



**CCWW Sports Report No. 704
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by
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Daylight Savings Time is behind us, the days are growing shorter, the sunsets here in the PNW are getting earlier and there's been enough Big Red action to reconfirm that Cornell is, as ever, a "hockey school." It's also an academic school but that's beside the point; what it isn't, perhaps, is a "finishing school," based on the recently boorish behavior of Brandon Taubman '07, whose outburst directed at a group of female sports reporters not only cost him his job with the Houston Astros but also turned anyone who wasn't already so inclined into a Washington Nationals fan. (Oh, and btw, I'm wondering exactly what deal with the devil Howie Kendrick made to turn him into a 21st-century Joe Hardy. "Whatever Lola wants, Lola gets") Cornell is not—at least not since 1939—a football school; we'll get to that later. Nor is it yet a soccer school.

Late-Season Report on Fall Sports

This fall was expected to be about three teams: Volleyball and Men's Soccer (because they seemed to be pretty good) and Football (because, well, it's football). Arguably, now, it's just about one: only the Cornell volleyball team has a shot this fall at an Ivy League title. The details are below but any early-season optimism about the men's and women's soccer teams has faded; Sprint Football just finished one of its worst seasons ever, and the field hockey and men's and women's cross-country teams have done about what we (I?) expected. Football, well, we'll discuss that below.

Volleyball. When I last updated y'all, the Big Red had won 11 matches in a row, sported a 13-2 overall record, and were sitting atop the Ivy League standings undefeated (at 6-0). Since then, the Red have split four matches, losing at defending Ivy champion Yale in four sets, defeating Columbia, losing to Princeton in five sets (more on that below) and blitzing Penn in three not-very-close sets. That leaves the Big Red tied with Yale for second in the league at 8-2, behind Princeton's 9-1.

The Coyle-Petersons were in New York the weekend before last and I dragged Sherilyn up to Levien Gym to watch the Big Red take on my law school alma mater, Columbia. They've remodeled the gym since I was a student there; it's pretty nice and the volleyball games are free. *If* you can figure out how to get in; although there's probably less crime on the Upper West Side than in Seattle, Columbia still has a fortress mentality ("Fort Apache, Morningside Heights," perhaps) with security that flummoxed me and the other Cornell fans (There were several) trying to gain entry. We did make it inside for the start of the match, however, and were treated to a solid straight-sets victory by the Big Red, confirming what I thought I had been seeing on ESPN+—that the Red are a very good team.

Catching that win in person made last Friday's loss at home to Princeton that much more of a bummer. I was in Bloomington, Indiana, and watched the Big Red take the first two sets from the Tigers before heading off to dinner. Without me to root the Big Red on, Princeton came all the way back, winning the next three sets and the match. If Cornell misses the Ivy title and a trip to the NCAA tournament, they may look back on this match as one that "got away" and kept them home from the dance.

From here on, it's all pretty much "must win" for the Big Red, starting with Friday's match at home against Yale. After that, the Big Red host Brown on Saturday and then wrap up the regular season next weekend with matches at Harvard and Dartmouth. Matches on Fridays are at 4 p.m. PST and on Saturdays at 2 p.m. PDT. And even if the Red win all four, they must hope someone can beat Princeton. If all that happens, Cornell and Princeton will be Ivy co-champions. Then a one-match playoff will be held the weekend before Thanksgiving to determine who gets the NCAA tournament bid. The Big Red earned the right to host that playoff by virtue of winning more games (five to four) in their head to head matches with the Tigers.

Men's Soccer. Cornell has an 8-5-2 record but is only 1-2-2 in league play. I cannot explain it but the 2019 edition of Cornell men's soccer has, frankly, underachieved. Last year's rather inexperienced team overachieved, coming back late to win more than their fair share of close matches. This year the pendulum has swung back, as the Red have failed to capitalize on scoring chances. In every one of the four Ivy matches the Big Red have lost or tied, they have outshot the opposition. In total, the Red took eighteen more shots than the opposition (63-41) in these four matches.

