Pick six! Against Brown, senior defensive back Tanner Lee clutched Harvard’s first interception of the season, which he turned into a game-breaking touchdown.

downs against a Harvard defense turned over (like the offense) largely to the subs made the final score look more respectable than it was.

As Murphy announced afterward, the game ball was ticketed for Abercrombie. Before the playing of the national anthem, the scoreboard had shown a video that included heartfelt greetings to him from members of Harvard men’s and women’s athletic teams; it can be viewed on gocrimson.com and on YouTube. On their helmets this season the Crimson players will wear decals reading “BA.” Said Tanner Lee, like Abercrombie an Alabama product: “The season’s now about winning games but also for a lot of us about putting a championship ring on Ben’s finger.”

The following week in the nation’s capital, Harvard was barely challenged in whipping Georgetown for the fourth straight year. The highlight came early in the first period, when Shelton-Mosley fielded a punt at his nine-yard line, identified a seam and, set up by a wall of blockers, streaked to a touchdown. The 91-yard return was the longest in Crimson history, surpassing the previous effort of Hal Moffie ‘50 against Holy Cross in 1948. Smith again started at quarterback and went 16-for-30 passing. Booker powered to two touchdowns, the Crimson defense forced four turnovers and McGhee had Harvard’s second interception return for a touchdown in as many weeks, a 23-yarder. All in all, a good warmup for the cauldron of the Ivy campaign.

Tidbits: Harvard has not lost a home opener since 2000, and it has not dropped an Ivy League opener since 2010. Murphy is 19-3 in Ivy openers.... Of the home states of players on the Crimson’s opening-day roster, California was most represented, with 17, followed by Texas (14), Georgia and Massachusetts (eight each) and Alabama (seven).... At season’s start, nine former Harvard players were on NFL active rosters or practice squads.

—Dick Friedman

“Too Normal” for a Goalie?

Merrick Madsen was the brick wall in net for last season’s Frozen Four team.

Last March, Harvard goaltender Merrick Madsen ’18 played one of the best games of his life: a 3-0 shutout against Providence, on the road, in the east regional semifinals of the NCAA tournament. The contest was a big deal—Harvard had made seven NCAA tournament appearances in recent years, but the team hadn’t won a game there since 1994. This season was already something different, though. By the time the Crimson reached Providence, it had begun to seem unbeatable. The players were riding a streak of 14 consecutive wins. They’d won the Beanpot Tournament for the first time in 24 years. Two weeks before the Providence game, they had taken the ECAC conference championship, thrashing perennial foe Cornell 4-1 in the final at Lake Placid, New York. That victory had earned them the chance at this one. And so here they were, back at the NCAAs. Before the game, Madsen told himself that he was going to leave everything he had out on the ice, no matter what. “I thought, I want to be stretchered off if I have to. Because I am trying that hard.”

In the next three periods, Madsen stopped 41 pucks, a furious assault from the Friars, who took half again as many shots on goal as the Crimson. In the first three and a half minutes alone, he made seven saves. That was pretty much how the next two hours went. “I think we had something on our side,” Madsen told reporters after the game. His coach, Ted Donato ’91, put it a different way: “I think it starts with the goaltender.”

And yet, when you ask Madsen to think back on the season that took his team all the way to the Frozen Four, the first game to come to mind for him is an earlier, less glorious contest: a late November matchup against Boston University. At that point in the season, Harvard was 5-2-1; they’d had a
Merrick Madsen

This year, they begin again. Eight players from last year’s roster graduated in May. Madsen is unfazed. “Every year I’ve been here, we’ve always been underestimated,” he says. “Last season everyone thought we wouldn’t be that good, because we had lost Jimmy Vesey [’16] and Kyle Criscuolo [’16]. But then everyone showed up…If anything, we know that we have the ability to prove people wrong. It’s going to be about guys stepping up and playing a bigger role. Those guys who didn’t play much last year—we need them this year. Just like we did before, everyone needs to show up.”

—LYDIALYLE GIBSON

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