

**DP**  
The Daily  
Pennsylvanian



**BAND  
OF BROTHERS**

**FOOTBALL SUPPLEMENT 2016**

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# PRIORE: THE RIGHT MAN AT THE RIGHT TIME



NICK  
BUCHTA

When I came into my freshman year in 2013, Penn football was supposed to coast to its fourth Ivy title in five years. I was inaugurated into Franklin Field with a win over Lafayette that made that dream seem like a possibility.

But a different reality took shape. Al Bagnoli's squad dropped six of the next nine, ending the season on a four-game skid.

In Bagnoli's final year, it got worse. A 2-8 campaign was highlighted only by wins over winless Columbia and a one-win Cornell team that hardly fostered optimism for Ray Priore's first year at the helm in 2015.

As Priore took over after 27 years on the sidelines of Franklin Field, there was little reason to think things would change. How could a coach who had been there longer than anyone else bring to life a program that had begun to feel stale?

The Quakers were supposed to finish in the bottom half of the Ivy League for the first time in two decades — but they didn't. For the first time since I set foot on campus, the Red and Blue were Ivy League champs.

"What happens over time is you remember how to win," Priore said. "You go through season after season of success and you don't do the little things that it takes."

It turned out that Penn football didn't need a new vision; it needed to remember why it had been the Ivy League's dominant program for more than 20 years. And Priore was in a better position to do that than just about anyone else.

Now, here we are in 2016. It's hard not to be overly optimistic. The Quakers return all of their offensive weapons and

the majority of their defense. Even where they lost players, there isn't a sense of unease over how the holes will be filled — both sides of the line bring back players with considerable game experience and the depth at linebacker seems just about limitless.

They have national player of the year candidates in Alek Torgersen and Justin Watson. They have a not-so-secret-any-more weapon in Ray Priore. Take a look through the rest of this supplement and you'll see what the Red and Blue bring to the table.

Yet this year is immeasurably more important than 2015. Last year, expectations were minimal — there was little to prove beyond internal metrics. Things have changed. The Quakers have about even odds with Harvard to win the title. Penn's stars are all known quantities. Now, people are watching.

Six times this season, Penn will play on national television. Three times, those will be Friday night games on NBC Sports. How Priore's squad responds will do a lot to set the tone for the next several years — the Quakers will determine if they belong with the top echelon of the Ivy League again or not.

"You work a whole year for 10 games. We don't go to the playoffs, so every game is like a playoff game," Priore said. "So it only gets better when it's on TV."

It's entirely different to play when you're the under the radar, playing with nothing to lose — as the Quakers did in their mind-blowing win over Villanova last September — than the experience of being the team everyone is gunning for.

This fall, everyone will be watching. But Priore's squad is ready for the challenge, and I can't wait to see what's in store.

**NICK BUCHTA** is a College senior from Olmsted Falls, Ohio, and is senior sports editor of The Daily Pennsylvanian. He can be reached at buchta@thedp.com.

# LAST SEASON IN REVIEW



# 2015 RESULTS



Sat., Sept 19  
@ LEHIGH  
Bethlehem, Pa.  
L, 42-21



Fri., Oct 23  
v. YALE  
Franklin Field  
W, 34-20



Thurs., Sept 24  
@ VILLANOVA  
Philadelphia, Pa.  
W, 24-13



Sat., Oct 31  
@ BROWN  
Providence, R.I.  
W, 48-28



Sat., Oct 3  
v. DARTMOUTH  
Franklin Field  
L, 41-20



Sat., Nov 7  
v. PRINCETON  
Franklin Field  
W, 26-23 (OT)



Sat., Oct 10  
v. FORDHAM  
Franklin Field  
L, 48-45



Sat., Nov 14  
@ HARVARD  
Boston, Mass.  
W, 35-25



Sat., Oct 17  
@ COLUMBIA  
New York, N.Y.  
W, 42-7



Sat., Nov 21  
v. CORNELL  
Franklin Field  
W, 34-21

# 2016 SCHEDULE



Sat., Sept 17, 5pm  
v. LEHIGH  
Franklin Field



Fri., Oct 21, 7pm  
@ YALE  
New Haven, Conn.



Sat., Sept 24, 1pm  
@ FORDHAM  
Bronx, N.Y.



Sat., Oct 29, 1pm  
v. BROWN  
Franklin Field



Fri., Sept 30, 7pm  
@ DARTMOUTH  
Hanover, N.H.



Sat., Nov 5, 12pm  
@ PRINCETON  
Princeton, N.J.



Sat., Oct 8, 1pm  
v. CENT. CONN. STATE  
Franklin Field



Fri., Nov 11, 8pm  
v. HARVARD  
Franklin Field



Sat., Oct 15, 3pm  
v. COLUMBIA  
Franklin Field



Sat., Nov 19, 12pm  
@ CORNELL  
Ithaca, N.Y.

# LINEMEN FIGHT FOR OPEN SPOTS

Offensive line seeks to replace three graduates

**JACOB SNYDER**

*Associate Sports Editor*

It all starts and ends up front.

After an impressive 2015 season in which Penn football only allowed 12 sacks all year, the Quakers' offensive line faces a new challenge. However, this obstacle is not a powerful defensive lineman or a blitzing cornerback — it is the prospect of three holes needing to be filled on the offensive line with relatively inexperienced players.

On the left side of the line, the experience is there. Seniors Nick Demes and Dan Poulos have both been starting since at least their sophomore year, and thus have earned the responsibility of protecting quarterback Alex Torgersen's blind side.

However, as you move farther right on the line, there are some question marks of various magnitudes. At center, Nate Kirchmier will start in place of the graduated Jack York. Playing in two games

last year, Kirchmier spent most of the 2015 season preparing for a starting role in 2016.

"Kirchmier was a really solid backup last year," Penn offensive coordinator John Reagan said. "He has really earned that starting center role."

Head coach Ray Priore echoed Reagan's confidence in Kirchmier.

"You're always going to have people graduating, that's just college football," Priore said. "Kirchmier has taken great steps this past offseason towards filling the center position."

At right guard, senior Nick Whitton is also a logical incumbent. Whitton played in eight games last year, getting valuable experience that will help him move into a full-time starting job this season. Playing last season also helped him develop priceless chemistry with Demes and Poulos.

"We stress having good communication up front," Demes said. "Usually it takes some time to jell but I think having some experience back will help out the new guys."

Whitton will be looking to finish his Penn career strong after spending years learning the system and improving his technique behind starter Daniil Ly-senko.

The largest question mark is at right tackle. The Quakers coaching staff has yet to decide on a starter, acknowledging that there are two or three legitimate contenders at the position.

"The two guys who have really stood out at the position are [juniors] Gerhard Williams and Austin Stapleton," Reagan said. "It could turn out that there's more than one guy playing right tackle in tandem."

Reagan also pointed out the physical advantages to a possible joint-starting role for the pair of juniors.

"Having six or seven guys that can play up front is a great situation," Reagan said. "If you can take 10 snaps off an offensive lineman every game, he's essentially played one less game by the end of the season."



ILANA WURMAN | DP FILE PHOTO

After allowing just 12 sacks last season, Penn's offensive line will look different this year, having graduated 3 of 5 starters.

One to look at for the future is freshman Greg Begnoche, who Reagan specifically named when questioned about the right tackle position.

"[Begnoche] is showing a lot of promise so far in camp," Reagan admitted. "We'll see if he's ready physically and mentally to play at

all this season."

Whoever steps in at right tackle will not only have the challenge of finding their feet in a newfound starting role, but will also have to fill the shoes of All-Ivy tackle Tanner Thexton, arguably Penn's best offensive lineman last year.

So, what can we expect from the offensive line early in the year? Although the team is confident in the ability of the new starters, they admit that there could be a small learning curve that results in some early-season wrinkles.

"The more reps we have together the better," Poulos said. "It's nice to have some out of conference games to work out the kinks."

Offensive line coach Joe Johnson also noted the importance of getting the new group game time together.

