



**CCWW Sports Report No. 430**  
**(May 1, 2017)**  
by  
Rich Coyle '68



Happy May Day!

**Country Club Sports—Two Ivy League Titles**

Both the Cornell men's and women's **Tennis** teams were Ivy co-champions. For the men, winning a share of the Ivy title—Cornell's second championship in the 61 years of Ivy League tennis—was a fitting end to one of its best seasons ever. More on that below. For the women, it was their **first Ivy title ever!** They came into the final weekend (April 22-23) with a 3-2 record, needing to catch two teams—Harvard and Princeton—both of whom were at 4-1. Cornell had already shown they were as good as these two teams. The Big Red had beaten Princeton twice, once in the ECAC indoor championships and once in the regular season. (BTW, before those two victories, the Red hadn't beaten Princeton in 21 years.) And Cornell had split two matches with Harvard, losing to the Crimson in the ECACs and then defeating them when the teams met in the Ivy League regular season. But before the victory over Harvard, the Big Red had lost to Dartmouth and Penn, and so they were only in third-place, tied with Dartmouth and Penn. To gain a share of the Ivy title, Cornell not only had to defeat Yale and Brown in its last two contests, but also needed both Princeton and Harvard to lose at least once. Princeton and Harvard played each other on Saturday so one of those losses was going to happen. The other would have to come from the winner of the Princeton/Harvard match losing on Sunday.

But first Cornell had to take care of its own business, which it did pretty handily. At Yale on Saturday, the Red lost the doubles point, then won all six singles matches, five in straight sets, for a 6-1 victory. While that was going on, Harvard beat Princeton, while Dartmouth kept pace with the Red by edging Penn. On Sunday, Cornell defeated Brown. After Cornell won the doubles point, it split the first two completed singles matches, before the Red won at the No. 1 and No. 4 positions to clinch the victory. Usually the women finish up the ongoing matches, even after one team has clinched the win, but not this time. Final score: Cornell 4 Brown 1.

That took us to scoreboard-watching time. Actually, it was twitter-watching. Without "Live Stats," the best way to keep track of a tennis match is usually by accessing one of the teams' twitter feeds. Through this modern invention, I (and I suspect the Cornell team) learned that the Harvard/Penn match was still going on—and was in fact tied at 3—after Cornell won. It took the best part of another hour, but Penn eventually pulled out a 4-3 win, giving the Red a share of the Ivy title with Harvard and Dartmouth, which defeated Princeton on Sunday.

Congratulations to the entire Big Red team. For Ivy League play, the Red used the same six players for singles and doubles but during the spring season nine different players (pictured below after their victory over Brown) played and won matches for the Big Red. The team was led by seniors **Marika Cusick '17** and **Alex D'Ascenzo '17**, who competed exclusively in the Nos. 1 and 2 positions, respectively. Marika was 13-5 this spring, and won 10 of her last 11 matches, while Alex was 10-8, competing against each team's second-best player. The Red got strong showings throughout its line-up. **Priyanka Shah '18**, playing exclusively in the No. 3 position, was 14-4, including a big win against Brown. **Liz Stewart '18** played mostly in the No. 4 position and went 17-4, including a perfect 7-0 in Ivy League play. The other two regulars, **Mariko Iinuma '19** and **Madison Stevens '18**, also had winning records. Mariko was 11-4, including a perfect 6-0 in Ivy League matches, and Madison was 11-6. The Red also got wins in non-conference matches this spring from Redmond High graduate **Michelle Wang '19** and first years **Ananya Dua '20** and **Maria Perez de la Llave '20**.



The Big Red women's share of the Ivy title is not likely to gain it entry to the NCAA tournament. The Ivy League's tie-breaking rules gave the Ivy automatic bid to the NCAAs to Dartmouth. Cornell moved up to 50th in the ITA rankings, but that will almost certainly not be good enough to get the Red an at-large bid. So the Cornell women's fine season is over.

Not true for Cornell men's tennis. Unlike the women, the Cornell men went into the last weekend of the regular season tied for the league lead and not needing help to win a share of the Ivy title. To be Ivy co-champs, the Big Red simply had to win out at home over Yale and Brown. And they did, although it was hardly a cakewalk. The final score in both matches was 4-3, and on both days the Red had to come from behind to secure the victory. Against Yale, Cornell trailed 2-1, took a 3-2 lead, then saw the match tied 3-3, with it all coming down to the contest at the No. 4 position between **Pietro Rimondini '20** and Yale's Doehler. They split the first two sets, and Doehler twice served for the match in the third set, but Pietro held him off and ultimately won the match, 6-2, 2-6, 7-6, to give the Big Red the 4-3 victory.

The Sunday match against Brown was even more difficult. Brown won the doubles point and two of the three first-completed matches to take a 3-1 lead. That left the Big Red with zero margin for error. Three matches remained, all involving Cornell seniors, and the Red needed to win them all. But in what is likely to be their last home matches, all three came through, with **Colin Sinclair '17** winning at No. 3, **Chris Vrabel '17** winning at No. 4, and **Bernardo Casares Rosa '17** clinching the Big Red's title by winning at No. 6.

