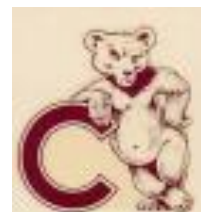




CCWW Sports Report No. 616
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by
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There were several important results this past week and there's some interesting stuff is coming up. Since I'm going to be out of pocket all next week and won't be reporting, I'll include a preview of what will or may happen over the next few weeks.

Road Trip Redux

In March 2007 we made an enjoyable trip to North Carolina. Our younger daughter was on the riding (what Cornell calls "equestrian") team at her college in Virginia and Sherilyn and I would regularly visit her and watch the horse shows. Also, it was my sixtieth birthday. So I proposed driving down from Lexington, Virginia, after the show to explore the Raleigh-Durham-Chapel Hill area (which we had not visited before) and, more importantly (to me, anyway), to attend the Cornell men's lacrosse game at Duke on the evening of my birthday. For a few years I'd been a huge Big Red lacrosse fan, and Cornell and Duke (playing again that year after their 2006 season was suspended by the so-called "Duke lacrosse scandal") were two of the top teams in country. At game time, Cornell was No. 1 and Duke was fifth.

Everything was magical: a warm evening, a 7-6 Cornell victory, and an after-game birthday dinner at a very good French bistro (Vin Rouge, still open and as of my last visit there in 2017, just as good). The game was close the whole way with no team ever leading by more than two goals. I recall that my favorite Cornell player, goalie **Matt McMonagle '07**, was the best player on the field that night. (That Cornell team went on to win 15 straight; a streak broken when the Red met Duke again, in the NCAA semifinals, and Duke won by a goal—but we won't talk about that.)

Anyway, when the 2019 Cornell men's lacrosse schedule was announced last December, I immediately circled the weekend of March 8-10. Cornell would play two games in North Carolina against good teams. Also, since there was no guarantee that these games would be televised or streamed, a trip to Charlotte was the only sure way to see them. So there we were last week—in North Carolina ready to bask in sunny weather and watch the Big Red win a couple of lacrosse games.

It did not work out quite that way. It was chilly and rainy all weekend; indeed, it rained—at times hard—throughout the Friday evening game between fourth-ranked Penn State and second-ranked Cornell. Worse than that, the Big Red's goaltending and face-off difficulties of prior games continued, allowing the Nittany Lions to take a 10-2 lead early in the second quarter. At that point, Cornell's soggy goose was pretty well cooked but we still had to sit in the rain for another hour before the final whistle. And the glimmer of hope we got when the Big Red pulled within three at the beginning of the fourth quarter was quickly squashed by the Red's inability to win faceoffs. Fewer than three minutes later the State lead was back up to six with Cornell barely touching the ball. And after the teams traded a few goals, six was the final margin as PSU won, 19-13.

Still, there were some silver linings and some hope. Many of the Big Red's careless turnovers were caused at least in part by the miserable playing conditions. More importantly, after the Cornell starting goalie, **Caelahn Bullen '21**, stopped only two of Penn State's first eight shots in the opening ten minutes, the Red changed goaltenders. Freshman **Chayse Ierlan '22** was brought in and he did a nice job, all things considered. Chayse allowed 13 goals but also made 11 saves and most of the goals came on shots from point-blank range. So maybe Cornell had found a goalie.

After a Saturday spent exploring Charlotte (I recommend the Levine Museum and the fried chicken at Haberdish), we were back at the field on Sunday to see Cornell take on No. 1 Towson. This was second

time in the Big Red's last eight games that they played the nation's top-ranked team—last May the Red beat Yale in the Ivy League Tournament when the Elis were No. 1. Of course, the loss to PSU deprived the Red of any chance to take over the top spot with a win but the game was still an important test. The weather was predicted to be better—high near 70 and no rain. (Neither forecast turned out to be very accurate; it drizzled off and on throughout the game and the temperature never got out of the low 60's.)

