

(6.0 tackles for the game) and a bunch of juniors: Koran and defensive back Scott Peters (5.0 tackles apiece), plus defensive back Sean Ahern and tackle Doug Webb (4.0 tackles apiece). They helped the Crimson gain the field position that set up the game-turning play.

On third and eight from the Brown 43, Hosch handed the ball to Stanton, who bolted off right tackle, then cut back. Seconds later, he was in the end zone. (Brown coach Phil Estes later lamented what might have been: "We had the right defense called, and should have blown it up right at the point of attack.") Senior Ben Falloon kicked the point to make it 14-13.

On Brown's next series, Duberg (for the second straight week) made a play, stuffing Bruins back Andrew Coke on a third-and-two. With 13:47 left in the game, Harvard got the ball back...on its own three-yard line. Now Hosch showed his resourcefulness. He wasn't worried, later saying, "I know if we can execute, we can move the ball." Making like John Elway, he got the ball down to the Brown five, the key play coming on a beautiful crossing pattern executed by Firkser that resulted in a 34-yard gain. On third and goal from the five, Hosch was harassed but coolly tossed the ball out of harm's way, allowing senior Andrew Flesher to kick a 16-yard field goal that gave the Crimson a 16-14 lead.

On the Crimson's final drive—87 yards that chewed up 4:37—Fischer deftly worked the Brown flanks and hooked up with Hosch for five receptions. With third and goal from the Brown three, Hosch faked a pitch and ran it in himself to give Harvard a 22-14 lead. Moments later, junior defensive back Chris Evans salted it away with an interception.

Fischer's 12 catches doubled his previous game high, achieved twice (the prior week against Holy Cross, and in 2013 against San Diego). He credited his rapport with Hosch to "lots of reps in practice," adding that "we came into the game clicking."

The next week, the injuries to Hempel and Stanton were sufficiently aggravating to keep them from making the trip to Washington, D.C., for Harvard's first football game ever against Georgetown. Again, Casten was ready. "I always have that 'next guy up' mentality," he said afterward. With Hosch methodically running the attack (20-of-25 passing) and the offensive line gouging enormous holes,

**Only 4:09 minutes into the Holy Cross game, surprise Crimson starter Andrew Casten scored the season's first points—and the first of his three touchdowns—on a three-yard plunge. He averaged nine yards a carry.**

Casten ran for 139 yards and topped his performance against Holy Cross by scoring four times in a 34-3 win. His four rushing touchdowns were one shy of the Crimson single-game record set by Tom Ossman '52 in 1951 against Brown.

From these first three games, Crimson supporters found much to like, especially the efforts of the fill-ins. But there were concerns: the first-half funks; the absence of a deep passing game; and a kicking unit that was making each extra point and field goal an adventure.

More ominously, defending co-champion Princeton, led by quarterback Quinn Epperly (2013 Ivy League Player of the Year), again was scoring in bunches, while Yale, recently somnolent, was giving every sign of a great awakening, especially with an overtime upset of Army.

In other words, just as in olden times, it might again come down to the Big Three. Somewhere, T.R. was smacking his lips.

**TIDBITS:** In Harvard's Norman Hayes and Yale's running back Deon Randall, The Game this year for the first time will boast two African-American captains....A crowd of 15,132 attended the opener against Holy Cross on Friday, September 19. That was down from the 17,256 who had shown up



for the 2013 home opener against Brown, played on a Saturday night. The victory over the Crusaders ran the Crimson's record in home games under the lights to 8-0....Preseason polls tabbed Princeton to win the Ivy League, with Harvard a close second. Dartmouth was third, followed by

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Penn and Yale....Penn's Al Bagnoli has announced that this season, his twenty-third with the Quakers, will be his last. His final game at Franklin Field on November 15 will, somewhat fittingly, be against the Crimson: with Bagnoli's retirement, Harvard's Tim Murphy will become the dean of Ivy football coaches.

—DICK FRIEDMAN

Dick Friedman '73 spent two decades as an editor and writer at Sports Illustrated.

## Rooks and Reverse Layups

*The Ivies' top player, Wesley Saunders, anticipates better—and more.*

**CHESS** was the game Ed Saunders, father of Wesley Saunders '15, recommended to his son and played with him: chess, the father said, would teach young Wes to think a few steps ahead. Apparently it worked, and not just with pawns and bishops. Last spring, in Harvard's third-round game against Michigan State in the NCAA basketball tournament, the Spartans threw an in-bounds pass to star power forward Adreian Payne (now with the Atlanta Hawks). "I was on the help side," Saunders recalls—the area

of the court away from the ball, on defense. When the pass came to Payne, "I was able to tap the ball away from him, and out of nowhere Steve [Moundou-Missi '15] grabs it and goes running down the sideline for a dunk. It was one of the great plays."

Moundou-Missi's thunderous jam over a Spartan defender narrowed the gap to 55-51 and electrified the crowd. Moments later, Saunders picked off another pass and drove the ball home to tie the game at 55. Soon, the Crimson shook the house by tak-



ing a 62-60 lead. The heavily favored Spartans eventually regrouped to prevail at the end, 80-73. But the centerpiece of that glorious Harvard run had been Saunders and his anticipation of where the throw-in might go—a skill honed at the chessboard. “The reason I am a good defender is my anticipation,” he explains. “Knowing where the pass is going to go.”

