Rissmiller injured her arm during the club's last game of the season. Because of the tight-knit nature of the group, Rissmiller still attends practices and helps her teammates improve for game days.

Practices are directed by the captain and run by the experienced players on the team. They consist of drills focusing on the physical and mental aspects of the game, and every so often include a sit-down chat to reassure anxieties and boost morale.

"It's consistent reinforcement of what we're teaching, from the moment you walk into the door to the moment that you leave, as well as us building confidence in [new players] too, and being like, 'Hey, you're doing great. That time was better than last time,'" Vaksdal said.

The long-time players also usually have experience teaching the sport.

Outside of Rider, Rivera coaches travel softball for her town and also trains girls from seven to 14 years old one-on-one. But just because the experienced players often take on a teaching role, does not mean they do not learn more themselves.

"[Softball has] taught me so many things. It taught me trust, it taught me loyalty. It's just taught me so many great life lessons that I try to hold on going through club softball and even through life," Rivera said.

Rissmiller explained that she has helped coach her younger siblings' T-ball teams, "Being a coach for younger kids, you really learn how to simplify things, so it has helped a lot. … You could be the best athlete in the world, but if you don't know how to put it into words, you're doing no good."

The club is entirely student-run, and while the e-board communicates when needed with the director of campus recreation, the practice spaces, game locations and even umpires are all booked by members of the team.

Rider Club Softball plays against other club teams from schools in the area, and because travel time can take up to two hours, they make the most out of the trip by playing two consecutive games.

To schedule a game, Vaksdal and Rivera contact other teams on Instagram. If it is decided that Rider will be playing at home, they then reach out to local recreation departments, such as Hopewell Township's, to reserve a field.

The team currently consists of around 12 women, and the e-board decides the positions of each player and the starting line up based on what they observe during practice.

Rivera recalled how during her freshman year, the club only had a few members consistently showing up for practices.

"As someone who's played the sport, it was really sad. I wanted the team to grow," Rivera said. She also credits the club's previous e-board as the reason for the success of the team today.

"They did leave a good foundation, and it's kind of up to me now to help keep that good foundation and keep the team growing. Freshman year was very much like an example of what happens to a club if it just breaks, but [since then] we've built it from the ground, truly," Rivera said.

To get their name out there, the e-board has paid special attention to participating in events like Broncapalooza and hosting events like Pie a Softball Player to get further involved on campus.

Still, the biggest reason credited for the growth of the club is the relationships it provides its members with.

"For [Rider Club Softball] it's more about building a community rather than being a super competitive high-level team, and I think that's something that we always advocate … It's always like wow, I get to show you my sport, and it's exciting and it's new, and I feel like that's the biggest thing. It's not toxic or competitive," Rissmiller admitted. "It's more about community and bringing people together and sharing something that you love."

Rivera echoed this sentiment, "It's kind of bittersweet because it's my last year. But at the end of the day, these girls are definitely going to be at my wedding, and it's because the sport didn't just give me the yellow ball and the bat, it gave me friends that I know I'll have till after college."



