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by  
Rich Coyle '68



**“Not That Bad”**

That’s how I described to my wife how Cornell played in last Saturday’s **football** game against Yale. She rolled her eyes and responded, “Is that the test?” “Whoa,” I responded. “Wasn’t that the test for many years for your alma mater’s football team [the Northwestern Wildcats] (or as they were known in that time, the “Mildcats”)]? Maybe “not that bad” is a necessary phase a team must pass through between being bad and actually winning some games.

Last week I compared the Big Red’s relatively close loss to Delaware this year to last year’s beatdown. Last Saturday was déjà vu. In 2017 Yale rushed for 342 yards and defeated the Red by 25 points. On Saturday, the Elis gained a mere 145 yards on the ground and won by just six points. Big improvement. Still, the 30-24 loss was very disappointing because this was a game Cornell could have won.

Here’s the rundown. After Yale marched down the field for touchdowns on its first two drives, the Red defense settled into a “bend-but-not-break” mode, giving up lots of yards but just three field goals on Yale’s next six drives. Meanwhile, Cornell responded to each of Yale’s first two touchdown drives with a long scoring drive of its own, the first ending with a 40-yard TD run by **Harold Coles '20**, and the second with Coles catching a screen pass and racing 58 yards for the touchdown. After the three Eli field goals gave them a nine-point lead, the Red struck for a touchdown to cut the lead to two points with 12 minutes left. **David Jones '20** started things off with a 53-yard kickoff return. **Dalton Banks '19** completed a couple of passes to **John Fitzgerald '20** for first downs, then Banks was replaced by **Mike Catanese '20**, who ran 24 yards for a TD, to make the score 23-21.

Yale could not advance the ball past midfield on its next possession and had to punt. The Big Red also could not move the ball and punted it back to Yale. The Elis took over at the Cornell 47, picked up one first down, but then threw an incomplete pass on third and eight at the Cornell 34, setting up what looked to be a long fourth down, or possibly a long field attempt (51-52 yards). Cornell would get the ball back with more than four minutes to go and needing a touchdown—or perhaps just a field goal—to take the lead. But it didn’t happen; the Red was flagged for roughing the passer and Yale kept the ball and eventually scored. I thought it was a questionable call but there is apparently an emphasis this year on protecting the quarterback. That call was the game. The Big Red got the ball back with just over three minutes to go and needing two scores. Banks completed four straight passes to get into the red zone, but after two incompletions and a sack, the Red elected to kick a field goal on fourth down to make it a one-score game. An attempted inside kick failed and the Yale QB took three knees to run out the clock.

Takeaways: Just two, really.

- Banks was better this week, and the offense was better. Dalton was 16 for 23 for 152 yards, with one touchdown pass and no interceptions. He still did not throw the ball very well down the field (I think he completed just one pass downfield to a wide receiver) but his average yards per completion of 9.5 was better than the paltry 5.4 of a week ago. As for the running game, the stats look pretty good for Cornell—an average of almost six yards per carry—but that’s a little deceptive. When you take out the long TD runs by Coles and Catanese, a long run by Banks and two meaningless runs by Catanese at the end of the first half, the Big Red gained just 49 yards on its other 22 carries. Another concern is that two players recovering from last season’s injuries, **Chris Walker '19** and **Eric Gallman '21**, were not effective and it remains to be seen how much

they can contribute this season. Still and all, the Big Red did put up three touchdowns and a field goal and without that crushing roughing the passer penalty it might have been enough to win.

- As for the defense, the big concern coming in was Yale's ground game. As I wrote above, last year the Elis ran for 342 yards with Dudek running for 176 of those. This year the Red held Dudek to just 33 net yards on 13 carries. A Yale freshman, Alston, gained 120 yards on the ground but still Yale averaged just four yards on its 41 carries. The problem this year—and this week, just like last week—was the deep passing game. Yale QB Rawlings was 18 for 25 for 283 yards. Five different receivers had at least one catch for over 20 yards. I'm not sure whether the problem is the pass rush or the coverage, or maybe a bit of both, but improvement is needed.

