

WINTER IS COMING

WINTER SPORTS
PREVIEW 2023



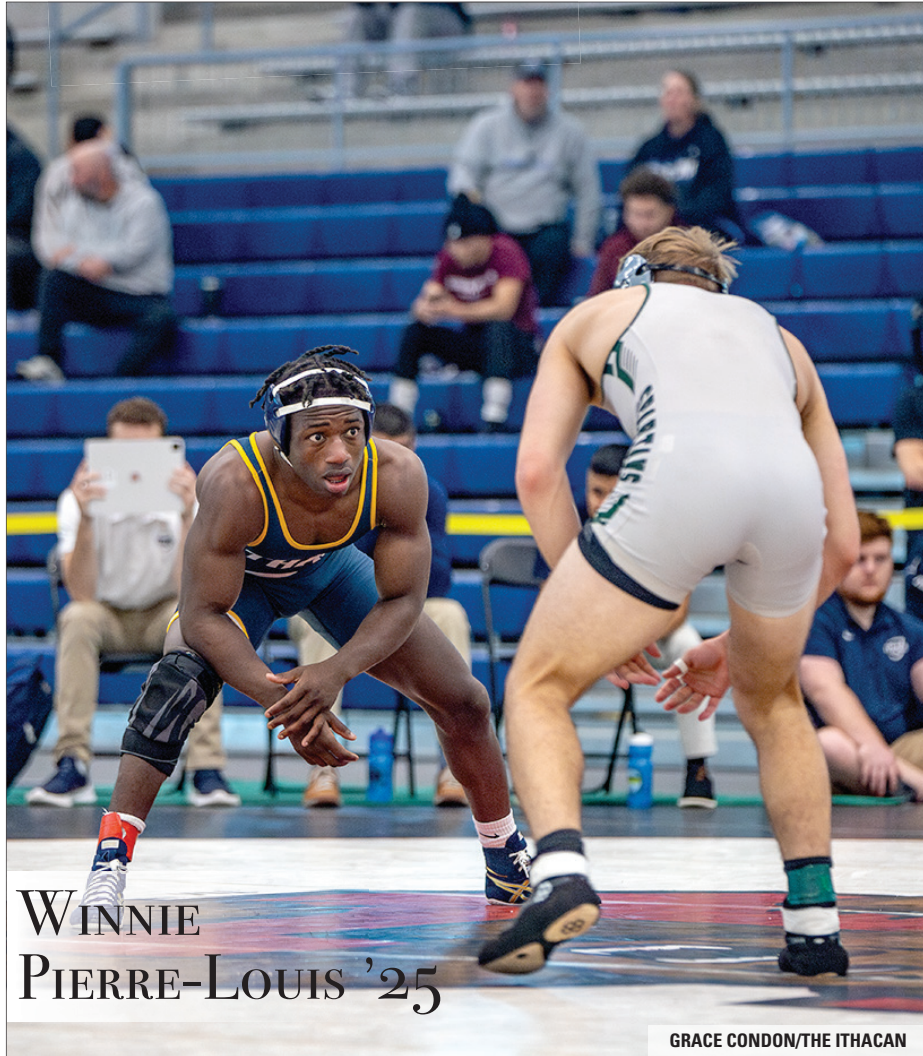
THE ITHACAN
SPECIAL ISSUE



ALL-AMERICAN GYMNASTS
Skye Cohen '25, Grace Murray '26

WRESTLING

Bombers see fresh faces in conference competition



WINNIE
PIERRE-LOUIS '25

GRACE CONDON/THE ITHACAN

BY JACOB INFALD
CONTRIBUTING WRITER

The Ithaca College wrestling team is looking to build upon a second-place finish at the NCAA Mid-east Regional Championships and fight for another chance at a national title.

After a dominant run in the Empire Collegiate Wrestling Conference, where the Bombers have taken home the conference championship every season since 2014, they will be moving to the SUNYAC. This move makes the Bombers the only team at the college to compete in the same conference as rival SUNY Cortland.

Despite the change, the Bombers are as determined as ever to have a successful season. They hope to win the conference, regional championship and send numerous athletes

to the ultimate goal: the Division III National Wrestling Championships at the University of Wisconsin-La Crosse.

Junior team captain Wenhard "Winnie" Pierre-Louis, who wrestles at 157 pounds, has high expectations for his team this year and said the group is special.

"This is probably gonna be one of the best teams that I have been on," Pierre-Louis said.

Pierre-Louis won the 157 pound bracket

at the regional meet last season, qualifying for his first National Championship. In his second full collegiate season, he said he is not satisfied with last season's successes. He said he wants an individual title and is holding himself accountable both on and off the mat.

"I take it very personal now because of the things that are on the line," Pierre-Louis said. "Everything's getting done the right way in order to be a champ."

Pierre-Louis believes that one of the keys to getting it done is trusting his coaching staff, which consists of all Ithaca College wrestling alumni, including head coach Marty Nichols. Nichols is entering his 27th season at the helm and shares the same confidence in his athletes as his captain does. Nichols said he only has one objective for the team.

"Win the nationals, right?" Nichols said. "That's always the goal."

Nichols and the team have three athletes returning who went to the national meet last year. Along with Pierre-Louis, there is sophomore Isaias Torres who wrestles at 133 lbs. and graduate student Matthew Beyer who wrestles at 149 lbs.

The team is also looking for some new wrestlers to take the next jump and join them at nationals so they can compete for the team podium. Nichols said the team has the upside to make that a reality.

"To be in the top four [at nationals], you probably gotta have five guys," Nichols said. "We could make that happen. Depends on how much they improve during the year."

One of the athletes Nichols expects to step up is senior Jackson Gray, who wrestles at 165 lbs. Gray has plenty of experience, wrestling at the regional meet the last two seasons, including a fourth-place finish in 2022. Nichols said the sky is the limit for Gray.

"[Gray] is pretty tough. ... Our expectations are high for him," Nichols said. "He was fourth, so he's right there. He's a guy you keep an eye on."

Sophomore Isaias Torres is also looking to take a step forward this season after qualifying for the national meet last

season. Similar to Pierre-Louis, Torres said he is holding himself more accountable this year after getting a taste of the national stage last season.

"I've been doing things this year that I hadn't been doing last year, like diet-wise," Torres said. "I'm trying to stay consistent with my sleep."

Torres also stated that his teammates have been going above and beyond this offseason. Torres said that the team has been training when others have not and that other teams should be aware of them for that very reason.

