What Price Victory?  
What Price Honor?  

The University of Pennsylvania football team opened its seventy-fourth season of play on Saturday, September 30, 1950, when it met the University of Virginia at Franklin Field, the horseshoe-shaped stadium where Penn plays its home games. It was a stale, misty day in Philadelphia, with temperatures in the low 70s at kickoff time. The announced attendance of 40,718 was disappointing because Penn—perennially among the national leaders in college football attendance—frequently came close to filling its 80,000-seat stadium. The small crowd could be attributed to a combination of poor weather and head-to-head competition from the Philadelphia Phillies, who were engaged in a hot race for the National League baseball pennant. But there was still plenty of excitement at Franklin Field as the University of Pennsylvania president Harold E. Stassen threw out the first ball to herald the opening of a new college football season.

Virginia quickly put a damper on the festivities as it pushed the home team around en route to a 7-0 halftime lead. The only time Philadelphians had reason to cheer in the first half was when it was announced over the public address system that the first-place Phillies had scored three runs in the top of the sixth inning against the second-place Brooklyn Dodgers. A new-look Pennsylvania marching band,
much faster in step and style than its predecessors, performed at halftime. The new band was the brainchild of Francis “Franny” Murray, who had been named Penn’s athletic director by Stassen in the summer of 1950. Its halftime program for the Virginia game was “A Salute to Some of the Outstanding Men on the Pennsylvania Campus,” and included tributes to Stassen and George Munger, the head football coach. For Stassen, who had served three terms as governor of Minnesota before becoming Penn’s president in 1948, the band played “Minnesota Rouser.” It would prove to be a prophetic selection.

When the teams took the field for the start of the second half, the Penn squad displayed a revitalized spirit, scoring two quick touchdowns to take a 14-7 lead. A catalyst in the turnaround was sophomore end Edward Bell, the first black player in modern Penn football history. In addition to making four tackles and recovering a fumble, Bell made an interception that led to Penn’s third touchdown of the quarter. Stassen, who had demanded the integration of the football program soon after arriving at Pennsylvania, remembered Bell’s interception thirty-five years later. “It was a spectacular one-handed grab,” Stassen said. “Everybody was cheering and I had tears in my eyes because I knew that the integration of football had happened.”

Pennsylvania went on to defeat Virginia by a score of 21-7.

The Virginia game is notable because it was Pennsylvania’s first under Stassen’s “Victory With Honor” program. Stassen articulated the program on August 7, 1950, at a Philadelphia press conference announcing Murray’s appointment as athletic director. It called for a stepped-up emphasis on intercollegiate athletics at Penn. On September 30, 1950, after the first Penn football game had been contested under the “Victory With Honor” banner, there was both victory and

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4 Penn-Virginia Game Program, Franklin Field Illustrated 35 (Sept. 30, 1950), in UPL 1080, lot no. 5278, box 3 (University of Pennsylvania Archives). Unless otherwise noted, all references to University of Pennsylvania materials are located in the University of Pennsylvania Archives.
honor at Pennsylvania. Four years later, it could be argued that there was neither.

A venerable university possesses a deeply-rooted identity that evolves and changes very little over time. And since the institutional identity of a university is shaped from both within and without, based as much on past perceptions as on present realities, the opportunity for a university radically and definitively to recast its identity is exceedingly rare. The University of Pennsylvania was afforded such an opportunity in the early 1950s. It came from an unlikely source—a debate over the position that intercollegiate athletics, especially football, should occupy at the university. When the controversy was over, Pennsylvania was a member of the newly formed Ivy League and no longer the major-college football power that it had been for many decades prior to the debate. As a result of these changes, Pennsylvania’s institutional identity was dramatically changed.

Football was at the very center of the discussions and agreements that led to the formation of the Ivy League. In fact, the very term “Ivy League” was coined by a pair of football writers, Caswell Adams and Stanley Woodward of the New York Herald Tribune. One Saturday in October 1937 Adams drew Columbia-Pennsylvania as his football assignment for the Herald Tribune. Miffed at being sent to Columbia’s Baker Field and not being allowed to cover a game at the New York Polo Grounds, Adams asked his editor, “Whyinell do I have to watch the ivy grow every Saturday afternoon? How about letting me see some football away from the ivy-covered halls of learning for a change?” Woodward, a fellow writer at the Herald Tribune, picked up on Adams’s lead and began to use the term “Ivy League” in his weekly football roundups. Although the schools that Woodward touted as the Ivy League (Brown, Columbia, Cornell, Dartmouth, Harvard, Pennsylvania, Princeton, and Yale) were not actually joined in a formal conference, they were longstanding athletic

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8 Harron, “How the Ivy League Got Its Name,” 34.
rivals and the East’s most prestigious colleges. Grouping them together was natural in 1937. The term “Ivy League” quickly caught on and came to be popularly understood as a reference to the informal club that had as its members the eight schools mentioned above.  

