ATHLETICS

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Bryant’s athletics program developed in numerous ways during this 30-year period – adding new sports, fields and facilities entering Division I competition and inspiring much greater student participation.

When President Ronald K. Machtley took the reins at Bryant in 1996, he had a bold vision for the future of athletics. He envisioned athletics as part of a direct tactical approach for increasing enrollments, enhancing student/alumni life, and developing a brand for Bryant outside of New England. In the years following the implementation of his strategic plan, Bryant’s nationally recognized programs, stunning facilities, and a roster of impressive coaches helped attract top high school athletes from around the country. The results were very positive: strong graduation rates, outstanding academic honors of student-athletes, and a big boost to enrollment.

The first Athletics Director under President Machtley to help lead this strategic initiative was Dan Gavitt, now head of all basketball operations at the NCAA national level.

This chapter shares some highlights of Bryant athletics throughout this era. We will time-travel through the years, revisiting changes and memorable achievements by individuals and teams. We will see that
record of accomplishment reflected in Bryant’s Athletics Hall of Fame. And we’ll get insights about the athletics program from a conversation with William “Bill” Smith, Bryant’s Director of Athletics for the last half of this transformative period.

Winning in sports is scored in multiple ways, but here are some of the most important benefits of Bryant’s multifaceted athletics program:

WELLNESS – students are in better health now, thanks to many new facilities and fitness programs.

SOCIAL BONDING – great friendships are made through Division I competition, club sports, and intramural participation.

SCHOOL SPIRIT – athletic events generate pride and bring community members closer together.

BRANDING – Bryant University is more widely and favorably known through its varsity sports.

RECORD-BREAKING SUCCESS – teams and individuals continue to set and celebrate new records.

ACADEMICS – students achieve more academically when they are physically active and energized.

GRIT AND DETERMINATION – through athletic contests, students learn the qualities and skills of leadership and teamwork. And they learn how to fail, which is a critical factor for future success.

In addition to adding new athletic facilities over the last 23 years, Bryant increased the number of sports it offered. In 1999, Bryant fielded its first varsity football team and launched the inaugural season of field hockey as an intercollegiate sport. Men’s lacrosse was added in 2000, followed by women’s lacrosse in 2002. Intramural and club sports also increased, providing the entire student body the chance to compete outside the NCAA.
I remember driving onto the Bryant campus for the first time, and it was absolutely beautiful,” Bill Smith recalled. “I was impressed immediately, and even more so when I sat down with President Machtley. His vision and passion for not only the athletics department, but the entire university, really stood out.

“The subject of possibly moving up to Division I was never discussed during our interview and when I accepted the position, President Machtley was clear that there would be no guarantee. But we worked together during my first year putting together a very detailed analysis of what it would take for Bryant to move up to Division I and if we would be able to be competitive.

“Bryant had enjoyed tremendous success competing at the Division II level. My predecessor, Dan Gavitt, left the department in great shape, with teams winning conference championships and going to the NCAAAs. Bryant was winning nearly 80 percent of its competitions during my first year. We did an in-depth analysis of all 22 varsity sports programs, coaching staff and needs, and facility needs. Since there were so many factors and since it would be such a big move, we needed to put together a long-term strategic plan.

“It started with an exploratory year. During the transition period our teams were playing against Division I opponents; however, we were not eligible to qualify for any conference or NCAA championship during those four years. This is where I give my coaching staff and our student-athletes all the credit in the world. The student-athletes on our teams during the transition — knowing they wouldn’t be eligible for postseason championships — still went out and competed and helped us build the foundation of their programs’ success for the future in Division I.

“One of the most important parts of our strategic mission is the development of leaders. Our coaches are outstanding — not only in their knowledge of their sport, but in their ability to recruit student-athletes who are not just outstanding athletically and academically, but are leaders both on and off the field.

“Over these last three years, our student-athletes eclipsed the general student body GPA. With the exception of one semester, our average team GPA has improved every semester since we made the decision to move to Division I. That shows that we accomplished what we set out to do — not just to succeed in athletic competition, but to do it in the right way.”
HIGHLIGHTS IN BRYANT ATHLETICS

In 1994, the bulldog became the official logo/mascot of Bryant’s athletic teams. The bulldog was suggested by Protestant Chaplain Philip Devlin (aka Rev. Dev), whose own English bulldog, Lester, served as Bryant’s unofficial mascot for many years. The bulldog is a popular mascot because it symbolizes a team’s tenacity and ferocious dedication.

