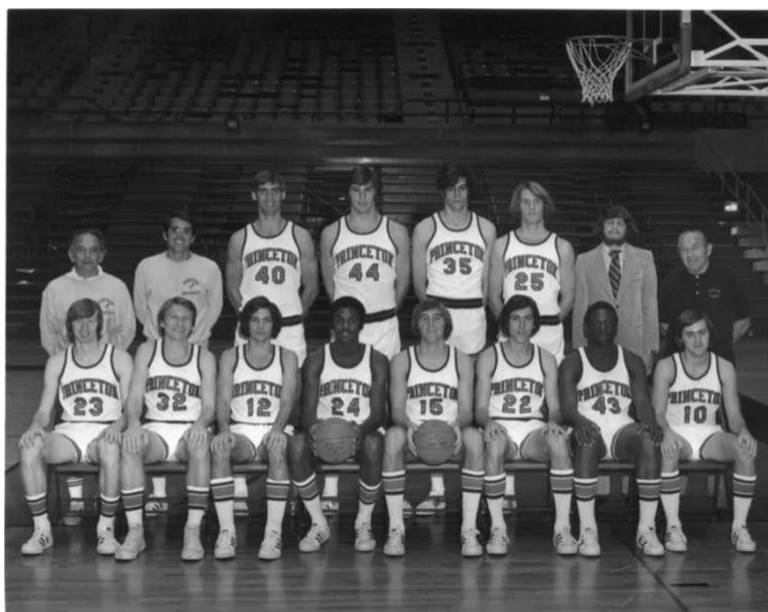




Princeton Class of 1975 Flashback



March 1975



By Peter Seldin '76



With one extraordinary exception, March 1975 was a slow news month at Princeton. Students were eagerly awaiting spring break after a long, cold winter. The year 1975 was the 90th-percentile coldest year in USA weather records, when *Newsweek* magazine warned of the dangers of global cooling. The nation has not had a single year as cold as 1975 since then.

Still reeling from the first OPEC oil price shock, the University did its best to heat the dorms, but energy costs contributed to a large, worrisome operating deficit. Austerity was in the air, with contemplated program cutbacks across the University. A proposed \$625 hike in tuition, room and board for 1975-76, about a 12% increase, sparked demonstrations on campus.

Among the other news stories in March 1975:



Professor Maitland Jones Jr. reported that 20 Organic Chemistry test papers and the associated grade list had been stolen from his office. By month-end, this audacious crime remained unsolved.



To comply with New Jersey fire regulations, the University officially prohibited student-built partitions and lofts in Princeton dorms. Some 400 rooms and suites were affected by this ruling. This decision's impact on the relative attractiveness of rooming options forced the Dormitory and Food Service to postpone the room draw for the Class of 1976.



Jackson Browne, Phoebe Snow and Ali Akbar Khan performed on campus. *M*A*S*H* and *West Side Story* were notable films shown that month.



The "world premiere" of *Supervixens*, the latest film by Russell Meyer, made front-page news. His previous works *Beyond the Valley of the Dolls* and *Vixens* had earned Meyer a reputation as both an artist and pornographer. Meyer appeared in person in McCosh 10 along with panelists from the Princeton Women's Center. The *Daily Princetonian's* banner headline read "Supervixens titillates, angers crowd," but viewers generally concluded that Meyer's latest film was heavy on violence, not sex.



On the athletic front, the women's squash team won the national championship as senior **Wendy Zaharko '75** finished #1 in the country for the third time; her junior teammate **Emily Goodfellow '76** was #2. Senior captain **CeCe Turner Haydock '75** upset Yale's #1 to earn the #3 national ranking.



Princeton swimmers won consecutive Eastern championships, the men's third in a row and the women's second. Seniors **Curtis Hayden '75** and **Mal Howard '75** won key individual races, while junior **Liz Osborn '76** led the women.



Jadwin Gym hosted the NCAA wrestling tournament with a record 9,200 in attendance for the Saturday night final matches.



But the biggest news in March 1975 occurred some 60 miles off campus at Madison Square Garden in New York City where the Princeton Tigers won the 1975 National Invitation Tournament, one of the greatest achievements in the long, storied history of the men's basketball program. As the *Princetonian's* co-sports editor, I had a front-row seat for one of the most extraordinary, and improbable, events in Princeton sports history. It is my pleasure to tell this story again, some 50 years later.



Watch final 48 seconds of 1975 NIT title game: www.youtube.com/watch?v=pVpQSF33ro

After the glory years of the 1960s, 1975 was not a particularly auspicious time for Princeton basketball.

