



**CCWW Sports Report No. 701B
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by
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This concludes my two-part series wrapping up the 2018-19 year in Cornell sports. This report will cover the spring and year-round sports; I'll start with my occasional "The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly" theme—I filled each category—and then move on to those teams whose seasons were "pretty good," "not bad," "disappointing," or just "so-so." The report concludes with a few thoughts on the current state of the overall Cornell athletics program.

The Good—Lightweight Rowing—IRA Champs Again

Results: After an autumn in which Cornell's top Lightweight 8 boat won the Head of the Charles (for the first time since 1979) and the Princeton Chase, the Big Red started the spring ranked second in the country behind Columbia. After the Lions lost their opening race, the Red moved to No. 1 and stayed there all spring. Cornell's varsity 8 boat was undefeated in the regular season and won the IRA title for the fourth time in the past six years. No sweat, right? Well, there was one hiccup along the way as the Red got out of synch and failed to make the grand final at the EARC championships. I've not seen an explanation of what went wrong but Cornell recovered, winning the petit final with a time that would have won the grand final. Two weeks later they reasserted their supremacy at IRAs. All's well that ends well.

In other races at IRA nationals, the varsity four with coxswain finished third and the varsity 4 without cox finished seventh.

Analysis: What can one say? Coach **Chris Kerber** has put together a consistent powerhouse. If only his magic would rub off on the heavyweights and the women.

Individual Honors.

- **Kerber:** IRA Lightweight Coach of the Year.
- **Nick Anderson '19, Cam Bertossa '20, Eric Lee '20, Molly Rochford '19, Rori Henderson '19, Alex Kost '20, Jules Kramer '21, Luke Sendelbach '19:** Academic All-IRA.
- **Henry Ellis '19:** Academic All-Ivy.

The Bad (1 of 3)—Women's Tennis—First to Last in Two Years

Results: Virtually nothing went right for the Big Red. Two years after winning a share of the Ivy League title, Cornell was 0-7 in league play and finished last. The Red's overall 6-16 record also included three more defeats at the hands of Ivy teams at the ECAC indoor championships. (The Big Red also lost all six "blind dual" contests at fall invitationals although no team scores were officially kept.) The Red had one win over a "big" school, Colorado, although that must come with an asterisk as the Buffaloes showed up with only five healthy players and had to forfeit a couple of matches, helping Cornell to a 4-3 victory.

Analysis: Since that 2017 Ivy title, there has been major turnover, not all due to graduation. The Big Red finished last spring with just six players, one senior and five first years. Those five will be back as sophomores along with four new first years, three of whom may be pretty good. With a team made up entirely of underclasswomen, I would not expect much immediate improvement but the Red have a new coach, former assistant **Milo Johnson**, and nowhere to go but up.

Individual Honors.

- **Valerie Ho '22:** Second Team All-Ivy.

The Bad (2 of 3)—Baseball—Fifth Losing Season in Last Six Years

Results: Cornell was 14-24 with an 8-13 Ivy record, which earned them a seventh-place tie in the Ivy League. The season started with a three-game Texas-style butt-kicking in Waco by Baylor (The scores were 17-0, 10-3 and 12-4), and the losing streak reached seven before the Big Red tasted victory. At one point the Red was 13 games under .500 (9-22) before they won five of their final seven.

Analysis. This team needs work. The Big Red won a program-record 31 games and an Ivy title in 2012. They've had just two winning seasons (and only one winning Ivy record) since then. The 2019 team had 19 underclassmen and just four seniors; OTOH, two of those seniors were the Red's two best hitters.

Individual Honors.

- **P John Natoli '20:** First Team All-Ivy.
- **C Will Simoneit '19:** Honorable Mention All-Ivy, Academic All-Ivy.

The Bad (3 of 3)—Women's Rowing—Lost Every Race

Results: The Varsity 8 lost every race of the spring season and for the second straight year finished last at the Ivy League championships. The other boats (second varsity 8, varsity 4) beat out a few boats but this was NOT a good season.

Analysis. Cornell just named a new head coach, the fifth head coach for this program in seven years. Eeech! No wonder they haven't done very well.

