# SPORTS



# Ridley primed and prepped for that moment

**By Dillon Flanigan**
**Sports Editor**



PHOTO | CARLY RUSSELL

**Quarterback Keith Ridley Jr., a graduate, forced out of bounds in the red zone.**

**"I wasn't greedy about having to play right away. I knew that I might have to wait and grind for my opportunity. Do I wish I had to wait four years to play? Obviously not. But everything works out for a reason, and I'm very grateful to be in the position that I am now."**

**— Quarterback Keith Ridley Jr., a graduate**

As a junior in high school, quarterback Keith Ridley Jr., a graduate, knew that he wanted to play collegiate football.

Ridley sought the attention of many schools. However, he was a 'tweener.' Ridley reached out to as many universities as possible, and was turned down by many, as Divisions II and III considered Ridley uninterested in their level.

He believed his talents constituted Division I level, but that level showed very little interest.

The Lynn, Massachusetts native had two Division I offers right down the road. His two options were to walk on to Boston College as a tight end or the University of Rhode Island as a quarterback.

For financial reasons, Ridley took the opportunity at Boston College for one semester. After the regular season ended, he reflected on his time and needed a change.

"I really did give them my all there," Ridley said. "But at the end of the day, it really just tore me apart when I was at practice seeing the other QBs there, knowing that I could at least beat one of them out for a spot."

At the end of 2019, Ridley transferred to Bryant University, a smaller Division I school in Rhode Island where he practiced against future Buffalo Bills linebacker Joe Andreessen.

After beating out four other quarterbacks each year for three seasons, he earned a scholarship in his final semester, though he remained the backup to starter Zevi Eckhaus.

Ridley completed his undergrad in December 2022, a semester early. He liked his time at Bryant and had conversations about being put on full scholarship, but it was made clear that Eckhaus was the starter.

"I just took a chance on myself," Ridley said. "I knew if I stayed there and was just complacent about being the backup, that that's something I regret for the rest of my life: not taking a chance on myself after everything that I've already been through."

Graduating early and the decision to transfer put him in a prime position for whatever program he joined.

It is typical for football players to transfer to another school after the fall semester. This allows them to compete in spring ball and to learn the playbook and potentially earn a spot before new recruits join in the summer.

Quarterbacks Coach Joe Bernard said: "He's always looking to get better. He never has the answers; he always wants to learn. The guy works his tail off, and that's every day, every morning, every night. It doesn't matter what it is, he's looking to learn and get better."

Graduate transfer Ridley took the starting in place of Bernard, the outgoing fifth year graduate-turned-coach.

Being healthy is key in a violent physical sport like football.

"I just try to protect myself and get out of bounds sometimes, or slide," Ridley said. "I feel like I do a pretty good job trying to protect myself out there the most I can."

Ridley wears several pieces of ancillary protective equipment. He wears rib pads, a mouth guard and a cue collar, which is tasked with protecting the player from a brain injury.

Ridley said: "The little things add up. If it does happen- hopefully it never does- we took steps to prevent it. And if these steps weren't good enough at the end of the day, I know that I put myself in the best position."

Last season was full of ups and downs with a final record of 4-6. Winning the last three games brings optimism to this season at 1-1 after an exciting victory against the American International College Yellow Jackets.

Game nine against the Yellow Jackets will wrap up the season in November, ending Ridley's collegiate football career.

**For more on this story, visit thesouthernews.com**

# Homecoming 2024 highlights



PHOTO | CARLY RUSSELL

**Defensive back Da'Jaun Banks, a junior, lined up against Greyhounds wide reciever Nick Ofodile.**



**Running back E'Lijah Gray, a senior, scores a touchdown.**



**Safety Joenel Figueroa, a junior, stops Greyhounds tight end Matt Raeke short of the goal line.**

# Field hockey snaps 3 game losing streak

**By Dillon Flanigan**
**Sports Editor**

A much-needed 1-0 win under the lights over Molloy University on Oct. 1, snaps the Owls losing streak as defensive play shined the brightest at Jess Dow Field.