The Big Red started Ierlan in goal and he played well. Towson scored two quick goals and then two more after a Cornell goal to lead 4-1. But then Ierlan started making saves and Cornell offense began to click. A 9-1 second quarter gave the Big Red a 12-6 halftime lead and the Tigers never got closer than six goals. Co-captain **Clarke Petterson '19** had a monster game for the Red, scoring eight goals on ten shots. Ierlan had ten saves (versus 11 goals) and got tougher as the game went on, with a save percentage of 60% after the first quarter. Cornell still had trouble with faceoffs, winning just six of 32 but they compensated for that with a terrific ride that limited Towson to just over 50% successful clears. Many times after the first quarter, Towson would win the faceoff only to have it taken right away by the Red.

In the end, I was glad we went and I remain optimistic about this team's chances. The offense is scary and the goaltending and defense are improving. I wish the Red were better at faceoffs but this too may improve as the season goes on. Next up is a key showdown with defending national champion Yale.

What Else Happened Last Week?

While Men's Hockey rested, two teams punched their tickets to continued post-season competition, six individual wrestlers did the same, and another team just might have done enough to get an invitation to play another day. Here's the rundown on these and other happenings:

Women's Hockey made it to the ECAC tournament final with a gutty double-overtime 3-2 victory over Princeton on Saturday. After the Tigers took a 2-0 lead in the second period, the Big Red fought back, tying the game on goals by **Gillis Frechette '22** and **Maddie Mills '21**. After Mills scored with 12:03 remaining in the third period, there would be no further scoring in regulation or in the first 20-minute overtime. **Micah Zandee-Hart '20** ended the game early in the second overtime with a blast from the blue line that found the back of the net. The winning goaltender was **Lindsay Browning '21**, who replaced starter **Marlène Boissonnault '20** after the second Princeton goal.

That goalie change was an interesting move by **Coach Doug Darraugh '91**. Boissonnault had started all but six games this season and had only been pulled from a game once—after giving up four goals to Clarkson in the first period on February 8. On the surface, this situation did not seem to be comparable—she had given up just two goals and had made six saves. And yet, I had been feeling for a while that Marlène was not having her best season. Her save percentage had been trending down for three months. After a 3-1 win over Clarkson on December 1, Boissonnault had a save percentage of .932. In seventeen games since then, her save percentage was only .901. In any event, the change to Browning was, with the benefit of hindsight, brilliant. Lindsay stopped 34 shots without giving up a goal, including seven third-period and overtime saves on Sarah Fillier, Princeton's excellent first year, who leads the country in scoring and was recently named Ivy Player of the Year and ECAC Rookie of the Year.

The semifinal win over Princeton, and the fact the Minnesota, Wisconsin, B.C. and Northeastern all won in their conference tournaments on Saturday, eliminated any chance that an upstart WCHA or Hockey East would steal a NCAA bid. So the Big Red was in the NCAA tournament, and the only issue for Sunday was whether the Red could defeat Clarkson in the ECAC final and thereby move up in the Pair Wise rankings and get a first-round home game in the NCAAs. It did not happen. Two second period goals gave the Golden Knights a lead they would not relinquish. Mills got Cornell's lone goal early in the third period. Browning started in the net and played the whole game, giving up three goals, while stopping 21. So the Big Red wound up with an at-large bid to the NCAA tourney and a date to play third-seeded Northeastern in Boston on Saturday. But, IMHO it might have worked out for the best. While a win over Clarkson would have kept the Red at home, they would likely have played Clarkson again, a team that Cornell does not seem to match up that well against. And the big win was on Saturday; losing that game

might have moved Princeton ahead of the Big Red and sent the Red out to Minneapolis this weekend to play Minnesota. I like the matchup with Northeastern in Boston a whole lot better.

Before I tell you how **Women's Basketball** earned its first-ever Ivy League Tourney spot, I ask for a very light pat on the back. Not for predicting this result—God, no, I had written the Big Red off long ago. After losing five of their first six league games, I wrote: “[b]arring a miraculous turnaround, the Red will not be going to the ILT.” A week later, even after the Big Red had swept Yale and Brown on the road, my comments were: “I don’t have much optimism that the Big Red can make the ILT,” and “[t]he Big Red really need at least a split [of games with Princeton and Penn] to have much of a chance to make the ILT.” Well they didn’t get that split, and yet here we are. And a week ago, with a 5-7 league record and two road games coming up at Harvard and Dartmouth, I came out with—well, not exactly a prediction—but a tepid vote of confidence: “I kinda like their chances of making the ILT a bit better than the men’s.” And I laid out a scenario that “would get them there: ... beat Dartmouth while Yale is swept by Penn and Princeton.” I ended with a rousing “could happen”; and for that I get my pat on the back because it DID happen.

