DATA

Yale, Harvard lead Ivy League ahead of The Game

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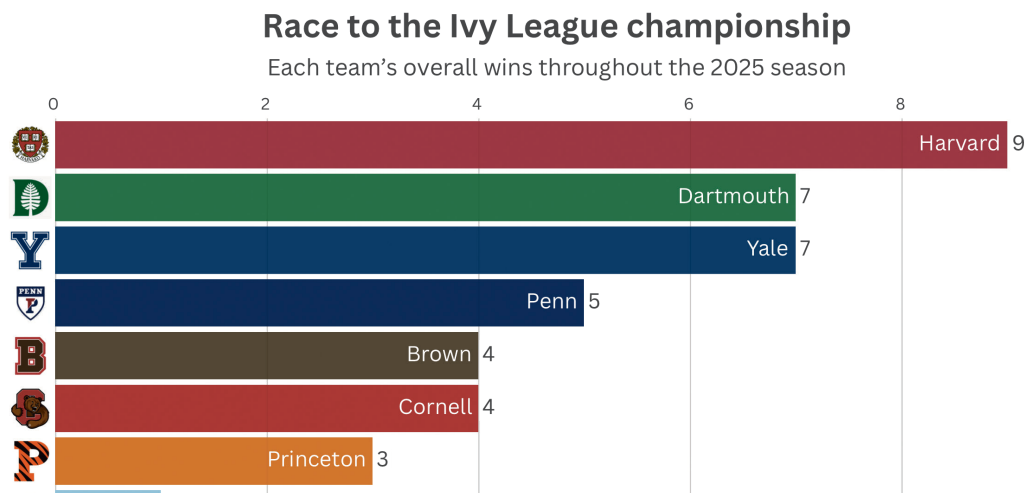
Ahead of this weekend's 141st installment of The Game — taking place 150 years after its inaugural 1875 match — data examined by the News provides a glimpse into what the top two teams may have in store for fans this Saturday.

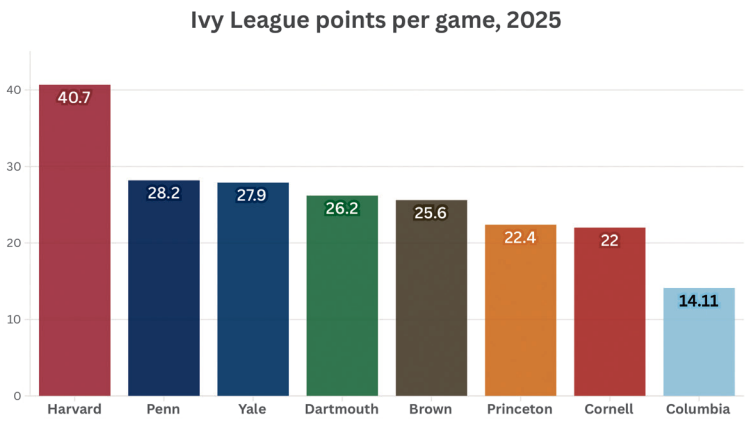
The Bulldogs (7–2, 5–1 Ivy) will host the Crimson (9–0, 6–0 Ivy) at the Yale Bowl, kicking off at noon on Saturday. Both teams have excelled in conference play this year, with the Crimson coming to New Haven undefeated. After a 2–2 start early in the season, Yale elevated its play, having won its last five straight games and entering The Game with the second-best conference record — their only Ivy loss coming a 17–16 nailbiter against Dartmouth.

With the top two conference records in the Ivy League, the Bulldogs and Crimson boast some of the best statistics among their competitors. Aided by two 59-point showings against Holy Cross and Stetson, the Crimson lead the Ivy League in scoring by far, with an average of 40.7 points per game. Yale ranks third in the league, just behind Penn, with an average of 27.9 points per game.

This dominance also translates to the other side of the ball. Harvard and Yale boast shutdown defenses, allowing just 15.1 and 16 points per game respectively — the two lowest averages in the league.



