



2025 Villanova Football Clip File



Table of Contents

1. Braden Reed makes a name for himself in Year 1 with Villanova: ‘He’s not a freshman anymore’	2-3
<i>Philadelphia Inquirer Dylan Johnson December 18, 2025</i>	
2. Fall River native with NFL dreams contributing to Villanova squad headed to FCS Championship Semifinals	4
<i>Fall River Reporter Ken Paiva December 16, 2025</i>	
3. ‘Resilient’ Villanova escapes early hole to upset Tarleton State, reach semis	5-6
<i>Delaware County Daily Times Matthew DeGeorge December 13, 2025</i>	
4. Villanova is playing its best complementary football at the right time: ‘We have a good nucleus’	7-8
<i>Philadelphia Inquirer Katie Lewis December 12, 2025</i>	
5. Mark Ferrante made Villanova into a regular playoff contender. Can it advance past the second round?	9-10
<i>Philadelphia Inquirer Dylan Johnson December 5, 2025</i>	
6. Local college football roundup: Villanova and E.S. South’s Sapp up next for Lehigh	11
<i>Lehigh Valley Live Corky Blake December 3, 2025</i>	
7. ‘Disrespected’ Villanova gives Harvard rude welcome to FCS Playoffs	12-14
<i>Delaware County Daily Times Matthew DeGeorge November 29, 2025</i>	
8. ‘We over me’: Mainland Regional grad sets Villanova rushing record: Must Win	15-16
<i>Press of Atlantic City Mike McGarry November 16, 2025</i>	
9. Ahead of CAA finale, Mark Ferrante wants Villanova ‘to end that era the appropriate way’	17-18
<i>Philadelphia Inquirer Katie Lewis November 14, 2025</i>	
10. Villanova’s Ja’Briel Mace hears from Brian Westbrook after breaking former Eagle’s record	19-20
<i>Philadelphia Inquirer Dylan Johnson November 14, 2025</i>	
11. Wildcat Watch: Luke Colella	21-22
<i>The Villanovan Genna Cottingham November 5, 2025</i>	
12. Villanova’s Pat McQuaide and Luke Colella have formed instant chemistry on a tight-knit team	23-24
<i>Philadelphia Inquirer Dylan Johnson October 25, 2025</i>	
13. Shane Hartzell has been the rock of Villanova’s defense. His goal in this final season? Leave a legacy.	25-26
<i>Philadelphia Inquirer Dylan Johnson October 10, 2025</i>	
14. Villanova’s new QB is all about leadership: ‘I want to just show these guys how much I care’	27-28
<i>Philadelphia Inquirer Katie Lewis October 1, 2025</i>	
15. Villanova’s David Avit was destined to play football for the Wildcats. He’s sure of that now.	29-30
<i>Philadelphia Inquirer Dylan Johnson September 26, 2025</i>	
16. Behind The Viral Villanova Touchdown Against Penn State	31-32
<i>The Villanovan Genna Cottingham September 18, 2025</i>	
17. Australian kicker Luke Larsen, Villanova’s new punter, isn’t letting his age define him	33-35
<i>Philadelphia Inquirer Devin Jackson September 10, 2025</i>	
18. Villanova looks to make a statement in its last football season in the Coastal Athletic Association	36-37
<i>Philadelphia Inquirer Tyler Delpercio August 27, 2025</i>	
19. Villanova Football’s Summer Grind: Freshman QB Hudson Heinemann Sets the Tone for 2025	38
<i>WJHL EIN Presswire August 5, 2025</i>	



2025 Villanova Football Clip File



Braden Reed makes a name for himself in Year 1 with Villanova: ‘He’s not a freshman anymore’

Philadelphia Inquirer | Dylan Johnson | December 18, 2025

Villanova receiver Braden Reed motioned to the backfield and awaited the snap against Tarleton State last Saturday in the FCS quarterfinal. He took a handoff and ran in the opposite direction, but instead of heading downfield, he threw a 27-yard pass toward the end zone.

The pass landed directly over the shoulder and into the hands of Villanova receiver Lucas Kopecky for a touchdown in the Wildcats’ 26-21 victory. Reed became the first Villanova receiver to throw a touchdown pass since Jaaron Hayek in 2019.

“It was cool,” Reed said. “I was appreciative that the coaches had so much trust in me as a freshman to throw a ball in the quarterfinals of the playoffs. I think that’s something really special that they were able to trust me with that.”

Reed, a freshman, has been a standout on Villanova’s special teams and recently on offense. For a majority of the season, he led the FCS in average punt return yards. In the last two games, he has caught what ended up being game-winning touchdowns against Lehigh and Tarleton State.

Now, Reed and Villanova are gearing up to host an FCS semifinal game on Saturday for the first time since 2009 (7:30 p.m., ESPN2). No. 12 Villanova will take on unseeded Illinois State with a trip to the FCS championship on the line.

“He’s not a freshman anymore,” Villanova head coach Mark Ferrante said after the Tarleton State game. “I don’t even know what our overall record is, to be honest, but he’s got that many games under his belt now. So he’s pretty much moved up to be a sophomore, as far as playing time. He’s been able to come in and pick the system up really well. So you’re seeing the fruits of his labor. He works really hard, and the results are now showing up on the field.”

Ferrante has noticed Reed’s work ethic. The freshman is one of the first guys on the field for practice and the last one to leave. After morning practice, Reed will return in the afternoon to take catches from one of the quarterbacks or the JUGS Machine.

Recently, Reed was named to the Stats Perform FCS Freshman All-America team and the 2025 FCS Football Central Freshman All-America team. He has tallied 31 receptions for 462 receiving yards and three touchdowns. On special teams, he has returned 20 punts for 298 yards, which currently ranks No. 6 in the FCS.

In high school, the graduate of Pope John Paul II made first-team all-state, was a three-time first-team all-conference honoree, and Pioneer Athletic Conference (PAC) Player of the Year. He was efficient on offense as well as punt returns.

Reed grew up around football at an early age. His father, Scott Reed, played football at West Chester and was a high school football coach. Scott was his son’s head coach for three years at Pope John Paul II.



2025 Villanova Football Clip File



Braden Reed makes a name for himself in Year 1 with Villanova: ‘He’s not a freshman anymore’

Philadelphia Inquirer | Dylan Johnson | December 18, 2025

“It’s been huge for me,” Reed said of having his father as a coach. “I wouldn’t be where I am without him. He’s one of my biggest fans and biggest haters. He’ll be the first one to humble me. He calls it the honest report. He tells me how it is. He’s very good at just keeping me grounded, keeping me humble and hungry, and just always wanting to strive for more.”

In his senior year at Pope John Paul II, Reed helped his team earn an appearance in the PIAA state playoffs. While he has experience of playing in games late into the season, Reed says he is not thinking too much about what’s at stake.

As of now, he still gets to do what he loves for another week.

“I’ve always kind of subscribed to the idea that every game is kind of the same,” Reed said. “At the end of the day, we’re playing a kid’s game, and we just happen to take it really serious. I try to not look at any of the outside stuff and just enjoy the fact that I get to play a game in December. I think that’s one of the coolest things ever. Really, the reward of the playoffs is getting to play more football. As much as championships are cool, getting to do what you love longer is something that drives me.”

Reed describes himself as “a big family guy,” and when making his college decision, he wanted to stay close to home. After every home game, he goes back home to spend time with his family.

This weekend, his family will be in the stands as usual, but this time there will be a larger crowd in support of Reed. His former high school teammates will be home from college for winter break, and some will be there in support. Reed’s uncle Tom, who has not missed a game since his freshman year of high school, will also be in the stands.

While the game this Saturday is not an average one, Reed and the team are treating it like it is any other week of the season.

“I think [we] keep everything the same as any other week,” Reed said. “Go 1-0. It’s about the guys in our locker room, and one of the big things that we’ve harped on all year is to protect the brand, protect the ‘V.’”



2025 Villanova Football Clip File



Fall River native with NFL dreams contributing to Villanova squad headed to FCS Championship Semifinals

Fall River Reporter | Ken Paiva | December 16, 2025

A Fall River football standout has become an integral part of a college football team that is making waves.

Jason Hall is a sophomore linebacker for the 12-2 Villanova Wildcats (FCS Division I), hailing from the scholarship city.

Standing at 6'2" and weighing around 230 pounds, Hall is recognized for his strong instincts and physical play at linebacker.

He was a standout running back at B.M.C. Durfee High School where he rushed for over 1,000 yards as a sophomore and dominated as a junior (1,035 yards and 16 TDs in five games).

Hall transferred to Suffield Academy in Connecticut for his senior year, earning All-League, All-State, and Boston Globe All-Scholastic honors.

He verbally committed to Villanova in 2022, fulfilling a lifelong goal of playing Division I football.

The Wildcats squad reached the Football Championship Subdivision semifinals after Saturday's 26-21 win against favored Tarleton State. Hall had 6 tackles, 2 of them solo, to go with 1 sack of the quarterback.

#11 will continue chasing those NFL dreams with a championship birth on the line as Villanova, who is favored, faces off against the 11-4 Illinois State Redbirds at home on Saturday at 7:30 p.m. on ESPN2.



2025 Villanova Football Clip File



‘Resilient’ Villanova escapes early hole to upset Tarleton State, reach semis

Delaware County Daily Times | Matthew DeGeorge | December 13, 2025

Villanova’s trip to Tarleton State for Saturday’s FCS quarterfinal couldn’t have started much worse.

Villanova’s defense couldn’t have finished it much better, with a little assist from the replay booth.

The 12th-seeded Wildcats spotted No. 4 Tarleton State 14 points in the game’s first 7:30, then held the highest scoring offense in FCS to seven points the rest of the way to advance to the FCS semifinals with a 26-21 win.