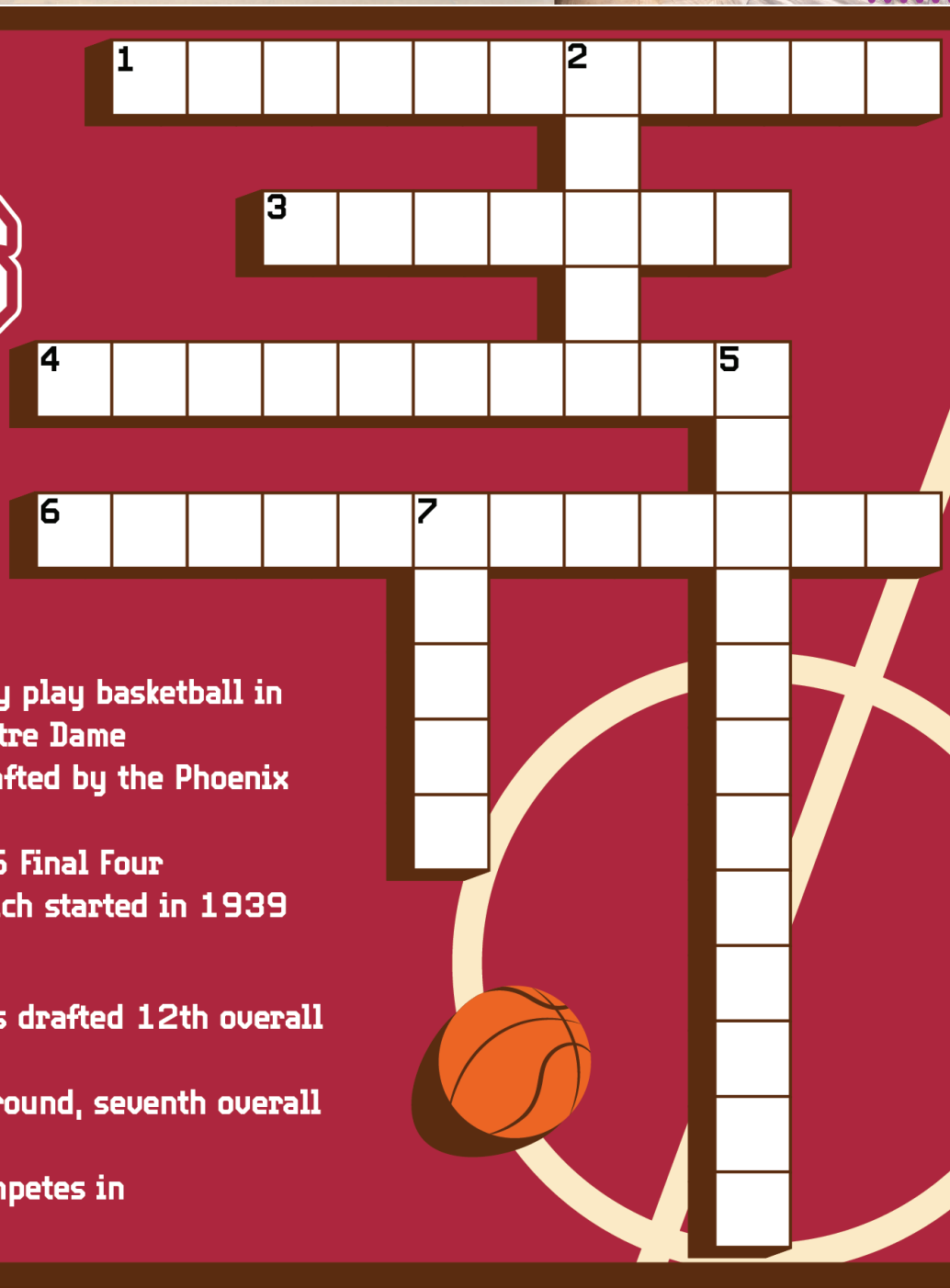
Abby Ray/The Rider News





By Ryan Denkovic
Graphic by Grace Juarez and Cal Sutton

GO BRONCS



Across

1. This 76ers player did not actually play basketball in college, he played football for Notre Dame
3. Rider alum, Stella _____ was drafted by the Phoenix Mercury in 2020
4. Michigan team; victor of the 2026 Final Four
6. College basketball tournament which started in 1939

Down

2. ____ Thompson, a Rider alum, was drafted 12th overall by the Sacramento Kings
5. Davidson College alum; the first round, seventh overall pick in 2009
7. ____ Conference; which Rider competes in

EVENTS CALENDAR: OCT. 23 - 25

OCT. 23
6 p.m. - Scream Screen at the C&R Lot
7:30 p.m. - "Jesus Christ Superstar" at the Yvonne Theater

OCT. 24
12–3 p.m. - Bronctoberfest at the Campus Mall
12–2 p.m. and 3–5 p.m. - DPhiE Haunted House at Delta Phi Epsilon house
2 p.m. and 7:30 p.m. - "Jesus Christ Superstar" at the Yvonne Theater
4 p.m. - Men's basketball exhibition game vs. Alvernia
6 p.m. - Greek Fall Yard Show at the Cavalla Room

OCT. 25
2 p.m. - "Jesus Christ Superstar" at the Yvonne Theater

Grace Juarez and Cal Sutton/The Rider News

Find the answers here!

Play online here!

Nathan Fielder lets us see everything



Grace Juarez/The Rider News

Nathan Fielder captures lightning in a bottle with this out-of-body documentary.

In my time of being a movie fan, I have looked forward to plenty of releases. Many anticipated projects have come and gone, meeting, exceeding or falling short of expectations. In the past few months, I would argue there has not been a film more anticipated in my life than "You Can See Everything." The film is a three-hour documentary on Elizabeth Holmes, founder and Chief Executive Officer of Theranos, a defunct company, found guilty of defrauding investors and patients. On the other side of this is Nathan Fielder. A well-known comedian, known famous for his early 2010s show "Nathan For You," wherein he visits and helps struggling businesses with bizarre and out-there ideas. An important note about Fielder is that he is always playing a version of himself. A character that is an overly serious and awkward individual, which aids in these over-the-top scenarios he finds himself in. It is a sort of Philomena Cunk archetype, if you will.

So knowing that these two were being paired together for this documentary — which would be her first public appearance since 2016 — set my expectations higher than they had ever been. And they only grew when, by Oct. 18, the third day of the movie's release, the film garnered a 100% on Rotten Tomatoes, a 98 on Metacritic, and most impressively, a 4.8 on Letterboxd, the highest-rated film ever on the platform. With all that being said, I am still shocked to say: the film outdid these expectations, and might arguably be the greatest film I will ever have the privilege of writing about.

While the title of this movie is "You Can See Everything," that does not mean that you know anything. Fielder and co-director Lance Oppenheim give us a first-hand look into Holmes' last month before being sentenced to federal prison. They record everything. No conversations are left censored, Holmes had no creative liberties in any of this. That being said, this documentary does not give us any concrete answers. The film calls out other documentaries, and itself, with a core theme being that no documentary can inherently be unbiased. The audience is guided mostly through Fielder's perspective, and he is in no way impartial. There are some parts where it is entirely just his memory and his retelling of events. We are left to either accept it and buy into the film's bias, or question it. While documentaries, this one included, are attempting to give an objective look, we will always see it through the lens of someone else's camera, another person's script and another's personal perspective. Can we see everything? Yes. But is what we are seeing the truth? That is the core question behind this documentary.

This is so much more than just a straight-forward showcase of Holmes' life before jail. There are messages of power, corruption, manipulation and media/documentation all throughout the three-hour runtime. I believe that, if this was just some regular documentary made by a regular old journalist, or done in a "60 Minutes" way, it would flop. It would not be groundbreaking or entertaining in the slightest. Fielder is the man that makes this film truly historical.

You may ask, what is so special about a comedian? Why is he so relevant? Well, I think it is due to him playing a character. Fielder is a master at social engineering. He knows exactly how to play his part to get what he wants out of others. This is on full display here, as he so effortlessly drags information out of Holmes and her husband Billy Evans. Be it through silence, flattery or sheer manipulation, he does more than most expert journalists could do. His genius is on full display in this documentary. After all, he did graduate from one of Canada's top business schools with really good grades.

