

# **2006 HIGH SCHOOL WRESTLING FORECAST**

(35<sup>th</sup> ANNUAL EDITION)

Written By:  
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## **Acknowledgements**

As always there are many people who help create this report. The most important are three masterful typists.

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## **Introduction**

The object of these annual reports encompasses two basic goals. First is to acquaint everyone with the basic character of each weight class and identify the participants who are likely to play a major role in its resolution. In addition, each individual district is examined as to whom its representatives might be. Second is to stimulate interest in the whole State tournament process throughout Ohio. Naturally, accuracy is also of primary concern, so care is taken to develop the most comprehensive list possible of outstanding wrestlers, though of necessity, the evaluation of their final place is, in part, subjective. This report was written during a ten-day period ending January 21, based on the information available at that time. Because this material was written by the 23<sup>rd</sup> and in the hands of the typists after that I have not included any information that may become available after that time. It's kind of a snapshot in time, with a picture that will surely change in many ways by tournament time. Certainly many of those listed at weight classes where they are currently certified will move up for competitive reasons or because they cannot make the 50 percent rule. In fact, some of those moves may well be precipitated by information contained within this document.

There are several ways you can help make this report more accurate. First by sending me bracket sheets for tournaments you enter either by fax or mail – I'm especially interested in sectional and district bracket sheets this year and **any** tournaments for next year. Also, phone calls, or better yet, e-mail messages dealing with results, weight class selection, or whatever, are gratefully received. I especially appreciate coaches who provide an honest overview of their squad and superior wrestlers they've seen in competition. Already I get messages and information from too many people to name individually, but I appreciate it all.

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This report is also available on the Internet on Gary Baumgartner's website, The Ohio Wrestler, as well as Brecksville High School's website:

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**And remember, my usual fee is a wrestling T-shirt – XL.  
(and that includes all you Internet readers)**

## DIVISION I

### 103 #

#### **PROJECTED CHAMPION: BO TOURIS (LAKOTA WEST)**

##### Top Contenders

2	Mitcheff (Elyria)	16	Schilling (Mentor)
3	Genetin (Massillon Perry)	17	Guerra (Waite)
4	Weaver (Moeller)	18	Henry (Solon)
5	Radsky (Thomas Worthington)	19	Hartley (Pickerington North)
6	Ciccarello (Brush)	20	Li (Reynoldsburg)
7	Lang (Brecksville)	21	Farber (St. Xavier)
8	Crasto (Centerville)	22	Totedo (Kenston)
9	Neibert (Beavercreek)	23	Sutter (Clay)
10	Mattingly (Uniontown Lake)	24	Sherman (Milford)
11	Millar (Davidson)	25	Foore (Wadsworth)
12	Bowman (Whitmer)	26	Cruz (Lorain Southview)
13	Mead (Harrison)	27	Conn (Teays Valley)
14	Pretty (Elder)	28	Zupancic (Barberton)
15	Boosz (Glen Oak)	29	Scarberry (Marion Franklin)

Last year there was an influx of exceptional freshman 103-pounders throughout the entire state. Both Division I finalists, for example, were from that class with Tony Jameson the eventual winner. This year there is no evidence of such an invasion by the incoming freshman (with the exception of David Taylor in Division II) so the battle for this title will feature wrestlers with more substantial high school experience. In Division I four wrestlers stand out and would seem to have the best chance of gaining the title. First, and foremost, is the undefeated Bo Touris, champion at the SWOCA and Brecksville, and the favorite at this class. He has crushed Genetin and Weaver in individual match-ups and looks to be the strongest of this quartet. Forced to participate at 112# last year after losing to state runner-up Fields in the wrestle-off, this junior looks primed to win it all this year. He is, however, not unbeatable. At Brecksville, Sergeant took him into overtime before losing and Mitcheff lost 9-8 in the final round that same day.

Mitcheff seems to be improving at a faster rate than the others. He was 7<sup>th</sup> last year losing to Jameson in the quarterfinals. This year he was 4<sup>th</sup> at the Ironman and 2<sup>nd</sup> at Brecksville including the aforementioned loss to Touris. Genetin looked exceptional at the Ironman. He lost to the highly rated Novachkov by a single point and pinned Mitcheff for 3<sup>rd</sup>. He was a convincing champ at Medina pinning Neibert and Householder, but lost very badly to Touris in the Ohio Duals. A state alternate last year he has strong finalist potential. Weaver, now a senior, was 4<sup>th</sup> last year, but will need all his experience and guile to beat the top trio. He failed to place at the Ironman and lost in the SWOCA finals to Touris, 16-4. With Weaver and Touris both exiting the Fairfield

District there is a one in three chance of an unbalanced bracket sheet with Mitcheff, Genetin, and Weaver (should he lose to Touris) in the same half of the draw.

Genetin head a solid Mentor District, but there are five contenders for the last three qualifying spots. Boosz is a returning state qualifier at this class, but his results have me concerned. He was 7<sup>th</sup> at Brecksville, 3<sup>rd</sup> at the Dies, and 2<sup>nd</sup> (to Genetin's backup) at Northwest and may be on the bubble here. Mattingly, a smooth freshman, was 2<sup>nd</sup> at Medina to Genetin and 5<sup>th</sup> at North Canton – losing twice to Crasto. He looks like a qualifier. However, the one to watch is probably Ciccarello. He won handily at North Canton and after getting “stuck” by Mattingly in the first round at Medina, won seven bouts before having to default to 4<sup>th</sup>. He has looked good in recent duals. Henry was 2<sup>nd</sup> to Schilling at Solon and was 6<sup>th</sup> at the Midwest Classic. Schilling after winning at Solon had a couple of shaky tournaments (he was 0-2 at Brecksville) but was crushing people at the Mentor duals. Also in the mix will be the Kenston champ Totedo (Kenston) and Hillock (Massillon Jackson).

Mitcheff should dominate at Waite. This is not a strong weight class at this district so there is a lot of opportunity here for everyone. I like the freshman Lang next best. He won big at Riverside, beat Division III choice Sergeant for 3<sup>rd</sup> at Brecksville, and was runner-up at the Dies. He could get a low place at Columbus. Bowman, Guerra, and Sutter are the best out of Toledo with the first named winning two district bouts last year, and Sutter winning at Perrysburg, Northwood and Sylvania Southview. The powerful Cruz might be sixth best here, which if the bracketing is good, is a disappointing place to be. Watch for Zupancic and Foore, a freshman with a lot of long term potential.

Radsky was 8<sup>th</sup> last year and returns for another go around at 103#. He is the best in the Central District, but that is not exactly a ringing endorsement. He was 2<sup>nd</sup> at Marion Harding to Papesh losing by a surprisingly large 11-1 margin. Also back is state qualifier Millar who was recently 2<sup>nd</sup> at Perrysburg losing to Sutter in overtime. A semi-finalist at Brecksville he ended up 5<sup>th</sup> after getting tech falled by both Mitcheff and Lang. Still he finished ahead of Genetin at DeSales the first week of the season. Hartley might be third best but he had a tough weekend at the Mentor duals losing badly to Schilling, Henry and Mitcheff. After him everything gets a little misty a Li, Conn, or Scarberry possibly next best.

There will be some tough wrestling at Fairfield although some of the wrestlers mentioned will be channeled to the much easier Darby district. Touris and Weaver lead the way, but I worry about the latter after a 4<sup>th</sup> place finish at the CIT. State qualifier Mead also returns at this weight class but a return trip to Columbus is no longer assured. He was 3<sup>rd</sup> at Wadsworth (losing to Foore) and was 4<sup>th</sup> at Fairfield behind Crasto. Neibert is very good finishing 3<sup>rd</sup> at Brecksville (losing only to Genetin) 3<sup>rd</sup> at the SWOGA and winning at Beaver creek. Also excellent is Crasto who beat Mattingly twice at North Canton and lost only to Ciccarello, was also 3<sup>rd</sup> at GMVVA and won handily at Fairfield. Add into the mix Pretty, a consistent placer, Farber, Doll (Fairmont) and Herrington (Sycamore) and you have to hope a few of these will migrate to Darby.

**112 #**

**PROJECTED CHAMPION: COLLIN PALMER (ST. EDWARD)**

*Top Contenders*

2	Fields (Lakota West)	15	Newbury (Milford)
3	Reese (Shaker Hts.)	16	Stoll (Coffman)
4	Peskar (Maple Hts.)	17	Shymske (Midpark)
5	McCoy (Elder)	18	Hinkle (Central Crossing)
6	Zamaria (Brecksville)	19	Latham (Sylvania Southview)
7	Farrell (St. Ignatius)	20	Steman (Teays Valley)
8	Horner (Massillon Perry)	21	Calabro (Springboro)
9	Dinda (Garfield Hts.)	22	Stephens (Piqua)
10	Radsky (Thomas Worthington)	23	Bivenour (Olentangy)
11	Fuller (Waite)	24	Briceno (Anthony Wayne)
12	Flores (Clay)	25	Wallander (Moeller)
13	Nein (Reynoldsburg)	26	Skilton (Mentor)
14	Lichtenberg (Strongsville)		

I failed to identify any fabulous freshman competing this year at 103#, but that is clearly not the case at this weight class. Collin Palmer may well go down as the most dominating freshman wrestler in Ohio history. This three-time junior high state champion has crushed every Ohio opponent pinning the vast majority of them. At Medina he had five falls, only one of which lasted into the third minute of action. He was champion at the Beast of the East in a dominating performance--and he does it all with a smile on his face. His only loss, an aberration in my mind, was in the finals at the Ironman, where, after majoring both the defending champ and the #1 ranked wrestler in the country, he seemed to panic after giving up an early big move. I don't foresee that happening again.

Palmer's only real threat is the excellent sophomore Ryan Fields. A state runner-up at 103# last year, he, like his workout partner Touris, is undefeated with titles at Brecksville and the SWOCA. Solid in every phase of the sport he'll want to get ahead of Palmer early and pressure him on top. Whether Fields can do this is problematical, but this former junior high state champion would seem to be the biggest barrier in Palmer's path.

Palmer exits a relatively weak district. Surprisingly there is not a single returning state qualifier at this weight, and no one with a history of major tournament victories. Three names, however, show up with some frequency. Flores, a transfer from Perrysburg, won at Sylvania Southview and Northwood after being a state alternate last year at 103#. He has not wrestled much outside the Toledo area, so it is difficult to judge him against a broader base of wrestlers. Zamaria won at Riverside in stylish fashion and was 4<sup>th</sup> at Brecksville--losing in the first round and then winning seven consolation bouts. He was a solid 2<sup>nd</sup> at the Dies and has good qualification chances. Lichtenberg is my mystery man. He always looks very solid to me, but his results are not what I

anticipate. A sectional champ last year, he was 2-2 at the district level. This year he has been 5<sup>th</sup> at Solon and Brecksville, and a runner-up at the Midwest Classic. Fuller had some big wins at Brecksville and won at Perrysburg over Sofoulis and could surpass at least one of the trio just discussed. I am looking for a breakout district from him. Other possibilities might be Gramza (Whitmer), Briceno, or Latham from Toledo or maybe Gyorfi (Lorain Southview).

The powerhouse district is at Mentor with a half-dozen state caliber wrestlers. The powerful Reese was 5<sup>th</sup> last year at Columbus with a number of big wins. He won at Solon despite some narrow escapes, but has missed some time with injuries. Dinda went 1-2 at Columbus last year, but had a bad tournament at Brecksville. I think that might have been an aberration. Peskar was a state alternate last year and has move ahead of Dinda. He won at Franklin Hts., Hudson and Kenston – the last mentioned with a big win over Bernard. He has state placement prospects. I also like Farrell and, possibly, Shymske who gives a solid performance each time out. The one to watch out for is the freshman Horner who was a semi-finalist at Medina and ended up 3<sup>rd</sup> and previously won at DeSales.

Maybe, it's me, but I do not see high placers emerging out of the Columbus area. I am thinking Alex Radsky might be the top contender for a state spot out of that area with 103# state qualifier Hinkle also in the running. Nein has had some good successes, but looked shaky at Brecksville losing on a 28 second fall to Roche and then 17-0 to Zamaria. Bivenour and Stoll are other possibilities and were 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> in the district at 103# last year. However, this is not a fertile area for 112-pounders. I kept thinking that, perhaps, a couple of the 119's might drop, but it did not happen.

As mentioned, Fields, I believe, will be Palmer's biggest obstacle on his path to a possible state title, and should dominate the Fairfield district. McCoy was a state qualifier at 103# last year and went 1-2 with a big win over Hinkle. This year he was 2<sup>nd</sup> to Fields at the SWOCA and gave him a good battle at Brecksville before losing 9-6 and not placing. However, he was only 5<sup>th</sup> at the CIT a somewhat disappointing result. Many of the top-flight contenders here have similar up-and-down records making final judgments difficult. Newberry, for example, beat a solid field at Wadsworth, but also failed to place at the SWOCA. Calabro is an experienced senior who has been placing at 119#, but certified at 112#. I like Stephens, 3<sup>rd</sup> at GMVWA, and the fast improving Wallander to provide solid competition at this weight class as well.

**119 #**

**PROJECTED CHAMPION: TONY JAMESON (FITCH)**

Top Contenders

2	Rini (Massillon Jackson)	16	Warner (Greenville)
3	Floyd (Solon)	17	Sanders (Westland)
4	Adams (Harrison)	18	Mercado (Lorain Southview)
5	Jones (Start)	19	Dare (Darby)
6	Palivoda (Marysville)	20	Peters (Lakota West)
7	Arnold (Garfield Hts.)	21	Eren (Perryburg)
8	Dukes (Princeton)	22	Krummert (Milford)
9	Birt (St. Edward)	23	Carmona (Waite)
10	McGuire (Miamisburg)	24	Reese (Amelia)
11	Byers (Holland Springfield)	25	Bradley (Sylvania Southview)
12	Graszl (Mansfield Madison)	26	Kretz (Twinsburg)
13	Highbaugh (Maple Hts.)	27	Rooney (Massillon Perry)
14	Nighman (Riverside)	28	Chaney (Westerville Central)
15	Lloyd (Olentangy)	29	Channel (Central Crossing)

This is a very strong weight class with at least a dozen state qualifiers likely to be competing for the overall championship. It will make for a very crowded bracket sheet at Columbus and that suggests that upsets will not be unexpected. The Mentor District will be absolutely brutal with the qualifiers there likely to be still recovering from that competition when they get to Columbus. Nonetheless, the brilliant sophomore Tony Jameson has to be the favorite based on his record the past two years. As a freshman he won the 103# title with four comfortable wins at Columbus including a 7-3 final over Fields. This year he has been even better culminating with a Brecksville title over a tremendously strong field that included four other state placers and two other state finalists. A well-deserved winner of the Outstanding Wrestler award he will have a target on his back for the rest of this field. However, he is so quick and smooth that he never presents a stationary reference point for his opponents. He made a careless mistake against Palivoda when well ahead putting him on his back for a few seconds. He cannot allow that few seconds lapse in focus in Columbus.

Also at that district is the powerful junior Dante Rini, 3<sup>rd</sup> last year at 103#. He gave Jameson fits last year defeating him twice – including the district semi-final. Since then they have not met as Rini has twice lost in the semi-finals (at State last year and Brecksville this year) one round before a potential Jameson match-up. Whether that history will impact the result of their next confrontation is still an open question. Rini is a short 119-pounder who is difficult to score against. He should be away from Jameson at Columbus. Ricky Floyd was 4<sup>th</sup> last year at this weight class losing a 1-0 semi-final thriller to the defensive-minded Sulzer. He wrestled the first two weeks of the season at Solon and the MWC with a balky knee and has not competed since then. Extremely quick and strong he is, at 100%, a formidable threat to anyone here. I would not be surprised to see him move up to 125# to again challenge Sulzer at what appears to be a far easier weight class. With Jameson, Rini, and Floyd at Mentor that leaves little

margin for error for the rest of the district. State qualifier Arnold is probably next best and the one plus is that this foursome all exit different sectionals setting up the best possible draw. Arnold had some bad luck at Columbus last year and has definite placement chances, if he can get there. I also like the powerful Highbaugh--one win from Columbus last year--and Medina runner-up Nighman. Both of these boys would be shoo-ins at any other district. Factor in Kretz and Cline (Uniontown Lake) and this district is exceptional. A dark horse is two-time state qualifier Scott Rooney who apparently will compete at this weight class. He will be the unknown variable at this district.

The top wrestler at Waite in the 119# class has to be Roshawn Jones. He was 7<sup>th</sup> last year at 112# with both state losses being two-point defeats. This year he had a first period fall to win at Sylvania Southview and a 20-3 technical fall to win at Northwood. Very athletic and strong he will be a formidable force at Columbus. Birt, who was 6<sup>th</sup> last year at 103#, and Byers, a state qualifier at 112#, are probably next best. Birt won their bout for 3<sup>rd</sup> place 6-2 at Medina and has wrestled a difficult schedule. Birt is still growing into the weight, but he is experienced and can put people on their back. Graszl is down from 125# and he has to factor into this contest. He won the always-competitive Gorman at this weight class and was 4<sup>th</sup> at the Top Gun in a weight class that featured two state champions. That is my top quartet with Mercado, Bradley and Carmona seem next best although Byers defeated the latter 20-6 at the Perrysburg final. Do not forget Eren. He has some erratic placements, but he did win the Midwest Classic over a host of solid competitors. He will need another weekend like that to qualify.

There are solid 119's in the Columbus area and factor in one or two more from the Xenia Sectional and it should be a spirited competition. Palivoda was the district champ at 112# last year and then grabbed a low place at States. He looked good at Brecksville making the semi-finals and scared the heck out of Jameson when he put him on his back during a 10-6 loss. He ended up 5<sup>th</sup> in the toughest weight class of a very strong tournament. Lloyd and Dare were both at Medina and both were pinned by Birt, but otherwise had good tournaments. Lloyd, in particular, had a tough first round draw losing 2-0 to eventual finalist Nighman. He then had some excellent wins and finished 5<sup>th</sup>. Sanders is very strong and should threaten all but Palivoda. Channel won at Franklin Hts. and was 5<sup>th</sup> at Wadsworth where he lost to the up-and-coming Chaney.

Adams is a standout at Fairfield. A district champion at 112# last year and a sixth place state finisher he is also a two time state qualifier. Oddly enough, and this has to be a rare occurrence, he met the same opponent (Travis Barnard) in the first round each time. After losing both he is probably happy that Geneva (and Barnard) are now in Division II. This year he was a solid winner at the SWOCA and won handily at Wadsworth. Duke, McGuire, and Warner are all returning state qualifiers at 112# who had a composite 1-6 record in Columbus. Dukes has missed some time this year, but McGuire has been one of spearheads of a very good Miamisburg team. He was 5<sup>th</sup> at GMVWA in a weight class that featured three state champs and was a solid 2<sup>nd</sup> at North Canton. One of this trio is likely to wind up at Darby. A second solid threesome,

perhaps just below this previous group, features Peters, Krummert, and Reese. There will not be many places left for Columbus, but any of this trio could qualify. Nguyen (Mason) and Campbell (Anderson) are other thoughts.

### 125 #

#### **PROJECTED CHAMPION: KEITH SULZER (ST. EDWARD)**

##### Top Contenders

2	Floyd (Solon) –(if at this class)	14	Ricard (Olentangy)
3	Gobin (Moeller)	15	Gooden (Waite)
4	Lybarger (Mt. Vernon)	16	Hotopp (Harrison)
5	Steele (Hamilton)	17	McDole (Tiffin Columbian)
6	Wall (Howland)	18	Millsaps (Green)
7	Hucle (Marysville)	19	Barth (Avon Lake)
8	Grzebyk (Elder)	20	Crine (Barberton)
9	Bryan (St. Ignatius)	21	Schreiner (Mentor)
10	Speelman (Mansfield Madison)	22	Dotson (Columbus West)
11	Potts (Kenston)	23	Beebe (Troy)
12	Holcomb (Pickerington Central)	24	Helber (Logan)
13	Dennis (Holland Springfield)	25	Noahr (Stow)

This weight class is becoming the exclusive domain of the Northeast District and, more specifically, St. Edward High School. The last seven champions and 10 of the past 11 have come from the Northeast while St. Ed's has placed at this weight six consecutive years with four different champions – Mark Jayne, Ryan Lang, Albert Madsen and Lance Palmer. This year could well be more of the same. State runner-up Keith Sulzer is a comfortable favorite in a weight class that is as presently constituted, rather weak. State fifth place winners Gobin and Steele are strong in the southwest while a handful of returning state qualifiers from around the state will also dot this bracket. However, Sulzer has defeated Gobin twice this year (majoring him the last time) and matches up well with others I see here. He still has a strongly defensive perspective, but this year has started to become more aggressive against all but two very best. He lost to Keyes in the dual and beat Jordan at the Ironman in close, low-scoring bouts that have been a hallmark of his career. Unless Floyd regains his health and competes here he should have few of those this time around.

I have a whole list of names at the Waite District, but none, except, Sulzer have previous state tournament experience. The name that seems to shine brightest is the fine sophomore Joshua Speelman. He won two district bouts last year and took the powerful Webb into overtime before losing. You could tell that he was going to be very good. This year he started at 130#, but moved to 125# winning the Gorman with ease and finishing 5<sup>th</sup> at a tough Top Gun weight class. Dennis and Gooden are the best out of Toledo and I note that in both bouts I have Dennis has been a narrow winner. Gooden was a semi-finalist at Brecksville while finishing 5<sup>th</sup>. Dennis was 3<sup>rd</sup> at Medina

including nice wins over Wentink and Kapper. For the record Sulzer beat him 13-0 in the semi-finals hence the gap between he and the others. Barth is also a solid possibility here, but I think McDole might be a shade better. He had a great junior year and could be a real factor. Wingard (Medina) and Crine (Barberton) might be other possibilities.

I believe this is the weakest weight class at Mentor (with the possible exception of 145#) and it looks like a fine haven for the large number of excellent 119's. I have already suggested Floyd might land here, but it must be a temptation for some others as well. Wall was a district champion in Division II last year beating Stone, Chapman, and Dean in the process. He has been at 125# most of the year, but certified at 119#. I think he will end up here. Second best would be the outstanding freshman Bryan who was 3<sup>rd</sup> at Solon, 2<sup>nd</sup> at Wadsworth and 4<sup>th</sup> at the CIT. He will be a big-time performer very soon. After that I have, well, I guess I have Schreiner, Millsaps and Potts in reverse order. That is a solid group but I think Kretz (Twinsburg), Jones (Parma), Cline (Lake) or even a Nighman or a Highbaugh might move in this direction.

There are some solid names in the Columbus area. Lybarger and Hucle were both state qualifiers last year going 1-2 at the Value City Arena. Hucle's first round win over district champ Kaake, 15-6, was particularly impressive. Both were solid at Brecksville. Lybarger, up at 130#, lost early to Vinnie Lopez then won eight consecutive bouts to finish a brilliant 3<sup>rd</sup>. Hucle went the other route at 125# making the semis and then ending up 6<sup>th</sup> after some sort of brouhaha. Lybarger was a solid 3<sup>rd</sup> at the Top Gun at 125# and he should place. Holcomb and Ricard are right behind them. The former has outperformed expectations this year winning at Pickerington and finishing 5<sup>th</sup> at the Midwest Classic. Two others to ponder are Dotson and Helber, but their chance could decrease with a large influx from Xenia.

Gobin and Steele both placed 5<sup>th</sup> last year (at 112# and 119# respectively). Gobin had big wins over Jones, Adams, and Lybarger (by fall) while Steele majored Hucle. This year Gobin was 7<sup>th</sup> at the Powerade, 2<sup>nd</sup> at the SWOCA and 3<sup>rd</sup> at the CIT beating Bryan in overtime. Only a sophomore he is still getting better. Steele was 3<sup>rd</sup> at the SWOCA and 2<sup>nd</sup> to Ben Jordan at the GMVWA. He has had injury problems recently but should be healthy soon. Grzebyk beat both these boys 7-5 to win the SWOCA, but has not been as sharp since then. He failed to place at Brecksville and was 5<sup>th</sup> at the CIT. I had state qualifier Dooley (Lakota West) penciled in at this weight class, but I have not seen his name anywhere, so he may be injured. Also here are Hotopp, Beebe, and Hensley each with qualification chances. Watch also for Oberschlake (Tecumseh) and Groh (Northmont).

**130 #**

**PROJECTED CHAMPION: RICHIE SPICEL (BRUNSWICK)**

Top Contenders

2	Hardy (Solon)	15	Elliott (Mayfield)
3	Mizer (Massillon Perry)	16	Duff (Westerville North)
4	Gonsor (St. Edward)	17	Parra (Barberton)
5	Flake (Lakota West)	18	Guy (Miamisburg)
6	Webb (Sandusky)	19	Lawler (Columbus West)
7	Curley (Lakewood)	20	Lopez (Waite)
8	Meyer (Oakhills)	21	Kennedy (Marysville)
9	Haas (Massillon Perry)	22	Wenger (Wadsworth)
10	Davis (Mt. Vernon)	23	Wiggins (Maple Hts.)
11	Ciccarello (Brush)	24	Hollandsworth (Hamilton)
12	Glaser (Moeller)	25	Vaughn (Fairfield)
13	Wolf (Northmont)	26	Gray (Celina)
14	Mancini (Twinsburg)	27	Roth (Whitmer)

For the past two years this has been one of the weakest weight classes in Division I and, in both years, we have had an unexpected and surprising state champion. Last year it was the freshman Richie Spicel who had failed to win either a sectional or district crown, but was victorious in a double overtime thriller in the final round at Columbus. It was a fairy tale ending for a wrestler who lost his sectional final 17-5 and failed to reach the district semi-finals. At the state meet he wrestled with remarkable poise winning four close, hard fought battles and confounding the supposed experts. This year we have a weight class with several highly credentialed wrestlers including a second state titlist each of whom has championship potential. But each with a substantial question mark next to his name.

In Spicel's case the question is can lightning strike for a second consecutive year. He began the year at 135# with a big win at Buckeye and an easy trip to the Medina finals – including a victory over former state champ Shawn Harris. However, Straughn overpowered him in the last round simplifying the dilemma as to the best weight class. Here, at 130#, he will face strong competition at both the district and state level. Defending state champion Kevin Hardy is up three weight classes and has tasted defeat more times already this year than all of last. He is still remarkably good in the top position and remains very tall even at this weight class. However, he is not turning people at this higher weight and remains somewhat vulnerable on his feet. He has not yet taken a tourney title this year, but as he grows into this class he should improve his results. Last year he allowed just two points in his eight district and state bouts (a Harris reversal). That is unlikely to happen again, but look for him to win a lot of low scoring bouts.

Also back is the runner-up at this weight class last year, Zach Mizer. He, too, started the season at 135#, but moved down shortly after the Ironman. He was 2<sup>nd</sup> at Medina, but lost badly in the finals apparently suffering an injury to his hand. He has not competed since then, but should be a significant factor at Columbus. The big unknown is Danny Gonsor, a backup last year, behind Sulzer and Palmer. After an exceptionally productive summer he claimed the 130# varsity spot and handled the eventual Medina champ Zach Burns in the opening dual meet. He then missed the next month with injuries returning as this report is being written. Rarely have I seen coaches as high as they are on this wrestler and that does not bode well for the competition. I am guessing that lightning will strike twice. That somehow, Spicel will navigate his way through a difficult bracket and win again. He has already beaten Mizer, and Gonsor has not yet reached peak form. That leaves state champion Hardy to beat. I think Spicel can beat him on his feet when he chooses neutral and that his coaches will teach him how to get out when Hardy chooses top.

The Mentor District is loaded. We have already talked about Hardy and Mizer, but there is more--much, much, more. There are four more wrestlers who have state credentials creating a logjam that will leave two deserving boys at home. Jordan Ciccarello suffered an injury at sectional that hampered him at last year's district. Even so he was a take down away from state qualification. He was 4<sup>th</sup> at North Canton – losing to Haas and Koballa – but missed Medina because of injury. Haas, now a junior returns at this class after being knocked out of last year's district by Richie Spicel. He was 3<sup>rd</sup> at North Canton beating Ciccarello 3-0 and then was 5<sup>th</sup> at Brecksville after losing a tough battle to Kriwinsky. Short and stocky he is difficult to score against. State qualifier Mencini made it to Columbus as a freshman, and went 0-2 at that level. This year he was 4<sup>th</sup> at Solon (losing to Hardy), 2<sup>nd</sup> at Hudson and Southview. He has avenged the defeat by Hardy in a dual and seems to be on an upward trajectory. State qualifier Elliott also returns and most recently was 3<sup>rd</sup> at 135# at the Top Gun. We have identified six very fine wrestlers and have not included Clopton who certified at 130#, but, I believe, is more likely to compete at the somewhat easier 135# class. In fact, Elliott may also choose to go that route as witness his latest effort at the Top Gun. If both move Wiggins might have hopes of qualification.

It was just as crowded at Waite. Again, Gonsor and Spicel have been looked at, but there are a half dozen other challengers. The Toledo sectionals will qualify some tough boys. State qualifier Webb is a load. Very powerful he should do better than his 0-2 record at the Schott last year--where he drew three time placer Hartley in the first round. Mayer qualified at 135# last year and upset district champ Bradberry in the first round before being eliminated. He won at Sylvania Southview and Perrysburg and should qualify. Curley may be better than either of the Toledo area boys, but Gonsor and Spicel will be a challenge. He was 8<sup>th</sup> at 125# last year, but it will be a push to do much better than that. Lopez and Roth are both good with the former upsetting Lybarger at Brecksville. Also a possibility is Nick Gray or Wenger. Again, I am guessing that some of this group may move to 135# in hopes of increasing their chances for qualification. Watch for the freshman Parra who is very good and getting better. Dave Mariola has built a fine squad at Barberton and it is still very young.

I do not see the same kind of logjam in the Columbus area. State qualifier Trever Davis and state alternate Paul Duff are both solid and have low placement potential. Davis, up a weight, was 2<sup>nd</sup> at the SWOCA and 4<sup>th</sup> at Brecksville after making the semi-finals. District finalist and state qualifier Kennedy returns at the same weight. He was 7<sup>th</sup> at Brecksville losing a tight 2-1 bout to Haas and another to Flake. He should be right there this year. Columbus West has some solid wrestlers with Franklin Hts. champion Tony Lawler one of the best. He was 2-2 at last year's district as a sophomore but should do better this year. That gives us four potential qualifiers with the Dayton area -- also rich in 130's --adding several more.

