

Alex Zanolle
Sports Journalism Portfolio

What Rob Thomson needs to change in order to finally bring a World Series trophy back to Philadelphia



Every baseball fan has, at some point, imagined what they would do if they were in charge of their favorite team. We often run through scenarios of what we would do if we were in charge or play video games where you can act as the decision maker and see how your moves would pan out, but in reality, only 30 men in the world have the opportunity to manage an MLB squad. [Rob Thomson](#), the manager of my favorite team, the [Philadelphia Phillies](#), has been largely successful in his three seasons as the skipper. However, if I were at the helm of the [2025 Phillies](#), I would implement one major change to push the team past its recent playoff disappointments and finally deliver another World Series championship to Philadelphia.

If I were Rob Thomson, I would restructure the Phillies' batting order. While Thomson has been an excellent leader and strategist, his unwavering commitment to [Kyle Schwarber](#) as the leadoff hitter has kept the team from reaching its full potential. Baseball is about making adjustments on the fly, and if the Phillies truly want to win it all, they need to properly adjust to optimize their lineup to reach their full potential.

Rob Thomson likes his batting order to be balanced in handedness, as he likes to evenly distribute and flip-flop left-handed and right-handed hitters throughout the order, and I agree with that strategy. However, if I were in his position, I would slightly adjust the batting order while still maintaining that balance. This is the lineup I would roll with:

Current Phillies lineup: My proposed Phillies lineup:

1. DH Kyle Schwarber (L)
1. SS Trea Turner
2. SS Trea Turner
2. 1B Bryce Harper (L)
3. 1B Bryce Harper (L)
3. 3B Alec Bohm
4. 3B Alec Bohm
4. DH Kyle Schwarber (L)
5. LF Max Kepler (L)
5. C JT Realmuto
6. C JT Realmuto
6. LF Max Kepler (L)
7. 2B Bryson Stott (L)
7. RF Nick Castellanos
8. RF Nick Castellanos
8. 2B Bryson Stott (L)
9. CF Brandon Marsh (L)
9. CF Brandon Marsh (L)

The most significant change I would make is moving [Turner](#) to the leadoff spot and Schwarber to the cleanup role. Turner is a prototypical leadoff hitter, as he consistently gets on base, hits for a high average, steals bases, and strikes out far less than Schwarber. Meanwhile, Schwarber's power would be better utilized in the cleanup spot, where he could drive in more runs with his home runs instead of his solo homers in the leadoff spot.

Thomson's reasoning for keeping Schwarber in the leadoff spot stems from his desire to start games with a home run. This strategy immediately sets the tone for the offense, puts pressure on the opposing pitcher, gives the Phillies' starter an early lead to work with, and maximizes Schwarber's number of plate appearances. Schwarber led the team last season with 106 walks and 38 home runs while posting a .366 on-base percentage, second only to Bryce Harper. These are compelling arguments, but they overlook the bigger picture.

While leading off with a home run can be electrifying and give the Phillies momentum from the get-go, it is not the optimal strategy for maximizing their run production. Schwarber hit 38 home runs last season, but only 15 came in the first inning. Once the first at-bat is over, a leadoff hitter is just another part of the lineup, and the goal should be to maximize production over the entire game, not just the first inning.

With Schwarber leading off, you guarantee that he and Harper both hit in the first inning and get the most at-bats, as the further you get to the top of the order, the more at-bats you have during the season. While I understand Thomson's thinking, and it has worked during the past few regular seasons, something needs to change in order for us to get over the hump and finally win a World Series.

Thomson has done an outstanding job managing the Phillies, and the team has improved its record every season under his leadership. However, despite coming within two wins of a World Series title in his first year, the Phillies have gotten eliminated in the NLCS in 2023 and the NLDS in 2024. It is time to stop relying on a lineup that has been given ample chances to win a championship but has not quite gotten over the hump.

Schwarber's high strikeout rate of 197 K's last season, compared to Turner's 98 K's, means more unproductive outs at the top of the order. Turner, who hit .295 last season and stole 30 bases in 2023, is a much better table-setter, capable of turning singles into doubles with his speed

and applying consistent pressure on defenses. Schwarber's .248 average and lack of baserunning ability make him a better fit for the cleanup role, where his power can be fully utilized with runners on base.

While Trea only had a .338 on-base percentage last year compared to Schwarbers' .366 on-base percentage, Trea was not hitting in the leadoff spot. Turner has a career .301 average and .351 on-base percentage when leading off, compared to Schwarber's .228 average and .339 OBP in that role. In Trea's last full season with the Phillies in 2023, he hit 26 home runs, only 12 less than Schwarber's 38 from last year. Last season, Turner, [Harper](#), and Bohm got on base more than anyone in the lineup besides Schwarber. Schwarber has some of the most power in all of baseball, as he has averaged 44 home runs per year in a Phillies uniform, and if he were batting cleanup, he would have more opportunities to hit with runners on base. It is simple math: a grand slam is more valuable than a solo shot.

Even former Phillies great Jimmy Rollins, who is the Phillies' all-time hits leader and has the most leadoff home runs in franchise history with 46, agrees with this assessment. In [an interview with John Clark](#), Rollins stated, "I would like to see (Trea Turner) lead off, get him a chance to get on base, run the bases, put pressure on for the big boys, when (Bryce Harper) gets up there and (Kyle Schwarber) hitting those bombs. Schwarber is a good hitter, he's patient at the plate, but when he's on base in front of Trea, that kind of slows Trea down for obvious reasons. Why not turn those home runs into two- and three-run home runs? I know they say you lead off once a game, but it does change the way a pitcher and the other team sets up how they face the lineup. When you have speed at the top and power throughout, it's different than having power in the beginning — which they have power all throughout — but there's an attack plan from the first batter. I still like setting up a guy that can hit a ball in the gap, you're still going to get more hits than home runs. You hit the ball in the gap, Trea scores. Trea hits a ball in the gap, Schwarber's not scoring. And that's what I like."

Modern baseball strategy also says to have your best hitter bat second, as the Yankees do with Aaron Judge, as this maximizes their plate appearances and opportunities to drive in runs. My lineup would allow Bryce to hit second and Bohm, who led the team in doubles last year with 44, to hit third and drive in runs.

Thomson has started experimenting with my proposed lineup against left-handed pitchers this season, but it should become the full-time approach. Consistency in the batting order allows hitters to settle into their roles and find their rhythm. If the Phillies want to win the World Series, this simple yet critical change could be the difference-maker.

After three seasons of trying it Thomson's way, it is time to see if a new strategy can push the Phillies over the top. The numbers, traditional baseball strategy, and even franchise legends like Jimmy Rollins all support my proposed change. Now, it is up to Rob Thomson to make the move that could finally allow the Phillies to reach their full potential and bring a World Series trophy back to Philadelphia.

Rowan Women's Lacrosse makes program history in a 14-3 trouncing of Kenyon College



The (4-0) [Rowan Women's Lacrosse](#) team continued their dominant start to the season with a commanding [14-3 victory](#) over (2-3) [Kenyon College](#) at Rowan University yesterday. In the first-ever meeting between the two programs, the Rowan Profs overwhelmed their opponents from Gambier, Ohio, leading to the program's first 5-0 start in school history.

Rowan wasted no time asserting their dominance, scoring four unanswered goals in the first nine minutes. Kenyon scored late in the first quarter, but Rowan responded with six straight goals in the second quarter to take a commanding 10-1 lead into halftime.

The third quarter saw more of the same, as Rowan extended their scoring run to 10 straight goals, pushing the lead to 14-1. Kenyon scored the only two goals in the fourth quarter, but by then, the game was well out of reach, as Rowan cruised to a 14-3 beatdown, improving to 5-0 while Kenyon dropped to 2-4.

