

**The “Big Three” and the  
Harvard-Princeton Football Break, 1926-1934  
by: Marcia G. Synnott  
University of South Carolina  
Columbia, S. C.**

Over the years, the term “Big Three” has achieved a special connotation. Originating in the mid-1880’s as a newspaper headline writer’s sobriquet for the country’s three best football teams (their players monopolized the first All-American team, selected by Coach Walter Camp of Yale in 1889), it was reduced to a journalistic expedient after more powerful teams arose at Georgia Tech, Notre Dame, the University of Pennsylvania, and West Point. But the term gained new currency when Harvard, Yale, and Princeton formalized athletic agreements among themselves, beginning in 1906. Moreover, these three universities also became national leaders in establishing standards for educational instruction and scholarly attainment. The “best” colleges had to lead in all fields, academic and cultural as well as athletic. But during its days of greatest popularity at the “Big Three,” until the early 1940’s, football competed successfully with education for the attention of many undergraduates and was the strongest tie binding alumni to their alma mater. Although pride in hard-won victories still warms the hearts of spectators and teams, the fanatical enthusiasm of fans and excessively rough games are largely memories of the past. Football at the top private, eastern colleges and universities came of age with the formalization of athletic relations and the regulation of contests under the post-World War II “Ivy League” agreements.<sup>1</sup>

Since the “Big Three” athletic agreements of 1916 and 1923 foreshadowed the later “Ivy Group Agreements,” the severance of all athletic relations between Harvard and Princeton for five years and of football for eight years may well have delayed the formation of an Ivy League until the early 1950’s. This athletic break followed a rough football game in November, 1926, in which the Harvard Crimson lost to the Princeton Tigers for the third consecutive season. But the game itself was only the culmination of several years of deteriorating relations between

<sup>1</sup>Lawrence Perry, “For the Games Sake,” (*New York Sun*) undated clipping (November, 1926), in box marked “Athletics, Football Break with Harvard, 1926-1934,” I, Princeton University Archives (hereafter abbreviated PUA).

the two universities. Not only had their annual contest become a clash rather than a game, but the athletics officials at Harvard and Princeton were beginning to differ over the interpretation of the “Big Three” agreements.

Of all Harvard, Yale, and Princeton football contests the most important were the last two or three games each season when the “Big Three” played each other. After 1900, however, Harvard and Yale signed a “Dual Agreement” and began regularly to schedule their game last, thus excluding the Tigers from a final “Big Two” contest. Princeton, considering itself co-equal with Yale, resented third place, but was somewhat mollified by its inclusion in the Harvard-Yale-Princeton athletic agreements.<sup>2</sup>

The casualties resulting from brutal mass-power plays and tackling at the knees led to a conference on football, called by President Theodore Roosevelt in October, 1905, and to the first “Big Three” agreement in March, 1906, which prohibited the inclusion of freshmen on varsity teams and limited player eligibility to three years. Then, in December, 1909, President Woodrow Wilson of Princeton, who had once coached football, proposed that the presidents of Princeton, Harvard, and Yale or their representatives confer on ways to eliminate injuries through rule changes. Wilson shared the opinion of *Harper's Weekly* that the three presidents “could, if they were to agree upon a principle of action and insist upon it, very largely and perhaps completely control the methods of the game of football,” so great was their influence. But not until June, 1916, did the three universities formally agree to regulate the conditions of playing football among themselves. Under the “Triple Agreement” they observed the same eligibility policy through a standing committee of the three athletics chairmen.<sup>3</sup>

Other reforms followed the revival of intercollegiate competition after World War I. The “Triple Agreement” was revised by a commission of alumni and professors in March, 1922, and supplemented by a “Three Presidents’ Agreement,” which

<sup>2</sup>Gregory H. Movius, ed., *The Second H Book of Harvard Athletes 1923-1963* (Cambridge, Mass Published by the Harvard Varsity Club, 1964) 9-18. See also in the above, Will Cloney, “Football,” 51-61.

<sup>3</sup>*Ibid.*, 12-18; Tim Cohane, *The Yale Football Story* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1951), 155-156; Frederick Rudolph, *The American College and University A History* (New York, Vintage Books, 1962), 375-377 Woodrow Wilson to A. Lawrence Lowell, December 6th, 9th, 23rd, 1909 and January 1st, 1910, and Percy D. Haughton to Woodrow Wilson, June 22nd, 1910, enclosing report of the same date, signed by Percy D. Haughton and Howard H. Henry, Woodrow Wilson Papers, folder football, PUA, L. B. R. Biggs, Chairman, Report of the Committee on the Regulation of Athletic Sports, *Reports of the President and the Treasurer of Harvard College 1915-16* (Cambridge, Mass.: Published by the University, 1917). 79-84.