"Playing offensive line is not five individual guys, it's one strong unit," Johnson said. "And that's why it's so important to get your five guys out there and let them mesh."

One thing is for sure — the relationships that are being built up front are getting stronger by the day.

"We're working better as a group every time we go out there," Kirchmier said. "We spend hours together every day hanging out and getting reps."

"The O-Line is a brotherhood. If we're gelling like this already, there's no telling how good we can get."



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# TWO IF BY LAND: QUAKERS BOAST DANGEROUS DUO ON THE GROUND

Solomon, Schoenauer back after strong 2015

**TOMMY ROTHMAN**  
Sports Editor

Halfbacks Brian Schoenauer and Tre Solomon specialize in one thing: Title runs.

During Penn football's Ivy League championship season in 2015, much of the attention — both from defenders on the field and spectators off of it — was focused on quarterback Alek Torgersen, who had a breakout season as a junior, and wideout Justin Watson, who as a sophomore established himself as the best receiver in the league.

The long ball is sexy, and not just in baseball. That's why the Red and Blue aerial assault, led by "Torg" and "J-Wat," was such a storyline last year. But the Quakers owed a huge part of their success to the ground game, which was possibly more dominant, albeit more quietly so.

Penn led the Ivy League

during conference play in rushing yards (1,194), yards-per-carry (4.5, tied with Harvard) and rushing touchdowns (16) in 2015, so it's not a stretch to say the Quakers' ground attack was the best in the Ancient Eight. The charge was led by two running backs who, like most of the team, had done very little in 2014.

Brian Schoenauer, coming off a sophomore campaign in which he rushed for just 206 yards on a very pedestrian 3.4 YPC, burst on the scene as a junior, leading the team with 652 yards on the ground and finishing second in the Ivy League with 5.3 YPC while finding the end zone six times in 10 games.

Tre Solomon, after suffering a season-ending knee injury that derailed a promising freshman season, managed to stay on the field as a sophomore and, like his backfield mate Schoenauer, was very effective, finishing with 535 all-purpose yards, 4.53 YPC, seven touchdowns on the ground and two more in the receiving game.

## GOING BACK TO BACK

### PENN RUSHING IVY PLAY 2015

1194 yards

170.6 yards per game

16 touchdowns

4.5 yards per carry



So, whereas the backfield was a huge question-mark heading into last season, the Quakers can enter the 2016 campaign with huge confidence in their ground game.

"We've got a pretty good situation, both guys have a ton of experience," offensive coordinator John Reagan said. "You've got a senior who was really steady all of last year and has a leadership role here, and you've got Tre, a junior that finally is healthy and looks like the Tre we all thought he was going to be."

In such a physical sport, having two quality running backs, as opposed to one, is huge. Both Schoenauer and Solomon appreciate the presence of the other to ease their own burden.

"It definitely does take a lot of pressure off of me, just knowing that he's gonna be able to come in, and knowing that once he comes in the offense won't skip a beat," Solomon said of Schoenauer.

Schoenauer agreed.

"But at the same time," he added, "if there's a long run, or somebody's got the hot hand, you have the ability to ride that, with multiple running backs."

If the two backs are fighting for carries, it is a friendly competition that can only be beneficial to the team.

"It's great because you always have someone who's pushing you," Schoenauer said. "I keep trying to raise the bar and push our expectations of what we can be and what we can do to be the most productive and reliable unit on the offense."

With so much talent on the offense, everybody will have to make sacrifices, but that ultimately comes at the expense of the Quakers' opponents, not the Red and Blue themselves. Far from feeling snubbed by the amount of attention given to Watson and Torgersen, the two running backs are excited about the added opportunities they will have to wreak havoc

out of the backfield.

"I think with so much focus on J-Wat and Torg — and rightfully so — that's gonna give us the opportunity to do something special, because teams are gonna be thinking about the talent we have at quarterback and wide receiver," Schoenauer said. "And we're hoping that that's going to open up the field for us so we can make productive plays and contribute as much as we can."

"It definitely opens up a lot of running lanes," Solomon agreed.

Reagan has his work cut out for him, but with "work" being the task of spreading the love between two excellent running-backs and a deadly receiving threat, he is surely the envy of the other seven Ivy League offensive coordinators.

"It is a challenge," he said, "but it's a good problem to have."

And how exactly does Reagan plan to address this "problem," to use the threat of Watson and Schoenauer and vice-versa? Like any good coach, he prioritized keeping opposing defenses in the dark over giving the media the bold, fancy quote:

"I guess we'll see."

But unlike last year, there are few guessing games to be played. There are hardly any question marks for this offense on the eve of the season, especially in the running game. Brian Schoenauer and Tre Solomon are bringing the pain.



WILL SNOW | DP FILE PHOTO

Penn football had the best running attack in the Ivy League in 2015, led by **Brian Schoenauer** and Tre Solomon, who both return to the offense for the 2016 season.

# Don't be confused: One-third ≠ one title



**WILL SNOW**

**O**ne-third. That's what will be important to keep in mind this fall: Penn football may have won the Ivy League title last season in an unexpected comeback, but they only won a third of it.

That means that there are two other teams who have just as much a claim to it this year as the Quakers do.

Harvard and Dartmouth

are both still strong teams — despite some key player graduations — who will be tough matches for the Red and Blue as they seek to win the title outright this year. And it is worth keeping that in mind throughout the season as we get hyped up for our school: Although we have a title-contending team, we have just that — we shouldn't get too far ahead of ourselves.

The Ivy League preseason media poll ranked Penn at second, behind Harvard, of course, but with a caveat: the former received more votes for first place, while the latter was placed in first because it

received more votes on aggregate.

Not to mention that the team's star wide receiver, junior Justin Watson, was a name on the nationwide FCS Offensive Player of the Year watchlist. His chemistry with senior quarterback Alek Torgersen should generate a decent number of touchdowns this year, but the two can only get their team so far. A team effort is necessary to win games and have a go at the title.

So the Quakers are ranked second in the preseason media poll, but last year, they fared much worse. They were ranked sixth, and the lack of pressure along with a chip on their shoulders likely helped them surge to the title. This year, it will be interesting to see how they handle the pressure of being one of the favorites.

"We keep talking about how we're not trying to defend a title," Watson said. "It's our same goal as last year — we're trying to go out and win the title. This year, we're trying to do it outright. One-third was great, it was great to send the

seniors out with a ring on their finger, but we want the whole thing this year."

In a way, this could be the best situation for the Quakers. Having won a third of the title in 2015, they got to enjoy the glory of topping the Ivy League, while avoiding the complacency, or perhaps relaxation, associated with finishing clear first. Just look at the last two seasons of Premier League soccer in England, and it's plain to see the effects total victory can have on the minds of the defending champions. It's easier to play with a chip on the shoulder rather than to defend a title, and you could say that Penn will do that in 2016.

"It's all how you handle it," coach Ray Priore said. "You look to the seniors and to the staff to keep people grounded."

Priore continued to mention the tough losses dealt to the team last year, arguing that keeping them fresh in memory should help give the team something to prove.

"Remember how you got there," he said. "It's all about

building the house from the foundation up, laying brick by brick."

That last phrase is one that Priore has been using frequently in recent weeks, in several different contexts. Here, he summed up perfectly what will be needed for his team's success this season — taking one task at a time, brick by brick. Focusing on the little things, the fundamentals, and not getting carried away with last year's glory. Start with the little things, and end up with the big prize.

In a way, that's what has happened to the team over time. Two years ago, they had a poor season. Last year, they got a third of what they wanted. And if Priore's plan comes to fruition, just as he's saying, the little things will add up.

A third can become a half, or a whole — but only one brick at a time.

**WILL SNOW** is a College sophomore from Nashville, Tenn., and is a sports editor of The Daily Pennsylvanian. He can be reached at [snow@thedp.com](mailto:snow@thedp.com).



