

The cast:

I really like this cast. Good mix of people who have never played plus solid returnees that haven't played too much. Almost half the people have never played Smogon before? And then most of the returnees haven't played too much either. There's a couple people I'm wishy-washy on but I'm a firm believer that even the greatest casts will have some duds. Should be a good one.

Inferno – This game will be a good test to Inferno, I feel like he's been stuck playing the same people for most of the games he's been in. I see this as a good opportunity for him to "break out." My concern is that he won't be able to recognize who the big threats to his game will be (snype, paper, and dle). He's quite sociable but I just don't think he's going to be able to recognize and get out the threats before they get him out. It's not that I think he's gullible or unaware. Perhaps a little too trusting? I don't know if he has that cutthroat edge that he probably will need in this game. I see this game coming down to one or two votes where the big threats to win will have to go after each other. And I can't see him getting past those votes. I see him as a deep threat that goes out late. Definitely a dark horse potential winner.

Laurel – Laurel probably is more controversial than I'd like to admit but he's one of my favorite people on Circus because he's really smart and funny. Fun fact: I infracted Laurel on the Pokemon Online Forums for flaming in a NOC game with Smogon Pokemon Superstar Finchinator. Laurel is a guy who I would've loved to see play mafia in circus's prime just because he's so suited to the OC style of negotiation. He's a good liar, solid challenge performer, and has a really good mind for Survivor. He'll do well in most if not all of this game's challenges and probably has a head-start on most reputation-wise. Big concern will be if people are wary of his reputation (although I'm not sure there's any who really will be sus of him. Snype?) He's almost a guarantee to go far unless he gets drafted into a team with a minority alliance who know what he's capable of and take him out before he can get to the merge.

UTO – It's always a pleasant surprise seeing random people from 1+ years ago pop up and make an appearance. It's really cool to see UTO playing games and I really hope he does well. He strikes me as the sort of person who's still learning but is willing to try anything. I would probably be more worried for him if there were more connected people in this game, but there's plenty of wild cards so I can see him carving out a niche for himself and getting into a majority alliance. I could also see him overplaying and flopping hard and being the fourth and fifth one out. I think he has it in him to win but not sure we'll see that sort of game from him. Max is probably 5th place? But I'm hoping he does really well. He's from Smogon so he'll probably be good at Pokemon challenges which will help his game!

MathTurtle – I really wanted Math to win...season 5??? But then for some reason he decided not to vote out vooper which was pretty ??? Or something like that I didn't really follow that season. He's a cryptic guy. I don't really know him that well and I'm not really sure what he's capable of. He comes across as a loyal follower...but who's he going to follow this game? I don't know if he knows anyone or there's anyone with a strong enough personality that he will gravitate too. I'm also slightly concerned about his activity? If he doesn't participate early I could see him going then...but if he finds a strong alliance, someone who recognizes his value then I could see him going far and possibly making it to the finals, albeit as a goat. I'd love to see an active game from him...going out there and talking to people and making plans. Or even just finding an alliance and backstabbing them/playing the middle at some point. There's just a lot of question marks for me because I don't really know him. But I'm hopeful that he can grow as a player.

Andy Snype – I think Steven Snype rolls off the tongue much better (or even just “Andrew”) but I don’t begrudge him for the name change. Snype is a super smart guy, incredible smogon mafia player in his time, probably would be great at NOC if he wanted to be (but I don’t blame him for not!). It’s purely a motivation issue for him. Will he want to be here? I really hope so and I really hope the challenges shmegg and I have created are fun and low intensive enough for not just him but others too. He’s just so good at networking when he wants...possibly the strongest networker I’ve played with. I think he could play a hal-like game but be likeable enough to sweep the finals. Potential to win is high IF he stays invested because I know he is a busy guy with other interests. Probably a winner pick for me.

Samoyed – Aubisio, the name I prefer, is a guy who’s really grown from his first Smogon appearance. I’m always sad when people leave a community for elsewhere that’s more in line with their interests, which I feel is the case with him but at the same time I’m really glad he’s branching out and expanding himself. He used to have a reputation for being AFK, unreliable, not much of a thinker so it’s really crazy that’s he grown to the point where he has his own voice and isn’t afraid to be dominant and out there. That’s the sort of change I really respect and as sappy as it sounds, is what I enjoy about having been on Smogon so long. Seeing people start at the bottom and grow. Anyways, Smogon Survivor history he’s probably not done as well as he would’ve wanted (in the two anon games). It’ll be interesting to see how he approaches non-anon and whether his name will carry any sort of reputation...good or bad. Could possibly be a dark horse winner but it would require some maneuvering. Could also just overplay and be out pre-merge. I’m really not sure what to expect from him, but I know he’ll play hard and if the other strong players play lax, he’s got a chance to win.

Thunder~BALLZ – I like that the last part of his name is capitalized. I dunno, it’s just so funny to me. I’m too immature lol. Anyways, tbz back in the day when I was looking at the PS! Server fairly often I noticed he would pretty much dominate in game wins in the history. And I mean dominate, like no one else was really close. I didn’t see him in action, but I think it speaks to his ability that he was able to win by so much in an extremely variable setting like real time mafia is. Forum is a different beast because he doesn’t quite have the same reputation...so he’s got to put in the work which maybe he doesn’t quite have the time for (see: some of the forum NOCs he’s played). But there’s no question he has the ability. I assume he’s got a Pokemon background too. I think he’s a pretty sure bet for the merge, and depending on the time he puts in, has got a decent chance of winning as well.