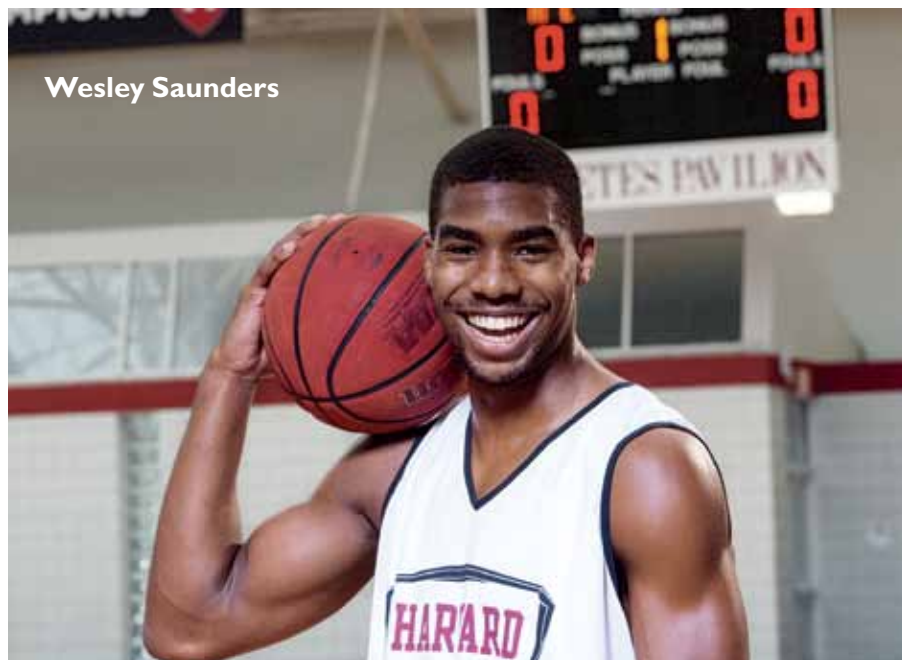
Anticipation plays a big role in many sports: it enables athletes to get the jump on the competition, sometimes quite literally. To rebound well, “you don’t need to be the highest jumper,” Saunders says. “It’s more about positioning, knowing where the ball will go when it hits off the rim.” For example, a shot from the corner, with no backboard to deflect it, typically bounces toward the opposite corner of the court.

Anticipation embraces foreknowledge of what opponents are likely to do in certain situations—or preparing for your own move by repositioning them. “Watch Dennis Rodman,” Saunders advises, naming one of the NBA’s greatest rebounders. “He would use his butt to push the defender back, and then just grab the ball. He had position.”

On offense, “I like reverse layups more than dunks,” Saunders reports. “I enjoy the finesse part of the game. When I used to play tennis, I was always doing trick shots.” He also likes spin moves, so he prefers to receive the ball in the middle of the court, where he can spin either way.

There are several types of layup: the classic layup that angles the ball off the backboard; the finger roll, in which the player rolls the ball off his fingers and over the rim. The reverse layup is probably the most stylish. To execute it, Saunders drives with the ball toward one side of the basket, and the defender “expects you to dunk, so he jumps as high as he can. Then you go under him” and lay the ball in from the other side—the “reverse” part—of the hoop. “He’s incredibly crafty,” says head coach Tommy Amaker. “Wes can move to the other side of the hoop while he’s in the air—and he’ll put English on it, too.”

Saunders has parlayed his finesse and anticipation into a bushel of points for Harvard. As a sophomore, he led the Ivy League in scoring, averaging 16.2 points per game, and last season he was Ivy League Player of the Year. He joined the Crimson’s career 1,000-point club in that Michigan State game and currently ranks thirty-first in all-time Harvard scoring,



with a full season yet to play. He is so fluid and productive on offense that many underestimate his excellent defense; his 55 steals as a sophomore, for example, rank seventh in team history. “Wes is one of the best all-around players in the country,” says Amaker, “and he has been the best in our conference for some time.”

Though he grew up only five minutes from the L.A. Lakers’ Staples Center, Saunders has no favorite team: “I just like good basketball.” He does learn from his favorite players, like Zach Randolph of the Mem-

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phis Grizzlies, a savvy rebounder. “He never really jumps,” Saunders says. “But he knows about positioning and angles.”

Saunders grew up in a highly athletic family. His mother, Ramona Robinson, remains an excellent tennis player; his father played football at the University of Iowa, where the couple met. Uncle John Wesley Saunders played free safety for the Los Angeles Rams of the National Football League and sister Akilah excelled at tennis. Wesley played basketball at Windward School in Los Angeles. “When I got there, we were very bad,” he recalls, but with his arrival and the addition of a few other talented players they won the California Interscholastic Federation champi-

onship in his sophomore and senior years. As a teenager he had to work hard to develop his outside game, because as a boy he had always been the biggest kid and so played center by default. “It slowed down my development,” he says.

He has caught up, and then some. As a Harvard freshman, Saunders played few minutes, but in the pivotal summer before sophomore year, “I worked out harder than I ever had.” (He is now a six-foot, five-inch, 215-pound shooting guard, with the strength to fight through screens.) That summer, the Crimson squad’s trip to Italy to compete against European professional teams proved another major learning experience. “You are up against players who are, arguably, more talented,” he says. “It is a different style of play. You always try to steal a little bit of somebody you come up against.”

Stealing like that serves Saunders’s major goal: becoming a fine all-around player. The sociology concentrator hopes to pursue that ambition next year in professional basketball. This winter, some pro scouts might discern a few of his underrated talents—like passing. “I don’t think people have really noticed, but I *do* like to pass the ball,” he says, grinning. “To find a teammate wide open, or throw up an alley-oop pass for a dunk—that feels great. The way we play, we try to get everyone to touch the ball. Everyone knows they’ll get the rock sooner or later. It raises your level of play—and it’s a lot more fun.”

—CRAIG LAMBERT