Let us now talk about the other manipulator in the film. Holmes is no stranger to social engineering, just like Fielder. She revamped her public appearance to align herself with other tech figures like Steve Jobs. The black turtlenecks, the deep masculine voice, these are all iconic things that most people know her for. But in this movie, everything is different. She is a mother and makes that painfully obvious, with most shots of her having her baby either in her arms, being breastfed or rocked and cradled. Many segments have her being incredibly submissive and fragile, especially when with Evans, her husband. It almost appears that she is being taken advantage of in some way or another by him. One could interpret this as being true. After all, Evans is in no way a saint, for he is quite the narcissist. Add on that people believe her prior boyfriend and Chief Operating Officer of Theranos, Sunny Balwani, lorded over her and was the one taking part in the fraud, not her, the narrative around this makes sense. However, this could all just be done purposefully, to make her seem more innocent than she really is. It is not a stretch to say the lying, convicted fraud is pretty good at manipulating and reshaping her public image.

In the end, we do not get any answers. Everything is left up to the audience to decide. Some will call for Holmes' head on a stick, believing that this is more proof of her misdeeds and borderline psychopathy. Others will see a misguided and abused woman, too young to have realized the bad things going on at her company; so innocent and focused. After all, she had only wanted to help people. A woman who still, to this day, only cares about helping others, but finds herself trapped, once again, by a sick and twisted man.

When the central story has three characters, all of whom are in some way lying or deceiving, no answers can be had. It is horrifying that three hours passed, and I have more questions than answers regarding Elizabeth Holmes, her husband Billy Evans and what really went on at Theranos. All I know for sure is that Fielder has come a long way, from being offered to sniff a five year old's pee, to crafting the greatest look into someone's psyche. He caught lightning in a bottle with "You Can See Everything."

I do not know why, but I love Elizabeth Holmes. Not because she is a good person, but in a more macabre, fascinating way. Her weirdness, mixed with her being a pathological liar, who to this day, stands by her innocence, intrigues me so much. Couple that with my longtime love for the show "Nathan For You," and you get one of my favorite projects of all time. I could easily talk about this film for hours. I have already seen it twice in theaters and have plans on seeing it at least two more times. It is the textbook definition of perfect, and not only gets the full five stars out of five, but supplants itself firmly in my top four favorite films of all time for right now.

Alfie Eville
sophomore history and secondary education major

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2026-27

The journey of Rider's many transfer students

Every college student has a story, but not every journey looks the same. For transfer students, finding a place to belong can mean starting over in an unfamiliar environment and adjusting to a new academic and social life.

At Rider, Transfer Student Appreciation Week celebrates those journeys and recognizes the students who help make the campus community what it is today.

As someone who transferred here last year to continue their education after spending time at a community college, I can definitely say that being here has not only changed my academic career, but also my social life. Rider has been an accepting, supportive and inspiring environment to be in. After talking to Jen Cook, director of transfer enrollment at Rider, I have come to realize that a big part of the process of being a transfer student is due to her.

"I've seen students who've struggled at other institutions or kind of felt left behind or like transfer was an afterthought. So for me, it's definitely meaningful to work at an institution where transfer is a priority," Cook said.

I came from a community college where I was not given the support I felt I needed in order to graduate from their institution. In fact, due to their lack of support, I was unable to obtain my associates degree from them due to their lack of help and accessibility.

However, that is not the case here. As soon as I was officially an enrolled student at Rider, I was contacted by Cook and her team to help me with making the transition as smooth as possible. They had taken an interest in talking to me, as well as listening to my comments, concerns and questions. "While 80% of students enter the community college, with the plan of eventually transferring and earning a bachelor's degree, in reality, only about 14 or 15% of students actually do within six to eight years" Cook said.

When talking about the community of transfer students on campus, Cook had a lot to say.

"Many of our actual own deans and faculty and staff were also transfer students themselves. So I think that also makes it a little bit unique so that the people that the students are working with also have had that kind of shared experience," Cook said.

While yes, our faculty and staff also have transfer student backgrounds, Cook also mentioned that, "Most recently, transfer students have generally been making up about a quarter of the enrollment every year. So about one in four students [are transfer students]."

But what does that support look like from a student's perspective? Members of Rider's Transfer Student Association shared their experiences and what Transfer Student Appreciation Week means to them, as well as what their experience has been like since becoming a Bronc.

Kwyne Pugh, a senior English major and the president of TSA that transferred from Middlesex Community College, mentioned when talking about what this upcoming week means to her that, "it's really just a time for transfer students to show that they're appreciated by the student body and even though we're not traditional students, we're still appreciated and loved."

Next, we heard from the Vice President of the TSA, Samantha Betancourt, a senior studying IT management with a minor in cyber security. She talked a lot about the clubs and organizations that she has joined since transferring here from Mercer County Community College. "There's lots to do, lots of people, there's many different clubs and organizations so you could join to find your people." To which Betancourt carried on to talk about her experience with the organization Future Business Leaders of America that she is also vice president of, "I got to go to a high school and talk about professional academic development," says Betancourt.

Alyssa Buck, a senior elementary education with multidisciplinary studies major, also says that with joining TSA, "it is the first club I have actually been a part of and have been helping with planning." Pugh also noted on this topic that, "If you're interested in anything, definitely try it. You never know where it could bring you." And with that, I could not agree more because, before I came to Rider, I was so anxious about meeting people until I actually put myself out there.

One thing led to another and I could not be happier with where I am today. With the friends, colleagues and overall connections I have made from the radio station to the athletics department and by being in TSA. I have met so many people and they have been a significant part of my journey here at Rider.

When asked about the transition to Rider, everyone had pretty positive experiences. Buck made a comment that I felt was very important to note, "There's so many people on campus, so they don't know if you're coming from a community college, or have already been here…just take advantage of it and talk to people in class."