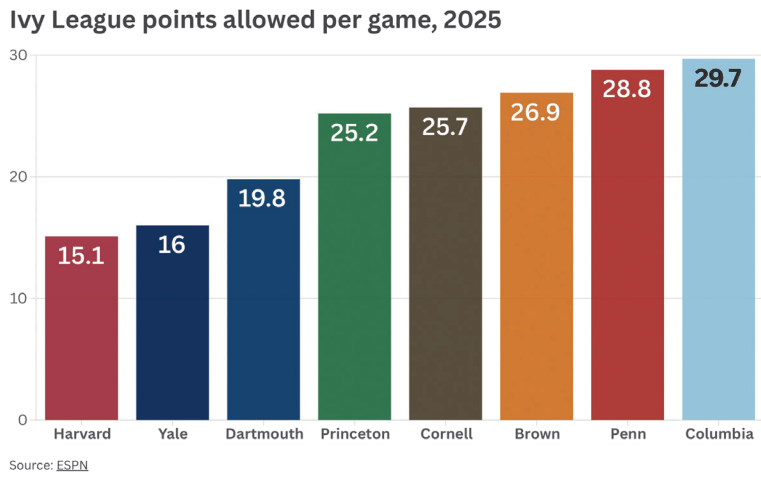
ON THE SCOREBOARD



Source: ESPN

Although Yale ranks seventh in the league for total passing yards, sophomore quarterback Dante Reno '28 is methodical when he does throw, limiting turnovers, completing a high percentage of passes and finding his receivers for touchdowns, which has yielded the second highest passing efficiency in the league — 147.2 — behind the Crimson's Jaden Craig — 163.9.

The Bulldogs and the Crimson are the only two teams in the Ivy League to have both an offensive efficiency above 145 and a defensive efficiency below 120. In short, each team has performed exceptionally on both sides of the ball.