became effective on January 1, 1923. It covered financial assistance, scholarships, “proselyting in preparatory schools,” coaching staff, training period and intercollegiate games. The provision that all university scholarships, prizes, and loans should be awarded by an authorized university officer or committee would become some twenty years later, according to *The Second H Book of Harvard Athletics* “the basic foundation of the Ivy League.”<sup>4</sup>

In the spring of 1926, however, the future of “Big Three” football was seriously jeopardized when Harvard entered into a two-year agreement for 1927 and 1928 to play the Wolverines of the University of Michigan instead of the Tigers. Harvard was inaugurating a new athletic policy whereby Yale would become its only permanent football rival, while other opponents could be added, dropped, or rotated on its schedule. President Lowell’s decision to drop Princeton, although it did not fully anticipate the consequences, should be seen in the light of his strong criticism of excessive undergraduate, alumni, and public enthusiasm for football, which eclipsed the educational purposes of universities. The importance of big, annual contests monopolized too much time, especially that of managers and candidates for managerships, with the result, according to a special Harvard faculty committee report, that their scholarship “was strikingly inferior to that both of players and of students not participating in the major sports.” Moreover, Lowell doubted “the necessity of maintaining a public spectacle attended by thousands of spectators every Saturday throughout the autumn,” when one major contest — like the annual Harvard-Yale crew race at New London, Connecticut — might accomplish the desired end. Influenced by the practice of Oxford and Cambridge, whose only intercollegiate matches were with each other, he had evidently come to believe, as his *President’s Report of 1920-21* suggested, that the Harvard-Yale football contest should be “The Game.”<sup>5</sup>

The Tigers became the target of the new policy because the Harvard-Princeton series, which had begun in 1877, had been

<sup>4</sup>“The Yale-Harvard-Princeton Athletic Agreement,” *The Yale Alumni Weekly*, XXXII (September 29, 1922), 44; Henry Pennypacker, Chairman, Report of the Committee on the Regulation of Athletic Sports, *Harvard President’s Report, 1924-25*, Appendix, 303-307, 314-317; Moviuss, ed., *Second H Book of Harvard Athletics*, 18.

<sup>5</sup>Charles W. Kennedy, copy of a letter to William J. Bingham, June 21, 1926, in Papers of H. Alexander Smith, 1920-1927, Box 36, folder Princeton-Harvard Relations, Department of Rare Books and Special Collections, Princeton University Library (PUL); *Harvard President’s Report, 1920-21*, 5-29; “Clippings. Comment Upon Pres. Lowell’s Report, 1922,” especially “President Lowell’s Report,” *Herald*, January 19, 1922, Harvard University Archives (HUA) and “Report of Special Committee appointed to Collect Facts regarding the Time required of Students participating in Certain Athletic Sports, 1921,” Faculty of Arts and Sciences, Harvard University, HUA, pp. 9-10.

marred by altercations and rough games. In 1889, for example, Harvard had alleged that fifteen Tiger players had violated amateur status, charges which were subsequently dismissed by the Intercollegiate League. But Harvard withdrew from this association and declined to play Princeton until 1895, when it severed relations with Yale. Two years later, Harvard resumed playing Yale and broke with Princeton. This rupture lasted until 1911, when Princeton won the “Big Three” championship. Then Harvard went on to win four consecutive “Big Three” titles. After another two-year break during World War I, the Tigers and the Crimson played tied games in 1919 and 1920. The next year, Princeton defeated Harvard, but lost to Yale. In 1922, Princeton was the champion with an undefeated season. Smarting from two successive losses, some Harvardians accused the Tigers of rough play (in the 1921 and 1922 games, the victors were penalized 9 times each for 40 and 77 yards respectively, while the Crimson received 3 and 4 penalties for 9 and 40 yards, respectively), and wanted to drop Princeton from the schedule.<sup>6</sup>

Four years later, the University of Michigan was chosen as a suitable replacement for several reasons. Western alumni wanted a resumption of a Harvard-Michigan contest — the Crimson team had won all three of their previous games with the Wolverines. Moreover, Michigan’s president was Clarence C. Little, a former Crimson varsity track captain. Without consulting Princeton beforehand, Colonel William J. Bingham, who had been appointed Harvard’s first Director of Athletics and Physical Education in 1926, had scheduled Harvard to play Michigan in Ann Arbor at the dedication of its new stadium in November, 1927. Michigan would then journey to Cambridge the following year.<sup>7</sup>

What had been intended to be a private agreement until after the 1926 season was somehow leaked to the newspapers, and “the fat was in the fire,” commented President James R. Angell, as Yale, placed in the middle of the threatened rupture of the “Big Three,” attempted to mediate. If the contract were not canceled, Angell believed it would “fatally mutilate the

<sup>6</sup>Alan Tabor, “Harvard vs. Princeton, The Reasons John Harvard is Tiger Hunting and the Tiger’s Stalking John,” *Liberty* (January 22, 1927), 25, 27; *Princeton Alumni Weekly*, XXIII (November 15, 1922), 149, and November 22, 1922, pp. 169-170; and “Princeton-Harvard Penalties,” in “Football Break with Harvard, 1926-1934,” Box 1, PUA.