There are so many different aspects that go into being a transfer student. The main one is just making sure that you feel comfortable where you are and that you are enjoying your time at school. As Cook pointed out, "The students that are here have already succeeded in many ways, just to get here. So that's why it's important that we celebrate their accomplishments." So with that being said, be sure to keep an eye out on the Rider TSA Instagram page, @rider_tsa, to come to our events to feel celebrated and connect with your fellow transfer students.

Allea Zikria
senior social media strategies major



Allea Zikria/The Rider News

Allea Zikria, pictured above, spending her time on campus.

DIGITAL EXCLUSIVE:

Horror: From 'too explicit' to 'not enough blood'

By Joey Poto



N.D. Medal/The Rider News

OUT ON CAMPUS

Queer satire ... or not?

Out on Campus is usually a hot-button, issue-based column where I discuss things that pertain to my personal queer experience, while shining light on those with identities I may not 100% relate to!

Now, I am sure that, sometimes, identities can be confusing for an outsider. I believe that respect is the baseline and, even if you do not understand, there is an expectation of kindness, respect and cordiality. Though, it does not make the LGBTQIA+ community look any better when situations arise involving the queer community … and make us look like a bunch of crazy people.

Back in September, The Boston Globe covered a story about a lesbian bar in Massachusetts, called Last Ditch Bar and Arts Venue. The venue required all patrons to wear KN-95 masks upon entering the establishment.

Fine by me. I am all for wearing a mask, I never really had a problem with it during the pandemic, anyway. If an establishment requires one, even in 2026, I will respect that.

Last Ditch, though, lifted their mask mandate ever so slightly. Originally requiring masks seven days a week, they announced via an Instagram post on Aug. 31 that they would be shifting Saturdays to the bar being "mask optional."

This received immense backlash, though. The bar received so much hate for this decision — the owners were called ableist by many patrons. Last Ditch turned off the comments on their posts following this.

On Sept. 2, the bar posted again on their Instagram account, which stated they would host an in-person and virtual forum to discuss the matter. To that, patrons responded saying that it was wrong of the bar to make it in-person and virtual, since those who were virtual would not be prioritized.

Why have I gone on so much of a tangent about this lesbian bar in Massachusetts? Because it just feels … unreal.

When I see people chatting about stereotypes within the queer community, I typically become livid. I do not think that it is fair to put people, who so evidently do not desire being boxed in, into little checkboxes.

To be queer is to be ever-moving and always changing. It is an injustice to all queer individuals to expect one subgroup to "act a certain way."

But when it comes to the problems such as the ones the lesbian bar faced in September, I get confused.

I am on the bar's side in this. They tried to move sensibly, they made their efforts to be inclusionary while still running their business.

Queer people do not ask for everything, we just ask for equal access to what we want and need. Queer people have faced a whole lot of adversity in our lives, but a lesbian bar should be the least of all of our worries.

Whether someone sees this mishap as true drama or borderline satire, there is one truth to it all.

In this day and age, we are so incredibly lucky to have access to queer safe spaces. We can walk out of our front doors, in most situations, and be proudly queer. Even if that means you cannot go to your favorite lesbian bar on Saturday nights.



Cal Sutton
junior journalism major

This article is part of the Out on Campus column by Cal Sutton to spread awareness and shine light on LGBTQIA+ identities.

Anecdotes for the autumnal season

Fall is here; the leaves are colorful and crunchy, the air a little crisp and my favorite yearly traditions are finally happening. I can understand anyone that argues for summer or winter as their favorite season. Spring, however, is simply incorrect. For me, though, there is something so special about these couple of months at the end of the year.

In about two weeks, it will be Halloween, and I think it is the perfect holiday, as it stands the test of time. As a kid, I think we can all remember the fun nights of pillaging adults' houses for bags of candy or dressing up in fun costumes. Some of my fondest childhood memories were had on Halloween. But now, being 19 and bordering on senior citizen, it is typically frowned upon to go trick-or-treating. Lame, yes, but so be it. That being said, the festivities do not have to end there, as I can still enjoy the holiday, going out to costume parties, going on hayrides or my personal favorite: staying in and watching scary movies.

Every year, I try to watch a handful of movies for "Spooktober." I am a huge horror fan, so getting any excuse to watch "The Shining" or "The Thing" is gladly accepted. The past few years I have gone to the Princeton Garden Theater, which is only about 15 minutes away from campus. They put on a screening of a different classic horror film every year, and I love it. I implore anyone that has not been there, and likes horror movies, to go there in October.

I have also found new enjoyment in my role as the adult being pilfered for candy. Some years, I stay with my grandmother and hand out the candies to neighborhood children; a role I fondly recall being in. It brings me immense joy seeing these kids, so proudly displaying their attire and so cheerfully accepting the bundles of candy I have for them.

The community, the costumes, the candy and the scares. Oh, and I cannot forget to mention: October baseball. This time of the year is the best time to be a sports fan. That is what separates fall from the rest of the seasons, and what puts it mightily above the other three.

Being that Halloween is just around the corner, I have found myself quite excited at the prospect of seasonal activities I can once again indulge in. While I have not gone trick-or-treating in a few years, I still find great enjoyment in sitting outside my house, playing music, and giving candy to all the trick or treaters who do come around.

Halloween is a special night because of the sense of community you don't really get to feel that often for the other 364 days of the year; and while I did not really recognize this to its fullest degree when I was a kid, I still felt it. I do miss being a kid and trick-or-treating; I mean I just miss being a kid in general. But that is just part of growing up, I guess.

I also have some personal traditions I indulge in every year. Recently, I have enjoyed watching the Cartoon Network mini-series "Over the Garden Wall." It follows two brothers, Wirt and Greg, as they journey through a mysterious forest known as "The Unknown." The aesthetics of this show are truly amazing, and it is surprisingly poignant towards the themes of death and self-esteem; I highly recommend it.