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# DP SWAMIS

62 YEARS OF GRIDIRON GENIUS

## PRESEASON

[Disclaimer: Swamis is an exercise where The Daily Pennsylvanian's editors make jokes and pick the Ivy League football games. Enjoy. - Nick]

In the words of the late, great Dick Rader: It finally feels like football.

That's right, Penn football is back and better than ever. This year, the quest is not to win a third of an Ivy title, not one-half, not an eighth. It's time for them to win the whole. f\*\*kin'. thing.

But that isn't the most

important part. There's one thing fans across the country, across campus, or at least potentially in the offices of 4015 Walnut care about this time of year: swamis are back.

Back to pick Columbia to win every game they play (sorry not sorry). Back potentially to defend a title. Back to make horrifically wrong picks with no apparent grounding in reality (looking at you, Lauren).

**PREDICTION: J-WAT 5, IVY LEAGUE 0**



<b>Nick</b> "Run-R.N.C." Buchta	<b>Tom</b> "Harambe" Nowlan	<b>Tommy</b> "Swamemes" Rothman	<b>Will</b> "Pee Wee" Snow	<b>Laine</b> "#Laine" Higgins
Penn Harvard Princeton Columbia Yale Brown Dartmouth Cornell	Harvard Penn Yale Dartmouth Princeton Columbia Cornell	Penn Harvard Yale Dartmouth Princeton Columbia Brown Cornell	Penn Harvard Dartmouth Yale Princeton Brown Columbia Cornell	Harvard Penn Dartmouth Princeton Yale Columbia Brown Cornell



<b>Holden</b> "Washed Up" McGinnis	<b>Colin</b> "Sigourney" Henderson	<b>Lauren</b> "Ted Cruz" Feiner	<b>Joyce</b> "Joooooyce" Varma	<b>Ananya</b> "@GoingBananyas" Chandra
Penn Harvard Dartmouth Princeton Yale Columbia Brown Cornell	Penn Harvard Dartmouth Princeton Yale Columbia Brown Cornell	Dartmouth Harvard Penn Cornell Princeton Yale Brown Columbia	Harvard Columbia Dartmouth Yale Penn Princeton Cornell Brown	Penn Harvard Columbia Dartmouth Yale Princeton Cornell Brown



<b>Alex</b> "Alek" Graves	<b>Ilana</b> "Dan Quisenberry" Wurman	<b>Carter</b> "Dab" Coudriet	<b>Anna</b> "David Freese" Dyer	<b>Thomas</b> "Back to back" Munson
Penn Harvard Dartmouth Yale Princeton Brown Columbia Cornell	Penn Harvard Princeton Dartmouth Yale Brown Columbia Cornell	Penn Princeton Harvard Dartmouth Yale Brown Columbia Cornell	Penn Harvard Dartmouth Yale Princeton Columbia Brown Cornell	Harvard Penn Yale Brown Dartmouth Princeton Cornell Columbia

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## Seniors seek to build legacy in final season

**LAINE HIGGINS**

*Senior Sports Reporter*

One more.

That's the phrase that was written across the shoulders on the Penn football team's 2015 Ivy League Champion t-shirts last year. It's also the phrase that's on all of the team's lifting apparel this year.

Last year, it was the mentality the team adopted after its third loss in four games to Fordham. It was a game where the Quakers

got "tattooed", 48-45, by their opponent, according to then-first year coach Ray Priore, and it was also a turning point of the season. From that day in October onwards, the Red and Blue would win every game. Every Saturday, one more.

This season the phrase has taken on a larger temporal scope. In 2016, it's not just one more win, one step closer to tying Dartmouth and Harvard for a share of the Ancient Eight crown. It's one more ring, one more season steeped in success, one step closer to elevating to the Penn football program back to the pedestal of perennial dominance upon which it once stood in the golden years of the Al Bagnoli Era.

Those golden years were something the senior class never knew. When the Class of 2017 was getting recruited to Penn, the Quakers had won three Ivy crowns in the previous four seasons. Battling through losing seasons just wasn't a part of the conversation.

"Everyone comes to Penn and wants to get a ring," senior linebacker Donald Panciello said.

A ring would not be in the cards early on, though. In 2013, Penn went 4-6. In 2014 — Bagnoli's last at the helm before retiring, unretiring and finally settling as Columbia's head coach in the spring of 2015 — the Quakers continued their dismal slide and

finished 2-8.

"You come to Penn, it was right after a championship year and we expected to perform well, perform at a high level," senior offensive lineman Nick Demes recalled. "The first couple years didn't go as well as we thought."

By 2015, jewelry was no longer part of the conversation. Something about two consecutive seasons near the basement of the Ivy League makes that kind of talk seem foolish.

When Priore transitioned from defensive coordinator to head coach, he came up with a new set of talking points for the Quakers. Fundamentals. Foundations. The little things.

"One of the reasons why we were so successful last year was our senior leadership and how focused and determined they were. They had those couple of bad seasons on the taste of their tongues," Priore said.

"We talked about building the house from the foundation up and laying brick by brick."

Each brick, one after another. It started with Columbia, a game Penn won, 42-7. Then Yale, then Brown, then Princeton, Harvard and Cornell. And then a ring.

Suddenly, that talk of jewelry didn't seem so imprudent anymore. Bling still isn't on Priore's mind. "It's all about remembering how you got there," he said.

"The margin of victory last year was only four or five touchdowns for the games. We had very close contests," said Priore. "You have to remember how you win and that's doing the fundamentals and the little things right."

At the dawn of the 2016 season, the Class of 2017 remembers the bitter aftertaste of their first two seasons playing for Penn. They also remember the lessons of hard work and determination impressed

upon them by the champions that came before them.

"The way that Chris Bush and Jake Schwertner were great role models for us, that's what we're trying to be for the younger guys on offensive line right now," Demes said.

According to senior offensive lineman Daniel Poulos, the most important lesson taken away from their former teammates was that of leadership by example.

"Just watching them every day and how they practice, how they work out, the things they do to study and watch extra film. They were nice enough to bring us in and we'd watch film with them and they would help us along the way."

"They set a really good example for us and that's what we're trying to do now as seniors for the younger guys," Poulos said.

So the tradition of leadership continues, and it's all according to Priore's master plan. On the Sunday before Thanksgiving last year, the coach called a meeting with the rising senior class to outline his expectations for the season to come. The final game of 2015 was not yet 24 hours old and already Priore was onto one more.

"We have to build ourselves into a team," he told his players, still riding the high of victory. "Good teams are followed by great leaders."

The challenge was set. The Class of 2017 would have to step up, lead by example and begin laying the foundation for another banner year for Penn football. Perhaps a testament to Priore's faith in his senior class, no captains were named until August 27 because he "truly believe[s] that all seniors, all players have to lead."

It's only September, but the foundation for that team of leaders is beginning to take shape. And it's a foundation built brick by brick.

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# GO LONG

Torgersen, Watson prepare to lead Penn on quest for second straight title  
 Thomas Munson | Senior Sports Reporter

"Go long."

Two of simplest words in American football are the cornerstone of pickup games played during recess and on sandlots across the country.

But, perhaps no other two words in the entire sport carry as much weight as that illustrious phrase. To junior wideout Justin Watson, they represent the best play in the book.

"You run the route, and you never know if you're gonna get it," Watson explains. "And that first moment when you see the ball's in the air. That's such a cool feeling."

Time sits still for a moment.

"You hear everyone kind of holding their breath when it's in the air and the crowd erupts and everyone else starts running down to you," Watson says with a smile.

For him, the feeling is familiar. Despite possessing a swiss army knife of offensive attributes, Watson's favorite moments are when he streaks down the sideline, in pursuit of a deep ball.

Senior quarterback Alek Torgersen delivered

plenty of those throws to Watson during their championship campaign last season. Back for a final year together, the duo is poised to keep connecting. On the field, Penn football will go

## "He is able to call the offense himself."

as far as Torgersen and Watson can take them.



Twelve months ago, the Quakers were surrounded by questions. With a new coach, a new offense and a 2-8 season fresh in their rearview mirror, expectations weren't high for the former Ivy League power.