<sup>7</sup>Clippings “Harvard May Drop Princeton Eleven,” *New York Times*, August 15, 1926, and “Expected Action by Harvard indicates integrity of ‘Big Three’ Will Be Maintained,” *New York Evening Post*, September 29, 1926, in Smith Papers, Box 36, folder Harvard-Princeton Relations, PUL; and Henry Aaron Yeomans, *Abbott Lawrence Lowell 1856-1943* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1948), pp. 338-341.

present good feeling in this triple alliance” and “put back a full generation the possibility of steady advance in the improvement of intercollegiate athletic conditions in the east.” He agreed that some Crimson charges of foul play by the Tigers were also voiced by Yale players. The Tigers sometimes escaped official detection by “the more surreptitious effort to injure men by gouging eyes, twisting ankles, and the like,” during a scrimmage. These evils would hopefully be eliminated by a continuation of the “Big Three” agreements. Hence Harvard’s contract with Michigan was “a blunder of the first magnitude and as inconsiderate as it is stupid.”<sup>8</sup>

Meanwhile, H. Alexander Smith, Executive Secretary of Princeton University, met in June with John W. Hallowell, president of the Associated Harvard Clubs, to discuss their different attitudes “toward H.Y.P. relations.” Princeton wanted “a complete equality all around,” but Harvard insisted on “special relations with Yale,” thereby putting Princeton in a secondary class along with Brown, Cornell, Dartmouth, and Michigan. Behind these arguments lay Princeton’s resentment at being classed as a smaller college, which lacked “the professional graduate schools which add so much to Harvard’s prestige.” Somewhat defensively, Smith would contend that Princeton was “justified in believing” that its “lineage” was “no less honorable” than Harvard’s and its “contribution to the nation’s progress . . . no less important.” Loyal sons of Nassau could not honorably yield to “Harvard’s dictation.”<sup>9</sup>

A stronger argument against the proposed Harvard-Michigan games was provided by the “Three Presidents’ Agreement.” Section 3 of article VI forbade “post-season contests, or contests for the purpose of settling sectional or other championships, or involving long and expensive trips, or extended absence from the University . . . .” Both Princeton and Yale had previously adhered to this article, when the former agreed not to play Oglethorpe in 1923 at the opening of its new stadium in Atlanta, and the latter had resisted alumni pressure that it play the University of Chicago. Princeton also pointed out to Harvard that dropping the Tigers would jeopardize “Big Three” eligi-

<sup>8</sup>James R. Angell to President John G. Hibben, copy, September 23, 1926, Smith Papers, Box 36, folder Princeton-Harvard Relations, PUL; and Angell to Hibben, December 1, 1926, and Hibben to Angell, November 12, 1926, Record of the President, James R. Angell, Box PR-Provost, folder Princeton, Yale University Archives [YUA].

<sup>9</sup>Memorandum of Conference between J. W. Hallowell and H. Alexander Smith re Harvard-Princeton Relations, Jun. 14 and 15, 1926; Conference between H. A. S. and Harold Edward, June 15, 1926, and Smith to John W. Hallowell, November 12, 1926 (Although this letter was not sent because of Hallowell’s death, it expressed clearly the attitude of Princetonians toward their relations with Harvard), Smith Papers, Box 36, folder Princeton-Harvard Relations, PUL.

bility policy which depended upon continuous, annual football competition.<sup>10</sup>

In a letter to President John Grier Hibben of Princeton on September 30, 1926, Lowell recognized the logic of these arguments and canceled the games with Michigan, although Harvard still intended to introduce its new policy. "The athletics of the University, like everything else," Lowell insisted, "ought to be freely conducted for the welfare of its students, and not be fettered by claims of other institutions." While Harvard men had no wish to sever relations with Princeton, they did want it clearly established that neither they nor Princeton was "under a moral obligation to play every year, and that no one has a right to feel hurt by playing, . . . , every other year." Once this principle was accepted, the existing "Big Three" athletic agreements could be continued on a friendly basis.<sup>11</sup>