In a similar vein, I also watch "It's the Great Pumpkin, Charlie Brown!" every year; I do not think there has been a single October since I was five that I have not watched it at least once. It is one of my favorite "Peanuts" specials, and just generally one of my favorite films of all time. Everything about "Great Pumpkin" is truly incredible, from the watercolor backdrops to Snoopy's antics as the World War I flying ace; it brings me back to that simpler time when I did not have a care in the world other than how much candy I had gotten that night.

Halloween has always, and will continue to be, my favorite time of the year. It is so incredibly special that everyone can celebrate in a different way, yet still feel that same joy that everyone else feels; whether that is partying, trick-or-treating or just staying home and watching a horror movie.

Alfie Eville
sophomore history and secondary education major

Ryan Denkovic
sophomore English major



Cal Sutton/The Rider News

Co-writer **Alfie Eville** enjoying the paper and taking in the weather.

The Rider News

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Executive Editor
Samantha Clark

Managing Editor
Cal Sutton

News Editor
Brannagh Rattigan

Features and Entertainment Editor
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Josiah Thomas/The Rider News

Head Coach **Kevin Baggett** enters the 2026-27 season with a fresh roster and winning mindset.

A new era: Rider men's basketball rebrands for 2026-27 season

By Samantha Clark

For the first time in program history, Rider men's basketball is welcoming a completely new team, as 14 fresh names will join the roster ahead of the 2026-27 season.

New roster, new look

Following a challenging 2025-26 season, where the Broncs went 4-25 to become ineligible for the Metro Atlantic Athletic Conference tournament for the only time in program history, Head Coach Kevin Baggett spent the offseason building an entirely new team.

"As a staff, we met, we talked about spending more time getting to know these guys before we recruited them," Baggett said. "And I think we hit home runs as far as our guys; great character guys."

Meet the Broncs

Four freshmen top this year's roster, starting with guard Richie Rosa, who recently finished up his high school career at Saint Peter's Preparatory School in Jersey City, where he earned First Team All-State, First Team All-Non Public and Hudson County Interscholastic Athletic League Player of the Year honors in his senior season.

Rosa was also a member of the Puerto Rico U-15, U-16 and U-17 teams, where he earned gold and bronze medals against national competition.

Freshman guard Mikes Connelly hails from Baltimore, where he competed for St. Vincent Pallotti High School. In addition to high school, Connelly played for Lucentum Alicante, a professional basketball club based in Alicante, Spain, where he averaged 20.5 points per game last season.

From Houston comes freshman guard JJ Washington, who averaged 18.6 points in his senior year at the Christian Academy of Louisville. In the beginning of his senior season, he reached the 1,000 point milestone, earning him a nomination for the McDonald's All-American team.

Rounding out the first-year squad is freshman guard Bryce Presley, who graduated from Philadelphia's Roman Catholic High School, the 14th-ranked program in the state of Pennsylvania. In his 2025-26 season, he received Philadelphia Catholic League All-Catholic Third-Team honors.

Sophomore forward Ezekiel Obe brings his talents to the Canastra Hammer Arena from Lagos, Nigeria, where he attended the NBA Academy Africa, an elite basketball development center for top prospects. In addition, in 2023, he was drafted by the City Oilers, a professional team in the Basketball Africa League.

Obe moved to the United States to attend Accelerated Prep in Lakewood, Colorado, a preparatory program that focuses on training NBA-bound athletes.

Sophomore forward Rich Brisco stems from the University of Akron, which was ranked No. 7 in the College Insider Mid-Major Top 25 Poll. As a Zip, he recorded seven rebounds across 10 games, proving himself to be beneficial to the backcourt.

After redshirting his freshmen year at Saint Francis University, which recently transitioned their intercollegiate athletic programs from Division I to Division III, sophomore forward Kam Wylie is ready to compete at a new level.

The upperclassmen players consist of four juniors, two seniors and a graduate student, allowing leadership to be maintained among the new recruits.

Junior guard Nasir Washington transferred to Rider out of Casper College, a junior college program in Wyoming, where he averaged 18 points per game.

The Broncs welcomed junior guard Ty Bevins from George Washington University, a Division I program in Washington, D.C. There, he made huge defensive efforts and strong performances off the bench, but after a back injury midway through the 2025-26 season, he only competed in 10 games, missing the final 20.

Ghana-native Stephen Avegah Semey, a junior center, spent two years at Western Oklahoma State College, where he started in 42 out of 61 total games played. In his freshman season, he averaged 8 points per game during the 2025-26 campaign.

Junior center Horace Simmons Jr. hit the portal after spending the past two years at Drexel University. In his 2024 Dragon debut, he put up 24 points, the most in a Drexel debut in more than 30 years.

One of two seniors is guard Mark Butler, who competed for Lafayette College over the past three years. After a sophomore season-ending injury, Butler bounced back his junior year, starting in all games as team captain.

Senior guard Khalil Farmer and graduate student Bryce Baker were named as the captains of the Bronc pack ahead of the season.

Farmer most recently competed for the University of Massachusetts Lowell, where he totaled 18 assists, 14 steals and seven blocks, proving his strength on both ends of play.

Rounding out the roster is Baker, who represented the Broncs at the Metro Conference's annual Media Day in Atlantic City. After graduating from Kanye West's Donda Academy in 2022, Baker attended Old Dominion University, Winthrop University and the College of Charleston, three highly competitive Division I programs.

Team culture

No matter the years of experience, previous jerseys or basketball backgrounds, the Rider Broncs have rebuilt with redemption in mind.