1996-97

The nationally-ranked golf team continued its unprecedented success, capturing its 14th conference in 16 years. Senior Ray Issler won the NE-10 Player of the Year Award for a record-setting fourth consecutive season, and the Guy Tedesco Award, given to the top college golfer in New England.

Two-sport athlete Kristin Regan earned the Bryant College Female Athlete of the Year Award. A captain of both the basketball and softball teams, Regan averaged 9.3 points and 8.4 rebounds on the hardwood and batted .341 on the diamond.

The baseball team registered back-to-back, 20-win seasons for the first time since 1985-1986. Five Bulldogs made the all-conference squad and two senior relief pitcher Chris Baldwin and senior shortstop Vic Donato – were named to the American Baseball Coaches Association All-Northeast Region Team.

Two members of the women’s cross-country squad earned post-season accolades. Freshman Nikki Rodgers was the NE-10 Freshman of the Year, a first-team all-conference choice. Sophomore Michele Mottola was named to the all-conference second team.
In 1998, Earvin “Magic” Johnson showed his support of Bryant’s new football team. One of the greatest NBA players of all time, Johnson addressed a crowd of students, alumni, trustees, staff, and high school students. He was the first speaker in Bryant’s new Trustee Speaker Series.

1998

The Bulldog football team played an exhibition schedule its first year, and surprised opponents who anticipated a weak first-year team. The team exceeded the expectations of even head coach Jim Miceli, who told The New York Times, “Sometimes you get crazy thoughts like maybe we could actually have a winning season.” The Bulldogs finished the season with 2 wins, 5 losses.

Marcie Monaco ’99 and Monica Carnevalini ’99 led the women’s volleyball team to a 20-win season, the sixth time in seven years the team posted that many victories.

On the soccer field, Bryant men had their best season in five years. Led by goalies Dan Kane ’00 and Brian Nemet ’01, the Bulldogs were the number-two seed in the Northeast 10 tournament. And one of the most prolific scorers in Bryant soccer history, Kathy Harrison ’99, broke a 12-year school scoring record with 12 goals, as well as the school record for points in a season (12 points).

The men’s and women’s track and field teams shattered 15 school records over the course of a stunning season that concluded with nine students – the highest number in the program’s history – qualifying for the New England Track and Field Outdoor Championships. High points of the season including Jeff Backstrom ’02 soaring over the previous triple-jump record of 43’05” by more than one foot, and fellow freshman Mark Silverman – who already held school records in the 55-meter and 100-meter dashes – adding a third accolade to his name by running the 200-meter dash in just 22.20 seconds (and breaking Bryant’s oldest athletics record of 22.24 seconds set in 1950).

The baseball team landed their first post-season tourney title, winning the Northeast-10 Conference tournament championship after capturing the 1998 regular-season championship.

2000

The men’s golf team won its second straight Northeast-10 championship. That was the first of three tournament wins for the program, landing the top spot at the New England Division II championships. Bryant also competed for the first time in women’s golf, with a young Bulldog squad showing great promise against some of the Northeast’s toughest competition.
2001

The Northeast-10 Conference announced that Bryant College women’s soccer coach Chris Flint and men’s soccer coach Seamus Purcell were named 2001 coaches of the year in their respective sports. The awards highlighted a significant presence for Bryant on the women’s and men’s all-conference teams.

2004

Bryant’s women’s field hockey team won the Northeast-10 Conference regular-season title and made it to the NCAA tournament for the second consecutive year. At the Northeast-10 field hockey awards banquet, senior Heidi Chirigotis ’04 was named 2003 Northeast-10 Player of the Year after leading the nation with 27 goals that season.

The women’s volleyball team turned in a record-breaking season with an undefeated Northeast-10 regular-season. The team won a school-record 37 matches that season and qualified for the NCAA tournament for the fifth consecutive year. Head coach Theresa Garlacy was named the Northeast-10 Conference Coach of the Year as the Bulldogs swept all conference postseason honors for the first time.