On October 6, Colonel Bingham of Harvard and Dr. Charles W. Kennedy, chairman of Princeton's Board of Athletic Control, met on neutral ground in New Haven and conferred with Professor George H. Nettleton, Yale's athletics chairman. Affirming mutual adherence to the "Big Three" agreements, the chairmen announced jointly that "no change in the essential athletic relations of the three universities is contemplated." Although believing that Harvard could still observe "Big Three" eligibility rules without playing Princeton every year, Bingham, nevertheless, made arrangements for a game with the Tigers in 1927 at their Palmer Stadium. About a week later, Lowell wrote President Hibben that future schedules should be considered "open," and that each university should adopt a policy in the best interests of its students. On October 18, Harvard's Committee on the Regulation of Athletic Sports voted that "except for its final game with Yale, . . . Harvard's policy" would be "as soon as circumstances permit, to play football with other colleges only at suitable intervals." During the two weeks following the New Haven conference, Bingham and Lowell worked on a draft of an explicit statement to be sent to the athletics committees of Princeton and Yale.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>10</sup>John Grier Hibben to A. Lawrence Lowell, September 29, 1926, Papers of Abbott Lawrence Lowell, 1925-1928, #564 Athletics: Three Presidents' Agreement, HUA; and "The Yale-Harvard-Princeton Athletic Agreement."

<sup>11</sup>A. Lawrence Lowell to John G. Hibben, copy, September 30, 1926, Smith Papers, Box 36, folder Princeton-Harvard Relations, PUL.

<sup>12</sup>Memorandum of "The meeting of the Director (William J. Bingham) with Professors Nettleton of Yale and Kennedy of Princeton at New Haven on October 6th (1926)"; John Grier Hibben to A. Lawrence Lowell, October 8, 1926; Lowell to Hibben, copy, October 14, 1926; Lowell to J. R. Angell, copy, October 21, 1926; and Lowell to W. J. Singham, copy, October 21, 1926. Lowell Papers, 1925, 1928, # 564 Athletics: Three Presidents' Agreement, HUA. See also "Harvard-Princeton 1927 Gridiron Clash Assured." *Harvard Crimson*, October 8, 1926, p. 1; "The Big Three," editorial, *Crimson*, November 12, 1926, p. 2.

But Harvard's new football coach, Arnold Horween, wanted "very much to withhold sending the vote" of the committee until after the game with Princeton in November. Advance notice of the resolution might make the Tigers more difficult to beat. According to Bingham, Horween did not have a strong team in 1926, because several players had been judged ineligible. Moreover, Tiger coach Bill Roper had in past years "taken advantage of every opportunity to impress on the Princeton team that unless they won Harvard would drop them." Behind Bingham's words was the hint that Harvard would relish beating the Tigers and *then* announce its new policy.<sup>13</sup>

Harvard officials would have preferred to demote Princeton diplomatically, but the *Harvard Lampoon's* contemptuous and satiric edition of the "Princeton Game," which greeted the 55,000 alumni and fans at Soldiers Field on November 6, destroyed that possibility. Undergraduate wits ran Princeton through the gamut of insult: placing, " 'Come, brother, let us root for dear old Princeton!' " beneath a cartoon showing two hogs in the mire ; admonishing Coach William Roper — portrayed as a little boy who had brought his muddy tiger into John Harvard's house — not to " 'bring that cat around here again, Bill!' " ; and referring to Princeton's song, "Old Nassau," as "Old Nausea." As if this were not enough, the *Lampoon* also issued a spurious edition of the *Harvard Crimson*, the campus newspaper, as a "Football Extra." Its headline — "Princeton Wins" — was followed by a column reporting: "Bill Roper, Princeton Coach, Dies On Field." The excitement of the game supposedly caused him to die of either apoplexy or heart failure.<sup>14</sup>

Undaunted by insults, the Tigers (who would become "Big Three" champions in 1926) shut out the Crimson, 12-0. The game was rough, and tempers were on edge. The *Crimson* later reported that three Harvard players, including the captain, were injured. On the other hand, the *Princeton Alumni Weekly* maintained that neither team suffered "injuries of any consequence." (The Tigers were penalized 8 times for a total of 60 yards, twice for 15 yards each because of holding and interfering with a fair catch; Harvard received one 5-yard penalty.) But excitement caused official errors: Tiger back

<sup>13</sup>William J. Bingham to A. Lawrence Lowell, October 25, 1926, and Lowell to Bingham, copy, October 25, 1926, Lowell Papers, #564 Athletics: Three Presidents' Agreement, HUA.

<sup>14</sup>"Princeton Game," *Harvard Lampoon*, XCII, No. 3 (Nov. 3, 1926). (99)-(104). 109; *Lampoon's* "Harvard Crimson," "Football Extra," November 6, 1926. p. 1; and Tabor, "Harvard vs. Princeton," pp. 22, 25, 27.

