IT'S THE 135th playing of The Game, Fenway Park, midway through the third quarter. Yale has scored 10 unanswered points to take the lead for the first time, 24-21. Nevertheless, the Harvard sideline exudes confidence. “There was no ‘woe-is-me,’” Crimson coach Tim Murphy later recalled. “The offense couldn’t wait to get out there.”

The spearhead of that attack is senior quarterback Tom Stewart. Six weeks before, Stewart was not on the radar to be in this spot; a career backup, he had assumed the starting job in midseason. Now he is the man of the moment. Starting at the Harvard 25, he needs only seven plays, the final one a 15-yard touchdown hookup with junior receiver Jack Cook, to recapture the lead.

At the final whistle Harvard had pulled away to win 45-27, and Tom Stewart had completed his inspirational if improbable rise from benchwarmer to team MVP and All-Ivy Honor-able Mention. The victory was Harvard’s third straight to end the season and gave the Crimson a 6-4 overall record and a 4-3 mark in the Ivy League, good for a third-place finish (see “Final Standings,” below). The triumph also broke a two-game losing streak for Harvard in The Game and gave Murphy, who now has completed 25 seasons on the Crimson sideline, an 18-7 record against Yale.

Though 2018’s record was only one game better than the disappointing 5-5 mark of 2017, it felt a lot better than that. Part of the reason was the strong finish, a contrast to the fades of the previous two seasons, when the Crimson lost its final two games. But the superior vibe was earned all season long. Even in defeat, Harvard played a crowd-pleasing, resilient brand of ball.

Accordingly, Murphy was very proud of this group. “There was considerable adversity and to our team’s credit, our kids never batted an eye,” he says. “And somehow we got not just physically stronger but mentally stronger as the year went on. It seemed like we gained momentum in every game.”

The happy conclusion had seemed unlikely a few weeks earlier. In the fourth game, at Cornell on October 6, the Crimson had been KO’d by a one-two combination: a 28-24 defeat in which Harvard not only coughed up a 10-point, fourth-quarter lead, but also lost its most dynamic offensive player, senior receiver/returner Justice Shelton-Mosley, who was hurt when he was tackled by two Big Red defenders while bringing back a punt. The injury to his left leg was so severe that it concluded his scintillating Harvard career.

A two-time All-American, Shelton-Mosley departed with his name festooning Harvard’s record book. He has the longest punt return for a touchdown (91 yards, against Georgetown in 2017) and the two best single-season averages for punt returns: 19.0 yards in 2015 and 18.8 in 2017. As a pass-catcher, Shelton-Mosley is third all-time in receptions with 148. “His absence wasn’t just about losing one of the best skill athletes in the league,” says Murphy. “It was also about losing a kid who was a great motivator on our team through his work ethic and his ability and his dependability. It took us

Cook’s tour: Harvard wideout Jack Cook leaves Yale’s Deonte Henson in the dust on a third-quarter, 15-yard touchdown. The score gave the Crimson a 28-24 lead, which it would not surrender.
One hand, two points: Tight end Adam West fended off Holy Cross’s Cullen Honohan with his right hand and caught the ball with his left for a conversion catch that made the list of Top 10 plays on ESPN’s SportsCenter.

Losing Shelton-Mosley was only one of Murphy’s problems. His was enduring a two-game losing streak; the meat of the league schedule loomed; and he had a team that was struggling to score in the red zone. Harvard’s attack was not without weapons, including a battle-tested offensive line, a speedy sophomore running corps that included breakout star Aaron Shampklin, and a cadre of resourceful receivers. The question mark—a big one—was Stewart, who had supplanted sophomore Jake Smith during the Cornell game.

In his first start, against Patriot League foe Holy Cross, Stewart began supplying some answers. Under Friday-night lights at Harvard Stadium, the Crimson suffered another fourth-quarter collapse that turned a 30-14 lead into a 31-30 deficit. The implosion threatened to obliterare a solid outing for Stewart (20-of-36 passing for 272 yards and two touchdowns with no interceptions) and a 57-yard touchdown run by Shampklin.