"It's a brand new squad. …We got a few freshmen, a few players from [junior college], just all over. It's been a fun time," Baker said. "It's definitely a family, and you can't really say that all the time."

Despite the newness of the Broncs' names and faces, the team is confident in their ability to play together, because they are exactly that, a team.

"The most important thing that we try to establish is 'team,'" Baggett said. "Not being individuals, but being something greater than themselves. … These guys have really started to come together."

The Broncs open their 2025-26 season at the annual exhibition game during Rider's Alumni and Family Day when they host Alvernia University on Oct. 24 at 4 p.m. Regular season play will continue on Nov. 2 at the University of Pittsburgh.

One final stop: Baker culminates basketball journey as a Bronc

By Samantha Clark

In the ever-changing landscape of modern collegiate athletics, the transfer portal has quickly become a revolving door, opening eyes to new opportunities and fresh starts. For graduate student guard Bryce Baker, that door has carried him through three different Division I programs, adding Rider as the final stop in his journey.

The long haul

Growing up in Mooresville, North Carolina, Baker's history in athletics has always been defined by change, involving himself in any sport that called his name.

"I played football, lacrosse, rugby; I was on the swim team, track and field, I ran cross country," Baker said. "I was all around; I was just an athlete, so I played where I was needed."

Ahead of his senior year of high school, Baker was recruited to join rapper Kanye West's Donda Academy team by his longtime friend and current Chicago Bulls guard Rob Dillingham.

"They thought I'd be a good addition to the team, and it just kinda worked out," Baker said.

And so, Baker took his talents to Simi Valley, California, where he honed his skills with the best of the best, opening his eyes to how far the game could take him. Upon graduation, he took those skills with him to Old Dominion University in Norfolk, Virginia for his freshman and sophomore seasons.

After Head Coach Jeff Jones announced his retirement, though, Baker took that as his sign to head somewhere closer to home. Baker entered the portal in 2024 and headed to Winthrop University in Rock Hill, South Carolina, just 30 minutes away from his mom.

Baker found a spot on the College of Charleston's roster for the next season, where he reunited with his Team Charlotte's Amateur Athletic Union head coach, who was hired to be an assistant for the Cougars.

However, at the beginning of the season, Baker pulled his groin, taking him out for the 2025-26 season, allowing him to take one more year to redshirt.

Road to Rider

For his final year of eligibility, Baker checked in with his roommate from his time at Donda, former Bronc Zion Cruz.

"I talked to him, to make sure I was comfortable at Rider," Baker said. "That's my guy."

Cruz added, "Bryce reached out to me during his recruitment process, and I told him that Rider is a great place to get better, learn and continue to develop as a player. ... He's a hard worker, a great teammate, and someone you can always count on."

After the university figured out a plan for Baker to receive his master's degree and join the roster as a graduate student, Baker knew Lawrenceville could one day be home.

With his in-depth experience of play at the Division I level, Baker tops Rider's roster as a leading force, a necessary component for a team of 14 new players.

"We were looking for guys that are coming out of winning programs," Head Coach Kevin Baggett said. "He will be one of the guys that we are gonna lean on heavily."

However, after multiple transfers, coaching staffs and injuries, Baker brings more to the courts than simply the game of basketball, he serves as an example to adapt, persevere and find opportunity through every obstacle.

"I definitely feel like I've grown personally and physically, just from my time being around different coaching staffs and programs," Baker said. "It's opened my eyes to possibilities … so my eyes are open."

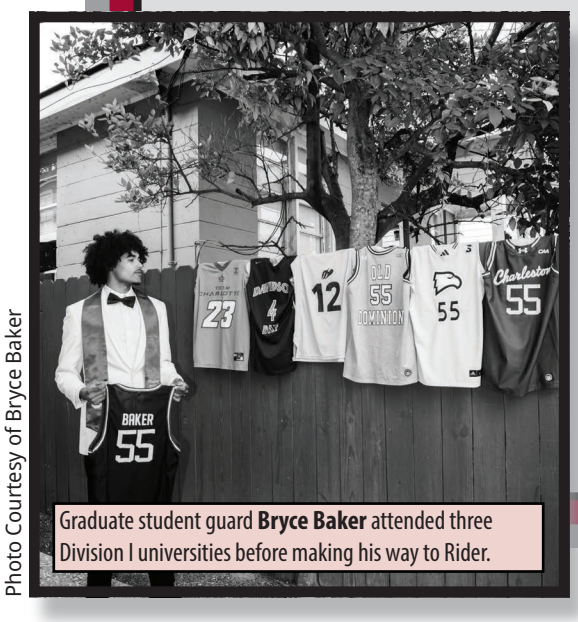


Photo Courtesy of Bryce Baker

Graduate student guard **Bryce Baker** attended three Division I universities before making his way to Rider.

Hartzell and Rider women's basketball build off their foundation in year two

By Joshua Yuhas

Falling just a game or two away from making the conference tournament last season for the second consecutive year, Rider women's basketball enters the 2026-27 season determined to return to the Metro Conference Championship.

Head Coach Jackie Hartzell returns for her second year at the helm of the program after a strong defensive year, ranking fifth in the conference for the lowest points per game allowed.

Taking to the newly renamed Canastra Hammer Arena, the Broncs, ranked 11th in the preseason poll, look to build upon what was built in Hartzell's first year to take that next step.

Starter retention

Four players from last season have stayed for Hartzell's second season, looking to guide the way. Those returning include senior guard Aliya McIver, sophomore guard Aina Perez Mesquida, sophomore guard Alena Cofield and senior forward Sam Richardson.

"Their roles could be a little bit different because of the players that we brought in, but they have done a great job leading the new players and setting the tone early," Hartzell said.

McIver will lead the way for the Broncs, being selected onto the Preseason All-Metro Second Team after a junior season that saw her finish second on the team with 9.9 points per game and an All-Defensive Team selection.

