

SPORTS

Who Let the Dogs Out?

THE YALE BULLDOG, muzzled by Harvard for five straight years, broke loose at the Stadium on November 18 and went on a tear. Closing out an Ivy League season made memorable by the exploits of Crimson running back Clifton Dawson, Yale's 34-13 victory gave the Eli the co-championship of the league (shared with Princeton) and consigned Harvard to third place in the final standings. The best efforts of Dawson, who had broken a 35-year-old Ivy rushing record a week earlier, were unavailing against Yale's stoked-up defense. The Blue defenders held the fleet senior tailback to a single touchdown and 60 yards rushing in 24 attempts, an average of 2.5 yards per carry. In his three previous outings against Yale, Dawson had rushed for 184, 120, and 128 yards, averaging close to five yards a carry.

All told, Dawson shattered 10 Ivy records this fall, and broke every single-season and career rushing record that Harvard keeps (opposite). Crimson football followers can take pride in his accomplishments, and in the less-publicized fact that over a four-year span of 40 games, the seniors on this fall's squad enjoyed a success rate higher than that of any Ivy or Patriot League team: a won-lost percentage of .775.

With the Ivy League's highest-scoring offense as well as its top-ranked defense, the 2006 team compiled an overall record of 7-3, finishing 4-3 in league play. Unhappily, its three losses—and its only offensive letdowns—came in critical Ivy contests against Princeton, Penn, and Yale.

Harvard started the season in fine style, with wins over Holy Cross, Brown, Lehigh, Cornell, and Lafayette. Dawson scored early and often, recording three

touchdowns in each of the first four games. A bevy of skilled receivers bolstered the passing attack, and the team's defensive prowess enabled Harvard to score 31 unanswered points against Holy Cross, 28 against Lehigh, 26 against Cornell, and 24 against Lafayette. The defense's front four, led by all-Ivy tackle Michael Berg '07, was the best in the nation at stopping the run. At the midpoint of the season, Harvard's chances of losing three of its five remaining games would have seemed remote.

But that's what happened. With first place in the league standings at stake, Harvard headed to Princeton Stadium and lost to the unbeaten Tigers, 31-28. Dawson once again scored three times, breaking the Ivy career record for rushing touchdowns, but Harvard was undone by five turnovers. A 40-yard loss on an errant punt snap gave Princeton one easy touchdown, a costly late-game penalty set up another, and the team's last

three possessions of the game were thwarted by Tiger interceptions. In New Haven, meanwhile, an overtime victory against Penn put Yale in a first-place tie with Princeton.

Dawson remained in three-touchdown form at Dartmouth the next weekend, racing 74 yards for a score on the first play of the game and adding two more

touchdowns before halftime. The defensive unit and special teams had a big day, forcing six Dartmouth turnovers in a rain-soaked 28-0 shutout. Back at the Stadium a week later, Dawson scored a pair of touchdowns as Harvard downed an im-



Yale mascot Handsome Dan XVI, who attended The Game for the first time in 2005, brought his team better luck this year. Snapping a five-year losing streak, Yale gave Harvard a 34-13 drubbing.

A 7-3 Season

Holy Cross	W	31-14
at Brown	W	38-21
at Lehigh	W	35-33
Cornell	W	33-23
Lafayette	W	24-7
at Princeton	L	28-31
at Dartmouth	W	28-0
Columbia	W	24-7
at Penn	L	13-22
Yale	L	13-34

proving Columbia team, 24-7. The defense shone again, contributing four quarterback sacks, recovering four fumbles, and holding the Lions to minus-14 yards rushing for the second consecutive year.

Then came another reversal. At Philadelphia's Franklin Field, where Harvard had managed only one victory in a dozen previous visits, the team took on an ill-starred Penn squad that had suffered consecutive overtime losses to Yale, Brown, and Princeton, a streak unprecedented in NCAA annals. Aided by two Crimson fumbles and a pair of interceptions, Penn took a 20-13 halftime lead and held Harvard scoreless the rest of the way, thanks in large part to its kicker, whose last three punts of the game were downed inside

Harvard's three-yard line. The second punt led to a two-point safety that helped seal Penn's 22-13 win. With a 55-yard carry on his second attempt of the day, Dawson broke the all-time Ivy rushing record, but Penn kept him out of the end zone for the first time in 11 games. "The biggest thing is that we lost this game," Dawson said afterward. "I wanted first and foremost to win an Ivy League championship."