The next two weeks brought Princeton and Dartmouth, both nationally ranked. In rollicking games, Harvard went toe-to-toe with these heavyweights before succumbing. The contests played out similarly: the Crimson dug itself into an early hole but then hung around. The Tigers entered Harvard Stadium on a rampage, scoring 52.0 points a game and surrendering an average of 8.6. The Crimson gave them all they could handle. The Harvard defense, led by sophomore linebacker Jordan Hill and senior tackles Stone Hart and Richie Ryan, did a marvelous job of holding down Princeton quarterback John Lovett, limiting him to 45 yards on the ground and 207 passing. Hill, particularly, was everywhere, with a game-high 11 tackles. "He’s so efficient, so consistent and so tough that even as a sophomore you tend to take him for granted," says Murphy.

In the fourth quarter, with Princeton leading 22-7, Stewart took the Crimson on a 10-play, 75-yard drive that ended with a 29-yard toss to senior wideout Henry Taylor. McIntyre kicked the point after. Princeton 29, Harvard 14. There was hope. All depended on the successful execution of an onside kick. Freshman Jonah Lipel banged it to the left. Princeton covered it at midfield. Two plays later, from the 49, Tiger back Charlie Volker turned right end and dashed upfield—all the way to the end zone. Princeton 29, Harvard 14. In never-say-die fashion, Stewart got the ball back and this time needed only six plays to get the ball in the end zone. The scoring play was a 32-yard pass to Adams. McIntyre again kicked the point. Princeton 29, Harvard 21. Amazingly, the Crimson was still in it. But what followed was another onside kick by Lipel and another Princeton recovery to ice the game.

The next week, at Dartmouth, the Crimson committed four first-half turnovers and left the field at the break behind 21-0. Like most successful coaches, though, Murphy teaches his teams resolve, and that is what Harvard displayed at the beginning of the second half. A long drive paid off in a seven-yard touchdown run up the middle by Shampklin; the score had been set up by two Stewart completions to Adams. After a Big Green field goal early in the fourth quarter, Stewart brought the Crimson closer with a 29-yard toss to senior wideout Henry Taylor, particularly, was everywhere, with a game-high 11 tackles. "He’s so efficient, so consistent and so tough that even as a sophomore you tend to take him for granted," says Murphy.

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Dropping back, he launched a Scud missile some 65 yards in the air that hit the streaking Cook in stride. In a twinkling Cook was over the goal line for a 92-yard touchdown—the longest TD pass in Crimson history. Two more touchdown passes, a 75-yarder to Adams and a 74-yarder to Shampklin, followed in the first 12 minutes alone. Stewart finished with five touchdown passes, tying the Harvard single-game record.

The following Saturday at Philadelphia's blustery Franklin Field, the Crimson offensive and defensive lines—the latter pulling off a stirring goal-line stand—dominated unexpectedly bumbling Penn in a 29-7 bludgeoning. When Stewart was knocked out of the game by a Penn tackler during the second quarter, Smith came in and played solidly, going 7-for-11 passing and tossing for 116 yards behind holes created by their interior linemen: senior left tackle Tim O'Brien, sophomore left guard Eric Wilson, senior right guard Larry Dunlap. Harvard's runners plowed for 215 yards rushing on 32 attempts. The Quakers or linemen: senior left tackle Tim O'Brien, sophomore left guard Eric Wilson, senior right guard Larry Dunlap. Harvard's runners plowed for 215 yards rushing on 32 attempts. The Quakers also committed four turnovers (two fumbles lost, two interceptions).