But back to my original point, the Big Red was *not that bad*. On offense, I'd like to see more of Catanese and the coaches need to decide whether Walker is able to produce like he did in 2016. Some adjustments to the defense are also needed but I'm not confident I know what these would be. The biggest problem for the Red going forward is the brutal schedule. Last week I wrote that seven of Cornell's ten opponents, including all three of its non-conference foes, received votes in the FCS media poll. That's still true this week. On Saturday, the Big Red will host another of those teams, Sacred Heart. The Pioneers are 3-0 and have outscored their opponents 106-34. On the plus side, they look to be primarily a running team and Cornell's rushing defense has been pretty good. The game will be streamed on ESPN+ at 10:30 a.m. PDT.

While I'm on the subject of teams whose losses were "not that bad," let's get **Sprint Football** out of the way. The Big Red lost Friday night at Penn, 16-7, but Cornell scored first and the game was tied until the fourth quarter. Considering that the Red lost to Penn by 31 points last fall, this was not that bad. Cornell was supposed to have a home game this weekend against Franklin Pierce but the Ravens have forfeited. It looks like FPU is in the process of transitioning its football team into a regular Division II program next year and made a last-minute decision to drop some opponents, including Cornell, from this year's schedule. There is no truth to the rumor that the CSFL will be replacing FPU with the Little Sisters of the Poor.

Moving on, the best story this fall has been the resurgence of **Men's Soccer** with a squad populated mostly with underclassmen. Last week saw the Big Red win twice, which took their record to 6-2-0. On Friday, the Red defeated Niagara. As has often been the case this season, the other side struck first. But **Emeka Eneli '22's** fourth goal of the season tied the score in the first half and two late goals by **George Pedlow '20** gave Cornell a 3-1 victory. The Big Red followed this up with a win at Lehigh on Tuesday. That match was different from the norm of this season in that the Red scored first and built a 2-0 lead before Lehigh tied the match with goals in the 62nd and 72nd minutes. The match went to overtime but ended quickly in the OT when **Charles Touche '21** scored his third goal in the 92nd minute.

The Big Red open Ivy play at home versus Penn on Saturday at 10:00 a.m. PDT.

Three other teams also opened their Ivy League seasons. **Volleyball** won at Columbia, three sets to one. Last year, when Cornell finished tied for third in the league with an 8-6 league record, it won just one road game. So the Big Red has already matched that performance. Indulge me one minor rant. Each week, the Ivy League names a Player of the Week, a Rookie of the Week, and an honor roll of indeterminate length. On Monday, the league published a list of these women—15 in all. Just one person from Cornell was named—**Carla Sganderlla '19**. Of the four teams which won their match last weekend all except Cornell had multiple players on the list. Indeed, three of the four teams that *lost* had two players on the list, including Columbia, whom the Big Red defeated, and Brown, which did not win a single set in its match with Yale.

The Red start a four-game homestand with matches against Harvard Friday at 4:00 p.m. PDT and Dartmouth on Saturday at 2:00 p.m. PDT.

**Women's Soccer** also opened its Ivy League slate at Columbia on Saturday. The match was, to say the least, odd. Cornell had just one corner kick and one shot the entire match. They came on the same play as **Kaili Gregory '20** fielded a corner kick by **Jessica Ritchie '19** and beat the Lion goalkeeper for her second goal of the season in the 24th minute. That was all of Cornell's offense and for 86 minutes it looked like it would be enough. Aided by **Meghan Kennedy '19's** career-high 15 saves, the Big Red led 1-0 until Columbia tied the game in the 87th minute. The match went to OT and the Lions got the game winner in the first minute of the second overtime. Cornell gets another shot at an Ivy League win this Saturday when they host Penn at 1:00 p.m. PDT on Saturday.

**Field Hockey** played twice. On Saturday, the Red was beaten by Penn, 1-0, in both team's Ivy opener. It was Cornell's sixth loss of the season, and the fourth time the Red had been shut out. The Red then had a mid-week non-conference game against Colgate, and Cornell defeated the Raiders 3-1 for its second win of the season. Next up for Cornell is an Ivy League match at Columbia at 9:00 a.m. PDT on Sunday.

All of these soccer, volleyball and field hockey matches will be on ESPN+.

Finally, the up and down fall season for Big Red **Golf** continued. This was an up week as the Cornell team finished tied for second with Princeton at the Queechee Club Collegiate Challenge in Vermont. The Red have entered this tournament every year since 2014 and this was its highest finish in that period.

That's it for this week. **GO BIG RED!**