The Ivy League gained a measure of legitimacy in 1945 when the presidents of the eight universities entered into a pact known as the “Intercollegiate Agreement” regarding common standards and practices to be followed on football policy matters. The Intercollegiate Agreement of 1945 set up two inter-institutional committees, a Committee on Administration and a Committee on Eligibility, and charged them with the responsibility of “maintaining the value of the game [football] while keeping it in fitting proportion to the main purposes of academic life.” The Intercollegiate Agreement was the first cooperative step towards the deemphasis of football in the Ivy League; it specified that Ivy teams could not participate in post-season contests nor schedule games more than two years in advance. But its chief importance stems from the fact that for the first time the eight members willingly ceded some of their institutional sovereignty to a league-wide agency. This is evidenced by a section of the agreement which read:

The participating institutions agree to give prompt attention to any actions or policies recommended by the Committee on Administration and to abide by any policies which have received the formal approval of a majority of the institutions subscribing to this agreement.

The provision showed that the league schools were prepared to enter into a virtual collective security pact in order to guard against the potential abuses that were inherent in intercollegiate football. The precedent of collective security established in 1945 would become important a few years later, when Pennsylvania tried to chart a more independent course.

Despite the camaraderie that characterized the 1945 agreement, the Ivy League was not of one mind in its conception of the proper

9 Ibid., 34.
10 Intercollegiate Agreement, Nov. 20, 1945, p. 1, in UPA 4, lot no. 2025, box 54, folder—
“Department of Intercollegiate Athletics (Ivy League, 1950-1955, II).”
11 Ibid, p. 2 (emphasis added).
role for intercollegiate football. Harvard, Yale, and Brown carried out football programs which were truest to the rhetoric of the Intercollegiate Agreement. Pennsylvania and Cornell, while sharing the belief that football in particular and intercollegiate athletics in general were an important part of the college learning experience, also saw football as a healthy focus of collegiate loyalty and as an important public relations tool. Princeton, Columbia, and Dartmouth fell somewhere in between.\(^{12}\)

Because of their differing conceptions on football policy, the eight schools conducted football programs that were considerably different. The number of scholarships available to football players, and the average value of those scholarships, is one way to see this difference. Obviously, if Pennsylvania and Cornell hoped to use football as a focal point for school loyalty and as a public relations tool, they would want to insure that they fielded winning teams. One way to do that was to lure the best possible athletes with the best possible scholarships. Table 1 illustrates how four Ivy League schools acted on this principle in 1951.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School</th>
<th># on Squad</th>
<th># of Scholarships</th>
<th>Avg. Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Harvard</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>$662</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Princeton</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>$602</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pennsylvania</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>$775</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cornell</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>$772</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^{12}\) It must be noted that my conclusions here are based upon the style of rhetoric employed in press dealings, the tone of letters sent between Ivy officials, and similar intangible evidence. While it is difficult to pin the distinctions down empirically, I feel that they are significant and well-founded and hence I propose them in a general sense.

\(^{13}\) Arnold Henry to Harold E. Stassen, Nov. 5, 1951, in UPA 4, lot no. 2025, box 54, folder—“Department of Intercollegiate Athletics (Ivy League, 1950-1955, III).” The scholarship awards to football players at the other four Ivy League colleges—Brown, Columbia, Dartmouth, and Yale—are unavailable. It is unlikely, however, that they were in excess of the awards given at Harvard and Princeton.
TABLE 2
Ivy League Won-Lost Records, 1938-1948

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School</th>
<th>Wins</th>
<th>Losses</th>
<th>Ties</th>
<th>Pct.</th>
<th>Titles</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pennsylvania</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>.884</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cornell</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>.583</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dartmouth</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.483</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harvard</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>.476</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yale</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>.452</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Princeton</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>.443</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brown</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>.400</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Columbia</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.344</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Given the more extensive and advantageous scholarship programs that Pennsylvania and Cornell offered, it is not surprising that the two schools enjoyed great success against their Ivy League brethren. Indeed, in the years 1938-1948 Pennsylvania and Cornell boasted the two highest winning percentages and won nine “Ivy titles” between them.

The eight Ivy League schools were not fielding football teams of similar quality. In addition to differences in football policy, differences in geography, enrollment, academic admissions standards, size of athletic budgets and facilities, talent of players and coaches, and just plain luck separated the schools as far as success on the football field was concerned. Through the 1940s, most of the aforementioned variables appeared to be working to the competitive advantage of one Ivy League school in particular. That school was Pennsylvania.

As Leo Riordan, then the sports editor at The Philadelphia Inquirer, later noted in The Saturday Evening Post, by 1948 Penn was more eager to schedule Ivy League teams than those teams were to schedule Penn. “This reluctance is understandable,” Riordan wrote, “when you look at the results.” Through 1948, the results showed conclusively that at least five Ivy schools—Harvard, Yale, Brown, Columbia, and Dartmouth—were hopelessly outclassed by Pennsylvania on

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15 Riordan, “The Football Blues Hit Penn,” 96.
the football field. Between 1938, when Munger became Penn's coach, and 1948 Pennsylvania won twenty-three games against these five schools, lost none, and tied only one. In a league already unstable because it lacked an established scheduling format, this domination was even more destabilizing. Tired of being regularly thrashed, Harvard and Yale had decided against playing Pennsylvania. And if the Quakers kept beating up on the other league schools, the formalization of the Ivy League—a step Pennsylvania was pursuing vigorously through 1948—promised to be a long time coming.