Finally, The Game. This year's venue was Fenway (though it was nominally a Harvard home game), before a sellout crowd of 34,675 and an ESPN2 audience. This was the first year since 1894 that the Game was not played at either a Harvard or Yale facility. Never a great place to watch football, Fenway received lukewarm reviews from the faithful. (Some female spectators did appreciate having better restrooms than those at Harvard Stadium.) The contest turned out to be one of the hottest and most contentious of the season. The Crimson offense came out in the Wildcat formation, with the snap going not to a quarterback but to sophomore running back B.J. Watson. Watson handed the ball to Adams, who was steaming from left to right. The play was, essentially, an old-fashioned end-around. Adams sped to the right flank, turned upfield, and outran everyone to the end zone. Harvard 14, Yale 7.


But shortly thereafter the Elis tied it again on a 16-yard pass from quarterback Griffin O'Connor to wideout JP Shoofy.

Right before halftime, Stewart took the Crimson 77 yards in 45 seconds. The final 19 came when Stewart flipped a little pitch to Taylor, who was running a short pattern from right to left. Taylor caught the ball at about the 12 and then got up enough steam to drag would-be Yale tackler Noah Pope to the end-zone pylon. Harvard 21, Yale 14.

Early in the third quarter came the first controversial call of the day. O'Connor briskly directed the Elis from their 25 to the Crimson eight. There, on third-and-goal, he threw a pass in the right flat to running back Zane Dudek. Harvard defensive back Wesley Oggsbury got to Dudek at the same time as the ball did. His smash hit, which looked to be at Dudek's shoulder level, caused an incompletion. But hold the phone! An official threw a flag and charged Oggsbury with targeting—taking deliberate aim at the receiver to inflict injury. Instead of being faced with fourth-and-goal from the eight, Yale was awarded a first down at the four-yard line; Oggsbury was ejected.

After the game, Murphy was having none of it. “It’s hard to be diplomatic here,” said the coach, who is usually diplomatic (in public, at least). “I watched it several times on replay. I just can’t believe that was anything other than a form [i.e., legal] tackle. Honest to goodness, it was such a bang-bang play.” (Clearly Oggsbury’s teammates held him harmless; see Tidbits, below.)

The effect of the penalty was two-fold. The immediate upshot was to give Yale a pathway to a touchdown instead of having to settle for a field goal; O’Connor would wedge the final yard for six points, and Alex Galland added the point after touchdown.
Harvard 21, Yale 21. The longer-term impact was to deprive the Crimson of its best secondary ball hawk (six interceptions, tied for second-most in the Ivy League in 2018) and most aggressive coverage man.

On its next possession Harvard went three-and-out. Taking over at its 27, Yale drove all the way to the Crimson six, courtesy of a 48-yard pass from O’Connor to Shohfi. (It’s possible that Ogsbury would have been the cover man had he remained in the game.) But here the defense showed its mettle. On first down, senior defensive tackle Scott Garrison broke through to sack O’Connor for an eight-yard loss. (Upon reflection, maybe the game’s biggest play.) Two incompletions followed. On fourth down, Galland’s 32-yard field-goal try sneaked inside the left upright. Yale 24, Harvard 21.

Now Harvard had to dig deep. Right back came Stewart on a 75-yard touchdown drive, completing four passes and even running for 12 yards. On the final toss, he found Cook with a short flip and Cook legged it the remainder of the 15 yards to the goal line. Harvard 28, Yale 21.

Again the Elis retaliated, holding the ball for more than five minutes while driving 67 yards to the Crimson eight. The fourth quarter had just begun and Yale was faced with fourth-and-two. Decision time: go for it and keep the possibility of a touchdown alive, or take the three points with the hope that you’ll score again? Yale coach Tony Reno called a time-out, then opted for the latter. Galland booted a 25-yard field goal that narrowed the score to a very narrow Harvard 28, Yale 27.

The rest of the fourth quarter was Crimson-colored, with the veteran offensive and defensive lines asserting their power. “They were the strength of our team,” says Murphy. “At the very first team meeting of 2018, I said, ‘It’s a line-of-scrimmage game. We’ve got to become a bigger, stronger, tougher, more physical football team.’ You could absolutely see that in 2018, and the epitome was the last three games, where we just dominated the last quarter against every team we played.”