Individual Honors.

- **Sheehan Gotsch '19:** First Team All-Ivy, Academic All-Ivy.
- **Jaquelyn Shroyer '20:** Second Team All-Ivy.

The Ugly—Softball—Read All About It

Results: Cornell set a program record for losses in 2019 with 36 (versus 10 wins) but that wasn't the worst of it. On May 6, the same day the season ended with a mercy-rule loss to Harvard, the Cornell *Daily Sun* published an article detailing allegations by seven current and former players of "Years of Mistreatment by Coach [Julie Farlow '97]" and "Neglect by Cornell Athletics." Here is the article: <https://cornellsun.com/2019/05/06/softball-players-detail-years-of-mistreatment-by-coach-neglect-by-cornell-athletics/>. The next day two players were dismissed from the team and a third quit voluntarily. <https://cornellsun.com/2019/05/10/two-cornell-softball-players-dismissed-from-team-day-after-2019-season-ends/>. Since then, the *Sun* has published letters from persons connected with the team. One letter, signed by former players, expressed support for Coach Farlow (<https://cornellsun.com/2019/05/10/two-cornell-softball-players-dismissed-from-team-day-after-2019-season-ends/>), while others, from players' relatives, took the opposite viewpoint (<https://cornellsun.com/2019/05/11/letter-to-the-editor-re-two-cornell-softball-players-dismissed-from-team-day-after-2019-season-ends/>; <https://cornellsun.com/2019/05/26/letter-to-the-editor-re-softball-players-detail-years-of-mistreatment-by-coach-neglect-by-cornell-athletics-2/>).

Analysis. I've never attended a Big Red softball game and have only watched a handful online. I have no first-hand knowledge of this situation although I tend to believe that "where there's smoke, there's fire." I can read a baseball score and do the math to know that in Coach Farlow's four years as head coach Cornell has a won 28% of its games (47-121) and finished last in the league three times. There are too many red flags here. Also, even if the coach's conduct was proper throughout I cannot imagine how she and Cornell can effectively recruit in the next few years.

Individual Honors.

- **Bridgette Rooney '20:** Second Team All-Ivy.

- **Allison Kerce '22:** Honorable Mention All-Ivy.
- **Ashley Delany '22:** Honorable Mention All-Ivy.

The Rest

Pretty Good—Men's Tennis: The Big Red finished tied for second in the Ivy League with a 5-2 record. The Ivy title race came down to the season's final day with the Red in a position not only to share the Ivy crown but also to capture the Ivy's NCAA tournament automatic qualifier. The Red needed a victory over Columbia for the share and a Harvard loss to Dartmouth for the AQ. Harvard did lose but the Red was edged by Columbia. The final was 4-2 with Cornell on the verge of winning the unfinished match. The contest ended with the Lions' three-set 3-6, 6-2, 7-6 victory at the No. 3 position. The third set came down to an 8-6 tiebreaker. All of which is a long-winded way of saying that the Big Red just needed two more points for their second Ivy co-championship and second NCAA bid in the last three years. Overall, the Big Red was 14-10, playing a tough schedule that included nine contests against Power-5 conference teams. The Red's final ITA ranking was 59th.

Analysis: This was another solid year for a program that is almost always in the top half of the league. The Red had no bad losses; all ten defeats were to teams in the top 60 the final national rankings. Against unranked teams Cornell was 10-0.

IMHO two things stood between the Big Red and a better record (and at least an NCAA at-large bid). Most significant was the injury to **David Volfson '19**. You may recall that David came to East Hill in 2015 as the No. 2-ranked freshman in the country. His first year was very good. Playing exclusively in the No. 1 position, he was first team All-Ivy and ITA Northeast Region Rookie of the Year. David was injured most of his sophomore year but came back as a junior to win first team All-Ivy honors again. This past year, Volfson had a great fall, losing only once—to the top-ranked college player in the country. He won the ITA Northeast Region singles championship and advanced to the round of 16 in the national fall championships before that loss. Then David got hurt again and missed the first 11 matches of the spring—in which the Red went 6-5. With Volfson in the lineup, the Big Red would have certainly reversed two 4-3 losses and likely won once or twice more. And when David came back, he was still not 100%; he started at the No. 4 position and never rose above the No. 2 position. The revised lineup may have cost the Red another win or two. But even aside from the effect of Volfson's injury, Cornell was still very close to getting the victories that would have put it back in the NCAA tournament. In the losses to No. 16 Columbia and No. 20 Michigan, the Red lost two matches in three sets; if either of those matches in each contest had gone the other way, the Big Red would have won. The losses to No. 32 Penn State and No. 41 Harvard were even closer. In both cases, all three of the victors' singles wins required three sets.