Junior attackman Elaina Corson led the offensive onslaught, exploding for six goals and an assist. Corson entered the game as Rowan's leading scorer with 15 goals and further solidified her lead, bringing her season total to 21. "I think we were really just taking it to them hard," said

Corson. “Had a lot of 1v1s in 8 meters, so I think that kind of just helped me get my goals set. It was definitely a team effort.”

A team effort it was, as the Profs dominated Kenyon across the stat sheet, as the Profs outshot Kenyon 40-9, committed just 13 turnovers compared to Kenyon’s 24, and controlled possession with an 18-2 advantage in draw controls. Rowan had nine free-position shots, while Kenyon managed only one, and the Profs scooped up 30 ground balls to Kenyon’s 15.

Sophomore goalie Kylie Durboraw made her first career start, recording four saves en route to securing the victory. Her strong performance complemented a Rowan defense that has been suffocating opponents all season long.

After finishing last year with an 8-11 record, Rowan has turned a corner this season. They have outscored their opponents 87-23 during their five-game winning streak to open the season.

Rowan head coach Lindsay Delaney credits the team’s turnaround to their growth and maturity. “We learned a lot of lessons last year. They’re more mature, more responsible, and they’ve always been talented,” said Delaney. “I think it’s just time. They know it’s time. It’s been time, and we underachieved last year. They’re tired of the narrative, and they’re tired of other schools getting the notoriety. They’re just better, and they’re a fun group. They’re a good group.”

With a much more experienced and improved squad, the Profs have their sights set on big goals this season. “We’re going to win the NJAC, and we’re going to make the NCAA tournament,” senior attackman Calista Burke exclaimed, who scored two goals on the day. With their dominant performances through the first five games, those goals seem well within reach.

The Profs look to keep their perfect season alive on Saturday when they host [Susquehanna University at 1 p.m.](#) before they hit the road for two key matchups in Virginia, as they take on Randolph-Macon on March 19th, before a crucial test against No. 22-ranked Christopher Newport on March 21st.

Rowan Baseball set to host John Jay College in home opener



The [No. 21-ranked Rowan Profs](#) are set to host the [John Jay College Bloodhounds](#) in the Profs' home opener tomorrow, March 5th, at 3 pm at the Rowan University Baseball Field in Glassboro, New Jersey. This marks the first-ever meeting between the two programs, with both teams looking to build on promising starts to the 2025 season.

The Profs, coming off a 29-15 campaign in 2024, sit at 2-1 on the season after taking two of three against Hampden-Sydney in its opening series down in Virginia. Meanwhile, the Bloodhounds, who finished 20-21 last year, come into this matchup 2-0 on the season.

The Profs' offense wasted no time finding its rhythm in their first series of the year, scoring 23 runs, fueled by sophomore Brayden Davis, who went 6-for-14 at the plate with a home run and four RBIs. They tallied 35 hits over the weekend while posting a solid .299 batting average as a team. However, the bullpen imploded in game two, letting up 10 runs in four innings en route to a 12-7 loss.

"Some good, some bad, some things that we obviously need to clean up as we move forward throughout the season," said Rowan head coach Mike Dickson. "I think there are signs that we'll play better, but we just need to be a little more consistent."

The Profs' starting rotation is setting up to be a formidable one, as they are anchored by three seniors, who combined to only let up two runs in 15 innings of work over the weekend.

Accompanied by a starting lineup also littered with experience, featuring six seniors, this senior-laden squad will lean on its wealth of experience throughout the season.

“They know what is expected,” said coach Dickson.

This group of seniors has experienced a plethora of success here at Rowan, and they look to continue building on that success in pursuit of a national championship.

That pursuit continues tomorrow vs. John Jay College, with first pitch set for 3 p.m.

The Long Game: Dylan Heine's Journey from Haddonfield to Notre Dame

It has been a while since Dylan Heine toed the rubber for Haddonfield Memorial High School, but he is still keeping his baseball dream alive and has finally ended up where he has always belonged. The 2019 graduate racked up a plethora of accolades in his time in high school as he earned Colonial Conference Player of the Year, First Team All-South Jersey, First Team All Group 2, and Second Team All-State accolades as a senior, as he went 9-1 with a 0.79 ERA on the bump. What has transpired since then exemplifies that hard work and perseverance really do pay off.

Despite dominating South Jersey as a senior, Heine did not garner much interest from Division 1 programs besides Rider University, where he ended up spending his first four years. "Out of high school, I was not heavily recruited, and Rider was the only Division 1 team that offered me a scholarship to come play for them. I could not have asked for a better time at Rider and made lifelong friends during my time there" Heine said. In his time at Rider, Heine experienced many obstacles in his baseball career, including a 2020 shortened season due to COVID-19, but none bigger than having to undergo Tommy John surgery ahead of the 2021 season.

Heine played right away as a freshman but was quickly faced with an injury that almost seems inevitable for pitchers nowadays. After a long road to recovery from Tommy John surgery in his pitching elbow, he returned midway through the 2022 season but only tossed 21 innings, as he did not feel like himself as he tried to regain his pre-tommy john form. It was not until his senior year in 2023 that he was tabbed as the pitching staff's Friday night starter, which in college baseball means you are their ace. He ended up starting 14 games that year. This was his first full uninterrupted season, as he anchored a staff that led the Rider Broncs to a 36-21 record and an automatic bid in the NCAA tournament. This was his first taste of the tournament, as he missed the last time the Broncs made it in 2021 due to his injury, but he was determined to make it back, experience it, and prove himself on the biggest stage against some of the top teams in the country.

After the 2023 season, he was faced with a tough decision. At this point, Heine still had two years of athletic eligibility due to the COVID-19 shortened season and the 2021 season he missed because of injury. "I realized with 2 years of eligibility remaining that I had to make a decision to either stay at Rider or transfer and start over at a new school. I ended up transferring and had some interest from some local D1 schools, but ultimately decided to take a risk and go to school far away from home and attend Arkansas State for what I believed was my final two years. On my visit, I fell in love with the coaching staff and the people down there and decided this would be home for the next two years," Heine said.

Arkansas is an entirely different world compared to South Jersey, but he acclimated well and showed that he was up for the challenge. He led the team in innings pitched, hurling 62 innings, and was the workhorse of their pitching staff. He was their most consistent arm, leading their starting rotation with a 4.65 ERA.

Now, with two full years under his belt, he faced another tough decision. "I had a great year at Arkansas State in the Sun Belt Conference and was ready to run it back, but the coaching staff was fired, and it was time to make a decision again. With help from family and friends, I decided it was best that I transferred again to my third school. I entered the transfer portal late compared to others but was blessed with a follow and DM from the pitching coach at Notre Dame. I was talking to a couple of other schools from all over, but ultimately, it came down to the fact that this is just not an opportunity you pass up. Being able to be a student at Notre Dame and play baseball in the ACC is something I have wanted since high school, and it finally came to fruition in my final year of eligibility," Heine said.

He is now a well-established college baseball player and has proved that he belongs playing big-time Division 1 baseball, and finally, a school realized that. Notre Dame is a part of the ACC, one of the top two conferences in college baseball. They were just in the College World Series in 2022, so he will be joining a blue blood type program. Heine is determined to prove that this is where he belongs. Size-wise, he surely fits the bill. However, despite his 6'6" 240-pound frame, he has never been someone who will kill you with velocity, but he has always been able to locate his pitches with the best of them. "My biggest motivation is to prove that I belong playing baseball in the ACC. I had a coach tell me when I committed to Notre Dame that if I were to tell him I was going there out of high school, he would have said no doubt about it. However, I am a big believer that everything happens for a reason, and I could not be more grateful for my time at Rider and Arkansas State," Heine said. He has proved himself every step of the way, leading him to where he is now.

This year, he looks to carve out a prominent role on the Notre Dame pitching staff. Now on his third team in three years, Heine is well-versed in adjusting to a new environment and knows what to expect. "Adjusting to a new school is always difficult because you have to figure out what the culture is like at each place and make new friends right away. It has been easier to make friends here because everyone on the team is like-minded, and we are with each other every day. It is a different adjustment than coming in as a freshman because I have experience in college baseball and am also established," Heine said. He has seemed to mesh well with his new teammates and, as a now 23-year-old, is taking on a leadership role as the veteran who has been there and done that. He is among the oldest players in college baseball, which will help him and his team tremendously.