The Penn defeat dropped Harvard to third place, behind Princeton and Yale. Those two had only one league loss each, having gone head-to-head at Yale Bowl on the day of the Harvard-Penn game. With a shot at securing an outright Ivy title for the first time in 26 years, Yale had funk'd it by giving up two late Princeton touchdowns and losing, 34-31.

So it was that Yale came to the Stadium the next week with a score to settle. The Eli defensive unit played ferociously, containing Dawson and putting heavy pressure on junior quarterback Liam O'Hagan and his receivers. Ominously, O'Hagan was sacked for a 10-yard loss on the team's initial series, and Dawson was thrown for five- and six-yard losses on his first two carries. Harvard mustered only one extended drive in the first half, with Dawson vaulting into the end zone from one yard out as the second quarter began. But Yale, with its offense in high gear, was in command. Adding a pair of field goals to two rushing touchdowns by sophomore tailback Mike McLeod, the Blue held a 20-7 lead at halftime.

That in itself might not have been conclusive. At Yale Bowl a year earlier, Harvard had trailed, 21-3, before rallying for a miraculous 30-24 win in triple overtime. But the Crimson couldn't find the magic dust this year, and after a scoreless third quarter the roof fell in. As the final period started, kicker Matt Schindel '08 dropped back to punt from his own end zone. His shanked kick spiraled out of bounds, Yale got the ball on the eight-yard line, and McLeod immediately ran it in for his third score of the day. Yale safety Steve Santoro delivered the coup de grâce just over a minute later, when Dawson was hit by a swarm of tacklers and parted company with the ball. Santoro scooped it up and ran it back 38 yards, going into the

end zone untouched. Harvard managed a consolation score on a 26-yard pass from junior Chris Pizzotti—the starting quarterback in five of the first six games—to senior Corey Mazza, the team's top receiver. But by then it was too late to think of closing the gap.

The 34-13 blowout was Yale's most decisive defeat of Harvard since its 28-0 shutout in 1981. The Bulldogs' inspired defensive play forced four Harvard turnovers, held the Crimson to a season-low 218 yards in total offense, and kept Dawson in check. His longest run of the day, at the start of the second period, covered 14 yards.

"It's difficult to go out this way," said Dawson after the game, "but I've had so many remarkable memories. I'm grateful

to have put on this jersey for four years. It's something that is going to bring me a lot of pride for the rest of my life." Indeed. Perhaps the best all-purpose back in Ivy history, Dawson rushed for 1,213 yards in his senior season and finished his college career with a total of 4,841 yards rushing. He led all active Division I-AA players in career rushing yards, all-purpose yards, touchdowns, total points, and scoring.

At 5 feet, 10 inches and 210 pounds, Dawson had the raw strength to shake off tacklers and the speed to outrun pursuing defenders once he got in the clear. He became a formidable blocker, and as a receiver he caught 80 passes, including seven for touchdowns, in his career. Opposing defenses often crammed eight men into the box in an effort to nail him before

Dawson by the Numbers

In his four seasons of Harvard football, Clifton Dawson '07 rewrote the record books.

NEW RECORD	OLD IVY RECORD	OLD HARVARD RECORD
4,841 Yards gained rushing, career	4,715 Ed Marinaro, Cornell, 1969-71	3,330 Chris Menick '00, 1996-99
6,138 All-purpose yards, career	5,117 Chad Levitt, Cornell, 1993-96	4,343 Chris Menick '00, 1996-99
958 Rushing attempts, career	922 Chad Levitt, Cornell, 1993-96	726 Chris Menick '00, 1996-99
66 Touchdowns, career	54 Nick Hartigan, Brown, 2002-05	29 Mike Giardi '94, 1991-93
60 Rushing touchdowns, career	50 Nick Hartigan, Brown, 2002-05	26 Chris Menick '00, 1996-99; Eion Hu '97, 1994-96
398 Points, career	324 Nick Hartigan, Brown, 2002-05	215 Charlie Brickley '15, 1912-14

Dawson also set Harvard single-season records for rushing yardage (1,302, in 2004); rushing attempts (248, in 2004); touchdowns (22, in 2006); rushing touchdowns (20, in 2006); and scoring (132, in 2006). He also set career records for rushing yardage, touchdowns, rushing touchdowns, and points scored in Ivy games only. Crimson teams went 31-9 during Dawson's career—the best four-year won-lost record in Harvard annals since 1919-22, when coach Robert Fisher's teams posted 31 wins, 4 losses, and 3 ties.