Individual Honors.

- **Volfson:** Second Team All-Ivy (Singles & Doubles), Academic All-Ivy, Academic All-District.
- **Alafia Ayeni '21:** First Team All-Ivy (Singles).
- **Lev Kazakov '20:** Second Team All-Ivy (Singles).
- **Daniel Soyfer '20:** Second Team All-Ivy (Doubles).

Pretty Good—Sailing: The collegiate sailing world is too complicated to explain (if I even could) in the small space allotted here so I'll just give y'all the big picture. A year ago, Cornell made it to all three spring national championships, one for all-women crews and two for coed crews. This was a first for the four-year old varsity program. Last year was good but not quite as good. Although the Big Red had a fair amount of success during the year, they could only qualify for two of the three national championships, missing out in the coed team racing category. In the all-women discipline, the Red made it to the national finals, finishing 15th; in the coed discipline, Cornell finished 10th in the national western semifinals.

Analysis: Steady as she goes.

Individual Honors.

- **Diana Otis '19:** Academic All-Ivy.

Pretty Good, All Things Considered—Men's Polo: The Big Red posted a 17-4 record, including a one-goal loss in the national semi-final to Texas A&M, the eventual national champion. Cornell's only other losses were in the fall to Kentucky and UVA, and once to Western Ontario, a team the Red defeated three other times.

Analysis: In most years losing in the national semi-finals would make the season a disappointment; this year not so much. **David Eldridge '81**, the long-time coach of both men's and women's polo, and the winningest coach in Cornell history in any sport, was forced to retire in September amid allegations of inappropriate conduct. Cornell operated with an interim coach until December. To come through all that with as much success as the team had is, well, "pretty good." This year the Red will have its first full season under new coach **Branden Van Loon '13**.

Individual Honors.

- **Lorenzo Masias '20:** All-Northeast Region, Academic All-Ivy.
- **Morgan Palacios '19:** All-Northeast Region.

Not Bad, All Things Considered—Women's Polo: For the third year in a row, the Big Red failed to reach the national finals. And for the third year in a row, the Red were eliminated in the semis by UVA. Cornell posted a 14-10 record overall.

Analysis: Obviously, this was not Big Red's best year but they went through the same coaching turmoil as the men and still posted a winning record and won the Northeast Regional championship.

Individual Honors.

- **Shariah Harris '20:** All-Northeast Region.

Not Bad—Equestrian: Just like a year ago, Cornell's equestrian team had a solid season but missed capturing the big prize—qualifying as a team for Nationals. The regular season went well; the Big Red was the high point team at four shows and finished second or third on the other days. The Big Red then won its second-straight regional championship and third-straight Ivy show. (Not enough Equestrian teams compete to make it an official Ivy League championship.) The regional title qualified the Red to compete as a team at Zones, where they finished second but (for reasons I don't entirely understand) did not qualify for Nationals. (In 2016, the only other time the Big Red got to Nationals, it was a second-place finish at Zones that got them there.) With no individual qualifiers, for the first time in ten years there were no Cornell riders at Nationals.

Analysis: A very minimal drop off for a solid program.

Not Bad—Women's Track & Field: Cornell finished fourth at Indoor Heptagonals, third at Outdoor Heps, and third (of 43 teams) at the outdoor ECAC championships. The Red sent seven athletes to the NCAA outdoor East Preliminary in Jacksonville, and two of those—**Beatrice Juskeviciute '22** (heptathlon) and **Briar Brumley '19** (steeplechase)—qualified for the NCAA nationals in Austin. Juskeviciute won the pentathlon at indoor Heps and the heptathlon at outdoor Heps; Brumley won the steeplechase at outdoor Heps. In a meet at the University of Tennessee, Beatrice set a new Cornell record for points in the heptathlon, breaking the 13-year old record of Olympic medalist **Jamie Greubel '06**. (Earlier in the year, Beatrice came within one point of tying Jamie's 13-year old school record in the indoor pentathlon.)

