



**CCWW Sports Report No. 431**  
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by  
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End of the year wrap-up time. In this Part I, I'll cover women's athletics. Next month, we'll look at the year that Cornell's male athletes and teams had. Also, since I haven't put out one of these reports since the beginning of May, I'll include a summary of what you may have missed while the school year was winding down, and do the same thing for the men in the next report. (Sneak Preview: the men won two national championships, one team and one individual, earlier this month.) So without further ado, here's the final 2016-17 report on Big Red women's athletics, presented, more or less, in reverse order of when the team's season ended.

**Track & Field.** The season ended in early June in Eugene, Oregon, where Cornell was represented by two athletes at the NCAA championships. **Taysia Radoslav '18** finished 15th in the 400 meter hurdles, good for second-team All-American honors. Classmate **Shannon Hugard '18** finished in 23rd place in the 1500-meter run. For Taysia, this was her second career second-team All-American honor; in 2015 she achieved that status as part of Cornell's 4x400 relay team that finished 16th.

Radoslav and Hugard earned a trip to the championships with their finishes at the NCAA East Preliminary held the last weekend in May in Lexington, Kentucky. In addition to Radoslav and Hugard, six other Cornell women qualified for the East Preliminary, led by tri-captain **Adrian Jones '17**, who qualified in three events—the 100 and 200 meter dashes and the 4x100 relay. Also making it to the prelims were **Briar Brumley '19** in the 3000 meter steeplechase, high jumper **Kate Gulbrandsen '18**, and the other three members of the 4x100 relay team, **Ellen Shepard '18**, **Kat Quigley '19**, and **Brittany Steneke '20**.

Before the NCAA championships, the Cornell women had two major end-of-season meets. The Big Red finished a disappointing sixth in the Ivy Heptagonals, held on May 6 and 7. The Red had no event wins, and the sixth-place finish was Cornell's worst in either the Indoor or Outdoor Heps since 1989. Cornell came back, however, a week later to win the Outdoor ECAC championships for a second-straight year. The Big Red bested 48 other teams, including four Ivy League schools that finished ahead of the Red at Heps a week earlier. Sweet revenge, huh? Yes, to some extent, but the win must come with an asterisk. Since the ECAC championships are after the last date to post a qualifying time for NAAs, and less than two weeks before the NCAA East Preliminary, many top athletes took a pass. Cornell was helped out by the fact that most of its NCAA qualifiers—Radoslav being the exception—*did* participate and contribute valuable points. Hugard and Brumley won their events and Adrian Jones took home a second in the 200, a third in the 100, and anchored a second-place finish in the 4x100. For that effort, Adrian was named the Most Outstanding Performer of the Meet.

Notwithstanding the ECAC title, this must be considered another down year for Women's Track & Field. In addition to the sixth-place Outdoor Heps finish, the Red could manage only a fourth at Indoor Heps. For most of this century, Cornell has been the dominant team in the Ivies. The Big Red were the indoor and outdoor champs every year from 2002 through 2007. Of the 24 combined indoor and outdoor titles available from 2002 through 2013, the Red women won 17 of them, and never finished lower than third. Since 2014, Cornell has zero titles, one runner-up finish, two thirds, two fourths, two fifths and this spring's sixth.

**Rowing.** The women's varsity 8 boat lost every race this spring, and finished last at the Ivy Championships a month ago. As a team, Cornell actually finished seventh (ahead of Dartmouth) at the Ivy championships because of the somewhat better performance of the Big Red's other boats, the second and third varsity 8s and the varsity 4s. Five years ago, Cornell won seven races, finished second in the Ivy League and 13th in the country. Since then, it's been downhill for the program.

**Sailing.** Cornell wrapped up its season last month with an 11th place finish (out of 18 teams) at the Eastern National Semifinals held in Charleston, South Carolina. Only the top nine boats advanced to the national finals.