In their season opener, the Red and Blue fell flat, getting smoked 42-21 at Lehigh. And while days later they knocked off fifth-ranked

Villanova, among the largest upsets in program history, it wasn't until week five that the Quakers truly hit their stride.

Fresh after missing a game due to a concus-

sion, Torgersen ignited the offense against an inferior Columbia squad. He passed for 270 yards and three touchdowns in a dominant win that would begin a relentless streak for the veteran quarterback and consequently, the team.

The Quakers would go on to win their final six games behind an offense that consistently relied on big performances from Torgersen and Watson, who kept improving as the season went on and as the offense became more familiar.

That combination of personal and team progress is what second-year head coach Ray Priore hopes to continue to foster this season.

"We have to grow as individuals, but we have to build ourselves as a team," he explained.

One area in which Torgersen has

were called in from the sidelines.

"It's like we have an offensive coordinator up top but he's that next guy," Countryman went on to say. "He's running the offense, taking over

and it's awesome seeing him being able to be in control at all time."

His increased knowledge is especially key to help show others the way.

"His leadership has been tremendous," Priore says. "Teaching young quarterbacks and young receivers the scheme within it."

Last season, Torgersen was new to the offense just like everyone else, but now he's an expert.

"When you're learning it for the first time, you're just worried about yourself. You can't really go out there and help anybody else," Priore added.

Another advantage to working in a second-year offense had been Watson and Torgersen's ability to work on plays together for the entire

plished anything yet."

Separating from Harvard, Dartmouth and the rest of the conference will be tough. For Torgersen and Watson the first steps towards another

## "He is able to call the offense himself."

-Priore on Torgersen

championship began after finals ended in May. This summer, the pair stayed on-campus. They worked at the same firm in center city, commuted, ate lunch and lifted together before hitting Franklin Field for throwing sessions every day.

They practiced timing, back shoulder fades and most importantly, option routes, where Watson will change his path based off the coverage, keeping faith that Torgersen sees the same alignment and will anticipate Watson's adjustment accurately.

"A lot of college quarterbacks and their receivers can't have that type of chemistry," Watson explained. "But I think us just being here all summer we're kind of on the same page that if I'm running the route I'm supposed to be run-

Countryman piled on the praise for Watson as well.

"J-Wat is one of the best receivers — I think he's the best receiver in FCS football, to be completely honest. So just being able to see what kind of talent he has whether it's being a possession receiver or being a deep threat, cuz he's both, you notice that."

Opposing defenses are starting to notice him too, keeping the pressure on both him to keep improving and on the Red and Blue to find new ways to utilize his skills.

"This offense allows our best playmakers to be put in space and make plays," Countryman says.

Against Harvard in November, with an Ivy League title on the line, Watson's versatility was on full display and the offense set him free to do damage.

Up 28-25 in the fourth quarter against the defending champions, having already scored on a 68-yard passing play earlier in the afternoon, Watson broke off for a 79-yard rushing touchdown to put the Quakers up for good.

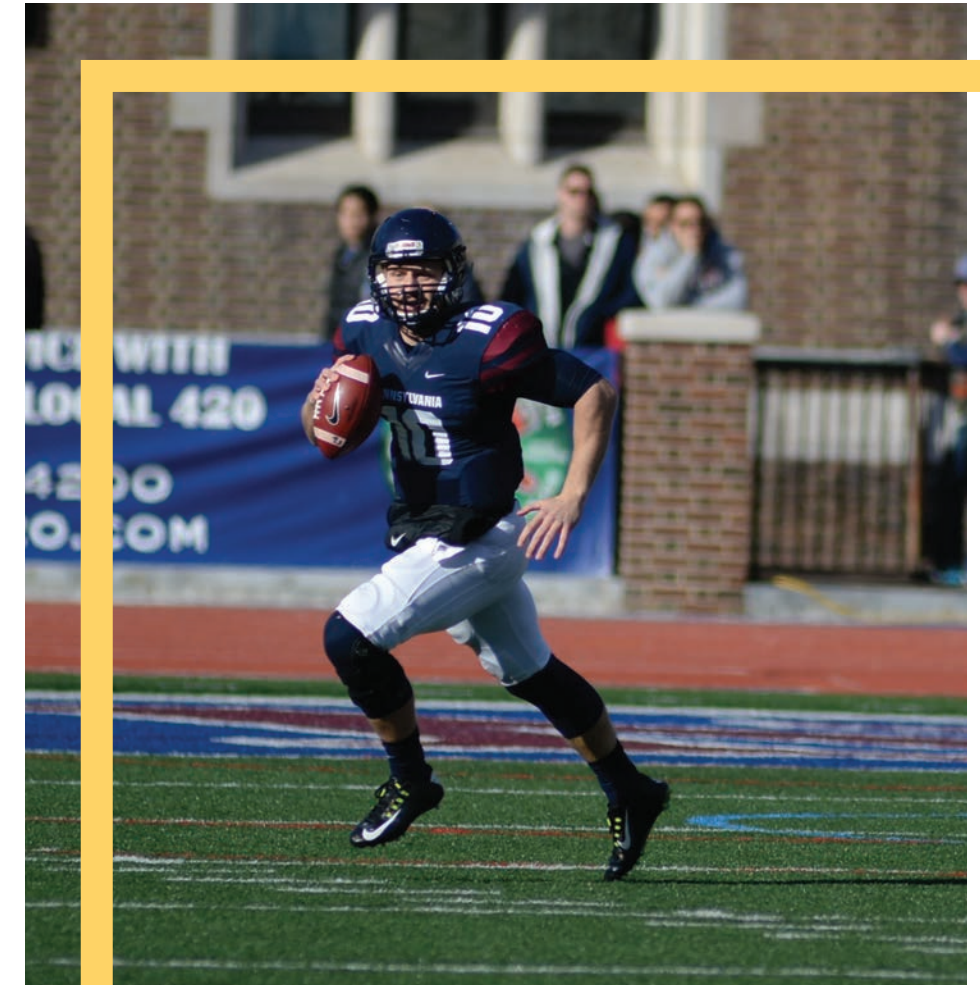
Performances like that one are what make Priore and Torgersen smile, and are what keep defensive backs up at night. As a result the opposition will be glued to Watson. He knows that and it doesn't faze him.

"If I gotta take two or three guys every game we'll be 10-0 because I know everyone else is gonna be making plays," Watson said.

But, Watson doesn't merely rely on natural abilities to separate himself from the pack.

"He's the hardest working kid on the field, day in and day out," Torgersen said.

"It really helps with the whole vibe and how everything goes at practice because when he's



WILLIAM SNOW | SPORTS EDITOR

After leading the Ivy League in completion percentage in 2016, senior quarterback Alek Torgersen returns for his third year under center for Penn in the quest for his second Ivy title.

## "It's the same goal as last year: We're trying to go out and win a title."

-Justin Watson

grown this offseason is his knowledge of the playbook and ability to adjust on the fly.

"He is able to call the offense himself," Priore said. "Knows how to check calls, anticipating things."

Fifth-year receiver Cam Countryman, who has had a front row seat to Torgersen's development, went into more depth to describe the quarterback's ascension.

"We're focusing on allowing Alek to just take over the offense," he said. "I think that he's gaining the ability to be able to see what's out there, see what the defense is trying to do and get us always in the right position."

Torgersen has become increasingly autonomous and gained the trust of Priore and offensive coordinator John Reagan to make the changes on his own that last year

offseason.



Having both earned first team All-Ivy selections in 2015 and with a league title under their belts, it would have been easy for Watson and Torgersen to be complacent with their development. But they want more.

"We keep talking about how we're still not trying to defend a title," Watson said. "It's the same goal as last year: We're trying to go out and win a title. And this year we're trying to be outright."

"One third was great," he added. "But you know we want the whole thing this year."

Torgersen has the same mindset entering his final season in west Philadelphia.