Led by All-American **Bill Bradley '65**, recently named by the *Princeton Alumni Weekly* as the greatest athlete in the University's history, Princeton reached the Final Four of the 1965 NCAA tournament. The Tigers dominated the Ivy League in that decade, winning the championship seven times. Princeton advanced to the NCAA regionals, before they were called the Sweet 16, in 1961, 1964 and 1967.

Pete Carril arrived from Lehigh for the 1967-68 season, taking over from coach **Butch van Breda Kolff '46** who headed off to the NBA's LA Lakers. Carril directed the Tigers to a share of the 1968 Ivy title and an undefeated league championship in 1969. After that, Penn took over, dominating the Ivy League with six consecutive titles. Princeton became perennial bridesmaids. The only bright light was a victory over Bobby Knight's Indiana Hoosiers in the first round of the 1972 NIT.

Facing a daunting schedule in 1974-75, the often-dour Carril was prepared for the worst, potentially his first losing season at Princeton.

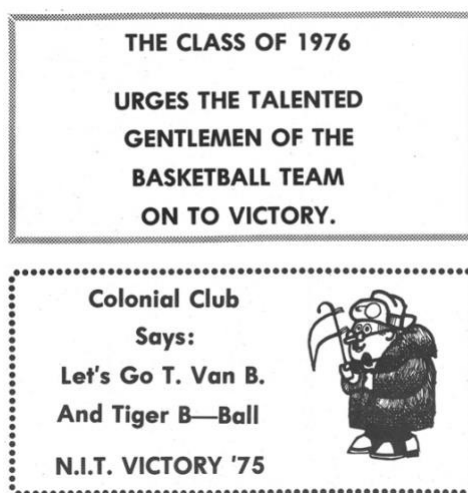
By mid-season, the Tigers had a 9-8 won-loss record, suffering defeats to Notre Dame, South Carolina and twice to Duke. After edging Penn, 50-49, in the Ivy opener, the Tigers were trounced in the rematch in Philadelphia, falling behind 32-12 in the first half of an eventual 75-57 loss. After a 62-61 loss at Brown, Carril said that his team was "virtually out of the race," conceding the title to Penn after just six games of the 14-game Ivy season.

Princeton was basically playing out the string, until one night on the road at Virginia, when the improbable started to happen. Vociferously protesting a fourth personal foul against **Armond Hill '76**,

Carril drew three quick technical fouls and was thrown out of the game. With assistant coach Gary Walters away on a recruiting trip, the Tigers played the final 15 minutes with substitute guard **Peter Molloy '76** taking over the coaching duties. Princeton switched to a zone defense to protect Hill and hung on for a hard-earned 55-50 victory.

As Carril later explained, "Virginia was the turning point. For 15 minutes, they took care of themselves. Please call him (Molloy) our assistant coach. The kid took over the team, and we won. They developed the toughness in that game. It started everything."

From there, the Tigers completed a nine-game winning streak, earning the attention of an NIT selection committee always looking for teams from the Tri-state area to boost attendance at the Garden. With its 18-8 regular-season record, the Tigers earned their tournament invitation and a first-round game against Holy Cross on Sunday March 16th.



Madison Square Garden had been the mecca of college basketball, and its National Invitation Tournament had once been a bigger event than even the NCAA championship itself. Over the years, the NAAs grew in stature and expanded its field to 32 teams. That did leave many strong teams available for the 16-team NIT, with all of its games to be played over a nine-day period at the Garden. For most schoolboy athletes, playing basketball at MSG was a big deal, a childhood dream.

As tournament Sunday approached, there was a buzz on the Princeton campus. The *Princetonian* ran the display ads, many in questionable taste, even by the standards of 1975. Ever the model of decorum, THE CLASS OF 1976 URGES THE TALENTED GENTLEMEN OF THE BASKETBALL TEAM ON TO VICTORY.

Our *Prince* game reporter **Steve Berger '76** and I made our way to MSG for the first-round game. As I described the next day in my sports column, I sat down by a pay phone in the Garden lobby. In the days before cell phones and online gaming, that phone turned out to be the bookie's hotline. A curious character who looked like an extra from *Guys and Dolls*, with his cigarillo, little note pad and stubby pencil, warned me not to touch that phone. I asked him who the smart money liked in the Princeton-Holy

Cross game. He replied, "I'll go wid a hunch and take Princeton. I always go wid de Ivy League. Dey play de most intelligent basketball. I like dis guy Hill."