Villanova will host a semifinal next Saturday against Illinois State, which pulled its third straight upset with a 42-31 win over U.C. Davis.

Braden Reed, who threw a 27-yard touchdown pass to Lucas Kopekcy in the first half, caught an 11-yarder from Pat McQuaide with 12:49 left. It’s the second straight week Reed has scored a game-winning touchdown, his 28-yard reception with 2:56 left the decider against Lehigh last week.

Villanova’s defense had two more holds to get, forcing a punt, then a turnover on downs at the end of a 14-play, 76-yard Tarleton State drive when a fourth-and-6 catch by Trevon West was ruled a touchdown on the field but overruled on video review as out of bounds.

“I’m just super proud of the group we have,” senior linebacker Shane Hartzell said. “We’re just very resilient. Going down 14-0 at the start is kind of tough. But we keep clawing back, we keep fighting. We saw the offense moving the ball. We just trusted them, and they were going to put the ball in the end zone. We’ve just got to do our part and let them do their part.”

The win sends Villanova to the FCS semifinals for the first time since 2010 and the fourth time in program history. Its lone win came in 2009, when the Wildcats won the national championship. Villanova had lost its last four FCS quarterfinal games by an average of 7.8 points per game.

Ja’Briel Mace led Villanova with 18 carries for 151 yards as the Wildcats (12-2) gained 219 yards on the ground. McQuaide was 16-for-33 for 180 yards. Luke Colella caught five balls for 71 yards, Reed five for 42.

Villanova’s start was disastrous. The Texans (12-2) entered leading FCS this season in turnovers forced at 38. No. 39 came when McQuaide was picked off on first-and-goal at the 7 by Blake Smith, tossing an ill-advised, “pretty awful” underhand flip into traffic.

The Texans cashed in on their first snap, Victor Gabalis going for the downs and hitting Peyton Kramer on a slant for an 80-yard touchdown.

Villanova went three and out. Luke Larsen’s punt was blocked by Omar Emmons. The Texans needed five plays to get in from the 12, Daniel Greek bulling for two on fourth-and-1 from the 3, then finishing it a play later for a 14-0 lead.

Villanova, however, was not down for long.



2025 Villanova Football Clip File



‘Resilient’ Villanova escapes early hole to upset Tarleton State, reach semis

Delaware County Daily Times | Matthew DeGeorge | December 13, 2025

“It’s about perseverance and resiliency,” head coach Mark Ferrante said. “And this team has shown that, not just today, but all year long. Really proud of these guys, not only to my left, but everyone in that locker room.”

A 16-play drive, covering 57 yards and 9:34 settled the game down, even if it resulted in only a 31-yard Jack Barnum field goal to stop the bleeding.

Anthony Hawkins picked off Gabalis on Tarleton’s next offensive snap. The short field let Ferrante dig into the bag of tricks, Reed taking a handoff and finding a wide open Kopecky in the corner of the end zone for a 27-yard score. The extra point was blocked, bringing the deficit to 14-9.

“Just continue to fight, continue to go,” McQuaide said. “It’s a long, long game. We saw that today. We go down early and we just kept going. It was never any panic. We’ve seen that all year. We went down last week. We went down in games in the regular season. We just know that if we keep going, we keep playing and keep playing hard, it’s going to work itself out.”

A sack by Hartzell and Richie Kimmel (Archbishop Carroll All-Delco) short-circuited the next Tarleton State drive, which had reached the 38. After an exchange of punts, McQuaide found Chris Colby for 19 yards, setting up Barnum’s 42-yard field goal and a 14-12 deficit at halftime.

The Texans, averaging 44 points per game, got back on track in the third quarter. Gabalis, who finished 12-for-23 for 210 yards, hit Marquis Willis for 39, then West for a 15-yard score and a 21-12 edge.

Mace supplied the answer personally, running for 21 yards, then hitting a ferocious cutback to the left to break a 47-yard TD to get the score back at 21-19 within 45 seconds.

A Jason Hall sack forced the Texans to punt with five minutes left in the third.

It was a heavy dose of Mace on the next series, with a field-flipping 26-yarder in the middle. Isaiah Ragland spelled him with a 16-yarder to get to first-and-goal. On third-and-goal on the 11, McQuaide hit Reed on a quick slant, and the wideout found a way over the goal line for a 26-21 lead.

That was all Villanova’s defense needed. It sacked Gabalis four times and came up with nine tackles for loss. The Texans’ next drive reached the 42 before Omari Bursey threw Gabalis for an 11-yard loss.

Three third-down conversions got Tarleton State to the 15 on their final series, a 14-play march starting at their 13. Gabalis was incomplete on a pair of targets for West, then scrambled and found West in the end zone, darting toward the left sideline. A decisive push from defensive back Damill Bostic while West was securing the catch kept his right foot from hitting inbounds, as the left landed out of bounds.

Villanova still needed one first down to drain the clock, supplied by McQuaide tossing to the freshman Reed for 11 yards, then six and cuing kneel downs.



2025 Villanova Football Clip File



Villanova is playing its best complementary football at the right time: ‘We have a good nucleus’

Philadelphia Inquirer | Katie Lewis | December 12, 2025

Throughout the season, coach Mark Ferrante has aimed for Villanova to play “complementary football.”

He saw that concept come to fruition in the final three minutes of Villanova’s 14-7 victory over host Lehigh last Saturday in the second round of the FCS playoffs.

It started with Lehigh going three-and-out late in the fourth quarter. On the next drive, Villanova freshman wide receiver Braden Reed scored a 28-yard touchdown. The energy transferred back to Villanova’s defense, as graduate defensive lineman Obinna Nwobodo forced a fumble in the red zone during Lehigh’s final possession.

“[Lehigh] shut us down for a good portion of the game, but our defense showed up,” said graduate quarterback Pat McQuaide. “Our defense picked us up when we were down and gave us short fields. We were fortunate that both our touchdowns came off of huge stops and turnovers. Those guys have been incredible all year.”

When graduate linebacker Shane Hartzell recovered the fumble, the Wildcats’ sideline erupted. It was ultimately the game-winning moment for Villanova as it escaped Lehigh.

“It’s not just the defense getting excited, the whole sideline is getting excited,” Ferrante said. “I think the team is doing a great job of playing together, playing for each other, and playing complementary football. That’s what needs to continue.”

No. 12 seed Villanova (11-2) looks to carry its momentum of a 10-game winning streak into its Football Championship Subdivision quarterfinal against fourth-seeded Tarleton State in Stephenville, Texas, on Saturday (noon, ESPN).

‘Let’s do this together’

Graduate players like Nwobodo and Hartzell form the backbone of Villanova’s defense, guiding the team through one of its most successful seasons in recent history.

Ferrante credited the team’s level-headed leadership with generating a thrilling finish against Lehigh.

“When we went into the locker room at halftime in past years, sometimes the defensive guys would complain about how we haven’t scored. But there was none of that,” Ferrante said. “There was no blame. There was no finger-pointing. It was all, ‘Let’s do this together and play a better second half collectively.’ Fortunately, we were able to do that.”

Villanova’s defense relied on its veteran players early in the season, but the secondary is made up of primarily underclassmen. Heading deeper into the playoffs, Ferrante no longer sees the youth of the unit as a potential weakness.

“[The secondary] is where we’ve made some of the biggest growth this year, because that was what everyone was worried about,” Ferrante said. “They don’t lack confidence; they just lacked experience.”



2025 Villanova Football Clip File



Villanova is playing its best complementary football at the right time: ‘We have a good nucleus’

Philadelphia Inquirer | Katie Lewis | December 12, 2025

Some of the graduate players spearheading the offense are newcomers this season.

McQuaide took over the starting position as a transfer from Nicholls State, and wide receiver Luke Colella, a Princeton transfer, is averaging a team-high 72.5 receiving yards a game.

“We have a good nucleus of guys who have been here for five or six years,” Ferrante said. “But [McQuaide and Colella] just add a different level of maturity. Even though they’re first-year guys with our program, they bring different perspectives because they’ve been somewhere else.”

Underdog mentality

The Wildcats enter their third game of the playoffs as the underdog.

In the first round, Villanova trounced Harvard, 52-7, despite some predictions saying the Crimson would win. The victory over Lehigh in Bethlehem, Pa., gave Villanova a further confidence boost.

“We’ve been an underdog every week so far,” McQuaide said. “So we kind of embrace it. It doesn’t really matter. Once the ball is kicked off on Saturday, it’s a four-quarter fight, and we’ll be ready to go.”

Villanova is up against its toughest challenge yet in Tarleton State (12-1), which has the most productive scoring offense in the nation, averaging 44.1 points per game.

“I don’t really see too many weaknesses in [Tarleton],” Ferrante said. “They score a lot of points, they play great defense, and they’re very opportunistic. They create a lot of turnovers.

“So I think what the keys to the game comes down to is who’s going to make the fewest mistakes, who’s going to hang on to the football, and not give the other team extra possessions.”



2025 Villanova Football Clip File



Mark Ferrante made Villanova into a regular playoff contender. Can it advance past the second round?

Philadelphia Inquirer | Dylan Johnson | December 5, 2025

Mark Ferrante wore his usual visor with a smile, but his plastic toothpick, which normally sticks out of the side of his mouth at practices, was missing.

It was Wednesday morning, and the Villanova coach walked off the field at Villanova Stadium after wrapping practice in preparation for his team's game against Lehigh in the second round of the FCS playoffs.

Despite the team's inexperience after losing more than a dozen starters to graduation, Villanova demolished Harvard, 52-7, last weekend and has won nine straight. Ferrante said postgame that his players might lack experience, but they never lacked confidence.

