2022 Winter Sports Preview

Liam Spellman ’23

Luka Radovich ’23

Jack Stern ’23

PHOTO ILLUSTRATION BY MALIK CLEMENT, KALYSTA DONAGHY-ROBINSON/THE ITHACAN
Wrestling grapples for a championship

BY DUSTIN TERRY

On Nov. 4 and 5, the Ithaca College wrestling team hosted the Ithaca Invitational, the first event of the season for the team. For the first time since Spring 2020, spectators can attend matches as the Bombers look to build on an impressive 2021–22 season.

The Bombers finished second last season with an 11–4 record in dual matches, ending the season with a conference finish in fourth place at the NCAA Regional championships last season.

Senior Matt Beyer posted an impressive 32–7 record and earned a second-place finish in the NCAA Championships as a first-year student. Beyer made a big jump last season, posting a 32–7 record with a fourth-place finish at NCAA Regionals. Beyer said the key to making his next step is to enjoy himself on the mat.

“The key is to stay relaxed every time I compete,” Beyer said. “I have a few tough guys in that bracket, I’m ready to wrestle, and hopefully we can start to work toward getting to Nationals.”

After making a name for himself as a first-year student, Beyer made a big jump last season, posting a 32–7 record with a fourth-place finish at NCAA Regionals. Beyer said the key to making his next step is to enjoy himself on the mat.

“Last year was a realization that I’m good enough to [win a National Championship],” Chukwuezi said. “But there’s still a lot of work I need to do to get there and be confident in my preparation to pursue a National Championship.”

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BY DANIEL KING

Following a second-place overall finish in all the 2022 NCAA Indoor Track and Field Championships, the Ithaca College women’s track and field team has its eyes set on the top of the mountain for the 2022–23 indoor season.

Multiple Bombers set indoor records for the college season. One of the team members who broke a previous record was senior Andy Frank. Frank broke the college’s 200m dash record with a time of 21.64 seconds Feb. 1 at the RIT Invite. Frank said it was something that he expected coming into college, since he

expects the best out of himself. While the team did not come in first, which Frank said was disappointing, not all was lost at the meet itself.

“Nothing brought me more joy than seeing people on that Liberty League podium that didn’t think they’d be anywhere near close to that at the beginning of the season,” Frank said. “So that was something that I took a lot of pride in.”

While last year’s accomplishments are impressive, head coach Jim Nichols said the team and we cannot get hung up on past results and should focus on the upcoming season. “Each and every one has to individually improve,” Nichols said. “We always say, ‘Run for fun and personal bests, run, jump and throw for fun and personal bests,’ is what we need each and every one of them to do.”

Nichols said that losing thrower Justin Showstead as someone who can up to the challenge. “So, not that he’s a replacement for Luke, you don’t replace somebody, but next man in next man up is what the philosophy is,” Nichols said.

Showstead had a nice performance at the Liberty League indoor championship, placing first in the shot put event with a throw of 15.12 meters. While he fell just short of Nationals, he said he is using that as motivation for the upcoming season.

Showstead said he believes heading into this season with first place in the shot put event will help him put on the best performance so far during his time at the college. “I was really tense, and I just really wanted to do well this year,” Showstead said. “I’m just more relaxed and I’m just taking it day by day and having fun.”

While the first meet is not until Dec. 5, the team has been practicing since the start of the year.

“Thinking about the teams before us and what we can do with this tradition of success, our women buy into that.”

The Bombers enter indoor competition having won the last 14 consecutive conference championships between the indoor and outdoor seasons. The team will be looking to continue their recent run of success and continuity as competition moves back indoors.

Potter added that managing the transition between seasons is another important part of the Bombers’ seasonal plan. “We have a long stretch of months where it’s our guys getting in five days a week to train,” Frank said. “Getting these relationships, build that trust and build that chemistry that we need going forward.”

While the goal is to win the conference championship, Nichols said he wants to pick up where he left off and build upon his success from last season.

“Last year was the first Nationals last season by one foot in the shot put. While the first meet of the season will be the Greg Page Relays on Dec. 3 at Barton Hall on the East Hill at Cornell University, the Bombers lost three seasons to the pandemic during the 2020–21 year. “Lingering in constant fear of, Will COVID end, another season? That stuff takes a lot out of you,” Potter said.