It was a bit strange. On Friday night, the Cornell men’s basketball team played one of their best games of the year, dominating Harvard (more on that below) to go to 6-7 in league play. On the same night, the women’s team got blown out by Harvard, losing by 42 points, easily their worst defeat of the season. So who had the better night? Why, clearly, the women. While the men were getting eliminated from the ILT race by things beyond their control, the women stayed right on track. Yale lost at home that night to Penn, so all the Big Red needed to make the ILT was to beat Dartmouth on Saturday night and watch Yale lose to league-leader Princeton. Check and check. The Red got off to a 12-2 lead but then saw Dartmouth score 19 points in a row to take a nine-point lead of their own. The Big Green stayed ahead (except for a brief one-point Cornell lead in the middle of the third quarter) until the Red opened the fourth quarter on a 14-0 run. That was that; the Green never got closer than seven and Cornell won by 10. **Laura Bagwell-Katalinich '20** and **Sam Widmann '20** combined for 17 of the Big Red’s 23 fourth-quarter points and eight of the Red’s 11 rebounds.

Meanwhile, in New Haven, it was all Princeton. The Tigers took a 4-3 lead two minutes into the game and never trailed again. Although this game started at the same time as the game in Hanover, it was still going on when the Cornell game ended, allowing me and other Big Red fans to watch the end. God bless ESPN+! Princeton had a comfortable lead throughout the fourth quarter and won by twelve. That put Cornell in a three-way tie with Yale and Dartmouth for fourth place in the Ivy League, with the Big Red holding the tie-breaker by virtue of its 2-0 record versus Yale. In games among the tied teams, Cornell was 3-1, Dartmouth 2-2 and Yale 1-3. So the Big Red are headed to the Ivy League Tournament this weekend.

Wrestling was in Binghamton last weekend for the EIWA championships. The two-day tournament crowned ten individual champions and a team champion. Perhaps more significantly, these conference tournaments determine who earns the NCAA tournament places that have been allocated to the conference based on its perceived strength in the various weight classes. Cornell sent six wrestlers to the EIWA finals. Three—**Chas Tucker '20** at 133, **Yianni Diakomihalis '21** at 141 and **Max Dean '21** at 184—won individual titles, while the three runners-up—**Vito Arujau '22** at 125, **Brandon Womack '20** at 174 and **Ben Honis '19** at 197—all also qualified for the NCAA tournament. For the EIWA team title, the Big Red finished second to Lehigh for the second-straight year; the Red was hurt by its weakness at the middle weights (149, 157 and 165), going just 4-7 at these weights. Another disappointment was **Jeremy Sweany '19**’s seventh-place finish at 285; fortunately for him and Big Red, however, his body of work during the season earned him one of the few at large bids at each weight class that are not allocated by conference standings. So Cornell will have seven qualifiers for next week’s NCAA championships.

I mentioned **Men's Basketball** earlier. Going into the weekend, the Big Red needed two wins and some help to make the Ivy League Tournament. The Red got the wins but did not get the help. On Friday, Cornell finished the game on a 31-15 run to defeat Harvard, 72-59. **Matt Morgan '19**, in his penultimate regular season game for the Big Red, lit up the Crimson for 31 points, and **Steve Julian '19** contributed 14 rebounds, three steals and a blocked shot. But victories that night by Brown and Penn eliminated the Red from the ILT race. Cornell still had one more game and something to play for. Saturday was Senior Night

and a victory over Dartmouth would (a) give the Big Red a .500 record in league play, its first non-losing league season since 2011-12; (b) give the Red a .500 overall record, its first non-losing overall record since 2009-10; and (c) possibly send the Red to a post-season tournament (the CBI or the CollegenInsider.com tourney) for the first time since the Sweet Sixteen run of 2010. I don't know whether the last will happen—I'm skeptical—but Cornell did get the W, using a big second half to pull away from the Big Green and win 66-51. All five seniors started the game and sixteen players—everyone who was healthy, I think—saw action. Curiously, Morgan only scored eight points, snapping his streak of consecutive games scoring in double figures at 80 games, a Cornell and Ivy League record. **Jimmy Boenheim '21**, however, who figures to be the Red's top offensive producer next year, had his best game in a Cornell uniform, missing just one shot and finishing with 21 points.

