DRIVE

"Been the number one diva in this game"
DIVA BEYONCÉ

Dante Reno carves his own path

BY ANGELA HUANG
CONTRIBUTING REPORTER



XIMENA SOLORZANO / PHOTOGRAPHY EDITOR

Quarterback Dante Reno '28 grew up around the Yale Bowl as the head coach's son, but he has sought to make a name for himself as a player. Reno has built relationships with the members of his team, which he said embodies a "family atmosphere."

Though he grew up around Yale football, quarterback Dante Reno '28 has forged his own path as a player.

His father, former Head Coach Tony Reno, helmed the program from 2012 until earlier this year, and the starting quarterback has had to find his own footing in a place where his last name was already familiar. After arriving at Yale last season following a redshirt year at South Carolina, Reno said he has gained his team's trust. He stressed that leadership stems from building relationships with his teammates.

"As a quarterback, you need to have that with everybody, I would say. Not just your close friend group, but everybody that's around you," Reno said in a phone interview with the News.

In 2025, Reno threw for a team-high 2,498 yards and 21 touchdowns. His breakout performance came in last year's Yale-Harvard matchup, where he completed 15 of 19 passes for 273 yards and three touchdowns.

The quarterback has brought more than passing yards to the program. Yale offensive coordinator and quarterbacks coach Chris Ostrowsky said that when he hears Reno laugh, he is reminded of the player's father, who died last month.

Ostrowsky joined the coaching staff in August 2021 and was a longtime friend and colleague of Tony Reno. He said he sees the former coach in the quarterback beyond their shared love of football — in the way Dante Reno speaks, his word choice and his giggles.

"There'll be certain times he'll say something, and you'll look and say, 'Oh my gosh, he sounds just like his dad,'" Ostrowsky said in an interview.

'A family atmosphere'

For someone who grew up surrounded by football, Reno was relatively late to the sport. He did not start until eighth grade, having spent his earlier years playing baseball and basketball.

When asked about Reno's transfer from South Carolina, Ostrowsky described the move as less of a recruitment and more of a homecoming.

"This has always been his home. He grew up here. He was a little boy here. He was here long before I was," Ostrowsky said.

But the quarterback's background did not absolve him from proving himself to the team.

Defensive back and Team 153 captain Abu Kamara '27 said of Reno's arrival that "obviously he's the coach's son, so he's going to get a bit of criticism."

Reno acknowledged those expectations, citing his performances from the end of last season, particularly against Harvard, as a turning point in earning his teammates' trust.

"He's able to speak and command the room when he's talking," Ostrowsky said. "He's got a little bit of coach in him, so he's got some coach speak for sure."

Those relationships extend far beyond the field and are a defining aspect of what sets Yale's team culture apart from other programs.

Reno described the team's dynamic as "more of a family atmosphere," and said he appreciated the continuity of Yale's roster. That culture differs from programs where players frequently transfer in and out.

"Kids stay here for about four years and build relationships, and that's kind of why we've been able to win," Reno said. "It's super fun to be part of."

Away from the football field, Reno said he likes to spend time outdoors, whether it's by the lake fishing or playing a round of golf with his teammates.

A drive to win

When asked what one word his teammates would use to describe him, Reno did not hesitate.

"Competitive," Reno said. "I hate losing."

He said that whether he is playing ping pong with friends or a board game, he has little appetite for defeat. On the practice field, he expects his teammates to bring that same competitive edge.

"He likes to challenge guys," Kamara said, adding that Reno's competitiveness comes from his care for the team.

These days, Ostrowsky said, much of Reno's preparation takes place away from the field. The coach said the quarterback spends hours studying film, working to understand both individual plays and how opposing defenses operate.

"He does a great job getting extra film in, really trying to dive into our opponent and get a true snapshot of the DNA of who we're playing," Ostrowsky said.

During practice, that preparation has not gone unnoticed by Bulldog defenders, which include Kamara.

When asked about what sets Reno apart from other quarterbacks, the team's captain said, "His IQ. His ability to read the defense and predetermine his throws."

Still, Kamara said, for all the time Reno spends dissecting defenses, he is hardly all business.

"I think if you don't really know Dante, every time you see him, he's working on something for his game," he said. "But if you really get to know him, he's just a funny, funny dude."

In remembrance

Since Tony Reno died in October, the Bulldogs have taken the field wearing patches on their jerseys bearing the initials "TR." Reno said his teammates also wear the initials on their bags and shirts outside the football facility.