“Being able to see my teammates achieve their goals is so opposite of that,” Brown said. “We always say, ‘Run for fun and personal bests, run, jump and throw for fun and personal bests.’”

Elaina Nichols-Gronez has impressed Nichols, Potter said. She has been loud in the lifting room, encouraging everyone to put more weight on, Potter said.

“Senior long jumper Sara Brown finished in third place in the Liberty League for long jump last season. BRENDAN IBRAHIM/THE ITHACAN

Senior Andy Frank set the Ithaca College program record in the 200m dash last season. This year, he is aiming to earn a National title. KAUTSA DONAGHY-ROBINSON/THE ITHACAN

BY LUCAS JAFET

Following a triumphant Spring 2022 season where the Ithaca College women’s track and field team finished 28th in the country, the Bombers are ready to resume competition for their indoor season.

Despite several key members of the team graduating this past May, head coach Jennifer Potter ’92 said she feels enthusiastic about the future of the program. “They keep using the word ‘energy’ in the weight room and at practice,” Potter said. “A lot of people just assume track, like cooking competition, is so opposite of that,” Nichols said. “It’s a great achievement. But … I’ve always wanted more.”

Looking ahead in terms of the competition, Nichols pegged the team that outscored his team for first place in the championship last year as one of their toughest opponents: the University of Rochester. Nichols also said he

She said these types of experiences are what help team morale and camaraderie stay at a high level throughout the course of a season. “It’s just a really good chance to get to know the team outside of practice,” Altonen said. “Having captains’ practices and chances to bond with the team has been awesome.”

“Senior pole vaulter Sara Altonen earned All-American honors in both indoor and outdoor competition last year. This year, she looks to build on her past success. NOLAN SAUNDERS/THE ITHACAN

Junior pole vaulter Sara Altonen set personal records and stay healthy. NOLAN SAUNDERS/THE ITHACAN

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“Being able to see my teammates achieve their goals is so opposite of that,” Brown said. “We always talk about our goals at the beginning of the season, and just seeing the other girls achieve what they set out to do [is important].”

Potter added that managing the transition between seasons is another important part of team success. She said the coaching staff designs the training regimen to ensure that each athlete is ready for their event all year.

“We had to start some of our outdoor events during indoor or else we wouldn’t have enough time to prepare,” Potter said.

The Bombers begin their season Dec. 3 at Cornell University in the Greg Page Relays.

“Each and every one of them has been loud in the lifting room, encouraging everyone to put more weight on,” Altonen said. “Senior long jumper Sara Brown said one definition of success for her would be watching the other women on the team set personal records and stay healthy.

BRENDAN IBRAHIM/THE ITHACAN

Launching toward another conference title

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Men’s basketball shoots for a return to conference championship game

BY TOMMY MUMAU

The Ithaca College men’s basketball team is back on the court with a veteran squad that has its sights set on a Liberty League title. The Bombers are coming off the 2022–23 season in which they finished second in the Liberty League with a 17–9 overall record. Despite the team’s solid regular season performance, the campaign came to a close Feb. 26 in a 76–74 loss to Vassar College in the semifinals of the Liberty League Championships.

Senior guard Liam Spellman ranked sixth in the Liberty League last year with 343 points, having 34 points per game. Spellman and Zach Warech and senior guard Luka Radovich started in 19 of 21 games. After transferring from Fordam University in Fall 2020, graduate student forward Luka Radovich is also back on South Hill, following a strong season in which he led the team in points scored, having 34 points per game. Head coach Wallace Farid is in his second season at the helm of the program and said he is looking forward to seeing what this experienced group can achieve.

“The excitement for this year is really high,” Farid said. “Returning 13 out of 15 guys from last year’s roster allows us to have a lot of continuity from last year to this year, which is giving us the ability to have some higher expectations for the season.”

The Bombers’ returning core has a track record of success as a team, as five members of this year’s squad contributed to the program’s first Liberty League title, which was won during the 2019–20 campaign.

Senior guard Liarn Spellman ranked sixth in the Liberty League in three pointers made on the season last year with 49.

The South Hill squad returns with a strong group of upperclassmen that will look to help the team get back to the postseason.