Accomplished youth

Alongside their talent remaining in Lawrenceville, a batch of young Broncs have made their way in with five freshman joining the squad.

Freshman guard Rebekah Hartzell, from Rahleigh, North Carolina, enters into the fray as a 2,000-point scorer at South Wake High School, a school record across both men's and women's teams.

From Kansas City, Missouri, freshman guard Millie Perry adds to the defensive end and provides a 3-point shooting flare, holding the all-time 3-point and steals records at Liberty North High School en route to a nomination for the McDonald's All-American Team.

A two-time district champion with Patrick Henry High School, freshman guard Ainsley Gibson travels from Roanoke, Virginia to contribute to the squad.

Freshman forward Jordan Barnes, hailing from South Plainfield, New Jersey, joins the Broncs after four years at St. Thomas Aquinas High School to maintain her basketball career in her home state.

Freshman forward Colleen Besachio, named to the third team All-State for her season with Archbishop Wood High School, overcame two knee injuries to find her way to Rider.

"College basketball is a big adjustment and we feel that these five freshmen have a ton of upside," Hartzell said. "We hope that they keep working hard and improving, so that hopefully they can be contributors this year."

Tapping into the portal

In addition to their freshmen class, Hartzell took a dip into the transfer portal with four players joining the Broncs, two coming from within the Metro Conference.

Playing in 10 games at Mercyhurst University as a product of East Fishkill, New York, junior forward Gabby Sweeney will join the Broncs' frontcourt group.

The two familiar faces begin with graduate student guard Gianna Hoddinott, who averaged 6.7 points in the 59 games she played in her four years with Mount St. Mary's University.

The other came from Fairfield University with junior guard Julia Karpell, who played 27 games across her freshman and sophomore years and was with the Stags for two Metro Atlantic Athletic Conference Championship titles.

"We are a little bit more familiar with Gianna [Hoddinott] and Julia [Karpell] since they played in the conference and have a lot of experience. For us, it's a lot about fitting into our system," Hartzell said.



Josiah Thomas/The Rider News

Ahead of Head Coach **Jackie Hartzell's** second year with the Broncs, the team looks to advance to the Metro tournament.

Next steps

With a fresh batch of freshmen and transfers joining Hartzell's first full recruiting class and the returning players, the chemistry has generated very quickly.

"The culture and dynamic is great. On the court, we have really great chemistry and I feel like we know each other's strengths and weaknesses," McIver said.

Carrying a variety of skill sets and personalities, the squad for Hartzell's second season leading the Broncs has deeper aspirations to compete late in the year.

"Every year is a new season and opportunity," Hartzell said. "We hope that we are playing our best in conference play and give ourselves a chance to compete in the Metro tournament this year."

The season will kick off for the Broncs with a six-game road stretch, with the season opener on Nov. 2 when they take on the New Jersey Institute of Technology on their quest for Atlantic City and the Metro Conference Tournament.

Feeling at home: McIver leads the way for women's basketball

By Joshua Yuhas

In an era of frequent roster changes in collegiate athletics, some find their home and stick with it until the end. Senior guard Aliya McIver found that place in Rider, looking to build off her all-conference defense and be a leader this season.

Opening on the gridiron

While basketball is where McIver found herself, it actually takes just a walk out onto the football field to get a glimpse at her first dream.

"I was playing flag football, and I was the only girl on the team," McIver said. "The next step was tackle, and my dad said, 'No, we are not doing that.' So they had to put me into something else, and that was basketball."

Even though she could not pursue football any further, the toughness required to stick it out as the only girl fueled her drive when it came to basketball.

"It started me off early without even realizing, carrying it over throughout my years of playing AAU, high school and college basketball," McIver said.

Attending high school in White Plains, New York, McIver showed up as an impressive, all-around player and it came time to decide where to play next.

Decision time

As the process continued for McIver to find that new home, there became one that stuck out as an immediate connection.

"The intimacy of it with how small the classrooms were. The coaches, staff and the team felt like a family and it felt like I would be comfortable coming here," McIver said.

Entering into the program and school as a true freshman, the environment was one that carried throughout her three years at Rider.

Rider's proximity to her home and overall feel became a driving factor to choose Rider, but her decisions were only beginning.

At every step of the way, McIver made the decision to stay and the toughest crossroads came following her breakout as a junior.

McIver began to flourish, scoring 9.9 points per game, while ranking fourth in the conference with 3.5 assists per game and third in steals with 2.2 per game.

Her defensive work earned her a place on the conference's All-Defensive First Team, but this summer, she faced the choice on whether to stay or leave.

Where some made the move away, McIver was one of four who made the choice to return for another season under Head Coach Jackie Hartzell.

"I'm just a loyal person. I'll rock it out with the people that helped me out along the way and I felt like it was just the right decision to stay," McIver said.

Everything that once drew McIver into Rider's campus as a recruit was what still resonated in her mind as a reason to stay for her senior year.

Strong connections

An environment she was comfortable to remain in comes with maintaining old relationships and extending into new ones.

Despite a rush of new faces, for McIver, the connecting process has been easy to where it does not matter which one she finds herself with.

"We all get along very well and I can be myself with each and every one of them if I had to," McIver said.

In the second year under Hartzell, the culture has extended into the latest squad, as the bond will only build throughout the year.

Taking that chemistry and translating it onto the court will be the key, and McIver hopes to be at the center of those efforts.

Tournament aspirations

As one of the most experienced players on the team and a top contributor last season, it was only natural to take on the season as a leader.