Against this background in stepped Harold E. Stassen, who was inaugurated as president of the University of Pennsylvania on September 17, 1948. A graduate of the University of Minnesota and its law school, Stassen had served three terms as governor of Minnesota, first gaining election in 1938 at the age of thirty-one. An ambitious, idealistic man, Stassen accepted the Penn presidency in July 1948, weeks after falling short in his second bid for the Republican presidential nomination. The Republican convention had been held at the Philadelphia Municipal Convention Hall (now called the Civic Center), just around the corner from the Penn campus. It was a short step from politics to university administration for Stassen, and many believed that it would be an equally short step back. There was widespread speculation that the Penn presidency was Stassen's showcase for keeping his name in the news and building an eastern constituency for his next presidential campaign.

The University of Pennsylvania trustees offered Stassen the post primarily because of his fund-raising abilities. According to The New York Times, "University officials felt that [Stassen's] qualifications met the need for a young, aggressive executive to direct Penn's $32 million post-war expansion program." But Stassen's impact at Pennsylvania was expected to be felt on more than just a financial level. A Times editorial noted, "An idealistic college president can throw the shadow of his influence a long way in these days of change. We

16 The 1983-84 Ivy League Record Book, 105.
believe Mr. Stassen will do that.”\textsuperscript{19} As far as Pennsylvania’s relationships with the Ivy League were concerned, \textit{The New York Times} would prove absolutely correct.

Stassen took a special interest in athletics, a field considered déclassé by most Ivy presidents. Headed a successful athletic program meshed neatly with Stassen’s ambition and with his desire to be a high-profile college president. One of Stassen’s first public appearances was a trip to Hershey, Pennsylvania, where the Penn football team held its preseason training camp. There the new president posed for a photograph session with members of the team and made the first of what would become a series of proclamations that greater victories and honors were on the horizon—both for the university and its already mighty football team.\textsuperscript{20}

Stassen’s impact on the Ivy football scene was first felt in December of 1949, when he traveled to Cambridge to meet Harvard president James Conant, with whom Stassen had served in the Navy during World War II. One of the items on the agenda was athletic policy, and Stassen hoped to convince his friend Conant to resume the Penn-Harvard football rivalry.\textsuperscript{21} On the morning of the meeting, the Boston papers carried a story which quoted Harvard Athletic Director Bill Bingham as saying, “Harvard has dropped Penn as a football rival . . . because we can’t compete with their state scholarships.”\textsuperscript{22} Bingham’s statement suggested that Penn used its state scholarships to stockpile football talent.

In the genteel world of the Ivy League, where the public statements of important university officials were usually couched in ambiguous, diplomatic language, a blunt comment like Bingham’s was unusual and the local newspapermen, smelling a fight, sought out Penn’s president for his response. According to Stassen, they found him in a Boston barber’s chair. “I hadn’t read the morning papers yet,” Stassen recalled, “and when they asked me what I thought of Bingham’s statement, I said, ‘Who is Bingham, and what did he say?’

\textsuperscript{19} Ibid., p. 16.
\textsuperscript{20} Rottenberg, \textit{Fight on Pennsylvania}, 74.
\textsuperscript{21} Interview with Harold E. Stassen, March 4, 1986.
\textsuperscript{22} \textit{The Philadelphia Evening Bulletin}, Dec. 2, 1949, p. 1. Each of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania’s fifty state senators were allowed to nominate three Pennsylvania residents for state-supported scholarships to the university.
Everyone in Boston knew who Bill Bingham was, and the newspapermen interpreted my comment as a put-down.\textsuperscript{23}

The anecdote is illuminating on a number of counts. Bingham's comments hint at a pervasive distrust of Pennsylvania that existed throughout the Ivy League. As far as the state scholarship issue was concerned, Pennsylvania later produced evidence to show that out of the 558 students at Penn on state scholarships in 1948, only 12 were members of Penn's 63-man football team, and only seven scholarships, or 1.2 percent of the total, belonged to students who had earned a varsity football letter.\textsuperscript{24} But while, as in this case, Pennsylvania officials were often able to produce evidence to contradict allegations against the university, they were never able to shake off the persistent cloud that surrounded Penn's conduct in the minds of other Ivy officials, and just as importantly, in the minds of the eastern sporting press.

On another level, the Bingham incident bears attention because it offers an example of the poor relationship that existed between Stassen and the eastern press. The press regarded Stassen as an opportunist, an interloper, and an outsider from the Big Ten. They doubted his credentials as an educator, and questioned his understanding of Ivy League athletic issues. Stassen was at least partly responsible for these impressions. While his appeal as a political figure stemmed from his reputation as a stubborn idealistic crusader,\textsuperscript{25} Stassen's crusades at Pennsylvania consistently embroiled him in controversy. For example, soon after his accession to the Penn presidency, Stassen received a letter from Notre Dame president John J. Cavanaugh expressing hope that the two schools would renew their football rivalry, which had lain dormant for almost twenty years. Upon investigation, Stassen learned that the Ivy schools had a longstanding informal agreement

\textsuperscript{23} Interview with Harold E. Stassen, March 4, 1986.

