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"We're out to prove that we're the best team in the Ivy League."
JORDAN BRATHWAITE '28

With new stars and old foes, Yale to seek March Madness return

MEN'S BASKETBALL

BY AZARA MASON
STAFF REPORTER

The Yale men's basketball team announced its schedule for the 2026-27 season on Friday. With a nonconference slate reprising historical rivalries and adding in five new foes, the path is set to a potential ninth NCAA Tournament berth for the Bulldogs.

When Yale opens the season against Howard University in November, the team's lineup will look different. Four of last season's five starters are no longer on the roster. Despite the turnover, expectations for the reigning Ivy League regular-season champions remain high.

The Elis lost significant talent and experience when seniors Nick Townsend '26 and Casey Simmons '26 graduated this year. Townsend, last season's Ivy League Player of the Year, played for the Philadelphia 76ers in the 2026 NBA Summer League and is now spending his 5th year of eligibility with Stanford. Simmons, the reigning Ivy League Defensive Player of the Year, recently signed a contract to play professionally in Spain with Cultural y Deportiva Leonesa Baloncesto.

Yale also lost two key contributors in the transfer portal. Forward Isaac Celiscar — formerly a member of the class of 2028 — transferred to Baylor University, while center Samson Aletan '26 graduated early and joined Providence College, leaving the Bulldogs with significant production to replace in the frontcourt.

Joining Yale alongside five freshmen in the class of 2030 will be Washington University transfer Connor May '28. In an interview this month with Ivy Hoops Online, Yale head coach James Jones praised the 6-foot-6 forward as "very skilled, tough, and a good shooter." May will bring a dangerous outside option to the Bulldogs' offense, headed by top three-point shooters Riley Fox '28 and Jordan Brathwaite '28.

As the Bulldogs integrate their new additions, captain Trevor Mullin '27 — Yale's only returning starter — emphasized the importance of building chemistry with younger players off the court while helping them gain confidence on the court. He said that includes encouraging players to learn from mistakes early.

"We understand that new guys and younger guys will make mistakes; it's human nature," Mullin wrote to the News in a text message. "We want to get those mistakes out of the way now so when it's time to play games they are ready to go."

Mullin expressed enthusiasm about this season's "very talented" team, adding that he believes every player can help lead the Bulldogs to victory.

Yale enters this year looking to replicate a strong non-conference showing from last season, when the Bulldogs lost just two games before Ivy League play.

One of those losses came against then-No. 14 University of Alabama, 102–87. This year's schedule features no opponent ranked as highly as the Crimson Tide was, and Yale has an opportunity to enter conference play with an even stronger record.

The Bulldogs will open their season on Nov. 2 at the John J. Lee Amphitheater. They will face off with Howard University, a familiar foe that Yale defeated in dramatic fashion just last February.

Trailing by three with less than three seconds remaining, Yale forced overtime when Brathwaite knocked down a contested corner three before pulling away in the additional period to defeat the Bisons. Howard University, fresh off a First Four victory in last season's NCAA Tournament, will return to New Haven looking to reverse that outcome.

Yale will then embark on a two-game trip south to take on a pair of Big 12 opponents, the only high-major conference matchups on their regular-season slate. The first of these two face-offs will come at the University of Central Florida on Nov. 6.

Yale will then travel to Waco, Texas, on Nov. 10 to face Baylor University in the second leg of the trip. The Bears will look to bounce back after a disappointing 2025-26 campaign in which they finished 6–12 in Big 12 play.

The matchup also carries historical significance: the only previous meeting between the two programs came in the first round of the 2016 NCAA Tournament, when Yale stunned Baylor University 79–75 to earn the program's first-ever NCAA Tournament victory.

This year's game in Waco will also reunite the Bulldogs with Celiscar, their former teammate. Brathwaite named Baylor as the game he is most looking forward to this season.

"Celiscar and I came in the same class together, and he was one of my closest friends on the team, so I'm looking forward to going out there and competing against him," Brathwaite wrote to the News in a text. "I think it'll definitely be a memorable experience."

Yale will then travel to Boston for its first-ever meeting with Northeastern University. The Huskies are coming off a disappointing season in which they finished last in the Coastal Athletic Association, but an overhauled roster will aim to bounce back this year. Brayden Young, a player for Northeastern, said the team has already identified the Yale game as an important early-season test.