"We still have kind of a chip on our shoulder," he stated. "Three-way tie, two other teams besides us got a championship last year so we haven't done anything, this group hasn't accom-

plished anything yet."

What makes those windows easier to find, and more lethal when exposed, are both players' raw talent.



Throughout August, as national watch lists came out, Torgersen was being labeled as one of the top passers in the FCS. Not to be outdone, Watson has been in the discussion for best player overall. Few teams, especially any in the Ivy league, can boast two such players on their roster.

"Justin's a stud, makes my life a lot easier," Torgersen bluntly declared.

"I expect him to make those crazy one-handed grabs. I expect him to catch every ball I throw to him and, when he doesn't, I get disappointed. Nothing surprises me at this point."

performing the whole offense is performing," Torgersen continued. "He's a natural leader."

That work-ethic and leadership is most evident when Watson discusses his personal accomplishments. He was a finalist for Ivy offensive player of the year in 2015 among other

awards and accolades.

"For me, it's more about the ring," Watson said. "It's a great honor and my mom and dad are really excited so it's good for them but for me I'm gonna go out and keep doing the same thing and just keeping taking it one step at a time. That's how I got to this point so I'm not

to see what they can accomplish together. Unlike last season, they won't be surprising anyone on the field this year. But, in a familiar offense and with a summer of work under their belts, even greater things could be in store for them and the rest of the Red and Blue.

Perhaps, at some point this year Torgersen

## "Justin's a stud, makes my life a lot easier."

-Alek Torgersen

gonna change anything."



Watson and Torgersen have one more chance

will look across the huddle at Watson and say two words, "Go long."

At that point the playbook won't matter, Watson will sprint ahead, Torgersen will drop back, and the fate of the game will lie in the balance of that long arching throw.



ALEX FISHER | SENIOR PHOTOGRAPHER

Going into his junior year, all eyes in the Ivy League will be on wide receiver Justin Watson, who was named to the FCS National Player of the Year preseason watch list.



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# STRENGTH IN NUMBERS

## Young LBs make up for loss of Drake

**TOM NOWLAN**  
Sports Editor

Tyler Drake had a pretty good 2015.

In the final season of his standout Penn career, the linebacker finished with 80 tackles, 8.5 sacks and two interceptions — good enough to earn him the Ivy League's Defensive Player of the Year award. He seemed to come up biggest on the largest stages — he picked up a sack and two forced fumbles in a mega-upset of Villanova and notched 12 tackles and a sack in a season-defining win over Harvard.

But, following Drake's graduation, the Red and Blue will be forced to reshuffle their linebacking corps as they look to repeat as Ivy champions. 12 of the unit's 16 members from 2015 will return this season, but they must adjust to the loss of their best player.

"We have some really talented players in the program who had really good springs," coach Ray Priore said. "Who would have imagined Tyler having the season that he had at this point last year?"

One player poised for a Drake-like breakout this season is junior Colton

Moskal. After spending his freshman year in 2014 at Syracuse, the linebacker transferred to Penn and found immediate success, picking up 44 tackles over nine games.

"You have to trust the process. It's a next-man-up mentality," Moskal said of replacing Drake. "I'm sure someone will come in and fill that role. I can't pinpoint one guy, since it's such a team sport on defense."

"We're not looking for one guy to come in and be Tyler Drake," linebackers coach Jon DuPont said. "We have good leadership on our defense. I think we'll be just fine."

The unit will also benefit from the addition of two new freshmen — Brendan O'Hara and Connor Jangro. Though they will likely not see much playing time off the bench, they will likely follow the path of marked year-by-year improvement that seems ubiquitous among the unit.

"Every year we've had freshman step up in places when needed," Outside linebackers coach Jeff Smart said, citing the precocious play of then-freshman defensive back Sam Philippi in 2015. "We're just going to play the best players."

Moving into a leadership role in his senior season will be Donald Panciello, who finished second on the team to Drake with 61 tackles a season

ago, earning honorable mention All-Ivy recognition.

Panciello seemed to always be in the center of the action, accounting for two of the season's most pivotal plays — a 90-yard fumble recovery and touchdown at the end of the Villanova game and a block of Princeton's game-winning field goal attempt as time expired in regulation of a come-from behind overtime win.

"I was in the right place at the right time," Panciello said, laughing. "I don't know how to explain it."

Though the New Jersey native bested Drake in terms of flair a season ago, he hopes to accumulate the eye-popping stats and provided veteran leadership that the star provided.

"He was a great player,

obviously," Panciello said. "He had all the stats, Defensive Player of the Year. It's going to be hard to fill his shoes."

It is also worth noting that Drake was far from the only defensive star lost to graduation. Safety Ian Dobbins — second team All-Ivy in his senior season — and linebacker Jack Madden both finished in the team's top five in tackles, with Dobbins adding three interceptions.

However, the Quakers will return their third-leading tackler, junior linebacker Brandon Mills. The California native was a quiet contributor to the Ivy championship team, racking up two interceptions and a fumble recovery in addition to his 57 tackles.

The Red and Blue will also benefit from Philippi's

sophomore campaign. In 2015 the first-year player picked up four interceptions, tops on the team.

The defense, to be sure, has room to improve — the unit surrendered 26.8 points per game a season ago, third-worst in the conference — and that was before they lost the league's best defensive player.

But it was enough to get the job done. With the high-octane offense fueled by Alek Torgersen and Justin Watson ready to take flight once again, the defense needn't be perfect to keep Penn in games.

And while Drake's departure will hurt, 2015 taught us one thing about Red and Blue: They will find a way. So while many may see a hole in the team, the Quakers prefer to look at it as something else: an opportunity.

## ANCHORING THE DEFENSE

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# SCOUT REPORT: ACROSS THE IVY LEAGUE

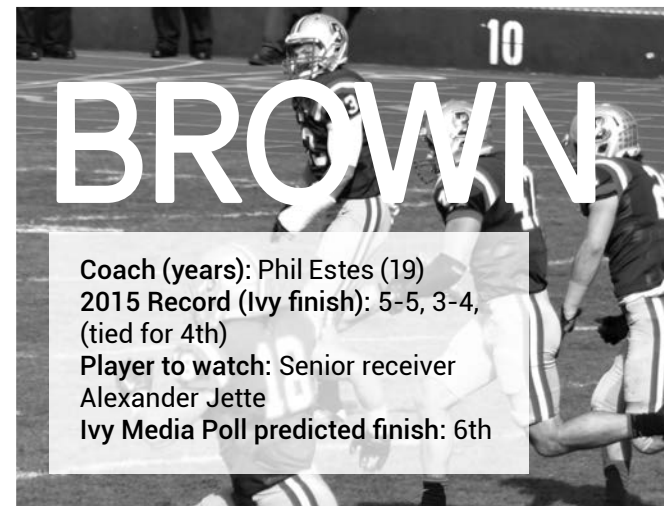
JACOB ADLER



**Coach (years):** Al Bagnoli (2)  
**2015 Record (Ivy finish):** 2-8, 1-6  
 (tied for 7th)  
**Player to watch:** Senior defensive  
 back Jared Katz  
**Ivy Media Poll predicted finish:** 7th

## COLUMBIA

After a seventh-place conference finish, the media predicts the Lions will again finish seventh. Columbia was actually decent on the defensive end last year, with five all-Ivy players and ceding fewer points than each Ancient Eight squad save Dartmouth and Harvard. Unfortunately, four of those players along with Columbia's best offensive player in running back Cameron Molina are gone. Senior defensive back Jared Katz is the holdover on a unit that be responsible for keeping the Lions in games. Senior quarterback Skyler Mornhinweg could be dangerous as a rusher, but averaged just 5.3 yards per pass attempt with only six touchdowns to 11 interceptions. His top receiver from last year, Scooter Hollis, will return and was the only Lion with more than 250 receiving yards.