The Southwest has four returning state qualifiers and several other top contenders. Meyer was 7<sup>th</sup> last year, but his quarterfinal loss to eventual runner-up Mizer was a 13-12 decision that could have gone either way. He was 3<sup>rd</sup> at the SWOCA losing to Flake who he defeated at last year's districts and 2<sup>nd</sup> to Boyd at GMVWA. Flake has been very good. He was 2<sup>nd</sup> at the SWOCA and 4<sup>th</sup> at Brecksville losing to Lybarger each time. State qualifier Glaser is up two weight classes. He was 4<sup>th</sup> at the SWOCA losing to Flake and Meyer, but won the CIT. Factor in state qualifier Chris Wolf, state alternate Tucker Guy, Hollandsworth, and Vaughn and this is yet another crowded district.

### 135 #

#### **PROJECTED CHAMPION: THOMAS STRAUGHN (MASSILLON PERRY)**

##### Top Contenders

2	Lindsay (Moeller)	15	Johnson (Glen Oak)
3	Harris (St. Edward)	16	Messerall (Thomas Worthington)
4	Brownlee (Western Brown)	17	Braun (Colerain)
5	Dong (Westerville North)	18	Shadrach (Parma)
6	Stevens (Lakota West)	19	Hijoka (Sylvania Southview)
7	Clopton (Shaker Hts.)	20	Carmack (Miamisburg)
8	Hopkins (Marysville)	21	Gushard (Marion Harding)
9	Castillo (Waite)	22	Edwards (Mansfield Madison)
10	Rendinell (Kenston)	23	Willis (Boardman)
11	Vaccari (Davidson)	24	Jones (Westlake)
12	Smith (Solon)	25	Waters (Grove City)
13	Carraher (St. Xavier)	26	Cooperstein (Mason)
14	Cramer (Centerville)		

It is a rare treat to be present when a real breakthrough occurs – be it in, for example, business, or mathematics or in high school sports. I believe I was witness to one on the night of December 28<sup>th</sup> when Thomas Straughn realized how good he could be. We all knew that he was very good. He was 2<sup>nd</sup> (to Nemec) at Junior High States as an 8<sup>th</sup> grader and then finished 5<sup>th</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> the last two years – losing several times to Nemec once again. Then this year he again dropped a close decision to Nemec at 145# when he apparently had an epiphany--that maybe, he should lose a few pounds like everyone

else. Never one to cut weight ala Alan Fried he decided, on reflection, to drop to 135#. The results were dramatic. In the semi-finals at Medina he pinned state runner-up Chris Andrews and then dismantled state champion Richie Spicel 21-6 in the finals. It got him the MIT title, the outstanding wrestler award, and if this is not some grand illusion, the inside track for the 135# state title. Last year, as a sophomore, he was a state semi-finalist at 140# losing to the eventual champ, Josh Horne, 9-6. This year just placing will not be enough – or next year he may be down to 119#.

It may not be easy, Lindsey, also a junior, has had a breakthrough season too. A state alternate last year he won the SWOCA in crushing style (closest bout was 20-8) and was 4<sup>th</sup> at the Ironman and 3<sup>rd</sup> at the Powerade. He beat both former champ Shaun Harris and Brecksville runner-up Jesse Stevens at the Ohio Duals in an excellent performance. He may have the horsepower to challenge Straughn.

Do not count out Harris just yet. A state champion as a freshman at 103# he lost to Hardy in the 112# title bout last year. In a bizarre episode, Harris down by a point took the down position in the third period against the strongest rider in the state. It seems to have been a case of playing into the opponent's strength while opting away from your own, and it cost him a second state title. It will certainly not be a decision that will be immortalized in the coaching hall of fame at St. Edward. This year, up four weight classes, Harris has had some early season struggles. He was 5<sup>th</sup> at Medina and 4<sup>th</sup> at the Beast and failed to place at the Ironman. Remember, that Harris has had some early season issues in the past and been brilliant at tourney time. He does, after all, know how to win.

Straughn leads the way at Mentor. The trio of state qualifiers Rendingell and Clopton along with state alternate Smith look next best. Rendingell won at North Canton and Kenston (beating Shadrach both times in the final). Clopton has been busy finishing 2<sup>nd</sup> (to Lipp) at Solon, 3<sup>rd</sup> at North Canton (losing in overtime to Shadrach), and 6<sup>th</sup> at the Powerade. Smith was 4<sup>th</sup> at the Midwest Classic and 8<sup>th</sup> at the Powerade. Also here is state qualifier Johnson, a Brecksville semi-finalist at 140#, before dropping to 6<sup>th</sup>. He beat out Smith for the final qualification spot last year. Add in Shadrach and Willis and it should be a solid competition. Certainly if Clopton opts for 130# or Elliott shoots up from 130#, it would have a major impact on the results.

It is much less crowded at Waite. The next best after Harris is state qualifier Castillo. While Harris has gone up four weight classes, he has remained at the same place. Last year he lost to Nemeck in the district finals and went 1-2 at Columbus. This year he has won at Perrysburg and was 6<sup>th</sup> at Brecksville losing twice to Brownlee. Beyond this duo the cupboard looks rather bare. Hijoka, who won three district bouts, and Gushard are in the mix with Edwards, 5<sup>th</sup> at the Top Gun and Jones (Westlake). Here is where we might see some of the 130's move up.

There are five high quality boys in Columbus with Dong at the top of my list. He was a district 3<sup>rd</sup> last year losing only to Depoy and then went 1-2 at States. I have him losing just once (to Andrews) this year and he marched through Wadsworth like Sherman

through Georgia. He has strong placement potential, as do any of the top three here. Hopkins was 5<sup>th</sup> at states beating Curley where Dong could not. This year he won at Marysville and was 8<sup>th</sup> at Brecksville including a loss to Castillo in the 30-second tiebreaker. Vaccari, also a state qualifier at 125#, went 1-2 at the Schott losing to Hopkins 2-0 in the consolation. He was 2<sup>nd</sup> to Mizer at DeSales and won at 140# at Perrysburg. He may be looking at that weight class as a tourney time option. Messerall was exceptional at Marion Harding crushing everyone until state runner-up Skoff majored him. Waters is back at 135# and could play a role here as might Hansel (Marion Harding).

Lindsey heads a strong Cincinnati area group that should place at least two at Columbus. Brownlee looked very good at Brecksville. In the semi-finals he gave Cubberly all he could handle exhibiting great strength and power. He was 4<sup>th</sup> at the SWOCA at the very tough 145-pound class and was 1<sup>st</sup> at Fairfield, and this junior is a goer. A Division II district champ last year, he is one to watch closely. State qualifier Carraher also returns and finished 3<sup>rd</sup> at the SWOCA losing big to Lindsey. He was 5<sup>th</sup> at 140# at Brecksville losing twice to the excellent Moore. This trio all had state success last year, but the sophomore Stevens, up three weight classes, is getting better very quickly. He was only 5<sup>th</sup> at the SWOCA losing to Carraher and Cloran, but had an excellent Brecksville Tourney finishing 2<sup>nd</sup> to Cubberly. In his run he pinned Hopkins and Davis and decisioned Brown. I think he is a player here. Add in Braun and Carmack and that is six solid wrestlers with Cooperstein a real possibility. Should be a very good district.

### 140 #

#### **PROJECTED CHAMPION: LANCE PALMER (ST. EDWARD)**

##### Top Contenders

2	Moore (Mount Vernon)	14	Lee (Maple Hts.)
3	Bodnar (Fitch)	15	Dettwiller (Springboro)
4	Weinkam (Moeller)	16	Andreas (Darby)
5	Kline (Westerville North)	17	Garcia (Sylvania Southview)
6	Janik (North Ridgeville)	18	Kappus (St. Ignatius)
7	Bohl (Lakota West)	19	Roth (Whitmer)
8	DeLiberato (Brush)	20	Tentler (Massillon Jackson)
9	Ruff (Beavercreek)	21	Hipp (Columbus West)
10	Rager (Wadsworth)	22	Gutierrez (Springfield South)
11	Newell (Kenston)	23	Brown (Gahanna Lincoln)
12	Vaughn (Fairfield)	24	Marrone (Parma)
13	Canini (Jerome)	25	Herrick (Waite)

The fourteen previous wrestlers who won state titles their first three years of wrestling have gone on to become four-time champs--and Lance Palmer will be an overwhelming choice to extend that streak this year. Palmer's path to four titles follows a remarkably

familiar template--wrestling at a very low weight as a freshman and sophomore and then moving up classes as a junior and senior. There is one difference, however, he will be only the third four-time champ in Ohio history all of whose titles were in Division I. Absolutely devastating on top he pinned every opponent at the sectional, district, and state tournament last year --all before the third period. In fact, you have to go back to a state quarterfinal bout in his sophomore year to find the last opponent he did not pin during the tourney process – Chris Hartley – who he never pinned in five meetings. His only loss the last two years was at the Ironman to Pennsylvania's Matt Dunn when he took down in the second period (what's with those Ed's coaches) and got turned. It will not happen again this year as Palmer should increase his pin streak at Columbus. I really believe that his power half will become the stuff of legends like Joe Heskett's cradle, Tommy Milkovich's fearsome fireman's carry, and Jimmy Mason's spiral ride.

With Palmer so dominant there are two schools of thought. Some wrestlers--with championship aspirations--look for other weight classes more conducive to their hopes. A second group sees an opportunity. Weight classes featuring three time champs are often less strong and deep, and provide placement probabilities. Underclassmen, particularly, may see a place on the awards podium as a stepping-stone for the following year. With Nemec at 145# we may not, however, see as much movement as might otherwise occur.

The Toledo Waite District is not deep after Palmer. The one exception is Janik who was 6<sup>th</sup> at this weight class last year representing St. Edward. He is very good winning at Avon Lake and Normandy and he certainly should know all about Palmer. They will be apart at the district level. Rager was at 145# last year and might still end up at 152# rather than here. He won two district bouts last year. He has been at several weight classes this year finishing 3<sup>rd</sup> at North Canton but failing to place at Wadsworth – both times at 152#. Garcia, Roth and Herrick will be the strongest representatives of the two wrestling sectionals at this district and two of them should qualify. Both Garcia (Sylvania Southview winner) and Roth (Tiffin champ) have solid district experience. Roth, a transfer from Toledo Central Catholic, knows how to win, while I see Garcia as more explosive.

There are a lot of possibilities at Mentor. I keep expecting great things from Bodnar and he is getting closer. Already a three-time state qualifier, he has not always had great bracketing luck. Two years ago he lost to eventual champion Mathews in overtime and fell one win short of placing. Last year, he lost his district final 2-1 to eventual runner-up Foore, and consequently drew in the first round, the very tough Dowell – losing 1-0. He ended up 6<sup>th</sup> losing again to Dowell. This year he was 2<sup>nd</sup> to Lipp at Brecksville and 2<sup>nd</sup> to Moore in overtime at the Top Gun. A good draw and a solid weekend could make him a finalist. I like the strong and punishing DeLiberato next best here after a 1<sup>st</sup> at Kent State, 2<sup>nd</sup> at North Canton and a DNP at Medina after Palmer pinned him in 60 seconds in the quarterfinal. Newell up from 125# won at Kenston and was 3<sup>rd</sup> at North Canton and seems next best. Hudson champ Lee needs to keep at weight but has the ability to reach Columbus at this class. The backups should one of the top quartet fail might be Tentler, Marrone, or Kappus.

The top two in Columbus are very good and, even better, are both sophomores. Kline was a state qualifier at 130# last year losing in overtime in the quarterfinals and then failing to place. If he has lost this year I have not seen it as he won the Midwest Classic, Pickerington, and Wadsworth. He is an exceptional talent with finalist possibilities. I think Moore might eventually be even better. He defeated Bodnar to win at the Top Gun and was 4<sup>th</sup> at Brecksville losing to Lipp in the semi-finals, and was 3<sup>rd</sup> at the SWOCA. He has wrestled a much more difficult schedule than Kline. I like Andreas next best with Hipp, state qualifier Canini, and Brown other possibilities. The Xenia Sectional will also play a key role here at this weight.

There are three returning state qualifiers at Fairfield--unless Ruff ends up at Darby again--and they all have placement potential. They are very close in performance. I am putting them basically in the order of their finish at the SWOCA. Weinkam defeated Ruff, and Bohl also did the same in overtime. Weinkam was 7<sup>th</sup> at the Ironman and this junior is out-performing expectations. The quartet of Vaughn, Dettwiller, Gutierrez and Massong (Oakhills) are role players with opportunities especially if several of this seven are sent to Darby.

### 145#

#### **PROJECTED CHAMPION: SEAN NEMEC (ST. EDWARD)**

##### Top Contenders

2	Foore (Wadsworth)	14	Tolbert (Shaker Hts.)
3	Haxton (Strongsville)	15	Johnston (Beavercreek)
4	Abdur-Rahmann (Princeton)	16	Mickley (Davidson)
5	DiYanni (Reynoldsburg)	17	Campbell (Solon)
6	Holley (Lakota West)	18	Thomas (Lakeside)
7	Hill (Grove City)	19	Brochetti (Parma)
8	Hilton (Moeller)	20	Harker (Westland)
9	Kusnier (Perrysburg)	21	Coleman (Massillion Perry)
10	Beech (Mentor)	22	Larter (Western Brown)
11	Place (Central Crossing)	23	Whitt (Groveport Madison)
12	Ewing (Miamisburg)	24	McNamara (North Olmsted)
13	Schafer (Ashland)	25	Saraniti (Stow)

Wrestlers meeting in the state finals in consecutive years, is relatively unusual (although with seeding the odds have improved), but this year three such possibilities exist in Division I alone. The most probable is here at 145# where Sean Nemec and Derek Foore look to renew their rivalry. Last year Nemec got any early lead and built on it to record a 12-2 decision. My guess is should they meet again Nemec will again prevail, though by a much closer margin.

Nemec, only a junior, finished 2<sup>nd</sup> at 130# two years ago after being upset by Mathews in the final round. Last year he was brilliant winning at the Medina and the Beast before

defeating Foore for the title. This year he again prevailed at Medina and won also at the Ironman--defeating his archrival Blasco in the finals. They have rested him to some extent because of knee issues, but he should be close to 100% at tourney time. He is on the path to becoming one of the great middleweights in Ohio history.

Foore, also a junior, has won at North Canton and Wadsworth but has not faced the rugged competition that Nemec has met. He has wrestled a few bouts at 152#, but my guess is that he will end up competing at 145#. The biggest difference between the two is Nemec's dominance on his feet and I am not convinced that Foore has yet closed that gap.

The Waite District has some great up-top strength. Nemec and Foore are both here as is state 3<sup>rd</sup> place winner Mike Haxton. The last named was exceptional at tournament time despite having seven losses in the regular season--he lost only to Schlatter and Gigliotti during the tourney process--the latter bout a 6-5 heartbreaker in the semi-finals. He has been at 152# much of the year and it did not seem to agree with him. He could be in the top three again this year. Kusnier was the winner of the Outstanding Wrestler Award at Perrysburg defeating Tank in a real barnburner. He will face tough competition from the top trio, but with good bracketing could qualify. It worries me that he failed to place at Brecksville losing to Wilson and DeYanni. But he was 2<sup>nd</sup> at the Midwest losing only to Beech. Schafer and Wharton (Clay) are also possibilities, but McNamara, 4<sup>th</sup> at Medina, could play a role as well.

There is very little at Mentor. State alternate Beech was 2<sup>nd</sup> (at 152#) at Solon and won the Midwest Classis for a great early start. However, he failed to place at Brecksville and then came back to battle Haxton in the dual before losing 7-6. That one bad weekend might well have been an anomaly. Tolbert was also a runner-up at Solon and he knows his way around a wrestling mat. Brochetti is another possibility, but Thomas cannot be overlooked. He defeated Brochetti 6-1 earlier in the year. Campbell, Coleman and Saraniti need to be considered as well. Coleman was impressive at Medina and may need to be rated higher.

The Darby District has some solid kids with good placement potential. The four that come immediately to mind are DiYanni, Hill, Place, and Mickley, and they are a solid step ahead of everyone else. The real question is how should they be ordered. Hill was the most successful last year winning a bout at States--but he lost to Place, 4-0 at the district level. This year he was 2<sup>nd</sup> at Marion Harding to Nicola, and beat St. Edward's third stringer 11-4. Not important you say. Well, Elliott (the sub) beat Foore at the Ohio Duals. Place, also a state qualifier, was 5<sup>th</sup> at Wadsworth losing to Foore (7-2) and Schafer. Mickley was 8<sup>th</sup> at Brecksville while DiYanni was 6<sup>th</sup> with the latter the more impressive of the two. Reynoldsburg seems to have ramped up their schedule and it shows--they have a nice squad particularly in the middle and upperweights. I think all four could qualify dependent somewhat on what teams arrive from Xenia. Look for DiYanni and Hill to be at the top at Darby with Whitt and Harker challenging the other two. Particularly keep an eye on Harker who had a great first day at district last year.

While Hilton is the only returning state qualifier at Fairfield, he is not at the top of my list at this district. The best of this group is Abdur-Rahman the 145# champ at the SWOCA. Last year he cruised into the district semi-finals and then lost a tough one-point bout to the excellent Mizener and failed to qualify. This year he has stayed at the same class, but gotten much stronger. He beat Holley in the finals 12-8 and looked very solid. Holley also lost to Abdur-Rahman at last year's district, but pinned Hilton at the SWOCA. At Brecksville he lost early to DiYanni, 2-1, but won some narrow bouts to finish 4<sup>th</sup>. Moeller's very difficult December schedule has been tough on Hilton who failed to place at the Ironman and Beast and was 4<sup>th</sup> at the SWOCA. Ewing was a sectional champ but was only 1-2 at the district level. He was 3<sup>rd</sup> at North Canton losing to Foore but beating DiYanni, but was only 5<sup>th</sup> at the GMVWA. That is my top quartet with Johnston, Larter (beaten 9-8 by Holley), the erratic Ferguson (Milford) and Blake (Springboro) in the mix.

### 152 #

#### **PROJECTED CHAMPION: JOHN PYCRAFT (ELYRIA)**

##### Top Contenders

2	Weisenstein (Ashland)	14	Thomas (Mayfield)
3	Mahon (Moeller)	15	Abitua (Whitmer)
4	Holztrager (Normandy)	16	Horn (Maple Hts.)
5	Kassil (Westlake)	17	Sjostrom (Thomas Worthington)
6	Shalash (Reynoldsburg)	18	Newton (Waite)
7	Quick (Mt. Vernon)	19	Phillips (Massillon Perry)
8	Bertin/McLaughlin (St. Edward)	20	Rees (Miamisburg)
9	Geist (Beavercreek)	21	Hiller (Greenville)
10	Donadee (Firch)	22	Walker (Madison)
11	Bivenour (Olentangy)	23	Williams (Pickerington North)
12	Gariety (Centerville)	24	DeJaco (Elder)
13	Rivera (Princeton)	25	Noll (Westerville North)

The 152# weight class is thin throughout the state in all three-school classifications with the exception of the two brilliant competitors in Division II. A couple of the 160's I thought might drop--Bradberry and Popham have stayed put while Haxton looks committed to 145#. This is, therefore, a class where a hot weekend could propel any of a dozen wrestlers to a state finals appearance.

The Waite District is by far the strongest. Weisenstein was a state quarter-finalist and has been outstanding this year. His only loss was to the exceptional Sponseller by an 8-4 margin – the closest bout this year for the West Holmes star. Pycraft started slowly missing Avon Lake and failing to place at the Ironman. He was outstanding at Brecksville beating Haxton and Kusar the last day. He also defeated Holztrager, by a point, in their dual meet. Kassil was a state semi-finalist at this weight class before being tech falled by Ciraky, eventually falling to 6<sup>th</sup>. District champ and state place

winner McLaughlin has had injury issues at St. Edward, but his back-up, Kyle Bertin, may be difficult to dislodge. He beat Mahon in overtime at the Ohio Duals. Abitua has been very good in the Northwest District, but sectional champ Joey Newton has eight losses already. Do not count him out, he could still be a factor here. I think the champion could well be from this district, but the question is which one? Lets go with Pycraft.

State qualifier Holztrager clearly stands out at Mentor. He was at 160# last year and won three bouts finishing 7<sup>th</sup>. He was 2<sup>nd</sup> at Avon Lake to state champion Friery and 2<sup>nd</sup> at the Midwest Classics to Terry. His only other loss was in the dual to Pycraft, the three losses have been by a total of four points. He should win this district and get a good state draw. Donadee has missed the entire year so I am not sure what to expect. He was a district 3<sup>rd</sup> last year at 140#, but lost twice at States. The Fitch team knows how to win so he could be a major factor. Horn, Thomas, Phillips, and Walker are other possibilities, but it really is wide open.

Shalash placed 8<sup>th</sup> at Columbus last year and heads the Darby District. He won three super-tight bouts last year just to qualify, but this junior is starting to score more. He will need to do so as this will be the second best district at this weight class. Shalash was 3<sup>rd</sup> at Brecksville losing to Kusar, but winning six other bouts including an overtime win over Haxton. He did not meet Pycraft but comparison wise he lost to Kusar by four while Pycraft beat the same opponent by seven--he defeated Haxton in overtime while Pycraft won by three. I think there could be style issues here. Quick has been a steady placer, but at the lower end (6<sup>th</sup> Brecksville and 4<sup>th</sup> Top Gun) in big meets. Bivenour and Sjostrom have done much the same with Williams and Noll two boys with upset potential.

I would not be at all surprised if Mahon won it all. I watched him at the Ironman go toe-to-toe with Josh Rohler – tied 2-2 in the 3<sup>rd</sup> period – until Rohler levered him over to win. Mahon was 7<sup>th</sup> last year at this class most significantly narrowly beating Shalash twice. This year he won at the SWOCA and was 5<sup>th</sup> at Powerade, but was upset at the CIT and finished 3<sup>rd</sup>. He also lost in overtime to Bert in the Ohio Duals. Still, only a junior he needs just a little more consistency. It is a crowded field after him. State alternate Gariety has missed some time with injuries and state qualifier Geist was injured at the GMVWA. They will both be back with Rivera, Rees, Hiller, and DeJaco all looking for a qualify spot. I think Geist and Rivera might have the inside track, but watch out for a healthy Gariety.

**160#**

**PROJECTED CHAMPION: ANTHONY CIRAKY (WESTERVILLE SOUTH)**

*Top Contenders*

2	Popham (Mount Vernon)	15	Vallos (Boardman)
3	Bradberry (Lakota West)	16	Campbell (Harrison)
4	Gaier (Moeller)	17	O'Connell (Milford)
5	Milavec (Elyria)	18	Findley (Lorain Southview)
6	Heinz (Riverside)	19	Motley (Shaker Hts.)
7	Becka (Normandy)	20	Gerenscer (Pickerington North)
8	Swift/Tomasone (St. Edward)	21	Cummings (Lakota East)
9	Cartledge (Maple Hts.)	22	Humphries (Westerville Central)
10	Green (Westlake)	23	Berdysz (Garfield Hts.)
11	Hess (Ashland)	24	Sturwold (Troy)
12	McKinley (Davidson)	25	Newburg (Northmont)
13	Donaldson (Bowling Green)	26	Snell (Cincinnati Northwestern)
14	Pawkiewicz (Fitch)		

Roy Thomas is a ballplayer that today almost no one remembers. Even in his own time – a century ago – he received little recognition and was forced each year to battle for his centerfield job. All he did was get on base all the time (he led the league in walks eight times), steal bases, score runs, and play brilliant defense. Modern statistical analysis suggests that he was one of the ten most productive players during the first decade of the last century, and yet, there is absolutely no chance that his name will ever be seen in Cooperstown. He was undervalued throughout his career and for the next ninety years as well. I feel that I too, have been guilty of undervaluing an exceptional performer. During the last two and half years Anthony Ciraky has a record of 112-3 wrestling at 140# or more since his sophomore season and has finished 2<sup>nd</sup> (to the now legendary Dustin Schlatter) and 1<sup>st</sup> at the last two state meets. He has outperformed my forecasts the last two years and that suggests that I, and, perhaps, many others have somehow overlooked (or undervalued) his results.

While he will be the favorite at this weight class based on his brilliant record, victory is not yet assured. Travis Popham returns (I believe) to challenge him once more. Last year Popham was 44-4, losing both the district final to Ciraky, 5-3, and the state final, 4-1. These were solid but by no means overwhelming wins that could not be reversed this year. I talked to Travis (and his mother) at Brecksville and they suggested that 152# was too great a cut so he would be at 160#. So, of course, he wrestled at 171# at the Top Gun just to give me something to consider. At any rate he was 2<sup>nd</sup> at Brecksville losing to Bradberry in the finals, and then was 3<sup>rd</sup> at the higher weight losing rather badly to Foster – but then so did Kilgore. He would seem to be a little short for the more crowded 171# class, but I suppose it might be an option. Still, I expect to see him looking for just that one crucial win over Ciraky on Saturday night. I do not see much else in the Columbus area. McKinley was the 4<sup>th</sup> seed at Brecksville, but only

went 2-2, while the #3 seed Humphries at Wadsworth ended up at 7<sup>th</sup>. Both these boys came close to state qualification so I think they will do much better in February.

There are some real good 160's at Fairfield. Both Gaier and Bradberry were district champs last year with Gaier finishing 4<sup>th</sup> at 145#. This year Gaier won at SWOCA (convincingly over Bradberry) and was 4<sup>th</sup> at the Powerade. His 2<sup>nd</sup> place finish at the CIT was surprising since his loss to McMullen was unexpected. Bradberry's big tournament was at Brecksville where he beat Popham 7-5 to win the title. He is up four weight classes but it is not impacting him as witness his overtime loss recently to Ciraky. There is a huge drop-off after this duo--about the same distance Ciraky and Popham outdistance their Columbus competition. Campbell, Cummings, and O'Connell (2<sup>nd</sup> at Wadsworth) all have state qualification possibilities, but not much in terms of placement. I think Sturwold and Newburg are also players here with Snell the dark horse.

The group at Waite will probably max out with a couple of middle to low places. There are two returning state qualifiers here, but I think Milavec might be best here. Last year at 152# he lost a tough district quarterfinal bout 6-5 but was marching easily through the consolation bracket (including a 11-2 win over Cartledge). In his go-to-state bout, comfortably ahead, he was called for an illegal slam (very questionable) and his opponent could not continue costing him the bout. I still say that the proper technique for an official in that case should be to go to the scoring table and seal a piece of paper that says either legal or illegal move. That way the incentives even out. A little small at 160# Milavec was 3<sup>rd</sup> at Avon Lake, but has not competed recently. St. Edward has used three 160's all of whom are strong. State placer (as a freshman) Tomasone has had three difficult three years much of which relates to a back injury. He was very rusty at Medina where he failed to place. Swift, just down from 171#, has looked very good giving Gaier a good bout at the Ohio Duals. State qualifier Green and Hess were 0-4 at Columbus, but again have been excellent this year. Green won both tournaments entered but Westlake does wrestle the toughest of schedules. Hess was 2<sup>nd</sup> at the WIT, but failed to place at Wadsworth. Donaldson was one win from state qualification last year and won big at Rogers earlier in the year. Findley, 2<sup>nd</sup> at Carlisle and Southview, gave Green all he could handle in the latter tournament and cannot be counted out. That is six wrestlers for four spots with a strong sectional split. Four of them exit the Southview Sectional while the other two will be at the Toledo Sectionals--hopefully the same one. If so, the pairings should be fine.

There are no returning state qualifiers at Mentor, but there are some rugged performers. State alternate Heinz won at Riverside and was 2<sup>nd</sup> at Medina (to Iowa State recruit Reader from Michigan). Right behind him are Becka and Cartledge both of whom have had solid success this year. Becka was 3<sup>rd</sup> at Avon Lake (losing to Milavec) and the Midwest Classic and 1<sup>st</sup> at Normandy, while Cartledge won at Franklin Hts. and Hudson. The latter is a powerful, very physical wrestler who won twice at the Ohio Duals and lost 14-9 to Gaier. Pankiewicz was 3<sup>rd</sup> at Brecksville and 4<sup>th</sup> at the Top Gun. He is one of those wrestlers who thrives in the consolation rounds. Vallos and Berdysz are both

good the former winning impressively at Kenston. Motley is returning from injuries, but has the talent to create upsets.

**171 #**

**PROJECTED CHAMPION: DUSTIN KILGORE (BEREA)**

Top Contenders

2	Roddy (St. Edward)	15	DeLong (Stebbins)
3	Cameron (Moeller)	16	Masterson (St. Ignatius)
4	Miller (St. Xavier)	17	Saks (Kenston)
5	Marrero (Reynoldsburg)	18	Muhammad (Shaker Hts.)
6	LaFollette (Marysville)	19	Brown (Pickerington North)
7	Santos (Hamilton)	20	Forte (Milford)
8	Pushpak (Brecksville)	21	Trusnik (Nordonio)
9	Samson (Whitmer)	22	Roman (Glen Oak)
10	Jones (Wadsworth)	23	Moore (Sandusky)
11	DeLande (Davidson)	24	Mosca (Darby)
12	Weiler (Ashland)	25	Brown (Bedford)
13	Flynn (Eastlake North)	26	Waller (Amherst Steele)
14	Cogar (Barberton)	27	Carr (Fairmont)

This is a weight class that could well be one of the most interesting and entertaining in Division I. It features wrestlers with contrasting styles and varying levels of experience and results. I have identified six performers who will be major factors in the final resolution – two from the north, two from the south, and two directly in between.

The two from the north are both underclassmen with extraordinary potential. Dustin Kilgore, now a junior, was 3<sup>rd</sup> at 160# last year losing only at the district level to three-time champion Mike Miller and at the state level to runner-up Bryan Koz. This year he has dominated at this weight class crushing every opponent on his way to a perfect record. Oops, not quite a perfect record as Foster caught and pinned him early at the Top Gun. Until then he had not had a close bout, at least partly because he has not wrestled a demanding schedule like a Cameron or Marrero. Nevertheless, he must be prepared at the state level for what will surely be some more demanding tests. The sophomore Roddy was 6<sup>th</sup> last year at this weight class losing in the semi-finals to the powerful Clemens. It was an exceptional result for a freshman, though not unexpected from this two-time junior high state champion. This year he was 2<sup>nd</sup> at the Ironman and then missed three weeks before returning for the Ohio Duals. He lost to Cameron at the Ironman (after defeating him twice last year), but then turned the tables with a pin in an otherwise close bout in the dual. He has both outstanding technique and power for a still youthful wrestler.