"We're eager to play Yale," Young told the News. "It'll be a great non-conference game to get us momentum going into conference play and hopefully have a great year."

Yale will then return to their home court to welcome a very familiar nonconference opponent, the University of Vermont. The two midmajor powerhouse programs have met every season since 2008. Yale trails in the all-time series 10–7. Last season, 6-foot-9 forward Gus Yalden demonstrated his physicality, scoring 22 points toward the University of Vermont's victory. With Yalden returning, Yale's frontcourt will face an important early-season test.

Over Thanksgiving break, the Bulldogs will travel to Orlando to compete in the 2026 ESPN Events Invitational Showcase from Nov. 23 to Nov. 25. The six-team field features Akron University, Belmont University, St. Bonaventure University, Wichita State University and Wright State University alongside Yale, giving the Bulldogs the opportunity to face several quality mid-major opponents early in the season.

Akron University also shared the floor with the Elis in their last Thanksgiving week tournament, in which Yale defeated the Zips 97-94 to capture the Paradise Jam championship in the United States Virgin Islands.

On Dec. 9, Yale will host Rhode Island College in New Haven.When they transition to conference play a month later, the Bulldogs will look to capture the Ivy League regular-season title for the third consecutive year when they transition to conference play. Their title defense will begin at home on Jan. 4 when the Bulldogs take on Brown before welcoming Princeton to the John J. Lee Amphitheater five days later.

The Tigers missed the Ivy League Tournament in the 2025-26 season after would-be senior stars Xavian Lee and Caden Pierce transferred to Florida and Purdue, respectively. This season, however, Princeton returns 100 percent of its minutes played.

Yale will host Penn on Jan. 23 in a clash of Ancient Eight heavyweights. The Quakers enter this season as one of the Ivy League favorites, returning First Team All-Ivy forward TJ Power and adding Notre Dame transfer Sir Mohammed, son of 2-time NCAA Champion and 18-year NBA veteran Nazr Mohammed, to an already talented roster.

The Jan. 23 matchup will be Yale's first meeting with Penn since last season's Ivy League Tournament championship, when Power erupted for a career-high and tournament-record 44 points to lead the No. 3-seeded Quakers past the top-seeded Bulldogs and secure Penn's first NCAA Tournament bid since 2018.

Another marquee home matchup will come on Feb. 12, when Yale hosts perennial rival Harvard, who finished just one game behind the Bulldogs in last season's Ivy League standings. After several Bulldog and Crimson players spent the summer as teammates representing the United States at the 2026 International University Sports Federation World University Championship 3-on-3 tournament, this season's two meetings will feature familiar faces on opposite sides.

Despite the roster turnover and a strong conference field, Brathwaite made the Bulldogs' goal for the season clear.

"We're out to prove that we're the best team in the Ivy League," he said.

The official schedule release announcement can be found on the Yale Athletics website.

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YALE ATHLETICS

The Bulldogs enter the season looking to return to the NCAA Tournament after a heartbreaking loss to the University of Pennsylvania in last season's Ivy Tournament championship game denied Yale a third consecutive March Madness appearance.

With new coach and strong rookies, Elis aim for back-to-back NCAA bid

TENNIS

BY REMI CLARK-REDSTAR
STAFF REPORTER

Yale men's tennis is coming off a strong season last year that ended with its best regular season campaign since 2017 and an appearance in the NCAA Championship.

This year, the Bulldogs have one goal in mind: returning to the tournament.

"If last year was the first sign of a new era, reaching the NCAA, this year is hopefully the start of a new era," Ethan Chung '29 said. "We are working hard to follow up on last year and start a great tradition and legacy of Yale men's tennis."

With a new coach, solid returners and a ready lineup of first years, the men's tennis team returns to campus optimistic for another successful season.

New coach, new captain

Over the summer, Yale hired a new head coach, Benjamin Johnson, to helm the tennis ship. Hailing from Louisville, Kentucky, Johnson began his collegiate coaching career at Davidson University as an assistant coach in 2007, helping elevate their team to their highest Intercollegiate Tennis Association recruiting class, which ranked at No. 5 in 2009.

After four years at Davidson, Johnson began his head coaching career at the University of Richmond in 2011, where he would remain for six seasons. Transforming the program into an Atlantic Top 10 team, he led the Spiders to 20 all-conference selections and Atlantic 10 Tournament top seeds in 2015 and 2017, as well as the team's first conference championship appearance in 2017.

