SPORTS

Team 153 enters season as heavy favorites to continue playoff run

FOOTBALL

BY BRODY GILKISON
STAFF REPORTER

Team 153 has a new head coach, but it is still the heavy favorite to win the conference.

Just a season ago, the Bulldogs kicked off what became a record-setting year with Head Coach Tony Reno at the helm, ready to take on the new era of Ivy football with playoff implications. As conference champions, the team reached its first playoff run in history.

This time around, Kevin Cahill will make his debut as Yale's head coach and look to uphold the winning standard left for him. Cahill, the 2025 FCS Coach of the Year, was named the 35th head coach of Yale football earlier this year on the heels of Coach Reno's exit due to health issues. The new hire had previously spent a decade as an assistant on Reno's staff.

"I know how things work around here, which has been super helpful," Cahill said in an interview with WTNH.

A look at the roster

In preseason polling, the Bulldogs are viewed as heavy favorites to win their second straight conference title and FCS Playoff berth.

Despite losing stars Josh Pitsenberger '26, Inumidun Ayo-Durojaye '26, and Spencer Mermans '27 to the league and the portal, Team 153 retains an abundance of talent on the roster, team captain and two-time Ivy Defensive Player of the Year Abu Kamara '27 leading the way.

Zairion Jackson-Bass '27, James Cave '28 and Mack Johnson '28 are set to play in the trenches. Behind them, Kamara will team up with Phoenix Grant '27, who was second in tackles last year, as well as Osize Daniyan '27, who is back from injury after missing a large portion of the 2025 season.

With several younger guys also expected to earn more playing time, the new-look group is eager to prove their worth.

"We are a hungry group," Kamara said in an interview with WTNH.

On offense, quarterback Dante Reno '28 will be working with several new playmakers compared to last season. Sophomore Hugo Djeumeni Kemeni '29 will be taking over the role once held by Pitsenberger as spearhead of the ground attack.

While Kemeni has seen limited historical usage, his performance in fall camp, according to his teammates, has given fans reason for excitement. His efforts will be supplemented by Cuttler Adams '28, who missed nearly the entire 2025 season with a leg injury.

On the receiving end of Reno's passes will be Jaxton Santiago '28, taking over the lead role from Nico Brown '26. Santiago, who was hurt in last year's playoff game against Youngstown State, has made a full recovery and is expected to improve dramatically from his nearly 700 yards and five touchdowns.

Lucius Anderson '29, Reid Jones '29 and Garon Kemp '26 will also receive a large number of targets as once-filled roles have now opened up above them.

The first half schedule

As is tradition, the Bulldogs will kick their season off by taking on the Holy Cross Crusaders, a game that has remained the opener for Yale for several years now.



LIZA KAUFMAN, STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

After reaching the first playoff run in Yale's history last year as the Ivy League champions, the Bulldogs are looking to build on their success ahead of their Sept. 19 season kickoff against Holy Cross.

The second week sees a road trip up to Ithaca for the Bulldogs' first conference game of the year. With Big Red Head Coach Dan Swanstrom now in year two leading the program, expect to see Cornell take a step forward from their mediocre (4–6, 3–4) showing a season ago. Cornell was picked to finish fifth in the preseason poll.

The Bulldogs finally get to host a game at the Yale Bowl when Merrimack comes to town in week three. Merrimack lost 35–7 to Rhode Island in week one.

Week four will be another home game for Team 153, with Dartmouth slated as the conference home opener. The Big Green, who have won four Ivy titles in the past six years, will return several starters on both offense and defense.

As many Yale fans may remember last season, a late-game special teams blunder and defensive breakdown blew the game for the Bulldogs. With that loss at the forefront of their minds, the Elis will take the field seeking revenge against the Big Green.

The following week, Yale's highest-ranked opponent comes to town in what is expected to be the most difficult game of the season for both teams. Yale is currently ranked 16th, while Rhode Island is seventh in the most recent FCS Rankings. Both teams advanced to the second round of last year's FCS Playoffs and will look to add to their resumes in this midseason test.

To Yale's advantage, the Rams return less talent from last season than the Bulldogs. And with Captain Kamara's penchant for big plays in big moments, the defense may be in good hands.

The Yale Bulldogs will kick off their season at 2 p.m. in Worcester, MA against Holy Cross on Sept. 19. The game will be available on ESPN+.

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Men's team to face Penn in semifinals of Ivy League tournament

MEN'S SOCCER

BY ELI RATNER
STAFF REPORTER

Following a 3–9–3 record last season, where the Bulldogs finished sixth in the Ivy League, men's soccer (1–1–0, 0–0–0 Ivy) started the 2026 season with mixed results in opening games against Quinnipiac University (2–1–0, 0–0–0 Metro) and Army (1–1–2, 0–0–0 Patriot).

The Elis kicked off the weekend hosting the Bobcats for their home opener on Friday night under the lights at Reese Stadium, where a dominant first half showed significant promise for the season ahead.



LIZA KAUFMAN, STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

After suffering a 3-4 loss to Quinnipiac University in its home opener, the Yale men's soccer team quickly recovered with a clean sheet victory over Army, handing the Black Knights their first loss of the season.