The two from the south have high place (or championship) potential. Cameron, 8<sup>th</sup> last year, has matured into a solid senior wrestler with considerable upside potential. He was one of only three wrestlers to win both the Ironman and Powerade and has tacked

on a SWOCA title as well. His only loss was the aforementioned fall to Roddy, but I was more impressed with his big win over that same wrestler, 12-9, in the Ironman finals. Miller, also a senior, was 7<sup>th</sup> last year defeating Cameron 10-5 after having twice lost to him earlier in the year. He has campaigned at 189# much of the season winning the SWOCA title, but missing the Brecksville because of injuries. At the CIT he again fell a point short of Cameron that is starting to become something of a habit.

The seniors LaFollette and Marrero are the duo I have highlighted from the Central District. LaFollette was a district runner-up at 160# last year and then finished 8<sup>th</sup> at the state meet. He had the misfortune of drawing Kilgore in the first round, but lost a relatively close 5-2 bout. This year he was 1<sup>st</sup> at Marysville and Pickerington, but only 3<sup>rd</sup> at Brecksville. Marrero has been a puzzle. I was impressed with his runner-up finish last year at Brecksville, but surprised when he lost in overtime and failed to qualify for States. This year I anticipated some very strong placements, but it has yet to happen. He was shut out at North Canton and was 6<sup>th</sup> at Brecksville (after reaching the semis) and losing bouts by scores like 17-13 and 11-9. I have not given up on him and he will be a dangerous opponent for anyone – as witness his win at St. Xavier.

This does not exhaust the list of potential contenders. State qualifier Santos is very good and will be a thorny obstacle at both the district and state level. He was a state quarter-finalist at 189# last year, and was 2<sup>nd</sup> to Cameron at the SWOCA. Pushpak defeated both Marrero and Lafollette on his way to the Brecksville title and deserves special attention.

Kilgore should dominate at Mentor. I just do not see anyone here who can give any real trouble. The other three qualifiers are likely to have a tough time in Columbus based on results so far this year. I think Flynn, Masterson, and Saks might have the best chances to qualify with Roman and Brown certainly in the mix. Muhammed is another possibility, but has not wrestled of late.

Roddy faces far stiffer competition at Waite. State heavyweight placer Tim Samson is apparently wrestling at 171# in a move you do not often see. He has been fighting injuries (not surprising after battling those mammoth heavyweights all last year), but after watching him you can never count him out. Pushpak, as mentioned won the Brecksville title along with Riverside and was 2<sup>nd</sup> at the Dies. He has really become a factor at this weight class. I am not sure about the sophomore Dru Jones. He failed to place at North Canton and was 5<sup>th</sup> at Wadsworth, but was perfect at the Ohio Duals with three first period falls. That is a good quartet but a second foursome of Cogar, Hassan Moore, Weiler and Trusnik are also strong. They will make this a very tough bracket sheet. Cogar, for example, beat Roman by six at the Dies and lost to Pushpak 2-1. This second group will pounce if Samson is not 100% or Jones has an off weekend. A wrestler to watch in the future is the freshman Nelisse (Elyria). He is going to be very good.

Two other names I have in Columbus are Delande and Brown. The first named won two district bouts last year, but injuries shut him down at Mentor. Brown also had two

district wins and has had success this year at the same weight class. This duo is well below LaFollette and Marrero. Mosca is another possibility, but expect the Xenia Sectional to get some qualifiers here.

Cameron, Miller and Santos are rock solid at Fairfield. They could all place at the state level. DeLong is very strong and has a consolation round upset over Santos as proof. Forte and Carr are also contenders, but I may some good people. I kind of looked for state qualifier Angelo Mauro (Centerville) at this class, but injuries apparently will prevent him from competing. He would be a real factor either here or at 160#.

### 189 #

#### **PROJECTED CHAMPION: ERIQUE ROBERTSON (MAPLE HTS.)**

##### Top Contenders

2	Honeycutt (St. Edward)	15	Schoen (Toledo St. John)
3	Hettlinger (Darby)	16	Alexander (Findlay)
4	Dattilo (Centerville)	17	Hayes (Mayfield)
5	Iammarino (Brush)	18	Weatherholt (Lakota West)
6	Keefer (Reynoldsburg)	19	Canfield (Lakota East)
7	Porter (Mason)	20	Beatty (Central Crossing)
8	Legg (Westerville Central)	21	Schilling (Massillon Perry)
9	Naylor (Western Brown)	22	Cardenas (Bowling Green)
10	Andrews (Collinwood)	23	Evans (Brookhaven)
11	Waggy (Wooster)	24	Varner (Uniontown Lake)
12	Sokolow (Avon Lakes)	25	Goblirsch (Toledo St. Francis)
13	Porco (Massillon Jackson)	26	Rooney (Anderson)
14	Nickolai (Piqua)		

I keep thinking that this class might be one of those interesting weights dominated by just two wrestlers--but there are some factors that may complicate such a straightforward analysis. Those complications include injury recovery time, weight class selection, and dark horse candidates. Let us take a closer look at that top duo.

Erique Robertson, still only a junior, is a gifted athlete with solid fundamentals instilled by a coach who knows how to win. A district champion last year he made it to the state semi-finals before losing to the eventual champion, Tim Miller, 8-3, and ending up 4<sup>th</sup>. I am not sure that he has had anything resembling a close bout this year, and his 12-4 win over the excellent Bill Schindel highlighted his credentials. He has won at Franklin Hts., Hudson, and Kenston and ended every match early at the Ohio Duals. I believe it will take a superior effort for six full minutes to have any chance of beating him.

Chris Honeycutt was a regular at the St. Edward camps as a middle schooler, but moved to Massachusetts before entering high school. As a sophomore he captured the Massachusetts state title before returning to Ohio when his father was transferred back to Cleveland. He is still a bit of a project, but the talent is there. He was 5<sup>th</sup> at the

Ironman (losing 8-7 and 14-13 bouts) and 1<sup>st</sup> at Medina earning a dramatic 10-8 overtime win over the redoubtable John Weakley. This was a victory that was gained primarily by applying seven minutes of constant pressure to an outstanding opponent and converting opportunities into points. It would have been great to have had a match up with Robertson at the Ohio Duals, but they, unfortunately, never met. Like Robertson, none of his bouts went the full six minutes.

The big unknown is the status of Phil Hettlinger. A district runner-up he was outstanding at the Schott winning three bouts before succumbing to two-time champ, Mike Ward, in the finals. He has been injured all year and has not yet competed. There are conflicting stories as to his eventual availability, but should he be able to wrestle he would transform this competition into a three-cornered affair.

Robertson will face some tough people at his own sectional and district. Last year, as a 10<sup>th</sup> grader at this weight class, lammarino captured a district third and qualified for the state meet. He met Hettlinger in the first round losing 3-1 and then won three consolation bouts to finish 7<sup>th</sup>. This year he has not been as dominant as I anticipated. He won at Kent State but was 3<sup>rd</sup> at North Canton losing to Fisher in one round and then tech falling him the next time. He was 4<sup>th</sup> at 215# at Medina, but has looked good in recent duals. Andrews is amazing. This senior has more strength and athleticism than just about anyone here--his collegiate upside is amazing. State qualifier Waggy knows how to win. He was a district champion last year and went 1-2 at Columbus. This year he has been a consistent placer with a 2<sup>nd</sup> at the WIT and a 3<sup>rd</sup> at Medina – losing only to Weakley. Porco, 3<sup>rd</sup> at Brecksville beating Naylor, Molder and Keefer, could easily qualify. He has come a long way this year. Add in Schilling, Varner, and maybe Kuti Fitch) and it is a very good district. A wrestler to watch is the freshman Cody Hayes. He may not get to state this year, but if not, it will be the last time he misses.

Honeycutt should not face such a crowded field. State alternate Sokolow has moved up a weight class and has had solid success. He was 3<sup>rd</sup> at Avon Lake and won at Southview. Tom Schoen has come out of nowhere to dominate in the Toledo area. Most recently he was 2<sup>nd</sup> at the CIT losing an 8-7 decision to the powerful Srock. I wonder if he is related to Chuck – a fine TSJ wrestler in the mid 1970's. Alexander, a former junior high state runner-up, won at Marion Harding and has had a great dual meet season. He certainly has placement possibilities at the district level. Also from the west Cardenas and Goblirsch have done fine work meeting, for example, in the finals at Rogers.

If Hettlinger is healthy he is easily the best in the Central District. Otherwise, the top spot is really wide open. Keefer qualified last year at 215# and is probably the best 189# currently wrestling in that area. He was 4<sup>th</sup> at Brecksville and won at St. Xavier. State alternate Legg is also at this class and won at Wadsworth defeating Beatty 10-5, in the final. Beatty was also 2<sup>nd</sup> at Franklin Hts. after being tech falled by Robertson. Evans was a smashing winner at the Wolfpack Classic and could play a role along with Schuh. The other possibility here is Dutton (Pickerington North).

The Southwest District is deep. Dattilo was a state qualifier at Columbus last year at 171# (10-2), but has really stepped up this year. He was 1<sup>st</sup> at North Canton and 2<sup>nd</sup> (to Division III choice Logan Brown) at the GMVWA. Porter was the district champ at this weight class going 1-2 at Columbus after getting an unlucky draw. He was 3<sup>rd</sup> at the SWOCA losing to Naylor, but I see that as an anomaly. Naylor has moved to Division I with Western Brown and was 2<sup>nd</sup> at the SWOCA including a win over Porter. Up from 160# he lost a 2-1 quarterfinal bout at Brecksville to Porco and failed to place. That is my top trio, but Massie, Canfield, Weatherholt, and Rooney have all had their movements this year. Each has a very good tournament, but I have not seen consistency. One of this group is almost sure to qualify and it could be even two or three. The sophomore Quehl (Moeller) was 3<sup>rd</sup> at the CIT and could be a factor. He was a junior high state runner-up losing to Roddy two years ago.

### 215 #

#### **PROJECTED CHAMPION: JUSTIN POWELL (BOARDMAN)**

##### Top Contenders

2	Jabbie (Westerville South)	14	Hogan/Sitkowski (Chardon)
3	Jameson (Elder)	15	Balogh (Valley Forge)
4	Gantz (Howland)	16	Barker (North Ridgeville)
5	Crowley (Wadsworth)	17	Hale (Mentor)
6	Watson (Sandusky)	18	Morton (Mason)
7	Stolarsky (Solon)	19	Newcombe (Marion Franklin)
8	Rasho (Uniontown Lake)	20	Emmons (Milford)
9	Mernedakis (Pickerington Central)	21	Simmons (Coffman)
10	Robinson (Maple Hts.)	22	Fletcher (Greenville)
11	Campeau (Fairmont)	23	Beach (Scott)
12	McGriffin (Bowling Green)	24	Brogan (Westland)
13	Perez (Fremont Ross)	25	Little (Springboro)

This was an exceptionally strong weight class last year featuring some excellent big men. The most amazing aspect, however, was that the top four finishers--Marcellino, Roman, Palmieri, and Simon--all had Nicholas (or Nick) as their given name. Never before have we had a result even remotely similar to this one. Now, Nick has recently regained popularity and has become a relatively common name (top ten for males under 20), but still occurs, even in that group, less than 1% of the time. Assuming that people named Nick are no tougher than those with other names like Lance or Dustin or even Brian (how could they be) then the probability of last year's finish is  $(0.01)^4$  to the fourth power or about one in one hundred million. It is safe to say that with 42 weight classes per year we are not likely to see such a result in our lifetime or in many thousands of lifetimes.

In some ways weight classes remind me of commodity markets. Occasionally, after reaching a peak level they crash to far lower levels before rebuilding once again. That happened last year at heavyweight after the superstar group of heavies--Fox, Johnson, Hoppel, Nail, Davia, etc.--graduated two years ago. This year we have seen a real drop off in depth at 215# and it is arguably the weakest weight class in Division I.

I think it is a two-man battle between wrestlers who met in the first round of the state tournament last year. In one corner will be the senior, Manju Jabbie, and in the other the rapidly improving junior, Justin Powell. Jabbie was a district champ last year and went to States with a 41-1 record. He beat Powell 11-6 that first round, was a semi-finalist and eventually fell to 6<sup>th</sup>. I have him undefeated this year and pretty much unchallenged winning at Marion Harding and the Midwest Classic. Powell has suddenly become a whirlwind this year. At the Top Gun he blasted Nachtrab, 9-3, on his way to winning the title. It was the same story at Kenston when he pinned Cortez Robinson. The son of heavyweight runner-up Kevin Powell and nephew of Fitch coach Brett Powell, he has good "big man" genes.

Powell faces a far tougher district. Gantz was the state runner-up at this weight class In Division II last year and is solid. Powell defeated him in their dual. Sitkowski was a district runner-up and state qualifier at 171 pounds, but I have not seen scores for him yet this year. However, he has certified at 215 lbs. That may be because the excellent Hogan has won that position. Hogan had a district 6<sup>th</sup> last year—one win from qualification. Rasho is an excellent sophomore who cannot help but impress you. He was 3<sup>rd</sup> at Medina and North Canton and is getting tougher all the time. Stolarsky, Robinson and Balogh are all state caliber wrestlers, some of whom are bound to be disappointed. Stolarsky has been at 275 much of the year so he'll be a big 215 pounder (is there a small one?) while Robinson won at Hudson before getting pinned by Powell at the

It is not nearly so ridiculous a competition at Waite. The top two qualification candidates were both state alternates last year and now have one last chance to make it to Columbus. Crowley was second at North Canton and 1<sup>st</sup> at Wadsworth, defeating Watson 5-4 in the finals. I thought both might qualify last year, but this time they both should be district finalists. McGriffin won at Sylvania Southview and Rogers, pinning both Perez and Beach in the two finals. He was not on any of my lists at season's onset but he has thrived at 215. Perez looks fourth best here, but Barker could challenge. Perez did defeat him 12-5 in district consolation action last year. Beach is a possibility.

There are clearly three standouts headed for Darby from the Columbus area. Jabbie has already been discussed but Mernedakis and Newcombe are both very good, finishing 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> at this district last year. Both lost very tough go-to-state bouts and like Watson and Crowley, are down to one last chance. Mernedakis has had good results this year, but I haven't seen much on Newcombe. He was not good at Wadsworth being pounded by Crowley, but his track record shows him to be better than that. Rick Simmons is the fourth best and should have reasonable chances for

qualification. Sato and Brogan might be other possibilities, but this is a very solid group of 215's.

There were twelve underclassmen who made it to the district level from the Southwest district--eleven at Farfield and one at Darby. That makes for a lot of returnees and some solid competition. Jameson is the best of this group. He finished 8<sup>th</sup> at Columbus after having the bad luck of drawing Palmieri in the first round. He has won at the SWOCA and the CIT and was 2<sup>nd</sup> at Brecksville to Nachtrab. State alternate Campeau looks next best with a first at Fairmont and a third at GMVWA, losing to Moore. After that, it is by guess and by golly. Morton, Emmons, Fletcher and Little come to mind, but there is not a lot to differentiate them. This is one of those situations where favorable bracketing and a personal-best performance will decide who gets the last two qualifying spots.

### HVY.

#### **PROJECTED CHAMPION: DAVID WADE (BEAVERCREEK)**

##### Top Contenders

2	Barlow (Westerville Central)	15	Dies (Green)
3	Hartshorn (Reynoldsburg)	16	Oswalt (Mt. Vernon)
4	Wagner (Centerville)	17	Holland (Holland Springfield)
5	Jeremiah (Darby)	18	Kmiecek (Normandy)
6	Becker (Moeller)	19	Collins (Maple Hts.)
7	Nicholson (Marion Franklin)	20	Naro (Amherst Steele)
8	Lipsev (Sycamore)	21	Neria (Stebbins)
9	Terifaj (Strongsville)	22	Yoder (Massillon)
10	Piccirillo (Mayfield)	23	Guillion (Fairborn)
11	McBride (Scott)	24	Crum (Westerville South)
12	Gudmundson (Fairfield)	25	Cramb (Boardman)
13	Dobransky (Brecksville)	26	Humphreys (Medina)
14	Zucker (Fremont Ross)	27	Pritchard (Northmont)
		28	Cox (Glen Este)

In the early 1700's, a French statistician named Abraham DeMoivre (the mathematically inclined may recall DeMoivre's Theorem;  $(\cos \theta + i \sin \theta)^n = \cos(n \theta) + i \sin(n \theta)$ ) made his living by calculating odds for local gamblers. Statistics was in its infancy then and so he was able to support himself for many years in that manner. But, DeMoivre was, in truth, a determinist who believed everything could be predicted. During the last months of his life, he noticed that he spent ever more time asleep. He calculated from these observations that he would be asleep for 24 hours (in other words dead) on November 27, 1754 -- and, indeed, that is the day he died.

I hope I am never that good at forecasting (faithful readers know that I have nothing to fear), but it would probably take another DeMoivre to untangle the combatants in this weight class. There are, however, three conclusions that seem clear-cut. First, Columbus is the home of heavyweights this year with four or five solid contenders, while

Cincinnati is nearly as strong. Second, no heavyweight from the North (Mentor or Waite District) is likely to get anything more than a very, very low place. Third, a healthy Ben Kuhar, out with a torn ACL, would otherwise be a prohibitive favorite.

Let's look at those two strong and deep districts. The Central District has always seemed to have good heavyweight wrestlers so its mildly surprising that they haven't had a champion in this century--the last winner, Troy Bowers in 1999. This year, they have five or six good candidates with Darby likely being augmented by other top contenders from the Xenia Sectional. It will be a terrific district. Barlow was a Division II district champ last year and finished 6<sup>th</sup> in the state. This year he won at Liberty and Wadsworth, nipping Nicholson in the finals. A mobile 250 pounder, he can score points with solid offensive moves. The junior Hartshorn had a bad district last year, but I was impressed with him at North Canton and Brecksville. In the former, he was third, losing to state champion Cameron Wade in the semifinals and he was second at the latter losing again to Cameron Wade in the finals. A very big junior, he will be a major threat to Kuhar next year. State alternate Jeremiah--he lost his go-to-state bout 9-8--was very good at Medina, finishing second to David Wade, 2-1, in a rather lackluster final. Nicholson was a state qualifier last year, losing to Kuhar in the first round and ending up 1-2. I think Hartshorn and Jeremiah may have moved by him. Oswald and Crum are both good but the Xenia Sectional is bound to send some excellent boys, really narrowing the margin of error.

The Cincinnati-Dayton area has at least eight strong candidates--with only one or two likely to migrate to that hornet's nest at Darby. David Wade was machine-like at Medina, dispatching foes with real precision until the last round bout with Jeremiah. He beat both Becker and Oswald to win the SWOCA. The other Dayton area star is defending district champion Lance Wagner. He was 8<sup>th</sup> last year after losing to Kuhar in the quarterfinals. He was second at Fairfield and North Canton, but won at the GMVWA. Very athletic, he is a scorer who can make things happen. Three other Dayton heavyweights--the very small Guillon, Neria and Pritchard--are all possibilities, but this will, both at Darby and Fairfield, be very crowded fields.

There are two pre-eminent heavyweights in the Cincinnati area. Becker has shown great improvement after a district runner-up finish last year. He went 1-2 at Columbus, losing to Wagner for the second weekend in a row. This year, he was 2<sup>nd</sup> at the Ironman, SWOCA and CIT, a nice run of finalist appearances, but its time to win a few. He was undefeated at the Ohio Duals. State qualifier Lipsey was 4<sup>th</sup> at the SWOCA, but 1<sup>st</sup> at Fairfield where he beat Wagner 11-10 in the heavyweight bout of the year to this point. It got him the OW award as well. Gudmundson and Cox are two other reliable performers.

As promised, there isn't much at Waite. State qualifier Terifaj heads the assemblage and has had a solid season. He was second at Solon to Cameron Wade, but fell to 5<sup>th</sup> at Brecksville losing to Hartshorn and Hiles. His big win was at the Midwest Classic. I like some of the Toledo area heavyweights to qualify. McBride has won several tournaments and has improved substantially from last year. Holland (of Holland

Springfield) is also good and won at Perrysburg in convincing fashion, but failed to place at Medina. The gigantic Zucker is coming on strong (and I mean strong) and could well be a major factor here. The wild card is 270-pound Dobransky who was a startling 5<sup>th</sup> at the Powerade and a solid 3<sup>rd</sup> at Riverside. He failed to place at Brecksville so its still too early for final judgements. Naro, who beat McBride last year, Humphreys and Ernst(Whitmer) are other thoughts.

Piccirillo won at the Top Gun, defeating Oswalt (probably the 5<sup>th</sup> best Columbus heavyweight) in the finals. He also won the Kenston on a rideout over Gudmundson and is the best at Mentor. I'm seeing very little after him. No Division I wrestler from this district was in the top five at North Canton, Medina, Brecksville or Wadsworth. That is not good news. Dies, 4<sup>th</sup> at the Dies, and Kmiecek, champion at Avon Lake and Normandy, are probably next best with Collins and Yoder waiting in the wings. I'm guessing two heavies not mentioned in this report make it to Columbus from this district.

## TEAMS

1. St. Edward                      This will be a signature year for St. Edward. They will tie the record of the 1978-1987 teams by winning their tenth consecutive team title and twenty-second since 1978. Also, dare I say legendary coach Greg Urbas will have won his eleventh team title, tying him with Howard Ferguson for the most championships. They scored 209.5 points last year, eclipsing the previous record held by Walsh Jesuit (1995) by 6.5 points, and becoming the second team to break the 200 point barrier. They may do so again this year. It is conceivable that they could win six individual titles even without their heavyweight Ben Kuhar (torn ACL). They have an opportunity to go down as one of the great teams and now must seize that chance.
  
2. Moeller                        I don't think that this team has yet peaked and performed on all cylinders. They could have as many as nine placers and will need that depth to hold off Lakota West for the runner-up trophy they won twice previously (2000-2001). The strength of the team is the middleweights from 135 to 171, but the bookends Becker (who has been great) and Weaver (who has struggled) can really help.
  
3. Lakota West                    This team seemed to get better really quick--and that can most often be attributed to good coaching. They get off to a fabulous start with Touris and Fields both finalist material. The middleweights--Flake, Stevens, Bohl and Holley--need to do well, and Bradberry has to continue to be super. If Moeller falters, this team could score 100 points and take away the runner-up trophy.
  
4. Massillon Perry                The top three teams have outstanding depth for state level wrestling that no one else can match. At this point, everyone else has three, or at most four boys who can successfully compete in Columbus. Perry, the state runner-up, the last two years has three potential finalists in Straughn, Genetin and Mizer. Horner may be able to help or two-time qualifier Rooney, but it looks like the top trio will score virtually all their points.
  
5. Marysville                      Popham should be in the top three while the sophomore Moore is very good. Lybarger and Davis need to do some scoring and hope that Quick can help. Oswalt could qualify out of the northern districts, but it is likely to be left behind here.

6. Elyria Pycraft and Mitcheff are possible finalists who can score a lot of points. They need Milavec to step up big time and hope that Goins becomes available and can score at 135. There is no margin for error here.
7. Westerville South Ciracky and Jabbie could both be champs and score some bonus points. That is worth 50 points generally puts you in the top five or six. I haven't heard about Legg recently, but he could be a real helper if available.
8. Fitch Jameson and Bodnar are a great tandem and a healthy Donadee could really help. I'm not sure where more points are going to come from unless Coach Powell can have his nephew transfer in.
9. Reynoldsburg This is a very fine team and it is time to see whether they can wrestle with the big boys. Starting at 145, they can throw at you--DiYanni, Shalash, Marrero, Keefer and Hartshorn. If they are ready to set personal-best marks, they could be a top-five team.
10. Maple Heights They have the one incandescent superstar in Robertson, but need to find additional scoring punch. Peskar could help, but Highbaugh is in a murderous weight class and I'm unsure about Lee, Horn, Collins and Wiggins. That means Robinson and Cartledge have to step it up at 215 and 160.

## Division II

### 103#

#### **PROJECTED CHAMPION: DAVID TAYLOR (GRAHAM)**

#### Top Contenders

2	Papesh (Aurora)	14	Corpus (Wauseon)
3	Cribari (West Geauga)	15	Ferris (Jackson)
4	Quickle (Hillsboro)	16	Weisman (Bexley)
5	McClure (Tri-Valley)	17	Rumple (Galion)
6	Ditcher (Claymont)	18	Minnard (Fairfield Union)
7	Gilchrist (Jefferson)	19	Dennis (Holy Name)
8	Turnbull (Buckeye Local)	20	Shaw (Minerva)
9	Keller (Dayton Carroll)	21	Munafo (Perkins)
10	Westfall (Lake Catholic)	22	Majoy (Edison)
11	Garringer (Miami Trace)	23	Alsip (Norwood)
12	Inghram (University School)	24	Risdon (Harrison Central)
13	Smith (Eastwood)	25	Morris (Ravenna Southeast)

David Taylor was, perhaps, the greatest youth wrestler in Ohio history. He was a three-time junior high champion who ended every bout in less than 4 ½ minutes, and has been a many time national champ. He is saddled with incredible expectations, but he is an incredible talent. He is a very small 103-pounder and has had to adjust his style to compensate for the size differential he will face nearly every week. Nonetheless, he has won the GMVWA, Beast and Ironman, and was 2<sup>nd</sup> at Graham, losing a close bout to Sergeant the first week. That bout was avenged the following week and it has been clear sailing since then. It's difficult to imagine how good he'll be when he is the same size as everyone else. Unless he gets careless (and I've seen no sign of such a trait), the one real obstacle he likely faces in collecting his first state title is Johnny Papesh. Papesh is a very tall 103# who will dwarf Taylor in height. He is also very good, finishing 4<sup>th</sup> at this weight class last year. He is undefeated so far, but has wrestled a far easier schedule than Taylor. Nonetheless, his increased aggressiveness has resulted in total domination of his opponents. I suspect he would like bracketing that puts him away from Taylor until the final round, thus making his size advantage even more pronounced.

Taylor should have little trouble at the Goshen District. The only returning state qualifier is Kyle Quickle who Taylor pinned at the GMVWA. Still, Quickle is second-best here and hopes to better his 1-2 record he compiled at Columbus last year. The next two spots are far more problematical. Junior high state place winner, Garringer, may be next best after winning at Groveport and was 4<sup>th</sup> at the GMVWA – including losing by fall to Quickle. Keller was a finalist at the CIT, including a win over state placer Alex Weaver. Ferris returns at this weight class after winning over 40 bouts last year and

upsetting a sectional champ in the first round. Other possibilities are Alsip and Johnson (Logan Elm).

Papesh will face a somewhat sterner test at Firestone. Cribari is a returning state qualifier who has missed almost the entire year due to injury. He was 2<sup>nd</sup> at DeSales and has tremendous potential. If healthy, he will push Papesh and certainly has strong state placement potential. Also here is Gilchrist who won the Dies over the excellent Lang and pinned Cruz to win at Southview. The little freshman Inghram is already good, finishing 6<sup>th</sup> at Brecksville and 4<sup>th</sup> at the Top Gun. He failed to place at the Ironman, drawing Taylor and Weaver back-to-back. Maybe, even a better freshman is Westfall, who won the CIT, after failing to place at Medina. This is a nice, solid quintet. Morris and Shaw are other possibilities.

I'm not seeing a lot at Galion. Smith is probably the best here, but will not be a huge threat outside this district. He was 5<sup>th</sup> at the Top Gun, but failed to place at Brecksville losing to Inghram 9-2. One of his biggest contributions was holding Taylor to a major in the state dual final, thus saving two critical points. Had he been pinned, Graham would have won on criteria. Corpus is likely next in line after winning at Van Buren, while Gorman champ Ruple, Dennis, and Munafo are possible threats. The freshman Young also has potential here.

State qualifier McClure heads a relatively weak Watkins District. I also like Ditcher, a finalist at the Top Gun and 6<sup>th</sup> at Medina. Turnbull, winner at the OVAC, and Risdon, his last round victor, are possible qualifiers. Weisman seems clearly the best in the Central District, and won two district matches last year. Minnard has won several small tournaments and would be a dark horse candidate.

**112#**

**PROJECTED CHAMPION: DENNIS ROCHE (UNIVERSITY SCHOOL)**

*Top Contenders*

2	Tinnel (Eastwood)	14	Vaughn (Columbus DeSales)
3	Penny (Milton Union)	15	Hildenbrand (Franklin)
4	Bernard (Geneva)	16	McClintock (Galion)
5	Meyer (Ravenna)	17	Allen (Benjamin Logan)
6	Klein (River View)	18	Humenik (Revere)
7	Chapman (Kenmore)	19	Cisco (St. Marys Memorial)
8	Campbell (Perkins)	20	Jameson (Indian Hills)
9	Lay (Greenon)	21	Garrabrandt (Claymont)
10	Rose (Cambridge)	22	Palladino (Padua)
11	Knotek (Walsh)	23	Nakama (Big Walnut)
12	Danielson (New Lexington)	24	Rowe/Longstreet (Graham)
13	Nycz (Holy Name)	25	Payne (Orange)
		26	Sofoulis (Bryan)

This initiates a run of four very strong and deep weight classes that should be of substantial interest to everyone. The top quartet at 112# is all returning state place winners and, in something of an oddity, all school classifications are represented. Tinnel was the 119# runner-up in Division III. Bernard was 4<sup>th</sup> in Division I, and Roche and Penny were both 3<sup>rd</sup> in Division II.

Tinnel, now a junior, transferred from Edison to Eastwood and then moved down a weight class as well. Last year he defeated Opfer for the district title, but then dropped an 8-7 decision to him in the state finals. He got a late start this year, but then was 2<sup>nd</sup> at Brecksville (to Fields), finishing ahead of Roche, but never meeting him. He was terrific in the state duals, pinning both Knotek and Rowe in under a minute, then at the Top Gun he got caught by Roche and lost a 6-1 decision. Hmm. I wonder if the weight cut is becoming a problem.

