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"All week, our focus was on getting back to who we are and how we can play better, and that showed today."

KEVIN CAHILL, FOOTBALL HEAD COACH

With dominant defense, Bulldogs bounce back to beat Columbia

FOOTBALL

BY BRODY GILKISON
STAFF REPORTER

Team 153 (4–3, 2–2 Ivy) sprang back during Saturday's matchup with Columbia (4–3, 1–3 Ivy), when the Bulldogs combined a dominant defensive performance with an impressive ground game to overwhelm the Lions and win 26-8.

Yale entered the match after dropping two straight games, including a home loss to the University of Rhode Island (5–4, 2–3 CAA) and an away matchup against the University of Pennsylvania (3–4, 1–3 Ivy). A variety of problems have plagued the Bulldogs, from turnovers to defensive breakdowns to special teams mishaps. But Yale seemed to have cleaned up many of those issues and played a complete game en route to a wire-to-wire victory in New York.

The contest started with a very forgettable first quarter for the offense. Yale's first two drives ended in a missed 50-yard field goal and a punt, but the defense did a good job keeping the score even. In three Columbia drives, the Lions totaled just 30 yards on 12 plays thanks to a suffocating Yale secondary.

"I thought everyone did a great job of executing their role today," defensive back Billy Eastep '28, who finished the day with seven tackles, said in an interview. "We were all on the same page, and that enabled us to go out there and have a good game."

The second quarter was a different story for Team 153. An efficient nine-play, 67-yard drive was capped off by a short pass to Graham Smith '27, who outran several Lion defenders on his way to the end zone.

A perfect snap and hold led to a successful point-after attempt to make the score 7-0. On the following kickoff, a special teams play finally went the Bulldogs' way as the Columbia returner muffed the catch and got out to just the one-yard line before being tackled.

With 99 yards to go for the Lion offense, Phoenix Grant '27 complicated Columbia's efforts, meeting the running back well behind the line of scrimmage in the end zone for a safety and making the score 9-0.

The next drive for the Bulldogs brought even more scoring, as they marched down the field and capped off a 68-yard drive with another touchdown. This time, Dante Reno '28 found the speedy Lucius Anderson '29 across the middle on a slant for a 34-yard score to extend the lead to 16-0.

For the rest of the half, the Yale defense stayed strong even as its offense stalled out. Both teams punted the ball away three times, and the score remained 16-0 at halftime.

The Bulldogs received the kick to open the third quarter and immediately got to work pulling the game out of reach. On just the fourth play of the drive, star running back Hugo Djeumeni Kemeni '29 found a hole and made a 63-yard housecall to make the score 23-0 in favor of Yale. The long run pushed Djeumeni Kemeni past the century mark, as the league's leading rusher finished the day with 155 yards.

The Yale defense kept up the strong play, allowing only 12 total yards over the next two Columbia drives. However, after a string of Yale punts, the Bulldogs finally gave up their first and only score of the day to the Lions on an 11-yard touchdown pass from senior Chase Goodwin.

For the remainder of the game, the offense seemed to lose all the momentum they gained in the second quarter. Following the initial scoring drive to open the half, Yale managed to gain just 53 yards on offense. While Team 153 finished the game with no turnovers, its first time doing so this season, a lack of production was certainly alarming for what is normally a strong Bulldog offensive group.

The offense's second-half flop did little to put Yale's chances of winning in danger, however, as the Bulldog defense played their strongest game of the season and continued to dominate Columbia through to the end. The Lions were held to just 241 yards total, with a third of those coming in a late-game drive.

"I think we just focused on playing better, more sound football," head coach Kevin Cahill said in a postgame press conference, according to a Yale press release. "We focused on what we needed to improve, eliminating the X plays and just playing fast. All week, our focus was on getting back to who we are and how we can play better, and that showed today."

With the win, as well as a Harvard (6–1, 3–1 Ivy) upset loss to Dartmouth (4–3, 2–1 Ivy), the Bulldogs are close to controlling their own destiny as the regular season winds down.

Sitting at 2–2 in Ivy play, Dartmouth needs just one more loss to fall back in a tie with Yale. If that happens, Team 153 can win out without any additional help, in which case the Bulldogs will be heading back to the FCS Playoffs for the second consecutive season.

Yale will face off against Brown at home at 12 p.m. on Saturday.

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LIZA KAUFMAN / PHOTOGRAPHY EDITOR

On Saturday, Yale won its first game in three weeks against the Columbia Lions, keeping the team's playoff aspirations alive. The Bulldogs built momentum on the ground, supported by a strong defensive performance, to end the game 26-8.

Bulldogs split weekend on the road, dropping to second in Ivy League

VOLLEYBALL

BY TANNER BATTLE
STAFF REPORTER

The Bulldogs saw mixed results on the road last weekend, picking up one win and one loss against the Dartmouth Big Green (8–12, 2–8 Ivy) and the Harvard Crimson (16–3, 7–3 Ivy).

While the Bulldogs cruised to victory in New Hampshire, defeating the Big Green 3-0 to extend their win streak to seven, they fell to the Crimson on Halloween. Before Halloween weekend, the Elis were ranked first in the Ivy League. Following the Harvard heartbreaker, Cornell (13–6, 9–1 Ivy) overtook Yale.

"We plan on getting back in the gym and back to work to finish out the season strong and win Ivies regardless of the tough loss yesterday," Arya Jue '27 wrote in a Sunday text message to the News.

On Friday night, the Bulldogs defeated the Big Green in straight sets. Although Yale narrowly took the first set 25-23, they easily took the second set 25-7 and finished off the third 25-18.

Setter Kalyssa Taggart '30 led the team in assists and digs, recording 27 and 16, respectively.

In their subsequent game against the Crimson, which fell on Halloween, the Bulldogs looked to avenge an 2-3 loss at home earlier this season.

Despite being the heavy favorite, Yale once again lost to the Crimson in the last set.

After Harvard won the first set 18-25, Yale came back swinging taking the next two 25-11, before Harvard decisively won the fourth and fifth sets 23-25 and 7-15 to snap the Bulldogs' seven-game streak.

"It was very exciting and fun to play on a special Saturday like that, which got us pumped!" Jue wrote.

Jue led the team with 20 digs against the Crimson, alongside Betsy Goodenow '27, who led the team in kills with a staggering 25.

Yale will play first-ranked Cornell on Friday and seventh-ranked Columbia (8–11, 2–8 Ivy) on Saturday.

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TANNER BATTLE / CONTRIBUTING PHOTOGRAPHER

On Friday night, the Bulldogs swept Dartmouth 3-0 in Hanover for the second time this season, extending their win streak to seven. That streak was broken on Saturday in a tight game against Harvard in Cambridge.

STAT OF THE DAY

AN EFFICIENT NINE-PLAY, 67-YARD DRIVE WAS CAPPED OFF BY A SHORT PASS TO GRAHAM SMITH '27, WHO OUTRAN SEVERAL LION DEFENDERS ON HIS WAY TO THE END ZONE.