Ferrante, in his ninth year at the helm, and the program is making its fifth FCS playoff appearance in the last six seasons and 17th all-time. Ferrante has been around the team since 1987 and watched former head coach Andy Talley build the program from the ground up. That paid off in 2009, when Villanova won its lone FCS championship.

In the last three seasons, Villanova has won its first FCS playoff game and then fallen short in the second round. Last season, Villanova traveled to San Antonio, Texas, to face sixth-seeded Incarnate Word in the second round. The Wildcats held Incarnate Word, which last season averaged 33.6 points per game, to 13, but still lost, 13-6.

Now, Villanova is back in the second round, and Ferrante is tasked with guiding his team over that hurdle on Saturday noon (ESPN+) in Bethlehem, Pa.

Villanova's FBS game — against Penn State this season — and tough Coastal Athletic Association matchups helped prepare the team to play into December.

"Sometimes it comes down to the health of the team," Ferrante said. "If you look at last year against Incarnate Word, we're playing a ton of freshmen [defensive backs] in that game by the time we got to that point of the season. So right now, we're better than we were a year ago when it comes to the health of the team. I'm not looking to make excuses, because you have to go 1-0 each week. And this idea is to survive and advance."

Villanova has lost starters intermittently because of injuries this year. Notably, standout running back David Avit has missed the last three games with a knee injury. Ja'briel Mace and Isaiah Ragland stepped up with no issue, both rushing for career highs during that stretch. Mace even broke the program's 24-year-old single-game rushing record.

On defense, the team started the season without graduate linebacker Richie Kimmel and lost junior linebacker JR Strauss after the Penn State game.

During Villanova's 2009 championship season, meanwhile, it lost one notable starter to an injury.

While injuries are uncontrollable, execution is not, Ferrante said.



2025 Villanova Football Clip File



Mark Ferrante made Villanova into a regular playoff contender. Can it advance past the second round?

Philadelphia Inquirer | Dylan Johnson | December 5, 2025

“The bottom line is it has to come down to execution,” Ferrante said. “You have to go out and perform at a high level, regardless of who you’re playing, regardless of the weather conditions, regardless of the health of your team.”

Graduate linebacker Shane Hartzell has played in all of Villanova’s playoff games these past three seasons.

“The experience of Shane, I’m sure [the vets] talk to guys behind the scenes,” Ferrante said. “I think we have a good locker room right now. So I think there’s a lot of that going on that we really don’t even see as coaches, but it’s their practice habits that help as well. You have guys that just go out there and practice hard all the time, and that filters down into the young guys.

“So now you see some of our younger guys are having fairly good success. They see how practice is supposed to be, and then they follow suit, and then they end up becoming pretty good players.”

It has become a standard for Villanova to retain players for four years or more. Ten of Villanova’s starters last season were five-plus-year players.

“We just try to set a standard of being good students, good athletes, and good people,” Ferrante said. “Just work hard, be a good person, make good decisions, and good things will happen.

“That’s our approach when it comes to the classroom. That’s our approach when it comes to practice and playing. If you have a good locker room and you have a team that could lead themselves a little bit, there’s not a lot of drama.”

As college football coaches ride a merry-go-round of programs, Ferrante has not moved an inch from the Main Line, and that looks to be the case well into the future.

“If you love what you do, you love where you do it, and you love the people you do it with, that’s a win,” Ferrante said. “And that’s what this place has been for me.”



2025 Villanova Football Clip File



Local college football roundup: Villanova and E.S. South's Sapp up next for Lehigh

Lehigh Valley Live | Corky Blake | December 3, 2025

Villanova University rudely bounced Harvard from its first-ever NCAA FCS playoff appearance on Saturday with a 52-7 first-round victory. Senior safety Christian Sapp of East Stroudsburg South High School was an integral member of the Villanova's suffocating defense. Sapp contributed 5 tackles and returned an interception for 38 yards.

The win advanced Sapp and the Wildcats into the second round against unbeaten Patriot League champion Lehigh at noon, Saturday, at Goodman Stadium. Villanova (10-2), along with William & Mary, are leaving the Coastal Athletic Association to join the Patriot League next season. The Wildcats posted a 7-1 conference record and paced the CAA in rushing offense and a FCS-leading fewest turnovers (five). Lehigh led the Patriot League and FCS in rushing defense.

The 6-foot, 195-pound Sapp garnered All-CAA second-team honors. He enters Saturday's game third on the team with 55 tackles (37 solo), two pass breakups and a fumble recovery.

Fifth-seeded Lehigh will have to buck its recent trend against 12th-seeded Villanova. The Wildcats are 6-0 against the Mountain Hawks during coach Mark Ferrante's nine-year tenure including a 2023 season-opening 38-10 win at Goodman Stadium. Villanova enjoys a 14-5 lead in the series and has won the last 11 encounters.

This will be Lehigh's third home playoff game at Goodman Stadium, which opened in 1988. The Mountain Hawks defeated Hofstra in overtime in 2001 and lost to eventual national champion James Madison 14-13 in 2004. The winner of Saturday's game will advance to meet the victor of the Tarleton State-North Dakota contest.

Villanova's roster includes redshirt freshman kicker Luke Myers of Central Catholic. He converted a PAT in a win over Hampton this season.



2025 Villanova Football Clip File



‘Disrespected’ Villanova gives Harvard rude welcome to FCS Playoffs

Delaware County Daily Times | Matthew DeGeorge | November 29, 2025

RADNOR — Harvard’s first foray into the Division I Football Championships didn’t go well Saturday. Villanova’s offense saw to that.

The Wildcats rampaged out of the gates, led by 31 points at halftime and punished Harvard’s every miscue in a 52-7 win in the first round of the FCS playoffs.

Pat McQuaide threw for three touchdowns and ran for one.

Villanova ran up 512 yards of total offense, with 319 on the ground led by Isaiah Ragland (17 carries for a career-high 152 yards) and Ja’briel Mace (18 for 88). McQuaide hit Lucas Kopecky (30 yards), Luke Colella (29 yards) and Antonio Johnson (8 yards) for TDs on the way to 193 yards on 14-for-22 through the air.

Villanova’s defense limited Harvard to 213 yards of offense. It caused three turnovers, with interceptions by Newton Essiem and Christian Sapp.

The win sends No. 12 seed Villanova to next Saturday’s second round against No. 5 Lehigh.

The Crimson (9-2) was playing its first postseason game since the 1920 Rose Bowl, in the first year of Ivy League participation in this tournament. It didn’t seem quite ready for the moment.

“All the credit goes to Villanova,” said head coach Andrew Aurich, who added an apology to his fellow Ancient Eight mates for the effect their performance may have the league’s ability to earn two bids in the future. “They completely dominated us. They dominated us up front. They dominated us on the back end, both sides of the ball. Early in the game, when it is actually close enough, they made plays in critical situations. We were in similar ones. We didn’t make the plays.

“When a team executes at the level they were executing, and a team like us doesn’t execute at the level we were not executing, that’s when you end up with a score like we had today.”

It’s the third straight year and fourth in the last five that Villanova has won a first-round playoff game. It has won a game in the postseason in 11 of its last 13 FCS playoff trips. Saturday was the 23rd consecutive win at Villanova Stadium for the Wildcats.

The gulf in playoff experience was evident early.

“I think being here for the third year in a row, we know what playoff football is like,” Villanova and Archbishop Carroll All-Delco linebacker Richie Kimmel said. “We know the intensity and the execution needed to succeed in the playoffs.”

“We said that approaching playoffs is the same as any regular-season game,” Harvard running back DJ Gordon said. “There’s always more hype in a win-or-go home. It’s a different feeling. And since it’s our first year here and we’re kind of rookies in this playoff, we didn’t really know what to expect.”



2025 Villanova Football Clip File



'Disrespected' Villanova gives Harvard rude welcome to FCS Playoffs

Delaware County Daily Times | Matthew DeGeorge | November 29, 2025

Villanova dominated the first half. It collected 336 yards to Harvard's 33, winning the time of possession battle 22:07-7:53. Of those yards, 212 came on the ground.

Harvard entered seventh in the nation in rush defense, allowing an average of 105.5 yards per game. Villanova hit that number in the first quarter with 131 yards.

The Wildcats surpassed their season average of 178.6 midway through the second quarter. A Ragland burst with 5 minutes left in the first half took Harvard past its season-high of 189 yards allowed.

"I don't know, maybe people just stop trying to run against them as much as we thought we were going to try to run against them," Villanova coach Mark Ferrante said. "Statistically, they had a good run defense. But when we were watching the film, we felt we could attack them in the run game, and that's what we went out and did."

Harvard had allowed three rushing touchdowns in their first eight games and nine for the season. Ragland, McQuaide and Mace had the first total in the first half.

Villanova also shut down the Crimson's bread-and-butter passing attack.

Harvard quarterback Jaden Craig led an air attack that ranked ninth the nation in yardage per game at 291.5. Craig entered halftime 2-for-11 for 13 yards and two sacks for a loss of 12 yards. He finished 9-for-21 for 107 yards with a TD, two picks and three sacks. Gordon led the rushing attack with 10 carries for 59 yards.

The game pivoted early on a Harvard passing miscue. Villanova pounded the ball with Mace before Ragland broke a 45-yard touchdown for a 7-0 lead on the opening series.

Harvard looked set to get it right back, reaching the 28 for Craig to attempt a double-reverse flea flicker. Tight end Ryan Osborne was open in the end zone, but he bobbled the throw long enough for Villanova's Newton Essiem to close the distance and pin the ball against Osborne in the process of tackling him, emerging from the tangle with an interception and a touchback.

"I feel like that really changed the game and set the tone for the rest of the game," Kimmel said. "He made a great play on that ball. We trust in our young DBs, we trust in Newt to get that play made."