Penny has now been 3<sup>rd</sup> twice losing tough quarterfinal bouts each time (10-8 and 11-9). Last year he split a pair of bouts with Aaron Hart (winning at the Sectional and losing at the District), proving he can compete with anyone. He has won at the GMVWA and Edgewood, and is poised to make a real run in this his senior year.

Roche was a state semi-finalist last year, losing to Pelton in overtime. Also a senior, he crushed all opposition at North Canton and lost only to Fields at Brecksville, while finishing 3<sup>rd</sup>. Also on his Chapel Hill resume is a 5<sup>th</sup> place finish at the Ironman in what was a difficult weight class. Then at the Top Gun he outclassed Tinnel and took home a big title. Compact and strong, he has gotten much better on his feet, and will be a real factor.

Bernard lost his district semi-final last year to eventual champ Kevin Hardy, and dropped to 4<sup>th</sup>. Then he reached the state semi-final again losing to Hardy and once again finishing 4<sup>th</sup>. I expect him to be a real critical element at Columbus, but I was disappointed in his runner-up finish at Kenston, losing to Peskar 6-1. He'll need to step it up in February.

The bracketing should be good. If the districts play out as anticipated, Tinnel should be bracketed away from Penny and Roche or Bernard, with that loser moving up with Tinnel. However, there are plenty of good 112's who could impact that process.

Tinnel should have a relatively easy time at Ontario. State placer Kidd, who was at 112# for a week, has moved to (apparently) 130#, leaving Spencer Campbell as second best at this location. Campbell won at Tiffin and sparkled at the SBC Duals. It will be a crowded field behind this duo. The Highland Sectional has Nycz, Palladino, and Hermann (Vermillion), with the first two squarely in the picture when it comes to qualification. Nycz was 2<sup>nd</sup> at the CIT and Wadsworth, and won at Avon Lake, while Palladino was the state alternate at 103# last year. McClintock just won at the Gorman, while Cisco took the Marion Harding tournament. Don't overlook Sofoulis and Corpus (Wauseon) from the far west, who both have previous district experience. These last two qualifying spots will be fiercely contested.

The Goshen District is a little thinner after Penny. The sophomore Lay was a finalist at Medina, losing to Palmer in the title bout. Hildenbrand beat Lay by a point last year and this season was 2<sup>nd</sup> at Franklin. Allen is also competitive here and this trio might be mild favorites for the last state berths. I don't want to forget Rowe or Longstreet from Graham, who wrestled enormously difficult schedules that wounded their records, but built their abilities. Reeser (Miami Trace) and Jameson look like two other options.

Roche and Bernard will head the crew at Firestone. The sophomore Meyer is now firmly in place at 112#, and he is very good. A state qualifier last year, he went 3-2 finishing a solid 7<sup>th</sup>. This year he was 4<sup>th</sup> at the Top Gun, losing badly to Roche, but it was a major step upward after a shaky Brecksville performance. Chapman missed qualification at this class by three points last year, but may well do better this time. He beat Zamaria to win the Dies and was 2<sup>nd</sup> at 119# at Wadsworth. I really like the freshman Knotek, but this is a tough district at his weight class. He was 4<sup>th</sup> at Solon and 2<sup>nd</sup> at Mayfield. Humenik, Delpra (West Geauga), and Payne are other possibilities.

I think low and, maybe, middle state places are within reach of the 112's at Watkins, but not much more. Klein, a three-time state qualifier, has seniority rights and he has been exercising them this year--winning, for example, the Chertow Classic. He is 1-6 in state bouts and has had some very tough first round draws. State qualifier Rose won at Sheridan and Barnesville, and won five bouts at Brecksville to finish 7<sup>th</sup> (included was a win over Meyer). Danielson fought his way back to 7<sup>th</sup> after being the #2 seed at Medina and drawing Collin Palmer in the first round. I really like the freshman Vaughn, and he should qualify. He was 5<sup>th</sup> at DeSales, 6<sup>th</sup> at Brecksville, 3<sup>rd</sup> at the CIT, and 1<sup>st</sup>

at Mayfield. The young Garrabrandt and Nakama (Big Walnut) are people to watch as well.

### 119#

#### **PROJECTED CHAMPION: AARON HART (GRAHAM)**

##### Top Contenders

2	Pelton (Bellevue)	14	Dynes (Claymont)
3	Ulinski (Eastwood)	15	Walters (West Geauga)
4	Morton (Canal Winchester)	16	Chappalear (Indian Lakes)
5	Dean (Akron St. Vincent)	17	Sully (Van Wert)
6	Stone (University School)	18	King (Benedictine)
7	Daugherty (Cambridge)	19	Canty (Columbus DeSales)
8	Romeo (Lake Catholic)	20	Becker (Minerva)
9	Silvers (Eaton)	21	Armstrong (Miami Trace)
10	Baxter (Perkins)	22	Hughes (Bexley)
11	Roth (Norwalk)	23	McQuillen (Lexington)
12	Martin (Liberty)	24	Van Wey (John Glenn)
13	Von Neumann (Dayton Carroll)	25	Leonard (Fostoria)

Probably it's just coincidence, but it seems that we have seen many more serious injuries to top performers this year than is generally the case. So many people have missed large segments of the schedule, while others like Kuhar, Tymoscucuk, and Olds may miss the entire season. At 119# injuries could play a major role in the outcome at Columbus. State qualifier Ulinski, after a brilliant summer season, started the year at 119# for Eastwood, moving state champion Llanas to 125#. A broken ankle suffered right before Christmas may keep him sidelined the remainder of the season – or at least until sectionals. Llanas has since certified at 119#, as has Ulinski, making it uncertain as to who will show up at these next two weight classes. My guess, and that is all it is, has Ulinski at this weight class with Llanas staying at 125#.

The brilliant Hart is again the favorite. A three-time state placer (4-1-2) he was upset last year by Llanas when he did not look to be 100%. A rare three-time winner at the Ironman, he faces formidable competition at this weight class heavy with returning qualifiers. He is a fierce competitor who can win the big bout with everything on the line. Just look at his performance in the GMVWA where he pinned state champion Kolodzik in the final round after defeating state champ Gambill handily, 8-4, in the semis. One place he shouldn't face many difficulties is at the district level. Silvers is a returning state qualifier who made the quarterfinals at Columbus before being run over by Llanas. He met Hart at the district level and suffered a second period fall. This year he was 4<sup>th</sup> at the GMVWA behind the three state champs, Kolodzik beat him 6-4. He had no trouble winning at Xenia and has placement potential. The rest of this district is a step (or maybe two) behind this twosome. Von Neumann was 4<sup>th</sup> at the CIT, while

Chappalear and Armstrong have had some wins. Maybe, Turner, with two titles this year, can get to the Schott in this wide-open contest.

The Ontario District is very strong. State runner-up Pelton returns and he is very rugged, especially in the top position. He was 3<sup>rd</sup> at Brecksville in an absolutely hellacious weight class. He shut out --in succession--Dean, Thome, and Rini on his way to the consolation final. Bellevue has a good back-up. State placer Kidd certified at 119#, but will probably wrestle at 130#. I have Ulinski back for sectionals at this weight class. I didn't see him before his injury, but he was garnering rave reviews after a sparkling summer season. A two time state qualifier he gives Eastwood a great line-up in the lower middleweights. State qualifier Baxter is next best after reaching the district finals last year. He was 3<sup>rd</sup> at Tiffin. He is not safe. State alternate Roth, Sully, McQuillen, and Leonard all have winning credentials.

It looks like pretty much a two-man competition at Watkins between Seth Morton and Dustin Daugherty. Morton, the 112# district champ last year, had an excellent state tournament. He beat Michaels 14-12 in the first round and upset Jeff Penny in the second 10---two great slam-bang bouts. Llanas cooled him off, but he still finished 4<sup>th</sup> in an extremely tough weight class. This year he won at Tiffin over McQuillen (by fall) and Baxter and dominated at Watterson. He has finalist potential. Daugherty won at Groveport and the OVAC and is a past state qualifier, too. At that time he caught Hart in the first round. The rest of this district is not particularly strong. Dynes was a state alternate last year who has gotten a late start, but is rounding into shape. Canty was most recently 6<sup>th</sup> at Mayfield and the CIT and his tough schedule should have him battle hardened by district time. After that, maybe, a Hughes or a Van Wey can make inroads.

Look for some solid performances out of Firestone. Dean looked very good at Solon, beating state runner-up Freeman and losing to Boing by a point. He was 7<sup>th</sup> at Brecksville losing to state champion Jameson and state runner-up Pelton, but beating state champion Llanas. At the CIT he defeated Von Neumann, King, and Romeo consecutively to win the title. Romeo was champ at Medina beating Birt and Nighman and was 2<sup>nd</sup> to Dean at the CIT. The wild card here is Stone. After failing to place at the Ironman and finishing 6<sup>th</sup> at North Canton, he blazed through Brecksville beating Llanas, Arnold, and Rini to reach the finals. Who will show up the dynamo Stone, or the ordinary Stone, is a very pertinent question. At the Top Gun it was the dynamo with a 3<sup>rd</sup> place finish. State alternate Zach Martin returns, as do the peppery Ricky King, Walters, and Stephen Becker. WIT runner-up Graham could be an important factor at this district.

**125#**

**PROJECTED CHAMPION: BEN JORDAN (GRAHAM)**

*Top Contenders*

2	Keyes (Walsh Jesuit)	14	Fraley (Miami Trace)
3	Llanas (Eastwood)	15	Hogue (Ravenna Southeast)
4	Manfull (Carrollton)	16	Kovach (Claymont)
5	Kapper (Canal Fulton NW)	17	McHugh (Bellbrook)
6	McGovern (Columbus DeSales)	18	Riedy (Bellvue)
7	Salyer (Willard)	19	Aleshire (Buckeye Valley)
8	Espinoza (Rossford)	20	Leonard (Norton)
9	Sulzer (Holy Name)	21	McDole (Tiffin Columbian)
10	Sheppard (Kenmore)	22	Osterloh (McClain)
11	Melillo (Padua)	23	Ray (Cambridge)
12	Johnson (Milton Union)	24	Goodrich (Chagrin Falls)
13	Androsko (St. Clairsville)	25	Carrisalez (Defiance)

A terrific trio of wrestlers is likely to face off at another outstanding weight class. Two are state champions, while the third could easily have won the past two years. There is also substantial history within this group of two seniors and a precocious sophomore.

I guess I shouldn't have been surprised by Ben Jordan's brilliant stretch run. Just the previous year I saw him at Junior High States upset the heavy favorite, defending champ Chase Skonieczny, to take the title. Last year was more of the same. After a narrow first round win he met Keyes in the semi-finals and won an exciting 11-10 victory in a bout that could have gone either way. Then, in an almost exact replay, he entered as an underdog against the defending champ, and won 8-4. This year, getting a lot more attention from opponents, he was 2<sup>nd</sup> at the Ironman (to Sulzer) and won easily at the GMVWA. At Graham Thome gave him a solid battle before succumbing 7-5.

We'll rate Llanas at 125#, which is "Hartless" in both aspects of the word. At any rate, Llanas was 3<sup>rd</sup> two years ago and then upended state champion Aaron Hart in last year's final, 6-5, in a match that didn't seem quite that close. It was an electric performance. This year Llanas looked a little shaky early at 125#, and then dropped to 119# for Brecksville. It was an absolutely brutal weight class and Llanas failed to place, losing to the red-hot Stone and Dean. He gave Hart, however, a terrific battle at the Ohio Duals, losing 4-3. Then back at 125# he took the Top Gun against a representative field. They need to choose a weight class for him so he can focus totally on wrestling.

Keyes always loses some bouts early in the year, but comes on strong at tourney time. Two years ago he was 2<sup>nd</sup> at 112#, losing a tough 3-1 decision to Kriwinsky. Then last year he beat Kriwinsky in the district final only to lose that 9-8 semi-final to Jordan and finish 3<sup>rd</sup>. After winning at Solon (over state runner-up Freeman) he was 4<sup>th</sup> at the

Ironman, losing again to Jordan in the semis. He can't let that become a mental thing for him with Jordan. He is primed to become a four-time state placer (4-2-3), but this year only first place will do.

I see Jordan winning again. If the districts go as expected Jordan will be away from both Llanas and Keyes. In that battle, a high scoring one, I think Keyes, every bit as athletic and strong, will squeak out a win over Llanas. However, in the final Keyes will have to overcome the defensive style of Jordan and remain very patient. Instead, a mistake or two will happen and doubt will creep in, and Jordan will have won again.

Keyes should have few problems at Firestone. State qualifier Kapper is the principal threat, but I think Keyes will again handle him. Don't shortchange Kapper, however. He was a state semi-finalist and finished 4<sup>th</sup>, losing to Keyes 6-1. Sheppard, Hogue, and Leonard all have a chance here with Goodrich probably in that group as well. Freshman Mike Fee may not be quite ready for state action, but I'm often wrong.

There is a lot of depth at Ontario after Llanas. Three returning state qualifiers dot the field (four if Mitchell competes here), but that will not guarantee a return trip. Salyer was a district runner-up, but went 0-2 at Columbus. He was a finalist at Medina, losing to Sulzer (the St. Edward version). Willard has had a bit of a "down" spell, but Salyer has continued to win. Espinoza and Sulzer (the Holy Name sophomore) are both solid with Espinoza picking up an 8<sup>th</sup> in Columbus. Sulzer was 3<sup>rd</sup> at Wadsworth and 1<sup>st</sup> at the CIT beating the excellent Padua newcomer, Anthony Melillo. Melillo also got a 3<sup>rd</sup> at Brecksville, and is a significant threat here. Factor in Riedy, McDole, and Rogers champion Carrisalez and it is a very strong field.

Jordan had things pretty much his own way last year winning his district title and we can anticipate that again this year. Fraley was a state qualifier at 103# last year, but had an absolutely terrible draw, getting state champion Earley and Papesch back-to-back. This year, up three weight classes, he was 5<sup>th</sup> at the GMVWA, 1<sup>st</sup> at Groveport, and second to Llanas, 7-1, at Western Brown. McHugh also qualified (at 112#), but like Fraley was gone after two bouts. He won at Xenia and was 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> respectively at Edgewood and Bellbrook. Johnson finished ahead of Fraley at the GMVWA and might be second best at this district. State alternate Osterloh is also here along with Harmon.

If anybody is ready to challenge my top trio it's state qualifier Matt Manfull. At the Top Gun he crushed Nakama and Lybarger and lost in the finals to Llanas 5-4. Injuries slowed him down last year, but this wrestler is the real deal. McGovern should be second best here. He was 5<sup>th</sup> at Columbus last year, losing to Jordan in the championship round by six. He has vacillated between 125# and 130#, but I think he'll chose to compete here. I had state qualifier Caudill certified at this class, but I may have been in error. He has competed at 130# in all the results that I have, so I have ranked him there. Androsko, Kovach, and Ray lead the OVAC type competitors, while Aleshire or Nakama might be best in Columbus after McGovern.

**130#**

**PROJECTED CHAMPION: ADAM KRIWINSKY (UNIVERSITY SCHOOL)**

Top Contenders

2	Saxton (Buckeye Local)	14	Wagers (Williard)
3	Boyd (Graham)	15	Kidd (Bellevue)
4	Skonieczny (Walsh Jesuit)	16	Brassfield (Hebron Lakewood)
5	Reedy (Ravenna)	17	Gifford (Logan Elm)
6	Caudill (Beaver Local)	18	Schenk (Milton Union)
7	Milner (Aurora)	19	Clark (Lexington)
8	Fondale (New Lexington)	20	Cunningham (Miami Trace)
9	Sigurdson (Oak Harbor)	21	Brown (Norwalk)
10	Cozad (Hamilton Ross)	22	Robbe (Batavia)
11	McLaughlin (Canal Fulton NW)	23	Cintron (Alliance)
12	Pusateri (Perkins)	24	Ray (Cambridge)
13	Taylor (Eastwood)	25	Pendleton (Indian Creek)

If you're looking for terrific competition then the Division II tournament outshines the other two. There are more marvelous weight classes and more outstanding match-ups than I can ever remember in the past. This is the fourth consecutive weight that is just loaded with tremendous wrestlers. I count six placers and another half dozen returning state qualifiers setting up some exceptional match-ups.

Leading the way is former state champ Adam Kriwinsky. He won two years ago at 112#, finishing ahead of Keyes, Llanas and Reedy. Last year it was more of the same until the final round where Jordan gained the upset, 8-4. Still, I thought Kriwinsky was the better boy for most of the bout attacking time after time only to be frustrated by Jordan's defense. Kriwinsky had a half dozen good shots he just could not finish. Jordan, somehow, I'm not sure how, escaped probably deserved stalling warnings, and got a couple of other refereeing breaks. Take nothing away from Jordan. He was ablaze that weekend, but there was little to choose between the two. This year Kriwinsky has been devastating. He was 4<sup>th</sup> at the Ironman, losing to the #1 rated Billy Murphy, 10-9, in a semi-final where he dominated the last two minutes. He tore through North Canton, Brecksville, and the Top Gun in an even more aggressive mode and that will be needed to beat the star-studded group challenging at this class.

A top challenger in his own district is the sophomore Chase Skonieczny. Twice a finalist in the Junior High States (2-1), he was 4<sup>th</sup> at 125# last year, finishing with a flourish after absorbing some tough early season losses. He was a semi-final loser to Ryan Cubberly 4-2, and then fell to Saxton by three in the battle for 3<sup>rd</sup>. He was great at Solon, defeating state champion Kevin Hardy for the title. At the Ironman he got caught by Coby Boyd early, but came back to take 3<sup>rd</sup> beating several state champs--including Koballa and Kriwinsky in overtime. He took the Powerade – beating Hardy again, and then was undefeated at the Ohio Duals. He'll win a couple of titles in his career, maybe starting this year. Also returning is state qualifier Matt Reedy, currently a junior at

Ravenna. Now at 130# he beat state qualifiers Pajestka, Gardella, and McGovern on his way to the finals at Brecksville before losing 15-5 to Kriwinsky. He was 3<sup>rd</sup> at the Top Gun, losing again to Kriwinsky, but narrowing the margin to 6-3. At most weight classes Reedy would have little problem placing, but it may not be that easy here. Also at Firestone is state placer Milner--7<sup>th</sup> last year at 125#, and a difficult boy to wrestle. He beat the excellent Mencini, 15-0, earlier in the year, to win at Hudson, but was only 3<sup>rd</sup> at Aurora against a small field. I also like state qualifier McLaughlin, Cintron, and Richmond Hts. champion Lucas. It's a tremendous district field with lots of potential surprises.

While Kriwinsky and Skonieczny stand out at Firestone, they must know that Saxton out of Watkins is an equal. A three-time state qualifier, I expected that he might have been a finalist long before this. Two years ago he lost to eventual finalist Ryan Cubberly 10-8 in overtime, while last year he drew Doggett in the semi-finals and ended up 3<sup>rd</sup>. This year he has dominated the Eastern District once again defeating, for example, the excellent Caudill, 18-6 in the finals. He also won the Midwest Classic over a strong field defeating state champion Kevin Hardy, 17-6. His only loss was on a disqualification to Ciccarello at Kent State. Caudill and Fondale both went 1-2 at Columbus last year, but need to be in top form to place at this tough class. Brassfield was undefeated until just recently and could grab a qualifying spot, but Ray, Pendleton, and Huffman could well intervene.

Coby Boyd fills out the quartet of superstars at this class. As a freshman at this weight class last year Boyd cruised into the district semi-finals last year with a 36-5 record, but then lost two of the next three (by a total of three points) to get a 4<sup>th</sup>. He drew my choice, district champ Jordan Lipp, in the first round and pulled the upset. Friery defeated him in the semis and he fell to 6<sup>th</sup>. This year he was 5<sup>th</sup> at the Ironman, losing to former state champ Kriwinsky 5-4, and beating former state champ Koballa. He won the GMVWA, was undefeated in the Ohio Duals and beat Gonsor in the St. Ed's dual. He is a devastating pinner with tremendous upside potential. State qualifiers Gifford and Robbe are in the field, but I'm not so sure that they will even qualify this year. I like Cozad, Schenck, and Cunningham, all of whom have put together excellent seasons. For example, Cunningham won at Groveport (up a weight), placed 6<sup>th</sup> at the GMVWA, and was 3<sup>rd</sup> at Western Brown. Schenck has a win over Cunningham, while Cozad won at Edgewood. Factor in Stevenson and Thompson, and there will be a real battle here-- for 2<sup>nd</sup> place.

There are no superstars at Ontario. I had Danny Michaels rated on top here, but a dislocated elbow has apparently sidelined him for the rest of the year. Wagers and Kidd have state experience (Kidd placed at 112#), but they face real obstacles for a return trip. State qualifier Pusateri is also present, but he seems to run hot and cold. He can be very good (2<sup>nd</sup> at Tiffin), or not so good (5<sup>th</sup> at North Canton). It looked like he was on the down cycle at the SBC Duals. That leaves Sigurdson and Taylor as potentially on top here, but Clark and Brown are both good. Throw in Shiff or Gregor and anything can happen. If Melillo shows up here that will further complicate things.

The big four here are Kriwinsky, Saxton, Skonieczny and Boyd. Assuming the districts are as projected--problematic at Firestone-- Kriwinsky and Saxton should be apart, with Skonieczny away from Kriwinsky and Boyd, who knows where. That sets up some titanic match-ups that boggle the mind.

### 135#

#### **PROJECTED CHAMPION: RYAN CUBBERLY (EASTWOOD)**

##### Top Contenders

2	McLemore (Padua)	14	Hilbert (Revere)
3	Andrews (New Albany)	15	Pencil (Springfield NW)
4	Morrison (Miami Trace)	16	McKibben (Claymont)
5	Christensen (Greenon)	17	Stroh (Canal Fulton NW)
6	Tanzillo (Watkins Memorial)	18	Zimmer (River View)
7	Putnam (Norwalk)	19	Shanholtz (Akron St. Vincent)
8	Connelly (Lake Catholic)	20	Siemer (Hamilton Ross)
9	Gayheart (Willard)	21	Szucs (Holy Name)
10	Mahley (Cambridge)	22	Stine (Edison)
11	Brown (Columbus DeSales)	23	Suggett (Norton)
12	Newland/Thomusseit (Graham)	24	Stalder (Athens)
13	Pressley (Oak Harbor)	25	Tubbs (Walsh Jesuit)

The level of high school wrestling in Ohio has advanced so far that just qualifying for the state tournament is an exceptional achievement--and should be recognized as such. Becoming a state finalist is now the result of at least a decade of tremendous work and a dedication that is rarely matched in most other endeavors. That is why it is unusual that we have four competitors at this weight class who have already wrestled late on Saturday for a state title. It is my expectation that one of them will win at this class, but there are at least two other competitors who could derail that outcome.

Ryan Cubberly has already placed three times (3-2-2) and I think it's his time to win one. He has twice been runner-up at 125#, losing both times to three-time champ Cameron Doggett. Frankly, I thought he should have moved to the easier 130# class rather than challenge Doggett a second time. His only losses were at the Beast, where he was 5<sup>th</sup>, but he won at Brecksville, and the Top Gun – both times winning by huge scores (16-2 and 17-1). More worrisome, have been some very close bouts against wrestlers we would have expected him to beat more easily (Tubbs, Brownlee, etc.). Every year there are a number of wrestlers who have paid their dues and seem deserving of a title (Percival, Horne, Enright in past years); this year Cubberly falls into that category.

Pat McLemore won a state title as a freshman at 103# three years ago, getting off his back to win big. As a sophomore he failed to place at the tough 119# class, and last year was one of frustration. Sidelined with a broken hand, he watched Trevor Bowers

(who he has twice majored) run off with the title. This year he defeated state champion Richie Spicel to win at Avon Lake, finished 3<sup>rd</sup> at the Ironman, was 3<sup>rd</sup> at 140# at Brecksville, and then won handily at the CIT. While he certified at 135#, I would not be overly surprised to see him challenge Kyle at the somewhat easier 140# class.

Andrews was a tough luck loser to Scaletta in Division III last year, losing in the second overtime. He ended up with a sparkling 54-2 record, but moves to Division II in 2006. He won at Upper Arlington, New Albany, and beat Dong to take the Midwest Classic in fine style. He was 4<sup>th</sup> at Medina, losing by fall to Straughn in the semi-finals. Morrison was a surprise (at least to me) finalist at 135#, defeating Rendinell, E. Cubberly, and Kyle in the process before losing 14-10 to Bowers. Miami Trace has an excellent team with Morrison the prime mover, winning at GMVWA and Groveport. He surprised some people last year, but that luxury has now passed.

Never a state finalist, Kevin Christensen is another possible candidate at 135#. Already a three-time state qualifier, he was 4<sup>th</sup> last year at 130#. A true oddity is that in each of the past three years he has lost in the championship bracket to a Padua wrestler. By this time he must despise the color brown. He'll want to be bracketed away from McLemore. Morrison and Christensen both exit Goshen. State qualifier Pencil is back and sharp as ever. He went 1-2 at states losing to Manfull in the first round. He won at Bellefontaine, up a weight class over the tough Gutierrez. However, I think Newland is probably third best here. His recent 8-4 loss to state champion Harris shows he is competitive with the best. State qualifier Thomusseit could also be here having set a school record, I'm sure, for most different weight classes wrestled. I've got Siemer, Stephens and Stalder on my lists, showing a definite preference for the letter "S".

Cubberly and McLemore both emerge from Ontario and these two great seniors deserve to be bracketed apart there. State qualifier Putnam could be a finalist if that fails to happen. A district semi-finalist last year, he went 1-2 in Columbus. Gayheart and, I guess, Pressley might be next best here, but it's difficult to tell. Szucs could also play a role here and, maybe, Shoch (Avon) as well.

There is some real depth at Watkins. We've already talked about Andrews, but there is much more. State qualifier Tanzillo is extremely dangerous. He has pinned dozens of good wrestlers with that "zilla thrilla" and I'm sure there'll be more victims. Not only is he good, but he'll be wrestling on his home mats as well. Cambridge has really built a great program with a good wrestler at almost every weight class – and a sprinkling of excellent ones. Mahley was a state qualifier last year and pulled off a huge first round upset, dumping Robbie Michaels. This year he was 2<sup>nd</sup> at the OVAC and was a Brecksville quarter-finalist before being shut out by Cubberly. He was 3<sup>rd</sup> at Brecksville and may have passed all but Andrews at this district. Also here is Top Gun runner-up McKibben, who is making a late season run at qualification. Was Top Gun a fluke, or is he ready to do battle with the best at this district? I also like Zimmer, Stine, and Bragg (Morgan), but there won't be room for all of them.

The Firestone District is uncharacteristically weak. Hilbert and Connelly are former state qualifiers, but that does not give them a big edge here. State alternate Stroh is a possibility, but I have not seen his name in the results recently. I think Shanholtz is good, but he seems to have gotten off to a slow start this year. Suggett and Tubbs have wrestled well lately and they could potentially qualify. The other possibility is that one or two of the 130's move up hoping to improve their qualification chances.

### 140#

#### **PROJECTED CHAMPION: JAKE KYLE (GRAHAM))**

##### Top Contenders

2	Cavello (Willard)	15	Paul (Tallmadge)
3	Collett (West Holmes)	16	Yackey (Dover)
4	Myers (Indian Creek)	17	Zofkie (Wapakoneta)
5	Fisher (Morgan)	18	England (Aurora)
6	Dukeshire (Port Clinton)	19	Dennis (Defiance)
7	Wells (Greenon)	20	Grisham (Tipp City)
8	Triplett (Claymont)	21	Neill (Vincent Warren)
9	Teter (Triway)	22	Severance (Sheridan)
10	Horne (Hillsdale)	23	Windom (CVCA)
11	Brown (Walsh Jesuit)	24	Giachetti (Oak Harbor)
12	Aona (Clyde)	25	Sills (New Albany)
13	Neff (Miami Trace)	26	Fetrow (Louisville)
14	Hoffman (Eastwood)	27	Burger (Fairview Park)

You ever give a party and have almost no one show up. That's what it seems happened at 140#. Jake Kyle is there, but people like Friery, Lamancusa, and Robbie Michaels are all at 145#. I suppose there is a chance one of the 135's might move up, but as of the moment Kyle has to be accorded the favorite role. It will certainly be viewed as a plus for Graham in the team competition, but sometimes what seems like good fortune can easily go awry.

Kyle would certainly be an excellent champ. He was 2<sup>nd</sup> two years ago at 130#, losing to Lashaway, 1-0, in the final. Last year he finished 3<sup>rd</sup> in his district and got what looked like a bad draw, but then beat Triplett and upset Lipp to make the semi-finals whence a narrow 5-4 loss to Morrison eventually dropped him to 4<sup>th</sup>. He specializes in tight, low-scoring bouts where his defensive skills become paramount. This year he has had some injury problems, missing some time. He did not place at the Ironman, losing to Lerer and Weinkam, but won at the GMVWA and was perfect at the Ohio Duals, wrestling up a weight class and defeating Lovell and Eric Cubberly. He is a stubborn wrestler who doesn't give in and is just plain difficult to beat.

McLemore has an interesting decision to make. At 135# he would be away from Cubberly at States (they exit the same district), but probably with Andrews and/or Morrison. I believe he can beat both of them so he'd meet Cubberly on Saturday night

as a slight underdog. At 140# he and Kyle could well be in the same half of the draw, but it's a toss-up as to which one would win.

For a variety of reasons many of the wrestlers I thought might challenge Kyle at Goshen at 140# are not competing there--Brownlee and Nichols, for example, moved to Division I. I think Wells is next best after finishing 5<sup>th</sup> at Medina, pinning Triplett and Dotson in the process. State qualifier Bret Horne certified at this class, but has not competed in some time. If healthy he would be a significant addition to this district. Neff might be fourth best after winning at Western Brown and taking a 4<sup>th</sup> at the GMVWA. Grisham, Hammor (Roger Bacon), and Neill are capable back-ups for this top foursome.