\textsuperscript{24} William DuBarry to Donald Lippincott, Dec. 15, 1949, in UPA 4, lot no. 11197, box 38, folder—"Department of Physical Education (Division of Intercollegiate Athletics, 1945-1950, VI)."

\textsuperscript{25} Later in his career, Stassen ran for Mayor of Philadelphia. A Republican, he had no chance of victory in the overwhelmingly Democratic city. Friends counseled against the run, arguing that a municipal campaign was beneath a man of Stassen's national reputation. Stassen responded that his campaign would uphold the integrity of the two-party system of government, and that any political damage he might personally suffer by mounting a losing effort was therefore of secondary importance.
not to schedule Notre Dame, the most powerful football team in the nation, because of alleged abuses in the Fighting Irish program. The notions of organized boycotts and guilt by inference were repugnant to Stassen and he was inclined to violate the agreement. E. LeRoy Mercer, Penn’s Dean of Physical Education, who understood that a game with Notre Dame would be interpreted in the Ivy League as a sure sign of over-emphasis on football, advised Stassen bluntly: “I think it would be unwise to schedule this game.”

But Penn’s president disregarded the advice and arranged the game for the 1952 season.

Stassen’s adversarial relationship with the press, his insensitivity to political fallout, and his dogged pursuit of idealistic solutions combined to produce the most serious controversy of his presidency in August 1950, when he delivered his soon-to-be famous “Victory With Honor” speech, which outlined his plans for a restructuring of the university’s athletic programs and priorities. The occasion for the speech was a press conference to announce that Francis T. Murray would succeed H. Jamison Swarts as Penn’s director of athletics. As one contemporary commentator observed, Swarts was “a solid but colorless man, who was nonetheless a popular figure in Eastern intercollegiate athletic circles, and respected nationally.”

The decision to replace him with Murray, a Penn football star from the 1930s whose background was in athletic promotion, was greeted with a good deal of skepticism. Allison Danzig, a respected football writer at The New York Times, was so dismayed that he sent a personal letter to Stassen. It summarizes the reaction that greeted Swarts’s dismissal throughout the eastern sporting establishment so neatly that it warrants full reproduction here.

As a friend of Pennsylvania’s who has had a close contact with the Athletic Department through my work on the sports staff of the Times,

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26 E. LeRoy Mercer to Harold E. Stassen, in UPA 4, lot no. 11197, box 38, folder—“Department of Physical Education (Division of Intercollegiate Athletics, 1945-1950, V).” Interestingly, Stassen was later accused by one Penn alumnus of scheduling Notre Dame in order to increase his appeal with Roman Catholics for his next bid for the U.S. presidency.

27 Riordan, “The Football Blues Hit Penn,” 96.
may I tell you how much of a shock it was to me that Mr. H. Jamison Swarts has been replaced as Director of Athletics.

I have known Mr. Swarts during his entire tenure and have regarded him as one of the finest characters in intercollegiate athletics. May I presume to say that, considering the friends he has made for the University, his stature in his field, the respect in which he is held by the athletic heads of other colleges and newspapermen . . . it is incomprehensible to me how Pennsylvania could have let him go.

As a Cornell alumnus who cherishes the strong bonds of friendly rivalry between our two schools, as well as as a newspaperman who has enjoyed such cordial relations with Mr. Swarts for so many years, I feel I must go on record to say how keenly I regret his dismissal.28

The prevailing impression throughout the Ivy League at the time was, to quote Yale Athletic Advisory Committeeman Chester LaRoche, that “Pennsylvania is again off on a big-time football schedule and is moving much more in that direction than in the direction of the Ivy League.”29 News that Penn had scheduled Notre Dame, in concert with the dismissal of Swarts and the hiring of Murray, was regarded throughout the Ivy League as final indication that Penn was going big-time. And when Harold Stassen took the podium at the Warwick Hotel on August 7, 1950, to introduce Murray to the press, he said nothing to convince his Ivy critics to the contrary.

Perhaps the most appropriate method to understand the impact of Stassen’s “Victory With Honor” speech is to look at the way it was reported in the newspapers. After all, the occasion was a press conference and the audience consisted primarily of working sportswriters. The Ivy athletic officials for the most part were not in attendance, and they would form their impressions of Stassen’s comments from what they read in the papers. A sampling of press clipping follows below.

28 Allison Danzig to Harold E. Stassen, Sept. 12, 1950, in UPA 4, lot no. 2024, box 53, folder—“Department of Intercollegiate Athletics, 1950-1955 (Football, Letters from Public, I).”