Among the upperclassmen are captains graduate student guards Stefan Simon, George Sikoryak Ill and Zach Warch and senior guard Liam Spellman. Graduate student forward Luka Radovich is also back on South Hill, following a strong season in which he led the team in points scored, having 34 points per game. Head coach Wallace Farid is in his second season at the helm of the program and said he is looking forward to seeing what this experienced group can achieve.

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Senior forward Jack Stern made his collegiate debut during that season and said he believes this team’s upperclassmen will play a pivotal role this winter.

“I think what our veterans bring is that extra experience and that bit of knowledge of how to act, how to carry ourselves [and] what we can do to keep the team morale high,” Stern said. “I think that it’s such a strong characteristic of our team that really allows us to be ourselves but be a successful team at the same time.”

The team began official practices Oct. 15 following preseason workouts in which athletes lifted weights and played pickup games multiple times per week. Radovich said Stern was impressed with the team’s preparation before the start of the season.

“I can tell that all the guys are fully bought into what we’re doing this year and the system that we’ve got in place,” Stern said. “It just feels like everyone knows what we want to get done [and] knows what we have to get done as a team.”

Along with the team’s preseason training, it has also held weekly meetings to discuss the upcoming campaign, Radovich said. He said the team has worked to build team culture during these meetings, bringing in Greg Shelley, director of the Ithaca College Leadership Academy and retired associate professor, to speak to the group. Farid said he believes these meetings have been important in building team chemistry.

“We’ve just been trying to get everybody on the same page,” Farid said. “Understanding that everybody’s got a role to play and everyone is doing their best for the best of the program.”

Stern said he believes that the group’s camaraderie will play an important role in the upcoming season.

“I think that [for] a lot of us, having experience with each other [and] being around each other for the past three or four years has really given us the opportunity to not only learn who we are on the court but also off the court,” Stern said.

The Bombers season began with a matchup against SUNY Cortland at Ben Light Gymnasium on Nov. 8.

Senior forward Jack Stern was ranked ninth in points per game during the 2021–22 season, with an average of 14.5 points. Stern also ranked third in rebounds on the season, collecting 120 rebounds.
Women’s basketball aims to build on Liberty League title three-peat

BY EMMA KERSTING

The Ithaca College women’s basketball team is looking to the upcoming season with high expectations after taking home the Bombers’ first Liberty League Championship title for the last three seasons in a row.

Senior guard Camryn Coffey said the seniors are looking forward to another successful season, as they were on the team when the Bombers won the Liberty League Championship in the 2019–20 and 2021–22 seasons. Coffey said that

while the team reached its end goal last year with an overall season record of 25–4, the team was simply playing for the love of the sport.

“Everyone was so excited to play every day, and we got in that groove of playing with each other where it was just fun and exciting, especially toward the end of the season, those games where we had a new foundation in comparison to past seasons. Last season had six first-year students and three sophomores, and because the 2020–21 season was canceled, none of them had played before.”

Senior forward Emily Dorn did not start a game last season but averaged 18 minutes, 8.2 points and 4.8 rebounds per game.

“Senior guard Natalie Smith led the team in minutes off the bench last season with 18.3. She also

while competing her sophomore year because of the COVID-19 pandemic, Coffey said she felt less confident coming into her junior season in 2021. Senior forward Emily Dorn also said that she feels like she holds a greater position as a leader this season.

“I definitely stepped into this new role this preseason,” Dorn said. “I was one of the main leaders. I feel like our [first-year students] feel supported and like they know what’s going to happen.”

Head coach Dan Raymond also said Dorn really stepped up this preseason, succeeding in sharing the responsibilities with her peers, namely Coffey and senior guard Natalie Smith.

To prepare for the season, Smith and Coffey said the team has been working hard in practices by going to the weight room three times a week and attending conditioning and agility sessions with Vic Brown, strength and conditioning head coach in the Office of Intercollegiate Athletics. Coffey said the team also played pick-up three times a week, just playing five against five without any coaches.

Dorn said that because there are only two first-year students joining the team, it did not have to dedicate as much time to building a new foundation in comparison to past seasons. Last season had six first-year students and three sophomores, and because the 2020–21 season was canceled, none of them had played before.

Smith said her teammates were pushing one another to improve every day in the preseason and they all look forward to the start of the new season.