Cornell has two more matches, at Dartmouth this Saturday and at home against Columbia the following Saturday. The Red need to win twice to finish 10-5-2, a record which looked very doable seven weeks ago. Now it will be tough.

Football. Since my last report, the Big Red handed Colgate its first win of the year, pulled out a miraculous victory over Brown, and hung pretty tough in a Friday night televised ESPNU game against Princeton. After the Colgate loss, my fear was less that Cornell wouldn't win again and more that it would win a few of its remaining five games and that those wins would be considered enough, by the powers that be, to save **David Archer '05's** job. "Please, God, no!" I prayed, "I've suffered enough."

And Cornell did win the following week over Brown, although I'm not quite sure how they did it. I was at the afore-mentioned volleyball match and then traveling to Kennedy Airport so I didn't see much. When I did check in from time-to-time, the Big Red were ahead, as **Richie Kenney '21** was playing his best game in a Cornell uniform, eventually completing 23 of 34 passes for 332 yards, a touchdown, no interceptions and no sacks. Still, when I got to Kennedy and could watch on my iPhone, Brown was not only leading by a point but had the ball deep in Cornell territory, second down, with 2:15 to go and the Big Red out of timeouts. "Over," I thought, another defeat pulled from the jaws of victory. Brown ran two conservative running plays, gaining six yards and setting up a fourth and six from the Cornell 12 with just 42 seconds left. And then something strange occurred. It turns out that stupid coaching decisions don't emanate solely from the Cornell sideline.

If you're Brown, what do you do? Well, you could try and see if you can get the first down that would clinch the victory. Or you could attempt a 33-yard field goal so the Red would need a touchdown to win. Your kicking game has had problems but your guy just hit a 35-yarder a few minutes earlier from the same end of the field to give you that one-point lead. But maybe you're afraid of a blocked kick and runback. So, you do the conservative thing, hold the ball for a few seconds and take a knee. The Big Red get the ball back with less than 40 seconds to play and need to gain at least sixty yards to get into range for a long field goal attempt. So what do the Bears do? They call a timeout and devise a play where the quarterback runs backwards to kill a few extra seconds before he's tackled for twelve-yard loss. Dumb! Cornell now only needs fifty or so yards to get into range for the winning field goal. That extra ten yards turns out to be just what the Big Red needed. Starting with 36 seconds to go, Kenney completed three of four passes to move Cornell 48 yards to the Brown 24 with 12 seconds left. **Nickolas Null '20** then nailed his 41-yard field goal attempt (with an assist from the left upright) to give the Red a 37-35 victory.

Last week the Big Red played Princeton, the school that gave the Red its worst football loss ever last fall. Cornell lost again but the final score was just 21-7. The Big Red defense was pretty solid but the offense could put together only one sustained drive—85 yards for a third-quarter touchdown that brought the Red to within seven points. But that was as close as it got. The Tigers immediately answered with a long drive of their own and that was all the scoring. Cornell had its chances. Defensive back **Jelani Taylor '20**, who is having an All-Ivy season, created two turnovers with an interception and a forced fumble but the Big Red returned the favor with two interceptions, one of which killed off a critical Cornell drive, which had reached the Princeton 10, with a little over four minutes to play. For the game, Red quarterback **Richie Kenney '21** was 17 for 30 for 195 yards, no touchdowns, two interceptions and three sacks. Not great but not horrible. Kenney seems to be a lot like his processor in the job, **Dalton Banks '19**, who would mix in flashes of brilliance with stretches of poor decision-making. The Big Red have games left at Penn, at Dartmouth (which is *really* good) and at home against Columbia. The Red could win as many as two or lose all three. Time will tell.

Field Hockey. With one game left—a visit to last-place Dartmouth—the Big Red are 9-7 and 3-3 in Ivy League games. The Red should win but even if they do not, this year marks a successful turnaround from last year's troubles and a solid first year at the helm for **Coach Andy Smith**.