Torres also noted that the team this year is very young. This offseason, Nichols brought in 17 first-year athletes. Torres said the team is keeping a keen eye on developing a solid team dynamic.

"We've been focusing on team chemistry first," Torres said. "The [first-year students] feel comfortable in the room."

Torres believes that the abundance of youth will help push the upperclassmen.

"It's gonna help the upperclassmen with getting good partners in the room," Torres said.

Nichols believes that the first-year students he handpicked add depth and skill on the team and said the whole class will be able to affect the team this season.

"We have some pretty good [first-year students]," Nichols said. "Max Watson's pretty good, Angelo Pellicci, Jake Jones is pretty good. So you have some pretty good guys that can get in there and do something."

Nichols pointed to the upperclassmen as being capable leaders, including Pierre-Louis, Beyer and Gray. Nichols believes their experience will allow the team to grow and that they have been great mentors to the incoming class.

However, despite being given the title of team captain, Pierre-Louis said he does not believe in the title.

"I think that every guy in my room is a leader," Pierre-Louis said.

Pierre-Louis said he believes that this style of leadership has allowed the first-year students to flourish and integrate themselves into the program easily. Pierre-Louis said he also believes that

another one of his roles is to get everyone to buy into Nichols' plan.

"The guy who knows it all is Marty," Pierre-Louis said. "He's been there, he's had guys before and he knows what it's like, and he knows the situation."

One of Pierre-Louis' goals as a leader is to create bonds not just in the heat of competition, but to build deep connections beyond the mat.

"It's not just about the wrestling. I think it's just the fact that we're creating a brotherhood and a family," Pierre-Louis said.

Coach Nichols also said he credits the importance that the team has seven alumni of the program helping out, including Eze Chukwuezi '23. Chukwuezi was a three-time All-American during his time in the program and

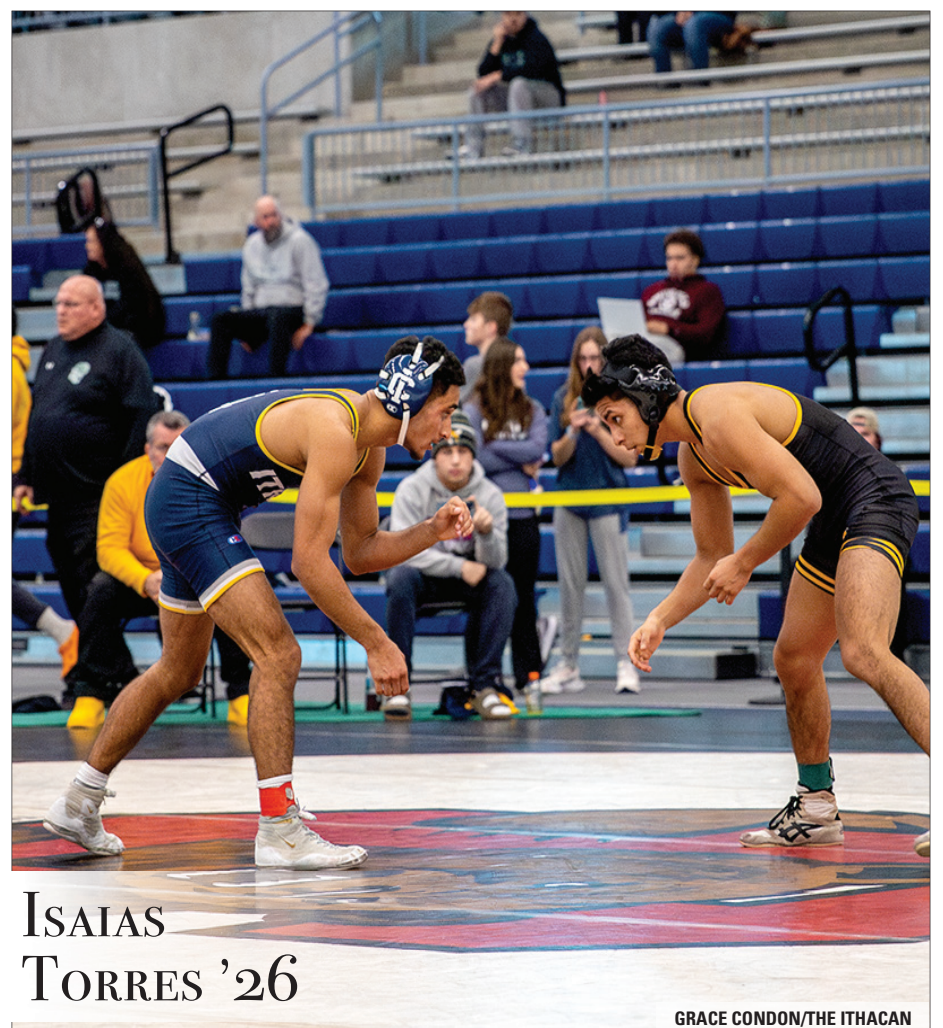
placed third at the national meet last year.

Heading into the team's first meet Nov. 3 and 4, Pierre-Louis said it would be the first meet that positions the team at the top of the D-III wrestling landscape.

"We are gonna solidify ourselves as one of the top teams in the country," Pierre-Louis said.

The Bombers opened up its season with the Ithaca Invitational Nov. 3 and finished fourth out of 12 teams competing. The two-day event saw graduate student Matthew Beyer come away as the champion of the 149 pound weight class with a 13-3 win. The Bombers will next travel to compete in the Bob Del Rosa Ohio Intercollegiate Open at 10 a.m. Nov. 12 in Cleveland, Ohio.

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ISAIAS
TORRES '26

GRACE CONDON/THE ITHACAN

BASKETBALL



Looking for vengeance in conference competition

BY ALLIEY MAGISTRO
STAFF WRITER

After its loss in the Liberty League championship last season against Skidmore College, the Ithaca College women's basketball team is coming back to try and redeem its title shortcomings. After only losing by two points in the Liberty League title game, the team plans on not letting that happen again.

The 2022–23 season was a successful one for the Bombers, finishing with a record of 24–5. Yet,

with unfinished business on the horizon, the team is ready to turn the page. Senior guard Hannah Polce talked about what losing the title meant to the team and said the team is using it as motivation to find a different result this time around.