McQuaide orchestrated a 10-play, 80-yard drive that ended with a 30-yard touchdown to Kopecky on fourth-and-11, after Harvard's Austin-Jake Guillory dropped a sure interception on third down.

Jack Barnum made it 17-0 with a 29-yard field goal early in the second quarter.

The Wildcats got a short field when an Obinna Nwobodo (Delco Christian) tackle for loss short-circuited Harvard's series. McQuaide scrambled for a 10-yard score on Villanova's next possession, capping an eight-play, 65-yard march set up when Cam Henry dropped a Craig deep shot well behind the Villanova defense.

The Wildcats made it 31-0 on Mace's 5-yard rush with exactly 2:00 left to halftime.



2025 Villanova Football Clip File



'Disrespected' Villanova gives Harvard rude welcome to FCS Playoffs

Delaware County Daily Times | Matthew DeGeorge | November 29, 2025

Harvard re-established the run in the second half, gaining 116 yards in the quarter.

Craig found Jordan Harris for a 6-yard TD on fourth-and-goal to end the shutout bid. Villanova replied instantly, a four-play drive ending with McQuaide hitting Colella for a 29-yard TD.

The next time Villanova got a fourth-down shot, it stymied Harvard, Christian Sapp with a third-down tackle for loss and Capri Martin a sack on fourth. Converted lacrosse player Julian Glantz capped the scoring with a 5-yard run in the fourth for Villanova.

It was the final touch on what Ragland said was a week where Villanova clocked and channeled the disrespect coming its way.

"We don't like to be in the media and stuff like that, but we know we were getting a lot of disrespect, and we took that to heart, as we should," he said. "Going into this week, our mentality was just to dominate the whole game, all four quarters. That's what we did today."



2025 Villanova Football Clip File



‘We over me’: Mainland Regional grad sets Villanova rushing record: Must Win

Press of Atlantic City | Mike McGarry | November 16, 2025

Ja'Briel Mace experienced one of the greatest days in Villanova University football history last Saturday.

It got better when he shared it with others.

The 2023 Mainland Regional High School graduate rushed for a school record 291 yards in a 28-10 win over Towson University, breaking the mark of 287 set by retired Philadelphia Eagles star Brian Westbrook in 2001. Mace ran for four TDs, including an 82-yarder.

As part of the postgame, locker room celebration, the Villanova offensive and defensive linemen lifted the junior running back up on their shoulders. Mace loved seeing the excitement in his teammates' faces. He could see that the rushing record was about more than just him.

“I’ve gotten a lot of interviews and a lot of people are mentioning me, me, me,” he said. “I can’t do anything without the guys upfront and coaches believing me. I think Villanova does a really good job of installing the culture of ‘we over me.’”

The record continued what has been a breakout season for Mace. Success has not come easy for him. He ran for 283 yards in his first two seasons at Villanova. Until Saturday, when he carried 28 times, his previous season-high for carries was three. He got so many opportunities Saturday because two other Villanova running backs were dinged up.

Mace isn’t getting carried away with his sudden success.

“The most important thing I care about,” Mace said, “is winning games.”

It’s great to break a school rushing record. It’s even better to break the record if it’s held by a beloved former Eagles standout. Westbrook finished his Eagles career as the franchise’s all-time leader in total yards from scrimmage with 9,785 yards.

“To even be mentioned in the same conversation with Brian Westbrook is a blessing,” Mace said. “I’m not able to do anything I did on Saturday without the guys upfront.”

Mace emerged a standout as a Mainland freshman, rushing for 1,389 yards in 2019. He led Mainland to the Central Jersey Group IV title in 2022, the first of the Mustangs’ current streak of three straight sectional championships. But the Somers Point resident’s college career began slowly.

Mace first turned heads this season when he returned the second-half kickoff 100 yards for a TD in a 31-24 win over William & Mary on Sept. 26. Mace sprinted up the middle to midfield and then broke to the sideline, running untouched to the end zone. Mace said the Villanova coaches challenged the team and the kickoff return team at halftime of that contest. Mace has twice been the Colonial Athletic Association Special Teams Player of the Week this season.



2025 Villanova Football Clip File



‘We over me’: Mainland Regional grad sets Villanova rushing record: Must Win

Press of Atlantic City | Mike McGarry | November 16, 2025

“Ever since (William & Mary), I’ve had the mindset that I’m going to do whatever the coaches ask me to do,” he said. “If they want me to run the ball 28 times, I’ll do that. If they just want me returning kicks, I’ll do that. I just want to win football games.”

The rewards and recognition have rolled in for Mace since his performance Saturday.

Westbrook congratulated Mace on X, formerly known as twitter. Mace was named the FCS National Offensive Player of the Week.

“It’s been a little crazy,” Mace said. “Everything on social media. Everybody tagging me. I’ve been trying to block it out and really focus on Stony Brook this week.”

Villanova (7-2), which has won six straight, will host Stony Brook (3-3) at 1 p.m. Saturday. Villanova is in contention for an at-large bid to the FCS playoffs.

Mace’s success this season has come in part because he was patient and persevered through some early college struggles. That’s a rare thing in college sports today with what seems to be a consistently spinning transfer portal. Players who don’t play are often tempted to leave for another school.

Mace had to adapt both on and off the field at Villanova. He said he arrived at not with the expectation of being a standout player but with the mindset of wanting to learn from the veteran players and coaches.

“You get a real rude awakening when you come to college,” he said. “Everybody is good. Coming here, I really got humbled.”

So what made him stick it out?

“That’s just how life is,” he said. “I feel like you have to go through stuff to eventually get to where you want to be. It’s been crazy. From Mainland to now, it’s been a crazy ride.”

And it’s easier to handle the ups and downs of a college football career when you put the team above all else.

“It’s ‘we over me,’” Mace said. “That’s what’s been stuck in my mind ever since I got here.”



2025 Villanova Football Clip File



Ahead of CAA finale, Mark Ferrante wants Villanova ‘to end that era the appropriate way’

Philadelphia Inquirer | Katie Lewis | November 14, 2025

Standing in front of his team at the end of practice on Thursday, Villanova coach Mark Ferrante reminded his players of the extra significance of this Saturday’s home matchup.

Not only is Stony Brook the last Coastal Athletic Association opponent on the schedule, but Saturday’s game (1 p.m., FloSports) will be Villanova’s last regular-season contest as a member of the conference.

“Ever since 1988, we’ve been in this league playing under the flag of the CAA, and this is our last season with it,” Ferrante said. “I told the guys, ‘Let’s make sure we end that era the appropriate way and go out and play well.’”

The Wildcats, then led by coach Andy Talley, joined the FCS in 1985 after the program was reinstated. At the time, Villanova was part of the Yankee Conference, which evolved into what now is the CAA.

In June, Villanova announced its plans to leave the CAA, staying in the FCS but joining the Patriot League. It will move conferences for the 2026 season alongside CAA rival William & Mary. In its announcement, Villanova said the Patriot League’s members align more closely with the school academically and geographically.

Moving up

The Wildcats are one of the toughest teams in the CAA at No. 2 in the standings and looking to extend a six-game winning streak.

Villanova (7-2, 6-1 CAA) also has risen in national rankings throughout the season. The Wildcats broke into the FCS’s top 10 last week and now are No. 7 in the country, according to the AFCA FCS Coaches Poll.

While a win over Stony Brook is crucial to maintain its standing in the conference, Villanova’s 20-game home winning streak also is on the line. The Wildcats have not lost a game at Villanova Stadium since falling to Monmouth on Sept. 24, 2022.

“The energy is high, and we’re excited to be playing back at home,” Ferrante said. “It’s another CAA opponent, so you know they’re going to play hard, you know they’re going to be fast, and you know they’re going to be physical.”

Running back battle

One of Villanova’s most consistent strengths has been its ground attack. The Wildcats boast the second-best rushing offense in the CAA, averaging 174.1 yards per game. Three sophomore running backs make up the main rotation: David Avit, Isaiah Ragland, and Ja’briel Mace.

Circumstances changed last week against Towson, when Mace took over for Avit and Ragland, who both missed the second half with injuries. Despite lacking their usual offensive depth, the Wildcats delivered, and Mace made program history with 28 carries, 291 rushing yards, and four rushing touchdowns.



2025 Villanova Football Clip File



Ahead of CAA finale, Mark Ferrante wants Villanova ‘to end that era the appropriate way’

Philadelphia Inquirer | Katie Lewis | November 14, 2025

Stony Brook (5-5, 3-3 CAA) also prides itself on its run game, behind graduate running back Roland Dempster. Dempster averages 97.2 rushing yards per game, the second-most in the conference, and also is a solid receiver with 27.3 receiving yards per game.

The Seawolves have also been on an upward trajectory thanks to redshirt freshman quarterback Quinn Boyd, who took over the starting job midseason. He is coming off a CAA Rookie of the Week performance after completing 37 of 48 passes for 380 yards and three touchdowns at North Carolina A&T last week.

Ferrante is confident in his defense, which has grown throughout the season, to handle Dempster and the Stony Brook attack.

“You cannot simulate game experience, so the more games you get under your belt, the better you get, whether it’s the veteran offensive line coming back or the youth in the secondary,” Ferrante said. “Defensively, we’ve started playing better team football now that the young guys have gotten the experience that they didn’t have earlier in the season.”



2025 Villanova Football Clip File



Villanova's Ja'Briel Mace hears from Brian Westbrook after breaking former Eagle's record

Philadelphia Inquirer | Dylan Johnson | November 14, 2025

It was third and 3, and Villanova huddled up after Towson burned its final timeout last Saturday. The Wildcats needed just 3 yards to seal their sixth consecutive victory.

The message in the huddle was simple: Get the first down and stay in bounds.