It will be a ferocious competition at Watkins, featuring four returning state qualifiers and some exciting new talent. It may well be that the best wrestler is one who has not yet qualified for Columbus. Collett has had some excellent weekends this year, but also at least one mediocre one. He was first at the WIT, pinning Teter and was 3<sup>rd</sup> at the Top Gun ahead of Triplett, Yackey and Windom (who he pinned), and losing to Bodnar, 9-8. However, at Medina he failed to place and lost to Triplett and Windom. Myers, a two-time state qualifier, was 5<sup>th</sup> two years ago at 103#, but drew Kriwinsky early last year and failed to place. He won the OVAC at this weight and in the past two years has never lost a district bout (8-0). That record will be tested this year. And let's not forget about Fisher. He roared through the 135# district last year snaring the championship with his closest bout a 9-2 decision. He pinned Tanzillo and Triplett in the last two rounds to punctuate his domination. He opened with two falls at Columbus before losing successive bouts (18-3, 12-3, and 8-2), the last to Kyle. He's been great this year again. He gets on a roll and, maybe, he's a finalist.

There may be some big surprises at Ontario this year, too. However, Cavello won't be one of them. A district 3<sup>rd</sup> last year, he went 1-2 in Columbus after drawing eventual champ Bowers in the first round. He was a solid 3<sup>rd</sup> at Medina losing only to Lance Palmer, and the only wrestler to go six minutes with him. The surprise package here might be Dukeshire who has been devastating in recent weeks. He won at Clyde – beating Aona – and starred at the SBC, including a fall over Aona. Watch for him. If Putnam moves up to this class he'll be a major factor, but otherwise state qualifier Aona is probably third best. Other possibilities are Hoffman, Zofkie, Dennis, Giachetti, and Burger. That's a long list, but this is a deep district at this weight class (and many others).

I don't see either the same quantity or quality at Firestone. Teter, Paul, and Brown were also state qualifiers last year, but went 1-6 at the state meet. Teter is probably best after beating Paul 18-7 to win the Dies. He was 2<sup>nd</sup> at Wadsworth and the WIT (to Collett) and is an experienced competitor. Brown, tall and lanky, likes low scoring bouts where his leg wrestling pays off. He was 6<sup>th</sup> at Mayfield and perfect at the Ohio Duals where he was able to turn Aona several times on top. England might find this field to his liking, while Windom, Fetrow, and Finlaw (Ashtabula Edgewood) are possibilities.

**145#**

**PROJECTED CHAMPION: ANDY LAMANCUSA (WEST BRANCH)**

Top Contenders

2	Friery (Padua)	14	Christman (Indian Lakes)
3	Michaels (Clyde)	15	Bordner (Wapakoneta)
4	Schuller (St Clarsville)	16	Coleman (Benjamin Logan)
5	Tank (Oak Harbor)	17	Komaromy (Dover)
6	Lovell (Columbus DeSales)	18	Mann (Orange)
7	E. Cubberly (Eastwood)	19	Teague (Cambridge)
8	Erdman (University School)	20	Steele (Chillicothe)
9	Harris (Kenmore)	21	Whitten (Tipp City)
10	Dukes (Ravenna)	22	Buras (Benedictine)
11	Mannier (Graham)	23	Hartsock (Bryan)
12	Clark (Louisville)	24	Cook (New Lexington)
13	Lorenz (New Philadelphia)	25	Moore (Geneva)

This is easily the best weight class at the state tournament, with an abundance of high-grade talent. As I mentioned in the last essay, I fully expected some of this group to head for 140#, but it did not happen, leaving eight excellent contenders for a finalist showcase. Interestingly they all come from three districts with the Goshen District looking to be cannon fodder at this class. While there is an embarrassment of riches in the field, the corollary is that choosing a winner will be a complex and difficult task.

It's absolutely crazy at Ontario. Look at this district field. Defending state champion Shane Friery will move up three weight classes after spending part of the year at 140#. He wrestled a wonderful State Tournament last year, the only bout in doubt being the quarter-final struggle with Christensen. This year he was 4<sup>th</sup> at the Ironman, but won at Avon Lake, Brecksville, and the CIT. I have Michaels with over 150 career wins and yet, maddeningly, he has never placed at the state level. A superior performer, it has just never worked out for this two-time qualifier. This is his last chance and he has battled injuries this year, but he won big at Clyde and the SBC Duals so he is ready for that final push. Both Tank and Eric Cubberly are exceptional sophomores. They met last year in the district finals with Cubberly winning 7-2 and only he placed at States. This year Tank won at Oak Harbor and was a solid 2<sup>nd</sup> at Medina, losing to state champion Nemeck in the finals. He has mixed into all that winning a couple of strange losses that will have to be eliminated at this fierce district. Cubberly was 2<sup>nd</sup> at Brecksville and 1<sup>st</sup> at Western Brown. A concern here is Cubberly going to his back and being pinned by Kyle and Dukes. I worry about the district pairing since Tank and Michaels are at the same sectional. Also here is Bordner, a state alternate last year, who may not quite have the firepower of this top quartet. He could qualify out of any other district, but he may need to pull an upset to do it here. Hartsock and Swartz are other possibilities.

Lamancusa is capable of defeating anyone here. I thought he might be at 140#, but he has remained at this crowded field. He ended the year with a 40-1 record, losing only in the state semi-finals to the marvelous Sponseller, 9-6, easily, Sponseller's toughest bout in the tournament process. Other than that, Lamancusa won handily. This year he is again undefeated to this point, winning the Dies on a technical fall and defeating Thatcher to win at Riverside. He, however, has not wrestled the same difficult schedule as some of the other top boys. The sophomore Dukes is up three weight classes after being a state qualifier at 130# last year. He was 7<sup>th</sup> at Brecksville, but won the Top Gun in a flourish, pinning his last two opponents. State qualifier Clark was 4<sup>th</sup> at Wadsworth, but did not place at North Canton. Instead look for Erdman, who had a great early season start (semi-finalist at the Ironman), and state qualifier Harris to move ahead at this district. Mann, a state alternate, and Buras are also possibilities here, along with Moore. I particularly like the powerful Harris at this class.

There are two very good competitors at Watkins. Schuller was the district champ at this class last year and then wrestled an excellent tournament, finishing 3<sup>rd</sup> behind seniors Quallich and Pelton. Normally, that would make you the favorite the next year, but not at this weight class. He missed the early part of the year, but won at St. Clairsville (on a TF over Komaromy), and defeated Nicola, 3-2, to win the OVAC. I have him at 26-1 right now. The junior Lovell is also excellent. A great junior high wrestler he is starting to cash in on the expectations many had for him. A state qualifier last year, he has been even better in 2006. He was 3<sup>rd</sup> at DeSales (behind Straughn), and 3<sup>rd</sup> at Brecksville (losing a close bout to Friery). He has missed the last few weeks. They should dominate this district. Lorenz is probably third best with Komaromy, Teague, and Lentz (Sheridan) next in line here.

The Goshen District qualifiers are likely to get some tough draws in Columbus. The young Mannier is really improving. He was 3<sup>rd</sup> at the GMVWA, losing only to the Kentucky state champ and battled Nemeć to a 12-7 score at their dual. He also beat Croasmun, Shroyer, and Teague at the Ohio Duals. The latter up a weight class. After him I believe Christman is next best after finishing as the state alternate last year at 140#. After this twosome, Coleman, Steele, and Whitten might have the best chances here.

**152#**

**PROJECTED CHAMPION: COLT SPONSELLER (WEST HOLMES)**

*Top Contenders*

2	Rohler (Akron St. Vincent)	14	Foor (Miami Trace)
3	Kusar (Revere)	15	Cheatham (Walsh Jesuit)
4	Witt (Oak Harbor)	16	Croasmun (Columbus DeSales)
5	Terry (New Albany)	17	Gilson (Napoleon)
6	Schwartz (Clyde)	18	Wright (Indian Lakes)
7	Van Fossen (New Philadelphia)	19	Mills (University School)
8	Hupp (Bellevue)	20	Brackett (Bellbrook)
9	Brooks (Harrison Central)	21	Hamad (Perkins)
10	Shroyer (Eastwood)	22	Haddox (Canal Fulton NW)
11	Luster (Graham)	23	Egan (New Richmond)
12	Tharp (Fairfield Union)	24	Eggleston (Minerva)
13	Archer (Padua)	25	Whitely (Benedictine)

There are two titanic match-ups that will draw incredible attention at the Value City Arena. One is the Falk-Lipp confrontation in Division III and the other, probably even more anticipated, is at this weight class. It brings together two of the most talented grapplers in Ohio in what should be an epic struggle.

Rohler, already signed by Penn State, is probably the second best 152-pounder in the country--or so say the national experts. Yet, he has never won a state title as unlikely as that seems. Two years ago he wrestled a strange final round bout against Ryan Morgan, losing 5-3, and giving up two critical points on penalties. It looked like the pressure had, maybe, gotten to him. Then last year, after beating Rella twice and Erwin once, he rolled to an early lead against unheralded Lance Esch. Again, he seemed to lose focus, get unsteady, and allow Esch to rally for a 9-8 win. It was the most unbelievable bout in the tournament. This year he was out late for football and probably was under-prepared for the Ironman. He lost in the finals to Eric Medina, who was a step quicker on his feet and rolled to three first period takedowns. At the Beast Rohler injured his knee and has not returned to action. I am assured that he will wrestle shortly. Superb in the top position he needs two good legs to work his arsenal of takedowns.

I thought Colt Sponseller might go at 145#, but I think he relishes the prospect of matching up with Rohler. He dominated on his way to the 140# title last year, crushing everyone, but Lamancusa, who kept it reasonably close. This year it's been more of the same – effortless win after effortless win. I'm not sure that's good given that at least with Rohler he'll need six minutes of all out effort. Only a junior, he is one of the best athletes in the state and should be prime recruiting material next year. His only loss the last two years is to Nemeck when he was a sophomore. He has won at Medina, the WIT, and the Top Gun, with only Weisenstein going the distance.

I think Sponseller will win, though this choice will undoubtedly motivate Rohler. There are three critical factors. It's been more than a month now and Rohler must still have issues with that knee that "no more than two weeks out" now rings as very optimistic. Second, I think Sponseller is better on his feet--a half-step quicker and a great finisher. Third, I wonder about Rohler's reaction in these big bouts. He's wrestled a lot of them in life, but twice now he has struggled at a crucial moment in the state tournament process. This tendency could be exacerbated if his knee is not 100%.

Last year as a freshman the extremely strong Kusar qualified for Columbus at 145# and went 1-2 at that level. A junior high state champion, he'll win some state titles, but not this year at this weight. Still he has high placement potential. He was 3<sup>rd</sup> at Solon, losing to Rohler, 16-5, and 2<sup>nd</sup> at Brecksville, losing to Pycraft. He won at the Dies against a good field. Cheatham has just returned at this class, finishing 4<sup>th</sup> at Mayfield and beating Schwartz and Croasmun at the Ohio Duals. The freshman Mills is someone to really watch. He has been gaining confidence every week. He was the runner-up at the Top Gun and won four bouts at Brecksville after losing 3-1 to Haxton in the first round. Haddox was 2<sup>nd</sup> at the Dies, while Eggleston is also a contender. However, one wrestler to watch closely may be Whitely. He has district experience and was a solid 5<sup>th</sup> at the CIT.

Sponseller has some solid companions at Watkins. Terry was 4<sup>th</sup> two years ago, but failed to place at a tough weight class last year. Now in Division II he faces a lot of difficult competition. If New Albany were still in Division III he'd likely be the favorite at 152#. At any rate he is still top-ranked in the Columbus area, winning at the Midwest Classic, over the rugged Holztrager, and at Upper Arlington, while failing to place at Medina. Van Fossen was 2<sup>nd</sup> at Medina, pinning four consecutive opponents, including Terry in the first round. He took Sponseller down in the finals, but lost by a fall shortly thereafter. He was 3<sup>rd</sup> at the WIT--also losing to Sponseller. State qualifier Brooks was 8<sup>th</sup> last year. He was 2<sup>nd</sup> this year at the OVAC and should be an important factor here. Tharp is one of those tantalizing wrestlers who seem right on the edge of stardom. He missed the early part of this year, but dominated at Sheridan. Croasmun won the CIT and DeSales and was 2<sup>nd</sup> at Mayfield and, perhaps, deserves a higher rating. However, he mixes those good results with others like Brecksville where he was 1-2 and lost to Whitely. I wonder if he has had some nagging injuries. A key factor here will be state qualifier Bowman. I've ranked him at 160# where he certified. He'll be a factor at either class. My dark horse candidates here are Crippen (Maysville), who was one bout from qualification last year, and Robinson (New Lexington), 2<sup>nd</sup> at Western Brown and district 6<sup>th</sup> last year.

It is a very weak Goshen District at this weight class. I think Foor or Luster might be best, but it's difficult to be sure. Foor was 5<sup>th</sup> at Western Brown, but failed to place at GMVWA where Luster nailed down a 5<sup>th</sup>. Brackett won at Bellbrook and Edgewood and was 2<sup>nd</sup> at Xenia, and has placement potential here. Factor in Egan, Wright, and Mugavero (Urbana) and it's clear that there are no dominating folks here. Watch out for

Wright. He has wrestled mainly at 160#, but certified here where he could be a district finalist.

It's another horrendously crowded field at Ontario, with half dozen or more reasonable candidates for state placement, if they can just escape this district. I have ten solid names here, including six at just one sectional (Oak Harbor). In the interest of brevity and the fact that it's 3:00 A.M., let's just very briefly review the candidates. The junior Schwartz was a state alternate last year and won at Clyde, while finishing 3<sup>rd</sup> at Southview. The sophomore Witt was the district champ at 140# last year, and went 1-2 at the meet. This year he won at Oak Harbor, placed at Medina, and was 1<sup>st</sup> at Perrysburg. Shroyer was 7<sup>th</sup> at 130# last year, certified at 140#, but will apparently wrestle at 152#. A tough, cagy opponent, he won at Western Brown, but failed to place at the Top Gun. State qualifier Archer seemed ready to certify at 140#, when Friery moved up, but will compete here. He was 4<sup>th</sup> at the CIT. Hupp is very good, finishing 3<sup>rd</sup> at Avon Lake, 1<sup>st</sup> at Bellevue, and 7<sup>th</sup> at Brecksville. Gilson was 2<sup>nd</sup> at Perrysburg, losing 2-1. State qualifier Hamad has been in a wrestling slump that he needs to work his way out of. Finally, Platzke (Rossford), Williams (Tiffin Columbian), and Hirschy (Van Wert) are all potential upset-makers. I think Schwartz, Witt, and Hupp have solid chances for qualification with Shroyer or Archer having the next highest probability.

### 160#

#### **PROJECTED CHAMPION: DAVID RELLA (WALSH JESUIT)**

##### Top Contenders

2	Baker (Bellevue)	14	Gorman (Marlington)
3	Bowman (Big Walnut)	15	Sherman (Urbana)
4	Ray (Hamilton Ross)	16	McCune (Oak Harbor)
5	McMullen (Akron St. Vincent)	17	Dickerhoof (Canton South)
6	Henry (Claymont)	18	Philpot (McNicholas)
7	Rhoads (Hillsboro)	19	Apperson (Morgan)
8	Thornton (Williard)	20	Love (Tipp City)
9	Galloway (Perkins)	21	Braham (Ravenna Southeast)
10	Martin (Little Miami)	23	Hammer (Hebron Lakewood)
11	Thurn (Clyde)	23	Quallich (Medina Buckeye)
12	Dunn (Beaver Local)	24	McCurdy (Fairfield Union)
13	Meiser (New Philadelphia)	25	Shipp (Wapakoneta)

Tosca is an opera of enormous emotion and passion that stirs the blood like few others. Almost always sung by a fiery Italian soprano, I am reminded of a famous incident at LaScala. At the end of Act II in a flurry of emotion Tosca kills the evil Duke Scarpia and sings wildly over him as he lays dying. This soprano was so overcome by passion that in the middle of the aria she raced up, quite spontaneously, and unexpectedly kicked the baritone in the ribs much to the amazement of everyone. That is the kind of emotion (but no kicking) that we see from Dave Rella. He wrestles with an energy and a passion

that is not often seen. One of the two best 160's in the country, he has traded victories with the other, Mark Lewnes, of Maryland, this year with both boys scoring precisely 13 points in their three bouts. In Ohio there is no one here to challenge him as he strives for a second state crown. He is just so good and so strong that he becomes an irresistible force. He'll be remembered as one of the great Walsh wrestlers, keeping company with the Hesketts, Mollicas, Knapps, and the like.

Rella will, of course, be the dominant figure at the relatively thin weight class at Firestone. District champ Nick McMullen has journeyed up from 145# and should be away from Rella at both the district and state meet. McMullen, rather short for 160#, started the year at 171# where he was 2<sup>nd</sup> at Solon then moved to 160# finishing 4<sup>th</sup> at Brecksville and 1<sup>st</sup> at the CIT over Gaier. A tough, feisty wrestler, he could place at Columbus. The rest of the field is pretty much in disarray. Gorman and Dickerhoof were the finalists at North Canton, while Braham, Jastal (Crestwood) and Garris (Aurora) might be involved as well.

There are several wrestlers at Ontario with state placement potential. I like Baker the best--while winning at Avon Lake and Bellevue and finishing 5<sup>th</sup> at Brecksville, losing to Bradberry and McMullen, 3-2. He beat Thurn handily at Clyde to cement this top district ranking. Thornton is a steady performer for Willard and was a state alternate last year. Then it's Galloway and Thurn, or is Thurn and Galloway behind this top duo with McCune a wild card. He won at Oak Harbor and was 5<sup>th</sup> at Medina. That leaves Quallich and Shipp or, maybe, Kervin (Eastwood) as possibilities.

Two wrestlers stand out at Watkins. Bowman and Henry met in the district consolations with Henry winning 9-4. Both went 1-2 at the state meet. They were 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> at the Top Gun, but did not meet with Bowman ahead this time. Henry was 3<sup>rd</sup> at Medina and 2<sup>nd</sup> at Barnesville coming close, but not winning, any of these titles. Bowman, on the other hand, won at Groveport and is top-rated in the Columbus area. Dunn has wrestled at both 160# and 171#, but certified here. He'll be a factor along with Meiser and Apperson. Hammer, what a great name for a wrestler, is second best in Columbus and should score well at this district. He was 1<sup>st</sup> at Olentangy. McCurdy is also a threat at this class, while Donley (Harrison Central) placed 4<sup>th</sup> at the OVAC and 2<sup>nd</sup> at Graham.

There are three returning state qualifiers at Goshen. Ray was 6<sup>th</sup> last year at 145# in Columbus and won handily at Franklin and Edgewood. Rhoads has been all over the map. He won at Bellbrook, 4<sup>th</sup> at the SWOCA, 6<sup>th</sup> at Western Brown and 7<sup>th</sup> at GMVWA. A state qualifier last year he is dangerous. Martin is also back after qualifying for Columbus last year and getting Josh Rohler in the first round as his prize. Henry only beat him 2-0 in consolations. My guess is that Sherman, down a weight class, has the best chance of claiming that fourth berth. He missed qualification last year by one win. I think Love, Morelli (Eaton), or Wilson (Milton Union) have possibilities as qualifiers, but state alternate Philpot has the inside track should Sherman, or one of the others fall short.

**#171**

**PROJECTED CHAMPION: JEREMY FOSTER (EASTWOOD)**

Top Contenders

2	Magrum (Oak Harbor)	14	Stoll (Edison)
3	Thompson (Graham)	15	Bailey (Clear Fork)
4	Neptune (John Glenn)	16	Wetherell (Cambridge)
5	Van Buskirk (Benjamin Logan)	17	Meany (Chagrin Falls)
6	Tripp (CVCA)	18	Abbuhl (Claymont)
7	Poyser (Louisville)	19	Frees (Bryan)
8	Kuechler (Columbus DeSales)	20	Hughes (New Philadelphia)
9	Kanta (Hamilton Ross)	21	Griffin (Canal Fulton NW)
10	Cologie (Buckeye Local)	22	Conley (Miami Trace)
11	Dencer (Clyde)	23	Hamilton (Franklin)
12	Hill (Tallmadge)	24	Webster (Van Wert)
13	Schick (Alter)	25	Lewis (Whitenall)

With Rella so dominant at 160# we have a particularly robust group of contenders at this weight class, several of whom seems to find it a more congenial locale than the one directly below. Not only will there be a lot of talent in the bracket sheet, but it will be well distributed with each district having some potential contenders.

I'm coming to the conclusion that the champion will emerge from the Ontario District and will be one of two sophomores--Jeremy Foster or Cody Magrum. Foster has been sensational recently. He won the Top Gun defeating Popham in the semi-finals and pinning Kilgore in the finals. He also won over a strong field at Western Brown. Foster started the year at 160#, but moved up just before Christmas. At Brecksville he lost to Weiner in the semis and LaFollette in the consolations and finished 5<sup>th</sup>. He may not have lost since then and beat Thompson, 12-6, at the Ohio Duals. He was the district champ last year at 152# and gave Rella his only battle at States before succumbing 15-9 and then lost 5-4 to Rohler in the consolation final. Magrum is also a prodigy. A district runner-up last year at 160# he finished 7<sup>th</sup> at states. He was a semi-finalist at the Ironman (losing to Roddy) and ended up 4<sup>th</sup>. He missed Medina, but won at Oak Harbor and Perrysburg.

Their district is not nearly as crowded as most other weight classes. Dencer is a solid performer, while Stoll, Bailey, and Frees have state ability. My guess is that there will be at least one surprise qualifier out of Ontario.

Thompson and Van Buskirk will renew their rivalry at Goshen. So far Thompson holds the advantage, winning their individual match each time. Last year he won the district final 4-2 and ended up 4<sup>th</sup> at the state meet after finishing 6<sup>th</sup> the year before. He was 8<sup>th</sup> at the Ironman and 4<sup>th</sup> at the Beast before winning the GMVWA, 8-2, over Andy Olsen. I don't think he's been as sharp this, his junior year, but he has experience and knows how to win. Van Buskirk ended up 6<sup>th</sup> last year and is a dangerous foe. He won

at North Union on a fall over Buena and has dominated all but Thompson in his area. He won, for example, at Franklin, pinning Dencer in the finals. Right behind this top duo is state alternate Kanta. At 189# early in the year he won at Xenia and since moved down to 171#, leaving his options open. There is a drop-off after this trio with Hamilton, Conley, and Schick next best. I rate Schick marginally the best of this trio.

I think Neptune is a dark horse candidate to be a state finalist this year. You don't hear much about him because of location and schedule, but he is very good. He was 7<sup>th</sup> last year losing 3-2 to Thompson in one of the consolation rounds. I have him undefeated this year with wins at Barnesville, St. Clairsville and the Chertow Classic. He's a big-time pinner and a major threat. Kuechler was a state qualifier at 160# last year going 1-2. This year he has had some ups and downs, finishing 8<sup>th</sup> at Brecksville, but a sharp 3<sup>rd</sup> at the CIT (losing only to Cameron), and then 2<sup>nd</sup> at Mayfield (to Cameron, again). He is placement material. Cologie was majored by Kuechler at this district last year, but managed to qualify. This year he has a big win at the OVAC. It was a signature performance. He may be on a hot streak now. Wetherell, 3<sup>rd</sup> at the OVAC, is also good, with Abbuhl and Hughes waiting in the wings. Lewis might be another contender from the Columbus area.

I'm not seeing a lot at Firestone. Tripp was 4<sup>th</sup> last year in Division III, but has struggled to reach this weight class. He was 4<sup>th</sup> at the very difficult weight class at the Top Gun, losing to Kilgore (by four) and Popham (by one). He beat Poyser, 1-0. He could be the surprise package at Columbus. State qualifier Hill also returns and should qualify once more this year. I like Poyser, who was 1<sup>st</sup> at North Canton, 3<sup>rd</sup> at Wadsworth, and 5<sup>th</sup> at the Top Gun. His steady performances should get him to Columbus. I think Meany has the best shot at the fourth berth with Griffin, Scott (Benedictine), and Rogers.

**189#**

**PROJECTED CHAMPION: JOHN WEAKLEY (CVCA)**

*Top Contenders*

2	Srock (Akron St. Vincent)	14	Herres (Bellbrook)
3	Schindel (Hoban)	15	Scherf (Oak Harbor)
4	Blakely (Benjamin Logan)	16	Smith (Graham)
5	Knapp (Morgan)	17	Twarek (Aurora)
6	McGrain (Olmsted Falls)	18	Reichard (New Albany)
7	Reeder (Beaver Local)	19	Fenner (Miami Trace)
8	Scurlock (Cambridge)	20	Bizorik (Bellevue)
9	Fisher (Perkins)	21	Houska (Medina Highland)
10	Knopick (Ravenna Southeast)	22	Sams (Franklin)
11	Kline (Van Wert)	23	Minshall (Jonathan More)
12	Andrews (Clyde)	24	Hersman (Perry)
13	Kampfer (Carollton)	25	Akam (West Holmes)

At the end of our telecasting season I consolidate the enormous amount of information I gather each year and take it up to the attic where it stays until November. Just before I make that trip up the rickety ladder I take a couple of hours to imagine what the next year might be like. At that time I believed that this weight class might turn out to be quite weak. There were six returning 171's, but it looked like they might all remain at the weight class (five did) and there were six returning 189's and I thought several might go up (two did and one is not competing). What changed that view was the movement of CVCA (and John Weakley) to Division II and the transfer of Jamie Srock to Akron St. Vincent. As it turns out, they head the list at this class.

Weakley, up from 160#, has been positively amazing. He beat the #3 ranked wrestler in the nation on a major decision to win the Ironman and won the Top Gun and Solon as well. His only loss was in the Medina finals where he fell in overtime to Honeycutt, 10-8. He is devastating on his feet with superb speed and strength, and has beaten both Srock and Schindel. The only issue has been a certain hyperventilation in the few close bouts that he has had. The loss to Honeycutt came after he built a small early lead, but was unable to shake Honeycutt. Constant pressure seemed to generate mistakes not usually made, and eventually defeat. They tell me it's not conditioning, but it needs to be addressed. In any case this well-built junior, who reminds many of Kevin Randleman, will be highly recruited next year.

The mammoth Srock was a district 4<sup>th</sup> place finisher last year as a sophomore at this weight class in Division I. However, two sparkling wins made him a semi-finalist before bowing to Hettlinger and finishing 5<sup>th</sup>. This year he was runner-up to Weakley at Solon, 3<sup>rd</sup> at the Beast, defeating Honeycutt, and 7<sup>th</sup> at the Ironman. His best performance however was at Brecksville where he dominated with no bouts going the full six

minutes. He also won the Top Gun, defeating the difficult Schoen for the title. Bigger than Weakley, he is not as quick and is matched in strength – thus I see Weakley repeating his first week win in Columbus.

Firestone is a tremendous district. Weakley and Srock will compete with both state placer Schindel and state qualifier Knopick--and there are several other potential qualifiers as well. Schindel was 5<sup>th</sup> at this class last year losing a 10-9 heartbreaker to eventual finalist Tommy LaRosa in the quarterfinals. Weakley defeated him at the Ironman semi-finals – again being a step quicker. Schindel won the Dies, taking Knopick 9-7 in the final round. Other possibilities are Twarek, Hershberger (Marlington) and, maybe, Riverside champion Hersman.

I don't see anybody at Ontario being able to challenge the top three at Firestone. The two best are McGrain and Fisher, and a bout between them would be rated a toss-up. McGrain was 4<sup>th</sup> at Medina, losing to Weakley 17-8. He was a Dies semi-finalist, but was pinned by Schindel and later injured. Fisher, only a sophomore, beat lammarino at North Canton and lost by a point to Dattilo – two good Division I wrestlers. He was 2<sup>nd</sup> to Blakely at Tiffin, losing 3-1. Right behind these two is a trio of Kline, Scherf, and Andrews. Kline had two district wins last year and was 5<sup>th</sup> at the GMVWA, losing to Dattilo and Kirian. He won at Oak Harbor over an excellent group of 189's. A freshman to watch is Tyler Houska who has placed at the Dies (4<sup>th</sup>) and just missed placement at Medina. He is a nephew of one of Ohio's greatest wrestlers – the unsung NCAA Division I champ Harry Houska. Bizorik, Saffle (Elida), and Stickel (Eastwood) are other possibilities. Not competing this year is Galen Kline from Wapakoneta, a district runner-up who was injured in the first round at Columbus. He would have been a major factor.

It will be a very competitive weight class that fans will see at Watkins. There are two returning state qualifiers, but I think the junior Mitch Knapp might be the best 189-pounder here. A state alternate at 171# last year (Neptune knocked him out), he beat Scurlock at Barnesville and won at Union Local. Scurlock, one of the returning state qualifiers, is very good. He beat Caponi as a state quarter finalist before bowing out, and has continued that upward trend this year. He was 2<sup>nd</sup> at Barnesville, but was a champion at Groveport and Sheridan, and was 2<sup>nd</sup> at Brecksville to Srock. Reeder, also a returning qualifier, was 4<sup>th</sup> at Southview, but won the giant OVAC championship handing Scurlock a 7-5 loss. Below this trio are two other threesomes. The first are three 189's from the Columbus area, Minshall, Reichard, and Brankamp (DeSales). The first two were Division III wrestlers last year whose schools moved up a classification. The second trio is from the western part of this district and consists of Kampfer, Akam, and Weininger. I hadn't seen Kampfer this year until he brought home a 3<sup>rd</sup> place finish at the Top Gun, losing only to Weakley and defeating Akam. Weininger won at Dover, but failed to place at North Canton. He's a long shot here.

With Kanta apparently at 171# Blakely stands alone at Goshen. He reeled in a district 3<sup>rd</sup> last year and then was 6<sup>th</sup> at Columbus. He beat Fisher to win at Tiffin and has won several other smaller tournaments. He and Van Buskirk are an excellent twosome at Benjamin Logan. Herres has been solid at this weight class, while Smith keeps

improving for Graham. Miami Trace seems to have a good wrestler at every weight class and Fenner is no exception. Sams and Ford are somewhat dimmer possibilities.

