

# The Boys of Fall, Winter and Spring

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**A**MONG the many things we didn't know when we arrived on campus in the late summer of 1961, with our panoply of high school football, basketball, hockey, tennis, track, and lacrosse captains, was that we were in for the ride of our lives, a ride that many who were not classmates would, as the old saw goes, have given their eye teeth for. When Charlie Gibson was asked not long ago by an incoming freshman if he would share his favorite memory of his undergraduate years, he paused, smiled, and then shook his head no. For those of us from the pre-coeducation era the answer was, so to speak, transparent. But it would be understandable if someone had suggested that it involved Cos throwing the football into the Yale Bowl end zone not once but twice, or Ken Shank scoring the last 8 points of the 109-69 victory over Providence that sent us to the National Championship, as it was then called. Those points almost doubled the career point total of our beloved "Secret Weapon." Or it might have been when the team returned with a third-place finish which included Bill Bradley's record-setting 58 points in his last collegiate game and Bill apologized to all of us for not beating Michigan, to be answered by a wise (ass) classmate shouting "Yeah, apologize 58 times!"

Not all the memories are smiles, just as life is not one long Houseparties weekend, or a Spring Break trip to Puerto Rico with Will McClave and Mike (Chabot) Smith. We lost by one to Michigan in the Holiday Festival over Christmas break, the first sign of how good we would become (yes, it was Bill, the one and only, but always “us” as well, and always will be). The Dartmouth disaster in the snow after the game had been postponed because of JFK’s assassination, with the Ivy crown on the line, was the epitome of heart-break. The other, other Mike Smith broke his leg and had the chutzpah (not a term ordinarily associated with The Hill School) to mount a picture of his being carried off the field over his desk in his dorm room, which may have served as inspiration for off-field achievements of some magnitude. Up in Ithaca no one, not even Houdini, could catch Gary Wood, who went on to a decent career with the Giants displaying the same elusiveness. (Add to your Princeton trivia collection these facts—Tarkenton’s son was a wide-out who played not a lot, Franco Harris’s son never went out for football, and we got the smartest son of John Thompson, while Georgetown got the other two, until John III succumbed to his father’s magnetism and now coaches at his brothers’ alma mater—note that the old man played for Providence! Bill Walton ditto, except for the coaching.)

All this was not built on air. A pub in midtown Manhattan features banners from Chapel Hill reflecting five national championships in basketball. I’ve asked the owner several times if I could bring him a Princeton banner noting 22 national football championships, but he always gets distracted by a customer shouting for another Guinness. We should also not forget the NCAA fencing championship won our sophomore year by a team including the late John O’Sullivan ’65 and the Olympic gold John Allis won in cycling. My son, who went to Yale to annoy me, and whom I took to several of Bill Tierney’s national championship lacrosse wins, once asked if Princeton ever won a national championship in any sport anyone knew about. I did remark that the more enlightened of our citizenry regard squash, track and field, lacrosse and crew, of either sex, and yes field hockey, as much purer sports than the ones where the trophies so often have to be returned, Heisman and team, when the fraud and malfeasance (cheating, in the world of two syllable words) are brought to light, as they sometimes are. Now I can also observe that Yale seems only to win in sailing, which speaks for itself (OK, ice hockey once, but they beat Quinnipiac in the finals).

As a life-long underperformer on the field, in the gym, and certainly on the rink (I did once strap on a pair of ice skates and leaned immobile on my stick for three long periods to earn Terrace Club a point in the interclub standings since our sixth skater was trying to finish his thesis experiment involving the bonding of metal to something it can’t bond to), my hat is off and my hands are clapping as loud and hard as they can for all the efforts of our classmates who put in so much time and such extraordinary effort to earn those memories, for “us” and themselves, and those letters, and wear them with justified and pardonable pride, even if they had more success with the girls than I ever did.

Finally, because of a personal commitment to keep to 1,000 words (you may be able to get a 4.4 GPA these days, but no winning percentage is better than 1.000), two memories stand out in particular. Coming to New York City after law school, sharing season tickets to the Knicks then seemed automatic. Under the category of Winning is the Best Revenge, those teams won two championships and played some of the most beautiful team basketball anyone has ever seen, but only when Cazzie Russell, formerly of Michigan, was injured and permanently replaced in the starting lineup by William Warren Bradley, Princeton ’65, Olympic captain and gold medal winner, and a member of the NCAA and NBA Halls of Fame, whose statue now graces the entrance to Jadwin. The other, simpler but equally powerful, is of a flagstone in the middle of the walk into Holder Court towards Commons, on which was painted, in early December 1964, in bright orange, the simple outline of a crown fit for Richard the Lion-Hearted and bearing the legend “King Cos—9 and 0!”