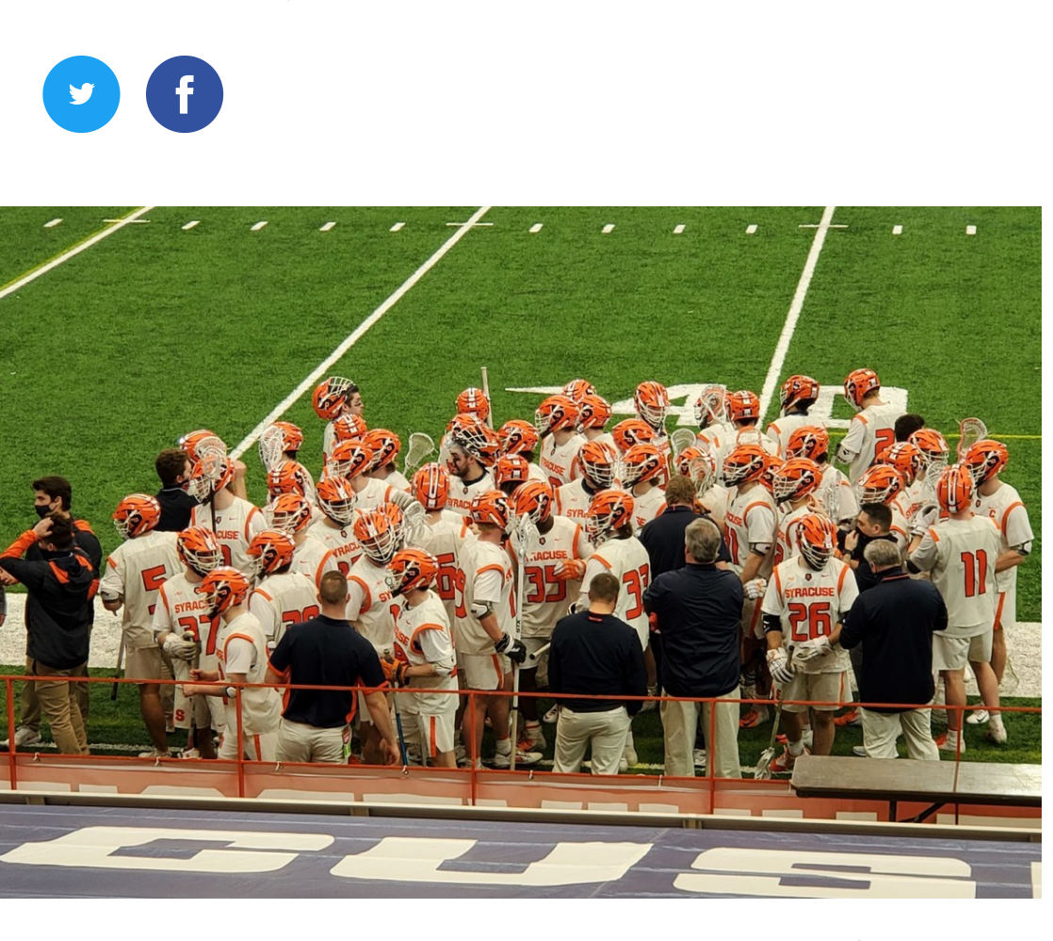
Syracuse men's lacrosse: Reloaded roster set to take the field for Orange in 2023

A new season brings a whole bunch of new names and faces to an Orange team that's going to look A LOT different than last year.

By John Orsenigo on January 25, 2023 11:30 am



Michael Ostrowski

The beginning of a new season is always an exciting time as fans dream of potential big things to come for their favorite teams.