## 215#

### **PROJECTED CHAMPION: RYAN NACHTRAB (EASTWOOD)**

#### Top Contenders

2	Meyer (Columbus DeSales)	14	Swinderman (New Philadelphia)
3	Walker (Alliance)	15	Tymoszczuk (Lake Catholic)
4	Schwartz (Clyde)	16	Caponi (Akron St. Vincent)
5	Weber/Griffin (Canal Fulton NW)	17	McCluggage (West Holmes)
6	Rodriguez (Willard)	18	Nicholson (Louisville)
7	Snyder (Hillsboro)	19	Moore (West Muskingum)
8	Winters (Gallia)	20	Pummill (Valley View)
9	Clum (Galion)	21	Maloney (Oak Harbor)
10	Truster (Talawanda)	22	Luchsinger (Watterson)
11	Pinzone (Padua)	23	Oddo (CVCA)
12	Moore (Miami Trace)	24	Hess (Urbana)
13	Maxworthy (Buckeye)	25	Harder (Perkins)

In his best selling book Blink Malcolm Gladwell brings into play cutting-edge neuroscience to maximize decision-making. A key variable is the art of thin-slicing--filtering the very few factors that matter from an overwhelming number of variables. The overall thesis is that decisions made very quickly can be every bit as good or, maybe, even better than those made cautiously or deliberately. We see that in wrestling. You look at two boys for three seconds as they wait to wrestle and you “know” which one will win. The brain may look at posture, facial expression, size of hands, whatever, and comes to a rapid conclusion. It happens many times because our unconscious “thin slices.”

Here’s hoping it works at 215#. This is a weight class that looks somewhat different than I initially anticipated. Howland High School was moved to Division I taking state runner-up Kyle Gantz out of the picture. Joe Tymoszczuk suffered a serious knee injury, making his appearance at tourney time problematical. Scott Weber may end up at 275# because of a logjam at 215# with Aaron Griffin, and Galen Miller, as I mentioned, is not wrestling this year. Add in Marco Caponi, who I expected to see at 189#, Patrick Truster and Cory Swinderman, whose schools moved down to Division II and it’s like a major casting change at a Broadway play.

One thing that hasn’t changed is my top choice Ryan Nachtrab. A great freestyler, he was 7<sup>th</sup> last year as a junior, drawing into eventual champ Marshall in the quarter-finals and later dropping one of those 30 second tie-breaking bouts this year. He was 4<sup>th</sup> at the Beast behind Cody Gardner and 1<sup>st</sup> at Brecksville in what was a very impressive performance. Then just yesterday he was 3<sup>rd</sup> at the Top Gun, losing to Powell, but

pinning Walker and Nicholson. It is not inconceivable (although unlikely) that his finals bout could also decide the team title in which case give Eastwood the edge.

The Firestone District is very crowded. The big question mark is Tymoszczuk. Last year he was 38-0 going into the district semi-final against eventual state (and national) champ Mike Pucillo. Behind on points he injured his knee late in the 3<sup>rd</sup> period and was forced to default. He hobbled his way to a win in the consolation semi-finals, but could not compete at Columbus. Then a serious football injury put this, his senior season, in doubt and he has not yet competed. It would be a stretch to believe that he could return and perform almost immediately at a 100% level. Walker was a state semi-finalist last year at this weight class before losing to Marshall and finishing 5<sup>th</sup>. He has been equally good this year before the 4<sup>th</sup> place finish at the Top Gun. His overtime semi-final loss to McCluggage was a total surprise. Weber won at Medina at 215# and at Northwest at 275#, and may be at either weight class. He went 1-2 at Columbus last year at 215# and beat both Iammarino and Maxworthy at Medina. However, it may be former state qualifier Aaron Griffin at 215# and he, too, is very good. Either one would have solid qualification chances. State qualifier Caponi is really a 189-pounder, but competes here as Srock wrestles at 189#. A tall, slender lad he can be out-horsepowered by some of the strongest boys, but wins a lot of bouts with good mat presence and solid takedowns. He was 2<sup>nd</sup> at Solon, 4<sup>th</sup> at the Ironman and CIT, and 8<sup>th</sup> at the Beast. That rigorous schedule makes him a battle-hardened warrior who could go far at the state level. Nicholson, Oddo, and, maybe, McCarty (Marlington) are other possibilities here. Of this group I think the first named may be slightly better despite an overtime loss to Oddo recently.

The Ontario District is again loaded. Nachtrab, of course, leads the way. Then comes real confusion. Schwartz is very good, winning at Clyde and Southview and holding his own at the SBC Duals. He was the state alternate last year at 189#. Clum started the year like a world-beater crushing everyone. He won at Ashland, was 2<sup>nd</sup> to Jabbie at Tiffin, and won again at the Gorman. However, recently the scores have been closer and finally now a loss to Rodriguez in the dual meet. He was 6<sup>th</sup> at this district last year, losing to Schwartz, 3-2. Rodriguez is a puzzle. At 215# he has done very well, but he has been equally good at heavy weight. I think this win over Clum may be the reason he stays at 215#. He'll be tough to beat at that weight, and the margin for error is greater--not many "squish" pins. Also in play from the northwest are Maloney and Harder, both of whom have battled this top crew all year. That's six boys, but it missed the two stars coming from the Northeast District's Highland Sectional. Pinzone is a returning state qualifier who went 1-2 at the Schott. He's had a busy year winning at Avon Lake, finishing 6<sup>th</sup> at Brecksville and 3<sup>rd</sup> at the CIT. Also arriving from the east is Maxworthy, 2<sup>nd</sup> to Weber at Medina and winner at Edison and Buckeye. Some very good people are going to be left home.

Kyle Meyer stands out at Watkins. A state qualifier last year, he is even better this year. He won at DeSales and Mayfield, was a close 2<sup>nd</sup> at the CIT to Jameson, and was 3<sup>rd</sup> at the Brecksville to Jameson and the Ironman. He has definite finalist potential. I know little of McCluggage and, perhaps, the Top Gun was an anomaly. At any rate, he ended

up 15-16 last year although he did win two district bouts. He was 3<sup>rd</sup> at the WIT (losing to Swinderman) and won one bout at Medina. Suddenly at the Top Gun he finishes 2<sup>nd</sup> at that loaded field beating Walker in the process. I need another great tourney to be convinced. Swinderman has put together a solid campaign, winning at the WIT and winning four times at Medina. Luchsinger and Moore are back with district experience, while Sollick (Beaver Local) placed at the OVAC. Maybe, a Britnell (Cambridge), Franklin (Big Walnut) or Newell (River View) will get hot district weekend.

There is also a logjam at 215# at the Goshen District. It is one of those districts where transitivity (i.e. if A beat B and B beat C then A should beat C) does not hold. A central figure is Oney Snyder, the former junior high state champion, who has wrestled many of the contenders here. He has lost some bouts, but all of them are close. Only a sophomore, he has lots of upside. He was 3<sup>rd</sup> at the SWOCA (losing to Jameson by one) and 4<sup>th</sup> at the GMVWA, was 2<sup>nd</sup> at Bellbrook (to Pummill), and 3<sup>rd</sup> at Western Brown (where he lost to Nachtrab 3-2), and beat Moore. Moore, a state qualifier last year, won the GMVWA and is a consistent performer. There are two wild cards here. First, is state qualifier Winters, who wrestles for Gallia from whence comes little news. He was 3<sup>rd</sup> at this district last year, pinning Moore in the consolation final. Very aggressive, he can score points by the bushel load, but has given up some too. The other unknown is Truster, a state qualifier in Division I last year. He has won at least two tournaments this season and should qualify. Three other candidates are at about the same level. Pummill, who won over Snyder at Bellbrook, Hess, a recent winner at West Liberty Salem and one win from Columbus last year, and Spence (Benjamin Logan).

**Hvy.**

**PROJECTED CHAMPION: MATT GUHN (CLYDE)**

Top Contenders

2	Bowersock (Beaver Local)	15	Ickes (Fairfield Union)
3	Sharp (West Branch)	16	Diagosta (East Liverpool)
4	Hiles (Columbus DeSales)	17	Kerns (Urbana)
5	Van Voorhis (Elida)	18	Fraley (Lexington)
6	Sizemore (Franklin)	19	Horvath (Geneva)
7	Brown (Defiance)	20	Taylor (Indian Lakes)
8	Nicolozakes (Cambridge)	21	Sims (Holy Name)
9	Weber/Griffin (Canal Fulton NW)	22	Deighan (Padua)
10	Hinerman (Edison)	23	Walls (Graham)
11	Petrella (Steubenville)	24	Giltz (Goshen)
12	Davis (Circleville)	25	Davis (Upper Sandusky)
13	Schulte (Eastwood)	26	Brown (Napoleon)
14	Duraine (Ashtabula Edgewood)	27	Calhoun (Bethel Tate)

Despite the fact that both of last year's finalist return, this should be a real donnybrook with some exceptionally close bouts and a sprinkling of upsets. Matt Guhn and Nathan Sharp are both back and 2005 was the first time since 1991 in Division II that both finalists were underclassmen. Guhn, a Michigan signee, was 55-0 last year and finished the season with a third period fall over the then sophomore Sharp. He has extended his winning streak to 78 this year, and is now 124-3 since the beginning of his sophomore year, but it hasn't been easy. At Lorain Southview he beat Jimmy Bowersock with a 30-second rideout that brought howls of protest from many of the fans, but that's why referees earn big money. At the SBC Duals he twice gave up back points, but won handily each time. It is somewhat worrisome. The mammoth Sharp has been a pinning machine until the Dies when Nick Hooper, who certified at 215# and failed to place at Wadsworth, stunned him 11-4 in the final. Go figure. With both finalist hitting at least a few small bumps in the road, the myriad of contenders may be gaining hope – a dangerous commodity for the defenders.

There are, as there almost always is, a boatload of contenders at Ontario. Van Voorhis and Greg Brown both lost their go-to-state bout with Van Voorhis winning the battle for 5<sup>th</sup>. That turned out to be crucial as Van Voorhis went to Columbus when the 4<sup>th</sup> place finisher could not compete. That experience clearly helped Van Voorhis who has been near perfect this year, winning at Tiffin and dominating in duals. Brown was 3<sup>rd</sup> at the GMVWA losing to Wagner. Schulte has been a very serviceable heavyweight for Eastwood, including a 4<sup>th</sup> at Brecksville. Other Toledo area heavyweights include Davis, Fraley and Taylor Brown. Sims and Deighan will come over from the Highland Sectional, but whether they can challenge the big boys is open to question. Deighan had a couple of district wins last year, but may be giving up too much weight.

Sharp stands virtually alone at Firestone – particularly since state qualifier Xylon Purkiss will apparently not compete. The major threat will likely be the 215-pounder Scott Weber, up a weight class if Griffin ends up competing at the lower weight. Weber was 3<sup>rd</sup> at the Dies, 1<sup>st</sup> at Northwest, and 1<sup>st</sup> at Medina at 215#. A state qualifier last year, he'll need all his savvy and experience to win while giving up fifty pounds. Other solid possibilities are Duraine, a sectional champ with two district wins, and Horvath, a Division I district qualifier. Other thoughts are Donze (Tallmadge) and Rousher (Canfield), but I'm really struggling here.

There will be no shortage of challengers at Watkins. The district bracket sheet last year at heavyweight had only four seniors, so almost everyone is coming back a year older, a year wiser, and much bigger and stronger. The top-rated man, however, wasn't one of the 12 underclassmen in that bracket sheet. Jimmy Bowersock was, in fact, the state alternate at 215#, losing a one-point decision in his go-to-state bout. This year he has only the "loss" to Guhn on his record and defeated a very strong field to win the OVAC. At about 250 pounds he is not a small heavyweight. I like Hiles next best as this sophomore continues to mature. He beat the excellent Becker to win the CIT, but then finished 5<sup>th</sup> behind Becker at Mayfield. He was 3<sup>rd</sup> at Brecksville, losing only to state champ Cameron Wade, and won at DeSales. Nicolozakes was a semi-finalist at Brecksville and was the #2 seed at the OVAC, but was injured and had to default. Three other OVAC heavyweights are very good. State qualifier Petrella has struggled a little more this year than anticipated; while Hinerman and Diagosta join with the others taking turns beating one another. The one to watch is Ickes who has a very successful campaign.

In contrast to Watkins, only four underclassmen were on the heavyweight bracket sheet at Goshen. They're all back and they all could qualify. Sizemore was 1<sup>st</sup> at Franklin and 4<sup>th</sup> at Medina. He is a big, tall, strong-looking wrestler who can often overcome mistakes with strength. Parker, substantially smaller, won at Carlisle and Bellbrook, while finishing 2<sup>nd</sup> to Wagner at the GMVWA. Davis, only a junior, was a state qualifier and went 1-2 at states. He dropped a recent decision to Ickes in overtime at Sheridan. Factor in Kerns (or Hess), Walls, and Taylor and that's solid competition. In Cincinnati Giltz, Calhoun, and Steele (Norwood) were all undefeated into January. I think only the first name can compete with Dayton area boys.

## TEAMS

1. Graham They are looking for their sixth consecutive team championship and eighth overall, but it will not come easily. They have already surrendered the dual meet title, and it will be very close at this venue. Taylor, Hart, Jordan, and Kyle are relatively high probability finalists, but Boyd and Thompson have to be in the top four at their weight classes. The lack of depth at their district may allow them to augment these six with wrestlers like Mannier, Luster, or Newland who can score a few points at the state level.
2. Eastwood A great team that could easily win the title, but has some tough questions to answer. Ryan Cubberly, Foster, and Nachtrab have the look of finalists and must score big in Columbus. However, Llanas must revert to 2005 form at 125#. Tinnel must stay comfortable at 112#, Eric Cubberly must get through the brutal district at 145#, and Ulinski needs to be healthy and productive at 119#. Get positive answers to those concerns and maybe, some help from Shroyer and Schulte and Graham's long reign will be over – at least for a year.
3. Walsh Jesuit They have some great individual point-scoring power in Keyes, Skonieczny and Rella, but their backup strength is suspect. The freshman Knotek is going to be a star, while Brown, Cheatham, and Tubbs are back, but it's questionable how many points this quartet can score.
4. Oak Harbor The brilliant sophomore trio of Magrum, Tank, and Witt should begin to generate substantial point scoring at the state level. They have good back-up with Sigurdson, McCune, Maloney, Giachetti, and Scherf, but how many of this quintet can navigate the brutal Oak Harbor District.
5. Columbus DeSales The trio of Meyers, Hile, and Lovell is starting to pick up momentum, but two of them are in very difficult weight classes. Brown, Kuechler, Croasmun, and Vaughn probably can reach the States, but can they score there. A key element must be to get McGovern healthy and at the right weight class.
6. Akron St. Vincent Rohler and Srock should be finalists and score heavily, but they need McMullen and Dean to do some heavy lifting as well. Caponi and Shanholz are the only other possibilities.

7. Clyde This is a team with plenty of upside, but two big issues – competing in the most difficult district and inconsistent performances by some of their stars. Guhn needs to be totally on track, while Michaels has to wrestle the state tournament of his life. If the two Schwartz boys are in peak form and Aona, Dencer, and Thurn can make it out, they could really move up.
8. University School Roche and Krwinsky are potential finalists who have looked great all year. If the mercurial Stone wrestles like he did at Brecksville, that's a bushel load of points, too. Then it's up to Erdman, and the freshmen, Mills and Inghram to try and help out.
9. Padua When you have two state champs in your line-up you can expect a lot of points. Still, they have to get McLemore ideally located in terms of strategy and performance, while Friery has that tough 145-pound class to contend with. If this goes well and Pinzone and Melillo can help, they move up. Another big plus would be if the awkwardly placed Archer can get hot at 152#.
10. West Branch They have but two state caliber wrestlers, but both have finalist possibilities and could potentially score up to 50 points. However, Sharp and Lamancusa have no margin for error.
11. Miami Trace A beautifully balanced dual meet team – and why weren't they at the Ohio Duals – that may lack the firepower for the higher reaches of the state tournament. We know Morrison can be a finalist, while Moore (at a tough weight class) and Fraley (up three weight classes) are looking for a second trip to Columbus. They need Neff, Garringer, Foor, and all the rest to all score some state points to put them in the top ten.
12. Willard This is a team that may have under-performed during the season, but can rectify that with a big state tourney. Cavello, Salyer, Wagers, and Thornton all can score at Value City, while Gayheart needs to help. They have to find the right spot for the talented Rodriguez.
13. Cambridge This is a long shot candidate, but they have four returning state qualifiers, all of whom should score at the state level. If Wetherell and one of the Ray brothers can get out so much the better. A key element would be a healthy and smiling Nicolozakes getting out at that very tough heavyweight class at Watkins.

## **Division III**

### **103 #**

#### **PROJECTED CHAMPION: BEN SERGENT (TROY CHRISTIAN)**

##### **Top Contenders**

2	Harrington (Sandusky St. Mary)	15	Kopp (Loudonville)
3	Pope (Pleasant)	16	Clark (Reading)
4	Householder (West Jefferson)	17	Jones (Licking Hts.)
5	Hall (Tuslaw)	18	Begg (Bluffton)
6	Peecook (Trinity)	19	Freeman (Allen East)
7	Gossard (Dayton Christian)	20	Dandurand (Hopewell-Loudon)
8	Marmaros (Beachwood)	21	Cummins (Dixie)
9	Coblentz (Waynedale)	22	Westhoven (Liberty Center)
10	Farley (Waterford)	23	Deady (Triad)
11	Pizzuto (Jackson Milton)	24	Aranjo (Delta)
12	Brown Edgerton)	25	Tinch (Mt. Gilead)
13	Lute (Indian Valley)	26	Knapp (Waterloo)
14	Yoder (Martins Ferry)		

Last year there was a deep and accomplished field at this weight class that produced some exciting wrestling and some very close scores. However, in 2006 most of those wrestlers have moved on to other weight classes and I have been unable to identify replacements of the same caliber. I think it may end up an individual duel between two very good wrestlers – one who placed 4<sup>th</sup> last year and is a Cadet All-American and the other who was a back up last year and did not compete in the tournament process. It sounds like an easy choice, but if you think so you are very much mistaken.

Sergent, a junior high state runner-up two years ago to Collin Palmer, had a great freshman season as a somewhat small 103-pounder. He split two bouts with the eventual champ Daniel Kolodzik, but the loss was at the district final and it put him in the tough half of the draw with Freeman and Opfer. He finished 4<sup>th</sup> losing only to the aforementioned duo. This year he opened this season with a win at Graham, which included a victory over Division II choice, David Taylor. He was a semi-finalist at both the Ironman (losing to Taylor) and Brecksville (losing in overtime to Division I choice Touris). His carry is outstanding and it sets up an entire arsenal of moves on his feet.

Harrington was a very small 103-pounder last year wrestling behind the state 3<sup>rd</sup> place finisher, Troy Opfer. He has amazing fighting spirit and the talent to back it up. Nobody has come close to him in Division III at 103# and his 7-6 loss to state runner-up Bryce Freeman while giving up nine pounds at 112# is indicative of his determination. His only losses at 103# have been to Mitcheff and Shilling. You would hope that these two might

be in opposite brackets but there is a one in three chance that it will not work out that way. It should be quite a battle.

Sergent should have minimal problems at the Fairmont District. Most of the names are new and unfamiliar with much to be decided. Cummins is a returning district qualifier, but I think Gossard has passed him. Last information had Gossard as 14-2 and 2<sup>nd</sup> to Quickle at Bellbrook. Deady has had his moment while Freeman and Begg might be the best from the invading Lima District. Clark and possibly two-time junior high qualifier Ziegler are also in the mix. It looks like Sergent and then, perhaps Gossard, Clark or Cummins and then chaos.

Harrington, like Sergent, should have few problems. I have struggled to come up with some real challengers and have failed. I think it's very likely that his back up, Costello, is second best in this district. I rate Brown second best but with a significant gap to Harrington. After that Dandurand, Westhoven, and Arango might be in a clump along with Rohn (a young lady with definite district potential) and Garza (Hicksville). Varner (Tinora), if he is competing, and Parrigan (Plymouth) are other possibilities.

I think Maple Heights District could place two or three at Columbus. State alternate Jase Hall is strong here, but Peacock has been consistently good as well. The former was 5<sup>th</sup> at the Dies while the latter placed 5<sup>th</sup> at the CIT. Coblenz won at Richmond Hts. and Marmaros has wrestled a very tough schedule with some success – he was 3<sup>rd</sup> at Solon in a strong weight class. Kopp looked very good at the Gorman and may beat out one of the top group for a state berth. I think Coblenz might be vulnerable. This quintet will be challenged, perhaps, by Pizzuto and Strine (Hillsdale). The district pairings should be reasonable with Hall, Peacock, and Marmaros all at different sectionals.

There is confusion in Columbus. Pope, 7<sup>th</sup> last year at this weight, has not, as far as I can tell, yet wrestled. He may be here or at 112# should he return. If at this weight class he would have solid placement potential. Householder, we know will be here, and he is very good as well. He has won at North Union and West Jefferson against solid competition. Farley lost a 9-7 overtime struggle in his go-to-state bout last year and has been a steady winner this year. I have him with two tourney wins and a runner-up finish. Lute, Yoder, and Jones should also play a role here with Tinch as a long shot. If Pope is healthy, this will be an exciting district, qualifying several potential state placers.

**112 #**

**PROJECTED CHAMPION: TROY OPFER (SANDUSKY ST. MARY)**

Top Contenders

2	Bryce Freeman (Berkshire)	15	Neer (Northmor)
3	Toal (Troy Christian)	16	Gualtieri (West Jefferson)
4	Gulley (Tri-County North)	17	Boney (Nelsonville York)
5	Savage (Carlisle)	18	Shumaker (Bluffton)
6	Reisz (Beallsville)	19	Mascioli (Jackson Milton)
7	Taylor (Elyria Catholic)	20	Karnes (Edgerton)
8	Schafer (Chanel)	21	Carnahan (Paulding)
9	Phillips (Waynedale)	22	Thomas (Bloom Carroll)
10	Reyna (Montpelier)	23	Giesler (Woodmore)
11	Carpenter (Madeira)	24	Poling (North Union)
12	Bernath (Archbold)	25	Manrique (Trinity)
13	Reynolds (Pleasant)	26	McGillvray (Miami East)
14	Pezzin (Swanton)	27	Vizer (Black River)

At the risk of being repetitive, I believe that this too, is likely to be a two-man competition featuring wrestlers who met in last year's semi-finals – Troy Opfer and Bryce Freeman. If so, and they win their districts, they will be bracketed apart setting up what could be an outstanding finals. Opfer lost that semi-final, in overtime, but I believe he has now moved ahead of Freeman. Still there is a two year difference favoring the senior, Freeman, and he would be a huge 112-pounder on Saturday night. That size comes at a price since it is clearly a difficult cut that may hamper Freeman's performance in earlier rounds. Freeman has spent much of the year at 119# finishing 4<sup>th</sup> at Solon and then failing to make weight at Wadsworth. Opfer wrestled a limited schedule in December, but should be in high gear by tourney time. At the Ohio Duals it was Opfer at 119# who got off his back to beat Blake Thoreson 8-5 while Freeman defeated Harrington 7-6.

Pezzin and Bernath, both state qualifiers, should provide some competition for Opfer at the Owens District. They are both experienced and have had some big wins the last two years. I'm not so sure, though, that state alternate Reyna hasn't passed them. He looked very strong at Richmond Hts. Pezzin, on the other hand, is between weights. He tried to make 103# but ended up as a small 112-pounder. As a result he has struggled somewhat and already has six losses. Giesler, who beat Bernath 19-6 at last year's district, has not produced the kind of results I expected this year. He will have to bounce back to qualify. Instead look to Karnes and Carnahan as boys with strong upset potential. Karnes won at Woodmore dominating Giesler in the finals.

Freeman's biggest problem at Maple Hts. may well be the scale though there are some very good wrestlers at this class. Taylor just won at Chippewa and CIT at 112# after spending some time at 119#. He beat Nycz in the finals but the really impressive result was a six-point victory over Brecksville semi-finalist, freshman Jake Vaughn of

Columbus DeSales. Freeman defeated Taylor 11-5 in last year's district semi-final, but it looks to be a lot closer now. Also, back is state placer Phillips who transferred from Dalton to Waynedale. He was 8<sup>th</sup> last year and should do better this time around. He won at Richmond Hts., beating Reyna 2-0, and was 5<sup>th</sup> at the Dies. Also returning is district 103# runner-up Schafer who has wrestled the very tough Chanel schedule. He was 2<sup>nd</sup> at Solon and 4<sup>th</sup> at North Canton, but failed to place by one bout at Brecksville. Freeman pinned him in the dual just as he did in the district final. That is an excellent quarter with Mascioli, Vizer, and Manrique able back-up talent.

Reisz won three consolation bouts last year at Columbus and ended up 6<sup>th</sup>. This year he has gone 30-1 as I write this and has won at Union Local and Beallsville. He will not have an easy time at Steubenville. I like the Columbus area trio of Reynolds, Neer and Gualtieri a lot. Reynolds missed qualification at this weight class last year by a takedown. This year he won at North Union and was 2<sup>nd</sup> at DeSales. Neer was runner-up at the Gorman and 6<sup>th</sup> at Marion Harding. Gualtieri handed Reisz his only loss while winning at West Jefferson. Factor in state alternate Cody Thomas and this is a dynamite group from the Central District. Boney will come from the southeast and he has solid credentials and several tourney titles. The pairings could be critical here.

Fairmont also hosts a strong district at this weight class. Let's look at some of the top returnees, Gulley was 7<sup>th</sup> last year at this weight class after capturing a district 3<sup>rd</sup>. He was 5<sup>th</sup> at GMVWA beating Boney 9-2. Savage was also a state qualifier who after winning his first state bout was injured and had to default in the quarter-finals. This year he was 2<sup>nd</sup> at Carlisle (at 119#) and 2<sup>nd</sup> at the GMVWA losing 3-1 to Jeff Penney in the finals. Also back is state alternate Carpenter who dropped a 7-4 decision to Savage in his go-to-state bout. This year he won at Madeira and was 3<sup>rd</sup> at the SWOCA losing only to Division I state runner-up Ryan Fields in the semi-finals. This is an exceptional group but the freshman Zach Toal might be better. He won at Graham and placed at the Ironman. At Brecksville he pinned Zamaria but eventually failed to place. He is very good. Shumaker and McGillvray have to hope that the bracketing works out badly for the top quartet.

**119 #**

**PROJECTED CHAMPION: DARREN BOING (CHANEL)**

Top Contenders

2	Kolodzik (Miami Valley)	14	Reggetti (Canton Central Catholic)
3	Gambill (Miami East)	15	Young (Norwayne)
4	Wilson (Pleasant)	16	Middleton (Johnstown Northridge)
5	Scarberry (Liberty Center)	17	Runkle (West Salem Northwestern)
6	Reyes (Belpre)	18	Clark (Union Local)
7	Thompson (Brookfield)	19	Belcastro (Woodridge)
8	Thome (Troy Christian)	20	Beach (Dixie)
9	F. Wilson (Malvern)	21	Walter (Hopewell Loudon)
10	Stephen (Barnesville)	22	Caesar (Madeira)
11	Weirauch (Archbold)	23	VanAtta (McComb)
12	Border (Caldwell)	24	Thoreson (Berkshire)
13	Herner (Monroeville)	25	Petrie (Lemon Monroe)
		26	Avila (Margaretta)

This is arguably the strongest and deepest weight class in Division III with only the 140# class in the same ballpark. It may be made even more difficult should state runner-up Bryce Freeman find the cut to 112# too difficult and return to this class. However, even as it is presently constituted there are an exceptional group of athletes here. Included among their numbers are two state champions and a host of returning qualifiers. It's instructive to look more closely at the top contenders.

Kolodzik, now a sophomore, won the title last year at the very tough 103# class finishing ahead of Freeman, Opfer, and Sergent. He is a one-man team for the small private Miami Valley High School, but has not been deterred by that handicap. He has moved up two weight classes this year and has not had, at least to this point, the same level of success. He was 5<sup>th</sup> at the Ironman and 2<sup>nd</sup> at GMVWA getting pinned by Hart in the finals – not that bad, but indicative of someone adjusting to a new body size and older, more mature opponents. At the Top Gun, Jameson who he has met many times, defeated him 9-3 in the finals – a larger margin than might have been expected based on Kolodzik's win over him last year.

Gambill, also a sophomore, was something of a surprise champion as he swept to the title at 112#. A district runner-up he blew through the first two rounds in Columbus and then beat Lint and Freeman back-to-back to take the title. He was 3<sup>rd</sup> at GMVWA losing a four-point decision to Hart in the semi-finals. He comes from an outstanding wrestling family (he is the third) and that life long attachment shows with his poise on the mat.

Boing, still only a junior, is already twice a state place winner finishing 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> the past two years. Last year he lost his district final, 1-0, and found himself in the tough half of the draw with Freeman, Thome and Scarberry. He was a semi-finalist, but lost

the semi-final to the larger Freeman 3-2. This year he was 2<sup>nd</sup> at Solon, which included a win over Ricky Floyd, 1<sup>st</sup> at North Canton at 125#, and 4<sup>th</sup> at the absolutely brutal 119 pound class at Brecksville losing to Pelton and Rini. He is a big 119-pounder, but will have to beat both of the state champs to take the title.

Wilson is an enigma. A state qualifier as a freshman he gave every indication of being an enormous force for three more seasons. As it turned out injuries have prevented him from competing at the state meet the past two years. He has also missed this entire season, but is scheduled to return at this weight class, the last weekend of January. Last year he was a district champ and 39-1 before an injury sidelined him, so the potential is there. If he returns in peak form both state champions (and everyone else) will have to be at 100% to compete.

The Fairmont District features both state champions and won't that be a marvelous confrontation. The other important factor will be Jordan Thome who was 2<sup>nd</sup> at Graham to Aaron Hart. He won four bouts at Brecksville but failed to place – losing to state champion Tony Jameson and state runner-up Jeffrey Pelton. Clearly, he has experience in tough weight classes. Beach and Caesar are the best shots at 119# with Petrie and Clum (Spencerville) a further step behind.

Boing is light years better than anyone else at Maple Hts. State qualifier Thompson won at Elyria Catholic, but missed Mentor due to injury. State qualifier Young is up two weight classes and has done reasonably well. He won handsomely at the WIT and was 2<sup>nd</sup> at Chippewa – losing to Reghetti. Also here is Runkle who was one win from state last year at this weight class. He won at Black River and Hillsdale and was 4<sup>th</sup> at the Gorman. Add in state alternate Belcastro and the rapidly improving Thoreson and it will be a real donnybrook for the three slots behind Boing.

