FROM THE FRONT

"I believe that there is a subtle magnetism in nature, which, if we unconsciously yield to it, will direct us."
HENRY DAVID THOREAU AMERICAN ESSAYIST

Quarterback scores four touchdowns in comeback win

FOOTBALL FROM PAGE 1

medical reasons — on the videoboard. Reno had died less than 24 hours earlier, on Friday afternoon.

After finding themselves down 21-7 late in the first half, the Bulldogs (2–1, 0–1 Ivy) scored 21 unanswered points in the fourth quarter to defeat the Merrimack College Warriors (2–4).

"It was a battle all the way through," Yale head coach Kevin Cahill told Yale Athletics following the win. "We knew it. Merrimack was a really good football team. They played a really challenging schedule, so my hats off to them. They were prepared to come in and play."

Yale had an ideal start right out of the gate. On the third play of the game, the Bulldog defense punched the ball out, and defensive back JP Schmidt '28 pounced on the ball to give the offense great starting field position. Just a few plays later, Reno found his favorite target, receiver Jaxton Santiago '28, in the end zone to put the Bulldogs up 7-0.

Unfortunately, after the early turnover, the Merrimack offense woke up and took their anger out on the Yale defense. Several breakdowns in the secondary and 21 unanswered points later, the Bulldogs found themselves down 21-7 with seven minutes remaining in the first half.

With pressure mounting, Yale marched down the field and found the end zone in just three minutes. However, an offensive holding call nullified the score and forced the drive to stall out, resulting in a Noah Piper '29 field goal.

After a couple of poor series, the Team 153 defense stood strong and forced a three-and-out. Santiago followed up the defensive success with a 23-yard punt return to set the Bulldogs up at midfield.

Sensing a major momentum shift, the Yale faithful rose to their feet as their offense retook the field to cut into the deficit again. With just over three minutes left in the half, Reno got to work quickly. After a few chunk passing plays to work down the field, Santiago caught his second touchdown pass of the day just a minute and a half later to make the score 21-17 entering the break.

The Bulldogs received the kickoff to open the second half. Following two large gains by Santiago and Reid Jones '29 and a few solid runs by running back Hugo Djeumeni Kemeni '29, Yale was back deep into the red zone. Then, Reno hit tight end Graham Smith '27 for his third touchdown of the season and gave Yale the lead for the first time since the first quarter.

Merrimack, after allowing 17 straight points, finally put up points of their own after a long, methodical drive that resulted in a chip-shot field goal, tying the game at 24 apiece.

With just over five minutes left in the third quarter, Yale's offense retook the field with eyes set on taking back the lead. Unfortunately, the drive didn't last too long after a first-play fumble by Cuttler Adams '28 gave the Warriors the ball back with prime field position.

This time, the Bulldog defense held strong and forced a Merrimack field goal attempt just four players later, which sailed wide of the goalposts to keep the game tied.

Following the special teams miscue, both teams traded punts as the clock ran out to end the third quarter. Yale started the fourth quarter with the ball on their own 43-yard line, and made quick work of the Warrior defense as they marched down into the red zone. However, a penalty and a rush for a loss set the Bulldogs back, giving them a 3rd and goal from the Merrimack 20-yard line.

Wanting to find the end zone rather than settling for a field goal, Reno dropped back to pass and attempted to find senior receiver Garon Kemp '27. As the ball crossed the goal line, it was tipped by a Merrimack defender as he collided with Kemp. Kemp, never taking his eye off the ball, kept tracking it as he was falling to the ground and managed to haul it in before the ball touched the ground for a miraculous touchdown, putting the Bulldogs up 31-24.

From there on out, it was all Yale for the remainder of the game. An energized defense continued to shut down Merrimack quarterback AJ Hairston Jr. and the rest of his offense, and the Bulldogs kept putting up points.

Another Piper field goal grew the Yale lead to 10 with nine minutes left in the game, and a Djeumeni Kemeni rushing touchdown put the final touches on the comeback victory for Team 153, giving them a 41-24 win.



Liza Kaufman / Photography Editor
Quarterback Dante Reno '28 led Yale to an emotional win over the Merrimack Warriors on Saturday.