**Lacrosse.** It was another successful season for the Big Red women as they won a share of the Ivy championship and, for the second-straight year, advanced to the second round of the NCAA tournament. It would have been even better but for Princeton. An overtime loss to the Tigers during league play cost Cornell an undefeated Ivy League regular season. The Big Red lost again to the Tigers in the finals of the Ivy League tournament. While that loss did not cost the Red a place in the NCAA tournament, it likely did cost them a first-round bye and second-round home game. So after Cornell dispatched Notre Dame in the NCAA first round they got to play—you guessed it—Princeton for the third time this season. The final score was 11-9, as the Tigers scored twice in the last four minutes after the Big Red scored three straight to knot the score at nine. Cornell ended the season with a 13-6 record, five of its losses coming to teams in the nation's top seven in RPI.

A nice season like this usually comes with post-season honors for players and coaches. Defender **Catie Smith '17** led the way by being named a first-team All-American, to go with her first team All-Ivy, first-team All-ECAC, and first team all-Northeast Region selections. Catie was named the Ivy League Defender of the Year, and shared ECAC Defensive Player of the Year honors. Oh, and by the way, she was selected as Cornell's Senior Woman Athlete of the Year.

There were many other honors handed out to Cornellians. **Jenny Graap '86** was named the Ivy League Coach of the Year and shared ECAC Coach of the Year honors. Smith was joined on the All-Ivy first team by attack **Amie Dickson '17** and midfielder **Kristy Gilbert '17**, and on the all-region first team by Dickson and goalkeeper **Renee Poullott '17**. Gilbert was second-team all-region, while Poullott, for some unknown reason, slipped to honorable mention on the All-Ivy team. Rene, Cornell's all-time winningest goalie, was one of the top goalkeepers in the country and was selected to play in the IWLCA Senior All-Star game. Finally, **Catherine Ellis '17** and **Taylor Reed '18** were honorable mention All-Ivy picks.

**Equestrian.** This program is on the rise under third-year head coach **Joanna Novakovic '03**. The Big Red finished first in the region and won the Ivy League show. Their third-place finish at the zone championships did not earn them a second-straight trip to nationals but three individual riders did qualify for nationals.

**Softball.** The Big Red was not great; still, its Ivy League record of 6-14 and overall record of 13-28-1 showed a three league-win and four total-win improvement in coach **Julie Farlow '97**'s second year. This was a young team. Cornell's two All-Ivy selections, outfielder **Megan Murray '18** and catcher **Olivia Lam '19**, both named to the second team, will be back next year as will all but one of the Red's regulars.

**Tennis.** I've already written at length in earlier reports about the Cornell women's first Ivy League championship ever, and there's not much more to say. The Big Red finished the season ranked 49th in the Intercollegiate Tennis Association's national rankings. **Marika Cusick '17** was the unanimous selection for Ivy League Player of the Year and also was voted the Most Improved Player in the ITA Northeast Region. **Alexandra D'Ascenzo '17** was named to the All-Ivy second team and **Mike Stevens** was named Ivy League Coach of the Year. Cusick's and D'Ascenzo's graduation will create a big hole but the rest of the Red's rotation returns next year.

**Gymnastics.** This was yet another team that had a very good season, winning the Ivy Classic, finishing second in the ECAC championships, and thrice setting new school records for points in a meet. The Big Red were led by two sophomores, **Kaitlin Green '19**, who won individual titles at the USAG championships on the balance beam and the uneven bars, and **Lyanda Dudley '19**.

**Polo.** The Cornell women were unable to three-peat as national champions, losing by a goal to in the national semis to eventual champion UVA. The Big Red ended an unusual losing season with a 10-12 record. This has been a strong program for many years and there is no reason to think this was anything but an aberration.

**Fencing** had a new head coach, **Daria Schneider**, but in the end had a typical year. After some historic wins early in the season, the Big Red finished fifth (of seven teams) in the Ivy Round-Robin. It was the fifth straight year that Cornell finished fifth in the Ivies. Outstanding epeeist **Victoria Wines '17** won a silver medal at the NCAA Northeast Regional; in her four years, Wines never finished lower than second at this event. Vicki and foilists **Luby Kiriakidi '18** and **Gabriella Zusin '18** competed at the NCAA nationals and the three propelled the Red to a 15th-place finish, 13th if one just considers the women's results. That compares with a 10th-place finish among women's teams a year ago, an 11th-place finish in 2015, and a 15th-place finish in 2014. Like I said, a pretty typical year.