Women's Soccer. Even as the season goes a bit further downhill, I'll repeat what I wrote last month: this is "[b]etter than last year." After winning just one match a year ago, the Big Red got off to a 4-0 start this fall. Now Cornell is 4-9-1 and 0-6 in the Ivy League. The Red close out the season this Saturday in Hanover against a Dartmouth team that is also winless (0-5-1) in league play. With a chance to get out of the cellar, maybe the Big Red can get it done. Here's hoping.

Cross-Country. The Big Red men and the women both finished in sixth place at Heptagonals, each beating out Brown and Dartmouth. Those finishes bettered last year's seventh-place women's finish and eighth-place men's finish. Kudos to **Taylor Knibb '20**, who earned first-team All-Ivy honors with her fifth-place individual showing. Both teams will now travel to Buffalo on November 15th for the Northeast Regional to determine who qualifies for the NCAA championships. Neither team is likely to make it but Knibb could qualify as an individual, as she did last fall.

Sprint Football. After opening the season by defeating Alderson Broaddus, a West Virginia university no one has ever heard of, the Big Red lost its last five games, not only by lopsided margins to the likes of Penn (61-17), Army (49-0) and Navy (70-7) but also convincingly to no-names like St. Thomas Aquinas (39-19) and Mansfield (44-13). The Red's season ended prematurely when its last scheduled opponent, the for-profit academic giant Post University, canceled the rest of its season in response to some unspecified poor student-athlete behavior.

Let's take stock. This was an historically bad season. Cornell was winless in 1949 and suffered through a few other seasons with just one victory, but the margins of defeat, and the caliber of the schools that the Red lost to in 2019, are probably unprecedented. Okay, one might say, but most sports programs go through cycles. This is just a downturn for the Big Red; the Red had a one-win season in 1999 and by 2006 they went undefeated and won the league championship. That's true, but now may also be a good time to examine the viability of the concept. The league that is now the CSFL started in 1934 with Lafayette, Rutgers and three Ivies as charter members. Cornell joined two years later. For much of its history the CSFL (and its predecessors) was made up of prestigious institutions—all Ivies except Dartmouth and Brown, the service academies, top private colleges (Lafayette and Villanova), and elite public universities like Michigan and Rutgers. Most of these schools have since dropped the sport, replaced in the league by schools that look nothing like the institutions with which Cornell typically competes, athletically or academically.

I'm not privy to the financial aspects of this but I suspect the program is pretty much self-supporting. As a regular (if modest) contributor to Cornell Athletics, I get Andy Noel's fundraising emails and I've observed that virtually every year sprint football meets or exceeds its goals—this past year by over \$100,000. But is being able to pay your own way a reason to keep going? It likely would not save an academic department that did not fit the university's profile. Perhaps there are intangible benefits (e.g., alumni loyalty) to retaining the program (although four other Ivies did not find those benefits enough to keep going). (I will concede that there have been some national leaders who played college sprint football, including Jimmy Carter (Navy), Don Rumsfeld (Princeton), Robert Kraft (Columbia) and Beau Biden (Penn).)

Then there's the Title IX aspect. Again, I'm no expert but a sport with opportunities for 50+ males has to decrease Cornell's ability to add or expand other sports for male athletes. Example: how about a men's fencing team? Cornell is the only Ivy League school with just a women's team. The men have a club team that practices with the women and in 2018 won the national club championship. Who knew? Anyway, I'm unconvinced that continuing sprint football is the only or best option.

Monthly Big Red Hockey Report

The Ivy League schools start later than all the other colleges and the Big Red men and women have played just two and four games, respectively. But that's been enough to show that both teams are for real.

