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"I love hockey, I love this school, and I love representing Yale on the ice every time I step out there."

MICAH BERGER '28

FOOTBALL: Yale to host Cornell in Ivy League opener

BY BRODY GILKISON AND AUDREY KIM
STAFF REPORTER AND
CONTRIBUTING REPORTER

The football team (1–0, 0–0 Ivy) will welcome the Cornell Big Red (0–1, 0–0 Ivy) to the Yale Bowl this Saturday for what will be both teams' first Ivy League game of the year.

Last week, the Bulldogs had a strong showing on both sides of the ball in their win against Holy Cross. In Cornell's opener, the Big Red came out of the gates slowly and struggled throughout the game in a loss to Albany. This week, both teams will be looking to claim their first conference win of the first season when an Ivy League championship would automatically qualify them for the FCS Playoffs.

"It just means the stakes are just even higher," center Leo Bluhm '26 said about the chance to earn a spot in the playoffs.

Pound the ground

One key for the Bulldogs in this game will be to continue the ground dominance they showed in their first game against the Crusaders. Powered by a notably large offensive line, Yale was able to wear down Holy Cross and open up large holes for Josh Pitsenberger '26, running back and team captain, who racked up over 100 yards with three scores.

Similar to Holy Cross, Cornell comes into this matchup against Yale without the ability to trust their defensive line's ability to stop the run. Against Albany, the Big Red gave up over 150 yards and a touchdown, so the Bulldogs could look to establish the run game early and often to take advantage of Cornell's defense.

"Last week, we just really focused on doing our jobs right, playing fast and running the ball as a team," defensive lineman Mack Johnson '28 said in a Thursday interview. "And I think this week, if we just keep that same mentality, come hard to play, I think we're gonna be really successful in this game and have a similar outcome."

Enable the stars

In the previous game, one of the clear stars of the game was wideout Nico Brown '26, who picked up 119 yards and a score, as well as several highlight reel plays. Quarterback Dante Reno '28, in his debut for Yale, was able to connect with Brown and the rest of his receiving corps at a higher than 70 percent completion rate.

"I think it'll be a great game, they're a great team," Reno said about the Big Red. "It's gonna be a good start to Ivy League play, so we're all super excited."

Pairing an elite passing game with a high-octane ground attack helped the Bulldogs to consistently move the ball down the field and rack up points, but it is only possible if Reno stays protected.

After going through nearly the entire game against the Crusaders without much pressure, Yale will face a tougher test against the Cornell pass rush. While they surrendered a good amount of yards on the ground, the Big Red were able to sack Albany four times in their loss. The veteran offensive line of Yale will need to continue to protect their quarterback in order to keep their dynamic playmakers in rhythm.

Bend don't break

The Bulldogs' defense opened strong last Saturday, allowing only 88 rushing yards and one touchdown from Holy Cross. Despite giving up 193 passing yards in the game, Yale's defense held the Crusaders to a score of zero throughout the first half and continued to lock down their opponents in the second half to secure the win.



LIZA KAUFMAN / PHOTOGRAPHY EDITOR

The Bulldogs look to pick up their second win as they open up conference play against the Big Red.

Defensive Back Abu Kamara '27 was instrumental in carrying the defenses' momentum forward throughout the game and led the team in tackles, totaling 10, including four solo tackles and two tackles for loss.

"We just have a really good, tight-knit defense, and we all have really good chemistry together, and that at the end of the day, when we all play hard together, that success comes with that," Johnson, who got a sack in last Saturday's game, said.

As a whole, Yale's defense was able to rack up four sacks and seven tackles for loss, forcing the Crusaders' offense back a total of 46 yards. This weekend, the Bulldogs will be looking to replicate their performance against Cornell, who put up 110 rushing yards and 153 passing yards in their last game.

"Every year, Cornell is a big challenge. I mean, the past two years, they've gotten the best of us," Bluhm said. "They're always a well-coached team and a high-effort team. They play really hard, and it's really just a matter of who really wants it more."

Yale kicks off against Cornell this Saturday at 12 p.m. at the Yale Bowl.

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Yale athletes succeed in balancing books and practices

BY LIZA KAUFMAN
STAFF REPORTER

At Yale, most students' days are a mix of classes, readings and problem sets. But for student-athletes, there's an extra layer: long hours of practice, lifting sessions and travel.