Well, the smart money was right: the Tigers manhandled the Crusaders. Led by **Barnes Hauptfuhrer '76** with 19 points, Princeton cleverly broke the Holy Cross full-court press, building a 50-32 lead just after halftime and cruising to an 84-63 win. Eyeing a second-round match with the vaunted South Carolina Gamecocks, the Tiger fans under the basket, of course, chanted BEAT THE COCKS!



The victory set up a rematch with a South Carolina team that had blown out Princeton, 66-48, in December's Carolina Classic holiday tournament. We figured that this might be the end of the road for the Tigers.

Played on a Thursday night, not shown on television, and easily overlooked, this was, at least in the opinion of this student journalist, one of the greatest performances in Princeton history.

Given that one-sided December game, Princeton immediately had to set a different tone, and Armond Hill did just that. The two-time all-New York City star just went off, spinning and driving the lane to 18 first-half points as the Tigers stunned the Gamecocks and raced out to a 42-24 halftime lead.

Carril had always summarized his basketball philosophy in one sentence: the strong take from the weak, but the smart take from the strong. I don't think any game more exemplified Carril's approach than the Carolina game at MSG. The Tigers executed a dozen of their trademark back-door lay-ups, totally bewildering their opponents.



Bill Casp—Princetonian
EX-HILL-IRATING PERFORMANCE—Tiger co-captain Armond Hill scored from inside and long range as Princeton whipped Carolina.



THE RACE IS ON—Tiger guard Tim van Blommestejn, streaking out of backcourt, scored 24 points on breakaway lay-ups in NIT game.

Tim van Blommestejn '75, who led the Tigers with 24 points, repeatedly stole the ball for breakaway lay-ups. Carolina's star player 6-8 Alex English, an eventual NBA star and Hall-of-Famer, grew frustrated as the Gamecocks could only work the ball inside twice in the entire first half. The Tigers held him to 10 points as English committed a series of offensive fouls, fouling out of the game with 8:37 to go. The headline in the next morning's *Princetonian*: **CAGERS DESTROY CAROLINA**. Nothing could be finer than beatin' Carolina in the Ga – a – ar – den . . . except winning the whole damn thing.

Princeton prepared itself for a big weekend: a semifinal game on Saturday afternoon against the Oregon Ducks and either the championship game or third-place game on Sunday.

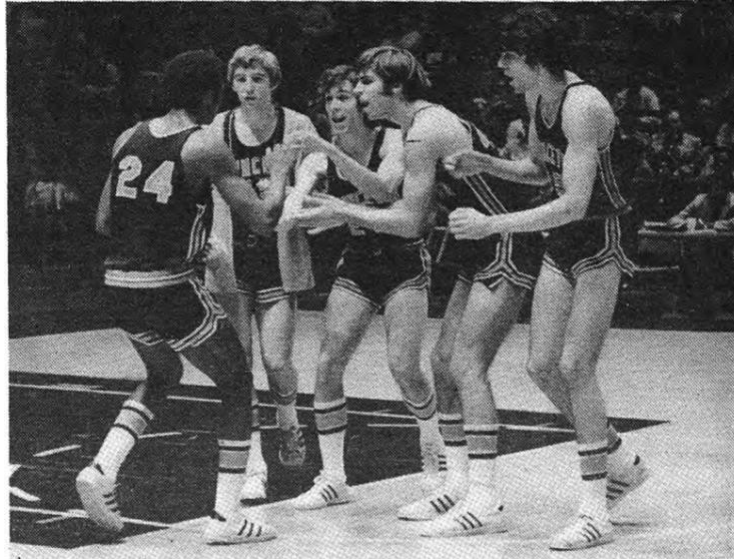
The Tigers often enjoyed an advantage when playing against an opponent from a faraway conference unfamiliar with Princeton's unique style of play. Not so this time. Oregon's coach Dick Harter had recently moved on from Penn, where he had consistently beaten Princeton on the way to two Ivy titles. The Tigers weren't going to score any uncontested points from back-door lay-ups in this game.



This semi-final game was a classic nail-biter, with 11 lead changes and the score tied 15 times. Hauptfuhrer, an ironman who played all 40 minutes in both finals weekend games, led the Tigers with 15 points. Sophomore center **Lon Ramati '77** had a surprising 13 points and boxed out the bulkier Ducks for some critical rebounds.

At crunch time, it was Hill who decided the game in a different role, the lockdown defender. Hill converted two free throws to give Princeton a 58-57 lead with 1:21 to go. Carril then switched his defense, asking Hill to guard Oregon's star player Ron Lee the rest of the way. Hill shut Lee down, and there was no more scoring in the game. Lee's desperation shot at the buzzer fell short. On to the finals!