He is embracing this role. "I sometimes get the, "You are 23 and still in college?". Other than that, I think it is a great advantage because I get to help out the younger guys, and they come to

me for advice or help. I do not mind being "the older guy" because, in college baseball, age is just a number. As long as you can help the team produce, it does not matter how old you are. I tell some of the guys that the biggest thing I have learned over my six years of college baseball is to enjoy the moment. These six years have flown by," Heine said. Not every athlete gets to experience six years of college athletics, but Heine sure has used it to his advantage to work his way up to the top levels of college baseball. He is imparting his wisdom on his new squad, and having a sixth-year teammate is invaluable in helping the young guys, as he can act as another coach on and off the field.

It has been a long journey to where he is now but he would not change it for the world. He has responded to every obstacle thrown at him and has been through more than most college athletes can say they have. "Playing at three different schools has been amazing. Although my circumstances were different leading me to each school, I am super grateful for where I ended up along the way. Each place is different in its own way, but that is what makes it special," Heine said. It was a long five-year journey, but now he is right where he belongs and looks to prove himself yet again this season against the best college baseball players in the country in a conference that had four teams in the College World Series this past year.

Not everything has gone his way in his college baseball career, but because of his perseverance, hard work, and determination, he is right where he belongs, even though it took him a little longer than he expected. For all the high school kids out there, as Heine shows, if you are not getting the interest you want from colleges, if you work hard and persevere through every obstacle, you never know what may happen. Look for South Jersey's own Dylan Heine to embark on his quest to make a national name for himself on the mound in South Bend this upcoming season.

Rowan Men's Basketball Suffers 70-67 Loss to Rutgers-Newark on Senior Day

By: Alex Zanolle
February 17th, 2025

The Rowan University Men's Basketball team hosted Rutgers-Newark Saturday afternoon in a classic New Jersey Athletic Conference (NJAC) showdown at Esbjornson Gymnasium in Glassboro, New Jersey. Despite a strong showing from senior Rowan guard Khalif Meares, who recorded 29 points on the day, the Rowan Profs fell to the Rutgers-Newark Scarlet Raiders 70-67 in the Prof's final regular-season home game.

Before the game, Rowan recognized its four seniors, Drew Amos, Danny Fleming, Khalif Meares, and Jamir Spivey, accompanied by their loved ones, and honored all of their contributions to the program.

With the NJAC tournament rapidly approaching, the Profs looked to keep their tournament hopes alive, while Rutgers-Newark looked to finish the season on a high note.

Rowan entered the game 12-11 on the season, losers of its last two games. At 6-17 overall, Rutgers-Newark was 2-15 in its last 17 games coming into this matchup.

145 people were in attendance for the Profs' final home game of the regular season, looking to help keep the Profs' playoff hopes alive and root on their departing seniors.

Once the Profs went up 4-0 to start the first half, their only lead of the game, the Scarlet Raiders never looked back, and the Profs could not muster up a response.

The first half was all Rutgers, as they jumped out to a 40-31 lead. The Scarlet Knights dominated the boards in the first half, with 21 rebounds to the Profs 12, and were 50% from the field compared to Rowan's 39%.

Coming out of the locker room after a disappointing first half, the Profs were visibly frustrated as they looked to establish some sort of momentum in the second half.

The second half was much more of a dogfight, with the Profs cutting their deficit to one point on three occasions, but each time, Rutgers-Newark responded to maintain and extend its lead, and Rowan was never able to reclaim theirs.

The Scarlet Raiders lost their previous matchup against the Profs 85-71 back in January, but they looked like a team that wanted it more this time.

"This was their championship game," Rowan Head Coach Eric Brennan said after the game. "I think they had that underdog mentality, backs against the wall, and they played with more energy and effort than us tonight, simple as that."

Khalif Meares, the Prof's leading scorer throughout the whole season, continued to dominate offensively.

However, the Scarlet Raiders contained the rest of the Profs' lineup, preventing them from establishing any sort of rhythm on either end of the floor.

Rutgers-Newark was led by senior guard Levi Holton, who scored 22 points and secured 10 rebounds on the day.

The Scarlet Raiders also got hot from beyond the arc, going 6-15, while the Profs went just 3-17. They also outrebounded the Profs 35-29, overcoming their size advantage.

With the crowd on their feet and five seconds left on the clock, Meares had a chance to send the game to overtime at the buzzer, but his last-second attempt bounced off the rim and was no good.

This win was Rutgers-Newark's first win over Rowan since January 2022 and subsequently ruined the Profs' senior day. Although the program has struggled the last few years, it finally toppled a perennial NJAC powerhouse.

"We just have to stay together; we can't point fingers at each other, curse each other out; we just have to stay together and know that we're just in a slump right now, and it's a setback for a major comeback," said senior Khalif Meares coming off his 29-point senior day loss.

The team looks to stay close as they are not having the year they expected. "Hopefully, through this adversity, through this loss, the guys come closer together, and we figure out how to get a win," Coach Brennan said regarding what he hopes the team takes away from this game.

The Profs do not have any more guaranteed home games left this season, and the reality of this being the senior's last home game in their basketball careers started to settle in post-game. "Just the fans, being able to put on a Rowan jersey has been an honor; I'm just going to miss playing at Rowan and seeing everybody hyping me up," said senior forward Danny Fleming after the tough loss.

Family and friends all came out to support the four seniors to witness the possible last time they will ever watch them play at Rowan.

Despite the loss and the now 12-12 record on the season, Rowan has qualified for the six-team NJAC tournament that starts on Saturday.

The Profs look to gain momentum heading into the postseason and finish the regular season above .500 on Wednesday, February 19th, as they travel to fellow NJAC powerhouse Stockton University for a 7:30 pm tip-off.

Once they get in the tournament, anything can happen, and the Profs know they need to turn their season around quickly if they want to make a run in the postseason.

Coach Brennan concluded, "There's not much you can build on from this game besides the fact that we have to play better and find a way to win these close games, especially this late in the season."

Sexual Assault-Related Crimes Remain a Concern at Rowan University-Glassboro Campus

By: Alex Zanolle

March 16th, 2025



Rowan University's main campus in Glassboro, New Jersey.

Glassboro, N.J. – Reports of sexual assault-related crimes at Rowan University continue to be an immense concern for students, with recent data showing that even though incidents have been on the decline in the past couple of years, they have persisted, specifically over the past six years. In compliance with the federal Clery Act, Rowan University sends timely warning emails to students alerting them of reported sexual assault-related crimes that they classify as “sexual offenses.”

The University categorizes sexual offenses into two primary categories: rape and fondling. The most recent data from the 2024 Rowan University Annual Security and Fire Safety Report shows that between 2020 and 2023, reported cases of rape fluctuated from a low of four in 2020 (likely due to the pandemic and subsequent evacuation of campus) to a high of 18 in 2022. Reported cases of fondling also reached a high of nine in 2022. According to the report, most offenses occurred in on-campus student housing. Preliminary data from 2024 and 2025, based on the Timely Warning Clery Act emails from the University, show a decrease in reported cases, though it remains a concern.

The Annual Security Report defines sexual assault as “any sexual act directed against another person without the consent of the victim, including instances where the victim is incapable of giving consent.” Rape is defined as “the penetration, no matter how slight, of the vagina or anus with any body part or object, or oral penetration by a sex organ of another person, without the consent of the victim.” Fondling is described as “the touching of the private parts of another person for the purposes of sexual gratification, without the consent of the victim, including instances where the victim is incapable of giving consent because of their age or because of their temporary or permanent mental incapacity.”