"I think not winning the Liberty League title hit us pretty hard," Polce said. "Overall, I would say last season was successful—it would be unfair to say it was not—but I definitely think we are not content with last year and want to push for better."

To prepare for this season, the

Bombers have taken a new approach to things. The South Hill squad has been focusing heavily on conditioning and the basics of basketball. The NCAA stated earlier this year that all Division III teams have been granted eight practices outside of its regular season. This gave the team the advantage to start working hard on the court before the season even started.

Junior forward Annabella Yorrio said these extra practices have added to the momentum of the team heading into the regular season.

"Our coaches got a few practices with us in preseason, which had really helped us prepare for the season," Yorrio said. "We're all really excited."

Returning players have been working hard to adjust to new positions as well, holding rest and recovery to a high standard. On Jan. 28 last season, the Bombers could only assemble a nine-player roster for its game against Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, with seven players out with injuries.

Thankfully for the Bombers, they have no injured players to begin the season and fans will be able to see underclassmen step up into key roles. Head coach Dan Raymond recruited five first-year students to the team, and the team is looking forward to seeing all the talent they carry.

Along with its new first-year students, the Bombers have recruited a Division I transfer from California



ANNABELLA YORRIO '25

KALYSTA DONAGHY-ROBINSON/THE ITHACAN

Polytechnic State University, senior Junie Dickson. The team is pumped to have new faces and talent.

Raymond is thrilled by the level of play he is seeing this year. Someone Raymond said he can lean on is Polce. As a senior guard, she not only brings talent to the team, but she said her determination for the Liberty League title can get the team there.

"I am ready to bring back the

Liberty title—beat the teams we lost to last year; I want to beat Vassar, but for the team, I am ready to step in as a leader," Polce said. "Our energy is different this year. We really want to focus on positivity rather than focusing on the negatives. That is what people can look forward to and what we hope for."

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HANNAH POLCE '24

KAI LINCKE/THE ITHACAN

Driving for dominance at the top of the Liberty League

BY FLYNN HYNES
STAFF WRITER

The Ithaca College men's basketball team is returning to the court with a young squad that has its eyes set on its first Liberty League title.

The Bombers had a successful 2022–23 season where they finished 18–8 and had the best regular season record in the Liberty League. However, the campaign ended in the semifinals of the Liberty League Championship when the team came up short 44–49 to Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute.

This season, there is going to be a whole new rotation as the Bombers graduated six graduate students and seniors, four of whom were starters. Head coach Waleed Farid, in his third season with the team, said that he is looking forward to coaching this year's squad and that there are going to be many opportunities for the players who may not have seen the court as much.

"We graduated six guys, six really big important pieces from our team last year," Farid said. "Six guys that we absolutely love and had huge impacts on our program from their first

day on campus. So, in terms of this year, that means there's a lot of holes, a lot of openings [and] a lot of opportunities to be had. ... With that, [it] brings some uncertainty but also brings some excitement."

This year's squad is made of 15 athletes, including five first-year students, three sophomores, three juniors and four seniors. Many of these players have played important roles for the team, but this season, their roles are going to be expanding with the loss of many key starters.

Senior guard Triston Wennersten said that after having to practice individually and in small groups toward the beginning of the academic year, getting back into the gym with the coaching staff has been especially beneficial.

"We've been getting in extra work, playing one-on-one or on our own," Wennersten said. "Now that the season officially started, we can get in work with the coaches and the assistant coaches, which has been helpful."

Furthermore, junior guard Logan Wendell said Farid has played a pivotal role in instilling discipline among the players. With only one starter from last season remaining, lineup changes are expected, so the team has to put its best foot forward.

Last season, the Bombers led the Liberty League in scoring margin, out-scoring their opponents by an average of 8.2 points per game and 2001–1789 overall. Wennersten said he believes the team will be able to get the edge this year because of its overall speed and athleticism. He said the team has plenty of different skill sets that will help them in the long run.

"Since we're a little on the smaller side, just using our speed and athleticism to get up and down the floor," Wennersten said. "We brought in a lot of good [first-year students] and I think our depth is going to help us a lot. We're gonna have a lot of people contributing on different nights."

Wendell is coming off a spectacular season where he ranked 7th in the Liberty League for scoring, averaging 14.5 points per game. He was also selected for the All-Liberty League Second Team. He said that this year, he is just going to try to repeat his feats, but it would not be possible without his teammates.

"My teammates have a lot of trust in me," Wendell said. "I'm super blessed to have the support I do from my coaches and my teammates. They make everything possible for me to go out there and succeed, so I'm gonna do everything in my power to keep it rolling this year."

The South Hill squad also brought in new assistant coach



TRISTON WENNERSTEN '24

FILE PHOTO/THE ITHACAN

George Sikoryak III '23. Sikoryak was a graduate student last year and started all 26 games. Farid explained that during his time as a player, Sikoryak set the mentality for everyone in terms of work ethic, which will carry over to his role as an assistant coach.

"He was a guy who lived in the gym, he took care of his body, was always bought into putting in the work [and] never satisfied with how good he was at anything," Farid said. "That's carried over to how he's going to be as an assistant coach for us. He's also somebody who always brings a positive attitude and energy to every single day. It has a really big impact, especially on a team that's a little bit younger, a little less experienced, having a guy who's been through it here."

The Bombers' season officially starts Nov. 9 with a rivalry match against the SUNY Cortland Red Dragons in Cortland, New York. Wennersten said he is using the loss against RPI in the semifinals to fuel the team's results for this season.

"That definitely motivated me a lot," Wennersten said. "I think the other guys feel the same way. And just the way to lose that on our home floor. We do not want to see that again."

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LOGAN WENDELL '25

FILE PHOTO/THE ITHACAN

SWIMMING & DIVING

Maintaining the championship tradition in the pool



KATIE
CHAMPAGNE '23

KALYSTA DONAGHY-ROBINSON/THE ITHACAN

BY DAVID SCHURTER
STAFF WRITER

Since 2017, Ithaca College athletics has competed as a member of the Liberty League. During this time, the college has won several Liberty League championships across every sport in every season. The women's swimming and diving program is one of those perennial championship teams and this season, they are looking to win their fifth-straight Liberty League title.

Coming into his first year as head coach, Mike Blakely-Armitage '00 said he is looking to keep a tradition of providing the best overall experience for the coaching staff, as well as the student-athletes. With a history of storied success, he said that rejoining the program as a coach has been the biggest honor.