As the final seconds ran off the clock, the home side of the Yale Bowl was filled with hugs and cheers.

Nobody would have blamed Reno for sitting out this game. The quarterback not only played, but put the team on his back and threw for nearly 300 yards and four touchdowns as he led his team to victory.

"I know my dad," Dante Reno told Yale Athletics after the game, adding that he would want nothing more "than for me to go out there and play, not miss practice. Go out there, go to school, be around the guys. We have a culture here that not everybody has in the country."

The Bulldogs will next host Dartmouth in an Ivy conference matchup at the Yale Bowl on Saturday.

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Tony Reno, who led Bulldogs to first playoffs, dies at 52



Liza Kaufman / Photography Editor
Reno coached Yale's football program from 2012 to 2026, winning five Ivy League titles and securing the first-ever FCS Playoff berth in school history, before stepping down in February due to health issues. He died on Friday.

RENO FROM PAGE 1

2003. He rejoined the Bulldogs in 2012, holding the head coach position until stepping down in February due to health issues.

"I am forever grateful to have had Coach Reno not only as a football coach, but as a mentor," Jake Biggs '25, who played football at Yale under Reno, wrote in a text message to the News. "Through Reno's influence, I learned what leadership looks like and developed into the man I am today. Coach always challenged us to 'plant trees that you will never see grow.' There are many great trees growing because of Tony Reno."

Reno led the Bulldogs to 83 victories, making him the second winningest coach in the history of Yale football.

He also led his student-athletes to succeed on and off the field. Six Elis were named Ivy League Player of the Year under Reno, including running back Josh Pitsenberger and defensive back Abu Kamara '27, the Ivy League's reigning offensive and defensive players of the year, respectively.

Reno also coached several players who continued on to play in the National Football League, including Foyesade Oluokun '18, Jackson Hawes '23, Ben Mann '25, Mason Tipton '24 and Rodney Thomas II '22 — all of whom are players in the NFL.

"I know what it took to build this up. I was behind the scenes with Tony to build this up to what it could be and what it has been, and that is a tremendous program." head coach Kevin Cahill, who was on Reno's staff from 2012 to 2022, said in a press conference after the Bulldogs defeated Merrimack College.

The Bulldogs' fourth straight win over Harvard in 2025 allowed Reno to bring Yale football back to the national stage, as the victory earned Yale the conference title and the first-ever Ivy League automatic playoff berth to the NCAA FCS playoffs. In the postseason, Yale won a historic 43-42 comeback victory against Youngstown State, before falling to Montana State University, and finished the 2025 season with a national ranking of No. 13.

"Tony Reno devoted his life to serving others and approached every day with humility, compassion, and purpose," Yale Athletic Director Vicky Chun told Yale Athletics. "While his accomplishments on the football field were remarkable, it is the relationships he built and the lives he changed that will define his enduring legacy."

During the 2025 season, Reno coached his eldest son, quarterback Dante Reno '28, who transferred to Yale from the University of South Carolina. The pair played a pivotal role in last year's record-breaking season for the Bulldogs. On Saturday, one day after his father's death, Dante threw for 298 yards and four touchdowns against Merrimack, ending the game with a 41-24 victory after overcoming a 14 point deficit.

Reno received several honors for his work as head coach. He was awarded Ivy League Coach of the Year in both 2022 and 2025 and was named the Jack Grinold Division I Coach of the Year in 2017 and 2025 by the New England Football Writers Association.

"It was never about him or simply about winning championships; it was about developing young men and leaders and helping them

Athlete majors less evenly distributed across disciplines

MAJORS FROM PAGE 1

teachers for accommodating his academic interests. "Overall, although being an athlete definitely impacts which classes you can take, our coaches and teachers at Yale have been very accommodating in letting us explore our academic interests."

Women's tennis player Katharine Liu '30 similarly said athletics had not restricted her academic interests.

"I think there's a common misconception that being an athlete limits your choice of major, which in my experience has not been true at all," Liu wrote in a statement.

Wagnon wrote that hockey teammates often take similar classes and majors, with older players recommending courses to younger ones.

"Taking classes with your best friends makes studying for exams and going to class a lot more fun and easier," he wrote.