The women opened the season with back-to-back shutouts of Robert Morris, a team that had already played six games and came into the weekend ranked in the top ten nationally. The scores were 6-0 and 3-0. **Lindsay Browning '21** got both shutout victories and was named ECAC Goalie of the Week. **Gillis Frechette '22** led the Big Red scorers with six points (3g, 3a), while **Jaime Bourbonnais '20** had five (1g, 4a). Frechette was named the ECAC Player of the Week.

Last weekend, the Big Red hosted ECAC rivals Quinnipiac and Princeton and won twice more. Against Q-Pac on Friday, **Kristen O'Neill '20's** second-period power play goal was all the scoring the Red needed as Browning got her third straight shutout. That streak was broken on Saturday when the fifth-ranked Big Red gave up a second-period goal to then sixth-ranked Princeton. Still, the Red prevailed, 3-1, and Browning earned her second-straight GOTW. With the 4-0 start, Cornell has moved up to No. 3 in both national polls, trailing only Wisconsin and Minnesota.

The Cornell women have nine more games before the exam break (which extends into January). This weekend the Big Red will head north to play St Lawrence and sixth-ranked Clarkson, and they will be without the services of O'Neill and defender **Micah Zandee-Hart '20**, who will be in Pittsburgh with Team Canada for training camp and two exhibition games against Team USA. The following week, Cornell will host Brown and Yale. Thanksgiving week will be busy as the Red will play at Syracuse on Tuesday and then travel to Columbus for two games against Ohio State, which is currently No. 8 in both national polls, on Friday and Saturday. The Big Red will close out their 2019 schedule the following weekend with a trip to Quinnipiac and Princeton.

The Cornell men also got their season off on the right foot with two wins at Michigan State. You will recall how the Big Red started last season by losing twice to the Spartans in Ithaca. Not so this time around. The Red edged MSU by a goal (3-2) last Friday and then won by four (6-2) on Saturday. The team, for a change, seems to have a big, fast, potent offense to go along with its always solid defense. Cornell got goals from eight different players and points from 13 different players. **Michael Regush '22** had two goals, and **Morgan Barron '21** and **Sam Malinski '23** each had a goal and three assists. Malinski was named ECAC Rookie of the Week. With the wins, the Big Red moved up to No. 4 in both the USCHO and USA Today polls.

This weekend the Big Red open ECAC play at home against Brown and Yale. The Red then play Clarkson, St. Lawrence, Quinnipiac and Princeton before the biannual "Red Hot Hockey" showdown with Boston University in Madison Square Garden the Saturday after Thanksgiving. Cornell will then complete its pre-exam break schedule with a visit to Harvard and Dartmouth the first weekend in December. And don't forget about Vegas and the "Fortress Invitational" where the Red will play Ohio State and then either Providence or Army the first weekend in January.

Basketball Preview

Last year both Big Red hoops teams finished tied for fourth in the Ivy League. Under the tiebreaking rules, the women earned the fourth spot in the Ivy League Tournament while the men were left out. Both teams are picked to finish lower this year; indeed the Ivy pre-season poll has the men tied for last place with Dartmouth. So, both teams have something to prove. But there are significant differences between the teams. While the women return almost everyone from last year's squad, the men lost their best offensive player (**Matt Morgan '19**, Cornell's all-time leading scorer) and two best defensive players (Morgan and **Steven Julian '19**).

Let's start with the men, since I've seen them play once (on Tuesday, an 84-64 win over Binghamton). And they looked pretty good. Here's an opening observation: in basketball, perhaps more than any other sport that involves putting a ball or puck into a net, a single player can have an outsized effect. Certainly, there were times over the last four seasons when Morgan carried the offense. But that can have a negative side, as teams tend to stand around waiting for the "star" to take care of things. This year's version of the Big Red has no such star (although it does have a couple of good offensive players in **Jimmy Boenheim '21** and **Josh Warren '20**). So, ball movement (and good shooting) on offense and a tight team defense will be the requisites for a winning season. And there were signs in that first game that