Reported Sexual Offenses at Rowan University (2020-2025)

Sexual Offenses Data (2020-2025)	2020	2021	2022	2023	*2024	*2025
Sexual Offenses- Rape	4	11	18	9	5	4
Sexual Offenses- Fondling	4	7	9	3	3	1

**The 2024 and 2025 data are not yet official and were gathered from emails Rowan University sent to students in compliance with the federal Clery Act.*

-Data from 2020-2023 is from the most recent Rowan University Annual Security and Fire Safety Report.

The Rowan University Police Department (RUPD) is actively working to prevent these crimes through educating the student body on the topic and increased police presence. “The Rowan Police Department works with Residence Life and the Office of Community Standards to promote education regarding personal safety as well as consent,” said RUPD Interim Chief of Police Rachel Baum in an interview conducted via email. “We typically have an increased number of officers working at night and on the weekends, which is when incidents such as these usually occur.”

RUPD takes these reports very seriously, and when asked what their protocol is when someone reports a crime like this, Baum stated, “When a sexual assault is reported to our department, the first priority of our officers is to ensure the survivor’s immediate safety and render medical aid if necessary. We would then try to determine the location and time that the crime occurred. If the crime occurred on campus, the Rowan Police Department and Gloucester County Prosecutor’s Office (GCPO) would be the primary investigating agencies. At the conclusion of the investigation, GCPO would determine if there is sufficient probable cause for criminal charges. If so, Rowan Police would issue those charges. Regardless of the outcome of the criminal investigation, if the survivor is a student, then they would be offered additional services through the Rowan Wellness Center and the Title IX office.”

Baum went on to implore, “If this happens to you, get to a safe location and report the incident to the police as soon as possible. Even if the survivor does not wish to pursue criminal charges, going to the hospital and getting a Sexual Assault Nurse Exam (SANE) is highly recommended. This kit can be stored as evidence and used later if the survivor opts to pursue criminal charges. I

would also strongly recommend taking advantage of the services offered by the Rowan Wellness Center.”

According to Baum, “In regard to penalties imposed by the court for a sexual assault conviction, the sentencing varies depending on the degree of the crime. For instance, for a conviction of second-degree sexual assault, penalties can include a prison sentence of 5-10 years, fines up to \$150,000, and registration as a sex offender. Penalties for aggravated sexual assault are more severe and could result in a prison sentence of 25 years to life, according to New Jersey Statute 2C:14-2.” Rowan may also impose disciplinary actions handed down by the University, including expulsion of students found guilty.

In the chart above, it is important to note that these are only the officially reported cases; it does not mean these are the only incidents that have occurred at Rowan. In fact, statistics show that far more cases go unreported than reported. Even though numbers fluctuate, victims feel more comfortable reporting when they feel supported and that they have access to quality sexual assault programs, which tends to lead them to report slightly more frequently.

“Nationally, it is estimated that more than half of the crimes involving sexual violence go unreported,” according to Rowan University’s Sexual Violence Prevention Program. “If the assailant is someone the survivor knows, it is even less likely to be reported. Only 16 percent of rape victims will ever report their assault to the police because survivors often may face post-assault adversity and hostile reactions from law enforcement, family, and friends. 63 percent of completed rapes, 65 percent of attempted rapes, and 74 percent of completed and attempted sexual assaults against females were not reported to law enforcement. One in ten reported assaults go to prosecution.”

An article on Rowan University’s website addressing sexual assaults on campus states, “Rape, Abuse and Incest National Network (RAINN), the nation’s largest anti-sexual violence organization, reports that 13 percent of all students in college (women and men, undergraduate and graduate students) experience rape or sexual assault through physical force, violence or incapacitation. Among undergraduates, 26.4 percent of females and 6.8 percent of males experience rape or sexual assault. According to RAINN’s statistics, more than 50 percent of college sexual assaults occur from August through October.”

Sexual assault-related crimes continue to impact the Rowan student body, and university officials and police continue to stress the importance of awareness and prevention and that students know that they have access to resources to help keep them safe.

I felt as though it was important to research this topic to help better inform the Rowan University community about the severity and regularity of such cases, specifically Rowan, and what to do in the case you are a victim of a sexual offense. It is time to change the stigma behind reporting these types of crimes. We as a society need to take these cases more seriously and fully grasp the impact they have on the lives of victims. I hope this article reaches the right audience, as I hope it could help at least one person obtain the correct information to stay safe or seek the resources they may need and inform potential offenders of what can happen to them if they commit such a heinous crime.

Concerns Over Route 322 Safety Addressed at Glassboro Borough Council Business Meeting

By: Alex Zanolle



Route 322 going through Rowan University's-Glassboro campus

The ongoing safety concerns surrounding Route 322, the major road that cuts right through the middle of Rowan University's campus, were discussed at the Glassboro Borough Council Business Meeting on Tuesday, March 25, in Glassboro, New Jersey.

After the meeting, Glassboro government officials and Rowan University journalism students discussed the ongoing risks posed by the major roadway's heavy traffic and speeding due to its proximity to Route 55 and the inadequate pedestrian walkways.

Students conveyed the urgent need for safety improvements, citing previous accidents and incidents of pedestrians being hit. Glassboro Mayor John E. Wallace III acknowledged these concerns and assured students that discussions about potential changes are continuously happening.

When asked about the rumor of the possibility of permanently closing the section of Route 322 that runs through campus and converting it into a pedestrian-only walkway, Wallace danced

around the question. "I'm not going to say it's true, and I'm not going to say it's not true," he said. "For over 35 years, they've talked about blocking it off, putting bridges over, or tunnels under. Something is going to change. What happens in that area, I can't say definitively, but something will change."

Many Glassboro residents have also expressed frustration over the lack of current safety measures and pedestrian injuries due to the road's dangers and heavy traffic. Community members have called for immediate solutions to help keep the Glassboro community safe.

However, Wallace suggested that Rowan University officials do not seem to view Route 322 as a top priority. "The decision-makers with the university... there are things higher on their priority list," he said.

He emphasized that while they hear the concerns, significant changes also involve bureaucratic and funding hurdles.

Mayor Wallace assured that the town of Glassboro is doing everything possible to assist with the issue and is trying to work with Rowan to find a feasible solution for any potential roadway modifications.

As discussions continue, residents and students remain hopeful that real safety improvements will be implemented before another tragic accident occurs.

"None of us believe it's right to have a major highway running through the heart of a college campus," Wallace stated. As for how or when this issue will be resolved, remains to be seen.

Virtual Game Story

The 0-1 Atlanta Falcons came into a raucous sold-out Lincoln Financial Field in Philadelphia, as the Eagles were coming off their opening week 34-29 victory over the Green Bay Packers in Brazil. Kirk Cousins and the Falcons coincidentally spoiled Nick Foles's retirement night, who beat them back in the 2018 divisional round on their road to becoming Super Bowl Champions. The Falcons were coming off an ugly 3-turnover 18-10 loss to the lowly Steelers last week and were 6-point underdogs coming into Philly. Kirk Cousins, who usually doesn't perform well in Monday night games, was 3-10 leading into this game. He made plays last night when he needed to, to secure the victory, that he did not the previous week. The Eagles have two new coordinators this year, and it is starting to show early on, as there has been sloppy play, and it is evident that not everyone is in rhythm yet.

Saquon Barkley, on the other hand, played well, as he had 116 scrimmage yards, but that was all for naught as he dropped the ball on the most crucial play of the game on 3rd and 3, stopping the clock and forcing the Eagles to kick a field goal to go up 21-15, instead of a game-sealing first down. That left 1:39 on the clock for the Falcons to score a touchdown to win the game, plenty of time. The Falcons did just that, as they only needed 65 seconds to march down the field. Philly and their new defensive coordinator, Vic Fangio, played soft coverage on the final drive to avoid the big play, but that proved costly as the Falcons drove down the field with ease for 70 yards in 6 plays with no timeouts left, as Cousins found Drake London in the end zone for a 7-yard touchdown to cap off the drive. "When you're down six, you can certainly go for broke, but we just tried to take what they gave us and move our way down the field," Cousins said. "And we were able to get some chunks that basically got us down there, low enough where the clock wasn't really our enemy."