The Stewart-led attack proved unstoppable. Harvard covered 75 yards in three plays: a 32-yard pass to Cook, a 16-yard run by Adams, and finally a 27-yard touchdown dash by sophomore back Devin Darrington. As he reached the three-yard-line, though, Darrington wagged his index finger at a Yale defender and was flagged for taunting. The touchdown was erased and the ball brought back 15 yards to the 18. After the game, Murphy did not defend Darrington the way he had Ogsbury. “The bottom line is, he was wrong,” said the coach. “He got overwhelmed by the moment.” The incident soon went viral. The Crimson eventually had to settle for a 36-yard McIntyre field goal. Instead of Harvard 35, Yale 27, it was Harvard 31, Yale 27.

Now the Elis looked worn down. Again they went three and out. A punt gave the Crimson excellent field position and Harvard began driving for the coup de grâce. On first and 10 from the Yale 17, Stewart took the snap and ran to his right. Seeing Eli tacklers, he went into the slide that quarterbacks are permitted as a protective measure. His right leg appeared to get stuck under him and, the play over, he lay on the ground in agony. The stretchers were summoned and Stewart was carried out like a gladiator on his shield. Taken to a hospital, he was released that evening and was expected to make a full recovery.

Thus concluded one of the more as-

Down goes Eli: After beating Yale blocker Sterling Strother, Harvard defensive lineman Scott Garrison tackles quarterback Griffin O’Connor. The third-quarter sack forced the Elis to settle for a field goal.

Green (and Crimson and Blue) Day: No stranger to football or big events, Fenway Park was decked out in its finest for its first Harvard-Yale game.

### FINAL STANDINGS

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tonishly meteoric careers in Crimson annals. “Tom and I had a lot of conversations along the way over four years,” says Murphy. “He grew so much as a person here. Like a lot of young quarterbacks, he really wasn’t ready. He could always throw the football, but he didn’t understand the mental part of the game—the emotional part and the leadership part. Between his sophomore year and his senior year he improved as much as any quarterback I’ve been around.”

In came Smith. On his first snap, he merely handed to Darrington, who gamboled through a large hole into the end zone. (No finger-wagging this time, though Darrington did take a long look into the Yale section along the third-base line.) McIntyre kicked the final point of the 2018 season. Harvard 45, Yale 27. The 45 points tied the Harvard high for The Game. The 72 combined points were the most ever in a Harvard-Yale game. Harvard’s 578 total yards were a record against Yale—zooming past the 518 amassed in 2012.

As he looks to 2019, Murphy has some big holes to fill, most notably on the offensive and defensive lines. But the skill positions are deep and talented. The running-back troika of Shampklin (who led the Ivy League in rushing with a 105.3-yard average), Darrington, and Watson all will get “tons of reps,” Murphy promises. McIntyre and punter Jon Sot, who as a freshman topped the Ivy League with a 41.1-yard average, will continue to handle the kicking. Jake Smith will have a shot at regaining his starting job at quarterback but he will be pushed by several promising candidates. Maybe one of them will emerge, just the way Tom Stewart did.

**TIDBITS:** With Harvard’s victory, the series now stands at Yale 67 wins, Harvard 60 wins, and eight ties....Five Harvard players were named to the All-Ivy first team: senior offensive lineman Larry Allen Jr., senior defensive lineman Stone Hart, sophomore running back Darrington, and Watson all will get “tons of reps,” Murphy promises. McIntyre and punter Jon Sot, who as a freshman topped the Ivy League with a 41.1-yard average, will continue to handle the kicking. Jake Smith will have a shot at regaining his starting job at quarterback but he will be pushed by several promising candidates. Maybe one of them will emerge, just the way Tom Stewart did.

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