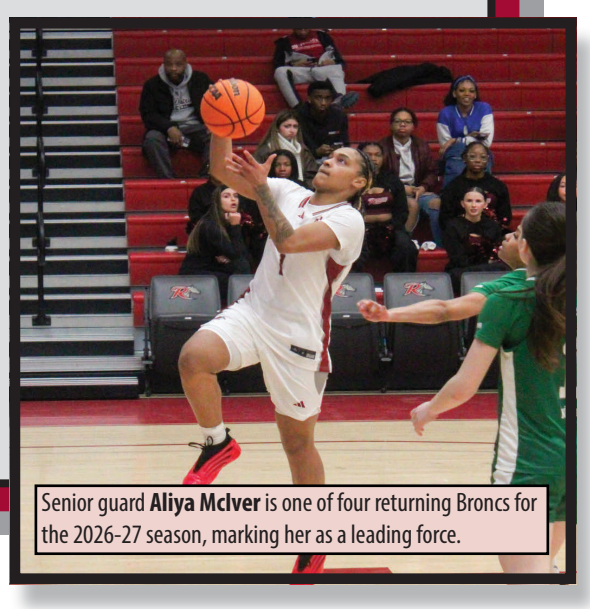
Hartzell, despite not recruiting McIver into Rider women's basketball, has seen the beginnings of taking a step forward.

"She had a great year last year and has really stepped more into a leadership role this year," Hartzell said. "It is like having another coach on the floor who knows what we expect.

Getting that taste of the tournament chase as a junior, the goal is to take that step forward and play a deeper role into it.

"I'm picking up right where I left off," McIver said. "Honestly, just being the leader that they need me to be and doing whatever I can for us to win and be in a good spot to make the tournament."

With her senior season at Rider, McIver hopes to turn the environment that kept her around into one where she can guide the Broncs into success and, ultimately, that conference tournament appearance.



Yanuel Santos/The Rider News

Senior guard **Aliya McIver** is one of four returning Broncs for the 2026-27 season, marking her as a leading force.

Sports

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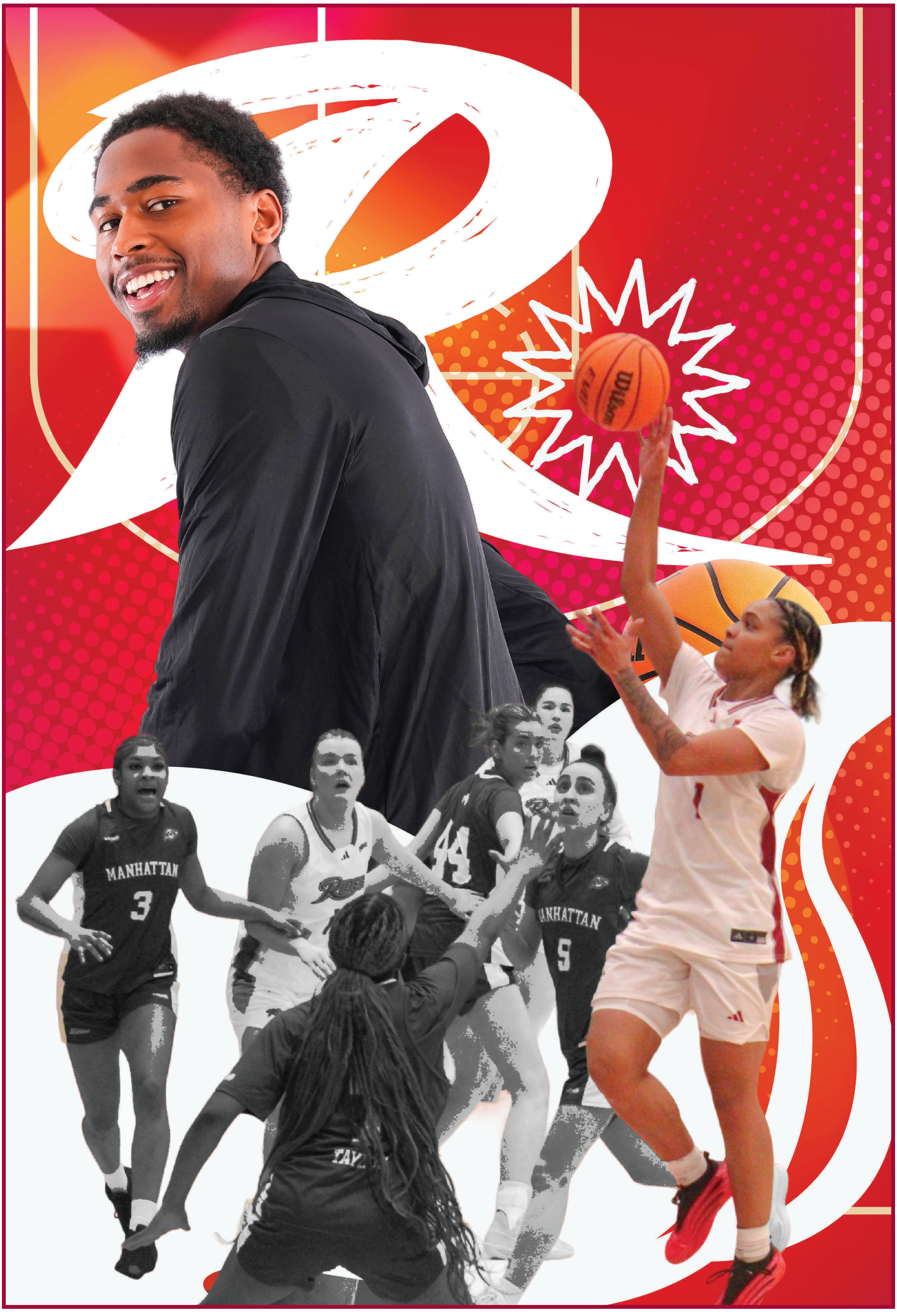

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