In 2000, Scott Paltos became the first Bulldog to join the NFL. A transfer from Georgetown, he was 5’11”, 250 pounds and, as a senior, became Bryant’s starting fullback. Invited to the minicamp of the New York Giants, he became the first Bryant student to ink a professional football contract. He later played with the Oakland Raiders, as well.
In 2006, William “Bill” Smith was appointed Director of Athletics, succeeding Dan Gavitt. Smith is pictured with his wife, Maura. He inherited an athletics program that had enjoyed tremendous success, having sent several teams and individuals to NCAA championships and winning two consecutive Northeast-10 Conference Presidents’ Cup trophies. “The foundation for success is here,” said Smith. “There’s a strong commitment to academics and athletics.”

In 2004-2005, the Bulldogs won the Northeast-10 Conference President’s Cup Trophy for the second straight year. Bryant claimed team conference titles in three sports: women’s volleyball, women’s tennis, and men’s golf, while the women’s softball team won its first-ever conference tournament championship in the spring. Men’s tennis finished second in the final standings, while softball, men’s lacrosse, and women’s lacrosse all placed third.

The 2004-2005 men’s basketball team was honored at the Rhode Island Statehouse. During its run through the NCAA Division II tournament, the Bulldogs captured the hearts of Rhode Island in their quest for the school’s first national title. The team won a school-record 25 games in 2004-05, led by junior regional All-American John Williams ’06 and Mike Williams ’04, the Northeast-10 Conference Defensive Player of the Year.
In 2006, Lorenzo Perry ’07 shattered Bryant’s rushing record. The Bulldog football team ran to an impressive 7–3 record, setting a new school record for wins in a single season, as well as establishing 29 new team records and 39 individual records. Under the direction of second-year coach Marty Fine, the Bulldogs passed for a school record 1,993 yards. Lorenzo Perry shattered the school rushing record with 1,335 yards and a record 17 touchdowns for the season.

In 2006, Bryant coach Mike Pressler ushered in a new era of Men’s Lacrosse. Pressler arrived at Bryant after 16 seasons at Duke University. During his tenure, the Blue Devils were one of the premier teams in the United States while boasting a 100 percent graduation rate. He left in the wake of Duke’s lacrosse-player crisis, where allegations against three student athletes later proved to be baseless. When it was announced in August 2006 that he’d lead Bryant’s lacrosse team, Pressler told the media: “For this program and this athletics director to step up and make this happen for me and my family, I’m very, very indebted and very grateful. Now it is up to me to go out there and deliver.” And deliver he has. In his first year, the Bulldogs captured their first Northeast-10 Conference regular–season championship with an undefeated 9–0 record in league play, and posted an impressive 11–4 overall record for 2007.
In 2008, Hafiz Greigre ’07 was named the NE-10 Athlete of the Year. On the track, the junior sprinter earned the honor by winning both the 100-meter and 200-meter dash races. A week later, Greigre became Bryant’s first-ever New England Track Champion by winning the men’s 400-meter dash in a school-record time of 47.37 seconds.
Delia Glover ’09 was named Bryant’s Female Athlete of the Year, a two-sport standout in volleyball and women’s lacrosse. “At first I was aghast at the possibility of going to Division I because I wanted another championship,” she explained at the time of the transition, “but then as the season got going, my attitude completely changed. When you’re in there playing, you rise to the level of your competition.”

In 2009, Jason Thresher ’10 was named the NEC Golfer of the Week three times. Perhaps his biggest triumph was a first-place finish at the New England Championships on Cape Cod, carding a round of 68 on the final day to take top honors.
On the eve of the annual Army–Navy football game, Bryant president Ronald K. Machtley joined a special early morning workout with the Reserve Officers’ Training Corps (ROTC). Bryant is one of more than 300 colleges in the U.S. that offer voluntary military training through the ROTC program.

