

Big Games

Saturday, 22 March 2008

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After defeating Columbia (twice), Brown, and Yale to open the Ivy League basketball season, the Big Red men faced the opponents who have stymied them in recent years: Princeton and Penn. But this time it was different—Cornell won both games. Princeton fell 72-61 on Friday, with junior center Jeff Foote scoring 18 points and anchoring the defense. "I think he did a terrific job on both ends," said head coach Steve Donahue. On Saturday, the Big Red cleared an even bigger hurdle, defeating Penn 87-74 in sold-out Newman Arena. Sophomore sensation Ryan Wittman led the way with 25 points. The last time Cornell swept Princeton and Penn at home was in the 1987-88 season—which was also the last time that the Big Red won the Ivy League basketball championship.

SUPER STARS The Super Bowl triumph of the New York Giants had a decidedly Big Red tinge. The game was played in spectacular University of Phoenix Stadium, home of the NFL's Arizona Cardinals, which was designed by Peter Eisenman '54, BArch '55—a Giants season-ticket holder. And suiting up for the winning team was Kevin Boothe '05, who was signed by the Giants after being released by the Oakland Raiders before the season. Boothe, a reserve offensive lineman and special teams player with the NFL champs, now has a Super Bowl ring to go with the All-Ivy and All-American honors he earned on the Hill.

ELITE STATUS When it comes to combining athletic and academic success, Cornell is one of the best schools in the country according to Stack magazine, a new publication for high school athletes. In the magazine's "Elite 50" ranking, Cornell placed 39th among NCAA Division I colleges and universities and was the only Ivy League school on the list. The magazine's editors used the U.S. News & World Report rankings, NCAA academic progress rates, sports polls, and win-loss records to rate schools. The men's lacrosse and wrestling teams were both ranked third in the nation in their sport while men's hockey ranked fifth. The full list is at elite50.stack.com.

BELL RINGER Plenty of Cornell graduates have made their mark on Wall Street, but few have made as much noise at the New York Stock Exchange as Mitch Belisle '07 when he helped ring the bell to open trading on January 8. Belisle was one of three members of the New York Titans indoor lacrosse team to participate in the ceremony, promoting the team's home opener at Madison Square Garden. Belisle, who also works as a senior associate for Moody's Investment Services, was the Titans' first pick in the 2007 National Lacrosse League entry draft after being named the Division I defensive player of the year.

GRIDIRON GREAT Despite playing in just three football games last season, Big Red running back Luke Siwula '08 was named a second-team Academic All-American by ESPN The Magazine, marking the third season he has received Academic All-America honors. Siwula scored a team-high six touch-downs in the three games he played in before being injured. A first-team Academic All-American last season, he has a 3.52 grade-point average in the School of Industrial and Labor Relations.

NEWSMAKERS Following a season that saw their return to the top of the national rankings, the men's lacrosse team continued to make news during the off-season. After posting a perfect 13-0 regular season and making Cornell's first trip to the national semifinals since 1988, the Big Red was named the NCAA Division I Team of the Year. In addition, head coach Jeff Tambroni was honored as the FieldTurf/NCAA Division I Coach of the Year while associate head coach Ben DeLuca '98 was named the Division I Assistant Coach of the Year by the Intercollegiate Men's Lacrosse Coaches Association. And Cornell's 12-11 overtime win against SUNY Albany in the NCAA quarterfinals was selected as the game of the year by Inside Lacrosse magazine. The magazine also placed Cornell seventh in the 2008 preseason rankings.

USING THEIR HEADS Both the men's and women's soccer teams earned a 2007 Team Academic Award from the National Soccer Coaches Association of America. The honor goes to squads that have a cumulative grade-point average of at least 3.0; the Big Red women earned a 3.29 GPA, while the men recorded a 3.27. Cornell was one of 44 schools to have both the men's and women's teams honored.

SPRINT STARS In 2006, Cornell won the Collegiate Sprint Football League title with an undefeated record and had seven players named first-team all-league. Although the Big Red finished third in the league in 2007, posting a 4-2 mark, it again had seven players named first-team all-league. Despite missing a game due to injury, quarterback Zak Dentes '09 led the CSFL in passing with 891 yards to repeat as a first-teamer. He was joined by running back Glenn Palmer '08, receiver Michael Brennan '09, lineman Ben Abramoff '08, defensive back Cameron Johnson '08, linebacker John Parke '09, and defensive end Jim Gonos '09.

ALL-STAR ALUMNI With the 14th annual American Hockey League All-Star game being held down the road in Binghamton, it was only fitting that Cornell had two former players on the Canadian team. Although only one of them, forward Michael Iggulden '05, actually played, defenseman Ryan O'Byrne '07 had a good excuse for his absence: a

month before the team was announced, he was called up by the Montreal Canadiens. O'Byrne recorded two assists in 11 NHL games before being knocked out of action with a broken thumb. Iggulden, meanwhile, entered the AHL All-Star break as the leading scorer on the Worcester Sharks with 39 points on 12 goals and 17 assists in the team's first 39 games.