29 Chester J. LaRoche to Leonard C. Dill, March 22, 1950, in UPA 4, lot no. 11197, box 38, folder—“Department of Physical Education (Division of Intercollegiate Athletics, 1945-1950, VI)”; Riordan, “The Football Blues Hit Penn,” 96.
University of Pennsylvania's program of "greater emphasis on intercollegiate athletics" is already in force, University President Harold E. Stassen said today. . . . More jobs through the school's student employment program are now being made available to athletes in need of money for room and board. More scholarships for athletes who can qualify under the scholastic provisions of the [NCAA Sanity] code are also being offered.30

Victory With Honor is the aim of a new stepped-up athletic policy at the University of Pennsylvania. . . . "Moving with ingenuity and resourcefulness under the NCAA code, we can have great teams at Pennsylvania in football and other sports," [University President Harold] Stassen predicted. Classroom schedules in the Wharton Business School have been readjusted so that late afternoon examination periods were avoided, giving students more time for athletic practice and greater efforts by the general student employment agency to find work for athletes under NCAA provisions were being made. . . . Franny Murray said that Pennsylvania would do all it could to aid and attract athletes who were good scholars, without taking advantage of the NCAA code, but "without bending over backwards to follow it."31

Harold E. Stassen last week made a forthright admission. He was one university president who wanted an athletic program with plenty of hard, sweaty muscle. "This date will be a milestone in Pennsylvania athletics," [Stassen told reporters]. " . . . We want victories with honor. We want to improve our schedules. We want to be able to appeal to star high-school athletes. . . . I foresee a remarkable future of strong teams."32

Clearly, the message sent out by the newspapers was that Pennsylvania was going big-time and would leave the Ivies in its wake if they did not follow along. Stassen did not intend it to come out that

32 "Something For the Boys," Newsweek, Aug. 21, 1950, p. 82.
He believed, perhaps idealistically, that Pennsylvania could continue as a member of the Ivy League while pursuing a reemphasized football program. Others disagreed. "Cynics said that Stassen's program was an impractical attempt to play all ends against the middle," Leo Riordan wrote in *The Saturday Evening Post*, and "that it was impossible for Penn successfully to pursue all these varying objectives at the same time. As it turned out, the cynics were right."\(^33\)

The fallout from Stassen's heavily publicized "Victory With Honor" speech came during the winter of 1950-1951, in the form of an Ivy League football boycott of Pennsylvania. The first rumblings of the approaching storm came at a meeting of Ivy League athletic directors in New York on November 28. One of the purposes of the meeting was to set the football schedules for the 1953 season. Murray, who was just settling into his position as Penn's athletic director at the time, remembers the meeting well. "This moron [Dartmouth Athletic Director William] McCarter, who used to be a librarian, walks over to me and says, 'Our people feel as though this year we should have a little diversity on our schedule'"—whereupon Dartmouth backed out of its tentatively scheduled 1953 game with Pennsylvania. "Then Columbia threatened to cancel and one other school [Princeton], and I was left with an empty schedule."\(^34\) At the time, Murray believed that the Ivy schools had made a concerted decision to boycott Pennsylvania. Today, he still holds that belief.

As a result of the sudden withdrawal of one-third of the teams that were supposed to constitute his 1953 schedule, Murray was forced to scramble to fill the gaps. He added two prominent football schools—Ohio State and Notre Dame—to replace Dartmouth and Columbia. "What the hell was I supposed to do, play Swarthmore and Drexel?" Murray said in retrospect, explaining the new additions to Penn's 1953 schedule. "We had a good football team."\(^35\) The scheduling of Ohio State and Notre Dame was of course interpreted in Ivy athletic circles as another sign of Penn's growing dedication

\(^{33}\) Riordan, "The Football Blues Hit Penn," 11.

\(^{34}\) Interview with Franny Murray, Boca Raton, Florida. Conducted over the telephone on March 23, 1986.

\(^{35}\) Ibid.
to big-time football, despite the fact that it was the Ivy action that forced the issue.

News of the boycott broke on January 15, 1951, when Joe Williams, a reporter at the New York World-Telegram and Sun, correctly reported that, in 1953, Penn would be "dropped by every team in the regal Ivy League except Cornell."³⁶ It would be the first time in twenty-two years that Penn had not played at least two Ivy teams in football. "Penn will have to strike out for itself as an independent power," Williams concluded. "That's what Stassen seems to have in mind anyhow."³⁷

The storm gathered intensity in the newspapers over the next few days. Red Smith, writing in The New York Times, blamed Stassen's "Victory With Honor" speech for the boycott. He wrote:

Announcing the appointment of Franny Murray as Athletic Director some months ago, Mr. Stassen made a victory with honor speech. He said, in effect, that he thought Penn could have a winning football team without breaking the rules too much. In tone, more than in words, he created the impression that Penn was going all out after the best football team money could buy.³⁸

Arthur Daley, a colleague at the Times, concurred with Smith's assessment in a January 22 column. Writing from the perspective of an Ivy League athletic director, Daley noted:

When Stassen gave his famous Victory With Honor speech in which he indicated that Pennsylvania would live up to the limit of the Sanity Code but would go as far as those limitations permitted in getting football talent, I began to think. . . . I decided that the time had come to rotate Penn off our schedule. Other Athletic Directors apparently reached the same conclusions. But we all reached them independently and there is no organized boycott.³⁹

Regardless of whether an organized boycott had been called, the storm that Stassen had whipped up with his "Victory With Honor"

³⁶ Joe Williams, "Ivy Leaguers Boycott Penn on Stassen Slur," The New York World-Telegram and Sun, Jan. 15, 1951.
³⁷ Ibid.
speech would rage for over four years. It had hit first in the newspapers, where it was sure to arouse maximum resentments and misunderstandings. It spun off into an unprecedented and almost complete break in the football relations between Pennsylvania and the rest of the Ivy League. But it would play itself out more privately in a long series of meetings involving the Ivy Group presidents. When these meetings were concluded, there would be a rigidly structured, formally organized Ivy League. The University of Pennsylvania’s membership in this new organization would become a vehicle for the reconstruction of the university’s institutional identity. But first, there were some fences that needed mending.