Jake Slagle had been allowed to drop kick for a fourth quarter field-goal after his team's fourth down. Even the *Princeton Alumni Weekly* would acknowledge that "official inattention provided him with a fifth-down opportunity" and boosted Princeton's score by "3 points that don't belong there." The situation became even more explosive when enthusiastic fans celebrated by tearing down Harvard's goal posts in an unruly demonstration.<sup>15</sup>

Much would be said, publicly as well as privately, which would reveal a deep-seated antipathy between undergraduates and alumni of the two universities. The *Daily Princetonian* declined to answer the *Lampoon*, but questioned the future of the "Big Three" agreements. In trying to explain the *Lampoon's* insults, a *Crimson* editorial rubbed salt into the wounds. To be sure, Harvard had "adopted a patronizing attitude toward Princeton," but the latter had "felt it eminently necessary to remain a part of the Big Three," because "even colleges must retain prestige." It would be deplorable, however, if "a petty feudalism" and a "tea cup war" should disrupt their annual game. Seconding the *Crimson's* stand, the *Yale Daily News* felt that both rivals shared the blame and suggested "a little introspection for the Princetonians and a good deal of penitence for the Harvard mud-flingers." Even the *Lampoon* partially apologized to the *Daily Princetonian* by admitting that its editorial had been "tactless." Yet it had not intended to be otherwise, since existing relationships between Harvard and Princeton had become "intolerable" and "entirely artificial, held together at the top of the somewhat tardy agreement of the athletic committees." Officially, President Lowell and Dean Chester N. Greenough apologized for the *Lampoon* episode to their Princeton counterparts, President John Grier Hibben and Dean Christian Gauss.<sup>16</sup>

Peace might well have been restored had not Director William J. Bingham sent simultaneously to the Princeton Board of Athletic Control the resolution which had been drafted on

<sup>15</sup>Losers Bear Scars of Tiger Juggernaut," *Harvard Crimson*, November 8, 1926, p. 1; "Harvard and Princeton?" and "Unworthy Substitute," editorials, and "Eleven Downs Harvard Third Successive Time," *Princeton Alumni Weekly*, XXVII, No. 8 (November 12, 1926), 215, 217-218, 220-222 and "Princeton-Harvard Penalties." See also clippings on "Football Break with Harvard, 1926-1934," Box 1, PUA; Joe Villa, "Settling the Pace," *New York Sun*, November 8, 1926; and "Academic Amenities," editorial, *New York Times*, November 10, 1926.

<sup>16</sup>From the *Harvard Crimson*: "Princetonian Asks Final Explanation," and "Princeton and Harvard," editorial, November 9, 1926, pp. 1, 2; "The 'Lampoon Affair'—Ibis Explains; the Prince Comments—One Suggestion," November 10, 1926, p. 1, and "Lampoon Apologizes For Editorial in Full," November 11, 1926, p. 1. From the *Yale Daily News*: "Harvard Crimson Deplores Lampoon's Gaucheries and Regrets Animosity Displayed at H-P Game," "Princetonian, Angered by Lampoon Attack, Calls For Understanding as to Future of Big Three," and "What Price Tradition?," editorial, November 9, 1926, pp. 1-3. See also Tabor, "Harvard vs. Princeton," 25.

October 18 by Harvard's Committee. The Princeton Board met in New York the same afternoon, November 10. Immediately thereafter, Chairman Charles W. Kennedy telegraphed their unanimous decision "to sever athletic relations with Harvard in all sports," because "that spirit of cordial good will between the undergraduate bodies of the two universities which should characterize college sport" was obviously lacking. Further contests were "inadvisable," although Princeton would discuss with Harvard whether the year's scheduled events should be held. When Princeton and Harvard terminated their series of football games in 1926 the scorecard read in favor of the Tigers: 17 wins, 9 losses, and 3 ties.<sup>17</sup>

Sports writers and cartoonists attempted to explain the causes and significance of this last rupture, which involved neither a national nor a sectional championship. As the New York Times noted in its editorial, "Gentlemen and Scholars and Football," on November 12, 1926: "Plenipotentiaries and Presidents entering upon a great war could not be impressed with a deeper sense of their own dignity." And it wished that "somebody would stamp or spank the sense of proportion and of humor into our young barbarians at play." One of the most perceptive articles was written by Alan Tabor for *Liberty* magazine, January 22, 1927. According to Tabor, beneath Crimson charges that Tiger players "deliberately" tried to injure opponents lay "*Harvard's Idea of the Typical Princeton Man*":

An extremely collegiate youth who has preserved too much of the prep-school tradition; wears a coonskin coat and ultra-fashionable clothes; never studies; drinks with a flourish and is inclined to become noisy in public places; New York night clubs are his natural habitat and his taste for feminine companions lacks discrimination.