Villanova running back Ja'briel Mace was ready for the designed run out of the timeout. He took the handoff and 22 yards later, he was in the end zone with his fourth touchdown of the day.

The rushing touchdown was the final piece in what Mace needed to set Villanova's 24-year-old single-game rushing record with 291 yards. The previous record was 287 yards, set by Brian Westbrook in 2001.

It also sealed a 28-10 win over Towson. Mace rushed for 198 of his 291 yards in the second half.

"[We said] get the first down and stay inbounds," Villanova coach Mark Ferrante said. "We didn't tell him not to score. So [Mace] decided to take all 22 yards instead of just the 3 we needed, and the record came with it."

After seeing his record fall, Westbrook, a former Eagle, jokingly sent Ferrante a text asking him why he didn't take Mace out of the game before he broke the record.

Westbrook also sent a video message to Mace congratulating him earlier this week.

Mace, a redshirt sophomore, has been Villanova's third-string running back for the entire season. Mace, who had two 97-plus-yard kick return touchdowns this season, entered the game against Towson with just 74 rushing yards.

Next man up

Villanova running backs David Avit and Isaiah Ragland left the game on Saturday in the second quarter with injuries and did not return. Mace was ready once his number was called, and credits his teammates for breaking the record.

"It's pretty cool to be even mentioned in the same conversation as Brian Westbrook," Mace said. "But I'm not able to do anything we did on Saturday without the guys in front."

The "guys in front," being the veteran offensive line —Stephane Voltaire, Temi Ajirotutu, Quin Whalen, Chris McCullers, and Kyle Fay — have helped Mace, the other running backs, and quarterback Pat McQuaide find success on the field.

"Those guys are amazing," Mace said. "I mean, it sucks because me, [Ragland], and David [Avit], we get all the credit. But realistically, those guys [should] get all the credit, because they're literally the ones getting rolled up on and taking hits to the head every play."



2025 Villanova Football Clip File



Villanova's Ja'Briel Mace hears from Brian Westbrook after breaking former Eagle's record

Philadelphia Inquirer | Dylan Johnson | November 14, 2025

Ragland took to his social media to share posts of Mace's touchdowns after the game, praising him for his performance.

"[Unselfishness is] what you need if you want to be a good team," Ferrante said. "You need to have that mentality. If one of them was running down the sideline with the ball in his hand on the field, the other guys are on the sideline, out of bounds, kind of going step by step with them. You have to be unselfish in this game."

Mace's big second half was fueled by a 140-yard fourth quarter.

"It happened all so unassumingly because if you look at the preseason depth chart, he's third in the running back room," Ferrante said. "[Westbrook] was the elite, priority guy at the time. He took over later in his freshman year when we made a playoff run in '97. He was a true freshman. And then in 1998, 2000, 2001, he's the man."

Up next

Mace and Villanova return home for their final Coastal Athletic Association (CAA) game at 1 p.m. Saturday (FloSports) before the team moves to the Patriot League next season. Villanova (7-2, 6-1 CAA) will face Stony Brook (5-5, 3-3) and look to extend its home win streak to 21 games.



2025 Villanova Football Clip File



Wildcat Watch: Luke Colella

The Villanovan | Genna Cottingham | November 5, 2025

Luke Colella celebrated his second touchdown against Albany on Oct. 25 with a backflip. Villanova graduate quarterback Pat McQuaide flew down the field to dance with him. It looked like Colella had been around Villanova for years.

Yet, Colella, a graduate wide receiver, transferred to Villanova this offseason from Princeton University.

Colella decided to take his receiving talents to the Main Line because Princeton's graduate programs did not match his interest in pursuing business.

In just a few months at Villanova, Colella said that he has formed a close relationship with his teammates.

"Villanova creates a culture filled with bonds and brotherhood," Colella said. "I think the coaches here have done a really good job of facilitating that culture."

The 5'10" Colella scored two touchdowns in Villanova's Homecoming game on Oct. 25, which the Wildcats won, 29-16, against Albany. Colella led his team to victory with key maneuvers in the second half.

Colella has since become a breakout star in the Coastal Athletic Association (CAA). He leads the Wildcats in receiving yards this season, averaging 92.13 over eight games.

Going into halftime against Albany, the Wildcats had a 12-7 lead. Five minutes into the third quarter, McQuaide and Colella connected on a 34-yard pass for the receiver's first touchdown of the game. Colella celebrated with a backflip.

McQuaide later connected with Colella for a 36-yard touchdown, his second of the game.

The last time Colella scored two touchdowns was in the 29-21 win over Elon on Oct. 21. They were his first touchdowns as a Wildcat.

The following Saturday, Oct. 19, Colella contributed one touchdown to Villanova's 56-14 blowout victory over Hampton University.

Colella has now scored five touchdowns for Villanova, tying his total from last season.

"Luke Colella is our leading receiver," head coach Mark Ferrante said. "He's one of the top receivers in the conference, right now. Him and Pat seem to have a good chemistry and they've built that over time, starting in the summer and the rest of the season."

Colella grew up in Wexford, PA, and played football at North Allegheny High School. He was a multi-sport athlete his first two years of high school, also playing basketball and baseball.



2025 Villanova Football Clip File



Wildcat Watch: Luke Colella

The Villanovan | Genna Cottingham | November 5, 2025

In his junior year of high school, Colella got serious about his football career. He realized that it would take both academics and athletics to gain recognition and earn a scholarship at a top university.

“During high school, I knew I wanted to try to play football as long as I could,” Colella said. “I started getting offers, and Princeton was definitely in my top choices. It all boiled down to the academics and team culture in making my decision to play for the Ivy League.”

Growing up in Western Pennsylvania, Colella and his family always respected Villanova’s athletic reputation. Once his dreams came true to play for his favorite school growing up, Colella wanted to express his strengths during his last year of eligibility.

Thanks in part to the efforts of Colella, Villanova is currently ranked No. 11 in the country and third overall in the CAA standings with a record of 6-2.

“It doesn’t mean much to me, to be honest,” Ferrante said of the high ranking. “We have a certain commitment to this team, and we have the opportunity to go as far as we can. We still have a lot left to play. It’s always nice to be in a good position going into the end of the season.”

Colella and the rest of the Villanova Wildcats are scheduled to return to the field to play Towson on Saturday, Nov. 8. The Wildcats are riding a five-game win streak and will close out the season with two games at Villanova Stadium.



2025 Villanova Football Clip File



Villanova's Pat McQuaide and Luke Colella have formed instant chemistry on a tight-knit team

Philadelphia Inquirer | Dylan Johnson | October 25, 2025

After Luke Colella officially transferred to Villanova this offseason, someone stopped by his hometown outside of Pittsburgh for a visit.

It was Pat McQuaide, Villanova's quarterback.

McQuaide was on his way home to the Cleveland area, but decided to make a pit stop in Wexford, Pa., to meet his new wide receiver and throw to him.

"I think that's kind of where the chemistry started," Colella said.

Fast forward seven games into the 2025 season, Colella has become McQuaide's top target within Villanova's offense. Colella leads the Wildcats with 41 receptions — 23 more than any other receiver — 630 receiving yards, and three touchdowns. Of McQuaide's 115 completions this season, 35% of them have gone to Colella.

Two weeks ago, McQuaide found Colella on back-to-back drives for touchdowns against Elon. The connection keyed a 26 -point second half for the Wildcats, who rallied from 11 down at the break to defeat the Phoenix, 29-21. Colella finished the game with a career-high 10 receptions and racked up 125 receiving yards to go along with the two touchdowns, while McQuaide threw for 255 yards and the pair of scores.

During last weekend's dismantling of Hampton, when the Wildcats led 49-0 at halftime, McQuaide again turned to his go-to guy Colella, hitting the receiver for a 34-yard touchdown before Villanova's starters were pulled in the second half.

The two graduate students will look to continue their success Saturday when No. 11/12 Villanova hosts Albany (3:30 p.m., NBCSP+) on homecoming weekend. The 5-2 Wildcats are seeking their fifth consecutive win and 20th straight victory at Villanova Stadium dating back to 2022.

Acing chemistry

McQuaide and Colella's chemistry extends beyond just quarterback and receiver. They have become close friends.

"Luke's great," McQuaide said. "First of all, he's a great kid. He doesn't technically live with me, but he pretty much lives with me. He lives across the hall. He's in my room all the time. And I think that's probably one of the reasons why it has been so big for us this year in the passing game."

Villanova's offensive coordinator Chris Boden has taken notice of the bond McQuaide and Colella have quickly cultivated.

"They're very tight off the field," Boden said. "They have a great relationship. I mean, it's just nonstop back and forth, busting each other. They've just been on the same page. Personality-wise, they mesh really well. They're high energy."



2025 Villanova Football Clip File



Villanova's Pat McQuaide and Luke Colella have formed instant chemistry on a tight-knit team

Philadelphia Inquirer | Dylan Johnson | October 25, 2025

McQuaide's infectious energy seemingly doesn't have an off switch. Every time he hits a receiver for a touchdown, the quarterback can be seen zipping down the field to celebrate with his teammates.

Boden, a former Villanova quarterback himself, has nicknamed McQuaide the "juice captain" of the team.

"It's a big part of my game, just trying to bring energy," McQuaide said after the win against Hampton. "I just try to be a source of positive energy and try to remind everybody that we're playing a game, and games are supposed to be fun. I think that positive energy is contagious."

Boden echoed that statement when asked about McQuaide's personality.

"He just has a very contagious personality," Boden said. "He's high tempo. He'll bark at the guys, and he's always talking. He breaks down the team. He breaks down the offense. He does it on the field as well. He's got nonstop chatter on the field. And I've never had a quarterback that led with that much energy."