## BROWN

**Coach (years):** Phil Estes (19)  
**2015 Record (Ivy finish):** 5-5, 3-4,  
 (tied for 4th)  
**Player to watch:** Senior receiver  
 Alexander Jette  
**Ivy Media Poll predicted finish:** 6th

The media predict the Bears to fall to sixth place in the Ivy League this year, with Princeton leapfrogging Brown. Last season, the Bears recorded only 333 rushing attempts — tied with Cornell for least in the conference and their 3.3 yards per carry was the lowest as well. After losing quarterback Marcus Fuller and receiver Troy Doles to graduation, senior quarterback Kyle Moreno and first team All-Ivy receiver Alexander Jette will carry the Brown offense this year. Allowing six games of 30+ points, the Bears defense surrendered the most points in the conference. Senior defensive end Richard Jarvis, the only Brown defensive returnee to receive All-Ivy recognition, and senior defensive end Robert Hughes make up part of a defensive line that will likely be the strong suit of the defense.

## A beautiful finish that lasts a lifetime.



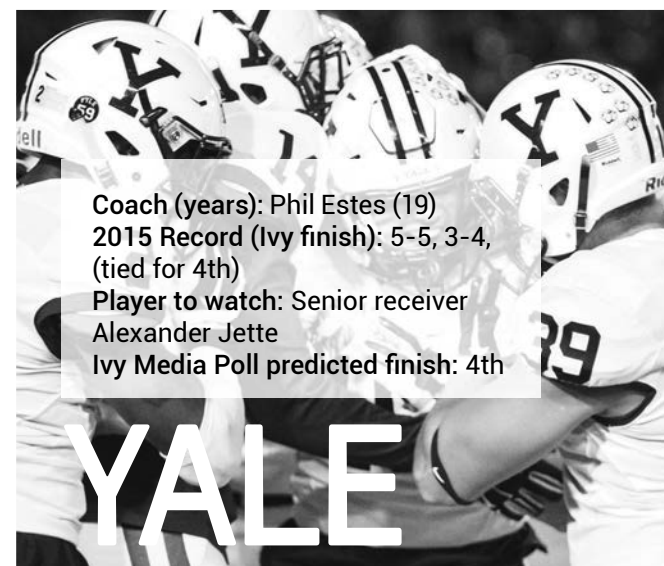
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**Coach (years):** Phil Estes (19)  
**2015 Record (Ivy finish):** 5-5, 3-4,  
 (tied for 4th)  
**Player to watch:** Senior receiver  
 Alexander Jette  
**Ivy Media Poll predicted finish:** 4th

## YALE

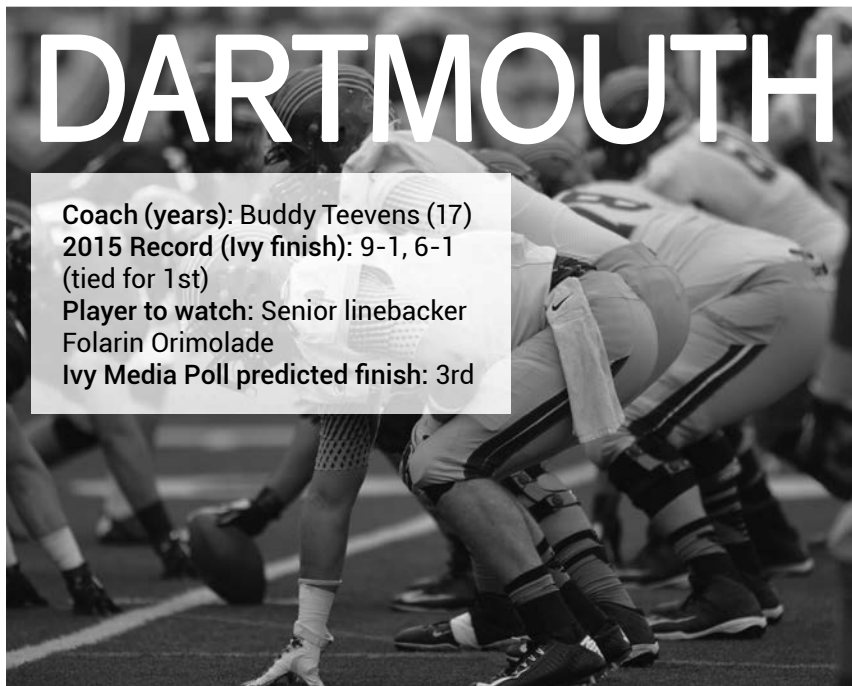
After a fourth-place finish in 2015, Yale is projected to once again finish fourth, with numerous returning starters offsetting the loss of quarterback Morgan Roberts. The Elis bring back all four defensive All-Ivy players along with junior defensive back Hayden Carlson, who led the Ivy League in tackles as a sophomore. On offense, Yale was hit hard by the loss of running back Tyler Varga, finding itself one of the least efficient teams running the ball and will need Roberts' replacement to avoid the same thing happening in the passing game this year.



**Coach (years):** David Archer (4)  
**2015 Record (Ivy finish):** 1-9, 1-6  
 (tied for 7th)  
**Player to watch:** Senior punter  
 Chris Fraser  
**Ivy Media Poll predicted finish:** 8th

# CORNELL

The Big Red's only victory last year was a 3-0 triumph over Columbia. Yikes. That's part of the reason why the media thinks Cornell will place last in the Ivy League. On average, opponents outscored Cornell by 15.5 points. Notably, the team played at a slow pace with the fewest run and pass plays despite the third-highest time of possession. The Big Red lost first team All-Ivy running back Luke Hagy to graduation, making the connection between senior quarterback Robert Somborn and fifth-year senior receiver Ben Rogers even more important. Senior linebacker Miles Norris is one of the favorites to lead the defense in tackles, along with senior linebacker Jackson Weber. The two have combined for 282 tackles at Cornell.



**Coach (years):** Buddy Teevens (17)  
**2015 Record (Ivy finish):** 9-1, 6-1  
 (tied for 1st)  
**Player to watch:** Senior linebacker  
 Folarin Orimolade  
**Ivy Media Poll predicted finish:** 3rd

# DARTMOUTH

After the Big Green's 41-20 romping of Penn last year, a Daily Pennsylvanian columnist predicted Dartmouth would dethrone Harvard and win the Ivy League. It turns out he was half-right, as the Big Green would split the title with the two others. Dartmouth took perhaps the biggest hit in the Ivy League from graduation, losing 17 starters, including star quarterback Dalyn Williams, and 16 of 18 All-Ivy players. However, senior linebacker Folarin Orimolade remains and was named the preseason Ivy League Defensive Player of the Year to go along with his placement on numerous watch lists. The Dartmouth defense was stout last season allowing just 10.1 points per game and totaling 18 interceptions, four more than second-ranked Penn. The media expects Dartmouth to place behind both Harvard and Penn at third.



# HARVARD

**Coach (years):** Tim Murphy (21)  
**2015 Record (Ivy finish):** 9-1, 6-1  
 (tied for 1st)  
**Player to watch:** Sophomore wide  
 receiver Justice Shelton-Mosley  
**Ivy Media Poll predicted finish:** 1st

The Crimson narrowly edged the Quakers for the top rank in the preseason poll. Gone are quarterback Scott Hosch, running back Paul Stanton Jr., and five other first team All-Ivy selections. However, Harvard returns plenty of starters, including all-purpose player and Ivy League Rookie of the Year Justice Shelton-Mosley, who gave Penn fits in last year's matchup with an 81-yard kick return and passing touchdown. The Crimson defense sees senior defensive back Sean Ahern return for another season after a first team All-Ivy campaign, but all other defensive All-Ivy players have moved on.



