



**CCWW Sports Report No. 706
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by
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I'm way behind so here's a brief catch-up on what y'all need (or don't need) to know about Cornell sports.

Hockey Headline: Cornell Men and Women Both No. 1 in the National Rankings! Yes, you read that right. After five weeks of taking turns at No. 1, in the February 24 USCHO polls, both Cornell teams were in the top spot. That's a first in the history of Cornell hockey. Now it would be really nice if they were both No. 1 on, say, April 13, after the men's NCAA championship final. Then we'd really have something to brag about. But let's revel in the moment. The Cornell men are 21-2-4, 16-2-2 in ECAC, and 8-1-1 in Ivy League contests. They have won the Ivy League title and, will win the ECAC title with a win or a tie in their final regular season game against Clarkson this Saturday. The Big Red are all but assured of an NCAA tournament bid no matter what happens from here on out.

The Cornell women have been even more dominant. They finished the regular season last weekend with home wins over RPI and Union and are 25-1-3 overall, 19-0-3 in ECAC play, and 10-0-0 against Ivy League opponents. The Big Red women are first in both the USCHO and USA Today polls and No. 1 in the Pairwise rankings. They won both the Ivy and ECAC titles, and will start the ECAC playoffs Friday with a best-of-three series at home against St. Lawrence. Win that and they will host the ECAC semifinals and finals at Lynah. And, since I can't see their PWR falling below No. 4, the Red will then host an NCAA quarterfinal game on March 13 or 14. In fact, Cornell should not have to play another game outside the friendly confines of Lynah until the women's Frozen Four in Boston on March 20-22.

Men's Basketball Headline: Better Than We Feared. It was never going to be a good season. The graduation last May of all-time leading scorer **Matt Morgan '19**, one of Cornell's best players ever, left the Big Red with no real star and not much size. The four recruiting classes after Morgan's seemed to have produced mostly role players; the Red have just one player, **Jimmy Boenheim '21**, who is All-Ivy caliber. Not surprisingly, Ivy pre-season pollsters picked Cornell to finish in a tie for last.

If I'd written this report three weeks ago (In fact, I did start to write it then), I could have pointed to nothing to contradict that grim prognosis. At that time the Big Red was 2-13 against Division I teams, and 1-3 in the Ivy League, tied with equally hapless Columbia a game out of last place. I won't bore you with the details but the Red had shown a pronounced inability to make baskets, especially three-pointers, exacerbated by an unwillingness to stop attempting those damn treys. But then a small corner was turned. In the past three weeks, the Red defeated second-place Princeton, blew out fourth-place Brown, lost in double overtime to league leader Yale, and lost a close game to fifth-place Penn. (The Red also got torched on the road at Harvard and Dartmouth; the less said about that the better.) The Big Red started shooting better. In the last six games, Cornell is shooting at a .453 clip, .038 higher than what they had been shooting against D-I teams. The Red also started shooting better from beyond the arc and, more importantly, they stopped shooting so many threes. After throwing up almost six treys every ten minutes in their first 21 games, the Big Red only attempted three every ten minutes last weekend against Brown and Yale. And their success rate went from 30% to almost 50%.

No, the Red will not make the Ivy League Tournament. But they've become more fun to watch. They played the Yale and Brown games without Boenheim, who was injured at Dartmouth. And a number of players, none of them seniors, have stepped up and shown that maybe, just maybe, they can be quality Ivy League players. So that's what the next two weeks are about—finding out who can play this game. The Big Red are at home this weekend for games against Dartmouth and Harvard and then wrap up the season next week at Penn and Princeton.

Women's Basketball Headline: **It Was Not Supposed to be Like This.** Unlike the men, the women did not suffer a major graduation loss. With All-Ivy first teamer **Laura Bagwell-Katalinich '20** and three-year captain **Samantha Widmann '20** leading the way, this should have been a year in which Cornell at least made the ILT and maybe did a bit more.