In January 1951 Ed Pollock of the *Philadelphia Evening Bulletin* wrote

> Two years ago, in the presence of two Penn graduates, one of whom is affiliated with the University, the athletic director of an Ivy college said: “The Ivy League is going to kick out Penn.”

The organization of a boycott against Pennsylvania’s football team was a decisive first step in that direction. And the university apparently recognized the seriousness of the threat. Through 1951 and 1952, Pennsylvania became increasingly accommodating in its league dealings as the school sought to forestall the devastating possibility that it might actually be kicked out of the Ivy League.

Reopening the lines of private communication that had been closed because of public battles in the newspapers was an important first step towards reconciliation. On February 7, 1951, Murray sent a letter to Stassen briefing the president on a phone conversation that Murray had had with Princeton Athletic Director Ken Fairman.

He [Fairman] volunteered that the press coverage following the luncheon at the Warwick announcing my appointment indicates to those at Princeton, as well as the other Ivy League schools, that it was Pennsylvania’s intention to depart from basic Ivy League policy in connection with athletics, and indicated that the athletes at Pennsylvania would receive special considerations over and above those shown students who were not athletically inclined.

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Fairman admits that to form conclusions from newspapers which often-times contain half-truths is not good policy, but that clarification of our position was required as far as his institution was concerned.\textsuperscript{41}

That clarification would come at a series of meetings involving the presidents of the eight Ivy League universities. Because Stassen’s “Victory With Honor” speech had been blamed for causing the rupture of Ivy League relations with Pennsylvania, perhaps it was fitting that Stassen initiated the series of meetings that led to the resolution of the problems. He did so in a letter to Princeton’s president Harold Dodds on March 13. “It is my deferential belief,” Stassen wrote to Dodds, “that a reappraisal [of intercollegiate athletics] should not be left solely in the hands of those who are immediately engaged in the supervision of athletics, but should have attention on a presidential level.”\textsuperscript{42} Three weeks later, on April 3, 1951, the eight Ivy League presidents convened in New York for their first meeting on athletic policy in the six years since the Intercollegiate Agreement of 1945 was signed. Within the ensuing thirteen months, they would meet three more times to discuss the very same subject. Triggered by the boycott, football policy had emerged as an important issue at the Ivy schools.

At Penn, the sides for this debate were clearly drawn. There were those who wished to see the university reemphasize its affiliation with the Ivy League, no matter what the cost might be to Penn’s big-time aspirations. There were those who believed that Penn should strike out on its own as an independent power. Stuck in the middle were those, Harold Stassen included, who believed that Penn could maintain a middle-ground status—as a member of the Ivy League, capable of occasionally facing the best teams in the country.\textsuperscript{43} In 1951, because

\textsuperscript{41} Franny Murray to Harold E. Stassen, Feb. 7, 1951, in UPA 4, lot no. 2024, box 53, folder—“Department of Intercollegiate Athletics, 1950-1955 (Ivy League, II).”
\textsuperscript{42} Harold E. Stassen to Harold Dodds, March 13, 1950, in ibid.
\textsuperscript{43} The Pennsylvania Gazette conducted a series of polls between 1951 and 1953 on the issue of football scheduling policies. The Gazette asked its readers to vote on which teams they would like to see Pennsylvania play “every year” and which teams should be scheduled “occasionally.” Cornell, Princeton, Army, and Navy were favored for “every year” scheduling by over 90 percent of all respondents. Of the remaining Ivy teams, Yale was recommended for “every year” scheduling by 63 percent, Columbia by 60 percent, Harvard by 36 percent, and Brown by only 8 percent. Major college teams such as Notre Dame and Michigan were
of an Ivy boycott that was scheduled to take effect two years hence, Stassen's position was proving to be increasingly untenable.

When the Ivy League presidents met in April 1951, they agreed to a major reworking of the 1945 Ivy code and scheduled a December meeting to draft such an agreement. The last thing Stassen needed in the summer of 1951 was to encourage suspicions within the Ivy League about the direction that Pennsylvania's football future was headed. Such suspicions would only further decrease Penn's credibility and leverage with the league, a poor idea in the months before the commencement of crucial Ivy negotiations. But during the 1951 summer, Stassen embroiled the university in a red-hot debate with the National Collegiate Athletic Association over that body's television policy. The debate started in January 1951, when the 200-plus colleges affiliated with the NCAA voted overwhelmingly (161-7, with 45 abstentions) to "declare a moratorium on live telecasting of college football games for 1951."

The moratorium cited "positive evidence that live television broadcasts have an adverse effect on attendance at college football games" as the reason for the one-year experimental ban.