In 2010, Bryant lacrosse coach Mike Pressler led Team USA to victory. After nearly two weeks of grueling competition at the FIL World Championships in Manchester, England, Team USA walked away with the gold. The U.S. won the championship match with a 12–10 victory over Team Canada. Pressler wasn’t the only participant with Bryant ties in the championship — he was joined on the field by former Bulldog assistant coach Matt Zash, who scored four goals in the Championship game. Former Bryant captain Zack Greer ‘09 MBA finished as the leading scorer for silver medalist Team Canada. And Evan Roberts ‘11 played in the tourney for Team England because of his dual citizenship.
Ironclad Tupper I became a member of the Class of 2010. When the Class of 2010 surpassed their fundraising goals, President and Mrs. Machtley were so impressed that they purchased and gifted to Bryant a white English bulldog in the honor of the class. Ironclad Tupper I was born January 13, 2010, at Ironclad Kennels in Raynham, MA. As a full member of the Class of 2010, he received an honorary degree in “obedience and character” during Commencement ceremonies.
Bryant’s legendary golf coach Arthur “Archie” Boulet retired in 2011 after a remarkable 47 years of service. Sadly, the beloved coach and professor passed away on December 15, 2018. Boulet was a professor of science for 38 years and served as Chair of the Science Department for 19 years. He was one of the most successful golf coaches in the United States. He founded Bryant Men’s Varsity Program in 1964 and directed it for 47 years, building it into a powerhouse program. He guided Bryant to 20 Northeast–10 Conference titles and 11 New England Championships, including a string of 15-straight appearances from 1974–1989. He coached 23 All-Americans and 7 New England Golf Players of the Year. Twenty-four of Boulet’s former players would work as head or assistant PGA professionals throughout the country, while several former players found success competing at the professional level. An exceptional athlete himself in football, baseball, and golf, Boulet holds the distinction of having been selected to receive eight separate Hall of Fame honors, including the National Golf Coaches Association of America. Archie Boulet is a charter member of the Bryant Athletics Hall of Fame.
In 2011, for the first time in Bryant history, the field hockey team entered Division I postseason play in the Northeast Conference semifinals. The Bulldogs clinched the third seed in the NEC after winning seven of its last nine games. The year’s historic team included a trio of All-Northeast Conference selections, earning the program’s first-ever first team all-conference recognition. Senior Brittany Glenn and juniors Courtney Landi and Katherine Andrusin were named to the all-conference second team, posting the most all-league picks for the Bulldogs since Bryant joined the Division I ranks. Glenn and sophomore Chiedza Mawema tallied another Bryant first when they were named to the 2010 NEC All-Tournament Team.

In 2012, the women’s swimming team set four conference records and broke seven Bryant records at the Northeast Conference Championships. The team placed fourth at the meeting in Cambridge, MA. Casey Ostrander ’13 was named conference Swimmer of the Year and Swimmer of the Meet, both for the third year in a row. Bryant’s 400 freestyle relay team (pictured): Casey Ostrander, Mara Valenzuela ’15, Taylor DeBever ’14, and Kaitlin Buckley ’14. They received gold medals for a performance that set a conference record.
In 2012, men’s lacrosse generated excitement after earning its first-ever national ranking. The team was ranked No. 19 in the Nike/Inside Lacrosse Media Poll. “When you see your team on the ticker on ESPN, there’s nothing like it,” said Coach Mike Pressler. The top goalie in Bulldog lacrosse history, Jameson Love ’12, was named Northeast Conference Defensive Player of the Year, All-Conference First Team, and the NEC Tournament Most Valuable Player.
In 2013, the men’s basketball team was heralded as “a Cinderella team that’s the most improved in the country,” by the Providence Journal. The team was selected to compete in the 2013 College Basketball Invitational (CBI), following one of the most impressive turnarounds in NCAA history, finishing second in the NEC standings and qualifying for postseason play in the program’s first campaign with full Division I eligibility.
Any lingering doubts about whether Bryant truly belonged in NCAA Division I were put to rest on May 14, 2014. On that day, the Bulldog men’s lacrosse team shocked the sports world by beating #2 seed and 11-time national champion Syracuse University 10–9, in Syracuse’s fabled Carrier Dome in the quarterfinals of the NCAA tournament. By pulling off what many called the biggest upset in tournament history, Bryant sent a message: The Bulldogs have arrived.

In the previous two seasons, Bryant’s athletic teams notched more than 350 victories and appeared in 10 NCAA Division I Championships. Bryant’s student-athletes were rewarded both years with the Northeast Conference Brenda Weare Commission’s Cup trophy, awarded to the top institution in the conference based on athletic success.

2014

In 2014–2015, women’s basketball netted their first-ever NEC regular season title. Breanna Rucker ’16 was NEC Player of the Year, making 22 double-doubles for the season. The Bulldogs had a historic season, which featured their first-ever regular season title, a program-record tying 22 wins, and a program-record 14 NEC wins.
Volleyball standout Natascha Scarff ’18 was a five-team winner of the Molten/NEC Volleyball Rookie of the Week award. She helped lead the team to a 7-7 record in the conference. Outside hitter Elena Lohr ’15 posted her 15th career double-double in her final collegiate match.