Both Harvard and Columbia won their final-weekend matches so the Ivy League season ended in a three-way tie. Under the Ivy League's tie-breaking rules, the Lions will get the automatic invitation to the NCAA tournament. Still, the Big Red retained its 26th-place ITA ranking and that should be good enough to send the Red to the tennis version of the big dance as an at-large team. Cornell has been in the NCAA tourney once before—in 2011, when that Ivy championship team lost to Louisville in the first round. The NCAA field will be announced on Tuesday, May 2.

For a while it looked like Cornell might pull off a trifecta in the C.C. sports. **Golf**, which has never won an Ivy title, was in second place, trailing Harvard by just two strokes after 36 holes of the 54-hole Ivy championship tournament. And the Big Red's **Mike Graboyes '18** had a three-stroke lead for individual medalist honors. The Red faded a bit on the final day, losing ground to Harvard, but they still hung on for second place, besting Princeton by two strokes. And Mike maintained that three-stroke lead to win medalist honors, joining older brother **Luke Graboyes '17**, who won last year, as only the second and third Cornellians in the history of the Ivy tournament to win medalist honors. Going in, I wrote that a fourth-place finish was the best Cornell could hope for. Shows you what I know.

### Spectator Sports—One Ivy League Title

**Women's Lacrosse** came within 2.7 seconds of going undefeated in the Ivy League and winning the league championship outright. But two weeks ago against Princeton, they gave up a very late goal to allow the Tigers to tie up the game, and Princeton won in double overtime. That created a three-way tie at the top among Cornell, Princeton and Penn, each with one loss. Cornell need to win at home over Harvard last Saturday to maintain at least a share of the title. Also, if all three tied teams won, Cornell would host the Ivy League Tournament coming up this weekend to determine who gets the Ivy League's automatic NCAA tournament bid. Well, that's exactly what happened. The Big Red easily disposed of the Crimson, 13-6, and Penn and Princeton both won. So Cornell, based on goal differential among the tied teams, will host, and be the top seed in, this weekend's ILT. The Big Red will play Harvard on Friday evening and if they win will play Penn or Princeton for the championship on Sunday morning. All games should be streamed on ESPN3.

Last Saturday was Senior Day, and several of the seniors came up big, including leading scorer **Amie Dickson '17**, who had a goal and three assists; goalie **Renee Poulott '17**, who stopped 15 of 21 shots; and all three tri-captains, **Catherine Ellis '17**, who netted five goals to add to her team-leading total, **Kristy Gilbert '17**, who set a Cornell record with four free-position goals, and the Big Red's Tewaaron Award nominee, **Catie Smith '17**, who caused five turnovers, and was named Ivy League Defensive Player of the Week.

**Men's Lacrosse** needed to beat Brown on April 22 to make it to the Ivy League tournament. They did not. While Cornell did not play its best game by any stretch, the 13-10 defeat can be largely chalked up to two factors. In the first half, the Big Red could not win a face off and therefore had trouble getting the ball. I mean "could not win a faceoff" literally, Brown won all 15 first-half face-offs. I don't think I've ever seen that before. The face-offs were almost even in the second half, but by then Brown's goalie had gotten hot, stopping 10 of Cornell's 15 second-half shots on goal.

The Big Red still had one game left, at home for Senior Day against 13th-ranked Princeton. With nothing but pride at stake, the Big Red offense lit up the Tigers for 18 goals, taking a six-goal lead early in the second half, and holding on for an 18-17 victory. **Jeff Teat '20** had 12 points (five goals, seven assists) to finish the season with 72 points, setting a new Cornell freshman record. Jeff's 12 points in this game was the most since **Tim Goldstein '88** had 12 points in a game at Hobart in 1987. For his accomplishment, Teat was named both the Ivy league Rookie of the Week (for the third time) and Player of the Week. It was the first time in 15 years that a Cornell player won the POW/ROW combo in the same week.

The Big Red finished the season with a 5-8 record, 3-3 in Ivy play. That compares with 6-7, 1-5 in league play a year ago. Improvement? Hard to say. This year's squad was very young, 29 freshmen and sophomores, but so was last year's team. The Red got off to a horrible start this spring, losing their first five games. Cornell opened against the same four teams as last year—Penn State, Hobart, Albany and Virginia. Last year, the Big Red split those four games, and scored one more goal than they gave up. This year, Cornell lost all four games, and was outscored by 30 goals over the four-game span. On the other hand, those four teams were generally better this year; last year they finished a combined 37-26. This year, their current combined record is 40-17. After the horrid start, Cornell won five of its last eight games and outscored the opposition by 16 goals. A year ago the Red lost five of its last eight games and was outscored by 14 goals. This year's team also had to contend with a major possession differential caused by the lack of a strong face-off specialist. In 2016, Cornell won 63% of its face-offs; this year, the Red won just 38%.