It will be total anarchy at Steubenville. I count seven returning state qualifiers plus some solid others who are nearly as good. We've discussed Mike Wilson, let's briefly review the rest. Fred Wilson is already a two time state qualifier who won three state matches during those years. He won at the Chertow Classic and Malvern (over Reghetti). Reyes was 6<sup>th</sup> last year at this weight class and is very good. He is a punishing wrestler who could beat either Wilson. Chaz Clark is also a two time state qualifier who has yet to place. He was only 4<sup>th</sup> at Shadyside (behind Stephan and Border) and was 2<sup>nd</sup> at Barnesville defeating Stephen.

Border made it out at 103# last year, and has lost eight times at the higher weight. However, his 2<sup>nd</sup> place finish to Shadyside shows how fast he is adjusting. Middleton replaced Wilson at the state meet last year and wrestled bravely – scoring 15 points in two hard fought losses. Stephan didn't make it out last year but he has been very successful. He won at Shadyside, finished 2<sup>nd</sup> at St. Clairsville and Sheridan and 4<sup>th</sup> at Barnesville. He was the 2<sup>nd</sup> seed at the OVAC. Add in a Martin (West Jefferson), Ruhl (Northmor) or Canter (Bellairre) and it is quite a group.

I like Scarberry the best at Owens. He was a district champ last year and went 1-2 at Columbus. This year he was 5<sup>th</sup> at Hudson and 6<sup>th</sup> at Medina while steadily winning in his area. He took Boing into overtime (11-9) at the Ohio Duals in probably his most impressive outing. Weirauch and Herner are returning state qualifiers both of whom lost to Fred Wilson at that level. I think Walters and Van Atta have the firepower to upset this twosome. They went 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> at Woodmore and Van Atta won at Richmond Hts. Avila is always a threat and he could be a finalist or could lose early. Devers might be a factor here or possibly Reed (Collins Western Reserve) or Reindel (Stritch).

### **125 #**

#### **PROJECTED CHAMPION: ADAM KOBALLA (CHANEL)**

##### Top Contenders

2	Thome (Troy Christian)	14	Edgell (Crestview)
3	Brett Freeman (Berkshire)	15	Crispin (West Jefferson)
4	Lint (Cuyahoga Hts.)	16	Betts (Elmwood)
5	Shumaker (Arcadia)	17	Espinoza (Genoa)
6	Pike (Greeneview)	18	Brown (Newark Catholic)
7	Clark (Union Local)	19	Hayden (Independence)
8	Anderson (Bluffton)	20	Russell (Spencerville)
9	Holt (Martins Ferry)	21	Peyton-Cook (Hawken)
10	Zolman (Northmor)	22	Moore (Dixie)
11	Redd (Archbold)	23	Halcomb (Hopewell-Loudon)
12	Shubert (Oberlin)	24	Bazerbashi (Academy)
13	Rohda (Liberty Center)	25	Bemmes (Reading)
		26	Evans (Madison Plains)

It will require exceptional forecasting to successfully choose the winner at this weight class. That is because we have a quartet of outstanding wrestlers looking to win a state title at another extremely competitive weight--three of whom battled it out at 112# last year. Three of the four will emerge from the Maple Hts. District potentially causing a misshapen bracket. We are likely to have Thome and the two Twinsburg non-winners in the same half of the draw while the Maple Hts. champ draws away from all three of them. That would make that particular district title a juicy prize.

At Maple Hts. Koballa should be a slender favorite. A state champion two years ago at 112# he caught eventual champ Blonairz in the semi-finals and lost a 6-5 heartbreaker likely costing him the title (Blonairz beat Hamilton 16-5 in the finals). This year he has confounded his coaching staff by failing to make weight at both Solon and Brecksville. He was 3<sup>rd</sup> at North Canton at 130# -- losing early but coming back to take 3<sup>rd</sup>. At the Ohio Duals he defeated an admittedly rusty Hartley, 5-4, and looks to be gearing up for his last chance for a title. He has tremendous experience, great mat presence, and knows how to win. That should be a recipe for a state title.

Freeman was a state runner-up at 112# last year defeating Thome 7-5 in the quarterfinals. This year he has been rock solid for Berkshire winning at Wadsworth and finishing 2<sup>nd</sup> to the dynamic Keyes at Solon. Lint, on the other hand, has been off the radar screen until lately, but he was 5<sup>th</sup> last year at Columbus. He lost a 5-3 semi-final bout to Gambill and then was beaten by Thome in a late consolation round. He was 2<sup>nd</sup> at Brecksville this year slipping through a crowded field until Thome beat him once again for the title.

Thome, the only junior in this quartet, is a tremendous competitor. Remember he beat eventual state champ Gambill 8-4, to win his district last year. He was 43-2 overall with the critical loss in the quarterfinals forcing him into the consolation round. His only loss this year was to Division II state champion Ben Jordan, 7-5, the first week of the season. He is the most athletic of this foursome, but whether that will translate into a state title is still an open question.

Freeman and Koballa emerge from the same sectional so they will be apart at the Maple Hts. District with Lint drawing into one of them. They are far ahead of everyone else here with the fourth qualifier unlikely to do much in Columbus. I think Shubert, Hayden, Peyton-Cook, and Perry are possibilities for that spot. With three heavy hitters in the bracket, the pairings will be critical for the fourth berth.

State qualifier Pike is back after qualifying at 112# last year. He won at Bellbrook recently and placed well at the GMVWA. I don't see him threatening Thome. I know Anderson certified at 119#, but he has wrestled most of the year at 125# and I think he may end up here. The odds of qualification look a little steeper at 119#. He was a state alternate last year and has been winning at a steady clip this year – for example, at Bellefontaine and Allen East. After this trio I'm stumped so maybe it will be Russell, Moore, and Bemmes.

I'm seeing very little at Owens – surprising considering the usual depth at this district. The one exception is Lee Shumaker, a district runner-up last year, and 6<sup>th</sup> in the state the following week. He twice lost to Lint in Columbus, both times by a single point. This year he has won at Arcadia, Plymouth, and Van Wert. After that, there is Reed and Rohda but the wrestler to watch for is Edgell. At 130# most of the year he has apparently certified at 125# which makes strategic sense. He was 3<sup>rd</sup> at 130# at the Gorman. The freshman Betts won at Richmond Hts. and could surprise the more experienced boys. Halcomb and Hendrick might be factors too.

There are some solid wrestlers at Steubenville, but that group may be augmented if several of the 119's in that crowded field move up. Holt, still only a sophomore, won a sectional title and then a district 4<sup>th</sup> to gain state experience. He has lost some early bouts this year, as he did last, but expect a lot from him. Another sophomore Chase Clark has been outstanding (24-2) along the river and has pulled even with Holt. Zolman was 2<sup>nd</sup> at the Gorman and might be the best from the Central District. I also like Crispin and Evans, but wonder about former state qualifier Brown and state alternate

Bazerbashi. The latter two look a step behind that top trio. Weatherholt (Garaway) could also be a factor here as could Vaughn (Belpre) and Jones (Waterford).

### 130 #

#### **PROJECTED CHAMPION: KYLE GARDELLA (CHANEL)**

##### Top Contenders

2	Guerra (Sandusky St. Mary)	15	Padach (South Range)
3	Ells (Grandview Hts.)	16	Eavers (Greeneview)
4	Young (Nelsonville York)	17	Nelson (Madison Plains)
5	Jenkins (Berkshire)	18	Johnson (Otsego)
6	Wetzel (River View)	19	Hancock (Troy Christian)
7	Toney (Mechanicsburg)	20	Kosky (Bellaire St. John)
8	Grigson (Northwood)	21	Schalk (Hopewell-Loudon)
9	Butler (Collins Western Reserve)	22	Furbee (Shadyside)
10	Stapleton (Carlisle)	23	Bassitt (Allen East)
11	Woody (Chippewa)	24	Bush (Black River)
12	Young (Norwayne)	25	Dodd (Shenandoah)
13	Franks (Fremont St. Joseph)	26	Vogelpohl (Genoa)
14	Pajestka (Cuyahoga Hts.)	27	Gfell (Monroeville)

Chris Hartley is a tremendous talent – three-time Division I place winner and absent Lance Palmer a possible two-time champion. He has also been the biggest mystery in Ohio this year. Would he wrestle for Perry or Berkshire or, maybe, Crestwood and would it be at 119# or 125# or 130# and would he be in top form or rusty or out of shape. The answer, apparently, is that he will not wrestle at all. My feeling was that he would be here, round into shape, and win. Now that such a scenario is extremely unlikely we'll need to re-visit each district and identify possible champs.

At Maple Hts. the junior Kyle Gardella would seem to be the best at 130#. A district runner-up last year, he was a state semi-finalist before getting decked by Tinnel and falling to 5<sup>th</sup>. This year he was 3<sup>rd</sup> at Solon (losing to Mencini) and 6<sup>th</sup> at Solon. Interestingly his only dual loss was to Brett Freeman, up a weight class. Jenkins fooled a lot of people last year (count me as one) when he not only qualified for the state meet, but won four consolation bouts to finish 4<sup>th</sup>. Up just two weight classes now that Hartley is gone he is in prime position to fool me again. Pajestka, also a state qualifier, got off to a late start and has gradually moved down from 140#. He lost to Pajestka 8-7 in the go-to-state bout last year. The clever Padach and Woody are other contenders – the former a runner-up at Richmond Hts. and the latter the Chippewa champ. Still I think Young has a chance to be better than anyone here but Gardella and Jenkins.

Guerra was 4<sup>th</sup> two years ago at 103# and then last February qualified at 112#. He caught eventual champ Gambill in the first round, got caught early, and never recovered. His tournament ended Thursday night. This year at 130# he should prosper. I also like Grigson who was the state alternate at 125# last year, and won at Northwood,

and Sylvania Southview this season. State qualifier Butler is also returning as he is on a rising trajectory this year including a big win at Edison. Franks has made giant strides this year and was 2<sup>nd</sup> at the CIT. Last year Butler defeated him 11-2. It should be a lot closer. Johnson, Schalk, and, maybe, Vogelpohl are at the next level down along with Gfell.

Ells and Nelson were both district champs last year and both finished 8<sup>th</sup> at the state meet. I rate Ells a little higher based on a 4<sup>th</sup> at Medina and a title at Groveport. Two-time state placer Wetzel should also be here, but I have not seen that he has competed recently. The wrestler to watch, however, is Steve Young. A state qualifier at 130# last year he remains at the same weight this year. He gave Hartley plenty of trouble in the dual meet before succumbing 4-2. He could be the champion at this district. That's a solid trio with lots of state placement possibilities. Three boys along the Ohio River – Furbee, Kosky and Dodd – may be able to scarf up one qualifying spot.

Defending district champ Toney is up two weights at Fairmont and will be a co-favorite with state qualifier Stapleton for the district title. They both have wrestled well this year, but Toney has particularly been good given the more difficult schedule he has wrestled. Eavers and the young Hancock are probably next best with Bassitt a possibility. The last two qualifiers are likely to struggle in Columbus.

### 135 #

#### **PROJECTED CHAMPION: DUSTY HERMES (SANDUSKY ST. MARY)**

##### Top Contenders

2	Gambill (Miami East)	15	Estrada (Fremont St. Joseph)
3	Skoff (Bellaire St. John)	16	Hill (Liberty Center)
4	Chmura (Chanel)	17	Skaggs (Jackson Milton)
5	True (Arcadia)	18	Cowgill (Berkshire)
6	Hill (McComb)	19	Tighe (Purcell)
7	Levy (West Liberty Salem)	20	Garrett (Madison Plains)
8	Prickett (Monroe Central)	21	Ash (Waynedale)
9	Campbell (Dayton Christian)	22	Pfister (Black River)
10	Harnett (Brookfield)	23	Hemmelgarn (Coldwater)
11	Beam (Cardington Lincoln)	24	Basting (Huron)
12	Cloran (Madeira)	25	Ford (Allen East)
13	Murray (Grandview Hts.)	26	Norway (Nelsonville York)
14	McCreary (Fairbanks)		

The dynamics of the next four weight classes has totally surprised me. Generally, at the beginning of the year the weight classes are irregular – some very strong others fairly weak. This clumpiness generally disappears as wrestlers, calculating the odds, flee to weight classes that seem less crowded and less strong. It happens every year, kind of like the diffusion of gas molecules in a large room as they end up with relatively equal density. However, this year in the middleweight classes we've had exactly the opposite

reaction. It's like all the molecules suddenly raced to one corner of the room leaving us gasping for breath everywhere else. We, all at once, have all kinds of excellent wrestlers at 140# and 145#, not nearly as much at 135#, and something of a scarcity at 152#. I mean Lipp moved up to 140# while Nicola, Wilson, and Seebach all cut down to certify at 140# in the Steubenville District. Hoff moved down to 145# as Lerer moved up to that weight class leaving things somehow out of balance. My guess is that with increased knowledge we may see additional movement before sectionals. Three weeks ago I had Hartley winning the title at 130# and Lipp and Falk breezing through at 135# and 140#. Three quick and easy checkmarks Now, with Hartley gone and Lipp at 140#, all three check marks have been erased.

With Lipp's somewhat surprising defection to 140# this has become a weight class without a strong focus. The movement of Hill and Gambill down to this classification gives it increased depth, but no one individual or even group of individuals can be accorded as heavy favorites. This is one of the situations where differences in style, fortune or misfortune in bracketing, and the lucky takedown or controversial referee's call will make a huge difference. Each district has a least one reasonable candidate for the title and it may well be that someone ranked in the bottom half of my table captures the prize.

I think the champ could well be from Owens. Hermes is a two-time state qualifier who was 4<sup>th</sup> last year 125# -- losing twice to Koballa, once in overtime. Sandusky St. Mary had a relatively casual schedule in December, but have ramped it up this month. Hermes has been winning big except a tight 4-3 victory over Chmura – perhaps, a foreshadowing of things to come. Also, there is junior Derrick Hill who found out a tough way to miss out on state qualification – having to default in overtime in his go-to-state bout. I don't think he has lost this year winning at Richmond Hts. very easily and crushing the field at Woodmore – both at 140#. State alternate Mason True as had similar success winning by big scores at Arcadia, Northwood, and Plymouth, but I don't see him able to beat the Hermes. Other possibilities are Clayton Hill who was 5<sup>th</sup> at the Gorman and at Hudson, Billy Dotson, Nick Basting, Estrada and Wagner (Genoa).

There is some power at Maple Hts. Chmura is a returning state qualifier at this class and was something of a surprise last year. He went 1-2 in the state meeting losing two close bouts including an 11-9 decision to state runner-up Joe Skoff. He had 15 losses showing the difficulty of Chanel's schedule. This year he was 5<sup>th</sup> at Solon and 7<sup>th</sup> at Brecksville and lost a hard fought battle to Hermes 4-3. He was 6<sup>th</sup> at Solon. Harnett was 7<sup>th</sup> at the State meet winning three consolation bouts. He won at Elyria Catholic over Skaggs who might be fourth best at this district. With Jenkins moving down to 130# Cowgill slips right into this weight class. Last year he missed state qualification by a single point in an 8-7 loss to Pajestka. He could do very well here. Ash and Pfister are also factors with Ash winning their individual battle 15-9 at the Dies. Pfister won three district bouts last year so he still remains a contender.

The Steubenville District divides into two components – two sectionals from the Central District and two from the Eastern. At this district I have identified a quartet of

possibilities from each area with the Central group overall a little stronger. However, the best wrestler is from the Eastern as Joe Skoff returns for his senior year. A state runner-up two years at 119# he jumped up three weight classes to 135#. He had to default his district final and, apparently little improved went 1-2 in Columbus.. This year again 135#, he is 21-1 as of the moment, including a big win at Marion Harding. State qualifier Prickett went 1-2 in Columbus and is the second-best of our eastern contingent. He is 21-4 this year with a couple of upset losses on his record. Norway and Mardis (Newcomerstown) are two other possibilities from the east.

Murray and Beam are at about the same level. Beam was a state alternate losing his go-to-state bout to eventual state runner-up Justin Seebach. Murray also had some district wins and has been generally good all year with the possible exception of Medina. The one bracketed away from Skoff could well be a finalist at Steubenville. I saw McCreary win at Richmond Hts. and he and Albanese (see next weight class) are a nice one-two combination. State qualifier Garrett, up five weight classes has predictably struggled, but will certainly be a factor come February. Also look to Wright (Tusky Valley), only a sophomore, for a potential upset.

Gambill has to be thought of as a co-favorite at this weight class. Last year he lost the district final to Falk 13-9 which might have been Josh's closest bout of the year. Gambill then lost a 9-8 first round barnburner to eventual runner-up Seebach before ripping through the consolation round with five straight wins to finish 3<sup>rd</sup>. He was 2<sup>nd</sup> at GMVWA to Kyle at 140# and has otherwise been close to perfect. Levy, a two-time state qualifier, is next best. His two state meets have had some uncanny parallels. Each trip has resulted in a first round loss by exactly three points, a first round consolation win in overtime, and then a second loss and Sayonara! He should do better this year with placement a reasonable outcome. Robel Campbell also qualified last year going 1-2. He has been burning up the southwest with good wrestling, He won at both Bellbrook and Madeira beating the excellent Tighe and state qualifier Cloran. Those two are right there with the top threesome making for a very good quintet of contenders. Factor in Hemmelgarn, Huffman (Tri-County North) and Ford and we may see some movement to 140#.

**140 #**

**PROJECTED CHAMPION: KEVIN LIPP (BEACHWOOD)**

*Top Contenders*

2	Falk (Bluffton)	14	Zaborski (Collins Western Reserve)
3	Seebach (Caldwell)	15	Bogan (Wellington)
4	Wyse (Grandview Hts.)	16	Petrella (Hartley)
5	Melko (Bellaire St. John)	17	Kazdin (Berkshire)
6	Fose (Middletown Madison)	18	Grys (New London)
7	Ware (Martins Ferry)	19	Dauski (Sandy Valley)
8	Taylor (Elyria Catholic)	20	Young (Seneca East)
9	Albanese (Fairbanks)	21	Rutan (Mechanicsburg)
10	Chasteen (Black River)	22	Elliott (Brookville)
11	Arreola (Fremont St. Joseph)	23	Kaufman (Loudonville)
12	Smith (Miami East)	24	Levy (Hicksville)
13	Dotson (Liberty Center)	25	Kirian (Arcadia)
		26	Marsteller (Allen East)

There are 42 weight classes at the Value Center Arena the last weekend of February, but there is no question that one of the two highlight match-ups --- the ones everyone wants to see -- will be at this weight class. Since Lipp certified at 140# there is a rising crescendo of excitement generated by the possibilities inherent in such a confrontation. Falk, now a junior, won his first state title at 135# with relative ease coasting past Seebach in the finals 10-5. He has not lost since his freshman year (a streak that now hovers at close to 70) though he does not wrestle a super-demanding schedule. I hypothesized last year that he was on track to becoming a three-time champ and join his father as the first father-son combination to each win three titles. I was comfortable with that until Kevin Lipp decided, for whatever reason, to forego an almost sure title at 135# and challenge Falk. Lipp, a three-time placer and one-time champ, is very good. He was 2<sup>nd</sup> at the Ironman and 1<sup>st</sup> at Brecksville and has conquered a very rugged schedule. Falk has been sensational on his feet, but Lipp is not easy prey and Lipp is very good on top. Lipp's problem has been some early round upsets the last two years, but the higher weight may actually help that. The pairings algorithm should put Falk in one half the draw and Seebach (if he competes at 140#) and Lipp in the other half. Look to Lipp to win by three or four points.

Lipp should have no trouble at the Maple Hts. district. Chasteen is the only returning state qualifier and he has been overpowering to this point at 140# -- most recently a DNP at the Dies -- though he did win at Black River. I think the last two qualifying spots might come from the trio of Taylor, Kazdin, and Bogan. Taylor won at Chippewa and was 6<sup>th</sup> at the CIT. He'll want to join his brother in Columbus. Kazdin was 18-15 last year going into districts and nearly qualified. With all the Berkshire shuffling, he just now is settling in at 140#. Bogan has been steady all year and should make a good run at it.

Falk should not be staying up nights worrying about his district competition. State qualifier Fose is back, but Falk defeated him in the district semi-finals, 18-3. Don't get me wrong, Fose is good. He won at Carlisle and Edgewood and should be a finalist at Fairmont. After that it's anybody's guess. Marsteller, Smith, Rutan and Elliott might be next in line with Warrick (Preble Shawnee) or Benedict (Greenview) a possibility. If Barga (Versailles) is at this weight class he could also do some damage.

I have been stymied finding solid contenders at Owens. Arreola, first at Northwood and 4<sup>th</sup> at the CIT, looks to be the best. Dotson was 2<sup>nd</sup> at Hudson and 4<sup>th</sup> at the Gorman, but lost badly to Arreola last year. Grys and Seth Kirian are other possibilities, but I don't want to raise anyone's hope too much. Zaborski is another strong candidate, but there must be others that I'm just missing.

The big puzzle is at Steubenville. The three best wrestlers at 145# suddenly all certified at 140#. Is it true that they are all moving down or are they just keeping their options open. My guess is that Nicola stays at 145#. Melko is a solid 140-pounder and Nicola has a slightly better chance of winning at 145# than at 140#. Wilson, too, stays at 145# for no better reason than that's where he has been all year. Seebach has been at 140# and decides to compete there after not making the finals at the OVAC at 145#. There are eight possible arrangements so I have a 12.5% probability of getting this right.

Even configured my way 140# will be very difficult at Steubenville. Seebach was the state runner-up at 135# last year losing only to Falk. This year he has been at 152#, 145#, and 140# with generally good success. He'll need to be in top form just to qualify. Wyse lost to Seebach in the district consolation finals and that was critical. He caught Falk in the first round and Chmura immediately afterward and his state tournament was over Thursday night. I saw him at Medina where he finished 4<sup>th</sup> – twice losing to Cavello. However, he defeated Dotson, Deliberato, and Triplett and that was impressive. Ware and Melko are both returning state qualifiers who excel along the river. Melko won (at 152#) at Bellaire St. John, was 2<sup>nd</sup> (to Myers) at Barnesville and finished 3<sup>rd</sup> at Marion Harding. He also was 3<sup>rd</sup> at the CIT beating Arreola in the consolation final. He and Ware have yet to meet. Dauski, now a junior, qualified as a freshman, but missed out last year. He'll be a longshot here. That's because Petrella and Albanese are both very good. I saw Albanese at Richmond Hts. and he did well until Hill shut him out in the final. He was the state alternate at 130# last year.

**145 #**

**PROJECTED CHAMPION: MARC HOFF (LIBERTY CENTER)**

Top Contenders

2	Lerer (Beachwood)	14	Kiefer (Chanel)
3	Nicola (Bellaire St. John)	15	Worthington (Crestview)
4	Reer (Collins Western Reserve)	16	Hessick (Fremont St. Joseph)
5	Wilson (Pleasant)	17	Kuzma (Hopewell-Loudon)
6	Heasley (Worthington Christian)	18	Looser (Delphos St. John)
7	Thatcher (Loudonville)	19	Miller (West Jefferson)
8	Dolinski (Brookville)	20	Crapo (Seneca East)
9	Ortolani (Sandusky St. Mary)	21	Keuterman (Versailles)
10	Wren (Berkshire)	22	Hatton (Smithville)
11	Howe (Northmor)	23	Domres (Licking Hts.)
12	Smyers (Norwayne)	24	Staley (Allen East)
13	Lopez (Patrick Henry)	25	Parker (West Liberty Salem)

I approach this weight class with real uncertainty and trepidation – even more than usual. I have hypothesized that Wilson and Nicola will be here and Seebach will not. Again, speculation on my part, I would not be surprised to see Hoff at 152# - -in fact, I might recommend it – as it is a far easier (at least to my eye) weight class. Even Lerer, who certified at 140# could conceivably return to that weight class should Lipp be unable to compete. There are five wrestlers here, any of who could be state champ, and, probably, deserve to be state champ.

Hoff has paid his dues. The last two years he beat eventual champ Jamison Moss in the Sectionals, had that victory reversed at Districts, and then lost heartbreakingly close state semi-final bouts. This year, at 152#, he had all falls at Hudson and was 4<sup>th</sup> at Medina after getting caught by Van Fossen in the semis. He will be a very big 145-pounder. Lerer has moved from 103# as a freshman to this weight class, and he is by no means undersized. Rather short, but very powerful, he like Hoff, has both experience and technique. He is a three-time placer in Division I with tremendous experience in gaining an advantage and maintaining it. Sometimes I think we tend to overvalue boys who move from Division I to Division III believing that they will automatically win big at the smaller school level. Experience has shown that that is not always the case. Lerer will be yet another test case of that theory.

Another dues-paying wrestler is the senior, Mick Nicola. He is a two-time state qualifier and was 4<sup>th</sup> last year at 130#. His district finals loss to Andrews threw him in the same quarter-bracket as two-time champ Scaletta and Shindledecker while Andrews cruised to the final round. This year he is 26-1 winning at Marion Harding, Bellaire St. John, and Barnesville, losing only in the CIT finals to state champion Friery. A very talented wrestler we've seen him compete for four successful years.

The fourth leg of the 145# weight class is the junior Eric Reer. He was 45-1 last year while finishing 3<sup>rd</sup> at Columbus. His only loss was a 10-9 barnburner to Justin Hill in the

quarter-finals. He has gotten very little notice, but is an outstanding talent. Western Reserve, almost a non-entity in wrestling for many years, has built a solid program that peaked last year when Chris Estep became their first state finalist. If everything goes perfectly right, they could win one or even two titles in 2006.

Wilson, only a sophomore, was 8<sup>th</sup> last year after burning up the mats during the early part of the year. He was 5<sup>th</sup> at Brecksville and won big at North Union and 4<sup>th</sup> at DeSales losing to Straughn and Lovell. He can be absolutely brilliant at times – almost unbeatable – and when he learns to sustain those surges everyone else better head for the hills.

Thatcher was the district champ at 140# last year, but was upset in the first round at Columbus and finished with a 1-2 record. He looked in top form at Black River, but has not appeared in my scorebook since then. He could give Lerer some problems at the Maple Hts. District. State qualifiers Wren and Smyers are also back. They were a combined 0-4 at Columbus and have looked vulnerable at times during the year. Kiefer lost to Wren by three at the Ohio Duals and might have a chance while Hatton and, maybe, Bender (Brookfield) could pull off the big upset. Tomaino (Jackson-Milton) has been out all year, but may wrestle here.

Hoff and Reer are likely to “own” this district and their bout will be most interesting. Lopez and Ortolani are my other two choices to qualify, but they will need to be at 100% to do so. Worthington, 3<sup>rd</sup> at the Gorman, is another candidate for a state berth, but there are several others. Hessick, Kuzma, and Crapo are all good and could easily qualify. Hessick was 5<sup>th</sup> at the CIT while Kuzma won at Van Buren. Harden(McComb) was 2<sup>nd</sup> at Richmond Hts. and Woodmore and is another possibility.

They'll break attendance records at Steubenville for a Wilson versus Nicola final, but state qualifier Heasley could make things difficult for the top duo. He was 4<sup>th</sup> at the district level and then lost two tough bouts against very good wrestlers in his first two state bouts. Not bad for a freshman. This year he has been even better during the regular season and, if in a different sectional than Wilson, could draw away from both he and Nicola. Howe and Domres are also strong out of the Central. And I would not be surprised to see Miller at this weight class. I haven't seen Chase Tucker's (Martins Ferry) name all year, but it looks like he may have certified here where he could certainly be an important bracket element. Kreinbihl (Indian Valley), Crock (Shenandoah) and Cooper (Belpre) might be other possibilities. This might have been the weight class where the excellent Jeremy Peoples would have been a favorite for state qualification. As it is he lost his season and very nearly his life in a tragic automobile accident.

With so many high-powered contenders in the other districts some will treat Fairmont as kind of an afterthought. There are no returning state qualifiers and no one that, at least at this moment, sets your blood aboil. I think Dolinski may well be the best here with Looser and Staley from the Northwest next in line. Keuterman is up three classes, but

has solid district experience. Parker and Sides (Coldwater) are two other possibilities, but state placers from this district are going to be rare.

### 152 #

#### **PROJECTED CHAMPION: ROSS TICE (BROOKFIELD)**

##### Top Contenders

2	Petrella (Hartley)	16	Jackson (Grand Valley)
3	Wiseman (Jackson Milton)	17	Hathaway (Genoa)
4	Bostleman (Otsego)	18	Porter (Berkshire)
5	Welfle (Norwalk St. Paul)	19	Alexander (Monroeville)
6	Johns (Brookville)	20	Mohney (Nelsonville York)
7	Gallik (Northmor)	21	Blosser (Dixie)
8	Foley (Worthington Christian)	22	Neff (Waynedale)
9	Reynolds (Black River)	23	Carnahan (Liberty Center)
10	Bowers (Martins Ferry)	24	Hickin (Waterloo)
11	Brunnett (Chanel)	25	Clack (Tri-County North)
12	Cartwright (Mohawk)	26	Jameson (Collins Western Reserve)
13	Deetz (Garaway)	27	Schmidt (Coldwater)
14	Lowe (Northridge)	28	Caligiuri (Van Buren)
15	Randolph (Belpre)	29	Donley (Lima Central Catholic)

As I have intimated in earlier essays, this is not a particularly strong or deep weight class thus providing a great opportunity for someone to snare a state title. This is a weight class where a "Hot Weekend" could propel a wrestler to a surprise title. A good example was at 135# last year in Division II where Trevor Bowers (a very good wrestler) won neither his sectional nor district but caught fire at Columbus and steamrolled four quality opponents. That could well happen here. The trick will be to identify who that might be. As we do that, keep in mind that Hoff may choose to compete here with monumental ramifications.