“Everyone needs to be ready to work really hard from the start, because I think if we give it every day in practice and in all our games, I think we’re going to be really happy with how the season goes,” Smith said.

Raymond said his recruiting process has been different in the past few years because of the pandemic. His only understanding of how the new team members play is done all by video.

“Smith said that every season is different naturally because of the teammates that graduate and the ones that join the team as first-year students. She said she hopes to see a similar energy from this season’s team as there was last season.

“I think if we can keep the progress that we’ve made in the past and carry it into the future, that it will only set us up for a great season this year, even if it ends up being a different team,” Smith said.

All three seniors said they have a great appreciation for the coaches of the team, saying that they like the connection all the players have with their coaches. Coffey said Raymond thinks of the team as a family in order to establish trust on the court, doing things like keeping his office door open for the team to step in at any time.

“[Raymond] has meetings with all the [first-year students] once a week, just to make them feel welcome,” Dorn said. “At the same time, the upperclassmen still go in there at least once a week, if not every day, just to talk to him.”

Raymond said he spends time talking to the first-year students on a weekly basis, not just about basketball, but how they are doing overall in their transition from high school to college. Raymond said he talks to the players about academics, roommates and other topics and wants to make the first-year students feel comfortable in their surroundings.

“I’ve always been really stressed that it was important for the players to get comfortable with me and for me to get comfortable with the players,” Raymond said. “So that when we do start actually coaching them, they understand that what I’m trying to accomplish, and what we as a staff are trying to accomplish, is more than just basketball.”

Smith and Dorn said that this season, the coaches want the team to take the season one game at a time, setting short-term goals alongside their long-term goals of winning the Liberty League Championship again. Smith said she is looking forward to the competitive games on the schedule. The Bombers’ first game of the season this year was against their rivals, SUNY Cortland. Coffey said that in the past, the team has faced a few losses at the start of the season before getting into the swing of things.

“The first few weeks of games we usually struggle a little bit, have a few tough losses,” Coffey said.

“They are really focused on being prepared for the day-to-day,” Raymond said. “Everyone needs to be ready to play every day, and we usually struggle a little bit, have a few tough losses.”

“Especially since our first game is at SUNY Cortland, we lost to them last year. … That’s not gonna happen again; we don’t want to have these losses in the beginning because then you’re constantly having to make up for it.”

The Bombers’ next game will be at 5 p.m. Nov. 11 against Montclair State University in Montclair, New Jersey, that starts a stretch of four road games. They return to the Ben Light Gymnasium on Dec. 2 to host Vassar College.

NOLAN SAUNDERS/THE ITHACAN

Senior guard Natalie Smith led the team in minutes off the bench last season with 18.3. She also

lodged 2 assists per game, third-best on the team, and the top mark for all bench players.

NOLAN SAUNDERS/THE ITHACAN

THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 10, 2022 WINTER SPORTS PREVIEW | A5
Looking to turn the tides in conference play

BY DAVID SCHURTER

After finishing second at the Liberty League Championship last season behind the Rochester Institute of Technology (RIT), the Ithaca College men’s swimming and diving team made its long awaited return to the Division III National Championship once again this season.

“Last season we lost one dual meet, a tight one to RIT,” Markwardt said. “Guys are going to have to step up in order to win the conference championship.”

The team will be relying on a heavy dose of new dives and make it back to nationals hopefully.”

Markwardt said that just because the team is coming in as title defenders does not mean it is planning on coasting the whole season. “We want to mainly maintain the success that we have had in the dual meet realm and conference meets,” Markwardt said. “It’s one thing to get on top, it’s another to stay on top.”

Markwardt said there are some familiar rivals ready to challenge for the Liberty League crown. “[The Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute] and [the Rochester Institute of Technology] are for sure [difficult opponents],” Markwardt said. “There are teams at the [Bomber Invitational on Dec. 2-4] like [the University of Rochester], which will be a good challenge for our women. And then we also got Hamilton [College], who’s been really coming up.”

The Bombers began their season on Oct. 15 and travel to Le Moyne College for their next meet at 5 p.m. Nov. 11.
Suddaby said 2022 was definitely a pandemic. Head coach Rick Bombers after the stoppage of another year of competition.