"I thought that tonight was a great game and a great example of how good of a team we can be and what we can be when we work together," forward Mia Oliverio, a junior, said. "I think everyone did the best that they could, and we all worked as a unit tonight. So, very happy with that."

The Owls had several opportunities to score but missed.

Forward Natalia Fiato, a junior, had the strongest opportunity to score with six shots on goal in nine attempts. Two attempts from forward Keana Criscuolo, a freshman, were wide of the goal, just as Oliverio's shot attempt was blocked.

"I can't even give you a number of opportunities that we should have been creating and scoring," Head Coach Kelley Frassinelli said.

Shortly thereafter, midway into the first quarter, Oliverio, who finished the game with only two shots on goal in three attempts, scored the only goal of the game, assisted by midfielder Lindsey Onofrio, a freshman.

"I was nervous, but once I saw that ball pass, I knew that was my only chance, so I went for it," Oliverio said. "I hit the ball, went over the right goalie shoulder, went in the net."

As mentioned, the opponent's defense was stout.

Molloy goalkeeper Kayla Balsamo faced the most shots attempted by the Owls with 21. In only her fourth game of her collegiate career, Balsamo allowed one goal and recorded nine saves during the game.

"It was not the easiest. I'll say that," Oliverio said. "They had very, tight D, but we also had ours, and we would not have won that game without our defense."

Owls goalkeeper Lyndsay Troisi, a freshman, also played well with four saves.

"We're really happy with the formation that we had in there," Frassinelli said. "They're strong, and they basically did what we asked them to do, and they stepped to the ball. They have a lot of speed. They're really smart in their decisions, so we're happy with what the unit has been doing in that backfield."

There is much more of the season to go, but with this win, Frassinelli is confident the team has proven themselves able to adjust their deficiencies, setting new goals for the weeks ahead.

"Growing pains is what we've been calling it because they're so young," Frassinelli said. "We have a great bench that's coming in and stepping in and doing the work when they step on the field. But we're growing little by little, and it's each step, each week."

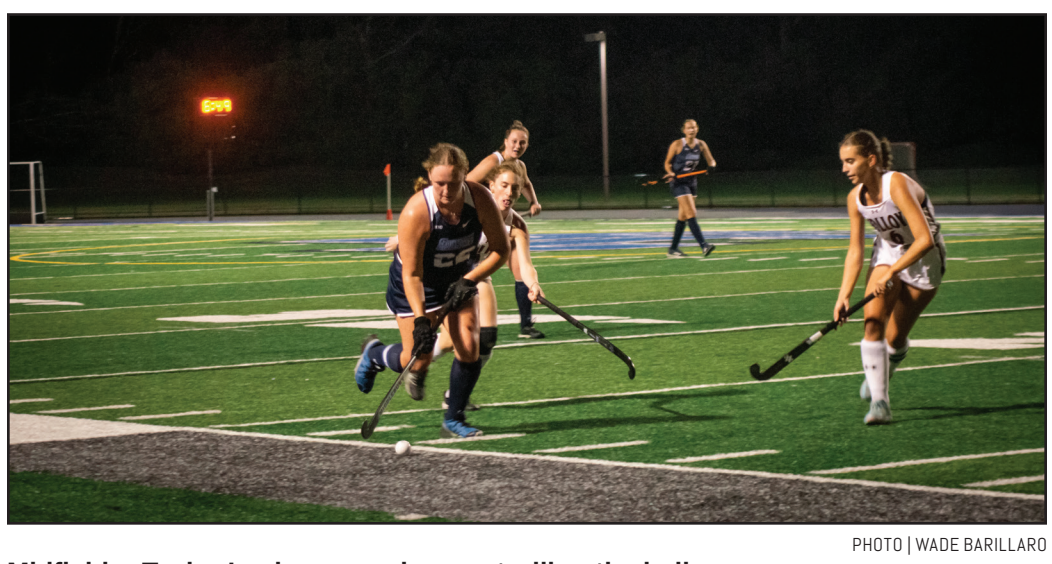


PHOTO | WADE BARILLARO

**Midfielder Taylor Leckey, a senior, controlling the ball.**