'What it means to be a Wildcat'

Despite starting their college careers in different programs, McQuaide and Colella's journeys have some similarities as graduate transfers. McQuaide, a Nicholls State transfer, and Colella, a transfer from Princeton, arrived on the Main Line this year with one final season of collegiate eligibility.

Both players also harped that the culture of the program was a big reason why they chose Villanova.

"A lot of people use the word culture, and I think that it's really, really good here," Colella said. "And I think that's a testament to what the coaches bring to the table here. I think it's just a really close group that gives us that feeling as soon as you walk in here, where it feels like I've known [McQuaide] for 10 years."

McQuaide credits coaches who were once former Wildcats, like Boden, for helping foster that special culture.

"I think it's great when you have coaches that come back," McQuaide said. "We talk all the time about protecting the brand, the 'V', it's a sacred thing for us, and people hate the 'V' outside of here. It's bigger than just the guys that we have on this team and on this staff. I think having guys like Coach [Mark] Ferrante, who spent his whole career [here] for the most part, and Coach Boden and Coach [Forrest] Rhyne. All of those guys that played here, you can't put a price on that."

For McQuaide and Colella, this season's accomplishments are not just for them; they are for the Wildcats who played before them and the ones who will come after them. After just a few months spent on the Main Line, the two already feel the significance of what culture and family mean to Villanova as the Wildcats chase a Coastal Athletic Association title and third consecutive playoff appearance.

"The tightness of the group is obviously set by the coaches," Colella said. "Like, you look to our left and all the coaches are running stairs together. I've never seen that before. I'm sure Pat hasn't either. They're together right now, doing their thing. I think it's really reflective of what it means to be a Wildcat."



2025 Villanova Football Clip File



Shane Hartzell has been the rock of Villanova's defense. His goal in this final season? Leave a legacy.

Philadelphia Inquirer | Dylan Johnson | October 10, 2025

While offensive skill players tend to take up much of the spotlight, linebackers like Villanova's Shane Hartzell quietly impact the game from behind the defensive line.

"He's not a super vocal guy," coach Mark Ferrante said. "But he is pretty vocal on the field."

With five seconds left in the Wildcats' game against William & Mary on Sept. 27, the Tribe had time for one final play while trailing by seven. Before the snap, Hartzell was orchestrating the Villanova defense, pointing to spots on the field and specific players on William & Mary's offense.

The Tribe went for a Hail Mary. Hartzell sat back until he saw an opportunity, then sliced through the offensive line to help sack Tribe quarterback Tyler Hughes and preserve the 31-24 win.

Hartzell finished with a team-high 10 tackles (including four for losses) as well as a career high-tying two sacks and two quarterback hits. His performance earned him CAA Defensive Player of the Week honors.

It was just another performance for Hartzell. He has led the Wildcats in tackles in three of the last four seasons. He was five tackles short in 2024.

"He's just been a great student of the game with a great work ethic," Ferrante said. "You can tell him something once, and he gets it. He'll make a mistake once, and not again. He'll correct it."

Hartzell leads the Wildcats in total tackles with 37.

He collected a litany of honors last season, including an FCS All-America second-team selection, CAA first-team defensive selection, a Phil Steele all-CAA first-team defensive award winner, a member of PhillySIDA's academic all-area team, and was Villanova's senior Student-Athlete of the Year.

This preseason, Hartzell was named to the Buck Buchanan Award watch list, Stats Perform FCS preseason All-America team, and CAA preseason all-conference team.

He has recorded 326 total tackles (30½ for losses), 15 sacks, one interception, three forced fumbles (one recovery), and six pass breakups in 48 games for the Wildcats.

"He reads defenses extremely well," Ferrante said. "When he gets his hands on you, you're not getting out. He's a good tackler, takes on blocks, but gets rid of blocks and then still makes a play. So he's just an excellent, high-IQ football player that studies really hard and plays really hard."

Said Hartzell: "I'm just grateful that I had the opportunity to play so early in my career. I think that really allowed me to grow into a better football player and into a better person for this team. So I'm just grateful for the fact that there was an opportunity there, and I was able to make an impact."

Hartzell committed to Villanova in 2020 during the pandemic. He grew up roughly 30 miles north of the Main



2025 Villanova Football Clip File



Shane Hartzell has been the rock of Villanova's defense. His goal in this final season? Leave a legacy.

Philadelphia Inquirer | Dylan Johnson | October 10, 2025

Line in Perkasio. He attended Pennridge High School, where he was a three-time all-Suburban One League selection.

Outside of wanting to stay close to home and receive a great education, Hartzell said the culture Villanova provided stood out to him.

"The coaches really brought a standard of building relationships throughout the recruiting process," Hartzell said. "They were always reaching out, always calling, checking up, not just about football, but just in life in general. That's how it's always been as I've been here through my five years. It's all an open-door policy. They want you to succeed."

This offseason, the Villanova defense lost a chunk of its veteran leadership to graduation, including Hartzell's former partner at linebacker, Brendan Bell.

Villanova's secondary is made up of a redshirt freshman, two sophomores, and two seniors who took on starting safety roles for the first time this season. Over the summer, Hartzell and other veterans brought in the younger Wildcats to watch film once or twice a week to gain experience.

"We all got together just to review film and get the communication down," Hartzell said. "A big part is that we also say, 'Eleven as one on the field.' So we all have to be communicating and doing the same thing. As we continue to play more games together, we'll only get better."

And now the work is paying off.

Despite recording a blank stat sheet against New Hampshire on Oct. 4, Villanova's defense put on one of their best performances this season. It picked up an interception on the game's fifth play that set up a Villanova scoring drive.

Villanova tallied its largest margin of victory over the team since the 2009 playoffs and held New Hampshire to a season-low seven points and 207 yards of total offense.

On Saturday, Hartzell had three tackles in a 29-21 win at Elon.

"He's been a great mentor to the young guys," Ferrante said. "That's how he was brought up. Forrest Rhyne took him, Brendan Bell, and Richie Kimmel under his belt. And so now, [Shane] and Richie are taking the rest of the guys. They're in there watching film all the time, and they get the young guys to come with them."

As his time at Villanova winds down, Hartzell is taking each game and snap one at a time. He is finishing his certificate in public administration but says he's still undecided on his future.

"Right now, I'm not really sure, career-wise, what [I will do]," Hartzell said. "If I'm blessed to have an opportunity to take a shot to the next level for football, I would love that, but other than that, I'm just focusing on what we're doing right now."



2025 Villanova Football Clip File



Villanova's new QB is all about leadership: 'I want to just show these guys how much I care'

Philadelphia Inquirer | Katie Lewis | October 1, 2025

When Villanova brought on quarterback Pat McQuaide as a graduate transfer in January, it was at first difficult for the coaching staff to envision the kind of leader he would become.

A surprise play in the season-opening win over Colgate on Sept. 6 was McQuaide's introduction as Villanova's quarterback. In the second quarter, the left-hander faked a handoff to running back David Avit and sprinted 28 yards for a touchdown.

"I didn't even know he pulled the ball," offensive coordinator Chris Boden said of McQuaide, a Nicholls State graduate from Solon, Ohio. "No one did. The players out on the field were all mad because we didn't get it. But when we realized he scored, he, of course, came running over to me, going, 'I told you I could run that.'"

The No. 18 Wildcats (2-2, 1-1 Coastal Athletic Association) had a disappointing start to conference play in a loss to Monmouth on Sept. 20. But they showed promise in last Saturday's victory over William & Mary, and coaches are confident in having an experienced quarterback at the helm of the offense.

A new spin on the offense

McQuaide succeeded Connor Watkins, the team's signal caller for the last three years. McQuaide is eager to bring his own style to the program.

"Connor was a phenomenal player and did great things for this program," McQuaide said. "But I'm not him, and the key for me is just to be myself. I'm not trying to form into what he did, but kind of put my own spin on the offense."

McQuaide prides himself on his passing game. So far this season, he has 853 passing yards and three touchdowns with a 57% completion rate. He showed off his arm against Monmouth, with 333 yards and two touchdowns for his best performance yet as a Wildcat in the 51-33 loss.

McQuaide does not characterize himself as a runner, however, and is averaging just 1.4 yards on eight carries this season. So, Villanova's talented running backs have been a big help in the backfield. The offense leans on a trio of sophomore running backs — Avit, Isaiah Ragland, and Ja'briel Mace — to gain yards on the ground.

"[McQuaide] is smart with the ball, he manages well, and he doesn't take a lot of chances," coach Mark Ferrante said after the win over William & Mary. "He's the most vocal guy we have on offense right now."

A 'vocal leader'

Following Watkins' graduation, Villanova was in serious need of an energetic player to step up and rally the team. Boden noticed those characteristics in McQuaide immediately after he arrived on campus.



2025 Villanova Football Clip File



Villanova's new QB is all about leadership: 'I want to just show these guys how much I care'

Philadelphia Inquirer | Katie Lewis | October 1, 2025

"When we were in spring ball, all of a sudden, I heard his voice talking to the team, and I thought that was kind of strange for a new guy," Boden said. "You don't expect new guys to step right into a leadership role. But from his energy, his charisma, everyone really took to him right away. He's been an incredible, vocal leader and a fiery guy on the field."

Coaches did not finalize the decision of who would start until the week of the season opener. Throughout the summer, McQuaide battled for the spot with junior Tanner Maddocks, who has appeared in three of Villanova's four games as a backup this season.

Ultimately, McQuaide's accurate arm and leadership abilities led coaches to believe that he was the right replacement for Watkins. The main task ahead, McQuaide said, is learning to play as if he and his teammates have known each other for more than just a few months.

"Any time you go somewhere new, you have to rebuild relationships and relearn different things about your teammates and your coaches," McQuaide said. "That's the biggest challenge. I want to just show these guys how much I care, and how invested I am in this team."