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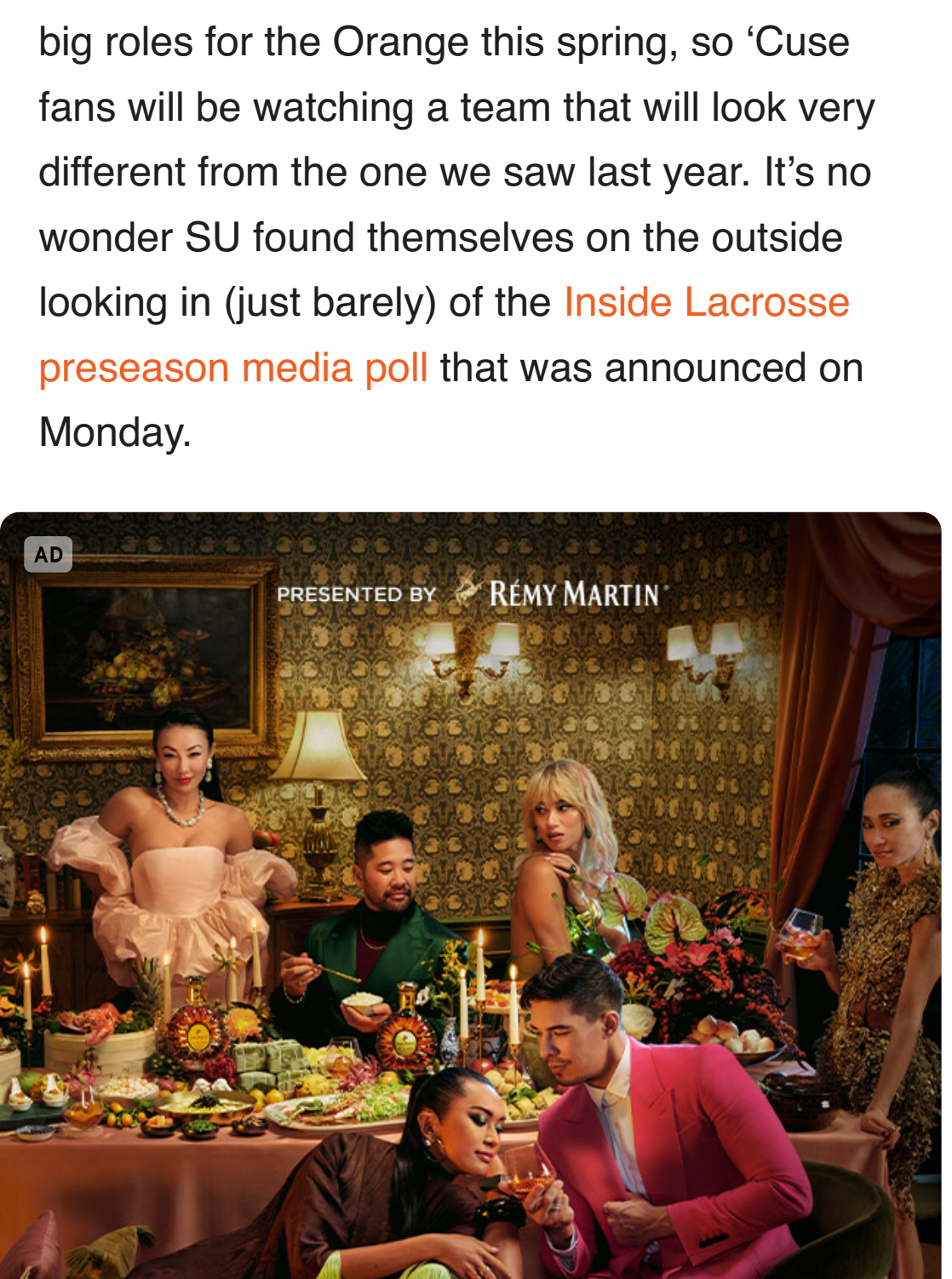
It's also a time to familiarize yourself with all the new players who have come to town for the first time, and Syracuse Orange fans have quite a lot of that going on this season.

Gary Gait and his staff had to put together a big roster rebuild after 23 players departed the program for a variety of reasons after last season.

Many of the new players are expected to play big roles for the Orange this spring, so 'Cuse fans will be watching a team that will look very different from the one we saw last year. It's no wonder SU found themselves on the outside looking in (just barely) of the Inside Lacrosse preseason media poll that was announced on Monday.