Tice has to be a slight favorite at this weight class. He was a state qualifier last year losing a critical 15-13 OT bout early and going 1-2. This year he won at Elyria Catholic (over Wiseman) and was 5<sup>th</sup> at Medina losing to Sponseller in the semi-final. Wiseman, also a state qualifier, is close to as good. He, too, went 1-2 at Columbus after being put out by eventual champ Brinden Baum. Also back is state qualifier Brunnett who got a late start, began at 145#, and is now just starting to perform. He started very slowly placing in only one of three tournaments --- a 6<sup>th</sup> at North Canton. Jackson was a district semi-finalist last year at this class, but failed to qualify. He started the year at 160# with a 4<sup>th</sup> at Richmond Hts. and did not seem to be comfortable at that weight. Reynolds was also a district semi-finalist who didn't qualify and that is a tough way to miss out. He won at Black River, was 2<sup>nd</sup> at the Gorman and was 6<sup>th</sup> at the Dies. He could easily bounce ahead of Brunnett and Jackson. Porter is a rising star for Berkshire, while Neff could easily be the same. He beat Jackson 11-9 at Richmond Hts.

The field at Owens is depleted since first I pondered it. Hoff is at 145# and the excellent sophomore Ryan Wasylik is hurt and out for the year. That still leaves two returning state qualifiers. After substantial thought Welfle went at 135# last year and it was a touch of genius. He crept into 4<sup>th</sup> at the district and then wrestled well at Columbus to get a 6<sup>th</sup>. A close quarter-final loss to eventual runner-up Seebach could have gone the other way and what happens next is unclear. This year he has again chosen exactly the right weight class and could go higher at the state level. He was 1<sup>st</sup> at Richmond Hts. and Edison and 2<sup>nd</sup> (to Hupp) at Bellevue. Bostleman qualified two years ago, but was shut out last year when he finished 6<sup>th</sup> at this district. He won at Rogers and should get a second trip to our capital city. I like state alternate Cartwright a lot and expect him to qualify easily this time. He was, for example, 4<sup>th</sup> at the GMVWA after that, its almost random. Hathaway and Alexander should do well while Carnahan, Jameson, and Caligiuri are long shots.

The question at Steubenville is, "Where will we find Tony Petrella?" He was certified at 152# and that is where I will rank him (although he has been at 160# much of the year). If he can perform at this weight it's a great strategic move. A state qualifier at this weight class and defending district titleholder, he will be the favorite to win at this district. Gallik and Foley are right behind him and both have good years. Bowers and Skoff are both solid with a consistent record of placements. The sophomore Randolph and Deetz are likely to be underdogs here, but they have upset potential as does Mohney (Nelsonville York) and Rossiter (Shenandoah).

State qualifier Johns is back and heads a rather uninspiring group of 152's at Fairmont. He won handily at Fairfield and should do well here. Lowe, Blosser, and Clack would seem to be next best with solid district performances in their background. Donley and Stemen (Delphos Jefferson) are Northern possibilities with Schmidt and O'Neil (Blanchester) as other candidates. This district will again be where you will want to draw into.

**160 #**

**PROJECTED CHAMPION: KEN SANGER (LUTHERAN WEST)**

*Top Contenders*

2	Nelson (Tuslaw)	14	Angle (Ridgewood)
3	Sowers (Mohawk)	15	Allis (Brookville)
4	Hines (Barnesville)	16	Wolff (Genoa)
5	Blanton (Sandusky St. Mary)	17	Gallik (Northmor)
6	Smith (Madison Plains)	18	Richardson (Berkshire)
7	Shockey (Bluffton)	19	Osterman (Grandview Hts.)
8	Hatfield (Hillsdale)	20	Wilson (Dixie)
9	Braden (Norwalk St. Paul)	21	Scavuzzo (Woodridge)
10	Kennedy (Manchester)	22	Bereschik (Wellsville)
11	Ziegler (Mechanicsburg)	23	Knipp (Archbold)
12	Taylor (Springfield Northeastern)	24	Lewis (Northridge)
13	Powell (Cory Rawson)	25	Hulit (Crestview)

You ever watch a Jackie Chan movie? Two or three times during the show about a dozen guys will attack him – always one at a time --- and he'll foot sweep one, kick another, karate chop a third, and so. I think that's the way the 160's are going to feel as there are a multitude of solid contenders.

The Owens District is in a state of transition. State runner-up Estep who originally certified at this weight class the first week of the season will apparently compete at 171#. That certainly swings open the door for state qualifiers Cory Braden and Brett Sowers. Braden won at Richmond Hts. and was 2<sup>nd</sup> at Bellevue to the excellent Baker. Sowers was a sectional champ and state alternate at 140# last year twice losing go-to-state bouts by just two points. This year he is much bigger and the results have been impressive. He won the GMVWA – only one of two Division III wrestlers to do so—and was 3<sup>rd</sup> at the Gorman losing in overtime in the semi-finals. Wolff winner at Northwood and Sylvania Southview is also strong and should be a factor. He would have placed at Medina but had to default out of the competition. Hulit, an unfamiliar name to me, was a finalist at the Gorman and vaults into contention along with Knipp. The major variable here, though, is T.J. Blanton. A super athlete – all-state first team quarterback and star baseball player – he also knows some wrestling. Last year he was champion in the tough Sandusky Bay Conference ahead of two Division II state qualifiers. Then Baum moved up to 152# at tournament time and Blanton could not compete. Baum, of course, won the state title three weekends later. This year Blanton has been inactive as this is written, but is due back soon. If he is 100% physically and rust-free, he will challenge all in this top group.

Maple Hts. is equally crowded. Sanger, after a great freshman year at Holy Name, disappeared for about 18 months, then suddenly, resurfaced at Lutheran West last January. His late start kept him off most radar screens but that didn't last for long. He

won the Twinsburg District at 152# and then won three state bouts by a total of five points before losing to Baum in an overtime final. This year he has been vacillating between 171# and 160# with solid success. He was 1<sup>st</sup> at Wadsworth and 2<sup>nd</sup> at Elyria Catholic and looks primed for another run deep into the tournament. Nelson was a Division I state qualifier last year for Massillon Perry at 152#. Now at Tuslaw, he won at Elyria Catholic beating Sanger in overtime. Hatfield was the district runner-up to Sanger, losing a narrow 8-7 bout, but was only 1-2 at Columbus and being, very uncharacteristically, outscored 26-6 in those two bouts. This year he has won at the WIT, Black River, and Chippewa while beating some top-notch opponents. Kennedy, a state alternate last year at this weight class, recently dropped from 171#. He promptly won at Canal Fulton over a tough field and was 5<sup>th</sup> at Wadsworth, losing to Sanger in overtime. Richardson and Scavuzzo are other possibilities if the bracketing is bad.

After two weak weight classes, Fairmont has some real depth. Shockey, the state pole vault champion, has a rare opportunity to win an individual state title in two different sports. A state qualifier last year he went 1-2 including a big win over Hatfield. He won at Allen County and Van Buren and is one of six good wrestlers looking to gain one of four state berths. Ziegler was 2<sup>nd</sup> at 152# at this district and finished 8<sup>th</sup> in the state. Taylor is also a returning state qualifier after a district runner-up finish at 160#. I like state alternate Powell a lot. He is a pinner who won at Woodmore and Arcadia. I think Allis and Wilson can do almost as well with Lewis as a possible upset maker.

Things will be no easier at Steubenville. I really like Hines and he could be the surprise package at this class. A district finalist at 152# -- he drew the tough Jeremiah Hill in the first round at Value City. After losing early, he won three consecutive consolation bouts before losing to Hill once again and ended up 6<sup>th</sup>. He has been on fire in the Eastern District this year. He won at Shadyside while taking the Outstanding Wrestler Award and also won at St. Clairsville defeating West Virginia state champ Rhett Northcraft. At Barnesville he defeated the highly ranked Kyle Henry from Claymont for the title, completing a rare sweep of all three titles. Smith was a state semi-finalist at this class defeating John Weakley in the quarters before ending up 6<sup>th</sup>. Now down at 160# he recently won the Chertow Classic in a tough battle with Angle, 4-3, as he strives to get comfortable at this weight. The last two spots are up for grabs. The top four possibilities are Osterman, Angle, Gallik, and Bereschik. I particularly like state alternate Angle and he would be the favorite from this quartet to qualify.

**171 #**

**PROJECTED CHAMPION: NICK PURDUE (GENOA)**

Top Contenders

2	Estep (Collins Western Reserve)	16	Sneary (Allen East)
3	Reed (Crestview)	17	Yeary (Reading)
4	Weiner (Beachwood)	18	McCraith (Wickliffe)
5	Kelley (Waynedale)	19	Albright (Indian Valley)
6	Ball (Licking Hts.)	20	Hughes (Seneca East)
7	Ross (Clinton Massie)	21	Dahm (Monroeville)
8	Mack (Tinora)	22	Border (Ridgewood)
9	Klaus (Mechanicsburg)	23	Pertee (Smithville)
10	Miely (Sandusky St. Mary)	24	Brickner (McComb)
11	Buena (Utica)	25	Inks (West Jefferson)
12	Herbert (Middletown Madison)	26	Barrett (Chanel)
13	Owens (Harvest Prep)	27	Stoll (Norwalk St. Paul)
14	Kennedy (Manchester)	28	Fritter (Barnesville)
15	Martter (Woodridge)	29	Kinzy (Beallsville)

One of the unusual things about Division III this year is that there is not a single weight class where you can give a contender something like a 90% chance of winning. Most years there are three or four wrestlers that meet that standard making things more comfortable for forecasters.

Here at 171# I see Purdue and Estep as co-favorites. Purdue, now a junior, was 3<sup>rd</sup> last year losing only to eventual champ Shannon 9-8 in the quarterfinals. He has, this year, won at Sylvania Southview and Northwood while finishing a solid 2<sup>nd</sup> to Cleveland State recruit Kyle Chittick at Medina. I worry that he has not had a roster of opponents who have pushed him, but part of that may be because of the high quality of his own performance. Last year he wrestled Adam Olds (Sandusky St. Mary) twice – losing at the district level and then winning 5-4, in the third consolation round at Columbus. Had Olds not torn up his knee, thus foregoing his senior year, they would have been rated as co-favorites.

Estep is the defending district champion and state runner-up at 160#. He opened the season at 160# at Edison, but has been at 171# since then. He has been very successful at this weight class highlighted by his win over Division II state place winner Cody Van Buskirk in the Tiffin finals. Both he and Purdue were sectional champs at 160# last year, but did not meet at either the district or state level despite finishing 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup>.

There are four returning state qualifiers exiting the district at Maple Hts. At the top of my list is Weiner who has really flourished this year. Last year in Division II he earned a district 4<sup>th</sup>, meeting eventual champ Hackett in the first round and two-time placer Thompson in the second consolation round; needless to say he went 1-2. This year he

was 5<sup>th</sup> at Solon, but at Brecksville he finished a startling 2<sup>nd</sup>. In the semi-final he went toe-to-toe with the #1 seed Jeremy Foster and won 7-3. It was the best I'd ever seen him wrestle. Kelley was very impressive at Richmond Hts. shutting out McCraith in the final. He also won the Dies easily. He was also 1-2 at Columbus last year, but look for him to do more this time. McCraith returns after a state appearance last year and won at Hawken and was 2<sup>nd</sup> at Richmond Hts. I haven't seen state qualifier Martter in the agate for some time, but he certified at this class. He drew Purdue in the first round with predictable results. State alternate Nate Kennedy and state qualifier Pertee are also at this class and both have solid state potential. Add in Barrett and DeLong (Hillsdale) and that is eight solid performers. I would think a couple of them – like Kennedy or Pertee – might re-consider their move down from the far less crowded 189# class.

Purdue Estep, and returning state qualifier Hunter Reed should dominate at Owens. It will be a tremendous battle between them likely to continue at the state level. Reed was 2<sup>nd</sup> at the Gorman and came off several other strong performances. Mack was the state alternate at this class last year and should qualify. He was 2<sup>nd</sup> at Perrysburg to the excellent Magrum. After this quartet it's wide open. My top three choices are Miely, Hughes, and Dahm. All of whom have had good years. Miely, in particular, has shown real flashes of excellence while Hughes won at Plymouth and Van Buren. Stockmaster (Calvert) and Kirian (Mohawk) certainly have to rate as possibilities.

It seems to me that the Steubenville District is in a state of flux at this weight class. There is a lot of churning in the results without generation of a recognizable pattern. Owens is a returning state qualifier, but wrestles a schedule that is invisible to me. At the district level he won two very close bouts that could have gone either way. Wrestling a weaker schedule, I wonder whether he can duplicate that feat. Instead, Ball and Inks may well have passed him while Buena, 2<sup>nd</sup> at North Union, is also strong. That quartet will match up with solid boys from the Eastern District. Albright lost to Owens 4-3 in that 30 second tie breaker last year and has been a consistent placer for Indian Valley. Border is also good, finishing 6<sup>th</sup> in the district and continuing to do well in his area. Fritter, Kinzy, and Stevens (Monroe Central) are OVAC wrestlers who have outside shots at qualification.

There are some intriguing contenders at Fairmont. Cole Ross was a state qualifier at this district last year at 189# and has dropped to this weight class for 2006. He had a superb 35-3 record before the state meet, but went two and out there. He won the Wolfpack Classic and Bellbrook, and seems ready to win some bouts at Columbus. Klaus was a state qualifier at 145# last year so he has gone in the opposite direction of Ross. He had two big wins at the Ohio Duals, losing only to Miely. The other top contender is Jake Herbert. He won at Carlisle over state placer Zach Smith and at Edgewood while becoming the top 171-pounder in this area. Yearly upset Herbert, but lost badly to Sneary, so in what mode will he be at tourney time. Sneary, Kunk Coldwater), and Ely (Covington) look to battle for that fourth state berth with Saam (Lincolnview) or Michael (Carlisle) a long shot.

**189 #**

**PROJECTED CHAMPION: LOGAN BROWN (COVINGTON)**

Top Contenders

2	Riedy (Sandusky St. Mary)	14	Hesson (Caldwell)
3	Kirian (Mohawk)	15	Reier (Troy Christian)
4	Urbina (Archbold)	16	Wilson (Wayne Trace)
5	Stevens (Crestview)	17	Nester (Grand Valley)
6	Beisner (Versailles)	18	Mead (Paulding)
7	Porter (Berkshire)	19	Johnson (West Salem Northwestern)
8	Steigerwald (Kirtland)	20	Mahl (Seneca East)
9	Schwab (Clinton Massie)	21	Cummins (Cardington Lincoln)
10	Hannum (Brooklyn)	22	Baum (Brookfield)
11	Wasserbeck North Union)	23	Grear (Barnesville)
12	Rice (West Jefferson)	24	Earley (Blanchester)
13	Buckner (Woodmore)	25	Garee (Utica)
		26	Pierson (Purcell)

Covington High School has never had a State Wrestling Champion, but Logan Brown gives them their best chance since Craig Vanderhorst back in 1983 and 1984. Last year he compiled a 50-1 record and a 3<sup>rd</sup> place state finish losing only to two-time state champ Spencer Dye. While he does not wrestle a high profile schedule, he is now a two-time champion at the Mammoth GMVWA that includes some powerful squads. This year he won a 5-4 final over Division I Dattilo, but the bouts that most interested me were the two that preceded it. In the first one he defeated Russ Beisner 8-7 while in the next round he pinned Brock Kirian in 75 seconds. Both opponents will challenge him during the tournament process and it showed both sides of him --- the dominating pinner and the wrestler who could be upended.

His district at Fairmont will be a challenge. I mentioned Beisner and he has gotten bigger and better. He was one win from Columbus last year at 171#. This year he placed at GMVWA after his close loss to Brown and won big at Plymouth. He has great upset potential against the entire field. Schwab was a state qualifier at 160# last year, but lost early and often at States. He was 2<sup>nd</sup> at both the Wolfpack and Bellbrook and I don't think will match up well with Brown. Reier lost his first district bout at this class and then won three consolation rounds only to lose to Ross in his go-to-state bout. He got a 4<sup>th</sup> seed at Brecksville, but was overmatched going 1-2. He may struggle here, too. Earley and Pierson, two strong boys from the Cincinnati area, will be challengers for most of the bracket while Gourley (Mechanicsburg), if he competes, could also be a factor.

Brown's biggest challenge is likely to emerge from the Owens District. There are four powerful contenders there waiting to confront him. Riedy qualified at 171# last year taking 7<sup>th</sup> place with a 3-2 record. This year he has been a mainstay at Sandusky St. Mary wrestling at both this weight and at 215#. He was perfect at the Ohio Duals. Last

year Kirian was 4<sup>th</sup> at this district losing to Riedy, 7-2, in the consolation finals. This year he was 4<sup>th</sup> at the GMVWA and won the Gorman. Urbina was the state alternate at 171# losing to Kirian by five. He wrestles a solid dual schedule. Then there is Stevens. He was a state qualifier at 189# last year, but drew Brown in the first round and lost 10-1. This year he was 3<sup>rd</sup> at the Gorman --- his only loss to Kirian, 9-5. If the bracketing is good, these are the four that should qualify. If not, Buckner, the Woodmore winner, would be a top candidate with Mahl and Mead in reserve.

I see very little at the Maple Hts. district. I would not be surprised to see some of the excess 171's travel here. I look for the sophomore Porter to survive and qualify after just missing out at 171# last year. He was 3<sup>rd</sup> at Wadsworth and had no problems at the Ohio Duals. I believe he is certified at 171#, but I think we'll find him here. Steigerwald and Hannum were finalists at Richmond Hts. with Steigerwald winning 12-9. I think he'll maintain that margin, but both should qualify. While this top trio seems marginal, the next threesome of Nester, Johnson, and Baum may be just as good. Again several of these boys have the option of 171# or 189#. Henderson or Salvaggi (Richmond Hts.) could also play a role here.

The Steubenville District is equally weak and, like at Maple Hts., we may see some movement by the lower-rated 171's. Last year's district bracket at this weight class only had five underclassmen – two of whom ended the year with losing records and one (Reichard) who moved to Division II. So there is not a lot of experience here. I rate Wasserbeck the best primarily because of his 6-2 win over Hesson, an OVAC placer. Rice is right behind Wasserbeck and this trio likely has the best chance for a low place at states for this district. Cummins and Gear are two other thoughts with Garee also in the mix.

**215 #**

**PROJECTED CHAMPION: NICK GIRLIE (AYERSVILLE)**

Top Contenders

2	Davis (Grandview Hts.)	15	Tiell (Hopewell-Loudon)
3	Studer (Mohawk)	16	Bowersox (Highland Sparta)
4	Bacci (Independence)	17	Wasserman (Fremont St. Joseph)
5	Hershey (West Salem Northwestern)	18	Clark (Martins Ferry)
6	Carr (Northmor)	19	Rhodes (Garrettsville Garfield)
7	Horn (Shenandoah)	20	Huber (Dixie)
8	Neff (Waynedale)	21	Stoll (Norwalk St. Paul)
9	Hooper (Manchester)	22	Gord (Dayton Christian)
10	Hughes (Tinora)	23	Zang (Hartley)
11	Taylor (Blanchester)	24	Keeney (Purcell)
12	Bostleman (Archbold)	25	Morosko (Tuslaw)
13	French (Middletown Madison)	26	Wagner (Triad)
14	Hunt (Calvert)	27	Matusik (River)

I remember when they added the 215# class there were naysayers (aren't there always) who said that the small schools would never be able to field boys there. Well, I hope they've looked at the bracket sheets the last few years as there has been excellent depth for some time – and this year is no different. I count at least eight possible winners spread out over three of the four Division III districts.

There are some interesting competitors at Owens. The top two were both state qualifiers, but come from diametrically opposed directions. Girlie was the district runner-up at this class last year losing to eventual state champ Van Sickle in the finals. He then finished 3<sup>rd</sup> at Value City defeating in the process returning 215's Bacci, Carr, and Davis. This year he is undefeated though he has not been overly tested to date. Studer was a state qualifier at 160# and then went 1-2 at Columbus. He has been excellent at this much higher weight finishing 2<sup>nd</sup> at the GMVWA including a win over the very tough Oney Snyder. I think there is a solid gap between these two and the next twosome of Tiell and Hughes. Tiell was a takedown from Columbus last year at 189#, but Girlie handled him easily, 14-4, at Woodmore. Girlie also beat Hughes in the dual suggesting that it'll be Studer who'll most challenge him. After that, there are some other possibilities that include Hunt, Wasserman, Bostleman, and Stoll.

It is very strong and crowded at Steubenville. Somewhat unusual, three of the four qualifiers at this weight class return for another go around. Carr was the district champ, but caught Girlie in the quarter-finals, lost, and was quickly eliminated. Davis, on the other hand was a semi-finalist eventually ending up 4<sup>th</sup> – losing the consolation final to Girlie. Interestingly, Girlie beat both of them by exactly the same score, 8-5. Horn, a district 4<sup>th</sup> never got started at Columbus and did not survive to Friday. Carr was 3<sup>rd</sup> at Marion Harding this year losing to Clum in the semi-finals and 5<sup>th</sup> at the Gorman losing to Studer and Hershey. I think it's possible that Davis may have erased that three point

deficit to Carr from last year's district final. Horn again dominates in the East, but we will have to assume that he still trails the Columbus duo. Jefferis and Clark both placed at the OVAC with the former a finalist. Bowersox and Zang have potential here with a squadron of possibilities behind them.

When I first started telecasting I would occasionally know an older sister of a wrestler, then, somewhat later I might be acquainted with a mother. Now, as time goes on, it's usually their grandmother I know. All this and it has not seemed that long a time period. At any rate, I think there are four wrestlers at Maple Hts. that really matter. State qualifier Bacci is back with a 30-2 record and titles at several tournaments (Hawken, Elyria Catholic, etc.) He was 0-2 at the state level, but he was a very light 215-pounder last year. Now he is substantially bigger and stronger and his narrow loss to Division I Cortez Robinson only cements my belief that he is the best here. Girlie, by the way, defeated him 8-4 in Columbus last year – one point different than Carr and Davis. Hershey lost to Bacci in the consolation finals last year at this district and also went 0-2 at the States. His recent 8-5 win over Carr suggests that the top half-dozen boys are very closely matched. Neff looked like a world-beater at Richmond Hts. crushing folks with speed and strength. Since then he was 2<sup>nd</sup> at the Dies finishing ahead of some excellent talent. And, again, the Hooper twins are at it – both certifying at 215# and then switching on and off at this weight class. My guess it will be Greg who was 3<sup>rd</sup> at Wadsworth and 5<sup>th</sup> at the Dies. This is really an excellent quartet. The pairing will have to be good for all four to qualify with three exiting the same sectional. The backup here would likely be Rhodes or Morosko.

While the three other districts are loaded, Fairmont will struggle to find four qualifiers with winning chances at Value City. Taylor, a district semi-finalist, last year seems best with French and Huber as strong possibilities. French, for example, won at Carlisle (while Huber was 3<sup>rd</sup>), and was 2<sup>nd</sup> at Edgewood to the excellent Truster. Both boys have flashy records, but some of the competition has been suspect. Gord pinned Hutchinson (Allen East) at Madeira and may be fourth best at this district although Kenney may surprise. Wagner is another option.

**Hvy.**

**PROJECTED CHAMPION: CAMERON WADE (CHANEL)**

*Top Contenders*

2	Taylor (Swanton)	15	Tahy (Elmwood)
3	Ruffer (Archbold)	16	Stewart (Brooklyn)
4	Harding (West Jefferson)	17	Johnson (Utica)
5	Campbell (Black River)	18	Endicott (Plymouth)
6	Gonzales (Paulding)	19	Bishop (Tusky Valley)
7	Phifer (Berkshire)	20	Burch (Sandusky St. Mary)
8	Ishmael (North Baltimore)	21	Fritz (Delphos St. John)
9	Hooper (Manchester)	22	Coole (Martins Ferry)
10	Salyers (Mechanicsburg)	23	Saylor (Nelsonville York)
11	Griffiths (Wayne Trace)	24	Hale (Preble Shawnee)
12	Robey (Licking Hts)	25	Foote (Liberty Center)
13	Rankin (Elyria Catholic)	26	Read (West Salem Northwestern)
14	Herrington (Blanchester)	27	Bruce (Bellaire)
		28	Hughes (Wellington)

There has never been a state finals rematch at the heavyweight class in Division III. It could happen in 2006. But there are, in the words of Howard Cosell, a plethora of 275-pounders with the talent to prevent it. Both Wade, who won, and Ruffer are back and look to be better than before. However, their competition has gotten deeper in scope and more athletic on the mat. In addition, neither of these boys won district titles last year suggesting that they had not overmatched the competition.

Last year Wade began the season as a 215-pounder and then moved up to heavyweight for the holiday tournaments. He used quickness, conditioning, and excellent coaching to wind a boatload of bouts. Beating Taylor and Ruffer back-to-back got him the deserved state title. This year he has won at both Brecksville and North Canton beating highly rated Division I competitors in both finals – and he no longer is winning on guile. A solid 250-pounder, Wade has now become a hammer who can score and pin.

Wade exits an extremely competitive district. Amazingly, all four placers from 2<sup>nd</sup> through 5<sup>th</sup> return and so do 13 of the 16 boys in the district bracket sheet. Campbell pinned Wade in the district quarter-finals and finished 2<sup>nd</sup>. However, he ended up 1-2 in Columbus losing to Taylor in the quarters. Close to the limit in size he was 5<sup>th</sup> at the very tough Dies and won at Firestone. Phifer, short and stocky, also qualified out of the fourth spot, and also went 1-2. He is very difficult to score against and wins a lot of defensive battles. He was 4<sup>th</sup> at Solon and 3<sup>rd</sup> at Wadsworth losing only to Nicholson. He had a controversial day at the Ohio Duals when he was disqualified against Wade for excessive stalling and then was dubiously pinned in the St. Mary's match and penalized a team point on a headgear violation in the 33-32 loss. A top contender would have to be Nick Hooper, who, outweighed by 50 pounds, beat Division II state runner-up

Nathan Sharp, 11-5, to win the Dies. It was one of the biggest upsets of the year, and it came on the heels of a 5-4 win over Weber in the quarter-finals. I keep wondering was it all an illusion or is Hooper for real. Rankin, champ at Elyria Catholic and 5<sup>th</sup> at the CIT is a player here. Last year Stewart rode him out in the 30 second tiebreaker to eliminate him, but this year he pinned him. Also on my list are Read, Ellsworth (Grand Valley), and Hughes all of whom could pull the big upset.

The Owens District is also deep in excellent heavyweights. Ruffer is the returning state runner-up, but like Wade lost at the district level. He did not look sharp early in the year, but he knows how to win. Taylor was the district champ and a state semi-finalist losing to Wade 3-1 and finishing 5<sup>th</sup>. He had built up a powerhouse record until Ishmael caught and pinned him at Van Buren. I still think Taylor is the best at this district. Ishmael was a great junior high wrestler who has started to capitalize on his talent this year. The mammoth red-headed Tathy won easily at Richmond Hts. after getting off his back in the semis to beat Ellsworth. The wildcard here is Gonzales. Missing a hand he has overcome that handicap and fashioned a great year for Paulding. I don't think he is overmatched against anyone here, but he doesn't have the experience that top trio possesses. Endicott or Burch are other possibilities, but watch for the pocket sized Foote who uses speed to win.

Harding is the only returning state qualifier at Steubenville. He drew Wade in the first round losing 6-2 and then failed to win his first consolation. Rather short he looks immensely strong at 275# and was an excellent 3<sup>rd</sup> at Medina – splitting two bouts with Sizemore and beating Holland and Foote. He won outright at North Union and was 2<sup>nd</sup> to Salyers at West Jefferson. Robey would seem to be the only other Central District wrestler with a chance to qualify. Most of the best heavyweights in the Eastern District are Division II with Coole and Bruce being the Division III exceptions. Bishop, though, in that middle area, has had some great victories winning at Beallsville and the Chertow. The huge Saylor has done well in Southeast, but may have trouble at the district level.

As we saw at Steubenville, the Fairmont District has only one returning state qualifier. Griffith went 1-2 at Columbus and has won this year at several tournaments. He should qualify, but it is likely to be a struggle at Columbus once again. Salyers might be the best at this district after checking out his win at West Jefferson and his two falls at the Ohio Duals (but losing to the 215# Davis). Herrington should also be a factor here Fritz, Hassett (Carlisle), and Hale also possibilities.

## TEAMS

1. Sandusky St. Mary They are going for an unprecedented fifth consecutive title in Division III and their seventh title overall, but it won't be easy. Chanel has as many estimated points so it will come down to execution. The key elements are heavy point scoring by Guerra and Hermes, some help by Miely, and, most of all, Blanton performing at peak efficiency. They can't afford any missteps this year.
2. Chanel Always a contender this team has to be the co-favorite with Sandusky St. Mary. We expect Koballa, Wade Gardella, and Boing to score heavily, but they need some solid help from their second tier performer. Specifically Brunnett and Chmura have to come up big and a Barrett or a Schaefer have to have the weekend of their life. It could come down to Wade in the last bout of the year.
3. Berksire The Freeman twins are beautifully placed and should score heavily. I look for Phifer, Jenkins, and, maybe, a Porter to gain a middle to high place. Now that Hartley is gone they probably don't have enough to catch the top two, but stranger things have happened.
4. Beachwood Lipp and Lerer are both at brutally difficult weight classes, but they will still score a boatload of points. However, they'll only nail down fourth place if Weiner performs at a very high level – and he has shown signs of just that. Marmaros could also be a helper.
5. Troy Christian It all has to come from the young lightweights. Casey Thome and Sergent are possible finalists while the young Thome and Toal should be able to score at the state level. If a Hancock or Reier can help, this position will be secure.
6. Archbold The big men Ruffer, Urbina, and Bostleman have to do the heavy lifting (what else are big men for), but state qualifiers Weirauch and Bernath along with Redd have to provide some aid, too. This could be a stretch, but there are a number of possible scorers.
7. Grandview Hts. The middle trio of Ells, Murray, and Wise can all score at the state level, and Davis could be a finalist at 215#. Osterman could be a real plus but he is at the difficult 160-pound weight class.

8. Western Reserve      Estep and Reer are both possible finalists, but they have to figure out the best weight class for both of them. Butler should be able to help, but where will other scoring come from?
  
9. Mohawk                All their scoring will come at 152# or more. I like Sowers and Studer to do very well with Cartwright and Kirian to help out. This quartet will have to be error free because there is no help anywhere else.
  
10. Pleasant                This is really going out on a limb – but think about. If Pope and Wilson came back at 103# and 119#, they could be top four placers. Give Steve Wilson the same placement at 145# and that is top ten points.