2025 Villanova Football Clip File



Villanova's David Avit was destined to play football for the Wildcats. He's sure of that now.

Philadelphia Inquirer | Dylan Johnson | September 26, 2025

After a freshman season that earned him CAA offensive Rookie of the Year honors and multiple program rushing records, Villanova sophomore running back David Avit decided to enter the transfer portal.

He received a few FBS offers, he said, specifically from Stanford and South Florida. The Wildcats were expected, if not prepared, to lose their star running back before he even completed a year of school on the Main Line.

However, Avit decided to withdraw his name in December, weeks after he entered.

Villanova was where he believed he belonged.

"The second I got in the portal ... I was like, 'What am I doing?'" Avit said. "I genuinely love being here. There was nothing wrong with it. And I just thought maybe explore my options, but then when I did that, it made me realize how good Villanova was for me."

Last week, Avit suited up in blue and white for Villanova's conference opener against Monmouth. He picked up right where he left off and rushed for 135 yards and three touchdowns.

He'll look to do much of the same when the Wildcats host William & Mary on Saturday (3:30 p.m., FloSports), a team the Wildcats haven't beaten since 2019.

'Childlike wonder'

It was not the first time Avit chose Villanova over FBS programs. In high school, he was recruited by Akron, Navy, and USEF.

"I was talking to my parents. They told me about Villanova's education," Avit said. "I probably couldn't pass up on it. I love playing football, but at the end of the day, it doesn't last forever. So I was really trying to get my education from a school like Villanova."

As a freshman, Avit played in all 14 games and rushed for 923 yards and nine touchdowns. He set the program record for rushing yards in his rookie season. He was 17 when he arrived on campus and did not turn 18 until 12 days before the start of the season.

He also became the eighth player in Villanova history to score four or more times in a game against Stony Brook. In the same game, he ran for 183 yards, shattering a 46-year-old rookie program record.

"Imagine if you gave a 5-year-old a lot of candy. That's David," said special teams coordinator and running backs coach Joshua Fletcher. "It's good, bad, and different. Sometimes it'll be at meetings, and he'll just ask the most random question. He's got a childlike wonder about everything."

After a record-setting and award-winning season, there now are eyes on Avit. He set a standard for what he is capable of, and now fans expect the same, if not more.



2025 Villanova Football Clip File



Villanova's David Avit was destined to play football for the Wildcats. He's sure of that now.

Philadelphia Inquirer | Dylan Johnson | September 26, 2025

"I feel like there's a lot of hype," Avit said. "Maybe some people even call it pressure, but I don't feel pressure. I feel like I just [have to] ball every game and do what I do. I was reading all the articles and getting into all this stuff people were saying about me, I was flooding up my head, but now it's really just about the team and getting these wins."

Shortly after Avit eclipsed 1,000 collegiate rushing yards following the Wildcats' game against Penn State on Sept. 13, the program recognized the milestone on social media.

Avit was not impressed.

"I really should have hit that last year," he said. "It's cool, but it just is a testament to what the [offensive line] does. Like, they really make it easy for me out there."

His game against Monmouth was no different. Avit led the team in rushing yards and total touchdowns. Those stats meant nothing to him, as the team did not earn the outcome they wanted: a victory.

"He has, for the right reasons, a short memory," Fletcher said. "If he messes something up, he understands to have a short memory. Good or bad. If we don't win, it doesn't matter. At the end of the day, all that personal stuff, all those personal accolades are great, but in the game, they want to win. I think he's really embodied that."

Fellow Villanova sophomore running back Ja'briel Mace broke away for a 30-yard rushing touchdown against Monmouth that ultimately was called back because of a holding call. A quick look at the Villanova sideline revealed that Avit was cheering on his teammate, and he was the first person to talk to Mace as he came off the field.

"No one was more hyped for Ja'briel than David," Fletcher said. "David was like, 'Listen, you're going to get that back. It's coming.'"

The team is always first in Avit's mind. For him, if the team is successful, his success will follow.

Avit currently has 237 rushing yards and three touchdowns this season and is averaging 79 yards per game. However, to him, that is just a glimpse of what he believes his potential is.

"I feel like if you're satisfied, you're going to become complacent," Avit said. "You're just going to be comfortable where you are. And the whole point is to keep reaching for something more. Like, if I hit 2,000 [rushing yards], why should I hit 3,000? I just got to keep going. You can always be better. There's always someone better than you, and I'm chasing that person."



2025 Villanova Football Clip File



Behind The Viral Villanova Touchdown Against Penn State

The Villanovan | Genna Cottingham | September 18, 2025

In front of 109,516 fans on Sept. 13, the Wildcats were scoreless at Beaver Stadium, home of Penn State. With only a few seconds on the clock and Villanova down by 52, junior quarterback Tanner Maddocks threw a short pass to the back of the end zone. On fourth down, Villanova had one final attempt to get points on the board before the game ended.

Redshirt freshman wide receiver Brandon Binkowski leapt in the back of the endzone and reached for the ball. Binkowski's one-handed touchdown ended Villanova's possibility of getting shutout with a final score of 52-6.

"It was definitely a cool moment for me in a historic stadium," Binkowski said. "At the end of the day, it didn't really matter much to me, because we lost the game, so that's all I really care about."

The monumental catch has since received attention from ESPN's SportsCenter and was named the College Play of the Day. It was Binkowski's first collegiate touchdown, and Maddocks' first passing touchdown.

"It's just something that they'll remember and cherish, but talking with [Binkowski] or talking with Tanner, they would trade that play in for a win, for sure," Villanova head coach Mark Ferrante said.

Binkowski has only started in two games for Villanova. After redshirting last season, he is now looking to increase his playing time and earn a spot on the starting lineup.

"I'm sure that will help his confidence, to make a play like that, against a team like that, in an environment like that, will only help him moving forward," Ferrante said. "The main goal is to take from the game what we can learn from some of the positive things that did happen along with that catch. It proved to us that [Binkowski] is not afraid to step up in big moments."

Binkowski, who attended Battlefield High School in Haymarket, VA, is not the only collegiate athlete in his family. His older brother, Matt, was a linebacker at James Madison University and Southern Utah. His younger brother, Cameron, plays at Army as a defensive lineman. The youngest Binkowski, Mia, recently committed to play soccer at Tennessee.

"We all kind of played since we were very little, like ankle biters, and all the way up from elementary school, all the way through college," Binkowski said. "I would say I wanted to play college when my brother started getting recruited. Then he played football in college, so that kind of made me want to follow him."

In high school, Binkowski earned first team All-State honors as a linebacker, first team All-Region and was named team captain his senior year. In 2023, Binkowski made 50 catches for 900 yards and 13 touchdowns. Along with six sacks and two interceptions, Binkowski put his versatility on display, which he brings to the Villanova roster on offense as a wide receiver.



2025 Villanova Football Clip File



Behind The Viral Villanova Touchdown Against Penn State

The Villanovan | Genna Cottingham | September 18, 2025

Binkowski went on several visits to Villanova before committing to the team. According to Binkowski, the dedicated coaching staff and strong team connection solidified his decision to become a Wildcat. Binkowski's win-or-nothing attitude has made him determined to continue improving during the 2025 season. It is a mindset that Ferrante aims to foster across the team.

"We just have to continue to get better each and every day, which hopefully will take us and get better each and every game," Ferrante said. "We got to just work on all the fundamental things that you know make you a good team, and we have to be able to do those things consistently."

The Wildcats will stay on the road this Saturday, Sept. 20, in their first conference game of the season. Villanova is scheduled to play CAA opponent No. 18 Monmouth University in West Long Branch, NJ, at 3:30 p.m.



2025 Villanova Football Clip File



Australian kicker Luke Larsen, Villanova's new punter, isn't letting his age define him

Philadelphia Inquirer | Devin Jackson | September 10, 2025

Luke Larsen's football story began in Melbourne, Australia, watching the Eagles and New England Patriots play in Super Bowl LII in 2018. Seven years later, his journey has him playing just outside the city that helped spark his interest in the sport.

Villanova's newest punter, now in his sixth and final season of college football, has made headlines throughout his college career, but less for his play on the field. Larsen recently turned 33 years old, and was thought to be the oldest player in the Football Bowl Subdivision last year as a kicker for East Carolina.

Larsen was 26 when he watched the Eagles win their first Super Bowl. He watched alongside a high school friend who knew former Rutgers punter Adam Gorsack, who went on to play for the Canadian Football League's Saskatchewan Roughriders.

Gorsack had gone through the Australia Prokick program — an organization founded by former NFL punter Nathan Chapman and kicker John Smith in 2007 to help train and turn Australian athletes into punters. Larsen's friend suggested that he try it out.

Larsen, who was running a fleet truck business, working as a national transport manager, and serving as a disc jockey in Australian nightclubs, didn't think much of the suggestion at the time.

About six months later, while in the process of selling his business to his father and figuring out what was next, Larsen was drawn back to the sport after a conversation with former Eagles punter Cameron Johnston, also from Melbourne, whom he played junior football against.

"I ran into him, and he told me his story and how he'd gone to Ohio State and won a national championship there [in 2014], and was just about to try and win the job at the Eagles from the guy that had played in the Super Bowl the year before [Donnie Jones]," Larsen said. "He assured me there was a great path that he took, and he was very happy that he took it, and I should really give it a go. And that was January in 2019 and by, I think it was May or June [of that same year], I had a couple of scholarship offers."

The first school interested in Larsen was East Carolina, and he chose the program to attend because it "was concrete and wanted me there in January." So Larsen packed his bags and moved 10,000 miles to chase his football dream, leaving the life he had established in Australia behind at 27 years old.