**Coach (years):** Bob Surace (7)  
**2015 Record (Ivy finish):** 5-5, 2-5  
 (6th)  
**Player to watch:** Junior quarter-  
 back John Lovett  
**Ivy Media Poll predicted finish:** 5th

# PRINCETON

After finishing sixth among the Ivies last year, the media pegs the Tigers for a fifth-place standing this season. Princeton is planning to use both senior Chad Kanoff and first-team all-Ivy selection John Lovett at quarterback, with the latter also planning to contribute in the rushing and receiving games. Lovett accounted for 13 touchdowns, with nine on the ground as well as three passing and one receiving. The Tigers defense was middle-of-the-pack last year and sees five of its top seven tacklers from 2015 return, including senior linebacker Dorian Williams, who finished second in the Ancient Eight in tackles last season.

# PENN BY POSITION

Returning starters leave little doubt across much of the Quakers' depth chart to start year

**GREG ROBINOV**

*Sports Reporter*

The FBS season may be underway, but for the Ivy League, we have yet to kick off. With the Quakers' first test coming Sept. 17 against Lehigh, precious time remains for players to prove themselves in training down at Franklin Field to earn themselves a favored spot on coach Ray Priore's roster.

While certain roles may have been locked up for a while by Red and Blue veterans, position battles wage on for those guys looking to find some decent minutes for the title defense of this 2016 season.

## Quarterback

No questions here. After being named first team All-Ivy last year, Alek Torgersen will be under center for his farewell season at Penn. His progression has really accelerated as of late, boasting 69.1 percent pass completion last year, good enough for best in the Ivies and fourth across the nation. In addition to excelling in the pocket, Torgersen scrambled for 320 yards and six touchdowns, one against Dartmouth resulting in an early exit. Should anything happen to Torgersen, junior Will Fischer-Colbrrie should be at the ready, but he has yet to see any varsity action, so there are no second thoughts about a position battle here.

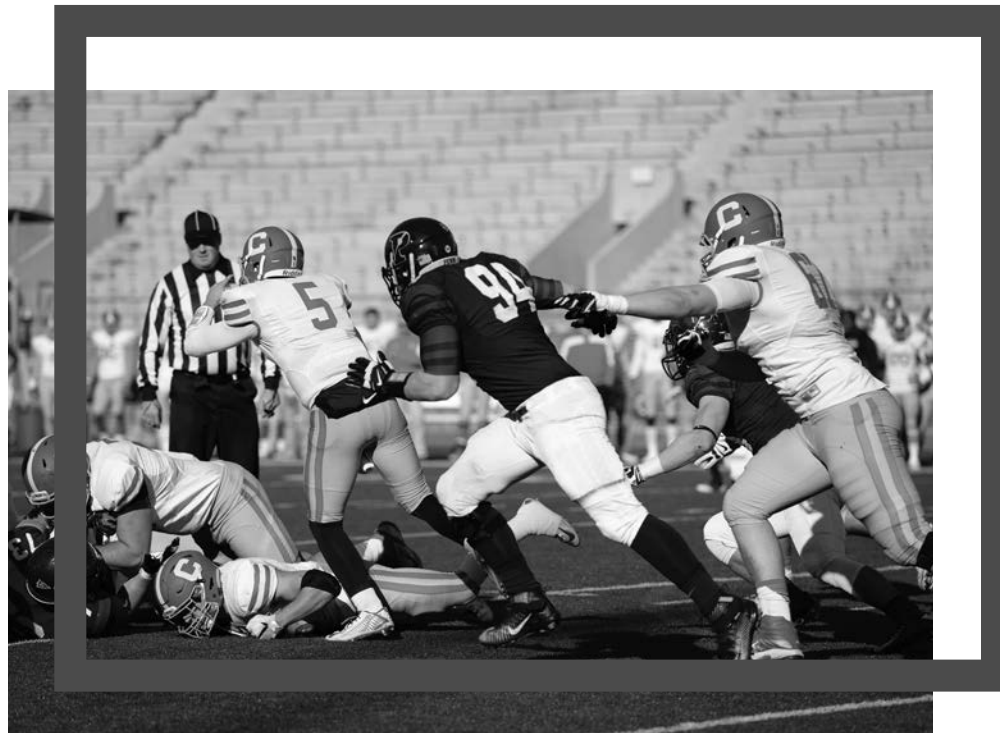
## Running Back

Things are a bit murky on this one, but there are solid options to choose from. Junior Tre Solomon and senior Brian Schoenauer both posted excellent production last year,

rushing for 453 and 652 yards respectively. While both got in all 10 games, Schoenauer claimed the second most yards per game in the Ivies while Solomon was fifth in that category. Both saw plenty of action, so perhaps the differentiating factor is that Solomon can double as a short range target, hauling in 12 catches for 82 yards and two scores. Look out for Schoenauer to claim the number one spot in his final season while Solomon will look to return to his pinnacle a full year removed from his season-ending ACL tear in 2014.

## Wide Receiver/Tight End

After a phenomenal year, junior Justin Watson is sure to still be the team's top target. The unanimous first team All-Ivy receiver put up numbers worthy of leading the Ivy League in receptions (74), receiving yards (1,082), and receiving touchdowns (nine), so he'll be looking to somehow improve on that. Also, Cam Countryman is back as a fifth-year senior and should build on his 25 receptions for 239 yards from 2015, perhaps looking to boost those numbers by getting time as kick returner. As far as tight end, this one could be up for grabs. After graduating Ryan O'Malley and Ryan Kelly, it's time for a fresh face to step up, perhaps the likes of juniors Jonathan Lilley and Nick Rittenhouse or sophomore Logan Sharp. Lilley walked on to the team after playing sprint football in 2014 and 2015, so look out for a surprise here.



ALEX FISHER | DP FILE PHOTO

Junior lineman **Taylor Hendrickson** will anchor a defensive line for the Quakers that will experience some turnover after the graduation of nose guard Dan Connaughton this past spring.

## Offensive Line

The veterans here should show off their experience. 280-pound senior Nick Demes, who played in all 10 games last year and earned himself All-Ivy honorable mention, will help lead the line again. Stepping up at right guard should be senior Nick Whitton, who contributed to Torgersen's line in eight games last year. Perhaps the six-foot-five fellow senior William Bishop can increase his workload from five games this time around. The squad certainly put in a shift last year contributing to the Ivy League's second-best rushing attack (169.2 yds/gm) while only allowing 12 sacks.

## Defensive Line

Things are mostly settled down here. Senior Corey Power will continue to make an impact, as he did with 16 tackles in 10 games in 2015

along with three pass break-ups. Another playmaker will be Taylor Hendrickson, who racked up four sacks and 20 tackles during his eight games this past season. With defensive leader Dan Connaughton graduating, there may be room for guys like junior Lukas Sontich or sophomore Cooper Gardner to make more of an impact this time around.

## Linebacker

Some old and new faces will be backing up the D-line this season. Senior and 2015 honorable mention All-Ivy player Donald Panciello will aim to improve upon truly impressive season recording 61 tackles along with a fumble recovery, a blocked kick and a touchdown. Another key will be the success of Colton Moskal, who finished nine games with 44 tackles, including 11 against Lehigh in his first season last year after

transferring from Syracuse. Look for outside linebacker Nico Ament to get more action after a bright freshman campaign with nine tackles in five games.

## Defensive Back

We'll see a bit of mixing-and-matching in the secondary for Penn this time around, as the Quakers return three starters in Mason Williams, Yron Walker and Sam Philippi. Expect the 6-foot-3 junior Ephraim Lee to improve upon his 11 tackles in eight games, including one tackle for a loss. In his final year, maybe Alex Moore will prove himself worthy of more time than the six games he was given last year where he totaled five tackles. Lastly, the sophomore Justin Morrison will look to break into the starting squad after a debut of five games with eight tackles and a forced fumble.



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# YOUNG GUNS

Sophomore DBs enter year with experience

**COLE JACOBSON**

Associate Sports Editor

Trusting a true freshman to start in the secondary at any level of college football is bold. Sending two out there at the same time is simply reckless.

In 2015, head coach Ray Priore and defensive coordinator Bob Benson had the guts to start three true freshmen in Penn football's defensive backfield — and their brashness brought home the school's 17th Ivy League championship.