But Yale's athletes embrace the challenge of balancing Yale's rigorous academics with Division I sports, often scheduling their classes around their practice schedules.

Men's hockey forward Micah Berger '28 maps out his weekdays like clockwork. He wakes up at 7:30 a.m., goes to an optional skills skate at 8:30 a.m., dashes to classes from 10:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m., grabs lunch and then heads back to Ingalls Rink at 4:30pm for practice and lift. Berger describes his days in season as "crazy busy," but he wouldn't have it any other way.

"I love hockey, I love this school, and I love representing Yale on the ice every time I step out there," Berger wrote to the News.

Long stick midfielder Francis Keneally '28 of men's lacrosse also thrives on structure. His afternoons begin with a 2:30 p.m. lift, followed by practice and film study, usually wrapping up around 7 p.m. Keneally likes having a rigid schedule to keep himself focused.

"I know in the morning I have to be focused on schoolwork, and in the afternoon it's time to focus on lacrosse. Having that structure has made me more put together," Keneally said in an interview with the News.

Across teams, practice schedules play a major role in shaping class choices. For men's hockey player Zach Wagnon '28, that means no classes after 3 p.m. and no Friday classes at all due to the team's travel schedule.

"Our whole day is shaped around our practice schedule," Wagnon said in an in-person interview with the News.

While scheduling conflicts may make certain lab-heavy majors, such as Yale's various biology majors, almost impossible for athletes because of the long afternoon lab hours, Wagnon — like many other athletes interviewed by the News — has not had any issues pursuing the classes that interest him.

Wagnon, a prospective Global Affairs major, has managed to balance his coursework with his hockey obligations.

"It's very manageable if you go about it the right way," he said.

He added that older teammates are a key resource because they often pass down course recommendations to newcomers.

"The easiest way I pick my classes is just off recommendations from the older guys. We pass it down now to the freshman before they come in," Wagnon said.

Athletes also find support amongst one another by taking classes with teammates for both camaraderie and practical scheduling reasons.

"It makes you actually want to go," Keneally said. "If you take the class with your team, then it's also easier to send an email in bulk and say, 'All of us play the sport together. We all have this game at this time.'"

Men's soccer defender Nick Miller '27 takes that strategy a step further, having planned every semester of classes alongside teammate Simon Adjakple '27. The two have had identical course schedules since they began college.

"We sit down together and we're like, 'Within the major, what are the distribution requirements that we need to fulfill in the coming semester?'" Miller said.

Yale Athletics also provides structured support through academic liaisons assigned to each varsity team. These liaisons, who are members of Yale's faculty or administration, support athletes with their academic pursuits and serve as resources for student-athletes inside and outside the classroom.

Wagnon explained how his liaison has helped him navigate both athletics and academics at Yale.

"Once a week he'll come to one of our practices, and we have a meal after practice and he'll sit down and talk to us," Wagnon said. "And if we have any questions, he's super friendly. He's from Canada, and he loves hockey, too, and he's already having lunch with all our freshmen."

Professors, too, tend to be understanding of athletes' other commitments, especially when students cultivate good relationships with them.

"If you have a good relationship with a teacher, they'll almost always give you the benefit of the doubt when it comes to missing a class or doing an assignment a bit late," Berger wrote.

Even athletes like men's fencer Konstantin Vaysbukh '27, who admit that practice schedules "reduce optionality because practice comes first," agree that their academics remain largely unaffected.

Despite the grind, all five athletes said the rewards outweigh the costs. For Keneally and Miller, it's the pride of succeeding both on the field and in the classroom.

"Doing well in class and knowing I have to balance the sport as well, that feels very rewarding to me," Keneally said. Miller similarly explained, "Putting work in and seeing output out is the most rewarding part...to be within that environment and to be producing the results and to be able to say I compete at the top of the top in both of these arenas."

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LIZA KAUFMAN / PHOTOGRAPHY EDITOR

Demanding practice and game schedules require athletes to make special considerations when scheduling academic commitments.

STAT OF THE WEEK FOYESADE OLUOKUN '18 WAS NAMED THE WEEK 1 NFL AFC DEFENSIVE PLAYER OF THE WEEK.