Nick Sirianni's questionable call to go for it on 4th and 4, instead of kicking a field goal on the Falcons 9-yard line in the first quarter, failed when Jalen Hurts threw an incomplete pass, which proved costly. "They made a couple more plays than we did down the stretch. We made some plays; they made more," Eagles coach Nick Sirianni said. "And that's on all of us. That starts with coaching and goes to the players. We are all responsible for the loss."

It was a back-and-forth battle, with seven lead changes in a relatively low-scoring game. Cousins calmed all the fears everyone had about his Achilles injury from last season, as he made all the clutch throws that Jalen Hurts did not. The Eagles got the ball back with 34 seconds left with two timeouts and got to their own 43, but Hurts threw an ill-advised pass that got picked off by Jessie Bates to seal the win for the Falcons and break the hearts of everyone associated with the Eagles. The Falcons held on to secure the 22-21 victory to move to 1-1 on the season.

The 1-1 Eagles look to right the ship next Sunday against the high-powered offense of the New Orleans Saints and prove they have fixed the problems that plagued them last year in their historic end-of-season collapse. The Falcons, on the other hand, look to ride the high of this primetime win as they go home to Atlanta to face off against the defending Super Bowl Champion Kansas City Chiefs on Sunday night in another primetime game and establish that they're a better team than last year.

Rowan Football Feature Story

In the heart of Glassboro, New Jersey, a quiet confidence has filled the air around Richard Wackar Stadium this fall. In college athletics, the starting quarterback at a school is usually the most important athlete in the athletic department. Football is the money maker, and no position is more important than the quarterback. Nate Maiers is the one who fills that role as the starting quarterback for the Rowan Profs. He may not look or act like a quarterback, as he is somewhat shy and undersized for the position, but his confidence in his abilities shows on the field with his arm strength, accuracy, and football IQ. Maiers is a local kid from Kingsway Regional High School in South Jersey. Initially committing to a Division 1 program out of high school, Monmouth University, he ended up coming to Rowan his freshman year, looking to win the quarterback competition right away.

His freshman year, due to an injury to then-starting quarterback Thomas Goldsborough in week 5 against TCNJ, he was thrust into action and has not looked back. From then on, Nate has been the starting quarterback for the Profs. Even though he was a freshman at the time, he did not let his age hinder him. He could have folded under the pressure of a freshman coming in and playing early in his first year. However, he proved to be up to the challenge and impressed in his first season with the Profs, throwing for eight touchdowns, 922 yards, and a 61% completion percentage in only six games. Maiers was named NJAC Offensive Rookie of the Year. "Last year, he actually transferred out, but Thomas, when he went down with his injury, and I had to play in this spot, he was very supportive of everything I was doing, and it's really hard for him as an upperclassmen to support a younger guy taking the position that you should be in, so yeah he helped me out with all my reads, and keeping my confidence up," Maiers said about who has been his biggest mentor while at Rowan. He could not have talked more highly about Goldsborough and how maturely he handled the situation, helping a freshman get comfortable at the position he originally earned. He credits a lot of his success so far to Goldsborough.

Maiers was hit with another challenge as they hired new head coach Pat Ruley to come in and take over the program after longtime coach Jay Accorsi retired following last season. He has answered the bell swimmingly yet again. "It's been tough; there was a lot of stuff going on in the beginning, but we all stayed locked in during the summer. It's been a tough transition, but we are starting to see the benefits now," Maiers said regarding how he and the team are adjusting to the coaching change. A lot of the staff was retained, but Ruley also took over as Defensive Coordinator and offensive line coach Gino Gradkowski was elevated to Offensive Coordinator. Their offensive and defensive philosophies were subsequently overhauled. Gradkowski is a former offensive lineman in the NFL for six seasons, so he brings a wealth of knowledge to the offensive side of the ball.

Maiers is a cerebral quarterback, but he is not the most physically imposing guy on the field, as he is generously listed as 6'0" and 195 pounds. He proves the doubts about his size wrong with

his mental traits and talent on the field. "I think I make good decisions; I like to compare myself to Drew Brees. I don't move the best, but I can sit in the pocket and put the ball where it needs to be and make the right reads," Maiers said when asked how he would describe himself as a quarterback and his strengths. He was honest about what he is good at but also what he is not so good at. A quarterback needs to be that calming and steady presence and someone who does the right things and makes the right decisions on the field. When asked to describe Nate as a quarterback, Offensive Coordinator Gino Gradkowski said, "Nate has a very calm presence to him, is very cool under pressure, processes things quickly, and is able to get to his second or third read if he needs to. I think he is an intelligent quarterback, smart in the pocket, navigates the pocket well, and one thing he is able to do well is that when things break down, he is able to keep his eyes downfield on the move... When he got his opportunity in the TCNJ game last year, he stepped in and did a great job. He's accurate and can make all the throws he needs to make."

You do not often see a four-year starter at the quarterback position in college, but Maiers is on pace to do just that. This year, his first full season as the starter, he has led the team in a few close losses, and as he gets more experience, he will learn how to close out and finish those types of games. The Profs have kept it close in every loss except against Ursinus, as they got blown out 58-14. He has continued to develop with new coaches, and his future is proving to be bright. It is not easy for a kid to go to a school for a specific coaching staff and then have everything change after one year. "I think he's handled it really well. I think Coach Morrison, the quarterback's coach, has done a great job coming in and coaching the quarterbacks, and Nate seemed to adjust to everything; our whole passing game kind of got revamped, so there were a lot of things the quarterbacks had to learn, and he did a great job picking everything up," Gradkowski said on how Nate has handled the coaching staff changes this year.

The Profs look to improve their 5-5 record from last year, as they are 3-4 with three games remaining in the regular season. His numbers are not quite as good as last year, but Maiers cares more about the numbers in the win-loss column than his personal stats. "It all comes down to the final score. I've thrown some picks here and there, but I feel like I've done okay, got the ball into the playmaker's hands, we just gotta close out these games," Maiers told me when asked how he thinks he has performed this year and how he looks to improve as a quarterback. Rowan seems to have the right guy at the helm of the quarterback position with that mindset. You need your leader to have that selfless mindset; it leads to great dividends for your entire team, even if it does not immediately show up in the win column. "I'm excited. He's done a great job all year long, and him being a second-year guy, having him for two more years is exciting. I can see him continuing to develop and turning into a great player. I think the future is bright for him," Gradkowski said regarding Nate's future. Maiers has more than enough time left in college to improve, as he is just a sophomore. The future is looking up for the sophomore gunslinger with the help of the new coaching staff. It is only a matter of time before he develops into his own, as he has the makings to become a great quarterback.

Maiers kept on circling back to talking about wanting his team to succeed. "We want to win the conference; we want to make the playoffs, and make a run. I got two more years to do that,"

Maiers said about his goals that he hopes to accomplish by the end of his four years at Rowan. His quiet confidence has radiated throughout the locker room, and his teammates have rallied around him and have their signal caller's back. "He seems to be great in the locker room; guys rally around him; he's a quiet leader, but when things need to be said, he says it. I think that now, with another year of experience this year and stepping into his junior year next year, his vocal leadership will get even better," Gradkowski said about how Nate is in the locker room. He is not a rah-rah guy, but as a quarterback should, he speaks up when needed. That is what you expect from your quarterback and leader. He brings a calmness to the huddle that is crucial to the team as a whole.

As Nate wraps up his sophomore year, the Profs look to fulfill that goal of his to make a run in the playoffs and finish better than they did last year. Every year, individually and as a team, you look to be better than you were the year before, and Nate sure has the mindset and talent to lead his team to do just that. Even if his numbers do not look the best, for Nate Maiers, it is all about winning. Look for Nate to lead the Profs back to where they belong as an NJAC powerhouse, and as he gets older, he is only going to get better. The better he gets, the better the team gets. As the team gets more acclimated with the coaching staff and things start to come together, Maiers and the Profs look like a promising young team on the rise. The next step on that journey is on Saturday as they battle Montclair State University at 2 pm at Richard Wackar Stadium.