"I feel very humbled to be the head coach of this program," Blakely-Armitage said. "I swam for the program and being an alum is something that I view to be an extreme privilege. I feel honored to be able to lead this program that I care a lot about. I want to make sure that the student-athlete experience is very strong and I want to make sure that I'm maintaining that experience."

After being promoted from associate head coach to head coach, Blakely-Armitage said that his role with the team will not change, but that he has the ability to control the mindset of the team as well as promote strong decision making among the athletes.

"I have more control of our training, all of our groups, distances and disciples," Blakely-Armitage said.

"Trusting my [assistant coach Noah Beck] to give me reliable and critical feedback. I like working with him and having him tell me if he thinks the training will be suitable. I'm also going to be putting my own stamp on our team culture and I'm looking forward to maintaining high standards for a strong team and also making sure that the athletes feel supported in both their efforts in the pool and beyond."

Blakely-Armitage said that the program lost a large group of talent with the class of 2023 graduating, like All-American diver Karalyn Pawcio and freestyle Emily VanderSleen, but that the emerging underclassmen will make up for the loss in the scoring department.

"We have a bunch of first-years and a strong sophomore class that had great experience last year and this year they will be tested," Blakely-Armitage said. "I think they're ready to take the lead culturally but also competitively in the pool. Samantha Bender is a first-year coming in and already making an impact. She'll be one of our top sprinters and swimming some of our shorter stroke events. [First-year student] Alex Eakin is another first-year and a really solid distance swimmer."

The program is coming off its first undefeated season since the 2019-20 season and sent four divers and five swimmers to the 2023 NCAA Division III Championships in Greensboro, North Carolina. There, nine All-Americans were crowned from the Bombers' squad.

One of those honorees was graduate student backstroke and individual

medley swimmer Katie Champagne. Champagne kept the valuable experience of competing at the national meet last season in the back of her head to serve as means for improvement and said she used it as a form of self-motivation in getting her back in the water.

"It was pretty cool, I loved watching all of the fast swimmers from the different teams," Champagne said. "The divers did amazing, the swimmers also did amazing, it was a really cool experience to be a part of. It definitely motivated me to come back this year, as I'm excited and I want to be in that position again. Seeing how everyone was swimming fast was really cool to be a part of."

Going into her farewell season, Champagne said she is focused on making sure she enjoys one last ride for her final season with the program, avoiding the negative push from the high stress of the sport she usually puts on herself.

"Having fun was my main goal that I set for myself," Champagne said. "I always put so much pressure on myself, so I'm going to have fun with it, enjoy the process and try to stay in the moment."

After a very strong showing by the divers who got entry into nationals in 2023, the team returns a healthy squad of divers looking for another huge season. One of those divers looking for a breakout season is sophomore Eliza Salus.

Salus said many of the divers have their eyes on returning to nationals, but the focus is on the process of reaching that goal and enjoying the season through each meet.

"We're just trying to enjoy the process. For a lot of us, nationals is definitely on the back of our minds, but I think that's something that's in a lot of ways out of our control," Salus said. "We're focused on that process and enjoying the time with our teammates and the progress that will be made throughout the season."

Salus said not every diver has the access to a board over the summer, and in

that case, it is important to train for the season in other ways.

"For diving, it can be tricky because not everyone necessarily has a club

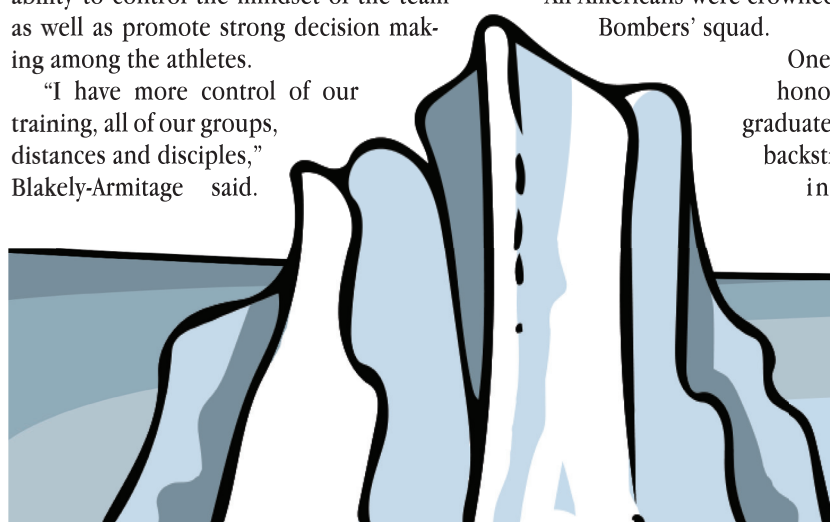


ELIZA
SALUS '26

they've practiced with or has boards they have access to easily," Salus said. "A lot of it is trying to stay in shape physically as well as visualizing potentially diving if we're not able to get on the boards and having that mental memory of the types of dives we're doing. Physically and mentally doing that preparation so when we come back, we can get right into it."

The team opened its season Oct. 14 with wins over Worcester Polytechnic Institute, 160-140, and William Smith College, 252-48, at home, but dropped their next meet Oct. 28 at the Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, 106-194. Despite the loss, the Bombers bounced back Nov. 4, defeating rival SUNY Cortland, 203-90. The team will next face off with the 2-1 Rochester Institute of Technology in a battle between two of the top contenders in the Liberty League at 1 p.m. Nov. 18 in Rochester, New York.

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SWIMMING & DIVING

New leadership eagerly dives into championship hope

BY MATTHEW GIVONE

STAFF WRITER

On Oct. 14, the Ithaca College men's swim and dive team returned to the pool, earning themselves a big win over Worcester Polytechnic Institute and Hobart College, with its sights set yet again on claiming its first Liberty League championship in February.

Mike Blakely-Armitage, the program's first-year head coach, wants to make an immediate impact by preaching a solid, strong team culture this season. Blakely-Armitage said he looks forward to working with everyone on a team level and an individual level.

"There's a lot of technique work we want to do and there are some individuals who also have goals that we want to help them reach," Blakely-Armitage said.

Blakely-Armitage spoke about the individual performers he expects big things from, like senior freestyle James Collishaw, junior freestyle Matthew Stevens, junior butterfly Santiago Ludwig and many more.

"While I'm naming names, we are really going to be depending on everybody on our team to perform in order for our team to be successful," Blakely-Armitage said.

