On Campus

Lions Three-Peat as Ivy champs, Surprise Hurricanes in NCAA tournament

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This year, the Lions baseball team had its winningest season ever, going 34–17 en route to claiming its third straight Ivy League title. The Lions took the crown the same way they did it the past two seasons: by prevailing in a best-of-three championship series against rival Dartmouth. In the deciding game, played at Columbia's Satow Stadium on May 10, freshman pitcher Harrisen Egly gave up a single unearned run over four and two-thirds innings of relief, while senior outfielder Joey Falcone hit two home runs to lift the Lions to a 10–7 victory.

As conference champions, the Lions earned a trip to the NCAA tournament, and it was there, in Coral Gables, Florida, that the team distinguished itself. Whereas previous Lions teams had struggled on the national stage, winning just one game in the last two tournaments combined, this squad played ferociously. First they beat East Carolina 6–3. Then, after losing to fifth-ranked Miami, they bounced back to beat Florida International 4–3. That set the stage for a rematch with the Miami Hurricanes, who were still undefeated in the double-elimination tournament, and whom the Lions therefore would now need to beat twice in a row to advance out of their four-team, first-round bracket. On May 27, the Lions, in what would be the biggest game in their program's 127-year history, put freshman pitcher Bryce Barr on the mound to face the Hurricanes. The tall, right-handed Texan, using a combination of fastballs, sliders, and changeups, exasperated Miami's hitters, holding them to two ground-ball 54 Columbia Fall 2015 singles and no runs over five innings. He was relieved in the sixth inning by Zack Bahm, another Lions freshman, who tossed three more scoreless frames. Finally, with the Lions nursing a 3–0 lead, Adam Cline closed out the game in the ninth, dealing the Hurricanes their first shutout loss of the season.

"When I got past the top of their order in the first inning, the home crowd went silent," Barr said later. "You could tell the Miami fans were nervous. And that relaxed me. It was smooth sailing from there on."

The next day, the Lions' magical season came to an end as the Hurricanes' bats sprang to life, driving in twenty-one runs and handing the Lions their first truly lopsided loss of the year.

"Afterward, I felt only elation for what these guys accomplished," said head coach Brett Boretti. "We always talk about the journey, and enjoying the journey for its own sake. We have so much to be proud of."

The following week, three Columbia players were chosen in the Major League Baseball draft, a record number for the program. They were outfielder Gus Craig '15SEAS, by the Seattle Mariners; pitcher George Thanopoulos '15CC, by the New York Mets; and outfielder Jordan Serena '15CC, by the Los Angeles Angels. Later in the summer, Joey Falcone '15GS signed a free-agent deal with the New York Yankees.



Guide to school abbreviations