**JOHN HARVARD’S JOURNAL**

**Loaded for Bear**

An impressive win at the outset of what will be a slightly truncated season gave grounds for optimism about the football team’s Ivy League prospects. The 101st Harvard-Brown game was a test of strength between offenses that put up spectacular numbers last year, when the Bruins scored a record 375 points in 10 games and Harvard displayed the most prolific attack in Ivy football history, gaining more than 500 yards per league contest. On a warm September day at the Stadium, the home team’s versatility tipped the balance. An unusually strong line blasted holes for Josh Staph, an unheralded fifth-year senior running back who, in his first starting assignment, carried 28 times for 152 yards and three touchdowns. Senior quarterback Neil Rose, a resourceful field general, clicked on nine of 10 third-quarter passes as Harvard erased a 10-point Brown lead. The defensive unit, which had yielded 126 aerial yards to Brown passer Kyle Rowley, played a critical role in the game’s final seconds, pulling off two quarterback sacks and an interception to short-circuit a Bruin rally and lock up a hard-fought 27-20 victory.

Like virtually all of America’s colleges, Harvard and Brown had suspended athletic activities on the weekend that followed the awful events of September 11, so the game was the season’s first for both teams. Brown, not quite ready for prime time, had a couple of touchdowns nullified by illegal-procedure penalties and was deprived of two more when overanxious receivers dropped passes in the clear. Harvard also incurred costly penalties, but earned a straight A for ball security with a fumble-free, interception-free day. That level of consistency is seldom attainable before midseason, if then. Indeed, as a Harvard Crimson scribe wrote after last year’s 34-24 loss to Yale, “For the past two years, the only consistency the Harvard football team has maintained is its ability to let games slip out of its fingers.” That was painfully true of the 2000 season, marred by 36 turnovers and by last-second, one-point losses to Cornell and Penn. Had it not let those games slip away, Harvard (4-3 in the Ivies, 5-5 overall) would have had a 6-1 league record and an Ivy title. Could a new era now be at hand?

As for our latest gridiron king, Mr. Staph, his college football career may validate the contention of that Soldiers Field savant, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow: “All things come round to him who will but wait.” An all-state fullback at his Greater Cleveland high school, Staph found himself a perennial low man on the Harvard depth charts. After his freshman and sophomore seasons, he was advised by head coach Tim Murphy to find another fall pastime. “I was crushed,” Staph recalls. Determined to persevere, he sat out his junior season with a shoulder injury, but returned to make cameo appearances in last year’s Columbia and Dartmouth games. With a year of eligibility left, Staph was invited back to shore up the team’s dwindling roster of fullbacks. When a knee injury disabled last year’s number-two rusher, Matt Leiszler ’03, Staph was shifted to tailback. His big day against Brown won plaudits from both sides of the field. “Josh Staph was immense,” said Bruin head coach Phil Estes. “Whenever he wanted a first down, he went out and got it.” Said Harvard coach Murphy, “No kid in our program has worked harder to get where he is.”

Staph’s fireplug dimensions—officially, he is 5 feet 10 inches, and 195 pounds—disguise his quickness and agility. At the start of the Brown game, his explosive rushes ignited an 85-yard scoring drive that gave Harvard a 7-0 lead. Brown responded with 37 unanswered points, but midway through the third period the tide turned. Rose’s almost-unerring passes accounted for most of the yardage in a drive capped by Staph’s second touchdown of the day, a three-yard bolt up the middle. Less than a minute later, free safety Niall Murphy ’03 snaffled a tipped pass in Brown territory, and soon Staph was back in the end zone, breaking tackles on a 10-yard sweep to his left. Brown tied the game with a fourth-period field goal, but, with Staph on the warpath again, Harvard drove downfield to score the game-winning touchdown on a fluttery nine-yard...
pass from Rose to junior Carl Morris, the team’s premier receiver.

Tidbits: Morris’s catch, his eighth of the game, gave him 101 aerial yards for the day. But that total was eclipsed by the 217 yards run up by Brown’s ace receiver, Chas Gessner. In last year’s Brown game, Morris caught 10 passes for 220 yards, a Harvard record.

Life in the trenches: Offensive linemen work in near-anonymity, but for the record, the starters who form the Crimson’s strong forward wall are tackles Steve Collins and Jamil Soriano, guards Danny Kistler and Justin Stark, and center Jason Hove. Soriano is a junior; the rest are seniors.

Defensive stalwarts: Icing the victory over Brown, strong safety Andy Fried ’02 made an acrobatic midfield interception with seconds left on the clock. Sophomore linebacker Dante Balestracci—the team’s foremost tackler last year, and the first freshman in league history to make the all-Ivy first team—took up where he left off, leading the defensive unit with nine unassisted tackles against Brown.

Scratched: The team’s opening game, canceled after the terrorist attacks, would have been a nonleague contest at Holy Cross. In a nonleague game a week after the Brown victory, Harvard defeated winless Lafayette, 38-14. Rose scored twice on quarterback sneaks and threw two touchdown passes to Morris, whose nine catches raised his career total to 101. Josh Staph, who’d sprained an ankle late in the Brown game, watched from the bench; junior Nick Palazzo, his alternate, carried 21 times for 98 yards and a touchdown.

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Game of inches: Rodney Thomas ’03, of Harvard’s special-teams unit, almost blocked Bruin punter Tim Goobic’s kick in the opening period of the Brown game.

**Fall Sports in Progress**

**Harvard Sports on the Web**
Visit the Crimson’s official website, [www.athletics.harvard.edu](http://www.athletics.harvard.edu), for Harvard teams’ schedules and results, stories, and features.

**Men’s Soccer**
At the start of coach John Kerr’s third year, he opined that overall, the Crimson’s deep squad was better than the 1986 Duke team he had played on that won the NCAA championship. His booters (4-2, 1-0 Ivy) opened their campaign with a 4-2 triumph over Yale and notched a big win in California, upsetting sixth-ranked San Diego 2-1 in overtime. But against Loyola Marymount, Harvard drew three second-half red cards in rapid succession and, with only seven field players, gave up two goals in the final 14 minutes, losing 3-1. With the trio of red-carded starters sitting out, Harvard lost the next game to Boston College 3-2, but then bounced back with 10 unanswered goals to shell Maine, 7-0, and Providence, 3-0.

**Women’s Soccer**
After an opening overtime loss to Colorado College, 5-4, the netwomen (4-1, 2-0 Ivy) reeled off four straight shutouts, blanking Central Connecticut, 1-0; Brown, 4-0; Yale, 1-0; and Massachusetts, 2-0. At that point, goalkeeper Cheryl Gunther ’03 had stonewalled opponents for 368 consecutive minutes. The double-overtime win against Yale ended with a brilliant score, when midfielder Katy Westfall ’04 rushed a restart, lofting the free kick over a wall of surprised Eli defenders to forward Beth Totman ’03, who punched in the golden goal.

**Field Hockey**
The stickwomen (4-2, 2-0 Ivy) overcame Vermont, 3-1, before succumbing to New Hampshire, 1-0, and Connecticut, 4-1. They then knocked off Brown, 1-0; Massachusetts, 4-2; and Yale, 3-2. The win against Massachusetts was the Crimson’s first victory over the Minutewomen since 1984, and only the second in the history of the series.

**Women’s Volleyball**
The women volleyballers (6-3, 0-1 Ivy) started strong with 3-0 wins over Loyola (Maryland), Colgate, and Lafayette, then foiled New Hampshire 3-1. Three losses followed, to Fairfield, Northeastern, and Dartmouth, before the spikers took down Georgia State and SUNY Binghamton, giving up only one game to each.