**Hockey.** Cornell won its first outright Ivy league title since 2012 (It shared the title in 2013), made the NCAA tournament for the first time since 2014, and won 20 games, also for the first time since 2014. The Big Red were 20-9-5, 13-4-5 in the ECAC. Five players graduated, all regulars, but a solid core is returning.

**Basketball.** I worry about this team. 2016-17 was supposed to be their year, when the stellar recruiting class entering in 2013 all became seniors. It's true that Cornell's 16-11 record this past season was its best since the 2008 Ivy championship team but much more was expected. Despite starting five seniors, the Red managed only a 7-7 league record and did not even make the Ivy League tournament. And now they're in for a total rebuild. Coach **Danya Smith** just announced an incoming class of four freshmen, plus a sophomore transfer from Penn who must sit out this year. The new class looks pretty good on paper but the inexperience of next year's team is staggering. Only one returning player started a game—she started *two* of the team's 27. Only one returnee averaged more than three points per game. I'd like to be wrong but I think Cornell will be fortunate to win ten games next year.

**Swimming & Diving.** You know those pools that allow you to “swim in place.” That's what the Big Red seems to be doing—swimming in place. Cornell finished seventh at the Ivy championships for the fourth straight year. It's not that Cornell is not getting better—in fact, the Ivy meet produced eight new Cornell school records—but, rather, the other Ivies are improving at least as fast. I'm not sure why the Red does not do better; it may be that its facilities are insufficient to make Cornell an attractive option for many recruits. Teagle Pool is an older facility and its lanes are just 25 yards long. It looks to me like every Ivy school other than Columbia has at least a practice pool with 50-meter lanes.

**Squash** won one of three matches at the Howe Cup and finished seventh in the country, its second-straight seventh-place finish after three years of finishing sixth. They've not been bad, they're just not one of the elite programs.

**Volleyball** looks like it's finally headed in the right direction under second-year coach **Trudy Vande Berg**. The team finished with a 12-12 record, the first non-losing record in a decade. With only two players graduating, Cornell should continue to see improvement. At times, the Big Red have been the class of the Ivy League, winning five straight titles from 1989 to 1993 and three straight from 2004 to 2006.

**Cross-Country.** When I started writing these reports in 2012, Cornell was not only the best team in the Ivy League but a national power. Led by All-Americans **Katie Kellner '13** and **Rachel Sorna '14**, the Big Red were ranked as high as tenth in the country during the season. The Red won the Paul Short Invitational, finished fifth of 48 teams in a packed field at the Wisconsin Invitational, dominated Heps, and eventually finished 13th at the NCAA championships. Since then, Cornell has not been able to repeat as Ivy champions, although the Red returned to nationals in 2013. Last year showed an upswing, as competing with a team that had only one senior in the top-seven, the Red finished fifth at Heps, and then fifth of the 37 teams at NCAA regionals, its highest finish since 2013.

**Soccer.** After three years of steady improvement under new coach Patrick Farmer, the Big Red backslid last year and finished with a losing 5-9-2 record (although the same 2-4-1 Ivy League record as the previous year). Now they will proceed with yet another new coach, **Dwight Hornibrook**, the husband of Field Hockey coach **Donna Hornibrook**.

**Field Hockey.** In 2004, Donna Hornibrook took over as head coach of a team that had gone 3-13 the previous year. Her 2004 team had the same 3-13 record but since then her Cornell teams have had winning records and double-figure victories in nine of twelve seasons. Last year was no exception. Cornell was 10-7 and, for the fourth-straight year, finished in the top half of the Ivy League standings. The Big Red got to 10-7 by winning their last four, including the first victory over perennial Ivy power Princeton in ten years and a 9-1 drubbing of Dartmouth on Senior Day.

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So that's the recap. Not bad, really. Most teams showed improvement and/or were young teams that can be expected to improve this year. The Big Red won official Ivy League titles in Hockey, Tennis and Lacrosse and unofficial titles in Gymnastics and Equestrian. Track & Field was off a bit, but I think it is too early to say that their days as an Ivy League power are over. The only team that seems really to be at a nadir is Rowing. Hopefully, that will start to turn around in the near future.

That's all for now. Next report will review the year for the men's teams.

**GO BIG RED!**