Bluedoom – Bluedoom is sort of a quiet guy. I think he’s easy to underestimate which is maybe why I overestimate him because I’m always thinking he’s going to break out and take over the game when it’s probably a little more complicated than that. This time around I’ll temper my expectations and say he’s a late pre-merge, early merge vote. He’ll be solid but unspectacular. He won’t lose his team challenges but he won’t win them either. Maybe he’ll be more connected then I originally thought? I think he could go far and possibly win and I want to see him do that, but chances are way more likely that he’s just consistent and is voted out early merge. Max is probably no higher 5 I would say.

Shub – Has he played since the second Survivor? I remember him being super aggressive, getting caught up in a scandal, and then voted out fairly early? But even that was surprising because I remembered him being so passive in mafia games. Didn’t expect to see that side of him. So I really don’t know what to expect. It’s clear he’s got that ability to be aggressive, to make alliances, but I’m just not sure about what social capital he is to pull that off. But perhaps he’ll have an advantage of people not expecting a lot from him? He’s a big wildcard. I hope he ends up being super invested and shakes the game up.

Paperblade – Paperblade's another in the wildcard category – I didn't expect him to sign up but here he is. I really like Paper and I think he's a really smart player. But motivation-wise I'm not sure where's at; how badly does he want to win? He should be able to stay under the radar. And he knows who the danger players are in this game (read: snype, dle, possibly RAD). Who's he going to align with? How hard is he going to work to create social capital? The social capital question applies for everyone, but for Paper to win, it's especially relevant for him. I think he's a strong chance to win because he's going to be able to be friends with the big targets but also recognize that those are the guys he needs to take out. If he's motivated and stays under the radar/create bonds with the more unknowns, he's got a great shot.

DLE – DLE has to be one of the strongest social players I've ever met...mafia for sure and his Survivor resume as well. He's just so incredibly sociable and likeable...he's got an uncanny ability to connect with people. And he's smart enough to take advantage of those relationships as well. I think that's what makes him unique among this cast; it's not his reputation that sets him apart, but his ability to create actually meaningful relationships with people beyond the game. The biggest threat to his game will definitely be the people who know him and who will recognize him as a threat. It would be a fatal flaw for players like RAD and Snype to align too closely with DLE because he will simply beat them in a vote and in the end if it's a battle to convince the unknown quantities. Oh and he's good at challenges too? Big threat to win. He won't be voted out pre-merge unless the tribe he's on blindsides him (unlikely). If he doesn't go early in the merge, the chances of him winning increase dramatically. Motivation will be key for him too, but I think if he does to the merge, he's more likely to really effort. Great players find ways to win, and there's no question he's a great player. Don't bet against him winning again.

RADicate – He's a great player but I'm not sure you'd ever get him to admit that. He sells himself short and that's been a big issue for him and getting to the end. He makes a ton of right moves but can't finish the deal historically...he's got to change that if he wants to win and I think he has the reputation where a big move like that wouldn't be expected. Great social game, solid challenge performer, and he's a dude you will like and want to be on his side. The next step is leveraging those relationships to put him into a good position to win. Activity is important to, but being non-anon helps him a lot because he does have a good enough reputation to skate by and win votes in the end. In all honesty – I don't think he has it in him to take that next step, to backstab someone and solidify his spot in the end. But he'd be a great winner if he can do it.

Cabbate – I'll be honest; I'm really nervous about her. Inexperience is fine and you have to start somewhere but I just am not filled with confidence about her activity. She was one of the last people to join the server which is my basis for that. Yeah, that's all I got. I like seeing new people do well but she's coming in with a disadvantage. A pre-merge boot if she doesn't show much activity. Even then, she might not make the merge. But I hope I'm proven wrong.

Epicsnorlax – Another guy I'm interested in seeing play...I remember him for being flaky a couple years ago but he seems very enthusiastic. Maybe too enthusiastic? He seems connected but to what extent? Honestly I just don't know what to expect. The enthusiasm is a good sign though. The fear is that people will be threatened but I think there's enough shaky people in the game where that will potentially carry them decently far. I think they'll do well to make the merge.

HeuryAlone – I don't know anything about this guy and I don't think anyone on this site knows anything about him. I was hesitant about letting him in because he just had no history. Talking to him, I think he's a good guy. He's at a disadvantage as a relative unknown so it's quite likely he goes pre-merge. He

seems like a friendly guy but not sure I get the sense that he'll be able to create relationships and or alliances to take him far. Possible that he gets picked up as a number in an alliance but I just fear he won't be able to connect in his tribe. It would take a spectacular effort to win. I hope he goes far.

Jornsy – I thought Jornsy was pretty good in anon Survivor and probably would've been great had they actually been doing all the things I wanted to say they were doing. I think their big problem ended up being activity – a couple votes where they went AWOL and a general inability to capitalize on the relationships they had. Jornsy's reputation became overstated and that's why they were voted out. So I think the trick this time around is Jornsy has to actually live up to that reputation. And I think there's a lot less pressure because people won't expect them to do much. Activity will be key though – Jornsy struggled with that last time, is there reason to believe the same issue won't present itself? I think this playerlist will be more difficult than that anon one to go deep in. Mid-merge vote out, potentially pre-merge if activity isn't there.

Out pre-merge: Math cabbate jornsy heury bluedoom Samoyed

Merge but prob won't win: epic, UTO, inferno, rad

Could win: tbz, laurel, shub

Strong candidates to win: DLE, snype, paper