Rowan Men's Soccer Game Story

On a beautiful afternoon in Glassboro, New Jersey, on Saturday, the seniors on the Rowan University Men's Soccer team took the pitch for their last regular season home game on Senior Day to face off against the Ramapo College Roadrunners. The Profs came into this match on a four-game winning streak, sporting an 8-4-5 overall record on the season, with a 5-0-2 record in conference play. The Profs, led by Head Coach Scott Baker, were looking to send the seniors off in fashion against NJAC rival Ramapo (8-3-4, 3-2-2). On paper, these two teams were evenly matched, but the Roadrunners quickly proved no match for the Profs. The Profs came out fired up on Senior day and jumped on them early. In the 18th minute, junior midfielder Jason Barragan paid tribute to his senior teammates as he scored the only goal of the match from just inside the box for his third goal of the year. "You always want to play hard for them, but today was one of those special games you just had to," Barragan said about the seniors after his goal to secure the Senior Day victory. "I look up to them, they always give me great advice and point me in the right direction." The ball seemed to be on the Prof's side of the pitch the entire first half as they dominated the time of possession and outshot the Roadrunners 11-3 through the first 45 minutes. However, in the second half, Ramapo found some life and gave the Profs all they could handle, especially late in the match, getting some shots on net. Senior goalkeeper Dylan Aportela was a rock in net, as he has been all season, and kept the Roadrunners scoreless on the day, as they held on for a 1-0 victory. Barragan's goal ended up being all the Profs needed to put away the Roadrunners, and Rowan is now on a five-game winning streak and moves to 9-4-5 on the season as they look to stay hot in the last game of the regular season at TCNJ on Wednesday night. Heading into the playoffs, riding a six-game win streak would give the Profs the momentum they will need as they look to knock off perennial NJAC power Montclair State University (12-4-1), who eliminated them last year in the NJAC championship game. This year is different, as Rowan and head coach Scott Baker have their eyes set on a much bigger prize than just the NJAC crown. When asked after the game about the legacy he hopes the Seniors leave behind, coach Baker already knew his answer, "National Championship." The Profs are as hot as any team leading into the playoffs, and they look to ride this hot streak all the way to Las Vegas for the Division 3 National Championship and accomplish something this program has not done since 1990.

The Rowan Men's Basketball Program: Why it is Where it is Today

There's something about these Haddonfield kids that Rowan seems to love, and for good reason. Almost a decade ago, in 2015, the Depersia twins, who were legends on the basketball court at Haddonfield Memorial High School, stepped on campus in Glassboro, unaware of the legacy they would leave behind on the Rowan University Men's Basketball program.

Like many Haddonfield kids, Rob and Nick Depersia were overlooked by every Division 1 program, as Haddonfield does not garner much attention because it is a small school in South Jersey. They were also undersized, with Rob being 5-9 / 168 lbs and Nick 6-0 / 180 lbs.

However, from the moment they stepped on campus, they proved to every Division 1 program that doubted them, that they were wrong. Like their high school, they may have been small, but they showed they could compete against anyone in the country, regardless of their size.

After not getting attention from any Division 1 schools out of high school, they decided to stay home in South Jersey and play together, just like they did their whole life.

A decade ago, Rowan was a relatively unknown and irrelevant Division 3 basketball program and had been for a while, but when they finished their four-year career here, Rowan men's basketball was back on the map.

Being four-year starters and three-year captains, their goal of putting basketball back on the map here at Rowan finally came to fruition their senior year back in 2019, as they went 22-7 and made the NCAA Tournament for the first time since 2000, eventually losing in the second round. Rob averaged 10.9 ppg on the year, while Nick averaged 15.3 ppg. Both won a plethora of accolades in their time here, on and off the court. They may have fallen short of their ultimate goal of a national title, but their Division 1 talent that was overlooked was a precursor for things to come at Rowan.

Ever since they graduated, Rowan has remained a perennial New Jersey Athletic Conference (NJAC) and national powerhouse, competing for a championship every year, as the Profs have made the NJAC tournament every year since they left. They have made the NJAC championship game twice (2022 and 2023) and won in 2023. They have made the NCAA Tournament the last three years and lost in the Sweet Sixteen the previous two, which is further than the Depersia teams ever went.

"To hear those two and those names, it's a good feeling," Head Coach Eric Brennan, assistant coach back in the Depersia days, said when asked about their impact on the program. "I think what they built was really a winning tradition back at Rowan. So when you start winning, typically recruiting picks up, and things fall in place a little bit easier because we already have a great university. So, to get it back in the right direction and then just continue with that recruiting will always be important, and then making it a place where student-athletes enjoy the experience. So, you know, improving on things every year, but playing a brand of basketball that people enjoy playing."

Coach Brennan took over for Joe Crispin in 2023, who, because of his success here at Rowan with the Depersia's, left for a coaching gig at Penn State University. This program did not skip a beat after the coaching change; arguably, they have gotten even better. That is all thanks to the Depersia twins, making Rowan a destination for overlooked Division 1 athletes in the area.

Two notable ones that coach Brennan brought in when he was elevated to Head Coach were Khalif Meares and Danny Fleming.

Khalif is widely regarded as the best player in the NJAC, averaging 25.8 ppg this year. He is a community college transfer from Harcum College just outside of Philadelphia. Now a two-year starter in his senior year, it is safe to say that without the foundation of success built by the Depersia teams, a talent like Khalif would have never come to Rowan if it was not a good program.

"He's unbelievable. He does everything," said Coach Brennan. "He's arguably the best offensive and defensive player in the conference and one of the best players in the country." Another overlooked Division 1 athlete coming to Rowan and dominating, sound familiar?

Brennan's relentless and never-ending recruiting has paid significant dividends, as he has seamlessly springboarded off the success of the previous regime. He has continued the culture and atmosphere that was built.

"I just felt like open arms. It was like they just welcomed me with all open arms. It was like a brotherhood when I came in." Khalif Meares said when asked about Coach Brennan. Rowan is lucky because it is a testament to the coach that these top athletes feel like that and want to play for you and your program. At the end of the day, they are still just kids and deserve to play at a place that has a culture like the one here at Rowan. The Rowan basketball program is in good hands with Coach Brennan.

When Coach Brennan took over back in 2023, there were not one, but two prized transfer recruits he brought in, the other being Danny Fleming, who is now a sixth year after transferring from Holy Family University, a Division 2 school.

Fleming also went to Haddonfield, and Brennan knew first-hand how well-coached these Haddonfield kids are. I went to high school with Danny, and I can personally vouch that he is, without a doubt, a Division 1 talent; he just blossomed late and didn't get much attention from schools. I remember his senior year when we played Camden and Lance Ware, who went to Kentucky, the best program in the country, and Danny outplayed him.

Although not undersized like the Depersia's, Fleming stands at a jaw-dropping 6-9/215 lbs. This year, he has started every game so far, is averaging 13 ppg, and is one of the most physically dominating players in the conference.

When asked what sets these Haddonfield kids apart and makes them thrive here at Rowan, Coach Brennan told me, "I recruited Danny extremely hard out of high school. I knew he wasn't coming to us originally, but that's not why I recruited him, because, you know, I didn't know exactly what would happen, but in August of last year, he contacted me and decided he wanted to come to Rowan. And you know, that is our approach to recruiting. A lot of times, we'll go after guys that we know we won't get initially, but start to develop that relationship early on."

Talent-wise, he is a Division 1 basketball player, but like the Depersia's, he ended up coming to Rowan where they believe in him, and is helping this program continuously reach new heights and proving everyone wrong.