What's Coming Up?

Lots. This Friday **Men's Hockey** starts a best-of-three ECAC quarterfinal series at Lynah versus Union. Right now the Big Red are on the NCAA tournament bubble and they need to win this series to keep their NCAA hopes alive. All games will be on ESPN+. The opening faceoffs on Friday and Saturday will be at 4:00 p.m. PDT; if a Sunday game is needed, it will start at 1:00 p.m. PDT.

Saturday is a huge day. At 10:00 a.m. PDT, **Men's Lacrosse** will play at Yale in a match-up of two top-five teams. The game will be televised nationally on ESPNNews, and for the Seattle-area folks there will be a watch party at the Attic in Madison Park. You might want to bring your iPad to the Attic so you can keep tabs on **Women's Hockey's** NCAA tournament quarterfinal game at Northeastern, which also starts at 10 a.m. our time. And, if you're really into multi-tasking, there's another Cornell game to follow at the same time as **Women's Lacrosse** plays 18th-ranked Stony Brook. The Big Red women laxers are on a four-game win streak after two close losses to open the season. The hockey game will be streamed on Stretch Internet; the women's lax game will be on ESPN+.

And that's not all for Saturday. At 3:00 p.m. PDT, **Women's Basketball** plays its first ever ILT game, against Princeton in New Haven. And an hour later Men's Hockey plays game 2 of its series with Union. You can watch both on ESPN+.

If Men's Hockey takes care of business on Friday and Saturday, Sunday will be a day of rest for them; if not, they play Sunday at 1:00 p.m. And if Cornell's women hoopsters can pull off the Saturday upset, they will play on Sunday, also at 1:00 p.m., for the ILT title and an NCAA tournament bid. Both games will be on ESPN+.

Next week starts slowly with a Men's Lacrosse game at home on Tuesday against St. Bonaventure. Opening face-off is at 2:00 p.m. PDT on ESPN+. Things then heat up on Thursday when the NCAA **Wrestling** Championships begin. As in prior years, all matches will be streamed on ESPN3, and some matches, including Friday night's semifinals and Saturday's finals will be televised on "the ESPN family of networks."

On Saturday, March 23, Men's Lacrosse will play its second Ivy contest of the season when it hosts Penn at 10:00 a.m. PDT. And Women's Lacrosse will look to go 3-0 in league play when it visits No. 5 Penn at the same time. Both games are on ESPN+. Also on ESPN+ you can catch Baseball's and Softball's first Ivy League action. You can get the details on cornellbigred.com.

That much we know will happen. What's more interesting is what *might* happen. Hopefully, Men's Hockey will be in Lake Placid playing for the ECAC tournament championship. If they get that far, you can catch the action on ESPN+. Friday's semifinal games will start at 1:00 p.m. PDT and 4:30 p.m. PDT (unless the first game runs late), and Saturday's final will start at 4:30 p.m. PDT.

If Women's Hockey can defeat Northeastern on Saturday, they will be in Hamden, Connecticut, next weekend for the women's Frozen Four. The semis will be on Friday, March 22, and the finals the next day. All games will be televised on the Big Ten Network. Check listings for exact times.

Finally, and I realize this is very much a longshot, but if Women's Basketball can win this weekend's ILT, they will be in action sometime next Friday or Saturday in the opening round of the NCAA's "big dance," and will keep playing until they lose. ESPN has all the coverage of this event so you should check cornellbigred.com to see when/if Cornell will be on.

Whew! Enough! There's also tennis and polo and even fencing but as Roy Wood, Jr. says on the Daily Show, "Ain't got no time for that." **GO BIG RED!**