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Let's take a look at the roster makeup of the 2023 men's lacrosse team:

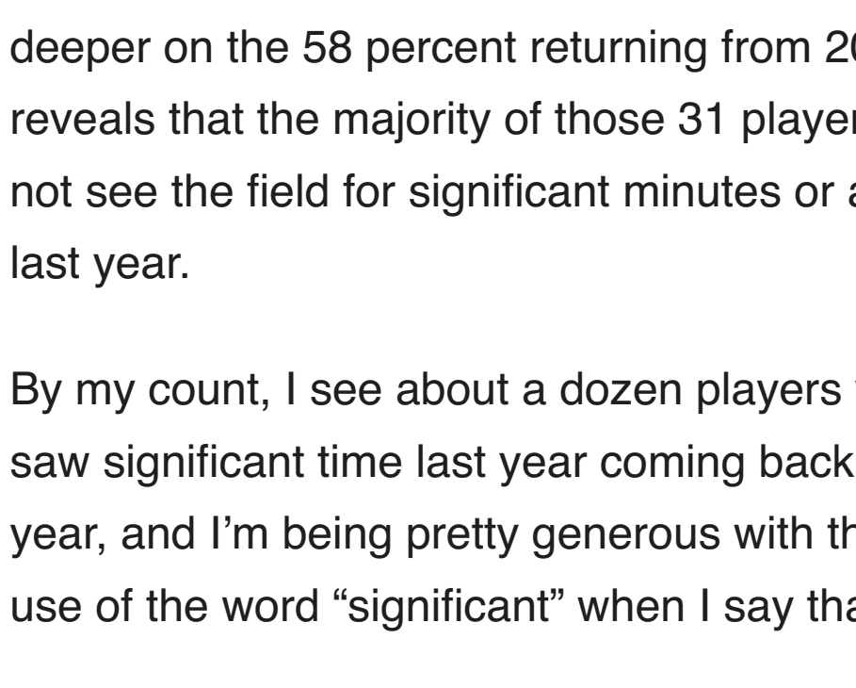
- 53 total players
- 31 returning
- 15 freshman
- 6 transfers
- 1 new walk-on

So the math checks out: 23 players OUT from last year, 22 new players IN for this year.

The math also tells us that 42 percent of the roster is new to the team this year. But that doesn't tell the whole story, because diving deeper on the 58 percent returning from 2022 reveals that the majority of those 31 players did not see the field for significant minutes or at all last year.

By my count, I see about a dozen players who saw significant time last year coming back this year, and I'm being pretty generous with the use of the word “significant” when I say that.

The point is that we will see a largely new group of players taking the field this season, and that's really a good thing when you remember that last year's group finished with the worst record in program history.