"It was interesting because it was a different period where I was looking at it different, it wasn't just like, 'Oh, I get to go to college.' It was more that I'm about to go spend four years of my life working toward a degree, which is going to help me with my future career prospects," Larsen said.

'They're being nurtured'

Smith's first impression was exactly what a scouting report would read on Larsen now: big, physical, and he has a big kick.



2025 Villanova Football Clip File



Australian kicker Luke Larsen, Villanova's new punter, isn't letting his age define him

Philadelphia Inquirer | Devin Jackson | September 10, 2025

Prokick Australia's head coach, who played in the CFL and the NFL in the 1980s, recalls Larsen being a part of the program at the same time with current and future NFL players, and says Villanova's 6-foot-2, 225-pound punter "fit really well."

"He was one of the characters, you know, and I always knew he'd go really well [at the college level]," Smith said. "He's really strong and he's self sufficient, he's smart, he can read a room. ... I've always had a great relationship with him."

On average, Smith estimates the Prokick Australia program is a 12- to 14-month process. Within three months, Smith says he can tell whether a player will become an elite punter.

The sole mission of the program, Smith says, is to "educate young men through sport." From attempting to replicate a college strength and conditioning program to setting up live scrimmages to give punters a gamelike feel, Smith believes the program is designed to set up Australian athletes who go through it for success.

"There's a lot of guys here, and there's a lot of competition, but from a technical point of view, they're being trained, but also the being looked after, they're being nurtured," Smith said of his program. "We're just preparing the players [who] come in to just not be overwhelmed by anything and just come in as if, 'OK, I know the game. I know what I'm doing, I know my place in the game. I understand structure, understand terminology.'"

Smith says about 90 punters playing in the FBS and Football Championship Subdivision have gone through the Prokick Australia program, including Penn State's Riley Thompson and Temple's Dante Atton. Current NFL punters Michael Dickson, Jeremy Crawshaw, and Tory Taylor also participated.

'I'm about to go get my third degree'

Larsen began his final season of eligibility with two degrees: His undergrad degree is in industrial distribution logistics and he earned his masters in business administration during the spring. He's working on his master of public administration degree at Villanova, which he's on track to get next spring.

Across five seasons at East Carolina, Larsen averaged 40.8 yards across 174 punts. But what about the elephant in the room regarding his age?

"I can see that some guys are, I would say, nervous is probably the best way to put it. They don't know how they can joke with me and things like that," Larsen said. "But once everyone then speaks to me for more than 20 seconds, they realize that pretty much I'm just like them, I'm in the same period of life as them. It's just sometimes I might have some advice that helps them out.

"I think it comes down to understanding other people's perception of it," he added regarding his age ... When you see I'm [33] years old, everyone thinks, 'This guy's been in college for four to eight years, is chasing money somewhere, doesn't want to go work.' Whereas for me, it doesn't matter my age. I'm about to go get my third degree."



2025 Villanova Football Clip File



Australian kicker Luke Larsen, Villanova's new punter, isn't letting his age define him

Philadelphia Inquirer | Devin Jackson | September 10, 2025

Added Smith: "If you think about what he's trying to pursue, he's doing this for educational reasons, as much as football reasons. That says everything about him. To have someone like Luke who's pursuing an academic goal, all the rest of the [expletive] he's actually put to bed very quickly."

In Villanova's season-opening win over Colgate, Larsen punted five times for a 39.6 yard average, but two of his punts dropped inside the 20-yard line. The Wildcats have Penn State up next at Beaver Stadium, where he'll reunite with Thompson and former Villanova coach Matt Colangelo, who recruited Larsen to the Wildcats and is now an analyst with the Nittany Lions.

Larsen plans to play pro football if the opportunity is there, wherever that may be, but Smith believes the punter has the knowledge and ability to coach someday, when his football career ends.

"To coach him, you better know your stuff," Smith said. "He could be a great coach now, special teams coach. He'd be tremendous. He's very forceful, he's very decent. He's extremely intelligent, and he's always got a plan."



2025 Villanova Football Clip File



Villanova looks to make a statement in its last football season in the Coastal Athletic Association

Philadelphia Inquirer | Tyler Delpercio | August 27, 2025

Fresh off a 2024 campaign that featured 10 wins and a run in the FCS playoffs, Villanova is gearing up for a pivotal season with plenty of eyes on one of the best programs in its subdivision.

With Villanova's season opener set for Sept. 6 against Colgate, here are five things to watch for this year:

Villanova's final season in the CAA

Since 2021, the Wildcats have been a premier team in the Coastal Athletic Association with a 24-8 record in the conference, just behind Richmond (25-7). The Wildcats have made three FCS playoff appearances in four seasons.

Villanova joined the conference in 2007 and has earned a share of four CAA championships. The Wildcats won their lone FCS title in 2009.

Plenty has changed in the conference in that span. Teams like James Madison and Delaware have moved on to the FBS while a few new programs joined. However, this season will be Villanova's last in the CAA, as the Wildcats and William & Mary will join the Patriot League starting in 2026, while Richmond joined this season.

But for now, Villanova will look to add one last CAA championship.

Who will start under center?

Pat McQuaide, a graduate transfer from Nicholls State, seems to be in line to take over as starting quarterback for Connor Watkins, who graduated. In 12 games for the Colonels last season, McQuaide completed 58.4% of his passes with 14 touchdowns, although he threw 10 interceptions. The year before, he was second-team All-Southland after ranking second in the conference in passing yards per game (199.6) and third in touchdowns (13).

Tanner Maddocks, a junior, could be another option for coach Mark Ferrante. Last season, he saw action in 11 games and threw for 112 yards while adding 17 rushing yards and two touchdowns.

"Tanner Maddocks has basically been Connor's backup for the last three years, so he's been in our system and with [offensive coordinator Chris] Boden and his guys over there," Ferrante said. "And we did bring in a grad transfer, Pat McQuaide from Nicholls State. It seems to be those two right now getting the majority of the reps with the ones, and they're splitting it pretty much 50/50."

How will the offense look?

Along with the change at quarterback, the Wildcats passing attack may take a step back after the losses of receivers Jaylan Sanchez and Devin Smith.

Sanchez, who transferred to James Madison, was the Wildcats' leading receiver with 522 yards on 38 receptions. Smith, who graduated, finished his career just 12 yards shy of 2,000 receiving yards, with 483 yards in 2024.

Given those two losses, Villanova may have a harder time moving the ball through the air and might lean into a heavier run-first offense.



2025 Villanova Football Clip File



Villanova looks to make a statement in its last football season in the Coastal Athletic Association

Philadelphia Inquirer | Tyler Delpercio | August 27, 2025

Luke Larsen's farewell season

Speaking of transfers, Villanova's special teams got a big boost with the addition of 33-year-old punter Luke Larsen, who transferred after five seasons at East Carolina.

He ended his Pirates tenure second in school history in net punting average (38.55 yards) and eighth in career punting average (40.8 yards per punt). Last season, Larsen landed 15 punts inside the opponent's 20-yard line, along with two touchbacks.

Larsen is the oldest player in college football after starting his collegiate career at age 28 in 2020. Before committing to East Carolina, he took part in Prokick Australia, a program aimed at helping Australians become professional football punters and kickers.

A young secondary

The Wildcats gained two defensive backs in the transfer portal, Julian Talley and Jordan Adderley, as their secondary has experienced some roster turnover.

They'll be led by sophomore cornerback Zahmir Dawud, who finished the 2024 season with two interceptions, two forced fumbles, four tackles for loss, and 47 tackles. Dawud earned honorable mention on the preseason All-CAA team.

Meanwhile, Newton Essiem is expected to pick up where he left off as a freshman and compete for the other starting cornerback job.

"Because of a little bit of injury we had last year, we did get quite a few young guys like Zahmir Dawud, Newton Essiem, [Damill] Bostic ... experience in the back end," Ferrante said. "So now it's their turn to fill the void that was left by those fourth-, fifth-, and sixth-year DBs that we had. We've moved some guys around to try and see what the best combination is at safety and corner."

That may move Talley, Adderley, or another standout defensive back to nickel or safety.



2025 Villanova Football Clip File



Villanova Football's Summer Grind: Freshman QB Hudson Heinemann Sets the Tone for 2025

WJHL | EIN Presswire | August 5, 2025

As temperatures soar across the Main Line, Villanova's football players are grinding through what may be their most crucial summer preparation in years. We caught up with freshman quarterback Hudson Heinemann, who has a disciplined approach at the state-of-the-art Howie Long Strength & Conditioning Center.

The two-story, 10,000 square foot facility has become a second home for players this summer, with Olympic lifting racks, turf areas, and sports-performance screening spaces buzzing with activity under Sports Performance Coach Mike Tucker and his dedicated team.

But it's Heinemann's relentless commitment that draws attention. "I have a strict training schedule that includes a specific diet, and I'm dedicated to this. I'm constantly training" said the IMG Academy transfer, who has made the rare leap straight into Villanova's quarterback lineup as the only freshman in the group.

What sets Heinemann apart isn't just his arm strength or field vision—it's his lifestyle choices. In an era where college athletes often struggle with the newfound freedoms of campus life, Heinemann has taken the opposite approach, maintaining a strict no-drinking, no-smoking regimen.

"Staying clean allows me to recover faster, train harder, and perform at my highest level. Every decision counts, and choosing a healthy, focused lifestyle gives me a competitive edge," Heinemann explained between training sessions.

Heinemann will be wearing the iconic #12 jersey—a number that carries significant weight historically.

With fall camp beginning Aug. 5th this summer's intensive preparation could prove pivotal for a Villanova program looking to make noise in 2025.

Can't wait to see how this summer's work translates to wins when the lights come on this fall!