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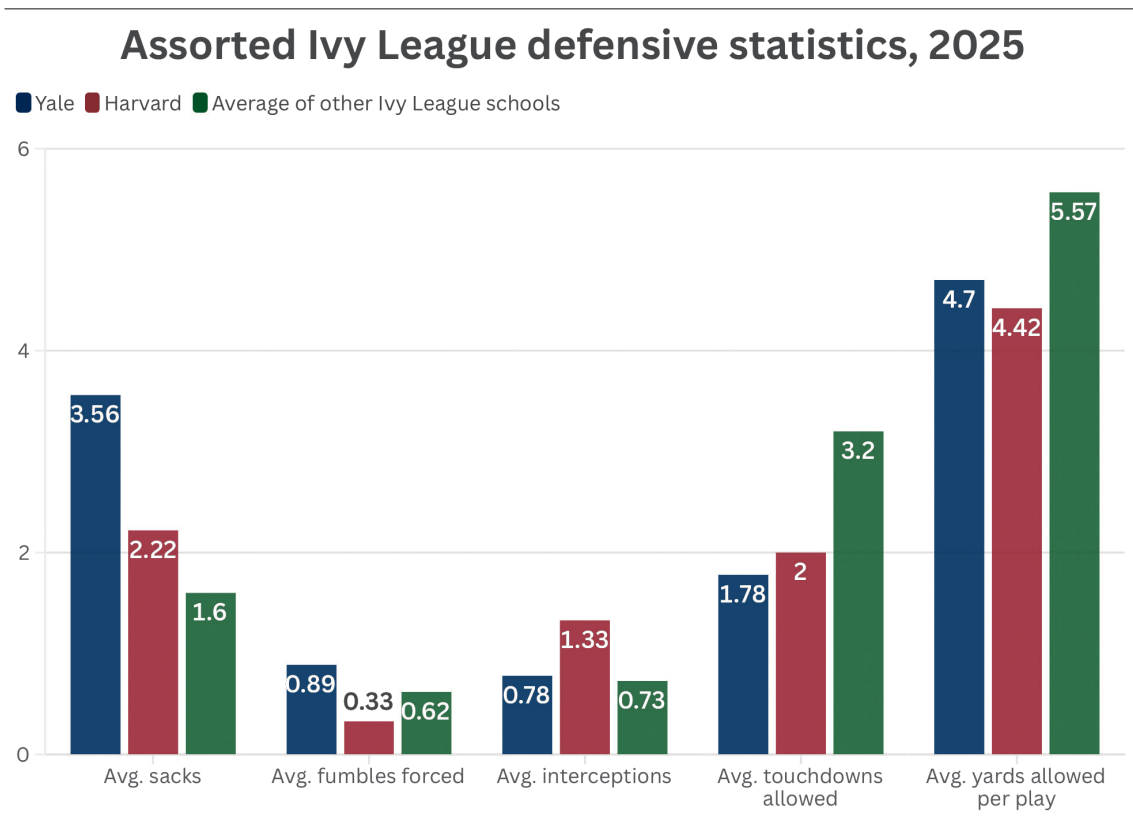
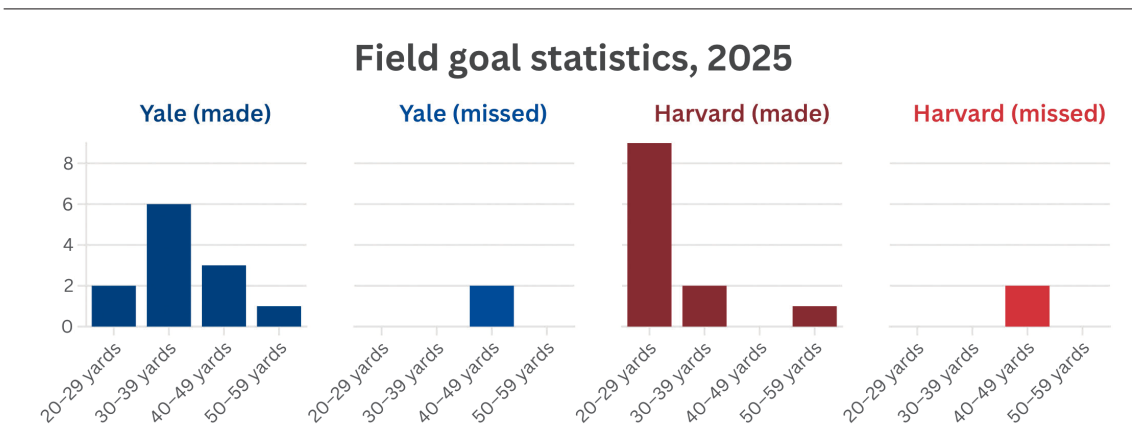


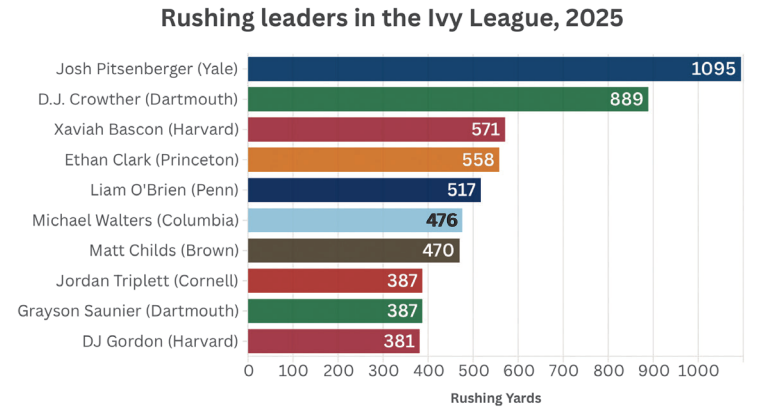
Besides limiting opponents to just 16 points per game, Yale's defense has been staunch against both the run and the pass. Senior linebacker Inumidun Ayo-Durojaiye '26 leads the Ivy League with 91 tackles this season, while junior defensive end Zeke Larry '27 holds the conference lead with 9.5 sacks.