"A lot of staff members wear it too, so it's really special," Reno said.

Reno said his father's influence goes far beyond football. The player recalled how he would invite players who couldn't afford to travel home for the holidays to spend Christmas with his family.

Reno and the rest of Team 153 will now seek to continue honoring his father's legacy this weekend as they travel to Boston to play Harvard in the 142nd edition of The Game.

The Bulldogs will kick off against the Crimson at 3:30 p.m. on Saturday at Fenway Park.

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Bulldog pride emerges for The Game

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With the 142nd edition of the Yale-Harvard game just around the corner, Yale's campus is already abuzz with students eager to see the Bulldogs prevail for the fifth consecutive time, this time at the historic Fenway Park.

But Yale's school pride runs deeper than plays on the field. The Game brings together students, faculty and alumni to join sides in a rivalry that goes back centuries. With tailgates, mixers and rowdy student sections scheduled around kickoff, The Game is the highlight of the November social calendar as many Elis unite behind a shared desire to see Yale football obliterate the Crimson.

"Yale's not a big sports school, but for one day, we get all the nerds to pay attention to something other than their books," Moriah Hogans '28 wrote in a text message to the News.

For some, it's all about football. Since Yale and Harvard frequently compete for the top spots in the conference standings, the match is often a trophy-decider that provides a big morale boost for the team going into the playoffs. This year, Harvard has already clinched the Ivy League title, but the Crimson could be forced to share the trophy with Princeton and Brown if they win their respective games and, crucially, if Yale spoils the party up at Fenway.

"A win in the game can seal Ivy League Championships, punch our ticket to the FCS playoffs, or just ruin Harvard's season. Are all valuable," Giuseppe DiMassa '28 wrote in a text to the News. He said he didn't really know what a loss might do, because he had "never seen it happen."

The majority of current Yalies have yet to see the Bulldogs lose in a Yale-Harvard matchup, which likely contributes to the optimism surrounding The Game. For many, the occasion offers a welcome respite from an otherwise grueling time of the year filled with exams and papers.

"The Game is so special because of the anticipation: in the midst of midterms you might attend a sporting event for a sport you've never seen before just to get your name in the raffle," Hogans wrote, referring to the ticketing lottery system in which students received added entries for going to particular Yale athletic events.

Yet sentiment around The Game is not always positive for students. Not everyone was able to obtain a ticket to this year's game through the lottery.

"I will not be at the game because I did not get a ticket," Chase Jones '28 said in an interview, "because the lottery system is kind of complex and I feel like it could be handled better. And all of the seats that haven't been sold are like $200, so that just isn't feasible for some students."

Still, the gameday spirit shines through for those who are able to attend the match and who plan on rushing the field in the case of a victory. But the weekend of The Game is appealing in other ways, too.

"The best part was honestly being able to be with friends and talk to one another in such an energetic environment," Mashnoov Chowdhury '28 wrote in a text to the News. "The stadium is an ocean of blue and red and there's chanting and you know that after the game's over, you get to go on break."

Some students said taking part in a school rivalry that dates back to the 1852 Yale-Harvard rowing regatta is key to the experience. And while many Bulldog faithful will bleed blue this weekend, The Game offers an opportunity for Yalies to meet the "enemy" and explore all Boston and Cambridge has to offer.

For some, the rivalry fosters a sense of Bulldog affinity that is deeply personal.

"I remember touring both schools before committing to Yale, and on my Harvard tour the guide brought up the rivalry a lot," Ashley Skinner '30 wrote in a text to the News. "I got a feeling of pride in Yale every time they would talk bad about it especially in reference to the game in a way that I had never felt about a school before, and it made me realize Yale was the right place for me."

Students said they feel The Game truly brings out their inner Yalie, encouraging them to identify with the school community around this time of year.

"I think what makes the Yale-Harvard game so special is that it goes beyond football," basketball forward Luisa Vydrova '27 wrote in a text to the News. "It's about school pride, tradition, and bringing the entire Yale community together."

The Yale Bulldogs take on the Harvard Crimson for the 142nd rivalry match this Saturday at 3:30 p.m. at Fenway Park.

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XIMENA SOLORZANO / PHOTOGRAPHY EDITOR

As Team 153 looks to notch their fifth straight victory over the Harvard Crimson in Saturday's face-off in Fenway Park, undergraduates told the News what The Game means to them, from tailgates to traditions to ticket shortages to campus tours.