Following that year's success, Johnson served as the assistant coach for the Southern Methodist University's tennis squad until 2019, when he was promoted to associate head coach. In that position, which he held until last season, he led the team to back-to-back American Athletic Conference Championships in 2022 and 2023.

This May, Johnson led the Mustangs to a first-round win over Princeton in the NCAA Championship. The program's highest ranking under his leadership was No. 20 on the ITA rankings, their highest ranking in over 20 years.

"Coach Ben is super organized and has experience that in the past we may not have had," Edward Liao '28 said in a phone interview. "His experience at SMU, the ACC mentality, he brings it to the Ivy League. He knows what to do at any given time, and I am excited to see what comes."

Joining Coach Johnson in a leadership role is newly elected captain Jim Ji '27.

A native of San Diego, California, Ji has had a distinguished career at Yale. In his first year, he finished the season with a 22-8 singles record and qualified for the ITA Super Regionals in singles. The following year, he was a CSC Academic All District Honoree and won 13 doubles matches with Eric Li '26 and Jason Shuler '27.

Last season, Ji was once more named a CSC Academic All District Honoree, notched 12 singles wins at the No. 4 and No. 5 positions as well as six doubles wins at the No. 3 position.

"Jim is a senior, but I would say he is one of the closest guys I have on the team. We are all very tightly connected as a team," Chung said. "He is one of those guys that is a super hard worker, a great athlete and a great supporter of the team. He wants to be a resource for all members, and he makes the team what it is."

The returners

Though many stalwarts of the team have left, most notably Vignesh Gogineni '26 and former captain Li, the Bulldogs still have players ready to make their mark on Yale tennis history.

Fans may recall the likes of Liao, who certainly made his mark last season.

Liao competed at the No. 2 singles position and triumphed with a 16-7 record, being named second-team All-Ivy in singles and first-team All-Ivy in doubles. In his previous season, he went 22-9 in singles with a 16-8 doubles record.

Shuler secured 17 wins in singles at the No. 3 position in the lineup last season, as well as 15 doubles triumphs with partner Dylan Tsoi '27. In his first Yale season in 2024, Shuler was ranked No. 17 in singles in the New England region, picking up 18 wins in singles and 14 in doubles.

The frosh

All players who spoke with the News made note of the first-year class.

"There is a lot of raw talent, I'm really excited about this freshmen class," Ji said in a phone interview. "They're really great movers and ball strikers, and their work ethic really stands out to me. You can see a lot of passion and grit and determination. A lot of potential in store for us. They can really be a game changer."

Joining the team this year is Bryan Assi '30 of Hilo, Hawaii, who was ranked No. 17 nationally in the 2026 recruiting class by TennisRecruiting.com and reached the No.1 ranking in the USTA 18-and-unders doubles rankings. He won the USTA Winter National Championships Level 1 18-and-under doubles title in 2024 and the Hawaii State Individual Singles Championship in 2025.

Magnus Weng '30, hailing from San Jose, California, was ranked as high No. 36 in the 2026 recruiting class and attained a national rank of No. 4 in the USTA 16-and-under division and No. 17 in the 18-and-under division. Weng was also a back-to-back USTA Northern California 18-and-under Sectional Champion.

William Zhang from Irvine, California, finishes out the new addition. He was a semifinalist in the 16-and-under Orange Bowl and received a Bronze Ball at the 16-and-under Easter Bowl. He has also been a finalist in ITF J200 and ITF J60 events and won two ITF J30 singles titles and an L4 18-and-under championship.

Zhang has competed in ITF World Tennis Tour M15 and M25 professional futures tournaments, where he won four ITF trophies, two of which are tournament titles.

The first match of the season is scheduled for Sept. 18 at the Chowderfest Invitational in Chestnut Hill, Massachusetts.

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LIZA KAUFMAN / PHOTOGRAPHY EDITOR

Following its best regular season record since 2017 and equipped with a new head coach, the men's tennis team is hungry to make a return to the championship stage.

STAT OF THE DAY

JOINING THE TEAM THIS YEAR IS BRYAN ASSI '30 OF HILO, HAWAII, WHO WAS RANKED NO. 17 NATIONALLY IN THE 2026 RECRUITING CLASS BY TENNISRECRUITING.