Tailback Clifton Dawson dove into the end zone from the one-yard line to put Harvard on the scoreboard against Yale. The second-quarter touchdown, his 22nd of the season, was the 66th of his record-breaking career.

broken, and Dawson's Ivy rushing total could be threatened in two years by Yale's McLeod, a fine runner whose 87 yards in The Game raised his two-year rushing yardage to 2,053. Dawson had 2,489 yards in his first two seasons, but come what may, his impress on the Harvard stat sheet is likely to be enduring. His career rushing mark exceeds the old record by a whopping 1,511 yards. His 66 touchdowns more than double the not-so-old record of 29. And his 398 career points have totally eclipsed the 215 scored by Charlie Brickley '15—a venerable record that went unchallenged for 90 years.

TIDBITS: Not since 1912, when the “Big Three” dominated American football, had Harvard, Yale, and Princeton each sported at least seven wins going into the season's last game. The year 1912 also saw the nation's first Big Three presidential election, with Princeton's Wilson outpolling Yale's Taft and Harvard's Roosevelt. But we digress. This season's final Ivy League standings:

	Ivy and overall records		Points for/against	
Princeton	6-1	9-1	233	179
Yale	6-1	8-2	257	208
Harvard	4-3	7-3	267	192
Cornell	3-4	5-5	189	217
Penn	3-4	5-5	228	191
Columbia	2-5	5-5	150	163
Brown	2-5	3-7	225	241
Dartmouth	2-5	2-8	147	254

Princeton and Yale last tied for the title in 1989. Harvard placed third that year, too.

Full house: A capacity crowd of 30,723 attended the Yale game....Yale trails, 26-24-1, in games played since the formalization of Ivy League competition in 1956.

Takeaways: Harvard's ups and downs in the last five games of the season reinforced the football axiom that in close (and even not-so-close) matchups, turnovers spin the plot. In the wins over Dartmouth and Columbia, Harvard lost two

fumbles while forcing seven and making three interceptions—a turnover margin of +8. Conversely, the margin in the Princeton, Penn, and Yale games was -9 (five lost fumbles and eight intercepted passes, against one fumble and three interceptions given up by opposing teams).

Good hands: With 36 catches, eight of them for touchdowns, Corey Mazza raised his career totals to 1,994 receiving yards and 21 touchdown catches—second only to the all-time records set by Carl Morris '03 (3,488 yards, 28 scoring passes). Injured for most of the 2005 season, Mazza may receive a medical hardship waiver and suit up again next year.

Good foot: Matt Schindel '08 booted his 28th career field goal in the Columbia game, breaking the Harvard record of 27 set by Jim Villanueva '84.

Four in a row: With 120 yards rushing in the Columbia game, Clifton Dawson became the first Ivy Leaguer—and just the ninth back in NCAA Division 1 history—to achieve four 1,000-yard seasons. The only other Harvardians to have run for 1,000 yards or more in a season are Jim Callinan '82, Eion Hu '97 (who did it twice), and Chris Menick '00.

Laurels: For the fourth straight year, Dawson was a unanimous choice for the all-Ivy first team. Former Harvard linebacker Dante Balestracci '03, who captained the 2002 team, is the only other player in league history to have made the first team four times. Also named to this year's first team were defensive tackle Mike Berg (another unanimous choice), receiver Corey Mazza, defensive back Andrew Berry '09, center Frank Fernandez '07, and linebacker and captain Ryan Tully '07....As he did in 2005, Dawson received the Crocker Award as the team's most valuable player. From the Toronto area himself, he's been drafted by the Canadian Football League's Toronto Argonauts and is seen as a possible National Football League draft pick next April.

Captain-elect: Defensive end Brad Bagdis, of Paxton, Massachusetts, and Leverett House, will lead the 2007 squad. A government concentrator, he has been one of the team's top tacklers for two seasons.

Locked in: Head coach Tim Murphy received a five-year contract extension after the season. His teams have compiled an

he could get to the line of scrimmage. That tactic was sometimes effective, but Dawson had a way of making football look like an easy game—as when, in this year's Brown victory, his three early touchdowns put Harvard up, 21-0, before the Bruins could make a first down. Or when, in the Cornell game, Dawson took the opening kickoff and sprinted down the sideline for a 93-yard touchdown. His 74-yard touchdown run on the first play of the Dartmouth game was Dawson's sixth career run of 70 or more yards. Before his arrival, no Harvard back had broken a 70-yard run since the 1993 season.