And beneath Tiger countercharges that Crimson officials were "high-handed, dictatorial, and arrogant" lay "*Princeton's Idea of a Typical Harvard Man*":

A stiff and supercilious youth with an affected accent; a solemn slave of good form, afraid of showing enthusiasm over anything; given to wearing the high hat among other college men; drinks gloomily, is too dignified to dance well or to carry a good conversational

<sup>17</sup>Princeton Severs Athletic Relations with Harvard," *Princeton Alumni Weekly*, XXVII, No. 9 (November 19, 1926), 143-247, from the *Harvard Crimson*: "Princeton Cuts Athletic Relations With Harvard" and "The Crimson Commends," editorial, November 11, 1926, pp. 1, 2, 3, and "The Big Three," November 12, 1926, p. 2. See also the *Yale Daily News*, November 11 and 12, 1926, p. 1, and Tabor, "Harvard vs. Princeton," 25, 27.

line, and so is forced to be content with the dullest and most unattractive girls.

To Harvard, Princetonians were country club playboys, descendants of debauched Cavaliers or sons of nouveaux riches; to Princeton, Harvardians were bespectacled and galoshes-



A HARVARD MAN ACCEPTS AN INVITATION TO DROP IN AT THE PRINCETON CLUB FOR LUNCH

wearing prigs, heirs of bluenosed Puritans or scions of codfish aristocrats.<sup>18</sup>

These stereotypes were strong enough to prevail against factors favoring reconciliation, although cordial relationships still continued on an individual basis. President and Mrs. Hibben had an enjoyable visit with President and Mrs. Lowell at Cambridge in April, 1927, when the former delivered the Godkin Lectures at Harvard on government and the duties of citizenship. Moreover, Lowell had tried to prevent the publication of Wynant Davis Hubbard's derogatory article, "Dirty Football," in *Liberty*, January 29, 1927, which accused the Tigers of using profane language and causing broken bones, sprains, and lacerations, especially around the eyes. Both the former head football coach at Harvard and Representative Hamilton Fish, Jr., '10, one-time Crimson captain and All-American guard, denounced Hubbard's article. Even the three men from Brown University, Lehigh, and Swarthmore, who served most frequently as officials at Harvard-Princeton games from 1919 to 1926, attested that both teams played "fairly and cleanly."<sup>19</sup>

But neither the testimony of impartial observers nor the efforts of concerned alumni could heal the breach. Although Howard Elliott, board chairman of the Northern Pacific Railroad and prominent Harvard overseer, recognized that Princeton's action might be justified, he hoped that rapprochement would be possible, since the break obviously called into question the athletic and educational leadership of both universities. Elliott voiced the concern of their alumni, who were frequently associated in business, civic affairs, and social life, when he said: " 'For these two national institutions to show to the world that they cannot engage in manly sports without friction and bad feeling weakens their influence in the nation and does not help in the general cause of wise education.' " Notwithstanding the truth of Elliott's observation, athletic reconciliation between Harvard and Princeton was blocked as much by

<sup>18</sup>Tabor, "Harvard vs. Princeton," 22 (picture), 27; "Gentleman and Scholars and Football," editorial, *New York Times*, November 12, 1926, and other clippings on "Football Break with Harvard, 1926-1934," Box I, PUA. See also Peter Arno's cartoon, "A Harvard Man Accepts An Invitation To Drop In At The Princeton Club For Lunch," *The New Yorker*, November 20, 1926, p. 22; Kenneth W. Webb, "The Harvard-Princeton Row, A Frank Discussion of One of the Bitterest and Least Understood Clashes in College History," *New York Herald Tribune*, Sunday, December 5, 1926 (magazine section), pp. 3, 18.

<sup>19</sup>A. Lawrence Lowell to President John Grier Hibben, copy, November 29, 1926, and Alexander Leitch to J. W. D. Seymour, copy, December 9, 1926, in box marked "Athletics, Football Break with Harvard, 1926-1934," II Resumption 1934, PUA; and Hibben to Lowell, April 30, 1927, Lowell Papers, 1925-1920, #758 Universities and Colleges: Princeton, HUA. See also (H. Alexander Smith) to A. Lawrence Lowell, (copy, January 25, 1927, Smith Papers, Box 36, folder Princeton-Harvard Relations, PUL; Wynant Davis Hubbard, "Dirty Football, A Former Harvard Player Tells Why His University Broke Relations With Princeton," *Liberty*, January 29, 1927, 38, 43, 44; "Princeton Denies Football Charges," clipping from the *New York Times*, January 24, 1927, and other clippings in "Football Break with Harvard," Box I, PUA; and "Officials In Harvard Games Discredit Published Charges," *Princeton Alumni Weekly*, XXVII, No. 16 (January 28, 1927), 487-488.

their respective athletic associations as by undergraduate sentiment. As far as Director Bingham was concerned, it was up to Princeton to heal the breach since their athletics officials had initiated the break.<sup>20</sup>