Analysis: When I started writing these reports in the fall of 2012, the Cornell women (and the men—more on that below) were dominating the Ivy League and competing nationally. Those days are now in the rearview mirror. Since 2014, the Big Red women have finished no higher than second at indoor Heps and third at outdoor Heps and their average placement has been just above fourth outdoors and just below that indoors. There has also been a drop off, although less pronounced, in the number of athletes qualifying for NCAA regionals and nationals. Judged against this new norm, Cornell's 2019 accomplishments were

“not bad.” After finishing 5th at indoor Heps and 4th at outdoor Heps in 2018, the Big Red moved up a spot in each—to fourth outdoor and third outdoor. They qualified fewer athletes for NCAA regionals than in 2018 (seven, down from 11) but sent two athletes to the NCAA finals—one more than a year ago.

Individual Honors.

- **Brumley:** First Team All-Ivy, Honorable Mention All-American (Heptathlon), Academic All-Ivy, Cornell Outstanding Senior Female Athlete.
- **Juskeviciute:** First Team All-Ivy (Heptathlon & Pentathlon), Honorable Mention All-American (Heptathlon).
- **Eve Glasergreen '19:** Second Team All-Ivy (10,000m & indoor 3000m), Academic All-Ivy, First Team Academic All-District.
- **Marguerite Lorenzo '21:** Second Team All-Ivy (high jump).
- **Kellian Kelly '21:** Second Team All-Ivy (indoor 200m).
- **Monique Anderson '22:** Second Team All-Ivy (indoor high jump).
- **Elise Burdette '22, Martha Sam '19, Brooke Overholt '22, Jinjer Pearce '20:** Second Team All-Ivy (indoor 4x400 relay).

Disappointing—Men's Lacrosse: Cornell finished with a 10-5 overall record, and their 4-2 mark in Ivy play put them in third place. The Big Red lost to defending NCAA champion (and 2019 NCAA runner-up) Yale in the first round of the Ivy League tournament. All the Red's losses were to highly-ranked teams: Penn State, Syracuse, Penn and twice to Yale. On the plus side, Cornell defeated Towson when the Tigers were ranked No. 1 and had an excellent road win at Notre Dame. In the end, the Big Red's resume was not good enough to earn them an NCAA tournament at-large bid; the Red appear to have been the first team out.

Analysis: Let's start off by defining the category “Disappointing.” The term is driven by expectations. When an A student gets some B's, that's disappointing; when a C student gets those same B's it's not. Like the student with a few B's, the Big Red did not have a bad season, or even a mediocre one—but they surely did not reach expectations. With a well-respected permanent coach in place (**Peter Milliman**) and mucho offensive firepower—led by All-American **Jeff Teat '20**—returning, 2019 looked like it could be really special. But it was not to be.

Cornell came into the season with two areas of concern: faceoffs and defense. The faceoff problem was a carryover from the previous year. For a while in June 2018 it looked like the problem would be solved “bigly” by Albany's record-breaking faceoff specialist, TD Ierlan, transferring to Cornell to join his brother, incoming goalie, **Chayse Ierlan '22**. However, TD eventually decided to go to Yale. And the Big Red's faceoff problems got even worse. As for the defense, while the main concern was losing goalie **Christian Knight '18**, Chayse Ierlan did just fine once he won the starter's job. The less-replaceable losses turned out to be All-American defenseman **Jake Pulver '18** and several short-stick defensive middies.

Still and all, if the Red could have one game back, it would likely have changed everything. At home on March 23, the Big Red got off to a 7-2 lead over Penn and still led by three with ten minutes to go in the game. But Penn scored six of the last eight goals, including the game winner with 17 seconds left. Had it held on to its lead, and the Red would have had one more win, tied for the Ivy title (and played Penn again rather than Yale in the ILT), and probably gone to the NCAA dance.