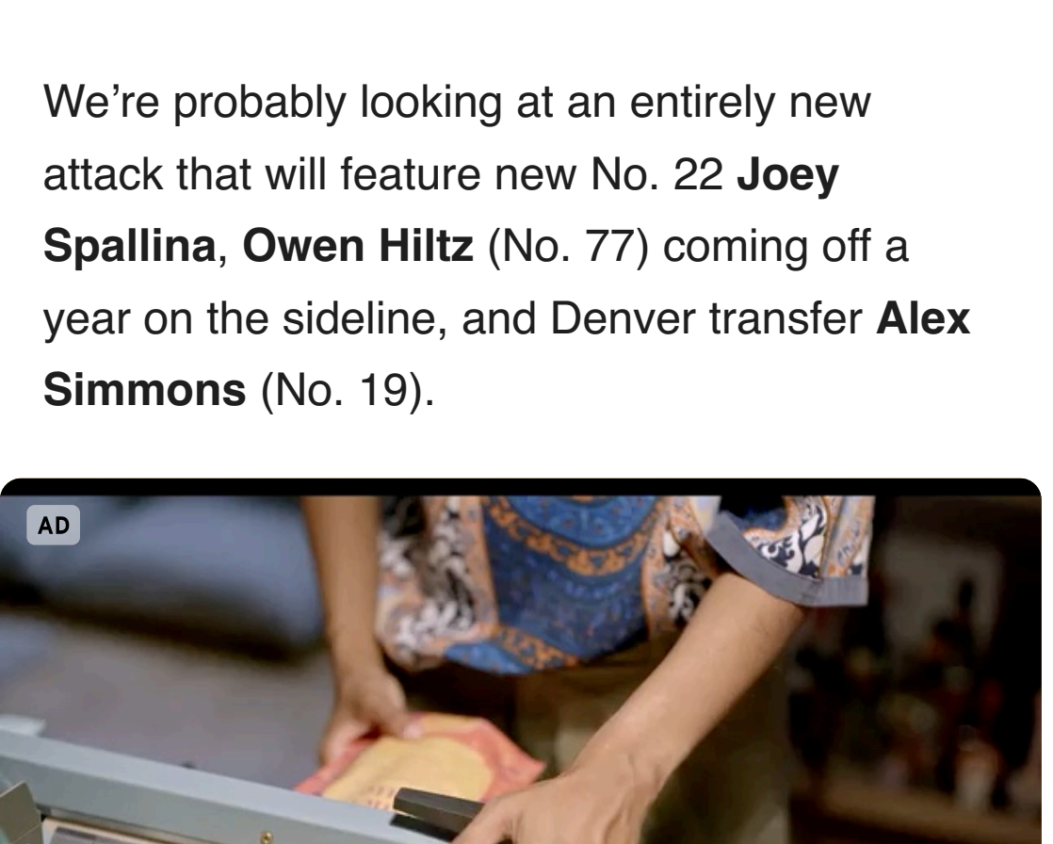


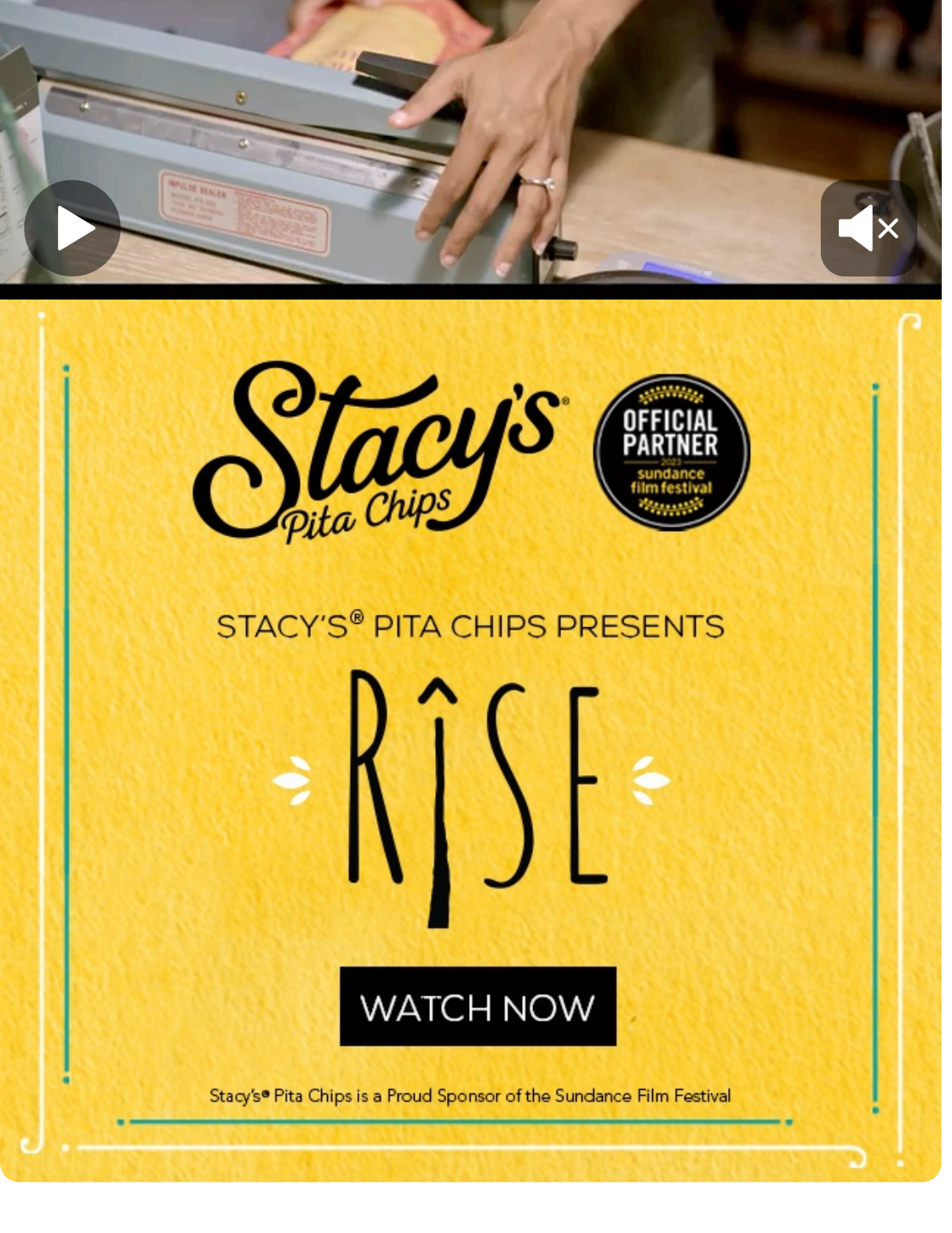
The new-ness of this year gives us as Orange fans a chance for fresh optimism as we welcome in one of the best freshman classes we've seen in a long time and a group of transfers who should all play important roles for this team.