Meanwhile, Yale kept alive the spirit of the “Big Three” by continuing to play both its major rivals and by reconfirming the provisions of the “Three Presidents’ Agreement” separately with both Harvard and Princeton in the form of similar dual agreements. Since the Committee of the Three Chairmen no longer existed, each university would have to assume responsibility for player eligibility. In addition, the controversial section 3 of article VI was amended to read: “No post-season contests or contests for the purpose of settling sectional or other championships shall be permitted.” But each was now free to play football with a mid-western university, provided that the game was part of the regular season schedule.<sup>21</sup>

By the spring of 1930, however, both the *Harvard Crimson* and the *Daily Princetonian* urged the establishment of “an ‘entente cordiale’ ” between their respective universities. In January, 1931, this sentiment was sufficiently strong at Princeton that the presidents of the three upper classes, the chairman of the Undergraduate Council, and fifteen sports captains wrote a letter to the *Princetonian* supporting the immediate resumption of athletic contests with Harvard, except in football. The action was endorsed a few days later by a resolution passed at a special meeting of the Harvard Student Council. In its lead editorial of January 29, the *Harvard Alumni Bulletin* noted that a new generation of students were in college who had no interest in what had become an “ ‘artificial breach,’ ” separating schoolmates and friends. After all, Harvard and Princeton were

‘institutions of the same type—Eastern, endowed colleges dating from Colonial times, devoted to the preservation of the tradition of liberal culture, maintaining high standards of scholarship and character, and breathing an atmosphere of free inquiry and personal liberty.

<sup>20</sup>Webb, “The Harvard-Princeton Row,” p. 18; “Bingham States Resolutions of Root of Tiger Break—Elliott Asks Apology,” *Harvard Crimson*, November 12, 1926, p. 1; *Crimson*, November 13, 1926, p. 1; and “Princeton Must Act First, Says Bingham,” clipping from the *New York Times*, March 11, 1927, “Football Break with Harvard,” Box 1, PUA.

<sup>21</sup>Memorandum for President Hibben from Charles W. Kennedy, February 22, 1927, “Football Break with Howard,” Box 1, PUA; and Charles P. Curtis, Jr. to A. Lawrence Lowell, December 8, 1927, Lowell Papers, #564 Athletics, Three Presidents’ Agreement, HUA.

Their *mores*, activities, and interests are substantially the same.<sup>22</sup>

On February 12, William J. Bingham and Charles W. Kennedy met in New York to review the athletic situation. In a joint statement, they acknowledged that the “complete change of undergraduate sentiment” would allow their respective athletics committees to “sanction renewal of competition in sports other than football with every prospect that relations” would be “marked by the cordially friendly spirit” desired by both. Thereupon Bingham and Kennedy agreed to arrange contests in sports for the coming spring, adding tennis, baseball, and lacrosse to the already scheduled rowing and golf. But “divergent policies” in regard to “dates, continuity of competition and rotation of the final games” prevented resumption of football.<sup>23</sup>

Almost immediately after their statement, Yale announced that it would rotate the final game on its football schedule between Harvard and Princeton (the Bulldogs would play the Tigers last in 1931, 1933, and 1935). Since this announcement would, in effect, revive a “Big Three,” Princeton was pleased, although the *Crimson* called it “A Bolt From the Blue.” Further steps toward reestablishing the “Big Three” in football followed.<sup>24</sup>

In December, 1931, the players, coaches, and managers of the Harvard, Yale, and Princeton football teams met at social gatherings in New York City. First, the teams had lunch at the Harvard Club. Then after attending the Army-Navy game, played to raise money for the unemployed, they dined at the Metropolitan Club. The dinner in honor of the three teams was memorable for two reasons. Harvard and Princeton athletics, directors, coaches, and players actually sat beside each other for the first time in years. Also attending the dinner were leading business and professional men, among them, Charles M. Schwab, chairman of Bethlehem Steel Corporation; Edgar Palmer, who gave Princeton its stadium; Henry R. Lute, Yale alumnus and editor of *Time* and *Fortune*; and Thomas L.

<sup>22</sup>From *The Daily Princetonian*: “Sports Resumption with Crimson Urged in Student Letter,” January 19, 1931; and “Contemporary Comment,” “Going Back to Nassau” January 22, 1931, from *Princeton Alumni Weekly*: “Contests with Harvard Urged,” XXXI, No. 15 (January 23, 1931); “On The Campus” and “As Harvard Sees It,” XXXI, No. 17 (February 6, 1931), 425, (429).