Yale took an early lead as a shot from Teague McCammon '28, assisted by Caleb Layton '29 and Angelo Zhu '29, in the fifth minute put the Bulldogs on the board.

Twelve minutes later, Sebi Roy '29 scored on an assist by Simon Adjakple '27, putting Yale up 2-0.

Although Quinnipiac University bounced back in the 37th minute to narrow the deficit to one, Yale quickly regained momentum through a solo goal by Ethan Otterberg '30, giving the Bulldogs a 3-1 lead going into halftime.

But the Elis' first-half lead did not last long. The Bobcats came out of the locker room hungry for victory. Led by Taehyeon Lim, who recorded a second half hat-trick, Quinnipiac overtook Yale and returned to Hamden with a 4-3 win.

"As you can imagine, I was really pleased with the first half. I can't remember the last time we scored three goals in a half, but it shows this team can create and score goals," Head Coach Kylie Stannard told Yale Athletics.

Although the home opener ended in a disappointing loss, the Bulldogs quickly recovered as they traveled to West Point, New York, on Monday to face off against Army.

Following a scoreless first half, the Bulldogs drew first blood from a shot by Nate Harmon '29 in the 51st minute, assisted by Sven Meacham '28 and Otterberg to put Yale up 1-0.

In the 87th minute, Meacham recorded his second assist of the night as he found Salif Leintu '28. Leintu's goal marked his first collegiate goal and carried the Elis to victory over the Black Knights.

A strong performance in the net from sophomore goalkeeper Josh Linebaugh '29 contributed to the Bulldogs' clean sheet, as Linebaugh made 5 saves in his first collegiate start.

With the victory, Yale improved to 1–1, while Army fell to 1–1–2.

With a tally in the win column, the Bulldogs will now look to build on Monday's success as they continue out of conference play before beginning Ivy play at the end of September.

The Elis will next head to State College, Pennsylvania, to take on the Pennsylvania State Nittany Lions (1–2–0, 0–0–0 Big Ten) on Friday at 7 p.m.

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Yale sees mixed results from early matches with Northeastern and UVA

WOMEN'S SOCCER

BY GIAN LOMBEYDA
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The Yale women's soccer team (2–2, 0–0 Ivy) defeated the Northeastern University Huskies (2–2–2, 0–0 CAA) in the third match of the season three days before a narrow defeat by nationally ranked No. 12 University of Virginia (4–0, 0–0 ACC) on Sunday.

The Bulldogs put on a show in the first 14 minutes against Northeastern in last Thursday's game, shocking the Huskies' staunch defense with two quick fire goals in enemy territory.

Leading the attack was forward Anita Thorvaldsdottir '27, who has two assists this season after recording three goals and an assist last year. Thorvaldsdottir did not take long to make an impact, bursting into the box along the left flank of the field and making a perfect cross to fellow senior Abigail Solomon '26.

Solomon beat her defenders to tap Thorvaldsdottir's assist into the net, snagging her first goal of the season and her second at Yale.

As the Bulldogs celebrated, the Huskies gathered in a huddle, visibly shaken. Solomon's point marked the first time Northeastern goalkeeper Eliza Teplow had allowed a goal in over 485 minutes of play, dating back to last season.

Yale took advantage of Northeastern's lapse in confidence and struck again seven minutes later off a corner kick taken by Alex Chang '27. After being punched away by Teplow amidst chaos in the box, the ball fell to Jojo DeNegri '29, who shot it home in her first career goal at Yale.

The second half did not see as much offensive production from the Bulldogs, but Yale held the line to conclude the match with a 2-0 victory.

The win lifted the Bulldogs to a 2–1–0 start to the year, a record identical to those it has boasted after the third game of each of the last three seasons.

Still, the team's fourth game has often marked a turning point for Yale, and this year the Bulldogs faced off for the first time in team history against the University of Virginia. The squad, ranked twelfth in the nation, started this season with three wins.

The match began with an early onslaught by the Cavaliers' offense, and midfielder Ella Carter scored in the eleventh minute. Just one minute later, the University of Virginia was awarded a penalty, which was saved by first-year goalkeeper and Ivy League Defensive Player of the Week Isabel Willems '30.

Gaining momentum, the Bulldogs struck against the run of play in the fourteenth minute through the deft footwork of Thorvaldsdottir, who tallied her first goal of the season and eighth at Yale.

The Bulldogs withstood eleven more shots to stay level by the halftime break.

Still, the University of Virginia attack would not relent. In the 75th minute, the Cavaliers finally breached Willems' goal, lifting the team to a one-point lead that would prove conclusive.

The match ended 2-1 with 26 shots on the night for University of Virginia and a career-high nine saves for Willems, who more than doubled the saves she had accumulated in every preceding match of the season combined.

"It was a gritty defensive effort for our group today," coach Sarah Martinez said to Yale Athletics after the match. "I'm proud of the discipline and resilience we showed against a top team on the road in the heat."

Yale will host Hofstra University (0–3–1, 0–0 CAA) in a 7 p.m. match on Thursday at Reese Stadium.

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