it could happen. To be sure, Bingo is not very good but there were some things to like. The Big Red used a nine-man rotation for most of the game and got contributions from all. Boenheim scored 24 points on 11 for 19 shooting and Warren had 19 points, six rebounds, and seven assists. There were other hopeful signs. **Terrence McBride '21**, who had a strong freshman year and all but disappeared last season, played very well with 15 points, two steals and just one turnover. **Thurston McCarty '20**, a JUCO transfer who was a bit of a bust in his first year with the Red last season, had eleven points, six boards, three shot blocks and zero turnovers. **Dean Noll '22**, who saw little court time as a freshman, played 22 minutes and shot, passed and defended well, and showed a nose for the ball, coming up with five rebounds, despite usually being the smallest guy on the court.

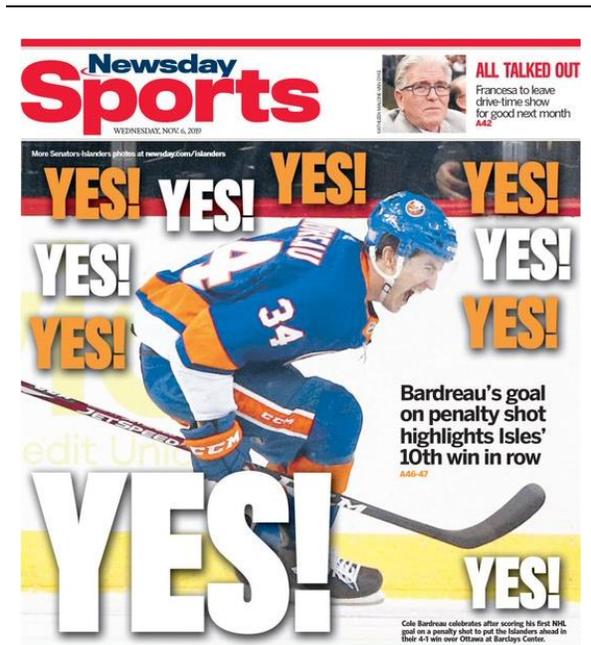
This is **Brian Earl's** fourth season as head coach of the Big Red and the offensive system and discipline he's brought in is appealing. What's been missing so far is the ability to attract top recruits. Hopefully, on-court success will change that. The first game was a promising start. Next up for the Red is Bryant in Rhode Island Sunday. After hosting NJIT in Ithaca next Wednesday, Cornell plays Big East DePaul in Chicago next Saturday and at ACC Syracuse the following Wednesday. By then, we should have a pretty good idea what the team is made of.

The women haven't played yet. They open this Friday at Albany, a game you can watch on ESPN3 at 4:00 p.m. PST. They then fly down to the Lone Star state to play Big 12 opponent Texas Christian on Sunday. Cornell should have some things going for it. First, **Danya Smith** is a good coach. Second, the team returns its top five scorers from last year, led by first team All-Ivy **Laura Bagwell-Katalinich '20**, who averaged 16 points and eight rebounds last season. Also back are **Samantha Widmann '20** and **Danielle Jorgenson '20**, both of whom started all 26 games last season, and four other players who started games last season. Help should also come from **Elodie Furey '21**, who was part of the regular rotation as a first year but missed most of last year due to illness.

This will likely be an upperclass-dominated team. The only sophomore on this year's team who played much last year was **Theresa Mbabefo '22**, who, like Furey, is a strong defensive player. It would be helpful if someone else from the first year or sophomore classes steps up.

Final Note

Since I took a semi-gratuitous dig at one Cornell alum in the opening paragraph of this report, I figured I should offset it with a shout-out to another. **Cole Bardreau '15**, one of my favorite hockey players when he was with the Big Red, was promoted to the New York Islanders a few weeks ago and has made an immediate impact, scoring on a penalty shot the other day, prompting this headline on the *Newsday* sports page.



Be back in December. Have a great Thanksgiving, y'all, and **GO BIG RED!**