And as the Red and Blue begin their quest to repeat as conference champs, sophomore defensive backs Mason Williams, Sam Philippi and Jyron Walker are set to pick up where they left off and prove one thing to the college football world: the former freshmen phenoms aren't kids anymore.

"This year, moving forward and having returners play, it's going to be our second year with this defensive style

and coach Benson, so we're really going to get after the quarterbacks and offensive coordinators of opposing teams," Philippi said. "I think we'll even be a better defense than last year."

It wasn't too hard to diagnose weaknesses when Penn football limped to a 2-8 finish in Al Bagnoli's final season in 2014, but none was more glaring than the inability to stop the pass. Opposing teams shredded the Quakers to the tune of 272.8 passing yards per game, 8.1 yards per attempt, a 25-to-6 TD-INT ratio and a ridiculous overall passing efficiency of 152.1 — the 14th highest in the entire FCS.

So when that secondary saw two starters graduate, including leading tackler and two-time All-Ivy safety Evan Jackson, it was only natural for Penn to fear a repeat of the previous season's results.

Enter the Class of 2019.

Being a true freshman isn't easy at any college football program, but Ivy League regulations made the task for Penn's trio even harder.

Unlike Power 5 conferences which practice all summer long — that is, if the incoming

freshman recruits don't opt to graduate high school a semester early to get an even further headstart in spring ball — Ivy programs are only allowed 29 practices before the regular season.

And even with the time constraints, California natives Williams and Philippi earned starting roles right off the bat, initially being joined by returning senior starters Kevin Ijoma at cornerback and Ian Dobbins at safety.

"The best people play; at the end of the day, you earn everything that is given to you in terms of playing time," said Benson, who also serves as the defensive backs' position coach. "They get here as freshmen, and it's not like other places where they spend the whole summer there, so they came in here — they had to do NSO — and tried to adjust to college and everything that comes with it, tried to learn new terminology and a new defense, new personalities, new

coaches, so it's just a very difficult situation."

Like the rest of the 2015 Quakers, the secondary had its share of early struggles — none more notable than Dartmouth's Dalyn Williams' record-setting 23-for-25 performance while accounting for six touchdowns in the Big Green's 41-20 shellacking of Penn in early October.

But Ijoma went down with an injury the following week when Penn hosted eventual FCS playoff qualifier Fordham, forcing Penn's coaches to give Walker his own trial by fire in the second half. And although the Red and Blue's epic comeback effort fell short in a 48-45 loss, Walker made four tackles as the team allowed only one second half touchdown after conceding five in the first half.

The small sample size was good enough for Benson; when Penn took the field a week later at Columbia, it suddenly found itself with three true freshmen starting in the secondary, and



ILANA WURMAN | DP FILE PHOTO

Penn's trio of sophomore DBs — **Mason Williams (left), Jyron Walker (middle) and Sam Philippi (right)** — enter 2016 with a full year under their belts and hunger for another Ivy ring.



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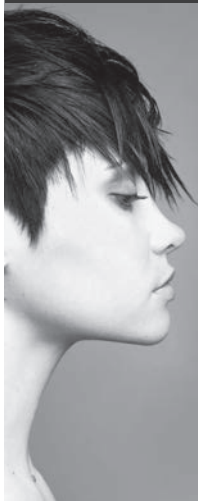
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A surprising title run in 2015 has left Penn football players wanting more — and most of the squad that finished first a year ago is back to defend the Ancient Eight crown.

all three would stay there the rest of the way.

“I definitely came in trying my hardest to play as soon as possible; I’m a competitor and I just wanted to get on the field,” Williams said. “I was able to pick up on the schemes pretty well and I liked the fact that I got to play as soon as possible. I wasn’t coming in thinking that I was going to start every game; I just wanted to try my hardest and work as best as I

could to maybe get on the field, but it happened a lot sooner than I thought it would.”

When all was said and done, Philippi finished with 46 tackles and a team-leading four interceptions — only two fewer than Penn’s entire team recorded in 2014 — Williams had 43 tackles and Walker secured 20 stops.

With all three freshmen starting from mid-October onwards, the Red and Blue

embarked on a historic six-game win streak to stun the nation and secure a share of the conference title.

“It was obvious that they were young, going to make some mistakes, but they definitely were the best solution for Penn to win football games,” Benson said. “They are students of the game, they care deeply, and they are extremely talented young men, so it was pretty obvious that those three

guys needed to be on the field.”

Certainly, the three rookies on the gridiron all found their own ways to contribute to Penn’s unprecedented turnaround, but a fellow newcomer on the sidelines was arguably more important than any of them. Following a phenomenal 2014 debut season as Albany’s defensive coordinator — when the Great Danes finished first in the nation in turnover margin and went 7-5 after being 90th in turnover margin with a 1-11 record in 2013 — Benson took his talents to Philadelphia to re-unite with Priore and made an immediate impact for the second consecutive year.

To say Penn’s secondary was perfect last year would be a stretch — its 135.99 defensive passing efficiency was the Ivy League’s second worst, and Penn gave up the most passing yards in the conference. But Benson’s blitz-happy, 3-4 scheme helped Penn leave its turnover troubles behind, as the Quakers secured 14 interceptions to vault to eighth in the nation in turnover margin after being a paltry 106th the year before.

“The moment we got on campus, Coach Benson preached turnovers; he wanted a turnover ratio, and we had quotas every practice,” Williams said. “He really pushes a very good pressure defense and he’s after the ball, so I think that we kind of feed off

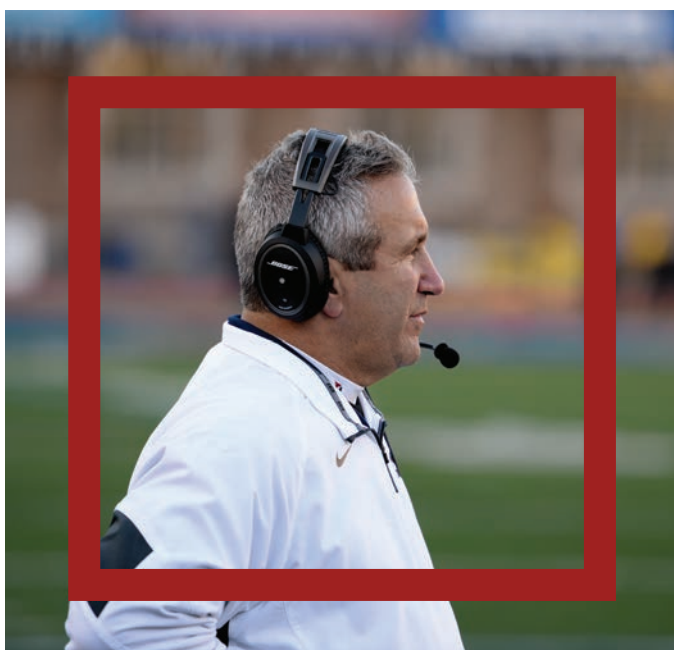
his leadership and his style of play-calling, and it definitely transitions onto the field and causes turnovers.”

Still, as impressive as the Quakers’ epic vault from sixth to first a season ago was, players and coaches understand that 2015 is in the past now. With the three returners all having completed their first offseason with the program, there’s room for even further improvement after an already stellar opening year.

“I think mentally it definitely helps us out [to have a full offseason] because we know the defense even better this year,” said Philippi, who was named to the 2016 pre-season first team All-Ivy defense by both Football Gameplan and College Sports Madness, making him the only underclassman to gain the nod from either publication.

And as for what might happen even further down the road — they all have three more seasons of eligibility, remember — Ivy League quarterbacks best be on watch for years to come.

“We had three freshmen starting last year and we also have two or three other sophomores going to get a lot of playing time, so this year and the next two years coming, we definitely have a lot of potential,” Walker said. “We’re all definitely looking forward to what we can do — the sky is the limit.”



ALEX FISHER | DP FILE PHOTO

In his second year at the helm, coach Ray Priore will need to rely a lot less on freshman talent than he had to in the secondary in 2015.

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