Suddaby noted how important it is to make sure the first-year students are assimilating. "This fall, we’re really spending a lot of time on some basic things that tend to hold our athletes back, especially our first-year [students]," Suddaby said. "Once we fix those, it really opens up the path for new skills and directions."

Senior Nya Pauldon said that because gymnastics is such a mental sport, performance levels can differ from routine to routine. It is for that reason that Suddaby focuses his coaching on keeping a positive mindset and finding the confidence needed to perform well.

"[Suddaby’s] biggest thing during preseason is to prepare us mentally because he knows, physically, we’re all going to get there at our own pace," Pauldon said. "For the most part, we just want everybody to feel welcome and important to our program." Pauldon is one of only three seniors competing in the 2023 season, and she is in good company alongside seniors Cameryn Nichols and Zoe Kyriakopoulos. Although their class is small, the seniors are aiming to make a big impact during their final season in the gym.

"With the season cancellations especially, it feels like we’ve gone from [first-year students] to seniors in the blink of an eye," Kyriakopoulos said. "I think we have really risen to the occasion of being vocal leaders and enforcing what we want to be done on the team, especially considering what our class has been through." Pauldon added that she and her classmates play a crucial role in making practices less intimidating to the underclassmen on the team. "We love to dance, we love to sing, we just want to make it feel like a pleasure to come to practice every day," Pauldon said.

In addition to their senior class, the Bombers will also be welcoming back graduate student Julia O’Sullivan for her sixth year of competition. Suddaby said O’Sullivan’s unique opportunity to spend another season in the gym, with her extra year of eligibility granted because of the COVID-19 pandemic, will add some valuable depth to the team.

Kyriakopoulos added that she is looking forward to seeing firsthand what kinds of differences the new athletes will make in the gym. "We definitely have a lot of [first-year students] that are going to be making lineups and making a difference," Kyriakopoulos said. "They all have their puzzle pieces that really fit into it."

As competition approaches, the Bombers are setting some ambitious standards for themselves, always keeping the goal of chronic improvement in mind. Kyriakopoulos said that although winning Nationals is a primary goal, she largely just wants to show off the expertise that her team is full of. "I think we just want to show the talent that we all know we have," Kyriakopoulos said. "Our depth in both skill and support for each other will keep us really united as a team."

The Bombers will start their season Jan. 15, 2023, when they host SUNY Brockport at home in the Ben Light Gymnasium.

Gymnastics vaults toward national success

BY TESS FERGUSON

Coming off an impressive season in which it placed fourth at the NCGA Championships hosted on South Hill, the Ithaca College Bombers are setting some ambitious standards for themselves.

Heading into the new season, Suddaby said that keeping consistent energy moving out of 2022 will be essential to continuing the Bombers past season’s success. "We had a great year last year, and the goal is to work with that and take another step forward," Suddaby said. "We have a great incoming class and we’re just excited to make it happen."

This season, the Bombers are adding seven first-year student athletes to their squad. As 16 athletes out of a 25-woman roster are underclassmen, Suddaby noted how important it is to make sure the first-year students are assimilating.

"This fall, we’re really spending a lot of time on some basic things that tend to hold our athletes back, especially our first-year [students]," Suddaby said. "Once we fix those, it really opens up the path for new skills and directions."

Senior Nya Pauldon said that during preseason is to prepare us mentally because he knows, physically, we’re all going to get there at our own pace," Pauldon said. "For the most part, we just want everybody to feel welcome and important to our program." Pauldon is one of only three seniors competing in the 2023 season, and she is in good company alongside seniors Cameryn Nichols and Zoe Kyriakopoulos. Although their class is small, the seniors are aiming to make a big impact during their final season in the gym.

"With the season cancellations especially, it feels like we’ve gone from [first-year students] to seniors in the blink of an eye," Kyriakopoulos said. "I think we have really risen to the occasion of being vocal leaders and enforcing what we want to be done on the team, especially considering what our class has been through."

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Senior Zoe Kyriakopoulos took 21st place in the bars and 16th in the beam at the 2022 NCGA Championships on March 26.

Just the Facts: 2021–22 season

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The Ithaca College gymnastics team opens the season with three athletes having earned All-American honors last season, its most in a single season since 2012. Amelia Bailey ’22 and now-sophomore Jillian Freyman earned the honor for the balance beam, while now-sophomore Skye Cohen earned it in the All Around.