Individual Honors.

- **Jeff Teat '20:** First Team All-Ivy, Second Team USILA All-American, Third Team Inside Lacrosse All-American.
- **Brandon Salvatore '20:** First Team All-Ivy, Honorable Mention USILA All-American, Honorable Mention Inside Lacrosse All-American.

- **Ryan Bray '19:** First Team All-Ivy, USILA Scholar All-American.
- **Clarke Petterson '19:** Second Team All-Ivy, Honorable Mention USILA All-American, Academic All-Ivy, USILA Scholar All-American.
- **Jake McCulloch '19:** Second Team All-Ivy, USILA Scholar All-American.
- **Fleet Wallace '19:** Second Team All-Ivy, USILA Scholar All-American.
- **Connor Fletcher '20:** Second Team All-Ivy.
- **John Piatelli '21:** Honorable Mention All-Ivy.
- **Jonathan Donville '21:** Honorable Mention All-Ivy.
- **Chayse Ierlan '22:** Honorable Mention All-Ivy.
- **Colton Rupp '19:** USILA Scholar All-American.
- **Zach Ward '19:** USILA Scholar All-American.

Disappointing—Men's Track & Field: Cornell finished seventh at Indoor Heps, and sixth at Outdoor Heps. The Big Red had no event wins at indoor Heps and one win at outdoor Heps (in the 4x100 relay). The Red sent seven athletes to the NCAA outdoor East Preliminary in Jacksonville but none qualified for the national finals.

Analysis: The Big Red finished first or second at both indoor and outdoor Heps for 15-straight years—from 2003 to 2017. That streak ended last year when the Red took fifth at indoor Heps and third at outdoor Heps. This year was worse; indeed, both Heps finishes were the worst by a Cornell men's team in this century. OTOH, the seven athletes who qualified for the East regional was an improvement on the single qualifying athlete in 2018 (although far below the average of 16 male athletes who represented Cornell at regionals in the five years from 2013 through 2017). And after sending at least one male Cornellian to nationals every year from 2010, when the regional preliminary system was instituted, through 2017 (when **Rudy Winkler '17** won the NCAA championship in the hammer throw), the Red have now gone two straight years without an athlete competing at nationals.

Individual Honors.

- **Kuune Mini '22, Austin Lyons '19, Alex Beck '19, Zach Menchaca '19:** Second Team All-Ivy (4x100 relay).

Disappointing—Golf: I'll make this quick. After finishing in the top half of the Ivy League for three-straight years, a program first, the Big Red slipped to seventh. **Jack Cen '19** finished sixth individually.

Analysis: The program seemed to be on the upswing but playing for the first time in six years without a **Graboyes** brother in the lineup (**Luke '17** was the medalist in 2017 and **Mike '18** the medalist the following year) was more than the Red could overcome. Hopefully, this was just a hiccup.

Individual Honors.

- **Cen:** Second Team All-Ivy, Academic All-Ivy.

So So—Women's Lacrosse: Cornell lost its first two games and ended the season on a four-game losing streak. In between, the Big Red won eight out of ten to finish with an 8-8 record. The Red were tied with Brown for fourth in the league and made the ILT by virtue of a head-to-head 10-7 victory over Brown. In the ILT first round, the Red gave up the first six goals to Princeton and were never in the game.

Analysis: In the six years from 2012 to 2017, the Big Red were 64-38, had a winning conference record every year, won the ILT in 2016, shared the regular-season Ivy title in 2017, and made the NCAA tournament twice, each time winning a game. The Red had a losing (7-8) record in 2018, and 2019 was only marginally better. Of the eight teams Cornell beat, only Brown had a winning record. At this point it's

unclear whether the program will be moving back up or moving further down. (I note that none of Cornell's six All-Ivies were seniors so, hopefully, that's a good sign for the future.) But last season met the definition of a "so-so" season.

Individual Honors.