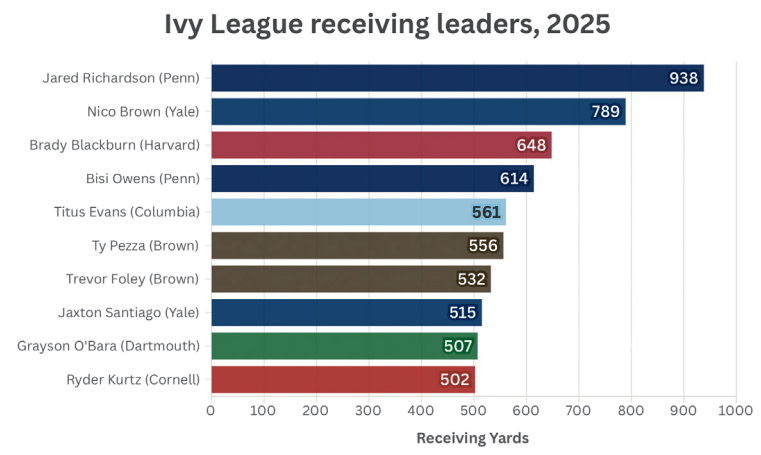
Accordingly, Yale as a team handily leads the league in sacks, with 32 on the season — or 3.56 sacks per game — 52 percent more than second-place Brown, which registered 21. The Bulldogs are second in the league to Brown in forced fumbles at 8, while the Crimson have snagged the most interceptions with 12.

On the special teams unit, first year Noah Piper '29 leads the Ivy League in field goals with 12, his two lone misses coming on a 43-yard try against Penn and a 46-yard try against Brown — both games the Bulldogs won. His long on the season was against Cornell, when he booted a 50-yarder in the third quarter for his first ever college field goal try. Piper has gone 19–20 on the season on extra point attempts, and senior Nick Conforti '26 went 10–11 during the first three games. For the Crimson, Kieran Corr has performed equally well — he has gone 36–37 on extra points and 11–13 on field goals, including a career long 53-yard game winner as time expired against Penn last week.



ON THE FIELD





Source: Ivy League

The Bulldogs' offense is particularly multi-faceted, with weapons from both the air and ground attack. Workhorse Josh Pitsenberger '26 leads the Ivy League in rushing yards — 1,095 — and touchdowns — 12. His complementary back, Wilhelm Daal '26, ranks second in the Ivy League in yards per carry, racking up 346 yards on just 59 carries.

Harvard divides most of its designed runs among a committee, with junior Xaviah Bascon receiving the lion's share of carries. Backup quarterback DJ Gordon has essentially acted as a running back for the Crimson, accounting for 381 yards on 70 attempts; he has not attempted a pass so far this season.

Two of Reno's favorite targets, Nico Brown '26 and Jaxton Santiago '28, rank in the top ten in the league in receiving yards, at 789 and 515, respectively. Furthermore, Brown is the only player to be in the top ten while playing in only eight out of nine games this season. The Crimson's explosive Brady Blackburn, who has earned a whopping 20.3 average yards per catch on a campaign to 648 yards, will be another key offensive player to watch on Saturday.

THROUGH THE YEARS

In addition to potentially becoming the first sole Ivy League champions since 2022, Yale also has the opportunity to four-peat against Harvard for the first time since 1947, something the Bulldogs have accomplished only four times in the rivalry's history.

Yale's longest win streak over Harvard was six straight, which was achieved twice from 1882–89 and again from 1902–07. The Game wasn't played in 1885 because Harvard temporarily banned football and again in 1888 when Harvard faculty refused to allow the team to travel to New York, which is why the former streak spans eight seasons but only six games. Harvard's longest win streak was nine seasons in a row, from 2007 to 2015.

Saturday's game will feature some of the best offense, defense and special teams that the Ivy League has to offer — at least according to the numbers.

In 1957, Yale beat Harvard 54–0, the largest margin of victory in the rivalry's history.

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