So, who will we be seeing out there once the calendar flips to February?

Let's start on offense, where we'll recognize the likes of **Jackson Birtwistle** (No. 9), **Griffin Cook** (No. 2), and **Tyler Cordes** (No. 29). Outside of that, it's all fresh faces on offense.

We're probably looking at an entirely new attack that will feature new No. 22 **Joey Spallina**, **Owen Hiltz** (No. 77) coming off a year on the sideline, and Denver transfer **Alex Simmons** (No. 19).





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There's also a sizable group of new guys who will be rotating in at midfield and/or sliding down to attack to give someone a rest. I'll start with the veteran in Lehigh transfer **Cole Kirst** (No. 40), who is going to be flanked by a whole slew of youngsters. **Finn Thomson** (No. 23), **Michael Leo** (No. 7), and **Luke Rhoa** (No. 8) are the freshman stars who will join Birtwistle, Cook, and Cordes in the midfield rotation. Team captain **Pete Fiorini** (No. 13), **John Cohen** (No. 81), and freshman **Carter Kempney** (No. 3) also factor into that equation.

Defensively, there are more familiar faces returning for the Orange. LSM **Saam Olexo** (No. 48) is back to lead the defensive midfield flanked by shorties **Brandon Aviles** (No. 43), **Carter Rice** (No. 12) and **Max Rosa** (No. 10). Meanwhile, the close defense returns **Nick Caccamo** (No. 28), **Nick Fraterrigo** (No. 25) and **Landon Clary** (No. 30) as he moves down from LSM.

Despite those returning names, the freshmen and transfers will factor in on this end of the field, as well. The top candidates for that include LIU transfer **Jake Murphy** (No. 16) as a midfielder, freshman SSDM **Vinnie Trujillo** (No. 18), and freshman LSM **Dylan Sageder** (No. 42). At close defense, **Billy Dwan** (No. 35), **Jordan Beck** (No. 41) and **Riley Figueiras** (No. 11), if he's healthy, all have a chance to make an impact.

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The specialists will be almost entirely new this season as the team searches for answers in the cage and tries to replace **Jakob Phaup** at the dot, and transfers and freshmen will likely be the answers for both spots.

There are three goalies in the equation for 'Cuse: LIU transfer **Will Mark** (No. 88), freshman **Jimmy McCool** (No. 39), and returner **Harrison Thompson** (No. 1). I would be surprised if Mark doesn't start the season as the experienced veteran whose been an All-American twice.

But the face-off situation is a big question mark, but Canisius transfer **Johnny Richiusa** (No. 45) will join the mix alongside freshman **Gavin Gibbs** (No. 24) and returner **Jack Fine** (No. 38). No matter how you slice up the face-off opportunities, we're going to be seeing all new names taking a crack at the re-starts for SU.