The biggest change this season however is Blakely-Armitage himself, stepping up into the head coaching position after spending the last four seasons as assistant head coach to Kevin Markwadt, who retired after the 2022–23 season. Blakely-Armitage said he wants his first season as bench boss to be about defining gain.

"We are going to lose some meets this year, win some dual meets, but we look to do our December invite, we look to Liberty Leagues as some big focal points for the season," Blakely-Armitage said. "We have some significant rivalries with [Rochester Polytechnic Institute] and [Rochester Institute of Technology] and we'd like to put in a good showing. ... We are also building our men's diving program and it's exciting to see."

One returning member of that men's diving team is sophomore diver Kian Long. Blakely-Armitage has big expectations for Long after a strong first season. Long said that last season the team had a strong bond and he wants to continue that.

"I feel like we did a great job last season coming together as one," Long said.

"Coming from different backgrounds, everyone from different areas across the U.S. coming together under one roof in that pool was definitely a great thing."

While Long looked promising last season, he dealt with an injury that caused him to struggle to compete in the three meter dive. He did, however, score a season-best 251.10 last season in the one meter six dives, and he scored a season-best 479.95 at the Dick Comanzo Diving Meet in the one meter 11 dives. Now with the help of his coaching staff, Long said he's ready to attack his sophomore season in full health.

"The coaches are great," Long said. "They know what we want to accomplish and how to get there. They care so much about this program and they're willing to do whatever it takes to get us to the spot we need to be at."

While Long and many of the other divers are only underclassmen, they are already stepping up to fill the holes left by last year's graduating seniors, a group Long said helped him integrate into the team.

"Getting to be around with all of the new divers and sort of showing them that new environment and that we all need to fill the holes



MATTHEW
MITROS '25

NOA RAN-RESSLER/THE ITHACAN

look up to.

"Last year, I was coming in, it was my first year and I didn't really know what was going on," Mitros said. "This year, all of a sudden I'm a captain, I'm leading the team, and now I know what's happening. I want to tell the new guys what is coming, what to prepare for."

Despite Mitros' short stint with the South Hill squad, his captainship represents and shows the leadership he possesses and the trust his teammates have in him to support the rest of the team. Mitros will look to carry that weight of leadership throughout the year.

Mitros said he thought last year went really well and was happy with the majority of the team's individual results, especially his own. Mitros swam his season-best 50 and 100 freestyle and butterfly in the Liberty League championships. He clocked a 21.14 for his 50 freestyle, a 46.05 for his 100 freestyle, a 23.31 for his 50 butterfly and a 50.72 for his 100 butterfly. Individual success is one thing, but from a team standpoint, Mitros said the men are determined this season, still cutting down on their times with a lighter workload moving into the season.

"We are taking a step away from 'yardage, yardage, yardage,' it seems, which is welcomed by just about everyone on the team," Mitros said. "We are entering this season a little softer [and] seeing less injuries so far, which is awesome"

Mitros said he was ready to get into the season and while he personally wants

to swim his best times, he is confident in another group on the team to help this team really find success while he puts in the work over on his end.

"I think the freshmen and the sophomores are going to do a lot," Mitros said. "We lost a good amount of guys and there's a lot of opportunities for the younger guys to step into scoring positions on the team and leadership positions on the team."

The team's season started off strong with wins over Hobart College 241–44 and Worcester Polytechnic Institute 175–123 in its first dual meet Oct. 14. The team suffered its first loss Oct. 28 against RPI 175.5–112 but got back on track Nov. 3, beating rival SUNY Cortland 172–127. Up next, the Bombers have a road date against Liberty League rival RIT at 1 p.m. Nov. 18 in Rochester, New York.

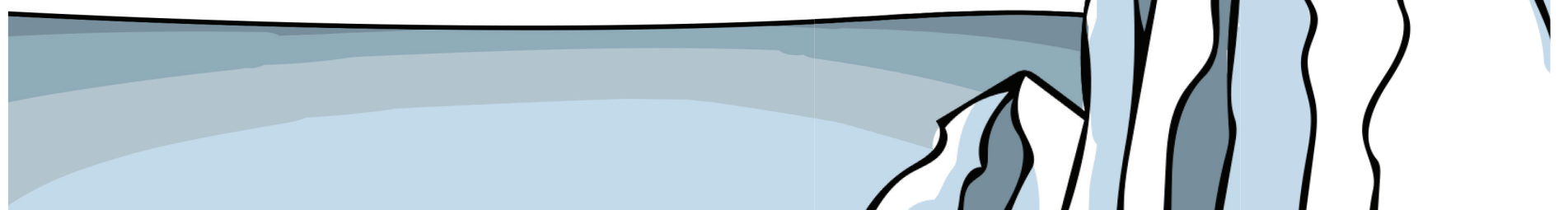
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KIAN
LONG '26

of the seniors who left last year," Long said. "We are getting there, but once we get there, we'll definitely be on track to get some stuff going."

While the divers look to step up on their end, junior captain freestyle/butterfly Matthew Mitros is looking to step into that leadership role on the swimming side of the team, just one year after he transferred from Oregon State. Mitros said he wants to be that leader the new swimmers



TRACK AND FIELD



Young squad runs toward redemption on the track

BY JULIA WALLACE
STAFF WRITER

As fall sports have started to come to an end, the Bombers have been getting a kick-start on their training for the 2023–24 indoor track and field season. After losing key athletes like pentathlete Logan Bruce '23 and pole vaulter Megan Matheny '23, the team must adjust to a new dynamic.

The team also said goodbye to four pole vaulters, three of which competed and scored points at the National Championship meet. After

a successful recruitment, head coach Jennifer Potter said over half of the roster is made of first-year students.

"I know what they did in high school athletically, but we'll have to wait and see," Potter said. "As far as their work ethic, confidence and drive, I'm excited."

There are also several upperclassman athletes who have either walked on or transferred into the program. Junior Lily Seyfert joined the team within the last year after transferring from the University of Connecticut. Seyfert participates in five events,

including shot put, discus, weight throw, hammer throw and javelin.

Seyfert said Potter believes in staying positive and not letting frustration be the reason that progress slows.

"Looking up to the seniors last year and seeing them always bounce back from a hardship helped me develop that mindset," Seyfert said.

Despite the changes, Potter calls this new team a breath of fresh air. She said that having a young group motivated and eager will guarantee them a strong base to build upon.

