season’s starting second baseman, hit .288 across a team-high 41 games played. He was named Ivy League Rookie of the Week in March and twice made the league Honor Roll in April. “He’s arguably one of the better middle infielders in the area, in the Northeast,” says the Crimson’s coach, Bill Decker. “He’s got electric feet.”

On first meeting, Hoffman seems quiet, but that’s just because he speaks with an even tone. Soon it becomes obvious that he’s eager and chatty about baseball, a quick talker with precise thoughts about his game, who acknowledges the unusual opportunities his family has given him without boasting or self-effacement. “He’s competitive, but he doesn’t do it with a growl,” Decker says. “He’s got that little confident look, not overconfidence.”

This January 24, from Harvard’s Bubble, the winter athletic practice dome inflated within the Stadium, Hoffman called his parents on FaceTime so he could witness a moment his family had awaited for years. Trevor Hoffman, the San Diego Padres’ closer for 15 seasons and the first major-league pitcher to record 600 saves, was elected to the National Baseball Hall of Fame. In July, Quinn will travel to Cooperstown, New York, with some teammates and possibly some coaches, to see his father inducted into baseball’s pantheon. “It’s everything he’s worked for,” Quinn says. “That’s the top of the game. That’s the peak, the pinnacle.”

A shortshop in high school, Hoffman switched to second base last season because senior Drew Reid held the starting job at short. “When you’re a shortstop, you’re more fluid, and throwing the baseball is more one motion,” he says. “As a second baseman, you have more time. You don’t have to be as fast with your throws, so you’re able to be more relaxed.”

The change also helped Hoffman focus more on batting, which paid off in his 14-game hitting streak, from April 1 to 19, culminating in his 2-for-2 performance at the plate in the rain-shortened Beanpot game (which Harvard lost to Boston College, 3-2, in four and a half innings). Hoffman says his timing and his mental game each played a role. “My foot was down early. I was seeing the pitches really well. Things started to click,” he recalls. “Midway through the season, I was able to forget my bad at-bats and remember the good ones.”

Playing for Harvard, Hoffman is starting to fulfill the promise he showed very early, growing up in a major-league-ball-playing family. “I was given a ball, and I was given a bat, when I was… I can’t even remember,” he says. “It was handed down to me. It’s kind of in my blood.”

When he was six, his dad took him to the Padres’ Petco Park, and, trusting his skills, left him in the outfield during batting practice. Someone hit a line drive that came straight toward him. His father “freaked out,” Hoffman recounts. “I don’t remember it—he tells me the story about it—but I guess I caught it.”

Even as a kid, Hoffman knew he wanted to play his uncle’s old position. “I’ve always wanted to be a shortstop,” he says. “I kept playing infield, enjoyed it, being able to get my uniform dirty and dive.” He watched his dad’s teammates play short and second base, soaking up their mechanics, their footwork, their arm action, how they turned double plays. Meanwhile, he watched his father—a bullpen leader famous for entering games in late innings to AC/DC’s “Hells Bells”—lead by example with his work ethic. “[He’d be] showing guys, ‘Hey, we’re getting up early, going to work out, going to run,’” he recalls.

Trevor Hoffman pitched for the Padres from 1993 to 2008, then ended his career with two seasons in Milwaukee. His older brother, Glenn, has been the Padres’ third base coach since 2006. While in high school, Quinn spent a couple of weekends a year with his uncle at the Padres’ spring training in Peoria, Arizona, shagging fly balls during batting practice and taking part in infield drills. “He gave me a couple tips here and there: try to stay underneath the ball, be quick with your feet, let your hands do the work,” Hoffman recalls.

He was a standout as the shortstop at Cathedral Catholic High School in San Diego. His senior year, he was team captain and most valuable player. With younger brother Wyatt starting next to him at second base, the team won the California Interscholastic Federation’s San Diego Section Championship, the top accomplishment for a high-school team in the metro area. The Padres picked him in the thirty-sixth round of the 2016 draft (a move the San Diego Union-Tribune described as a “courtesy” to his father). “As a kid you dream of getting drafted by a pro team,” he says. “It was surreal. I was in shock. I was also committed to Harvard, so I couldn’t go wrong with my decision.”

The sophomore sociology major wants to follow his dad and uncle into professional baseball, either on the field or off. “If I’m not able to play,” he says, “I’d like to do something that involves baseball, inside the game.”