Marko Pantovic, who played at Rowan with the Depersia's, is now an assistant coach for the Profs. "I would definitely say, they all kind of emulate the little grit, the basketball fundamentals, that they got from the longtime coach at Haddonfield," said Pantovic regarding what similarities he sees from these Haddonfield kids. "...I feel like you can kind of tell that style of play that sets them apart." Coming from a small school and being doubted definitely puts a chip on your shoulder to prove people wrong, and Danny is doing just that.

It has been a long road to Rowan for him, given he spent his first four years at Holy Family, but the relationship that Brennan established early on in high school ended up paying major dividends for Rowan and their current success. "He was always supportive. He knew I wasn't going to come to Rowan initially, but he was supporting me regardless, throughout my whole path," said Fleming on coach Brennan. "So when I had two years left, I hit him up. I literally texted him, said I got two years left. He said, Come on, let's do it. And you know, the rest is history. So yeah, he's the man."

He is now continuing the Haddonfield legacy at Rowan and is actually close with the Depersia's, as he played with their little brother in high school.

"Nick and Rob, they have a big legacy here," Fleming said about the Depersia's. "They weren't able to win a ring, unfortunately. They won an NJAC title, but I'm gonna try to do what they couldn't and win a ring. But I look up to them, obviously. They're amazing people, the whole family, great people; I couldn't say enough about how great they are. So, you know, I'm just trying to fill the shoes that they left here." Haddonfield is definitely etching its name into Rowan Basketball lore. Fleming can add to that lore if he helps bring home a national title to Rowan.

Even though he has a connection to the Depersia's and went to Haddonfield, he wants to make his own legacy and accomplish the ultimate goal that the Depersia's couldn't.

"I could score 40, I could score five, doesn't matter. I just want to leave this year with a ring. It's my last year. So, you know, last year, we got to the Sweet 16, and it was a lot of fun. So I want to get back, get further, and get a ring so they remember this team forever." Fleming said about the legacy he wants to leave at Rowan. He emulates the Depersia's as a leader, as he is selfless and an ultimate team-first guy.

What every college athlete should strive for is to leave your program better than when you found it and set them up for continuous success. The Depersia twins are the embodiment of that, as Rowan is now known as one of the country's top 20 D3 basketball programs, mainly because of them.

Khalif and Danny would not have come here if the Depersias had not laid this foundation for the program. They are the two leaders on this current team and will be the reasons for their success this year, however far they go. They are both D1 athletes in terms of talent, but they decided to come to an elite D3 program that believed in them, to shine, and that is precisely what they have done so far.

Being from Haddonfield myself, I am proud to see these overlooked kids proving everyone wrong and accomplishing great things. I look forward to seeing Rowan win a national title one day, and maybe it will be with another Haddonfield kid this year, further adding to the Haddonfield lore at Rowan University. The Depersia twins will forever be legends in this program, and if Rowan does end up winning a national title, they will have Rob and Nick to pay tribute to and thank for that because, without them, this program wouldn't be where it is today.

Rowan Basketball Game Story

December 15, 2024

As we wind down to the end of the semester for students and basketball season now in full swing, NJAC foe William Paterson University came to Esby Gym in Glassboro, New Jersey, on Saturday afternoon to face off against Rowan University. The Rowan Profs came into this matchup sitting at 4-3 (3-1 NJAC) on the season and faced off against the 4-5 (1-3 NJAC) William Patterson Pioneers, who have not won this matchup since February 6, 2019. The Profs, led by senior guard Khalif Meares, who leads the NJAC with 25.8 ppg, were looking to build off Wednesday's win against Kean. Conversely, the Pioneers were looking to continue to improve on last year, as they are already approaching last season's win total of six. 366 strong piled into Esby gym and watched the Prof's roll to a quick, commanding 16-0 lead in the game's first five minutes, as the Pioneers didn't get on the board until the 14:29 mark. It seemed as though everything was falling for the Profs, and nothing was going the Pioneers way. The Pioneers slowly but surely started to crawl back and made it a 44-33 game at the end of the first half, and it was all Rowan at halftime. However, it was a tale of two tapes, as William Patterson outscored the Profs 41-40 in the second half. "We've got to do a better job playing with the lead," Rowan head coach Eric Brennan said after the game. "We play fast, we take early shots, so when you allow that freedom, sometimes, when you have a lead in the game, if you don't hit those shots it allows for that lead to shrink." In the end, Rowan's size advantage and dominant start proved too much for the Pioneers en route to an 84-74 win for the Profs. Rowan's senior leadership was the edge in this matchup, as forward Jamir Spivey recorded a career-high 15 rebounds on the day, and the best player in the NJAC, Khalif Meares, led the way with 29 points. "I'm going for more," Jamir Spivey said postgame. "We have to clean up some stuff, though, at both ends of the floor. With us, it starts with defense and transitions to offense, so our defense definitely has to become our identity." The Profs improve to 5-3 (4-1 NJAC) on the season as they will participate in Catholic University's Tom McDevitt Classic this week, kicking off the tournament against the host team on **Wednesday, December 18th at 3 p.m. in Washington DC**. Rowan looks to improve on last season, when they went 21-8 and lost in the sweet sixteen of the NCAA Tournament to the number one team in the country, Hampden Sydney, and they will be heavily relying on their seniors to continue to lead the charge.

Eagles Preview Story

The Philadelphia Eagles will return home to Lincoln Financial Field this Sunday to face the Carolina Panthers at 1 p.m. This will be the Eagles' first home game since November 14, but they return home 10-2, riding an 8-game winning streak. The 3-9 Panthers, who are 1-7 in their last eight games, come into this matchup playing much better football than they were earlier in the season. Last week, they were narrowly defeated by the Tampa Bay Buccaneers, who blew out the Eagles earlier this season. Bryce Young and the Panthers look to build off their improvements over the last couple of weeks. Both teams come into this matchup dependent on their running game. The Panthers have the worst-ranked rushing defense in the NFL, giving up 166.8 rushing yards per game. Eagles running back and MVP candidate Saquon Barkley will look to rely on his NFL-best offensive line to carry his team to victory, as the Eagles will counter with the best rushing attack in the league, averaging 188.9 yards per game. He is on pace to break Eric Dickerson's single-season rushing yard record. Eagles fans hope Nick Sirianni and Kellen Moore will try to avoid getting too cute with their game plan and attack their obvious weakest link. Second-year quarterback Bryce Young got benched earlier in the season but looks to prove himself against an Eagles defense that ranks #1 in the NFL. If the Eagles establish their running game while stopping the Panthers rushing attack, putting the pressure on Bryce Young, this looks to be a long day for Panthers rookie head coach Dave Canales and company. The Eagles look to keep up with the Lions, as they are vying for the one seed and the all-important first-round bye, as they are one game back in the NFC playoff picture. On the flip side, the Panthers look to play spoiler while trying to build momentum going into next season. The Eagles have struggled in the first quarter this year, but they look to jump on them early and make a statement this Sunday to possibly clinch a spot in the playoffs.

NBA Fan Loyalty/Brand Awareness Paper

My biggest takeaway from this assignment is that contemporary NBA fandom includes both a deep connection to an individual's favorite player and a concern over the game's current state and where it is heading. Based on my interviews with Jake Fernandez and Liam Rooney, two self-proclaimed avid NBA fans, some key themes intertwined with Chapter 3 regarding player loyalty/branding, and the overall fan experience.

One aspect of contemporary NBA fandom is the focus on individual players, sometimes more than individual teams. The NBA markets its players more than its teams, along with the players market themselves, which in turn creates fanbases of said players. Jake, a Boston Celtics fan, admitted that his favorite player is LeBron James and roots for him wherever he goes. He stated, "I would follow LeBron to any team that he decides to go to" (Fernandez 6:24). Similarly, Liam, who is a Brooklyn Nets fan, continues to support Kyrie Irving even though he is no longer on the Nets. He said, "I like the Mavericks because Kyrie Irving is on the team... if the Nets were out of the playoffs, I would probably root for the Mavericks" (Rooney 4:00). All of this shows the increasing dominance of player-driven branding with athletes like LeBron and Kyrie cultivating their own personal brands and loyalty that reach beyond whatever team they are on.