After the game, Carril huddled with Bill Bradley in the Knicks' locker room, where Dollar Bill was preparing for that evening's game against the Celtics. Back in 1965, Bradley's Tigers beat Providence, 109-69, to reach the Final Four. In one of those sports coincidences, it was once again Providence that stood in the way of Princeton's greatest achievement since then.



FACES TELL THE STORY—The psychologically ready Tigers greet co-captain Armond Hill in championship game introductions at Garden.



The 1975 NIT final game between Princeton and Providence had its share of tension as well. The Tigers led, 38-37, at the half. Princeton built a modest lead, and then Carril switched to a four-guard offense to control the final ten minutes of the eventual 80-69 victory. **Mickey Steuerer '76** led the Tigers with 26 points, with the irrepressible van Blommesteijn scoring 23. Both players shot 9-for-12 from the field. That fourth guard, Molloy, added seven points, and critically four assists and three steals. Hill was once again the shutdown defender, keeping Friars star Joe Hassett in check.



HOLDING COURT—Tiger coach Pete Carril was the star of the show, telling the press, "I just can't believe we won the tournament."

'Don't wake me. Let me dream' . . .

PRINCETON (58)—Hauptfuhrer 4-8, 7-8, 15; van Blommestejn 6-14, 0-2, 12; Ramati 5-9, 3-5, 13; Hill 2-10, 4-4, 8; Steuerer 3-9, 0-0, 6; O'Neill 1-2, 2-2, 4; Hartley 0-0, 0-0, 0; Molloy 0-0, 0-0, 0. SHOOTING PCT: FG 21-52, .404; FT 16-21, .762.

OREGON (57)—Ballard 2-4, 2-3, 6; Jackson 0-5, 1-2, 1; Willett 5-8, 1-1, 11; Drummond 3-7, 0-0, 6; Lee 12-23, 0-0, 24; Coldren 3-6, 0-0, 6; Barwig 1-1, 1-4, 3. SHOOTING PCT: FG 26-55, .473; FT 5-10, .500.

HALFTIME SCORE: PRINCETON 36, Oregon 34. FOULED OUT: van Blommestejn, Ballard. ATTENDANCE: 13,176.

PRINCETON (80)—Hauptfuhrer 5-9, 0-0, 10; van Blommestejn 9-12, 5-6, 23; Ramati 5-8, 0-0, 10; Hill 2-8, 0-0, 4; Steuerer 9-12, 8-10, 26; Molloy 3-4, 1-3, 7; Hartley 0-1, 0-0, 0; O'Neill 0-0, 0-0, 0. SHOOTING PCT: FG 33-54, .611; FT 14-19, .737.

PROVIDENCE (69)—Eason 2-3, 0-0, 4; McAndrew 2-5, 5-6, 9; Cooper 2-6, 1-2, 5; Bello 10-15, 2-2, 22; Hassett 6-16, 1-3, 13; Campbell 5-11, 6-6 16; Santos 0-1, 0-1, 0. SHOOTING PCT: FG 27-57 .474; FT 15-20, .750.

HALFTIME SCORE: PRINCETON 38, Providence 37. FOULED OUT: None. ATTENDANCE: 14,763.

All-NIT team

Tim van Blommestejn,
PRINCETON

Barnes Hauptfuhrer,
PRINCETON

Ron Lee, Oregon

Joe Hassett, Providence

Gary Bello, Providence

As the 1975 NIT champions, the Tigers finished #12 in the AP national rankings. *The Sporting News* called Princeton's win "the most refreshing victory in the tournament's 38-year history." Carril told the assembled reporters that this was "my happiest moment in basketball. I never had a team that had so many odds against it but somehow won." The Princeton championship was such a team effort that the tournament committee could not name an individual Tiger as its MVP, with the honor going to Ron Lee in defeat.



As a footnote to the story, the last two men standing in college basketball in 1975 were John Wooden and Pete Carril. Wooden's UCLA Bruins beat Kentucky for his tenth and final NCAA championship. Carril was just warming up in his legendary Princeton career, another 21 years, after which he joined Wooden in the Hall of Fame. Carril's final victory, his 514th at Princeton, was the Tigers' 1996 first-round upset of the NCAA defending champions, those same UCLA Bruins

Thanks to the Classes of 1975 and 1976 for the opportunity to tell this remarkable story once again.

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'75! '75! '75!