Meanwhile, he’s been recovering from off-season shoulder surgery, undergoing twice-weekly physical therapy. As of press time, he was hoping to return to the Crimson lineup sometime this spring. When he does, he’ll likely become the starting shortstop. “As soon as he’s healthy, we become a better ball club,” says Decker. —ERICK TRICKEY

Near Misses
The basketball teams fall short of the NCAAs.

They each had their shot. After a season that yielded some strong wins but also unfortunate losses for the men’s and women’s basketball teams, both came up just short of reaching the NCAA tournament.

For the men, the shot at the NCAAs was literal: with five seconds left in the Ivy League tournament championship game and his team trailing Penn 68-65, Justin Bassey ’20 hoisted a three-point shot that would have tied the score. It caromed off the backboard, but the Crimson grabbed the rebound, leading to a corner three-
point attempt from Christian Juzang ’20. That missed as well, and Harvard watched as the Quakers celebrated the tournament crown and the accompanying automatic NCAA bid. It was a sequence that embodied the season.

It was remarkable that the Crimson reached that game and had a chance to tie the score. During the year, the team had lost key players to illness and injuries—most notably point guard Bryce Aiken ’20, the 2017 Ivy League Rookie of the Year—but still managed to finish with a 18-14 record overall and 12-2 in the league to earn a share of the regular-season Ivy title. The team then throttled Cornell 74-55 in the tournament semifinals to reach the championship, where, despite losing Ivy League Player of the Year Seth Towns ’20 to a knee injury late in the second half, Harvard rallied from 10 points down to take the lead briefly and set the stage for those dramatic last-second shots.

But the execution on that possession showed the Crimson's youth and inexperience. After the game, Stemberg coach Tommy Amaker noted that Bassey showed impressive confidence and aggressiveness in attempting the shot—but he might also have rushed it slightly. Unlike Penn, which got 19 first-half points from senior Darnell Foreman, Harvard’s lineup that afternoon—and throughout the season—consisted almost exclusively of freshmen and sophomores. The Crimson lacked the poise and maturity to play well throughout complete games and steady themselves in the biggest moments.

Despite their youth, the Crimson were picked to win the league in a preseason media poll, narrowly edging out Yale and Princeton. The reasoning was that the sophomores' talent (they were rated the tenth-best recruiting class in the country in 2016) would outweigh their inexperience.

Harvard's non-conference slate demonstrated otherwise. After opening the season with victories at home over MIT and UMass, the Crimson dropped six of its next seven games and finished 5-10 against non-league competition. It did suffer some bad luck, including a stomach virus that sidelined players during a Thanksgiving tournament, as well as the injury to Aiken, who appeared in just four games after an early-December victory at Fordham. But the team also performed erratically. Against Manhattan in November, Harvard fell behind by 18 points in the first half before staging a second-half comeback that fell just short in a 73-69 defeat. The Crimson found a steadier rhythm in conference play, winning 10 of their first 12 league games, led by stout defense: Harvard finished the year allowing a league-best 66.5 points per game. Juzang, who averaged 36.5 minutes per game in conference play, emerged as an iron man at point guard after the team lost Aiken. Center Chris Lewis ’20, a first-team All-Ivy selection, anchored the inside-out offense with 12.8 points per game. Most important was Towns, who averaged 18.6 points per game and shot 49.3 percent from three-point range in Ivy play.

That firepower was on display on the final night of the regular season, when Harvard pasted Columbia 93-74 to earn a share of the conference title. After the final buzzer sounded, the team accepted the championship trophy at center court, and the typically reserved Amaker joined the celebration, prompting the entire team to cheer.

Still, work remained if Harvard hoped to reach the NCAAs for the first time since 2015: the following weekend, the Crimson traveled to Philadelphia for the Ivy tournament. A tie-breaker had earned the team the number-one seed over regular season co-champion Penn. Both squads won easily in the semifinals, setting up the championship showdown on Sunday.

At first, Harvard dominated, establishing a 30-17 lead behind strong interior play from Lewis and a flurry of three-pointers. Then that youthful inconsistency reemerged: shots stopped falling and the defense lapsed, leading to a 28-2 Penn run that put the Crimson in a 13-point second-half deficit. Despite losing Towns with just over eight minutes remaining, Harvard stormed back and briefly retook the lead, but couldn’t quite put the game away.

Penn would go to the NCAA tournament, but because Harvard had earned a share of the regular season Ivy title and top seed in the conference tournament, the team received an automatic berth in the National Invitational Tournament (NIT), the second-most-prestigious postseason event. Lacking Towns and Aiken, though, the Crimson fell in the first round at Marquette 67-60, end-
ing their up-and-down season.