Pennsylvania was one of the seven schools that voted against the television ban. In 1940 Franklin Field had been the site of the first football game ever to be televised, and since that time Pennsylvania had enjoyed a highly profitable, eleven-year record of televising its home games. Fearful of losing these profits, Pennsylvania also vehemently disputed the legality of the proposed moratorium. Fran Murray openly challenged the ban in a letter to NCAA president Hugh Willett, writing: "the Constitution of the N.C.A.A. does not give the authority to the organization to exercise the centralized complete control over the member institutions which is now pro-

favored by roughly 30 percent apiece. The format of the poll makes it very difficult to analyze the results, and proponents of each side ("big-time" vs. "Ivy League") could and did claim that the Gazette polls showed support for their respective positions. See The Pennsylvania Gazette 50 (Dec. 1951) and 51 (April 1953) for complete poll results.

"Resolution Adopted by the 45th Annual N.C.A.A. Convention," Dallas, Texas—January 12, 1951, in UPA 4, lot no. 2024, box 53, folder—"Department of Intercollegiate Athletics, 1950-1955 (Television, I)."

Ibid.
posed.\textsuperscript{46} In the meantime, Murray negotiated a $200,000 contract with the American Broadcasting Company to televise Pennsylvania's eight 1951 home games.\textsuperscript{47}

Pennsylvania's decision to do battle with the NCAA was another example of Stassen's taste for populist crusades. As Irv Marsh noted in the \textit{New York Herald-Tribune}:

A good many college people feel that Mr. Stassen's motive in deciding to televise football games has political overtones; national political overtones. It is no secret, they say, that Mr. Stassen has had his eye for a long time on the Republican nomination for the Presidency . . . What could make him more popular to the poor, down-trodden owners of television sets (and there are millions of them) than to parade the fact that he has provided them with circuses as well as bread.\textsuperscript{48}

The television tussle also serves as an example of Stassen's surprising lack of political concern. On the eve of critical league negotiations, Stassen was willing to antagonize his Ivy colleagues, all of whom had voted for the ban, in order to stand up for a principle. The ploy backfired; Stassen won some scattered praise in the national media for his stand, but further strained his relations with his fellow Ivy presidents.\textsuperscript{49} Meanwhile, Penn was briefly declared by the NCAA as "a member not in good standing" and the university was forced to back down from its resistance to the television ban.\textsuperscript{50} In 1983 the United States Supreme Court ruled, as Murray had argued, that the NCAA's attempts to control television rights violated the Sherman Antitrust Act. But the ruling came thirty years too late to help Pennsylvania.

On December 22, 1951, with Penn's role in the television debate still fresh in the minds of many, the Ivy presidents convened in New

\textsuperscript{46} Franny Murray to Hugh C. Willett, June 6, 1951, in UPA 4, lot no. 2024, box 53, folder—"Department of Intercollegiate Athletics, 1950-1955 (Television, III)."
\textsuperscript{47} See UPA 4, lot no. 2024, box 53, folder— "Department of Intercollegiate Athletics, 1950-1955 (Television, II)."
\textsuperscript{48} \textit{The New York Herald-Tribune}, June 8, 1951.
\textsuperscript{49} See UPA 4, lot no. 2024, box 53, folder— "Department of Intercollegiate Athletics, 1950-1955 (Television, II)."
\textsuperscript{50} Hugh C. Willett to Harold E. Stassen, June 7, 1951, in UPA 4, lot no. 2024, box 53, folder—"Department of Intercollegiate Athletics, 1950-1955 (Television, V)."
York again to discuss athletic policy. After the feeling-out session in April, the presidents came to the December meeting prepared to take action. They voted to assume policy-making powers over a wide-ranging number of football issues which had previously been delegated to the athletic directors, including authority over length of seasons, and the timing and extent of fall and spring practices.

The question of spring football practice was the most important item in this package. Most college football teams held practice for six-to-eight weeks in the spring, and then again for four-to-six weeks in the fall before the start of a season. The Ivy Committee on Administration, which was comprised of the eight Ivy athletic directors, had met on December 13 and voted to limit spring practice in the Ivies to just four weeks, a move designed to prevent an over-emphasis on football. This vote was unanimous, with Yale abstaining because that school had already banned spring practice entirely. There was very little sentiment among the athletic directors to follow Yale's lead and abolish spring practice entirely, because such a move would cripple the ability of the Ivy schools to compete outside of the league, against opponents who had been practicing together for at least twice as long. As the 7-0 vote attests, there was rare agreement in the Ivy League that a spring football ban would not be in the best interests of the member schools.

But on January 25, 1952, when the Ivy presidents convened for the third time in nine months to discuss athletic policy, they disregarded the advice of their athletic directors and passed a ban on spring football practice. "It was agreed," the minutes of that meeting read, "to abolish spring football practice because of the peculiar pressures

51 The Ivy presidents were clearly displeased with Stassen's television crusade, claiming that while he may have been right in principle, his method had done "incalculable harm and created resentment that had not subsided." Ralph Morgan to Harold E. Stassen, Dec. 6, 1951, in UPA 4, lot no. 2024, box 53, folder—"Department of Intercollegiate Athletics, 1950-1955 (Ivy League, IV)."