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The nature of 'new' in sports intrinsically means excitement and fantasizing about what could be, whether it's a brand new season or a whole bunch of new players.

In 2023, both are the case for Syracuse, and the excitement only grows the closer we move to getting our first look at all the new names and numbers in Orange. Let's just get to February 4th already!

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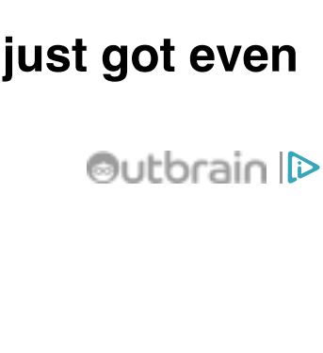

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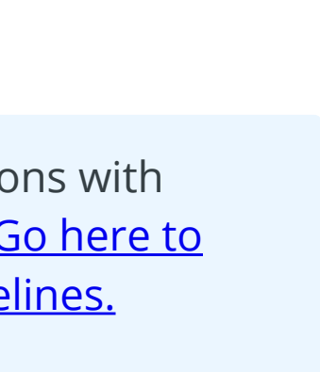

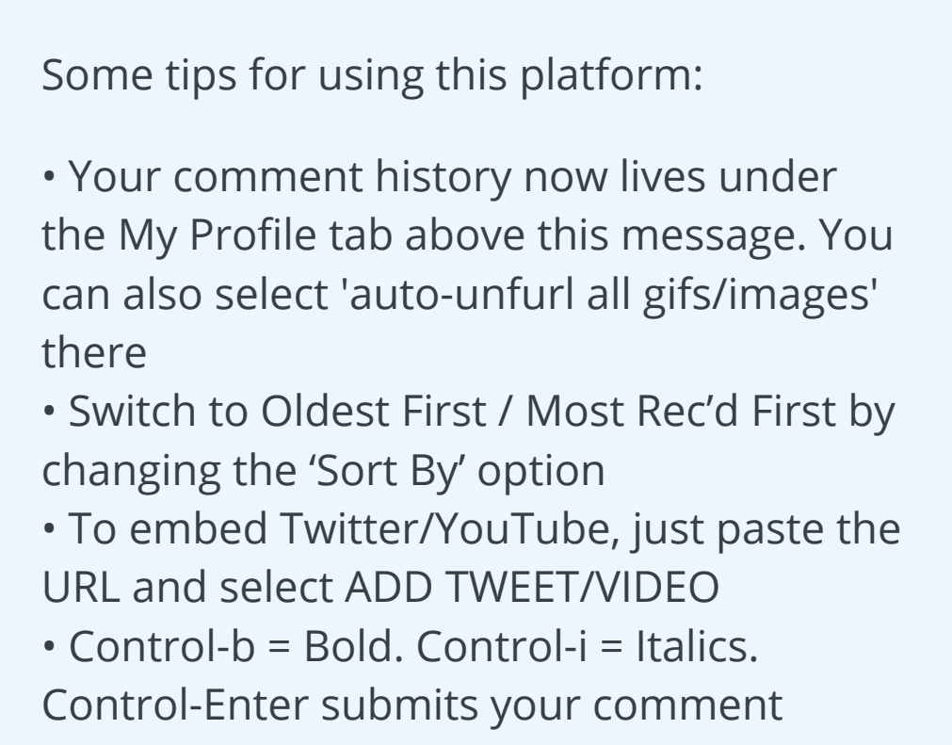

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GiantsCauseway
4 hours ago

I think this team will score goals, but will they get enough possessions with what they have at the X.

FirstTime
3 hours ago

In reply to GiantsCauseway

X is certainly a big unknown but with so many returning on D, we are likely to see the same story as last season - I think we ranked 66 out of 72 in goals allowed per game. If the D has not significantly improved (I can't see how it could have), we are likely to see the same result as last season in terms of wins and losses.

algonquin17
14 hours ago

Desko stayed several seasons too long, like Boeheim has with the hoops program, and now we have a pretty long road back to national relevance. I think that Gait will have the program back on track, and this season will be a significant step in the right direction.
Looking forward to this season and your great coverage John, thank you!

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