Ben Schulte ’18 set school records in the 100 and 200 breaststroke and in the 200 and 400 individual medleys at the AT&T U.S. National Championships. The men’s swimming and diving team won six of its nine dual meets.
In 2016, Bryant baseball won a program record 47 games — posting the highest winning percentage and most wins in the country. In securing a spot in the NCAA tournament for the third time in four years, the Bulldogs became the first Northeast Conference team to earn a No. 2 seed. They also captured their fifth consecutive regular season NEC championship and won the conference tournament for the third time in four years. The historic season was capped with head coach Steve Owens being named Coach of the Year by the NEC and the Eastern Collegiate Athletic Conference. The team was led by outfielder Matt Albanese ‘17 who, after putting together one of the best offensive seasons in program history, was selected in the seventh round by the Minnesota Twins in the Major League Baseball Amateur Draft. The highest drafted position player in school history, he hit .366 with 13 doubles, 11 home runs, 52 RBIs and 56 runs scored — despite missing the final 10 games of the year with an injury.
ESPN: “Julia Flynn is college volleyball’s most creative player.” ESPNW.com’s Matt Eisenberg wrote in 2017 that Bryant junior Julia Flynn used “almost every part of her body from head to toe – literally – to save a point.” Flynn’s team was one of 149 Division I teams earning the AVCA (American Volleyball Coaches Association) Team Academic Award for the 2016–2017 season. That marked the fourth consecutive year the scholar-athletes on the team won the award.
In 2018, the women’s swimming and diving team won the Northeast Conference championship for the first time in program history. They finished first in the four-night event with a total of 793 points, besting second-place Wagner by 55 points. Bryant coach Katie Cameron said, “I have never been prouder of a group of girls in my 20 years of coaching. This team is so resilient and passionate, and to be able to win this is an incredible feat.” Bryant became just the third team in the NEC meet’s history to win all five relays and the first since 2008. The Bulldogs broke 10 school records in the meet and three NEC meet records.

Bryant’s men’s tennis team joined elite company in April, 2018, winning its fifth-straight Northeast Conference championship. Bryant became the first program in school history to win five straight tournament titles and just the third program in NEC history to win five titles. The Bulldogs swept the three major NEC postseason awards for 2018: Matt Kuhar ’18 was named Player of the Year, Wilson Dong ’21 was tabbed Rookie of the Year, and Ron Gendron won Coach of the Year honors. For Gendron, this was his league-record sixth-straight NEC Coach of the Year recognition.
A cheering crowd of students, faculty, and staff welcomed the University’s new mascot, Tupper II, a 12-week-old English bulldog, in April of 2018.
VARSITY ATHLETICS

Bryant is home to 22 NCAA Division I varsity athletics teams and is a two-time winner of the Commissioner's Cup, which is presented annually to the best overall athletics program in the Northeast Conference. In 2018–2019, the last school year in this 30-year period, there were 538 Varsity Student-Athletes – 202 females and 336 males.

Men's Varsity Teams
- Baseball
- Basketball
- Cross Country
- Football
- Golf
- Lacrosse
- Soccer
- Swimming and Diving
- Tennis
- Track and Field (indoor and outdoor)

Women's Varsity Teams
- Basketball
- Cross Country
- Field Hockey
- Lacrosse
- Soccer
- Softball
- Swimming and Diving
- Tennis
- Track and Field (indoor and outdoor)
- Volleyball

INTRAMURAL SPORTS

In the last school year, there were 250 Intramural Teams with 2,093 participants.

Basketball
Dodgeball
Field Hockey
Flag Football
Floor Hockey

Soccer
Softball
Volleyball
Wiffleball

CLUB SPORTS

In the last school year in this 30-year period, there were 13 Club Sports with 337 participants.

Cheerleading
Dance
Karate
Men's Ice Hockey
Men's Lacrosse
Men's Rugby
Men's Volleyball
Racquetball
Squash
Tennis
Ultimate Frisbee
Women's Rowing
Women's Rugby

GROUP EXERCISE

Advanced Evolution
Beginner Tai Chi
Cardio Sculpt
Dance
HIIT
Karate
Kettlebells
Kickboxing
Mixed Martial Arts

Power Yoga
Rowing
Spinning
Stretch and Tone
Swimming
Velocity Dance
Yoga
Zumba