Economics was also the most common major among athletes, declared by 124 athletes, or 33.3 percent, compared with 199 non-athletes, or 7.6 percent. Political science followed with 56 athletes, or 15.1 percent, having declared the major, compared with 177 non-athletes, or 6.8 percent.

The difference extended beyond individual majors. Using categories created for the analysis, 25.5 percent of athletes declared STEM majors, while 41.4 percent of non-athletes declared STEM majors. Humanities and arts majors represented 8.3 percent and 24.2 percent of athletes and non-athletes, respectively.

The analysis excludes missing, undeclared and invalid majors and shows differences in major choice. Directory entries may also lag behind students' current plans.

Some athletes said their practice schedules have affected their ability to explore outside of their chosen course of study.

"I'd still study applied math, but I'd take larger workload classes outside my major," tennis player Rachel Lee '29 wrote in a statement.

Lee said while she has been able to pursue her academic passion, her tennis schedule has limited some of the courses she can take.

"Many interesting electives in the afternoon are hard to take due to practice," Lee wrote.

Cross-country and track athlete Colter Sienkiewicz '28, however, said the time demands of his sport led him to reconsider majoring in pure mathematics. He said he now intends to study mathematics and philosophy.

"I was gonna study pure math but I just didn't have the time," Sienkiewicz said.

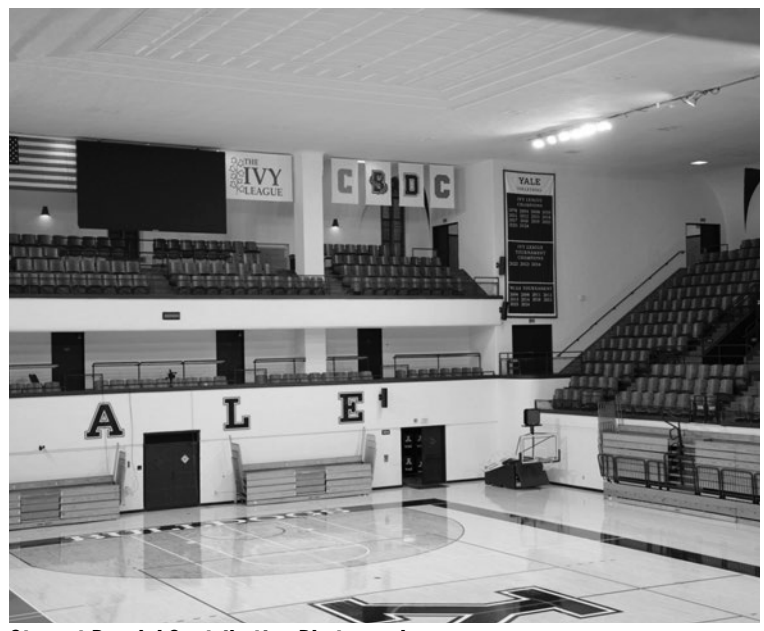
For others, athletic commitments have affected their schedules more than their intended academic fields.

Kenneth Whitmer '30, a track and field athlete who said he is planning to study mechanical engineering, said afternoon practices can complicate course selection.

"I think I would be pursuing Mechanical Engineering whether I was an athlete or not. That's actually one of the bigger reasons I chose to come to Yale — I didn't have to sacrifice my major for my athletics," Whitmer said.

Still, he said his practice schedule has affected his ability to take courses.

"There have been classes that I've been interested in that are only offered in the afternoon, but because of practice, I have to have all my classes in the morning," Whitmer said. "It does make scheduling difficult."



Stewart Royal / Contributing Photographer
A News analysis of 372 junior and senior athletes and 2,621 non-athletes found that economics and political science accounted for 48.4 percent of athlete majors, while only 14.3 percent of sampled non-athletes study either of the two subjects.

When tennis matches overlap with classes, Liu said, players work conflicts out with professors and their deans ahead of time.

"Tennis is a fall and spring sport, so I treat my schedule like I'm always in season," Lee said, adding that she dedicates around four to five hours to the sport per day. "I definitely prioritize tennis and school, so not much time for extracurriculars."

Yale has 35 varsity sports teams.

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