Looking to next year, a returning core of maturing players and the addition of several talented prospects (notably guards Spencer Freedman and Noah Kirkwood) will determine whether the Crimson can return to meaningful postseason play.

The women's team—which finished the year 18-11 overall and 10-4 (third place) in the Ivy League—also had a chance to hit a big shot and advance in the postseason. With 26 seconds remaining in the Ivy tournament semifinals and the Crimson trailing Penn 54-51, first-team all-Ivy point guard Katie Benzan ’20 attempted a three. (She had already drained six three-point shots, en route to a game-high 20 points.) But her attempt missed, and for the second consecutive year, the Crimson exited the tournament in the semifinal round.

Because the team had a strong regular season record, the Crimson received an at-large bid to the women's NIT (also for the second straight year)—and, at first, the squad appeared poised to advance, seizing a 33-24 halftime advantage in the opening round at Fordham. But the Rams outscored the Crimson 41-14 in the second half, and Harvard headed home after a 65-47 defeat.

The women's team, like the men's, retains many of its best players, including Benzan; center Jeannie Boehm ’20 (a second-team all-Ivy selection); and a trio of talented junior guards in Madeline Raster, Nani Redford, and Sydney Skinner. But coach Kathy Delaney-Smith confronts the problem of replacing the production of starters Kirby Porter ’18 and Taylor Rooks ’18, an all-Ivy second-team honoree and the team's second-leading scorer behind Benzan at 12.5 points per game.

Scheduling inequity?

During the basketball season, Harvard Magazine covered concerns Kathy Delaney-Smith and other women's basketball coaches expressed about the scheduling of Ivy tournament games: favorable for broadcasters focusing on the popular men's contests, but disadvantageous to the women student-athletes whom the league also purportedly valorizes. Read the full report, “A Gendered Schedule,” at harvardmag.com/ivy-scheduling-18.

Winter Sports

Track and Field

Sprinter Gabby Thomas ’19 has been breaking program records since she joined the Crimson in 2015. This winter, she made history, becoming the fastest collegiate woman to run the indoor 200-meter. Her 22.38 mark in the final heat of the NCAA tournament meet—which won her an individual championship—is the fifth-fastest time ever run indoors at 200 meters by a woman worldwide.

Men's Hockey

For junior forward Ryan Donato, a big year kept getting bigger. In February, he competed with the United States national team in the Olympics. A bright spot in the Americans’ seventh-place finish in South Korea, Donato scored five goals in five games—besting the four goals his father, Crimson coach Ted Donato ’91, netted in the 1992 Games. In March, the younger Donato turned professional, joining the Boston Bruins, recording a goal and two assists in his debut with the team. One of three finalists for the 2018 Hobey Baker Award (the winner was announced after press time), Donato planned to finish his spring semester courses, and to return later for his degree. Three of his Harvard teammates, all graduating seniors, also signed professional contracts this year. The Crimson finished the season with a 15-14-4 record.

Squash

The top-seeded Harvard women’s squash team closed out a 15-0 season with its fourth consecutive national championship, beating Trinity College 9-0 to win the Collegiate Squash Association’s Howe Cup. In individual competition, defending champion Gina Kennedy ’20 fought her way back to the national title game, but lost there to Penn’s Reeddum Sedky. After a 13-3 season, the Crimson men were edged out in the national title game by Trinity, a perennial powerhouse that took home the Potter Cup for the second year in a row. But senior David Ryan clinched an individual national title, defeating Trinity’s Kush Kumar, the overall top seed, in a come-from-behind win in extra points.

Swimming and Diving

Led by swimmers Dean Farris ’20 and Brennan Novak ’19, who between them broke five conference records at the Ivy League championships, men’s swimming and diving defended its 2017 title and went on to the NCAAs, where the team earned eight All-America honors and finished eighteenth, the top Ivy score in the tournament. The women’s swimming and diving team also clinched an Ivy championship, its third in five years. Sophomore swimmer Miki Dahlke and senior diver Jing Leung went on to NCAA competition, two of the tournament’s four Ivy athletes.

Fencing

Harvard sent 10 fencers to the NCAA championships in late March, including junior co-captain and 2016 Olympian Eli Dershwitz, who earned his second saber title in as many years, a first for the program. Competing in épée, Cindy Gao ’21 claimed an NCAA bronze. Men’s and women’s fencing teams won their respective Beanpot championships: for each, the eleventh straight title.

~David L. Tannenwald