- **Caroline Allen '20:** First Team All-Ivy, Academic All-Ivy.
- **Mary Kate Bonanni '20:** First Team All-Ivy, Academic All-Ivy.
- **Ellie Walsh '21:** Second Team All-Ivy.
- **Taylor Lis '20:** Honorable Mention All-Ivy.
- **Katie McGahan '20:** Honorable Mention All-Ivy.
- **Grace Paletta '21:** Honorable Mention All-Ivy.

So So—Heavyweight Rowing: The heavyweight Varsity 8 finished 12th at the IRA championships. (Cornell's second and third varsity 8's did not fare any better, finishing 12th and 13th, respectively.) This was the fourth straight year that the Varsity 8 finished 12th or 13th, the longest stretch of low finishes since the five-year span of 1995-1999. Before that, Cornell had finished out of the top ten in the country only twice in its rowing history going back to 1895.

Analysis: The beat goes on.

Individual Honors.

- **James Aimer '20 (V8); Alex Bebb '19 (V8); Tommy Brittingham '20 (V8); Mike Grady '19 (V8); Andrew Greubel '19 (V8); Ben Hawley '19 (V8); Matt Tomaszewski '19 (V8); Ray Weeks '19 (V8); Chris Wilkins '20 (V8); Hasan Atay '19 (2V8); Jack Tucker '19 (2V8); Nick Horbowy '21 (2V8); Mike Gates '19 (3V8):** Academic All-IRA.

Final Thoughts on 2018-19

Let's cut to the chase: with just a handful of exceptions, this was not a good year for Cornell intercollegiate athletics. The Big Red won just two Ivy League titles—in wrestling and men's hockey. This total tied the 2000-01 and 2015-16 school years for the fewest Ivy championships in this century. Athletic Director **Andy Noel** took over a program that was moribund in 1999, having won just five Ivy championships in the previous three years. Within three years, the Red's fortunes were completely turned around; in 2002-03, the Red won seven Ivy titles (tying the most in school history) and that started a 14-year run when Cornell *averaged* almost seven titles per year. That run ended in 2014, and the trend has been downhill since.

Winning an Ivy League championship, while the ultimate goal of many (but not all) Big Red teams, is not the only metric by which to measure progress and success. Winning records, a top-half league finish and (for some teams) national recognition should go into the equation as well. I did a crude calculation of how all Cornell teams competing in Ivy championship sports did and the average was between sixth and seventh place. As for being nationally competitive, only lightweight rowing really got the job done this year. The heavyweight crew is going through the second-worst patch in a history that goes back a century and a quarter. Track & field, which was a national presence just a few years ago, is no more.

Some sports—hockey, men's lacrosse, wrestling and polo—continue to make noise on the national scene but even those teams have not been as successful in the last few years as they were in the recent past. Men's lacrosse went to four NCAA Final Fours from 2007 to 2013 and (IMHO) were good enough to win the title in at least three of those years. In the last six years, the Red have made the NCAA tournament just three times and have won one NCAA tourney game. It's been 16 years since men's hockey has won more than one NCAA tournament game (and before the Red won a game last spring it had been six years since they won even one). Women's hockey did get back to the Frozen Four this past year after a six-year absence and this year promises also to be good but it looks like the talent level that fueled the Big Red

teams (and Canadian Olympic teams) earlier in this decade is no longer there. Wrestling continues to have top-ten finishes at the NCAA championships but from 2009 through 2013 those top-ten finishes were top-five finishes. No need to panic as recruiting is very strong—indeed, so strong that four team members are taking this year off to prepare for possible places on the USA Olympic team—and the off-year those sabbaticals may cause should be offset by a banner 2020-21; still the overall trend is not yet upward. And even polo is going through a rare three-year dearth of appearances by either the men or the women in the national title game.

I'm sure there are as many reasons for the recent decline as there are sports and some of the falloff at the national level may be inevitable—once the Ivy schools were national powers in football but that ended when bigger schools with more flexible academic standards and a greater willingness to devote resources to athletics—but there does seem to be a trend and, as we're starting a new school year, it is concerning. It does not increase confidence that the athletic department processes and decision-making seem to be unusually opaque. Maybe this is just a normal up-and-down cycle and things will turn north again—I certainly hope so!

In the meantime, and as always, **GO BIG RED!**