Serazio expands on the topic of how modern players have leveraged self-branding and social media to establish a fanbase. He adds, "'Athletes have been able to create their own persona independent of any other vehicle other than themselves,' laments Chris Dufresne of the Los Angeles Times. 'They've become almost like independent contractors where they used to be your celebrity, your stardom, may have been tied 20 or 30 years ago, to what team drafted you. If you were drafted by a crummy team that was in a small market, then you weren't going to get as much attention.' Nowadays, though, 'you can kind of create your own empire independent of your circumstance'" (Serazio 141). This shows how fans today are drawn to star players as much as if not more than, their favorite teams. People are more inclined to support a player with whom they align. It is easier to connect with a player than with a whole team because you can associate them with a face. Serazio explains, "The end goal here is, of course, producing and projecting celebrity characters to secure 'para-social relationships' with fans. This term refers to a curious, albeit widespread psychological state of imagined connection (and subsequent market value) that seems much more plausible and practicable given the technological advances of the last decade" (Serazio 142). Social media allows today's fans to engage directly with players, giving them the opportunity to establish "personal connections" that make supporting them easier than supporting an entire franchise.

Both Jake and Liam expressed their biggest issues with the current state of the NBA. Jake thinks that the regular season, sadly, does not matter to players anymore. Jake stated, "The regular season just no longer matters; if it's not the playoffs, the players don't try. A lot of times, it feels like they're not putting out their best product, and that, in turn, loses fans" (Fernandez 8:03). Liam thinks that the NBA and its players are alienating part of their fanbase by incorporating too much politics. He stated, "I think the NBA can sometimes get a little too political. People use sports as an escape to get away from all the political stuff. So, I don't think that they should bring that into games. I think if they get less political, they can bring more eyeballs because I think a lot of people stopped watching the NBA for that reason. I think the

NBA and any other sport should be about the sport itself. If I want to hear the player's political views on things, I'll look them up on Twitter or Instagram or see what they're saying on Fox News or CNN; I don't want to see it on NBC Sports or ESPN” (Rooney 5:02).

The contemporary NBA fan is very engaged with the league’s biggest stars and extremely loyal to their favorite players, not just their teams. I think this is especially true given the commercialization of sports franchises nowadays. However, they are critical of some of the main issues the NBA faces regarding putting the best product out on the floor every night and politics in sports. In terms of the future of the NBA, addressing and balancing competitive integrity, along with social messaging and player-driven branding, will be critical to keeping fans loyal and engaged.

Fyre Festival Documentary Essay

The Fyre Festival, spearheaded by Billy McFarland, was supposed to be this luxurious music festival on the private island of Norman's Cay, which Pablo Escobar once owned. Backed by close friend and rapper Ja Rule, it was initially supposed to promote their Fyre app, which was an app for booking music talent. McFarland bought his own private island and promised attendees luxury villas, gourmet food, private jets, big-name music acts, supermodels, and lavish accommodations. They sold tickets for upwards of \$250,000 and promised a never-before-seen experience on a dedicated private island. They even got some of the most famous people in the world to advertise the festival on their social media with an orange square. They ended up having to change the event's location to a new island and lied about the whole thing and what it all would be. The saying "When it looks too good to be true, it probably is" is perfectly applied here. What ensued was a failure of epic proportions. From the moment the attendees arrived on the island, they immediately experienced the disorganization of the entire thing. Even before they departed for the island, they were not given the private jets that they were promised. What they expected to be "VIP villas" ended up being FEMA tents that were left over from Hurricane Matthew, their mattresses were on rain-soaked floors, and their "gourmet food" was infamously cheese on bread. Everyone immediately knew that it was an immense failure. The subsequent fallout was massive, leading to lawsuits and a damaged reputation for all involved, public outrage, and Billy McFarland was sentenced to six years in prison and ordered to forfeit \$26 million. The Fyre Festival failed because of its terrible planning, lack of communication/transparency, and overestimation of funds.

Arguably, their biggest mistake was their failure to adequately plan for the event. First off, they only had a few months to plan for this festival when they should have given themselves ample time, probably two years, to plan everything. For such a big event, you need to account for roadblocks in the process, and they did not. They had to change the island entirely and then lied about the new island. They failed to provide the necessary and promised infrastructure and accommodations for the guests. They did not account for the amount of time, effort, money, and resources it would take to set up an event like this on a private island. Billy and his team just winged it, and he kept ignoring every problem they encountered, even when his team warned him. The experience the guests ended up having was a colossal failure compared to what they were promised. All their plans were soiled, and because they did not give themselves ample time to adjust their plan, it was a disastrous experience and failure.

Another big reason the festival failed was their lack of communication and transparency. From day one, McFarland and his team misled investors and customers about what the festival was actually going to be. They sold tickets for things and amenities they did not have and knew they could not provide them. This fraud led to mass confusion, and the attendees quickly realized they were not getting what they paid for, which started with the flight to the island before they even got there. It did not help that celebrities were paid to repost the orange square to promote the event when they did not even know what the festival was going to be themselves. From the public's perspective, it came across that since all these famous people are posting about it, it must be legit. This only grew their popularity and fed into Billy's pipe dream. They did not account for how many people could fit on the island. They falsely advertised and sold things they could not provide, which is illegal. They should have been fully transparent once they realized what they

were offering was unrealistic and not lie and continuously say they would provide something they could not. You cannot sell something you do not have. They did not have a sufficient customer support team to answer attendees' questions; they just ignored them. Their greed and lack of transparency damaged their reputations, ripped off thousands, and put the attendees in uncomfortable and dangerous situations.

The other main reason this festival failed was their overestimation of funds. They promised artists money they did not have and promised things they did not have the money for. McFarland lied to investors to raise millions, promising them unrealistic returns. They ran out of money but still sold tickets regardless to try to pay for the things they needed. McFarland was determined to do this and sell this vision when basically everyone on his team knew it was unrealistic, and they could not financially accomplish it. They prioritized these crazy marketing campaigns over actually delivering on their promises and obtaining even essential needs for the festival. They did not even have the money to pay the workers who had to work 24/7 for a couple of weeks to try to salvage the plan. The overestimation of available funds was the nail in the coffin for them. All of this was fraud.

The Fyre Festival is a prime example of how greed, obliviousness, inadequate planning, and deceit can lead to an absolute disaster of an event. Billy's team tried to warn him that it was impossible, but he did not listen. He was more obsessed with selling this plan and the money and popularity that came from it than actually following through with it. It was doomed from the very beginning because of their unrealistic expectations, which put them in a financial hole, and they were unable to deliver on their promises. They sold people on a plan that was just a pipe

dream in their heads. If Billy put me in charge of planning Fyre Festival 2, I do not know how he would gain the trust of the public back in order to sell tickets. However, If I were in charge of planning this event, I would give myself more time than I thought was needed to plan this sort of event. With this kind of money involved, you need to get everything right. I would give myself at least two years in order to plan everything, which is more than enough time. I would first ensure I have the money to follow through on a plan like this and then diligently lay out my plan for the next two years. I would ensure I could find a place that could logistically support and hold an event like this. I would be transparent with the public about my plan and if anything changed. I would also not sell something unless I had it. Ensuring everything is already in place and that I have everything logistically lined up before I market it to the public would prevent any fraud on my end. Honest communication with everyone involved would manage expectations so the potential buyers would know what they are getting. It is important that you do not sell something you do not and will not have. This whole fiasco shows that meticulous planning is more important than gaining hype. You plan first, follow through on your plan, then get the hype. Every event planner could learn valuable lessons from Billy McFarland's colossal failure so that they do not end up in jail like he did. The Fyre Festival was the blueprint for how not to plan an event. It was a nice idea in theory, but that is all it ever was... theory.