Many blog posters don't like the coach and blame him for the recent decline of the program. I'm not so sure—or, more precisely, I'm not sure that the current coach is a step down from his immediate predecessor. Jeff Tambroni, who left for Penn State following the 2010 season, was (and still is) a really good coach. But Coach Matt Kerwick's predecessor, now an assistant at Harvard, is not exactly wowing the Crimson fans. In any case, because it's doubtful that Coach Kerwick is going anywhere soon, we'll get to see next year whether his strong recruiting skill (about which everyone seems to agree) will begin to pay dividends as the players mature.

The **Baseball** season is over—and an odd and ultimately disappointing season it was. The Big Red got off to a great start in non-conference play, winning nine of its first 12 games. The Red then lost five of eight against the Rolfe Division teams, before winning three of four at Columbia to even its league record at 6-6. So two weeks ago, Cornell hosted Penn for four games, with a chance to tie the Quakers for the Gehrig Division lead by winning three of the four games. The Red could not get it done, instead losing three of four and eliminating itself from the division race.

Cornell finished its season with a non-conference 10-2 beat-down of Binghamton (Bingo is no slouch; its RPI is 63rd out of 299 D-I teams) and a split of its four game home-and-home series with Princeton. The Big Red's final record was 21-17, its first winning season since 2013. Its Ivy League record was 9-11. But the Red coulda, shoulda, done better. Even though it finished third in the four-team Gehrig Division, Cornell's RPI of 118 was the best in the division. The division co-champs, Columbia and Penn, were a combined 3-18 against the top 100 RPI teams; Cornell was 4-1, defeating Bingo twice and Michigan State and splitting with Yale. Some injuries hurt the team and sometimes they just lost to teams they should have beaten.

The **Softball** season will end with a game at Syracuse on May 2. Cornell completed its Ivy League slate with a record of 6-14, and its overall record, with that one game remaining, is 13-27-1. While the Big Red did not have a great season, it won three more league games and four more total games than a year ago under second-year head coach **Julie Farlow '97**. And graduation losses were slight—only two players, one of whom was hurt much of the year—so the Red should be better next year. One of the returnees is **Lisa Nelson '20**, from Kirkland and Juanita High school, who became one of Cornell's regular pitchers in her first year.

### **Water Sports—Another National Title in the Offing?**

The Rowing season is winding down. Cornell's best team, by far, is **Lightweight Rowing**, which has won two of the last three Eastern and IRA championships. The Big Red lights varsity 8 finished the regular season undefeated. Before this past weekend, the polls were split as to whether Cornell or Yale was No. 1. Both were undefeated and they had not raced each other. But on Saturday Yale lost to Harvard (whom the Red defeated earlier in the spring) so the new polls should be unanimous in putting the Big Red in the top spot. Up next are the Eastern Sprints in two weeks and IRA nationals in early June.

**Heavyweight Rowing** has had a tough year, the varsity 8 losing to Syracuse, Navy, Princeton, Yale and Harvard, before outracing Penn this past weekend. The Big Red are now ranked 18th. **Women's Rowing** has been having an even rougher time of it. Indeed, by my count, the women's varsity 8 has lost every race this spring, including a last-place finish of 21 boats at the Clemson Invitational. Their final race of the season will be the Ivy League championships in two weeks.

The Big Red has one other water sport, **Sailing**. Cornell seems to field both a women's team and a co-ed team. The regular regatta schedule is over. The women's team qualified for nationals, which will be held in Charleston, South Carolina, in three weeks. The co-ed team just missed qualifying for nationals.

### **Horse Sports—Another Ivy League Title—Sort of...**

**Equestrian** is not an official Ivy League sport but they still hold an unofficial championship. Cornell hosted it this past weekend and won it for the eighth time. Cornell riders won six of the eight events, led by **Victoria Whitworth '17**, who won in both open flat and open fences and was the High Point Rider.

Three weeks earlier the Big Red competed at the Zone 2 championships. The Red was looking to qualify as team to go to IHSA nationals on Thursday in Lexington, Kentucky, and also to qualify as many individual riders as possible for the same event. Last year, Cornell qualified as a team for nationals for the first time ever. Alas, it could not repeat, as the Red finished third, and only the top two teams will go to nationals. Three individual riders will be going to Lexington, however. **Amanda Ko '17** will compete for

the Cacchione Cup given to the nation's top collegiate rider. Also, **Claira Seely '17** will compete in Novice Flat and **Laura Vasquez-Bolanos '19** will compete in the Walk Trot event.

### **Coming Up This Weekend**

I already mentioned the Ivy League women's lacrosse tournament. Also, Men's and Women's Track & Field will be in New Haven for outdoor Heptagonals.

That's all for now. I'm going on an every two week schedule for the rest of the school year.

**GO BIG RED!**