For the first time in her over 20 years coaching at the college, Potter watched her athletes lose both the indoor and outdoor Liberty League titles to the University of Rochester. The competition was so tight, in fact, that the Bombers only lost the 2022–23 indoor title by half a point.

"Winning the Liberty Leagues for both indoor and outdoor seasons is a goal," Seyfert said. "At the end of the day, we all compete because we want to win a National Championship."

Potter has maintained a consistent and effective workout schedule that forces athletes to push themselves. Sophomore distance runner Kyla Eisman said she has been inspired by the work ethic Potter instills.

"Coach Potter always says it really does take a village in order to compete at the high level that we do and to hold each other accountable each day in and out," Eisman said.



LILY SEYFERT '25

JADYN DAVIS/THE ITHACAN

It is clear that all of the intense work and training the athletes are doing now is in preparation for making it to the championship.

"We have a lot of exciting meets this season, including the Greg Page Relays at Cornell and a few home meets here at Ithaca, which are always very fun," Eisman said. "But our main focus will be on the Liberty League championship."

On Dec. 2, the Bombers will

compete at the Greg Page Relays for their first meet. Potter says this meet is to get the women used to the atmosphere and give them a last little spark of adrenaline.

"We'll have them put on their uniforms in December at Cornell and then we'll continue to work from there," Potter said. "I'm sure they'll shine."

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KYLA EISMAN '26

GRACE CONDON/THE ITHACAN

Old and new faces look to accelerate to championship

BY BILLY WOOD
ASSISTANT SPORTS EDITOR

The Ithaca College men's indoor track & field squad is coming off a strong 2023 indoor season that saw it finish third in the Liberty League and 14th in the NCAA national championships. While its strong performance was the story of last season, its youth will be the story of this one.

While the team was not able to take home any team-wide championships last season, individual performers like senior pole vaulter Dom Mikula and senior sprinter Jalen Leonard-Osbourne did, finishing runner-up and third in nationals respectively. Mikula will not return in a performance capacity because of his decision to use his eligibility in the outdoor season and the team will only suit up seven seniors, exactly half of what they rostered last season.

Despite a depleted upper class, head coach Jim Nichols said he is encouraged by the incoming first-year class and is looking

forward to former underclassmen stepping up to fill a sizable void. Nichols said that nearly all of the team's distance runners were also involved in the cross country season this year and that the distance part of the team will carry seven first-year students and only one senior.

"I believe our track team is going to be very youth oriented," Nichols said.

The team will also continue its trend of bringing back football players to the team. Leonard-Osbourne is expected to be one of the top performers out of that group and coach Nichols said he believes Leonard-Osbourne will continue to be in the race for a national title.

"Leonard-Osborne — star [running back] right now and was a national champion and third in indoors last year in the 60 [meter dash] — I believe he'll be back for indoors this year," Nichols said. "You know, when you have a defending champion, you have a national champion. There's always a chance that he can win nationals, so he should be one of the best runners in not just the conference, but in the country."

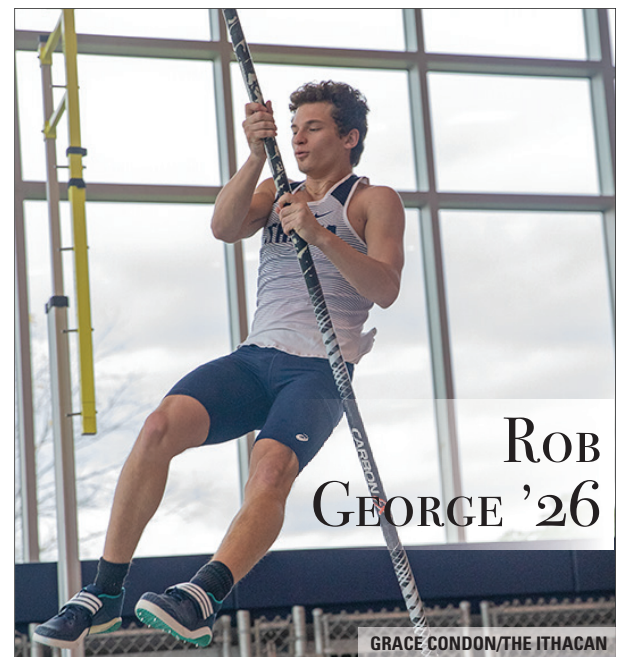
Learning from the leading upperclassmen of the team will be a very special duo of first-year runners. The tight bonds of the team might go farther when it comes to Alex and Max Boreland. Nichols said he is excited for the two and the hurdlers on the squad will be especially exciting to watch.

"We have two twins, [first-year sprinters] Alex and Max Boreland, who are some very good sprinters that should be able to score in conference right away," Nichols said. "We have a 400 meter runner and 400 hurdler [first-year student] Joe Napolitano that is excellent. He'll be on the 4x4 [and] that will help strengthen our 4x4. That'll be really good and then also our hurdlers should be very, very strong."

Pole vaulting has been one of the big strengths for the team over the past few seasons, with Mikula taking home the Liberty League championship and the runner up in the pole vault last season. With Mikula only being with the team in a training capacity this season, the rest of the team will have to step up and sophomore pole vaulter Rob George said he believes the team has the depth to fill his absence.

"I don't know if there's really one specific person to look out for; I think that anyone could have their opportunity to shine this season," George said.

George dealt with an injury last season, as did sophomore



ROB GEORGE '26

GRACE CONDON/THE ITHACAN

multi Matt Lokshin. Lokshin is switching from exclusively hurdles to multis this season after dealing with a sports hernia, and he said that while the every day training has stayed the same, the team has integrated new training that have helped recovery.

"We have had our consistency, we've had our routines and that's getting to us," Lokshin said. "It's better to be consistent when they introduce new things especially into the season. We did have a few changes where we had yoga on Thursdays for a few weeks to satisfy some days that we weren't allowed to practice and I think that was helpful."

With many set to overlook the team due to its young roster, Lokshin is not deterred and said a championship could be in the near future for the South Hill squad.

"I completely believe our ceiling is winning the Liberty League," Lokshin said. "We have a lot of guys, we get a lot more guys coming in the next first-year class and I think that if everyone keeps the same level of competitiveness [and] everyone keeps the same level of eagerness, then I think we're going to be in a really good spot."