52 James Conant to Harold E. Stassen, Feb. 4, 1952, in UPA 4, lot no. 2024, box 53, folder—"Department of Intercollegiate Athletics, 1950-1955 (Ivy League, IV)." This letter contained a copy of the minutes of the January 25 Ivy League presidents' meeting.

53 Franny Murray to Harold E. Stassen, Dec. 21, 1951, in UPA 4, lot no. 2024, box 53, folder—"Department of Intercollegiate Athletics, 1950-1955 (Ivy League, IV)."
on football and the desire to avoid the intensity of athletic specialization with its consequent effects on both players and coaches."

Six votes were required to pass a binding resolution at an Ivy president’s meeting, and the *Philadelphia Inquirer* correctly reported on February 14 that Princeton and Cornell had voted against the spring practice ban. That meant that Pennsylvania’s Harold Stassen had voted for the ban. “We had to decide whether we were going to be in with the Ivy League,” Stassen said recently, explaining his affirmative vote on the spring practice ban. “[Primarily] it was a gesture to allay criticism. It was a matter of going along with the others.”

In return for his vote on the spring practice ban, Stassen received one very important concession for Pennsylvania—an end to the Ivy boycott. At Stassen’s insistence, the Ivy presidents agreed to a provision which read: “Beginning in the fall of 1953, each institution agrees to play every other institution in the group at least once every five years.” After one very tense year, the boycott was over and Pennsylvania’s standing within the Ivy League was reaffirmed.

The 1952 agreement marks the true beginnings of the Ivy League, primarily because it was the first Ivy policy paper to reveal the modern Ivy League athletic philosophy. This philosophy contains definite elements of defeatism. In signing the Ivy Group Agreement of 1952, the Ivy presidents were admitting that they could not control collegiate football as long as it remained the incredibly popular, incredibly lucrative event that it was. The only alternative was to make it less popular and less lucrative, and that is the true motivation behind the spring practice ban and many of the other deflationary provisions that the Ivy presidents enacted.

The 1952 Pennsylvania-Notre Dame game, which was played to a 7-7 tie, drew over 80,000 paying spectators to Franklin Field. Franny Murray recalls being told by A.M. Greenfield, a prominent Philadelphia businessman, that the economic impact of that game on

54 James Conant to Harold E. Stassen, Feb. 4, 1952, in UPA 4, lot no. 2024, box 53, folder—“Department of Intercollegiate Athletics, 1950-1955 (Ivy League, IV).”
56 Interview with Harold E. Stassen, March 4, 1986.
57 Ibid.
the City of Philadelphia was greater than that of Christmas and New Years’ Day combined. The 1952 football team generated revenue in excess of $500,000 for the university and football netted a profit of well over $300,000, enough to subsidize all of Penn’s other athletic teams and leave the school with a $75,000 athletic surplus to boot. Within the Ivy League, Pennsylvania’s financial success with football was preeminent. But it was hardly unusual. The Ivy League presidents believed that as long as enormous economic importance could be attached to college football, the game would be, at best, “a type of public spectacle” that worked in opposition to “the essential educational purposes” of an Ivy League institution. At worst, it would create an environment where there would be room and motivation for abuses of the system that they had worked so hard to erect. Fearing this more than anything else, the Ivy League gave up on big-time football.

The University of Pennsylvania went along with the Ivy League in its de-emphasis of football because Penn valued its affiliation with the league more than it valued the rewards of maintaining a national athletic profile. Maybe it would be possible to create a historical balance sheet that showed on one side the assets the university has gained from its membership in the Ivy League, and on the other the liabilities it has incurred from its de-emphasis of football. Such an exercise would undoubtedly show that, given a choice, Stassen made the right one in opting to keep the university in the Ivy League. But this sort of an exercise fails to recognize that Pennsylvania could have avoided making such a choice through the early 1950s had Stassen exercised a more restrained modus operandi and a more developed political sense.

Today, the University of Pennsylvania remains a member of the Ivy League and its athletic teams compete in twenty-eight sports. After going twenty-three years without an Ivy League football cham-

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58 Interview with Franny Murray, March 23, 1986.
59 “Sources of Estimated Income and Expense, Department of Intercollegiate Athletics, 1952-1953,” in UPA 4, lot no. 2025, box 54, folder—“Department of Intercollegiate Athletics, 1950-1955 (Ivy League, VIII).”
60 Intercollegiate Agreement, Nov. 20, 1945, in UPA 4, lot no. 2025, box 54, folder—“Department of Intercollegiate Athletics, 1950-1955 (Ivy League, I).”
pionship, Penn’s teams have shared in or won the five titles from 1982 to 1986. Despite the success, football games rarely draw more than 25,000 fans to Franklin Field nowadays. Along with the decline in spectator interest, Pennsylvania (and the rest of the Ivy League) has lost its position of leadership on the national intercollegiate athletic front. Universities such as Duke, Stanford, and Michigan—which combine outstanding academic curricula with nationally successful athletic programs—have emerged through the past three decades in the national consciousness as the models and outstanding examples of how academics and athletics can and should be integrated. Their gain is Pennsylvania’s loss, and the legacy of the formation of the Ivy League.

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