<sup>23</sup>Harvard and Princeton Renew Sport Relations,” *Princeton Alumni Weekly*, XXXI, No. 19 (February 20, 1931), 476; and copy of statement made by Dr. Charles W. Kennedy to the *Daily Princetonian*, February 9, 1931, and copies of original and final agreement drawn up February 12, 1931, by William J. Bingham and Charles W. Kennedy, “Football Break with Harvard, 1926-1934,” Box II, Resumption 1934 PUA.

<sup>24</sup>“On The Campus,” *Princeton Alumni Weekly*, XXXI, No. 20 (February 27, 1931), 517.

Watson, president of International Business Machine Company. Such a gathering underscored the fact that “Big Three” alumni and their business associates found football contests and related social activities mutually profitable as well as entertaining. Business contacts could be made and strengthened in the relaxed, even if somewhat partisan, atmosphere of pre-game luncheons and post-game dinners.<sup>25</sup>

The early thirties proved to be a time when several old football ruptures were healed: Army and Navy, Pennsylvania and Yale, Princeton and Dartmouth, and Princeton and Harvard. On January 6, 1933, Princeton’s Board of Athletic Control voted to approve “two-game agreements” by which the tigers would begin playing the Green in 1933, after a seventeen-year break, and the Crimson in 1934, after an eight-year separation.<sup>26</sup>

On November 3, 1934, the Tigers again conquered Harvard at its own stadium, 19-0. (Yale would become the season’s “Big Three” champion, however, by shutting out both rivals.) Although Princeton fans again won the goal posts, this game was not marked by bitterness. Instead of the *Lampoon’s* calculated insults of 1926, “Lampy” joined with the *Princeton Tiger* in producing a special issue. To be sure, there was satire, including a reprint of the cartoon of the two hogs rooting in the mud “for dear old Princeton.” But underneath it, “Lampy and Tigey” professed to be “ignorant of the details of the ‘case of 1926’ and utterly devoid of the hard feeling then existing between the two Universities.” While the two editorial boards did not find the cartoon to be “particularly funny,” they “were amused at the idea of a whole world of University alumni, men with degrees and an education, working themselves into a furore over such a gratuitous bit of attempted humor.”<sup>27</sup>

The “Big Three” had been restored, and, in October, 1939 they renewed and enlarged the “Three Presidents’ Agreement” on eligibility. Six year later, Harvard, Yale, and Princeton were joined by Brown, Columbia, Cornell, Dartmouth, and Pennsylvania in the first presidents’ ‘Ivy Group Agreement’ on

<sup>25</sup>“Princeton Meets Harvard Men Here,” *New York Times*, Sunday, December 13, 1931, sec. 10, Sports, p. 2.

<sup>26</sup>Lawrence Perry, “The Football Brahmins Make Peace,” *Scribner’s Magazine*, XCVI, No. 5, (November, 1934), (289)-293; and “At Last!,” editorial, and “Harvard Football Relations Resumed—Dartmouth Also on Schedule,” *Princeton Alumni Weekly*, XXVIII, No. 15 (January 13, 1933), 322, 325.

<sup>27</sup>The *Princeton Tiger* and the *Harvard Lampoon*, (CVIII, No. 4 of the *Lampoon* and XLIV, No. 8 of the *Tiger*) (November 3, 1934, (127); from the *Princeton Alumni Weekly*: Editorial and “Princeton 19, Harvard 0,” XXXV, No. 7 (November 9, 1934), 144, 146-148, and “On the Campus” XXXV, No. 8 (November 16, 1934), 171. See also “The Rebuilt Chain,” editorial, *Harvard Crimson*, November 3, 1934, p. 2; the *Crimson’s* “Football Extra,” November 3, 1934; and Morris A. Bealle, *The History of Football At Harvard 1874-1948* (Washington, D. C.: Columbia Publishing Co. (1948), 265-268, 304-305.

football. Then on October 29, 1951, Harvard, Yale and Princeton issued a "Joint Scholarship Policy Statement." During the next two and a half years, steps would be taken to formalize and extend "The Ivy Group" code to all intercollegiate sports played by the eight private, eastern colleges. Under this agreement of February 11, 1954, Harvard yielded to " 'a round-robin schedule in football and the principle of round-robin schedules in as many sports as practicable.' " The adoption of this principle made possible the development of the Ivy Group into a league. What a *Crimson* editorial had recognized in October, 1926, a month before the break, had proven to be true: "The Big Three, no matter how misleading their title may be, no matter how much emphasis be placed on the phrase 'so called,' " were "a decidedly influential body in the student world." And boasted the *Crimson*, "they as much as any other group of universities" could "successfully lead athletics toward the millenium."<sup>28</sup>

<sup>28</sup>Movious, ed., *Second H Book of Harvard Athletics*, 26-29, 38-44; and "The Crimson Views with Disfavor," editorial, *Harvard Crimson*, October 4, 1926, p. 2.