CONTACT: WWOOD@ITHACA.EDU



MATT LOKSHIN '26

KALYSTA DONAGHY-ROBINSON/THE ITHACAN

GYMNASTICS

Bombers look to flip the narrative on the big stage

BY AUGUSTINE DAUDU
CONTRIBUTING WRITER

After finishing in sixth place at the 2023 National Collegiate Gymnastics Association Championships, where three Bombers earned All-American athletic honors, the Ithaca College gymnastics team is gearing up for a new season.

Head coach Rick Suddaby, who is in his 38th year of coaching the team and was named 2023 NCGA East Coach of the Year, said the team is hoping to place higher in the upcoming season. The team was in fourth place for most of its competition until the last two events.

"We were good, but we made mistakes when it counted," Suddaby said. "We've trained a lot of things that will take the ceiling off of their ability level, along with how to think about gymnastics while they're performing. ... We teach stress reduction to a certain extent so that they can work on that as a skill, because it is a skill."

The team is implementing a new strategy this year for selecting lineups, in hopes of being more prepared for high-intensity situations.

Suddaby said that by competing for their positions on the floor, his athletes will be more motivated to push themselves to the next level. Previously, the top six gymnasts in each event were selected to compete.

"[The gymnasts] will compete within the gym for the opportunity to compete on the floor," Suddaby said. "Instead of us just choosing the lineups, they'll compete for them, and that will help them get used to

handling that pressure."

Suddaby said he is excited for many new upgrades the Bombers are planning for this season. He said that in the off-season, his athletes have been working to rearrange their routines, maximizing their scores and minimizing deductions. The team typically trains five days a week and lifts twice a week.

"On beam, we're going to have some really strong returners and some really strong [first-year students] that will be able to score in the high nines," Suddaby said. "We're going to be adding a couple of twisting vaults, which will be new from last year."

Another boost to the team is that several gymnasts who did not compete last season will be returning to competition this year, including junior Jillian Freyman, a 2022 All-American who was out with an elbow injury.

Sophomore Grace Murray, who earned All-American status last season, said she is working on adding a new skill, a layout double backflip, to her floor routine. Murray, who specializes in floor exercise and finished third place in that event at the 2023 National Championship, is also looking to perform in other events. She said she is training for a new vault that she hopes will earn extra points for the team.

Murray said Suddaby emphasizes clearly communicating the team's responsibilities in terms of training.

"We know what he expects of us and we try to do it," Murray said. "If we can't, we talk to him, work something out, figure out what we can do [instead]."

Suddaby also values the importance of mental preparation and works with the team to prepare them for the challenges of competition.

"We've trained a lot of things that will take the top of the ceiling off of their ability level, along with how to think about gymnastics while they're performing, and when to think, and how to think and to focus," Suddaby said.

As crucial as mentality is to his athletes, Suddaby said he focuses much of his competition preparation on minimizing pressure by encouraging positive



GRACE MURRAY '26

GRACE CONDON/THE ITHACAN

affirmation in and out of the gym.

"We do a lot of work on self-talk," Suddaby said. "A lot of kids, just by the way they talk to themselves in their head, set themselves up to be less successful. They change that, they'll be more successful."

There are nine first-year students joining the team this year. Suddaby said that they have adjusted well to being part of the team and that the upperclassmen have been very important in facilitating that.

"Our senior class and our junior class are really stepping it up and leading the way; [they are] setting great examples," Suddaby said. "Especially our junior class, which will be scoring most of our points this year."

Junior Skye Cohen, who also earned All-American status last season, finished third in the all-around at the 2022 National Championship, the highest placement of a Bomber gymnast in over a decade. Cohen said she is working on adding new difficult elements on balance beam and vault to help contribute to the team's score.

Cohen echoed Suddaby in that her class has stepped up as leaders and mentors for the newer members of the team.

"I feel like they can come up to us and talk to us, and we can help them get through whatever they need," Cohen said. "College gymnastics is a team sport so we are all working hard to make the team be the best it can be. We all cheer each other on, and work hard to be as strong, confident, and as consistent as we could be," Cohen said.

The path to the team's third-straight appearance at nationals will not be an easy one. Suddaby expects that SUNY Brockport will be the Bombers' biggest competition in 2024.

"Brockport has traditionally been the toughest team in the region," Suddaby said. "We got beat by them last year at regionals, and so we're going to try not to let that happen again."

Another factor that the Bombers will have to face is the addition of Utica University to the NCGA East Athletic Conference. This will lower the number of team qualification spots to nationals

available at regionals from three to two.

"That's going to be a challenge because we did place third in regionals last year," Murray said. "Which means, if that happened this year, we wouldn't have qualified to nationals as a team."

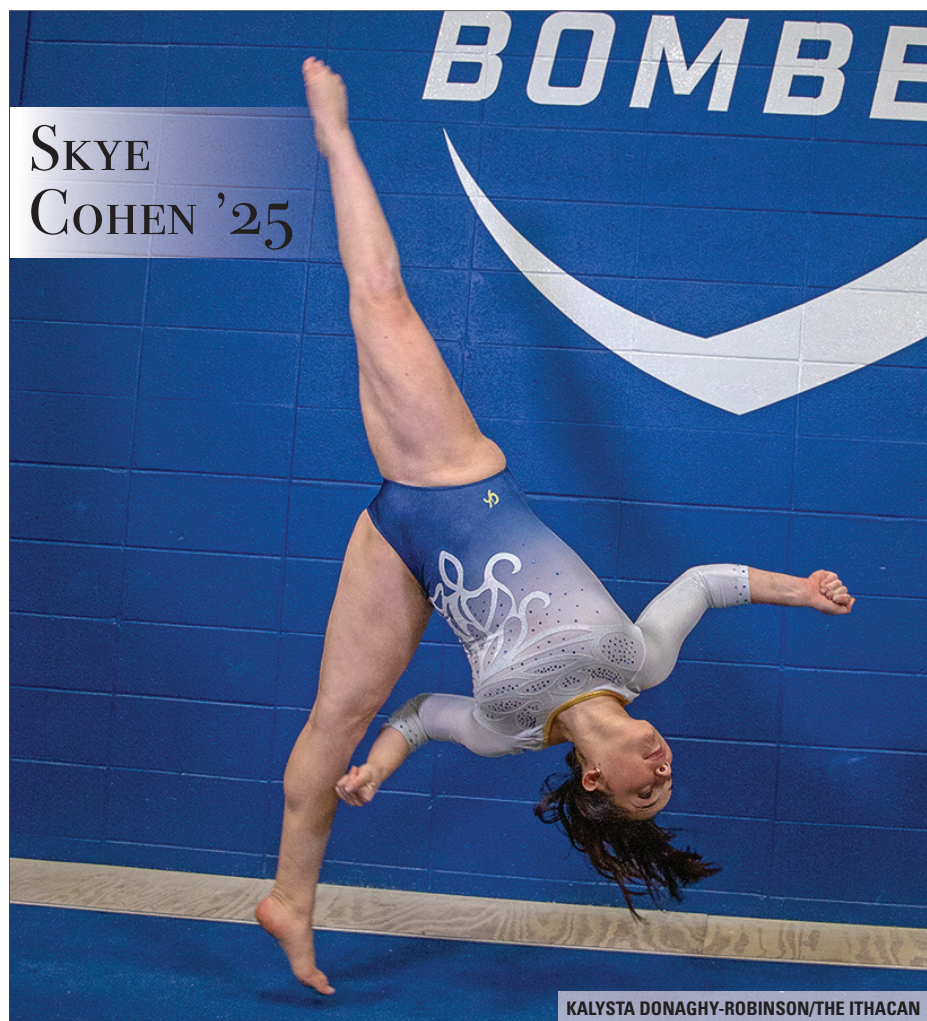
Nonetheless, the Bombers remain optimistic. Suddaby said he trusts that this team has what it takes