Though his physical gifts were integral to his gridiron success, Dawson also got points for demeanor. “Always a team-first guy, completely reliable, truly and sincerely humble, classy, dignified,” said head coach Tim Murphy after the Penn game. “I'm just very happy for him.” Opposing coaches concurred. “The class of the league,” said Buddy Teevens, the Dartmouth coach. “A wonderful ambassador for the Ivy League,” echoed Penn coach Al Bagnoli.

It's a truism that records exist to be

overall record of 80-49 in his 13 seasons at Harvard, winning three Ivy titles and placing 46 players on all-Ivy first teams. Twelve of Murphy's charges have gone on to pro football, including three currently on NFL rosters: Matt Birk '98 (Minnesota Vikings) and Isaiah Kacyvenski '00 and

Ryan Fitzpatrick '05 (St. Louis Rams).

Makeover: With Harvard's 133rd football season in the books, the Stadium playing field will be sealed in a giant pressurized bubble. Designed to permit cold-weather use of the 103-year-old facility, the 55-foot-high bubble is part of a three-

stage, \$5-million Stadium rehab. A synthetic surface was installed last summer (see "The Stadium Returned," July-August, page 74), and a bank of lights will be erected atop the colonnade. Night football may be right around the corner.

~"CLEAT"

Forecourt Phenoms

Two continents produce two squash stars, each with a knack for the nick.

IN THE WORLD of college squash, Harvard was once a perennial national champion. The Crimson have bagged 30 such titles, far more than any other college, and reeled off seven consecutive national nine-man championships as recently as 1991 though 1997. But around that time, Trinity College in Hartford, Connecticut, decided to build a powerhouse squash squad with global recruiting, January admits, and strong coaching—and has captured the national nine-man title every year since 1998. In fact, Trinity has not lost a men's squash match in eight years, the longest such streak in the sport's history. They've had some close calls: in the 2004 national team finals, for example, Trinity edged the Crimson 5-4, with the last match going down to the wire.

On the women's side, since a five-year streak from 1993 to 1998, the Crimson women have won only one Howe Cup, representing the national title; that was in 2001. (Trinity's women's program, strong but not as dominant as the men's, won Howe Cups in 2002 and 2003.) Yale is more of a factor in women's squash, having taken the last three Howe Cups.

Harvard, however, still stands tall in the Ivy League. Of the 16 Ivy men's squash titles decided since 1990, Harvard has won 13, all of them outright except last year's, a three-way share with Yale and Princeton. (The Tigers won the other three titles.) Harvard's women have been nearly as dominant, taking 11 of the last 16 Ivy championships, with two others going to Yale, two to Princeton, and one to Penn. Harvard's women went 6-0 in the Ivies last season.

This year, Harvard gathers itself for another run at the top, led by two top play-

ers aiming to close out their senior years with milestones. Siddharth Suchde '07 has played at number one in every Harvard men's match since his sophomore year. Last season he went undefeated in all his regular-season matches and was named Ivy League Player of the Year. He lost only one match, in the finals of the season-ending College Squash Association (CSA) national individual tournament. That was against Princeton's Yasser El Halaby, an Egyptian sensation who captured an unprecedented fourth national individual title. Suchde (pronounced *such-day*) had beaten El Halaby in the regular-season match, and went into the CSA event seeded first, but, as he recounts, "Yasser played out of his skin."

El Halaby has graduated and gone on to play professional squash, leaving Suchde as the college game's preeminent male player. "Sidd controls the court with his speed and his dominance of the T [the center of the squash court, where two boundary lines form a T]," says head squash coach Satinder Bajwa. Only two other men have beaten Suchde since he matriculated at Harvard: Yale's Julian Illingworth, a two-time national champion who has also graduated; and Bernardo Samper of Colombia, a former number-one player from Trinity who graduated in 2005.

But squash is a sport in which younger players are developing so early and so strongly that even the graduation of traditional nemeses doesn't necessarily clear

fierce challenges from the path. Take Kyla Grigg '07, Harvard's top woman player. A native of Calgary, Alberta, Grigg transferred to Harvard after one year at the University of Calgary. She was already a world-class junior squash player, and realized "that I wanted to play college squash," she says, "and Calgary didn't have a team." As a sophomore, Grigg immediately played at number one for the Crimson and was named Ivy League Rookie of the Year. She reached the finals of the national individual tournament, losing there to Yale's Michelle Quibell, a two-time national



Siddharth Suchde (foreground) and Kyla Grigg in a squash court at Harvard's Murr Center

Photograph by Tracy Powell

Reprinted from *Harvard Magazine*. For more information, contact Harvard Magazine, Inc. at 617-495-5746.