The non-conference season went pretty well, as the Big Red posted a 7-5 record, all five losses coming at the hands of teams with solid winning records, and all of them by ten points or less. And the Ivy schedule also started off okay. Cornell split two games with Columbia, blowing a lead and losing in New York but then coming back from a seven-point deficit with less than three minutes to go to win the rematch in overtime. The Red followed that up with a comfortable 11-point win over Brown and led a good Yale team by 16 early in the second half. Then the wheels came off. The Elis came back strong in the second half to win that game and that started a losing streak that has now reached seven games. With a 2-8 league record, the Big Red is in a three-way tie for last in the league and any hope of making the ILT is kaput.

Men's Lacrosse Headline: **3-0 Start: Just What the Doctor Ordered!** Last year the Big Red faced a loaded schedule that they couldn't handle. The Red were 10-5 with all five losses coming at the hands of teams ranked in the top-five in the country. And quality wins over then-No. 1 Towson and at Notre Dame weren't enough to earn the Red a place in the NCAA tournament. The consensus was that while Cornell's offense was efficient, problems with the defense and face-offs prevented the Red from being an elite team.

What a difference a year makes—at least so far. The Big Red have won their first three games by an average of 8.7 goals. (That number probably understates how dominant the Red have been; in each game, Cornell had a huge lead after three quarters and took its foot off the gas in the final period.) The offense, with two solid midfield lines complimenting the attack, has been unstoppable. The defense appears improved over last year. And here's the big improvement: faceoffs. Last year the Red won 38.4% of faceoffs. This year, they're winning faceoffs at a rate of 67.3%.

The teams Cornell has defeated—Albany, Towson and High Point—are traditionally good teams that may not be that good this year. So now comes in the hard part. Over the next four weekends, the Big Red will play four ranked teams, including No. 1 Yale and No. 2 Penn State. The action starts on Sunday at 9:00 a.m. against Ohio State and you can watch the game on ESPNU.

Wrestling Headline: **Big Red's String of Ivy Championships Ends at 17.** We kinda saw this coming. Cornell is competing this year without three top wrestlers, all taking a year off from school to try and make the U.S. Olympic team. Princeton, OTOH, had the best team it's had in years, with four wrestlers ranked in the top ten in the country at their weights. The teams met on February 9 in the Red's final Ivy League meet and the Tigers came away with a narrow 19-13 victory. That loss not only stopped the Big Red's string of Ivy championships but also ended a streak of Ivy dual meet victories going back to February 2002—92 in all.

In two weeks the Big Red will compete for the EIWA championship and then two weeks after that are the NCAA championships in Minneapolis. I am not predicting a Red to win at EIWA's and I expect that Cornell's streak of 12-straight top-10 NCAA finishes is in jeopardy. On the plus side, the Red have two wrestlers, **Chas Tucker '20**, who is undefeated so far at 133, and **Ben Darmstadt '22** at 197, who should earn All-American status and could conceivably compete for national titles.

Other Headlines:

- **Men's Tennis Wins ECAC Championship.** This is basically the Ivy League indoor championship. Cornell hosted the event and came in as the No. 3 seed, but defeated No. 2 Dartmouth and No. 1 Harvard to take the title. The Big Red are ranked 16th in the country, having started the season 7-1, the sole loss coming at the hands of No. 14 Michigan.
- **Fencing Defeats Princeton, Breaking Streak of 25-Straight Losses to the Tigers.** The 10th-ranked Big Red had not defeated the Tigers since February 1992, but in early February the Red

edged Princeton (then ranked No. 1) at the Northwestern Duals in Evanston. While the Tigers got some revenge a few weeks later, defeating the Red at the Ivy Round Robin, Cornell finished the dual season with a program-record 24 wins (against 10 losses).

- **Siva Subramaniam '22 Looks to Win CSA Title.** Last year, Cornell's top women squash player lost in CSA individual championship final to Harvard's Gina Kennedy. This year, Kennedy, now a senior, has handed Siva her only defeat of the season. Next weekend at Penn, Siva will look to avenge that defeat and earn the Big Red its first individual title ever.

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