to rise up to the challenge.

"They're really focused on what they want to get done," Suddaby said. "They're also quite coachable and they're very responsive to our help."

Cohen said the supportive environment fostered on the team will be especially important as the Bombers approach the 2024 season, which will begin Jan. 13 in an away meet against SUNY Brockport.

"It's really nice to have a big group of girls, they're always super supportive," Cohen said. "If we notice someone's down, we'll go and cheer them up and [give them] a little pep talk. We're all really hard workers, and I'm excited to see what's going to happen this season."



SKYE COHEN '25

KALYSTA DONAGHY-ROBINSON/THE ITHACAN

IT'S TIME FOR CORTACA '23!

A Message to Cortaca Fans from the IC Football Team:

The Cortaca Jug Game is finally making its return to South Hill this year for the first time since 2017! We will be giving it everything we have on the field to ensure we retain the coveted jug and make this Cortaca at home one to remember. And we need your help too!

We need our fans to pack Butterfield Stadium and help us make it the best homefield advantage possible. Cheer loud and cheer with IC pride, but let's remember to keep the tradition of the game clean. Many look forward to this game all year long and it's a tradition that we want to continue for many years to come, so – Let's keep it classy:

- Cheer with IC pride! No need for swearing, yelling at the opposing players/teams, fighting, or negative distractions from the game.
- Let's not let the Cortaca tradition be defined by actions off the field. Violence, public intoxication, and destruction of property all detract from the spirit of the game and can have serious repercussions for those engaging and encouraging these negative actions and behaviors.
- While this should go without saying, remember also to be respectful to all individuals visiting our campus and be good neighbors to the individuals in our greater South Hill community.

Please represent our school in a way that makes us proud to represent you. We hope to see you all on Saturday, November 11, at Butterfield Stadium at 12 p.m. Be loud and proud and let's keep the Jugs on South Hill!

Ithaca College Football Captains,
A.J. Wingfield and Ben Stola



Students of Ithaca College:

On November 11, Ithaca College will renew its annual rivalry with SUNY Cortland in the 2023 installment of the Cortaca Jug football game. The rich history of the Cortaca Jug rivalry dates back to 1959 and our community is so excited that the game will make its much-anticipated return to South Hill and our iconic Butterfield Stadium for the first time since 2017.

Whether you are planning to attend the game or not, I hope you will join our campus community in celebrating the school spirit, passion and storied memories associated with this annual event. Our community is as proud as ever of the tradition and competitive sportsmanship that engages so many students, alumni and fans, and truly makes the Cortaca rivalry one of the greatest in all of intercollegiate athletics.

As we reach the final countdown to this much anticipated event, I encourage all of our students to immerse themselves in the pageantry of this exciting weekend both responsibly and respectfully.

Expected Behavior

Please remember that your behavior related to the game reflects not only on yourself, but also on your college.

- Please treat every single person at this event with respect and dignity, regardless of the team they support or whether you disagree with their words or actions.
- Please show your support in a positive manner. Do not become involved in behavior that includes: vulgarity or is demeaning of players, coaches, officials, team representatives or opposing fans. Verbal abuse has no place in any setting, rivalry game or otherwise.
- Throwing objects on the field, or in the general direction of players, coaches, officials, team representatives or other fans will not be tolerated and is grounds for immediate ejection from the stadium. Violators could be subject to judicial and/or legal action.
- Fighting and other acts of physical violence will result in judicial action, including possible suspension or expulsion from Ithaca College.
- Please exercise caution as you navigate campus and the greater Ithaca community this weekend. Traffic patterns will be significantly impacted on gameday. Do not operate a motor vehicle or ride in a vehicle operated by somebody under the influence of drugs and/or alcohol.
- Please be mindful of comments, photos, and videos you may post to social media before, during, and after the game. Your online profile can have a powerful impact and follow you during your time at Ithaca College and beyond. Do not share anything online that could leave you liable to law enforcement or have a detrimental impact on your personal character by friends, family and/or future employers.

Game Day Information

The gates to Butterfield Stadium will open at 10:00 a.m. Students are strongly encouraged to begin making their way to the stadium entry by no later than 11:00 a.m. The game will kickoff promptly at noon.

- There will be no walk-up ticket sales for the game. All students need to have secured their tickets during the distribution period October 30-November 1.
- All fans attending Cortaca 2023 will need to pass through security screening at entry. **No bags of any size will be permitted inside the stadium.** Individuals with bags will be denied entry, so please plan accordingly. Refer to the information card shared during ticket distribution for more information.
- Please visit our 2023 Cortaca Central page at the following link for more info: <https://athletics.ithaca.edu/sports/2023/10/31/2023-cortaca-central.aspx>

In conclusion, let's remember to keep responsibility and respect foremost in our thoughts this upcoming weekend. I appreciate your cooperation and look forward to an amazing weekend that reaffirms our IC school pride!

Sincerely,

Bonnie Solt Prunty
Vice President for Student Affairs and Campus Life

Learn more at our
Cortaca 2023 Portal Page

Scan Here:

