

2008 HIGH SCHOOL WRESTLING FORECAST

(37th ANNUAL EDITION)

Written By:
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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 twelve-day period ending January 26, based on the information available at that time. Because this material was written by that time (and in most cases somewhat earlier) 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 ranked will move up or down for competitive reasons facilitated by the new rules which make it so much easier to do so. In fact, some of those moves may well be precipitated by information contained within this document.

As I said last year, the production of this report from my handwritten copy is no easy job. Not only do the typists have to read my writing, fill in words I forgot to include, and correct my punctuation and sentence structure, but they have to do it in rapid-fire fashion. This year my long suffering first cousin, Nancy Dimitris, typed two of the sections (each about 70 handwritten pages) going well beyond family duty or responsibility. Vicki Billow, who typed Division I, got off a sickbed to complete the task in her usual rapid and efficient manner. Next time you see them congratulate each for surviving this ordeal and thank them for all the work they do.

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 wrestling website:

<http://www.baumspage.com>

<http://www.brecksvillewrestling.com>

<http://www.ohiowrestler.com>

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

BRAKEMAN REPORT AUDIT

(How first choices fared)

2007

Won Title	27
Finished Second	9
Third	2
Fourth	3
Lower than Fourth	1 *
Total	42

*Finished 7th

BRAKEMAN REPORT AUDIT

(Won State Title)

Ranked First	27
Ranked Second	8
Ranked Third	4
Ranked Fourth	1
Ranked Lower Than 4 th	2**

** #6 Sulzer won at 130# in D-2 and #10 Stiltner won at 145# in D-3

NUMBER OF FALLS

	<u>DIVISION I</u>		<u>DIVISION II</u>		<u>DIVISION III</u>	
	<u>Championship</u>	<u>Consolation</u>	<u>Championship</u>	<u>Consolation</u>	<u>Championship</u>	<u>Consolation</u>
Total	43	31	39	46	53	31
%	74		85		84	
	17.6%		20.2%		20.0%	

FIRST ROUND MATCHUPS

	<u>Division I</u>	<u>Division II</u>	<u>Division III</u>	<u>Overall</u>	<u>%</u>
District Champ vs. 4's	51-5	53-3	50-6	154-15	92.7
2's vs. 3's	31-25	30-26	37-19	98-70	58.3

2007 DISTRICT RESULTS

(Only Inter-District Bouts)

	<u>Perry</u>	<u>Mentor</u>	<u>Darby</u>	<u>Fairfield</u>
Championship Rounds	61.5%	45.8%	43.9%	46.5%
Consolation Rounds	55.1%	55.9%	44.2%	43.4%
Total	59.0%	51.2%	44.0%	45.1%
	<u>Firestone</u>	<u>Ontario</u>	<u>Steubenville</u>	<u>Goshen</u>
Championship Rounds	53.2%	52.8%	45.9%	47.5%
Consolation Rounds	58.8%	46.2%	46.3%	47.5%
Total	55.8%	50.0%	46.1%	47.5%
	<u>Maple Hts.</u>	<u>Owens</u>	<u>Heath</u>	<u>Fairmont</u>
Championship Rounds	54.1%	46.3%	49.1%	50.0%
Consolation Rounds	47.6%	51.6%	52.1%	48.3%
Total	51.3%	48.9%	50.5%	49.2%

DIVISION I

103

PROJECTED CHAMPION: GUS SAKO (ST. EDWARD)

Top Contenders

2	Mines (Maple Hts.)	16	Kocol (West Carrollton)
3	Corrill (Moeller)	17	Hauser (Brush)
4	Hannan (Massillon Perry)	18	Caston (Sandusky)
5	Chorney (Solon)	19	Higgins (Central Crossing)
6	Toth (Riverside)	20	Terry (Butler)
7	Boehm (Watkins Memorial)	21	Nein (Reynoldsburg)
8	Manley (Holland Springfield)	22	Gray (Wadsworth)
9	Ague (Fitch)	23	Garcia (Clay)
10	Wright (Lima Sr.)	24	Schultz (Elder)
11	Ralston (Lorain Southview)	25	Keeling (St. Xavier)
12	Pasquale (Boardman)	26	Slater (Olmsted Falls)
13	Schilling (Edgewood)	27	Young (Mentor)
14	DiSabato (Davidson)	28	Boyd (Marion Franklin)
15	Artrip (Mason)	29	Mauro (Centerville)

If we were in the odds making industry one would have to say that Sako is probably the strongest favorite we've had at this weight class in Division I since the days of Kyle Ott. A junior high state champ and a Cadet Nationals place winner he has tremendous ability and experience. He was 4th at the Ironman losing one-point decisions to Stieber and DiJulius and 1st at the MIT—beating Toth in the finals 11-1, the closest of his five bouts. He beat Corrill 7-0 at the Ohio Duals and has only one other loss--to the pesky DiJulius, 1-0. Absent injury or other misfortune he should win relatively easily.

Sako exits a good district, and one with some interesting questions. Manley was very impressive at last year's district winning three bouts and finishing as the state alternate. Clark beat him badly in the semi-finals, but that was no disgrace. When I saw that he was back at 103# I saw immediate competition for Sako. It hasn't happened --yet. He was 8th at the MIT -- losing three times including by fall to Hauser. At Perrysburg he wrestled Cramer in the final and suffered a tough overtime defeat. I still think he can be a real force at this weight class. Jevon Wright had a 6th at last year's district losing twice to Manley. He is a prodigious scorer with speed and strength. This year he has struggled with the weight and injuries, but when healthy he can be very good. He won on technical fall against the excellent Hunlock (at 112#) and was 1st at Lima. He is an upset threat - - and, maybe, much more. Ralston has won four tournaments (Darby, Waite, Southview and Fremont Ross) and has shown the consistency that others have lacked. I wait to see him against the real tough guys. Garcia and Caston have been steady placers, but how they fit in might depend on how forceful Manley and Wright are. Slater, runner-up at the Dies, also has good chances here.

Corrill heads the group at Fairfield. He won the SWOCA in dominating fashion and was even more dominant at the CIT--except for a first round scare. In the last three rounds he won 16-4, 13-2, and 15-4. He did not place at the Ironman and his only loss since then was a 7-0 shutout to Sako at the Ohio Duals. I think there is a substantial gap between Corrill and the rest of the Cincinnati – Dayton boys. There are two sets of four to consider. In the southern part of the district Artrip, Schultz, Keeling and Mauro serve as contenders. Schultz and Keeling have met in the consolation finals at both the CIT and SWOCA--splitting the two bouts, but neither placed at Brecksville. Artrip, 5th at the SWOCA won at Mason and Dublin while Mauro was 1st at Fairfield. The second quartet is in the Dayton area and could compete either at Darby or Fairfield. As you recall, the two Dayton sectionals select from the area schools--one section heading north and the other south. We won't know who goes where until after this report is completed. In most cases I assign wrestlers to one or the other districts strictly based on my own guesses. It likely is a poor match for the eventual reality. At any rate that second quartet consists of Terry, Schilling, Kocol and Williamson. Of this group only Kocol has past district experience winning two bouts at Darby last year. He won at Wapakoneta, but was 2nd at Edgewood to Schilling by fall. Schilling may be the front-runner here, but has not wrestled a demanding schedule. Also look for Terry who was 2nd at the GMVWA.

Depending on the Southwest District split Darby could be very crowded. Boehm was a Division II state qualifier last year, but drew state runner-up Inghram in the first round and failed to place. He was 1st at Hamilton Twp. and has been a consistent winner all year. He was 7th at the MIT - - losing to Hannan and Mirman, but defeating Manley. The young DiSabato was a junior high state place winner last year and has done well at Davidson. He was 8th at Brecksville in a very tough weight class - - losing by a single point to state place winner Dakota Hayes in the third round and Ague. He had wins over Young, Schultz, and Tschantz. The active Higgins and Nein seem next best with a steady placement history. Boyd winner at Licking Hts. and Bishop Ready should not be overlooked.

In a decision that would seem to defy common sense and logic the powers that be have made the Perry District--clearly the most difficult in recent years (see chart)--even tougher. By switching around the sectional placements they have made sure that wrestlers who clearly deserve state qualification will be disappointed, while those with far less credentials are gerrymandered in. This is particularly true up through 152# where the Perry District is loaded with top talent. At this class there are at least six very solid, state-worthy wrestlers. Mines--transferred over from what was the Mentor District last year—where he was the district runner-up at this weight class. At Columbus he lost to White in the quarterfinals and ended up 6th. This year he has compiled a 22-1 record with 1st at Kenston and a 2nd at Hudson to the hard charging Mitch. Pasquale is also a returning state placer who twice lost by a point to Farber at the state level. This year he was 2nd to Mines at Kenston (losing 12-4), but did not place at the Top Gun. Last year he beat Ague to get to Columbus and may have to do so again. Chorney has won at Solon and North Coast and has past district experience. He looked very good at Solon.

The surprise here, however, is the hard charging Hannan. It's amazing the great run of 103's at Massillon Perry in the last decade or so--Smith, McBurney, Vickers, Hartley, Riggs, Johnston, Genetin and White--all placers and many state champs. Hannan is no exception. He won the Big 8 and was 4th at the MIT losing to Sako in the semi-finals. Toth was 2nd at the MIT and won at Riverside. He was 3rd at the Top Gun splitting two bouts with Brascetta and beating Pasquale 8-2. Ague was one bout from States last year while Hauser, Zingale, Young and Gray are all very good. I'm thinking Mines, Hannan, and Chorney are the front-runners with Toth and Ague close behind. Then Pasquale and the others need to pull a couple of upsets to qualify. It will be a topsy-turvy struggle at Perry.

112

PROJECTED CHAMPION: SAM WHITE (MASSILLON PERRY)

Top Contenders

2	Clark (St. Edward)	14	Belcher (Marysville)
3	Mitcheff (Elyria)	15	Gray (Wadsworth)
4	Robinson (St. Ignatius)	16	Dempsey (Westlake)
5	Herrington (Sycamore)	17	Gerberick (Lakota West)
6	Farber (St. Xavier)	18	Polley (Maple Hts.)
7	Bolger (Strongsville)	19	Marsico (Pickerington North)
8	Millar (Davidson)	20	Regan (Miamensburg)
9	Riegle (Springboro)	21	Wimer (Central Crossing)
10	Conn (Teays Valley)	22	McNulty (Mayfield)
11	Zupancic (Barberton)	23	MacVeigh (Moeller)
12	Inchaurregui (Lorain Southview)	24	Gonzalez (Mason)
13	McSorley (Edgewood)	25	Kunzi (Watkins Memorial)

The top four at this weight class are light years ahead of the rest of a good field. They are all tremendous and have great credentials both in youth wrestling (Junior High States Cadet Nationals, etc.) and at the high school level. Three of the four exit at the same district that may well require careful scrutiny by the seeding system. It is conceivable, even somewhat probable, that White would have to beat all three of them to become a repeat champion. Should White and Clark win their respective districts (with Mitcheff and Robinson 2nd and 3rd at Harding) - then that scenario arises.

I'm choosing White, not only because he is a superb wrestler, but by March he will be the biggest of the quartet. He'll be most vulnerable early when weight control is still critical which is why the pairing may be so difficult for him. White has also improved - - especially offensively--and maintains a great defense. I know Clark beat him at Medina --and soundly--but these boys know each other so well (they've trained together for many years) that the next meeting could have a very different outcome. And we have no assurance that it will be Clark versus White. Robinson came about as close to

winning as possible losing to Clark in last year's quarterfinals while Mitcheff has won a state title.

White lost two bouts the first week of last year and then won the last 41 in a run including two over Clark. They were uncannily similar with Clark always the aggressor and White playing defense. I frankly found it unbelievable that they had equal stalling calls in the state final--even more so when you review the DVD. This year White lost in the Ironman finals to Stieber and to Clark at the MIT. He is better than last year and that should bring no comfort to his opposition.

Clark has been brilliant again this year. Only a loss to the incomparable Taylor has kept him from perfection. Better on his feet than White he has to contend with a bigger White come States. An indication of this quartet's dominance was Clark's bout with the very fine wrestler and district champ Zac Conn at the Ohio Duals which Clark won 17-2. Should the bracketing put Clark, alone, in one side of the bracket, it would be a huge plus for him.

Robinson was 3rd last year with five crushing state wins and the controversial loss to Clark. He has been injured virtually the entire season so we have yet to see him at his best. However, if he is healthy he can beat anyone here. Mitcheff was the 103# state champ two years ago - - beating Ciccarello, Touris and Genetin in order. Last year he was a state semi-finalist losing this time to Touris in one of those extended bouts 3-2 otu. This year he was a semi-finalist at the Ironman losing to Clark and finishing 4th and was 3rd at Brecksville losing to Tessari and beating Robinson.

With Clark, Mitcheff and Robinson at Harding, there is very little margin for error at Harding with the bracket gods likely in ascendancy. Connor Dempsey and Narcisco Inchaurregui are two young wrestlers that have really been outstanding with the latter boy, for example, winning three tournaments and placing 2nd in another.

White stands alone at Perry. Bolger, very likely the second best, was just overwhelmed by White at the Big 8 losing by fall in the second period. However, Bolger won at Solon and was 5th at Brecksville losing to state runner-up Inghram and Robinson. The only other district placer at this district is Zupancic, down from 119#, who was 6th. He was 3rd at the Dies and 7th at the MIT and has good qualification chances. After that I'm thinking about Gray, Polley, or the exciting freshman McNulty. It'll be wide open for the fourth state berth with Zupancic certainly not guaranteed the third.

After the top quartet, the best 112-pounder in the state has probably been Herrington. Undefeated he has won at Sycamore, Fairfield and the SWOCA and he has been winning by large margins. Only Farber, for example, gave him a match at the SWOCA. He failed to get out of sectionals last year at 119#, but it has been a totally different story this year. State qualifier Riegle was second at Fairfield to Herrington and 2nd at the GMVWA to Taylor. He went 1-2 at States last year and seems ready to place. Farber did place at 103# getting a 7th after winning this district at 103#. He was a recent 1st at the CIT and a strong 3rd at the SWOCA giving Herrington a good bout (5-3). He

did not wrestle at Brecksville. This is a very good trio of leaving state qualifier Gerberick little margin for error. He failed to place at the SWOCA or Brecksville and depending on the direction of some of the Dayton wrestlers could be in jeopardy of staying home. Gonzalez and MacVeigh are two other names that come to mind.

There are a lot of possibilities at Darby. I count, under my dispersal system, three returning state qualifiers at this district. They were a combined 2-6 at the state meet, but the experience should make for improvements this year. Millar has been very successful the past couple years winning steadily in both tournaments and dual meets. The big tournament on his schedule was Brecksville where he finished 7th. His two losses were to Robinson and Mitcheff. Conn was the district champ at this class and had a tough early draw losing to Mitcheff and Hillock. He was 1st at Darby and St. Clairsville. State qualifier McSorley was 1st at Edgewood and 2nd at Darby this year. He'll be pushed by a bevy of good 112's. Regan was 3rd at the GMVWA losing only to Taylor. He won two district bouts last year beating Marsico, but losing badly to Millar. Belcher and Marsico have both been steady placers with the later winning at both Wapakoneta and St. X. That leaves Wimer, Kunzi, and maybe, Seiple (Coffman) with a difficult path to qualification.

119

PROJECTED CHAMPION: KYLE CICCARELLO (BRUSH)

Top Contenders

2	Fuller (Waite)	14	Comar (Twinsburg)
3	Henry (Solon)	15	Bivenour (Olentangy)
4	Shepherd (Mason)	16	Cobos (St. Edward)
5	Lawrence (Westlake)	17	Campbell (Anderson)
6	Hillock (Massillon Perry)	18	K. Leedy (Start)
7	Shivener (Springboro)	19	Lardiere (St. Charles)
8	Wallander (Moeller)	20	Speelman (Mansfield Madison)
9	Marks (Brecksville)	21	Davis (Lakota West)
10	Roeth (Miamsburg)	22	Jones (Beavercreek)
11	McCombs (Marysville)	23	Gyorfi (Lorain Southview)
12	Bencivenni (Eastlake North)	24	Flores (Fremont Ross)
13	Stoll (Coffman)	25	Smith (Mt. Vernon)

Every year there seems to be one weight class in Division I that seems clearly less strong than the others. A weight class where opportunity flows in wide streams, and state placement and state titles seem somewhat more attainable. It's not that there aren't any number of excellent wrestlers competing, but somehow there is a different "feel" to the weight class. Last year I felt it at 130# and the previous year at 152#. The problem at most weight classes is that there are too many candidates for Valhalla, at weight classes like this there never seems to be enough. Ironically an almost sure winner here, Sammy White, has for team considerations made the tough cut to 112#. It

gets Hillock in the lineup, but it, in my mind, reduces his title probability on the order of 30%.

In the end it would seem to come down to a three-way struggle featuring Ciccarello, Henry and Fuller, but if that's the case, then there is a reasonable chance of a surprise winner--an excellent freshman, somebody enjoying the competitive weekend of his life, or a good wrestler who, defying the odds, gets every break. Ciccarello was 5th two years ago and got trapped in that ridiculously difficult bottom half of the 112# draw last year. This year he was 2nd at Waite and Medina and 1st at North Canton. His two losses were to Fuller and state champion Garbrandt in overtime.

Henry was 5th at 119# last year--losing to Fields in overtime--and to Pretty in the consolations. This year he was 1st at Solon and 2nd at North Coast to Lawrence. Fuller wrestled extremely well last year at this class. He was the district champ--beating McLaughlin in the finals. He was then a state semi-finalist at Columbus beating Dukes and state runner-up Rini (8-1). Fields beat him by three in the semis but Fuller pinned Harger before losing to Pretty and finishing 5th. Those two state losses were double what he had the rest of the year. He was 1st at Waite beating Ciccarello, 5-2, but only 7th at Brecksville.

So, it's "by guess and by golly" time. Since Ciccarello and Henry are both at Perry, Fuller would likely have to beat them both. I think he matches up better with Ciccarello than the tall, slender, Henry, but it's a big order to win both. Henry, I believe, will also be the bigger boy on Saturday night if he can get there, but I don't think he matches up well with Ciccarello. Thus if A beats B and B beat C and C beat A who do you chose, I'm going with C for Ciccarello.

Ciccarello and Henry emerge from the same district and that squeezes the rest of the competition. There may be three other state qualifiers at this venue. Marks wrestled brilliantly at last year's districts at 125# unexpectedly making the finals before losing to Horner. He maintained that momentum at Columbus beating Krummert in the first round and losing in overtime to McGuire. Dinda stopped him in the consolation and he finished 8th. He has now dropped to 119# (he sees the opportunity) and after wrestling at 125# much of year. He was a semi-finalist at Brecksville before being pinned by Pretty and losing a one pointer to Chapman. In his first event at 119# he was 5th at the Dies losing to Gilchrist and Ford. Bencivenni was a district 3rd at this class last year, but got Harger in the first round and failed to place. Not in many large tournaments he continues to forge good results in duals. However, his 6th place finish at Solon (admittedly early in the year) was not encouraging. Twinsburg will either put state qualifier Kretz or the exciting Comar, on the mat and either is a threat. A key figure is Hillock. Wrestling for Massillon Jackson last year he grabbed the last district qualifying spot, and won two state bouts and finishing 8th (losing to current teammate Genetin for 7th). Now in at 119th he was 7th at Medina losing in overtime to Stoll and was 2nd at the Big 8 to Kovach. He went 2-1 at the state duals beating Wallander. Wenger (Wadsworth) or Montoney (Stow) are long shots here.

If anyone is going to challenge the Perry District qualifiers it could come from Fairfield. On paper Wallander would seem best. At 125# last year (like Marks) he wrestled a great district, after coming in with a 13-14 record, reaching the finals--tough schedules can pay off. At States he beat Moore, Channel and Marks to finish 7th. This year he was 2nd at the SWOCA and 3rd at the CIT losing to Martin of Watterson. At the Ohio Duals he beat Cobos and lost to Hillock. He should place again. The two wrestlers to watch are Shepherd and Shivener. Last year, as a freshman, he pulled off one of the shocking upsets at Columbus beating Genetin 10-8 in overtime. It was the high water mark since he lost the next three to finish 6th, but he showed his capability. This year he won at St. X and Mason and was 3rd at the SWOCA losing to the young Carpenter. If he gets on a hot streak he'll be tough to stop. Shivener is that "scary good" kind of freshman able to beat anyone. He was the junior high state champ last year, and has been very good this year. He won at Fairfield and was 2nd to Neibert at the GMVWA while pinning Roeth. Watch out! Roeth is a solid choice for Columbus. He was a state alternate at this weight class. This year he was 2nd at North Canton and 3rd at GMVWA. The freshman Ty Davis is another fine wrestler who could score big at this weight class. There are three other possibilities. Campbell has won at Edgewood and Marion Harding and was 2nd at Fairfield while Weiskettel (Sycamore) won at Sycamore, Trauth (St. Xavier) might be the long shot here.

The Darby District has a group of solid 119's. McCombs was 1st at Wapakoneta and 5th at Brecksville. He lost to Sergent in the championship bracket, but had some solid consolation wins. He was, in fact, the highest placing Division I wrestler. A district finalist last year he drew Shepherd in the first round at States losing 11-7. Stoll is likely second best here. He has not been lucky in past years, but this should be his time. He lost two tough district bouts last year (3-1 to Roeth and 5-4 OT to Bivenour and didn't earn a second trip to States. This year he has been 1st at Upper Arlington and Coffman and 6th at the MIT--beating Hillock. State qualifier Bivenour lost to Henry by four in the first round and is also in his senior season. He was 2nd recently to Gyorf at the Hilliard Darby Tourney. I like Lardiere for the last spot with Jones and, maybe, Gorman runner-up Smith as possibilities. Jordan is another thought.

Fuller leads the pack at Harding, but it's a tenuous hold. Lawrence was a state semi-finalist before losing to White and Robinson and finishing 5th. He is an exceptional wrestler who is the only in-state wrestler to beat Henry this year—at the North Coast Tourney. Cobos was a state qualifier but has not thrived since then. Still this is not the toughest weight class in the world and if he is truly healthy he has a shot. Speelman and Flores have won some big tournaments while Leedy is always a threat. He was 3rd at Waite over Gyorf (but lost to Fuller 11-0). Gyorf is the wild card; he won at Darby and was 2nd at Southview. He can beat anyone here but Fuller and Lawrence.

125 #

PROJECTED CHAMPION: TOM PRETTY (ELDER)

Top Contenders

2	Harger (Moeller)	14	Inchaurregui (Lorain Southview)
3	Genetin (Massillon Perry)	15	Moore (Beavercreek)
4	Mattingly (Uniontown Lake)	16	Vanderhoff (Marion Harding)
5	Chapman (Kenmore)	17	Hill (Mt. Vernon)
6	Dinda (Garfield Hts.)	18	Sherman (Milford)
7	Salupo (St. Edward)	19	Stemen (Teays Valley)
8	Sanders (Central Crossing)	20	B. Leedy (Start)
9	Fayette (Centerville)	21	Dalton (Barberton)
10	Foore (Wadsworth)	22	Kreacic (Lakota West)
11	Varga (Olmsted Falls)	23	Duccilli (Olentangy)
12	Few (Reynoldsburg)	24	Welsh (Stow)
13	Giffin (Harrison)	25	King (Madison)

The last eight years has seen a wrestler from the Northeast District take the title at this weight class. It is the longest such streak for one district at any of the 42 weight classes. .Next closest is the Northeast streak at 215# that currently stands at seven. There is a good chance that a wrestler from Elder will stop each of those streaks.

This looks to be a four-way battle for the top spot with enough quality people behind this quartet to insure competitive bouts and the occasional upset. The best four are distributed evenly over two sectionals so that the pairings should be good. Two are seniors and all have state placement credentials.

The wrestler on a roll right now is Harger. In the last couple of weeks he has beaten both Genetin and Pretty while winning the CIT and sweeping the Ohio Duals. He had lost to Pretty earlier at the SWOCA and failed to place at the Ironman. Only a sophomore he appears to be gaining confidence and momentum. Last year he was 6th at 119# again getting better as the year progressed.

Pretty is a two-time state qualifier who caught fire last year. He beat Fields to win the SWOCA and made it to the state semi-finals before losing to Squire and finishing 3rd. This year he was awesome at Brecksville – six falls as he won both it and the SWOCA. However, Genetin pinned him at the Ohio Duals and he lost in the CIT finals after an overtime struggle against the excellent Vaughan.

Genetin was a state runner-up at 103# two years ago losing in overtime to Mitcheff. Last year, at that extremely tough 112# class, he pinned his way through the district (and that included Mattingly in the final), and got a super pairing. Then, inexplicably, in the quarter-finals he lost to Shepherd in overtime and then ran into a train named Lang in the consolations and finished 7th. He was a semi-finalist at the Ironman and was 3rd at the Ironman - - losing in overtime to Mattingly. He is, like Pretty, a wonderful pinner.

Mattingly is a never give-up grinder. He was 4th at that tough 112# weight class last year losing to Touris and Lang. This season he won at the MIT, but was 4th at North Canton losing to Chapman and Fayette. His big win this year was that victory over Genetin.

There is no seeding at this class but the pairings should be good. The top foursome is evenly split between two districts that should even out the pairings. The one issue is that dynamite district at Perry that could create some tough early round match-ups. Harger has been on a great run recently, but that will be difficult to sustain. He seems able to neutralize Genetin's scoring ability. Pretty was so dominant at Brecksville that you fail to remember that it was not an awesomely strong weight class. You could pick any of this top four and your odds are 30% of being correct. Well, if I could have hit at that rate I'd been in the big leagues, but in this arena it would be nice to do better. So, let's go with Pretty figuring early pins keep him well rested and fresh.

The best and deepest district is at Perry. It's headed by Genetin and Mattingly, but there is an amazing amount of firepower. Chapman was 1st at Solon and North Canton, 2nd at the Dies and 5th at Brecksville after losing on a defensive pin in the semi-finals. He is sort of the lead-off man for an extraordinary group of Kenmore wrestlers. This is a program that is developing a stable of stars--Chapman, McCormick, Lamberg, the Sheppards and so on--and has become completely revitalized in recent years. Also returning is Dinda who has been 5th the last two years and would set a record of sorts if it happens again. He starts each year about three weight classes above his final objective and gradually works his way to the desired point--and he does so winning in a consistent manner. I have him with over 140 career wins. He has lost in the first round of states the last two years and gone the consolation route. He will have to be at his very best just to get out of this district. Foore was 4th at 103# last year, but it's a big jump to 125#. He was 2nd at the Big 8 and Wadsworth. I like state qualifier Kretz, but he's probably a 119 – pounder while Welsh, King, and Dalton are all very good, but unlikely to qualify – at least at this district. Also strong is Gibbons who has looked very good. He won two district bouts last year, but it will be tough going here.

Harger and Pretty dominate the Fairfield District, but depending on the Dayton dispersal, it could get even tougher. State qualifier Fayette, now at Miamisburg, was 3rd at North Canton, upsetting Mattingly, but getting badly beaten by Chapman. He was also 3rd at GMVWA losing to Tucker Armstrong, but won handily at Sycamore. Giffin pulled the huge upset at the SWOCA beating Harger in the semi-finals. He was 2nd there and placed 3rd at Wadsworth losing to Foore. Add in Sherman and Kreacic and it's a rugged district.

It will be somewhat easier at Darby. Sanders is generally recognized as the best at this weight class at Darby. He was a state alternate at 130# last year losing two close bouts after reaching the district semi-finals. Now at 125# he beat Stemen to win at Franklin Hts., beat Foore to win at Wadsworth and swept through the field at Mason. He was 2-1 at the Ohio Duals, the only blemish a 9-0 loss to Pretty. Moore is a returning state

qualifier who drew Collin Palmer in the first round and bowed out with a loss to Wallander. Stemen was one bout from States last year and was 2nd at Franklin Hts. Sanders has beaten him twice, but he still has to be on the short list for qualification. However, Few, 1st at Waite in a representative weight class and 8th at Brecksville might have passed him. Hill might have a chance here, while state qualifier Duccilli needs to generate some positive momentum.

The weak district is at Harding. Nobody here has state experience and many have never reached the district level. Salupo, new to the varsity, had an inauspicious start to his career at the Ironman drawing state champion Garbrandt and the excellent Knotek immediately and going two and out. However, he bounced back at the MIT beating the #1 seed in the semi-finals and losing a two-point bout to Mattingly in the finals. He had to wrestle Harger and Pretty back-to-back at the Ohio Duals and it wasn't pretty, but again he showed good resilience in the next dual by beating Knotek. I'm not sure what to think about Guerra. At last year's district he looked dominating at times and missed qualification on a 10-7 loss to the excellent Ciccarello. I had high expectations for this year, but it has not happened. He was 2-2 at Brecksville and 1-2 in the Ohio Duals. Leedy (that's Bryce) was 1st at Northwood and 4th at Waite. He is up two-weight classes after going 2-2 at last year's district. A newcomer to watch is Inchaurregui (that's Zenon) who has won at Fremont Ross and Southview and was 3rd at Waite losing only to Few. That bout might have set a record for the largest difference in the number of last name letters. Vanderhoff and Varga are quality wrestlers who could well qualify. Varga started out great, had a couple of slip-ups and then poured it on recently. In such cases I suspect injury. If he is healthy he's top four here. Rodriguez is a long shot.

130

PROJECTED CHAMPION: BRAD SQUIRE (WADSWORTH)

Top Contenders

2	Horner (Massillon Perry)	15	Hammer (Moeller)
3	Fields (Lakota West)	16	Frost (Upper Arlington)
4	Sulzer (St. Edward)	17	Palmer (Marion Franklin)
5	Parra (Barberton)	18	Simon (Maple Hts)
6	Weaver (Olentangy)	19	Newberry (Milford)
7	McCormick (Kenmore)	20	Morgan (Amherst)
8	Latham (Sylvania Southview)	21	Manno (Green)
9	Mezinger (Fremont Ross)	22	Myer (Butler)
10	Meyer (Elder)	23	Jacobs (Miamensburg)
11	D'Alessandro (Mayfield)	24	James (Teays Valley)
12	McHenry (Elyria)	25	Marler (West Carrollton)
13	Edwards (Central Crossing)	26	Yin (Mason)
14	Palmer (St. Ignatius)	27	Countryman (Marion Harding)

This is an absolutely fabulous weight class. There are five wrestlers who should be state finalists (three have already been there, the other two finished 3rd) and three of them come from one district. On top of that there are three more wrestlers that in a normal year would be in my top five choices. If you want to be a state champ going up is no treat with Collin Palmer there, so this bracket will be pulse pounding.

The district at Perry will be better--at least at the top--than many state brackets. Squire had an undefeated freshman year winning 34 consecutive bouts--after an early season injury. At the state meet he wrestled mistake free bouts with low scores and great defense. The combined scores of his four wins was 16-5. The final an overtime bout with Fields (more about that later) ended with a takedown--the only points in the bout. This year he extended his winning streak beating Horner at the Ironman, Latham at Wadsworth, and Hightower at North Canton. Finally, Horner, with two takedowns, ended the better than 50 match winning streak at the Mayfield Big 8 by 5-3. Horner, still just a junior, continues to get better. He has been 3rd in the state the last two years. But for an upset loss in the semi-final he would have battled Palmer in the state finals. He was, this year, 2nd at the Ironman and 1st at the MIT and Big 8. At the former he went into overtime to beat state runner-up Nick Sulzer after beating state 3rd, Parra, in the semi-finals. Parra was 3rd at States last year after reaching the state semi-finals. He beat Birt 11-4 for third. This year he was 3rd at the MIT--losing to Horner and beating Weaver--and 3rd at the Dies. Right with this group is the sophomore McCormick who won at the Dies and Solon and was 4th at Brecksville losing to Lazor (of Georgia) on a defensive pin and to Fields. He, too, was a state qualifier last year at 135#. These are four outstanding wrestlers--two are sophomores and two juniors. Right behind this quartet is state placer D'Alessandro who is going to reminisce about the good old days in Division III.

State runner-up Sulzer heads a crowded Harding District. As a freshman last year he utilized St. Ed's difficult schedule as a springboard to a district title over defending state champ Steve Mitcheff. That was critical because, in an unbalanced bracket, he was away from Touris, Mitcheff, Lang, Mattingly, and Ciccarello. When Genetin was upset he cruised in the finals outscoring his first three opponents 32-10. This year he is up three weight classes and it has not always been easy. He failed to place at the Ironman and lost 3-1 in overtime to Horner at the MIT final. Latham was a district runner-up at 125# last year and went 1-2 at States. He was 1st at Waite and 2nd at Wadsworth to Squire. He wrestles a lot of low scoring bouts. McHenry missed state qualification by a point last year after reaching the district semi-finals. He was 5th at Brecksville--losing a 7-6 quarterfinal bout to the eventual champion and an 8-6 struggle to McCormick. Like so many of Elyria's wrestlers he's trained to score. Palmer, this one from St. Ignatius is at about the same level. He was 2nd at the CIT in overtime and 6th at Brecksville losing to McHenry on tiebreaker. Mezinger is one to watch. He was a district 4th at 125# winning back-to-back 11-7 bouts (talk about lucky to qualify). This year he has won three tournaments and has never looked better. Behind this group I like Morgan and Countryman.

Fields stands out at Fairfield. He is a three-time state runner-up and I'm hoping he gets some lucky breaks this time. It's not that he has been 2nd to one-shot champs. I mean the losses have been to Jameson, Palmer, and Squire--all of whom could be four-time titleholders; last year had to be heartbreaking. Meaning absolutely no disrespect to Squire I thought Fields was the better wrestler that particular night. He attacked and attacked, took all the risks, but could not score thanks to Squire's inspired defense. Somehow I thought he "deserved" to win just because of his aggressiveness and energy, but it was not to be. This year he does not look the same. Yes, he won at the SWOCA, but not with his usual energy and he seemed almost listless against Vaughan at Brecksville where he was 3rd. He did win at Mason but it was by a single point over Weaver. There was some of that last year when Pretty beat him but he bounced back then and will I'm sure do so again. I think Meyer is next best after his state tournament run last year and a solid performance at the CIT where he had to forfeit the final. Looking more deeply Hammer and Newberry are next best with Yin and Williamson a possibility. Fields should be fresh for the rigors of the state after this district.

Like Fields, Weaver is way ahead of everybody else at his district. He was a state semi-finalist at this weight class before losing a 3-2 bout to Haas and dropping to 6th. The problem is that this weight class is light years harder than last year. He was 4th at the MIT losing to Sulzer and Parra, two very rugged competitors. He'll want to win this district and hope to get paired away from the Perry District in the first round. Edwards and Frost are probably next best, but that's fairly distant behind Weaver, with Marler and Palmer, this one from Marion Franklin, next in line. Jacobs, 1st at Sycamore, however might be better than this group, and James had a great district last year losing his go-to-state bout by a point.

There are five seedable wrestlers at this weight class--but three compete at one district --that leaves a number of possible configurations (for the so inclined I'll give the number at the end). Most likely scenario would have Squire on one side with Sulzer and Fields bracketed apart on the other side. If Horner and Parra were 2nd and 3rd at Perry it would leave us with four seedable wrestlers in one half bracket and only one in the other. There is certainly a rule that adjusts for this. At any rate winning the Perry District would be huge, increasing that wrestler's chances of winning the next week. As much as I hate to admit it defense may be the key attribute here, and if that is the case Squire will win. The Wadsworth coaching staff is, I'm sure, working out ways to negate Horner's leg attacks that led to his win. If Fields makes the finals, many will root for him hoping that no wrestler is a four-time runner-up. Sulzer kind of surprised all of us last year and that could happen again, but what a gauntlet he might have to run. Still, it might well come down to Horner versus Squire--like the Ironman, Big 8, and (probably) district -- one more time. Answer: 16.

135 #

PROJECTED CHAMPION: COLLIN PALMER (ST. EDWARD)

Top Contenders

2	Speelman (Mansfield Madison)	16	May (Kenmore)
3	Mencini (Twinsburg)	17	Moore (Butler)
4	DiFabritus (Mason)	18	Rojas (Fremont Ross)
5	Gallagher (St. Xavier)	19	Languis (Scioto)
6	Grandominico (Olentangy)	20	Gordon (Wadsworth)
7	Cline (Uniontown Lake)	21	Funk (Nordonia)
8	Krummert (Milford)	22	Price (Massillon)
9	Channel (Central Crossing)	23	Dooley (Lakota West)
10	Liggitt (Boardman)	24	Fehring (Amelia)
11	Sasfy (Reynoldsburg)	25	Ganue (Clay)
12	Puskas (Mayfield)	26	Benedict (Canfield)
13	Drake (Upper Arlington)	27	Gyorfi (Lorain Southview)
14	Duffy (Lakewood)	28	Dietsch (Toledo St. Francis)
15	Lopez (Waite)		

Now a junior Palmer will be bidding for his third state title and will be an overwhelming favorite. He had not a single close bout on the tournament trail last year as he dominated every opponent. This year he is undefeated and that by rough reckoning makes his high school mark 95-2 with both losses to out of state wrestlers. . This year he won for the first time at the Ironman, but curiously did not seem himself on the mat. I kept wondering whether he was overcoming some type of lingering injury. He also won at Medina and his legend continues to grow. A three-time junior high state champ he now owns five state titles--in a tie with Sean Nemec, Cameron Doggett, Dustin Schlatter and David Taylor. The leaders are Lance Palmer and J. Jagers with six--a mark very likely to be tied by Collin and David this year. Of course, now that we have state titles down through elementary school some prodigy may get to double figures. If healthy, Palmer should win with few problems.

One of Palmer's chief rivals will be at Harding. Speelman has had an exceptional high school career. He has placed twice at the state level--including a 4th two years ago. This year he has been a whirlwind winning at North Canton, Tiffin, and the Gorman and collecting some OW awards. His big benefit is that he should be away from Palmer at States giving him a solid opportunity to make the finals--and then, who knows. Maybe, his best win this year was beating state runner-up Wukie, 10-2, in the North Canton finals. State qualifier Duffy wrestles a low profile schedule, but has undeniable talent. He has wins at Southview and Avon Lake. He was 8th last year in Columbus, and any placement in this difficult year would be very good. The great unknown is Lopez. He has had trouble staying at this weight, and that can often impact performance. He was a district champ at this weight last year defeating Gasber 15-10, he then lost to state runner-up Clopton in the first round at States and failed to place. He was at 140# at

Brecksville and went 1-2 losing to Riedy and Hurley. At Toledo Waite he lost to Price in the semi-finals and finished 3rd, expect more of him by sectional time. The 135 – pounder who has made great strides is Rojas. I saw him last year and he looked like a tough, physical kid. This year he has been 1st at Lima, Fremont Ross, and Perrysburg and 2nd at Tiffin (to Speelman, 5-2). He looks very ready. Add Ganue and, maybe, Dietsch and it's a solid district.

As always, Perry is loaded. It's time for Mencini to make his mark. He was a freshman star and yet, now as a senior he still has not placed. Last year he was at 140#, a great strategic move, and ended up 2nd at the district--losing to Willis 8-7 in the finals. That was a mistake because it got him state champion Lindsey in the quarterfinals, a 19-10 loss, and an early exit once again. This time he should win the district after titles at Solon and the Dies and a 3rd at Brecksville where he lost only to Thome. State qualifiers Liggitt and Puskas, return, but there are no guarantees here. Puskas has been runner-up at Mayfield and Kenston. Liggitt has been at 140# much of the year, but dropped recently. He was 1st at Kenston and 5th at the Top Gun losing to Wukie. Cline was 3rd at North Canton after being shut out by Speelman and 2nd to Palmer at the MIT. May has come on strong lately with runner-up finishes at Solon and the Dies both times losing to Mencini. He did not fare nearly as well at Brecksville losing early to Sasfy. I like the athletic Gordon - - only a sophomore - - from Wadsworth. He could be upset maker, but probably not a qualifier. Other possibilities are Brennan, Hodge, Benedict, and Funk.

The Darby District traditionally scores worst on most measures of achievement, but they will do well here. There are three returning state qualifiers, but the one who isn't may be at least a co-equal to the other three. Grandminico only won a single district bout last year, but he has blossomed this time around. He was 2nd at St. Xavier losing only to DiFabritus in a bout that got the latter boy the OW. He was 3rd at the MIT losing only to Palmer - - and that at 7-4. Channel however, leads him in experience. He is the nucleus of a Central Crossing squad that is very good. A district runner-up last year, he was a state quarter-finalist, but failed to place. Only a junior this was his second state tournament. This year he won at Franklin Hts., but was 2nd at Wadsworth to Krummert. Drake, also a junior, lost to Grandominico in the first round of district and then piled up five consolation wins for a 3rd. He did not win in Columbus dropping a close first round bout to Nickolai. He won at Upper Arlington and Kettering Fairmont and was 2nd at St. Xavier to DiFabritus. I'm not sure his schedule has been rigorous enough for a long state run. Sasfy, also a qualifier (he lost only to eventual state champ Palivoda at the district) won a first round bout before being eliminated. A failure by any of the top four would bring Moore into the picture who has won at Wapakoneta and placed everywhere else or, perhaps, Languis who has been on the periphery of this report recently.

When I look at the initial state bracket very early on Sunday morning there is almost never a name that is totally new to me. They may not be in my report, but I've heard of them, seen some of their results, and remember the school they represent. A name that completely blind-sided me last year was Nick DiFabritus. Here he was 3rd at

Fairfield winning five consolation bouts over familiar names like Melink and Meyer and ready to face Kyle Weaver in the first round of States. This year as the vanquished king said to Achilles in "Troy", I'll remember that name. DiFabritus has been very good. He won the SWOCA and then won at St. Xavier and Mason. He has become the man to beat at this district. Krummert is not far behind. He won the SWOCA at 135# over Meyer and beat Channel 7-6 to win at Wadsworth. He was 3rd at 125# at Fairfield last year, and after a first round loss finished 6th. That will be difficult to better. Gallagher looks like a totally different wrestler at 135#. After failing to place at 140# at the SWOCA he was 4th at 135# at Brecksville losing only to Skonieczny and Mencini and beating Sasfy and Wukie and then winning the CIT. He's on fire. This is an excellent trio, but Calkins, who was a district runner-up at 145#, also returns. He was 1st at Sycamore, but didn't place at the SWOCA at 140# after twice getting beaten badly. Those are four solid wrestlers to which we can add Fehring and perhaps state qualifier, Dooley, who was hurt at the SWOCA.

140

PROJECTED CHAMPION: RICHIE SPICEL (BRUNSWICK)

Top Contenders

2	Habat (St. Ignatius)	14	Nickolai (Piqua)
3	Lang (Brecksville)	15	Schreiner (Mentor)
4	W. Sheppard (Kenmore)	16	Yetzer (Mansfield Madison)
5	Lijoi (Uniontown Lake)	17	Webb (Eastlake North)
6	Birt (St. Edward)	18	Pope (Elder)
7	Demas (Westerville North)	19	Ferguson (Holland Springfield)
8	Messerall (Thomas Worthington)	20	Brandenburg (Wadsworth)
9	Herrick (Waite)	21	Meenan (Wooster)
10	Marsh (Marysville)	22	Evans (Gahanna Lincoln)
11	Melink (Moeller)	23	Churchill (Elyria)
12	Leland (Colerain)	24	Goudy (Wayne)
13	Gordon (Scioto)	25	Fisher (Central Crossing)

This should just be a terrific weight class. There are so many good kids here we ought qualify 32 and give out 16 places. I count nine wrestlers who have a legitimate shot at the state title and they emerge from three of the four districts.

My choice by the narrowest of margins is former state champ Richie Spicel. I think that he has the best chance of winning because he has the least chance of getting upset on what will be a treacherous road to the finals. He is so good on his feet that he can, early on in a bout, create for himself a buffer from catastrophic error. Getting ahead by three or four points keeps a big move from being sure disaster and takes the referee out of looking for ways to help the wrestler who is a point behind. A junior high state runner-up - - he lost to Jedd Moore in overtime - he shocked us all by winning the state title at 130# his freshman year. An injury ruined his chances his sophomore year, and,

then, there was last year. His district qualifiers took the first four places at Columbus - - the only weight of 42 where that happened - - and they were all superb. At the districts Spicel beat Habat in the finals after Habat's semi-final upset of Jameson. However, at the state meet it was Jameson and Spicel with Tony winning his third title, 8-4. In a second (?) period flurry Spicel may have had control with Spicel on his back. It could have been two plus two (I'm not sure), but when Jameson regained control it really became the match decider.

Spicel seems to attract competition. The Perry District at 140# is sensational. Lang was 3rd at 112# last year after a 4th at 103# as a freshman. He was 3rd at his district losing to Mattingly and thus drew state champion Mitcheff in the first round, losing 5-4. Then came one of the greatest consolations runs I have ever seen. It included five wins - - the first by technical fall, then a decision over state placer Ciccarello, a major decision over state runner-up Genetin, a fall over state champion Mitcheff, and a fall over state placer Mattingly. This year I expected to see Lang at 130#. Instead he has moved up five weight classes and seems a touch small. At the Ironman he lost to Kolodzik in the quarter-finals and the #1 ranked Colin Johnston, by a point, later to finish 6th. At Brecksville he led Habat until the last seconds, 3-1, before giving up the tying takedown and, then, falling in overtime. He beat Shepard (in overtime) and state champion Sulzer to finish 3rd again. At the Dies he lost to Sheppard in the semis and finished - - 3rd. Lijoi is down a weight class from last year where he had a district 3rd and state 6th. He was 2nd at North Canton to Sheppard, 6-4, and 3rd at the MIT losing to Spicel 3-1, but pinning Demas. He is difficult to score against. That leaves Sheppard who had 45 wins last year and was 5th in the state in Division II. He lost to Skonieczny 10-8. He was 1st at North Canton, 2nd at the Dies and 5th at Brecksville losing a semi-final battle with Dukes, 16-15. He could win it all - - any of this four could win it all. I'd like to see pairings that let all four boys place at the district level. Coaches may have to do some serious thinking with three of the four coming from one sectional. Back-ups might include Schreiner, Webb or, maybe the young Brandenburg.

Things are not much easier at Harding. Habat had some freshman season last year. A two time junior high state champ, he was 35-3 at district time where he finished 2nd after his huge upset of Jameson. That loss was avenged in the state semi-finals with Habat taking 3rd. This year he was 1st at Brecksville beating Dukes, Lang, and Riedy and 1st at the CIT defeating Division II state champ Aaron Sulzer, but failing to win the MVP. He was upset by Herrick at the Ohio Duals, but will see him at the districts. I think that result will very likely be reversed. State placer Birt won the district last year with three falls, but had a horrible first round at Columbus. He came back to get 4th (he was also 6th in 2005), but had to be disappointed because that was a weight class just waiting for a champion. This year he failed to place at the Ironman and was not at the MIT. He was perfect at the Ohio Duals and then pinned Canty. It's difficult to know what he'll do. Herrick was a district runner-up at this weight class last year and was a state semi-finalist before falling to 6th. It was a great performance. As mentioned he owns a win over Habat and was an easy 1st at Waite crushing everybody. The only issue was Brecksville where he wrestled up a weight and finished 7th. He'd like to see Habat and

Birt on the other side of the draw at Harding. After this group maybe we'll see, Yetzer or Ferguson.

It's no easier at Darby. Demas is a prodigy. As a freshman last year in Division III he fought his way to the finals almost winning the team title for Pleasant. This year he is at Westerville and what a line-up of middle weights with Demas, Dong, and Kline. They'll make each other better. He was 4th at the MIT – losing in the semi-finals to a Michigan wrestler and getting pinned by Lijoi--and won handily at Fairfield. He is getting better all too rapidly. Messerall had a district 3rd at this weight class, but was 0 for 2 at Columbus. He was 1st at Marion Harding and 2nd at the Top Gun to Dukes 9-7. This is, as we've seen, a brutal weight class, but Messerall has high placement potential. Casey Gordon grabbed the fourth qualifying spot at 130# last year and ended up going 1-2 at States. This year he won at St. Xavier and has had a brilliant dual meet record. State qualifier Marsh - - is an exceptionally good fourth choice. He just recently won at Wapakoneta and his experience and tenacity should get him to States again. This is a formidable quartet leaving Evans looking for the upset somewhere at districts.

The Fairfield District looks outmanned and all three of the other districts will be hoping to draw into them for the first round. The best choice is district finalist Trevor Nickolai who has crafted another excellent season. A state quarter-finalist last year Spicel and Gasber knocked him out of the bracket, he has placed at the GMVWA, Edgewood, and Top Gun tournaments. Leland, 4th at the SWOCA, 2nd at Fairfield, and 1st at Sycamore is another steady performer. Melink, Pope, and Goudy are other possibilities, but there are I'm sure other candidates.

The pairings in Columbus will be interesting. If Spicel, Demas, and Habat all win their district then Spicel will be in one half and Habat and Demas in different quarter-brackets in the other half. If Lang wins instead of Spicel then Demas would get the open half bracket with Lang and Habat on the other side. If Sheppard were to win instead of Spicel then Demas and Habat would be on opposite sides with Sheppard randomly placed. Each case is different with winners and losers in all of them.

145#

PROJECTED CHAMPION: TONY JAMESON (FITCH)

Top Contenders

2	Gasber (unattached)	16	Schreiner (Mentor)
3	Suba (St. Edward)	17	Jenkins (Cloverleaf)
4	Stevens (Lakota West)	18	Cruz (Lorain Southview)
5	Crabtree (Darby)	19	Roshon (Marysville)
6	D'Alessandro (Mayfield)	20	Smith (Oak Hills)
7	Klontz (Springfield North)	21	Valliant (Sandusky)
8	Gordon (Scioto)	22	Brenner (Canfield)
9	Wiggins (Maple Hts.)	23	Sturwold (Troy)
10	Haxton (Strongsville)	24	Frasure (Logan)
11	Caraballo (St. Ignatius)	25	Ball (Wadsworth)
12	Gorrasi (Elder)	26	Otmar (Moeller)
13	J. Sheppard (Kenmore)	27	Luft (Teays Valley)
14	Rhoades (Uniontown Lake)	28	Sparks (Hamilton)
15	Smith (Davidson)	29	Rhyman (Marion Franklin)

As discussed in the past, there have been 15 wrestlers who won three state titles by the onset of the senior year and all 15 won that fourth title. They are a combined 60-0 at the state meet. There have been some close calls, but all have won. That brings us to Tony Jameson trying to become the sixteenth four-time champ and the fourth to win all of them at the Division I level. One of the most entertaining and acrobatic wrestlers in Ohio history he makes wrestling fun to watch. There is no opportunity to risky to attempt, no chance that wouldn't be fun to take, and no maneuver to wild to try, especially if he gets bored during the bout. Only one other four-time champ had a similar philosophy - - the incomparable Johnny McGhee. I am partial to such wrestlers. The risk/reward equation in this sport is skewed to the defensive side. Referees and their rules seem, almost always, to give the benefit of the doubt to the defensive wrestler. It's ruined post-collegiate freestyle and Greco-Roman wrestling where new rules are concocted annually to generate action and scoring. College wrestling has disappeared from much of the country not only because of Title IX, but because it generates long stretches of boredom. Even at the top-levels of high school wrestling we see too many 2-1 bouts and contests that drift through countless overtimes. Wrestlers like Jameson make it interesting and exciting and give athleticism the opportunity to be showcased.

Now, after all that, I think Jameson needs to show just a smidgen of patience. His two recent losses were exceptional theater, but they point out that good set-ups take a little time. In the 11-9 Toal loss Jameson scored most of the 20 points--nine for himself and a bunch more for Toal. There is no one in Division I who can beat Jameson, except, maybe, himself, but I am fully confident that next year when Palmer and Taylor head for their fourth titles I'll be able to say that those who had such opportunities were a combined 64-0.

Jameson exits a crowded Perry District. One wrestler who will apparently not be there is the marvelously talented Gasber. Like Jameson, unorthodox and a scorer, their bout would have lit up the scoreboard. Unfortunately, his transfer to Madison has offended some misguided regulation and, after being the MVP at North Coast and Hudson, he will be deemed ineligible. Now I understand precedent, my daughter is in law school, but if both schools sign off on the transfer to a home school which apparently had monetary underpinnings who has been harmed? How does it benefit anyone that Gasber is not allowed to wrestle? I get cranky writing this after midnight. At any rate there will be no lack of wrestlers looking to snatch one of the last three qualification spots. D'Alessandro was a Division III state quarter-finalist who has adjusted back to big school wrestling. He was 1st at the Big 8, 2nd at Kenston and 5th at the Top Gun. Wiggins, Schreiner, and Rhoades are experienced seniors with past district experience and a portfolio of tournament placements--unfortunately, not that many are titles, though Rhoades did win at North Canton. That gives Haxton a real shot at qualification. He was 2nd at Solon and the Big 8 while being a steady placer—all at 152#. Brenner and Williams (Nordon) are also good, but the one to watch is the young Shepard--a junior high state runner-up last year. Explosive, he was 3rd at North Canton, 4th at Solon, and 5th at the Dies, and 8th at Brecksville. He had some big wins (Gorrasi) but he's probably a year away. Another strong freshman is Ball – who was 2nd at the Big 8 and Wadsworth, and don't forget Jenkins--a super sized version of a state champion father.

At the beginning of the year I saw a three-way shootout at this district between state placer Goins, state qualifier Gooden, and Suba. As I write this Gooden is apparently no longer competing and Goins will wrestle at 152# that leaves Suba, the hero of the Blair Dual meet, at the top spot. He was champ at the MIT, 3-0 at the Ohio Duals, and 8th at the Ironman - - losing by two to Jordan and one to Habat. Cruz and Valliant have just moved down to 145# after enjoying moderate success at 152#. The wildcard here is Caraballo. He beat Chris Phillips – oops, that's the one from Georgia - - at Brecksville (losing to Canty) and was 2nd at the CIT (again losing to Cauty). He won two district bouts last year and in a depleted weight class, if this so becomes, he should qualify.

The Darby District is far more crowded than usual. The younger Gordon had a great freshman season at 140# last year winning 35 bouts including one at districts. This year he won at St. Xavier and is top-rated in the Columbus area. Klontz is also a returning state qualifier and he was runner-up at both the GMVWA and Troy. The intriguing candidate is Crabtree who has already won three tournaments--Darby, Mt. Vernon and Waite-- beating Valliant 9-3 at the last one. He's down from the 152# class where he wrestled last year winning two district bouts. Add in Roshon who was a bout from state qualification last year. I didn't see him at Brecksville, but he just won at Wapakoneta that suggests he is healthy and ready to compete. Two-time junior high placer Lehman (Westerville North) is also here with, maybe, Rhyman as a long shot.

Both Stevens and Gorrasi wrestled excellent district tournaments last year finishing 2nd and 3rd respectively, and Stevens ended up placing 8th at States while Gorrasi won a bout. This year they met in the SWOCA semi-finals with Stevens winning 8-6. He finished 2nd while Gorrasi defaulted down to 6th. Perhaps bothered by injury Gorrasi did

not place at Brecksville and was 5th at the CIT. Otmar has been in and out of the Moeller line-up, but he was 3rd at the SWOCA and 4th at the CIT. Xu, Sparks, and Smith are other possibilities, but they have inconsistent results. Sparks beat Otmar early at the SWOCA, but was tech failed by Gorrasi. Otmar came back to get 3rd while Sparks failed to place. I think they'll be a couple of surprising qualifiers here. Cable just might be one of them.

152

PROJECTED CHAMPION: JESSE DONG (WESTERVILLE NORTH)

Top Contenders

2	Heflin (Massillon Perry)	15	Porter (Mason)
3	Goins (Elyria)	16	Brubaker (Start)
4	Ewing (Miamisburg)	17	DeMarinis (Boardman)
5	Gobin (Moeller)	18	Rowe (Barberton)
6	Carraher (St. Xavier)	19	Ferguson (Pickerington North)
7	Greco (Fitch)	20	Wharton (Clay)
8	Hayes (Mayfield)	21	DiSabato (Davidson)
9	Rigel (Tecumseh)	22	Russ (Nordonia)
10	Martinson (St. Edwards)	23	Ramirez (Toledo St. Francis)
11	Henry (Westlake)	24	Zehler (Edgewood)
12	Hendon (Bowling Green)	25	Arens (Lakota West)
13	Jindra (Mentor)	26	Burkley (Jerome)
14	Maglott (Mt Vernon)	27	Brumfield (Mansfield)
		28	Sarno (Perrysburg)

I thought Dong was one of the best kids in the state last year. He was so crushingly dominant that it seemed almost impossible that he could lose. At a good solid district his closest bout was 18-2 and that was against a returning state place winner. It got a little closer in Columbus; but state runner-up couldn't score a point against him in the semi-finals. I had picked the marvelous Hardy to win his third state title. To me it was going to be one of the highlight bouts of the evening - - and it was. The key situation at the side of the mat was an apparent Dong takedown that Hardy suddenly, by some legerdemain, turned into a five-point move. Bob Dieli said immediately afterward -- substantially shortened and edited by me--that Dong had lost to a freakishly athletic force of nature. And so he did 9-4.

This year Dong has been the irresistible force -- with one exception. At Medina he defeated the excellent Heflin, 13-2, in the semi-final. In the last seconds Kusar, who has been simply superb himself, hit a last-second, controversial four-point move to win 5-4. That's not going to happen in the Division I States. Dong can spot anyone here a half-dozen points and still win--comfortably. This is one of the best and deepest weight classes, but it doesn't matter, Dong is too good. I'd love to see a four man wrestle off with Moore, Boyd, Kusar, and Dong going at it. Now that would be great theater.

By my strictly random method of parceling out Dayton wrestlers state placer Ewing should end up at Darby - - just as he did last year. At that time he rebounded from a quarterfinal defeat (by Andreas) and wrestled brilliantly to finish 3rd. He maintained that momentum defeating Hendon and Gobin to reach the semi-finals before Hardy dropped him into the consolation round. He ended up 4th losing at the very end to Andreas once again. He has been Miamisburg's best this year, winning at Sycamore and finishing 2nd at North Canton and the GMVWA - - losing respectively to Kusar and Boyd. He and Dong should dominate this district. Maglott is a scoring machine, tough on his feet, but is a clear step (or two) behind the top duo. His big win was over Porter at Mt. Vernon. Below this trio it really is a question of who from the Southwest District shows up. Zehler, 1st at Edgewood and 2nd at Sycamore, would be, for example, a strong candidate. The fourth spot however is wide open with Ferguson or DiSabato also in the picture. Burkley winner at Coffman and Upper Arlington has turned in some impressive wins and needs to be considered.

The deepest district without question is at Perry. My view is that there are as many as ten viable candidates for the four state berths. In the next section it becomes clear that there is a dearth of good 160's. No doubt others have noticed this strange imbalance and I would not be surprised to see several of this group emigrate to the adjacent weight class. As it currently stands I think that Heflin is clearly the best of this assembled multitude. He has been a "beast" most of the year. A junior, he was a state qualifier two years ago going 1-2 at 125#, but didn't get out last year losing to Mencini and Potts, 7-6 in his go-to-state bout and ending up as the state alternate. This year he has been great with his only losses being to the very best. He was 7th at the Ironman, losing to Kusar and Boyd and 3rd at Medina - - beating state runner-up Tank twice, but losing to Dong. He pinned Haxton to win at the Big 8, and was 3-9 at the Ohio Duals pounding Gobin 9-1. He'd like to draw away from Dong at states. A wild card here is Cory Hayes. As a freshman last year he was a district finalist at 130# and lost two tough, close state bouts. What can we expect from him now that he is up four weight classes, had a serious football injury, and started practice last week? My guess is we can expect a lot - - he'll certainly be fresh. I wondered whether it was a fluke that Greco was a finalist at Brecksville beating Georgia champ Lanham and Goins in the process. However, he was 3rd at the Top Gun--losing only to Kusar--so he's for real. He has had to be flexible competing at weight classes around Jameson. Last year he didn't get out of the sectional at a weight class that I thought was the toughest in the state the first week of tournaments. After this trio there is a litany of names of wrestlers with good credentials. Jindra was one bout from States last year and has placed well at Solon, Brecksville and the Top Gun. DeMarinis was a state alternate at this class last year, but has struggled a bit this year. Russ is the Kenston champ while Rowe was 4th at the Dies and has substantial district experience. There is a lot of talent here. I'm saying Heflin, Greco, and Hayes qualify with the bracket configuration a prime factor in who else qualifies

There is a powerful trio of wrestlers at Fairfield. Gobin was 5th three years ago as a freshman at 112#. After weight issues as a sophomore he returned to Columbus last year as the district champ at 145# and finished 7th losing to Ewing by a point in the

quarter-finals. This year he got knocked out of the Ironman by, who else, Kusar, and was 2nd at the SWOCA losing in overtime to Carraher. He has since avenged that defeat with a 6-2 win in the CIT finals. When he wrestles with confidence he is excellent. Carraher was a district 4th last year, and drew three-time champ Hardy in the first round. In most years he'd be a lock to place, but at this crowded field he'll have to be at the top of his game. Rigel is the X factor. He was the district champ at 135# besting a representative field. He had an unlucky draw for a #1 seed getting three-time champ Jameson in the quarter-finals and then losing to Webb in overtime. This is a talented wrestler who doesn't hit a lot of the big tournaments. However, he was a solid 3rd at the GMVWA losing only to Ewing. He'll need to be handled with care. Porter is the top candidate for the last spot finishing 5th at the SWOCA, 2nd at St. Xavier. You might look to Barron, a placer at both the SWOGA and GMVWA, and Arens as other possibilities - - especially the latter wrestler.

Every district is strong and Harding is no exception. I like Goins best. He is just so physical and bruising who would want to wrestle him. At last years district he lost to Lowe in the quarter-finals, but raced through the consolation bracket to finish 3rd, beating Lowe 4-3. He was a state quarter-finalist before getting mauled by Lybarger and finished 5th. He was at 145# at the Ironman and was eliminated by Toal. At Brecksville at 152# he lost a semi-final tie-breaker to Greco - - it could have gone either way - and then seemed to lose interest getting shut out 16-0 in the next two consolation bouts. Rather short I would not be surprised to see him return to 145#. Henry who I've also discussed at 160# could return here, and, if so, has solid qualification chances. Martinson keeps getting better and that must continue if he is to qualify. He did not place at the Ironman or Brecksville, but was 3-0 at the Ohio Duals defeating Gobin. In recent duals he has beaten Jindra, Spence, and Jones suggesting he is primed for a run here. Obviously, if Goins or Henry or both move his chances skyrocket. There are five strong possibilities out of the Toledo area, three of whom have just dropped down. This group is led by Hendon, a district semi-finalist last year, and a state alternate. At the BG Duals he was 9-1 (losing up at 160#) and majored state qualifier D'Alessandro. Brubaker, down from 171#, might be the second best if weight does not become an issue. He was 2nd at Northwood at 171#, but won convincingly at Waite pinning Wharton at this class in the finals. Wharton, down from 160#, is also very good. He won at Northwood, Ramirez, now a senior, pulled a big first-round district upset, but then lost the next two. He was 5th at the CIT and 4th at Tiffin. He'll have to do better to qualify. Brumfield, also has district experience winning twice before being eliminated by Goins. He was 1st at Bellevue and 2nd at the Gorman. A long- shot here is Sarno.

160#

PROJECTED CHAMPION: CHRIS KLINE (WESTERVILLE NORTH)

Top Contenders

2	Bryan (St. Ignatius)	14	Calhoun (Green)
3	Rice (Davidson)	15	Green (St. Edward)
4	Ellis (Western Brown)	16	Kovach (Brush)
5	Nickolai (Piqua)	17	Pankewicz (Fitch)
6	Torres (Fairfield)	18	Kirkbride (Bowling Green)
7	Rhodes (Nordonia)	19	Korecky (Solon)
8	Maserang (Mueller)	20	Launer (Darby)
9	Dilley (Lancaster)	21	Berman (Beavercreek)
10	Munson (Anthony Wayne)	22	Crawford (Ellet)
11	Ormiston (Teays Valley)	23	Childs (Glen Este)
12	Moore (Hoover)	24	Hagenimana (Centerville)
13	Tomanek (Avon Lake)	25	Winters (Princeton)
		26	Babuder (Toledo St. Francis)

In the last few years we have seen some great long lasting match-ups at this weight class - - for example Nemec vs. Foore and Ciraky vs. Popham. That will not be the case this time. In fact, it is very difficult to decide what match-up we will see. Part of the problem as we proceed through the upper weights in Division I is the enormous number of seniors who competed at the state last year. In the weight classes from 152# through 189# - that four weight classes - - 64 wrestlers qualified for the state meet. Of that number 53 were seniors (compared to 34 in Division II and 38 in Division III) meaning this year we will see a lot of new faces in Columbus.

My choice is, however, someone we have already seen twice at the state meet, but who has not always had good fortune. As a freshman Kline lost his state quarterfinal bout in overtime and just failed to place. The next year, after a tremendous regular season, he had a bad district tournament and, in an enormous surprise, failed to qualify. Last year Mickley caught him in the district finals and he ended up in the same quarter-bracket as two-time champ Straughn. A narrow two-point loss put him in the consolation round where he finished a solid 4th--including a 10-1 win over Mickley. Like Central District wrestlers Enright and Horne the past few years he has paid his dues and its time to win it all. He was 1st at Medina, though a couple of matches were closer than I would have anticipated, and 1st at Fairfield over Torres. I think it's his time.

He will not have an easy district. The compact Rice is strong and experienced. He had a difficult state draw at 145# last year getting Gonsor and Gobin early and failing to place. He was 6th at Brecksville wrestling the tough, defensive, hard-nosed style--splitting two low-scoring battles with Georgia state runner-up Bradley Banks and losing a one-pointer to Cheatham. I think he could make 152# (pure supposition on my part),

but I think his chances of winning it all are better here. Certainly, he should be opposite Kline in the state draw. Both Ormiston (1st at Darby and Franklin Hts.) and Dilley have district experience (and wins) while Launer has been a steady placer. All five are Central Division products and I'm guessing the excellent Nickolai may be there, too. He was 1st at Edgewood and the Gorman and 3rd at the GMVWA. However, this might be one of those times when it is better to head to Fairfield.

Speaking of Fairfield I see two solid placement contenders at this class. Torres qualified for state action at 140# last year, but failed to place. This year he was 2nd at both Kenston and Fairfield losing to Kline, 6-2, in the latter tournament. Ellis was the state alternate at this weight class losing to Newburg in the quarterfinals. He has won two major tournament titles at Kettering Fairmont and the SWOCA. That leaves two state berths still unaccounted for. Maserang was 2nd at the CIT losing to Bryan 9-5. He went 3-0 at the Ohio Duals, but failed to place at the SWOCA after losing a tough 12-10 overtime battle in the quarterfinals. Child was 3rd at Sycamore and 4th at the SWOCA after winning 33 bouts last year. Winters has pretty much the same kind of track record, but did pin Maserang. Hagenimana and Boggs are other options with the latter wrestler winning at Sycamore.

It will be interesting to see what happens as east versus west clashes at Harding. Representing the Toledo area are two successful seniors trying to build on their district appearance. Munson has over 100 career victories after taking the title at Waite and going undefeated at Springfield. Kirkbride has spent most of the year at 171# and just moved back down to 160#. Also moving down was Babuder who was 4th at Tiffin and 3rd at the CIT where he took Bryan into overtime. Representing the west side of Cleveland at this district will be a trio of solid performers. The best is Bryan who was 8th at Brecksville, 5th at the Ironman (where he reached the semi-finals after beating the #2 seed), and 1st at the CIT (over Maserang). Like Torres he was a state qualifier at 140#. Henry pulled a major upset in the first round at districts upsetting Evan Roth. He won one other bout before being eliminated. He has wrestled at 152# much of the year so I will be rating him at that weight class. Westlake doesn't wrestle many tournaments, but he was 3rd at Southview, beating Tomanek, what I like about Henry is that he is a scorer and able to put points on the board. Tomanek has qualification ability finishing 2nd at Southview and a strong 1st at Avon Lake. He had over 30 wins last year. I wonder if he is related to the Indians' former left-hander Dick Tomanek who I actually saw pitch for the Tribe in the early 1950's. Also check out Tischler who was 3rd at Wadsworth and 7th at the Top Gun.

While Perry is just incredibly loaded at most weight classes--especially up to 145#--this is one exception. Rhodes may be the best finishing 3rd at both North Canton and Kenston. A sectional champ last year he won two district bouts. Moore also had a good district last year, but failed to place at North Canton. He'll need to come on strong in February. I thought Kovach looked tough at Mentor last year, but so far "tough" hasn't won as much as anticipated. That leaves Calhoun, Hildreth and Korecky as possibilities, but there has to be other challengers as well. Maybe, Pankewicz can be a factor here or Crawford, who was 2nd at Wadsworth.

171#

PROJECTED CHAMPTION: BRIAN RODDY (ST. EDWARD)

Top Contenders

2	Harasyn (Mentor)	14	Darlington (Stow)
3	Winemiller (Amherst)	15	Hofmeyer (Elder)
4	Faiella (Central Crossing)	16	Ajayi (Shaker Hts)
5	Geter (Hamilton)	17	Gilmore (Teays Valley)
6	Phillips (Massillon Perry)	18	Cook (Reynoldsburg)
7	M. Alexander (Findley)	19	Hilton (Moeller)
8	Adams (Harrison)	20	Senter (Xenia)
9	Randolph (Wadsworth)	21	Tatum (Marion Franklin)
10	Stewart (Strongsville)	22	Slusher (Milford)
11	Martinez (Lorain Southview)	23	Tischler (Hoover)
12	Houston (Maple Hts)	24	Carey (Mason)
13	Mathews (Fairfield)	25	Moore (Sandusky)

Roddy has been a superstar wrestler for the past three years. He is already a three time placer at this weight class (6-2-1, and is a heavy favorite to win again this year. Two years ago he wrestled a dominating state tournament only to lose to Kilgore in the finals. Last year he wrestled a sensational state meet this time beating Kilgore 14-12 in overtime. It was a classic that featured great takedowns, surprising comebacks, and an unexpected ending. This year Roddy was a central figure in the "Monroeville frenzy" when he lost to Chris Phillip--a Kilgore protégé--in the Ironman final. It appeared to impact Roddy for a week or two, but he rebounded with a thoroughly dominating performance at Medina (beating the excellent Witt, 10-3 in the finals). He'll go down as one of the great upper weight wrestlers in St. Edward history.

Roddy had three falls and a 19—7 decision at last years district,, but it may be marginally more difficult this year. State qualifier Winemiller (Phillips also beat him) returns and should qualify again. He lost in the state quarterfinals 10-9 ott and couldn't come back and place. He was 1st at Avon Lake and is 16-1 outside the Brecksville Tourney. Alexander, the younger of two excellent brothers, was 1-2 at the district level as a freshman last year. He should qualify after finishing 3rd at Marion Harding and 2nd at Sylvania Southview. There are two other solid possibilities in Martinez and Ajayi. The first named lost his first district bout last year and then won three consolation bouts before falling to Winemiller in his go-to-state bout. He was 1st at Waite and 2nd at Southview and is very physical. Ajayi is, quite frankly, better than I thought. He was 1st at Kenston, 2nd at Solon, and 5th at North Canton winning big bouts and staying close when he lost.

I have hunted in vain for someone that I think is within a half dozen points of Roddy. Not going to happen this year. Nobody at Perry won more than two district bouts last year. There are seven possible candidates out there and I need to invent some special

computerized sorting system to differentiate this group. It could be that if we were somehow able to replicate this district weight class many times Harasyn would have the highest proportion of wins. Now seven weeks away from football and at 171# he is ready for the stretch run. He was 4th at the Top Gun in his first tourney at that weight and that suggests better things to come. He was a district finalist last year (losing to Roddy) and reached the quarterfinals where Kilgore put him out. Phillips and Randolph had a great bout at the Big 8 with Phillips winning--and Randolph getting 2nd as he did at North Canton. The one to watch in my mind is Stewart who was 1st at Solon and 3rd at the Big 8 after getting caught by Randolph. A district placewinner at 215# last year and with 30+ wins he could win here. I also like Darlington and Houston with former winning at Hudson and the latter twice runner-up at Kenston and Hudson. That leaves the overlooked Tischler who just keeps nailing down low places and the mysterious Kerrigan (Medina) with whom I am unfamiliar.

I am just not seeing much in the lower half of the state. Geter got a district 4th last year, but went "two and out" at Columbus. He had kind schizophrenic two weeks around Christmas. At the SWOCA he didn't have a close bout romping home to victory, but then the next weekend was only 7th at the GMVWA including a 19-4 loss to Rhoads. If the first Geter shows up he'll win this district. Adams was 2nd at the SWOCA and 3rd at Wadsworth losing only to the eventual champion and might be next best although not making the finals at Fairfield surprised. Hofmeyer, 7th at Brecksville, has past district experience, but I like Mathews to surpass a couple of this group. He was 3rd at Kenston and 1st at Fairfield. Also check out Hilton and Slusher in what should be a hard-fought district.

The major player at Harding is Faiella who was a district finalist last year at 160# after three dominating wins. This year he was 2nd at Wadsworth and Franklin Hts. and was perfect at the Ohio Duals including a 10-8 win over Hofmeyer. Gilmore is probably second best in the Central District, but Faiella beat him by ten recently. Senter and Tatum met in the first consolation round at districts last year, but I think they'll do much better this year. Brooks and Cook are other possibilities.

189 #

PROJECTED CHAMPION: ANDREW TUMLIN (HARRISON)

Top Contenders

2	Lamberg (Kenmore)	14	Benton (Waite)
3	Isley (Sylvania Southview)	15	Godfrey (Glen Este)
4	Jontony (Strongsville)	16	Mincy (Mt. Healthy)
5	Quehl (Moeller)	17	Krajicek (Holland Springfield)
6	Alexander (Findlay)	18	Baker (Green)
7	Newburg (Northmont)	19	Borgstrom (Middletown)
8	Saranitti (Stow)	20	Gluvna (Madison)
9	Robertson (Normandy)	21	Tudor (Watkins Memorial)
10	Nelisse (Elyria)	22	Wenrich (Amherst)
11	Allen (Hamilton)	23	Taylor (Lakota West)
12	Sanders (St. Charles)	24	Brooks (Hayes)
13	Porter (Mason)	25	Friend (North Ridgeville)
14	Miller (Centerville)	26	Terry (Colerain)

In what has to be a rather unusual situation, only four wrestlers at this weight class have had previous state experience--and two of those were at 160#. In this case it should make for a wide open competition with lots of surprises since most here have not experienced the pressure of state tournament wrestling. That is not an inconsequential factor as first time qualifiers often under-perform for that very reason. I think that there are at least four possible winners with no one having more than about a 50% chance of triumphing.

My choice is the junior Andrew Tumlin who has won three major tournaments this year. He has been 6th and 5th the past two years and that progression won't get you to the top step of the podium until you are a sophomore in college. So Tumlin dropped from 215# to 189# despite the fact that he was a state semi-finalist at the higher weight last year. It has worked. He dominated at the SWOCA and Fairfield, and beat a major rival, Isley, 5-4 to win at Wadsworth. I'm not sure he has the athleticism of a Lamberg or Isley, but he does have the experience and technique to make up for it.

Lamberg, a state junior high champ just two years ago, has been amazing. He has won four major tournaments--Solon, North Canton, Brecksville, and the Dies--against top-grade competition. He really is a co-favorite with Tumlin. His best tournament had to be Brecksville where this sophomore outwrestled the outstanding senior, Jeremy Foster. His combination of quickness and power will win him a state title or two - - perhaps, starting this year.

Isley, a junior was a district finalist at Mentor and a state quarter-finalist last year. I saw him at Mentor and he was impressive. Big and strong he has good riding skills and

some nice takedowns. This year he was 2nd at Wadsworth and 1st at Waite where he pinned in both the semi-finals and finals. He can go with either Tomlin or Lamberg, but may be susceptible to the big upset.

It looked for a while that Tumlin would pretty much have things his way at Fairfield - - then Quehl dropped down to join him. Like Tumlin, Quehl was a state qualifier at 215# last year finishing 3rd in this district. After a first round win he met state champ Powell in the quarterfinals and Hale immediately thereafter and was eliminated. This year he was 2nd to Scales at the SWOCA at 215# and came within a point of placing at the Ironman. If he wants to win a state title this is his best bet--and it's a good one--as he proved at the CIT with a dominating triumph. He cannot be overlooked here. Allen was 2nd at the SWOCA and won two district bouts last year. He is probably third best. State alternate Mincy has dropped back a bit, he was 5th at Edgewood and 3rd at Sycamore after getting pinned by Godfrey. I'm not sure what to expect from him. There are a quartet of wrestlers who will push Mincy for that fourth spot and his qualification is certainly in doubt. Porter is at the top of the list after a great freshman year (three district wins and 2nd at St. X and 1st at Mt. Vernon) along with Godfrey, the champion at Sycamore. Throw in Terry and Borgstrom and it will be an exciting struggle behind Tumlin and Allen.

Lamberg must also prepare for a very competitive district. Jontony has turned a lot of heads with his excellent wrestling. He had a bad district last year, but has made a quantum leap forward since then. He won the Mayfield Big 8 losing only to Foster. Big and strong he has become very good. State qualifier Saranitti is up from 160# and has prospered at this new weight class. He won at Hudson and was 3rd at the Dies - - losing by a pair to Lamberg. District placer (6th) Robertson should get the last state berth. Wrestling mainly dual meets he has been dominate. I'm thinking, maybe, a couple of Lake County wrestlers will be factors, too. Gluvna lost by two to both Saranitti and Nelisse while finishing 2nd at North Coast and 3rd at Hudson. Denman, up from 160#, won at Riverside, and was 3rd at Medina. Baker has been a steady placer (2nd WIT, 5th Wadsworth, 4th Dies)--enough so as to keep an eye on.

There is, for a change, some depth at Harding, Isley is very good, but he'll be challenged by Alexander, who I suspect defeated him at Sylvania Southview (where is Jamie Baker when you really need him). At any rate Alexander was very impressive at districts last year; losing in the semis to Isley by two and then having that same margin of loss to state place winner lammarino. He should get out this year and a solid placement is likely. He must avoid the costly upset such as the one at Marion Harding. Nelisse will be a huge factor. He was 7th at the Ironman losing to Foster by just two points. He was also 7th at Brecksville getting bounced by Bailey and then winning five consolation bouts before losing to Bailey again. Krajicek is my fourth choice here. He was 4th at Medina and 3rd at Perrysburg--two of his tournament losses have been to two-time state champion Magrum. I have three back-ups for this quartet--and all three were at this district weight class last year. I like Benton the best with Wenrich and Friend a half step behind.

None of my top challengers come from Darby, but there are still some high quality participants. Newburg is up from 160# where he was a district champion. After 10-0 blowout win in the first round of States he lost badly the next two rounds and was eliminated. This year he was 1st at St. Xavier (defeating Porter) and 1st at GMVWA. He should place. I will mention Snyder at 215# where all of my results for him occurred, but I have been told he will compete at this weight. If so, only Newburg is better. I also like Sanders and Miller with Tudor a long shot. Much of this is conjectural since we will not know the Dayton area split until after this report is completed. As it is expected some unfamiliar names will qualify from this district.

215

PROJECTED CHAMPION: ORLANDO SCALES (ELDER)

Top Contenders

2	Cogar (Barberton)	14	Mueller (Toledo St. John)
3	Smith (Beavercreek)	15	Primavera (Darby)
4	Hayes (Mayfield)	16	Konah (Maple Hts.)
5	Cook (Reynoldsburg)	17	Richards (Wadsworth)
6	Rasho (Uniontown Lake)	18	Fleming (Olentangy)
7	Brooks (Northmont)	19	Miller (Lakota East)
8	Lawson (Shaker Hts)	20	Krimmer (Glen Este)
9	Miller (Fitch)	21	Smugala (Westlake)
10	Zifzal (North Royalton)	22	Knowles (Springfield North)
11	Snyder (Grove City)	23	Romine (Xenia)
12	Banks (Edgewood)	24	Knapp (Olmsted Falls)
13	Green (St. Edward)	25	Cromie (Euclid)

There is a fascinating three-way struggle for supremacy at this weight class. Cogar, very short for this weight class, is extremely good. He was the state runner-up last year losing to Powell, 1-0. Clearly, after losing by fall to the same opponent the previous week, he was able to make effective modifications in his approach. This year he won at Cuyahoga Hts., Medina, and the Dies including some very significant wins perhaps, the most important, a win over another of the trio Cody Smith by 9-3 at Medina. Cogar also defeated Scales, last year, 6-3. The junior Orlando Scales, has yet to taste defeat this year. He looked awesome at Brecksville but Fisher's forfeit in the final deprived us of seeing him in action against a powerful opponent. Still his athleticism and confidence lead me to believe that he'll beat Cogar this time. They'll be seeded apart so the earliest that could occur would be the final round. The wild card is Smith who did not escape his district last year--in a major surprise. He has lost twice this year but as football season changes to wrestling he gets better and better.

Cogar will emerge from the best district. The junior Cody Hayes won four consolation bouts to nail down a district 3rd last year, and went 1-2 in Columbus. This year he

dominated at the Mayfield Big 8 and then was a finalist at the Top Gun before forfeiting to Porter. He has had injuries issues all year, and started the season late getting a 3rd at Kenston. If healthy he has middle to high placement potential. Rasho has been in a wrestling slump, but he is still a tremendous prospect. He was a state placer at this weight class two years ago as a sophomore, but he tailed off at the end of last year finishing 4th in the district and losing 13-6 to Cogar. He went 1-2 in Columbus--losing two very close bouts--and failed to place. Now a senior he was 6th at North Canton (losing 14-3 to Houska) and did not compete at Medina. He needs one last big push the next six weeks. Miller was a heavyweight last year, but has made a nice transition to this weight class. He was 5th at Brecksville and 3rd at the Top Gun losing only to Hayes. Zifzal was 1-2 at last year's district losing to Lawson and state champion Powell, but he continues to improve. He was 3rd at Brecksville losing only to Fisher and pinning Cook--a bout that was reversed at Waite when Cook won 2-1 and Zifzal was 3rd again. This is a strong quintet, but don't forget Konah. He beat Smugaca, 17-5, to win at Hudson, but was only 5th at Kenston losing to Hayes (3-1) and Poucher. Richards, 2nd at the Big 8 and 3rd at Wadsworth could also be a factor.

The two southern districts will both be good, but, as always it is difficult to know where the Dayton wrestlers will be. Scales should win at Fairfield, but will still get a solid workout even with Quehl moving to 189#. The junior Brooks split two bouts with Quehl at the district level, but was TF'ed by Scales. He was gone after a 0-2 record at Columbus. This year he was 1st at St. X but failed to place at GMVWA. He had 10 losses going into last year's district, but was strong when it really mattered. Krimmer was 2nd to Banks in overtime at Sycamore and 5th at the SWOCA, he joins Knowles and Romine as potential qualifiers

Assuming Smith is at Darby he will go in as the district favorite. Banks won at Sycamore and was 1st at Edgewood, but I'm not sure how he'll do at Harding. Cook is the best in the Central District now that Beatty has moved to 285#. He won at Waite and was 4th at Brecksville. Snyder, a state alternate at 189# last year, was 1st at Darby and 2nd at Waite. He lost there in that ultimate overtime so they're close - - that is if he remains at this weight class or eventually chooses to compete at 189#. Primavera has been a consistent placer at Darby, Tiffin, and Waite and cannot be counted out. Snyder defeated him 5-2. The one unknown here is Fleming. He won at Wadsworth, but was only 4th at Coffman. He could be a surprise. Longshots like Mulkey and Spracklen could have a chance.

The Harding District is real weak. That new distribution of teams from the Northeast Sectionals has really watered down the competition. Lawson may be the best with a 2nd at Solon and Kenston--losing to Porter both times--and a 3rd at North Canton losing to Fisher. Only a junior he beat Zifzal at last years district and a lost close bout to state placer Nemunaitis. After him there is not a lot to say. Mueller is probably best out of the Toledo area, while Smugala, Green, and Knapp have been the leaders (after Lawson) from the Northeast. I suspect that there are a couple of sleepers (Santana?) who I have overlooked.

285

PROJECTED CHAMPION: JOSH KLINE (MASON)

Top Contenders

2	Beatty (Central Crossing)	16	Rupert (Waite)
3	Prichard (Northmont)	17	Laird (Olmsted Falls)
4	Meder (Valley Forge)	18	Oglesbee (Olentangy)
5	McCarthy (Strongsville)	19	Beverly (West Carrollton)
6	Buzzelli (Wadsworth)	20	Johnson (Brecksville)
7	Jones (Uniontown Lake)	21	Stocum (Riverside)
8	McCaskey (Gahanna Lincoln)	22	Isham (Harrison)
9	Carpenter (St. Xavier)	23	Augustyniak (Start)
10	Byrd (North Ridgeville)	24	Marrero (Reynoldsburg)
11	Pope (Maple Hts.)	25	Baker (Sandusky)
12	Meyers (Lakota West)	26	Brading (Troy)
13	Coher (Barberton)	27	Williams (Pickerington Central)
14	Holcomb (Wilmington)	28	Reinold (Coffman)
15	Klayman (Western Hills)	29	

We've had three sensational years of heavyweight competition, but they all have graduated. Has the Central District ever had a better contemporaneous set of heavyweights than Barlow, Hartshorn and Jeremiah?--and what about the Southwest District with Becker, Marshall, Wade and Wagner. Well, those days are gone and we're back to searching every part of the state for good heavyweights. And what we have found is almost perfect parity with no one individual or even group of individuals standing out. Ask the next ten "experts" as to the winner and you're likely to get ten different names. Only one place winner returns--and he was 8th--and he got there on an overtime decision.

I think the final match-up will be the same as last year - - the best from the Darby District versus the best from Fairfield - - Kline vs. Beatty. Paraphrasing Damon Runyon the biggest and most powerful don't always win, but that's the way to bet, you have to go with Kline. A state qualifier last year (Pritchard pinned him for 3rd place) he went 0-2 at Columbus. This year, somewhat more auspiciously, he won at the SWOCA pinning both Carpenter and Meyers. He then beat Prichard, 4-1, to win at St. X. Beatty, who was 7th at 215# last year, started the year at that same weight class, but has moved up with great success. He won at Darby and Waite beating Southwick in the latter final.

The Field is real thin at Harding. State qualifier Meder has made amazing progress and he stands clear of the rest of the field. He was 2nd at the Ironman and gave defending champ and highly ranked Garrett Goebel a tremendous bout in the final. If not for the miniscule mats at that tournament I believe he would have won it in regulation with either of two good takedown attempts. Instead he lost in overtime. After that it is wide-

open. State qualifier Williams would have been rated second best. He had four district falls last year and won a state bout. However, Woodward is now in Division II. Byrd was a district semi-finalist last year only to be defeated three times on Saturday and be left home. He has not wrestled recently for unknown reasons. The Toledo area trio of Rupert, Augustyniak, and Baker are certainly in the hunt. Rupert had two district wins last year including a huge upset of Holland. Each has had steady placements. Laird was 4th at Medina and placed at the Dies. In this chaotic environment his chances are about as good as anyone.

Matters also lack definition at Perry. If healthy, McCarthy is probably the best they have to offer. He was 13-0 and the Solon champ when he was injured the second week of the season. Whether he returns by sectionals and is ready to go is problematical. He was the district runner-up last year beating Meder among others. At Columbus he got decked by Prichard and then lost in overtime. Buzzelli also qualified after a 3rd place district finish (including a win over Meder) but went two and out at Columbus--including a loss to Williams. Still it was a great result for a freshman heavyweight at the Division I level. He has also had injury issues, and was 4th at Wadsworth (losing to Baker and Isham), but 1st at the Mayfield Big 8 as he rounded into shape. He'll get tougher by the week. Jones was 3rd at North Canton and 2nd at Medina after a 2-2 record at the district level last year. He, too, defeated Buzzelli early in the year. Pope and, maybe, Johnson are next best with Coher and Stocum lurking not far behind. It's hard to get a solid grasp on relative ranking as results change from week to week. Maybe, that is the reality for the rest of this season as well.

The Fairfield District has a nice portfolio of heavyweight wrestlers. Kline, as discussed, seems to be the best at this time. Carpenter is a great pinner, but seems inconsistent while Meyers keeps getting better. Klayman won at Norwood and Sycamore finishing ahead of Holcomb at the later 15-9. Beverly pinned Holcomb early in the year and deserves some consideration as well. Throw in an Isham, the Wadsworth champ, and Brading and this is probably the best and deepest district

If Prichard is at Darby as I have assumed for this report it will be he and Beatty for the title. Prichard, stocky and strong, may be a bad fit for Beatty--as he is for almost everyone. He was 8th last year and certainly could move up to the top step this time around. He won the GMVWA over Walls and strength doesn't get as nervous as finesse. Only four underclassmen were in the heavyweight bracket at Darby last year. I like McCasky and Williams as next best with an Oglesbee or Reinold in reserve. The long shots are Marrero and Caldwell (Marion Franklin) and their odds of qualification are little worse than those of all but Beatty and Prichard.

TEAMS

1. St. Edward They continue to extend their own records with eleven consecutive team titles and twenty-three overall. They are heavy favorites to make it an even dozen in a row, but there is a slight whiff of uncertainty in the air. The quintet of Sako, Clark, Sulzer, Palmer and Roddy look to be worth 110 points, but that may not be quite enough to lock it up. They'll need to get some points from Suba and Birt and hope that there is at least one more contributor.
2. Massillon Perry The finest public school program in Division I has done it again - - put a great team on the mat. The lightweights are sensational, but only Heflin and, maybe, Phillips will score after 130#. Still with maximum effort they might be able to squeeze out 120 points. That would at least catch St. Edward's attention. I have great confidence in White, Genetin, Horner, and Heflin, but Hannan, Hillock, and Phillips have to pitch in.
3. Moeller Many of their superstars have graduated, but they have some up-top power with Corrill, Harger, Gobin, and Quehl. They also have opportunities to score at a number of other weight classes with Wallander, Melink, Maserang, Hilton, etc.
4. Westerville North It's a three-man team, but what a trio. Dong and Kline should nail down 50 points and Demas - - well, you know what de did last year.
5. Mason A team with wrestlers with solid high placement opportunities - - Kline, DiFabritus, and Shepherd - - along with a solid group of possibilities. The Porters, Artrip, Yin, and Carey need to help. It will be interesting to see their lineup at sectionals.
6. Elder Two possible state champs in Scales and Pretty are worth a lot. If they can get real help from friends like Meyer, Gorrasi, Pope, and Hofmeyer they could challenge for 3rd.
7. St. Ignatius It's a three-man team, but Habat should be a finalist and a healthy Robinson gets you at least 15 points. The key is if Bryan can get 15-20 at 160#.

8. Uniontown Lake Mattingly, Cline and Lijoi have scoring chances, but it's the last two weight classes that are critical. If Rasho and Jones crank it up they could move up. If not, they won't make the Top Ten.
9. Kenmore A team with some real upside. Chapman, McCormick, the older Sheppard, and Lamberg are going to score. If they get help from May and the young Sheppard they could be a Top Five squad. The problem is getting out at that brutal district.
10. Mayfield Two sets of brothers are critical to Top Ten success. The D'Alessandros have to qualify because they can score at the state level, and the younger of the Hayes brothers needs to be super-healthy and ready. I think the only other real helper is Puskas.
11. Wadsworth They're still a year or two away from really lighting it up, but they have Top Ten chances. Squire is the only certainty for big points. But a healthy Buzzelli could really help at the weak heavyweight class, and then Foore, Randolph, and the Grays need to chip in.

Division II

103#

PROJECTED CHAMPION: TY MITCH (AURORA)

Top Contenders

2	DiJulius (Walsh Jesuit)	16	Romanchik (Padua)
3	Garabrandt (Claymont)	17	Kazimer (Kenston)
4	Brascetta (Graham)	18	Ackerman (Bellevue)
5	Burkhart (Carrollton)	19	Latham (West Branch)
6	Mirman (Highland)	20	Nemec (Crestwood)
7	Hayes (Ravenna)	21	Fishking (Columbus DeSales)
8	Gambucci (Lexington)	22	Greenlee (Circleville)
9	Carter (Hillsboro)	23	McGrath (Hamilton Twp.)
10	Ward (Napoleon)	24	Jacobs (Oakwood)
11	McGee (Minerva)	25	Sidoti (Norwalk)
12	Cramer (Oak Harbor)	26	Harting (Kenton Ridge)
13	Hunlock (Elida)	27	Maynard (Licking Hts.)
14	November (West Geauga)	28	Heavilin (Harrison Central)
15	Bertubin (Cambridge)	29	Davidson (Bethel Tate)

This is a very crowded weight class, but there is a real possibility that the finalists will both live in the same community. I was not overly surprised when Mitch beat DiJulius at the Top Gun because he looks like the bigger boy to me. Both boys have excellent skills, but as the weight allowance goes up I think it helps Mitch a little bit more. They'll probably meet three more times and it's difficult to believe that one boy will win all three. Both boys have great credentials.

Mitch, a sophomore, lost only to state runner-up Inghram at the district level last year, and made it to the state quarterfinals before getting teched by Taylor. He ended up 8th, as much stronger wrestlers were able to handle him. This year he was 7th at the Ironman (pinning Corrill) and 3rd at Brecksville – losing to Stieber and pinning Hayes. At the Top Gun he beat Brascetta by seven and decisioned DiJulius in the finals 10-6. I saw his grandfather, Ernie Kream, lose a state title on a referee's decision to the gutsiest guy in my high school, and then turn around and win it all the next year. I think his grandson will do the same.

DiJulius, only a freshman, is not a surprise. He was 3rd and 2nd at the last two Junior High State meets – losing, 9-5, to Stieber in the last year's final. This year he was 3rd at the Ironman, defeating Sako, and 2nd at Brecksville, losing again to Stieber. He has been exceptional every week this season.

These two face stiff competition from around the state and even at the Firestone District. Hayes was 4th last year in Division III, losing in the state semi-finals to Logan Stieber. He was 4th at Brecksville, but I thought he looked sluggish, barely beating DiSabato, getting shut out by DiJulius, and losing by fall to Mitch. It might have just been the holiday blahs. I suspect he'll be better at sectionals. McGee, November, and Kazimer will probably fight for the last qualifying spot that could include Latham and Nemec. Of this group November has probably wrestled the toughest schedule which might serve him well in this donnybrook. McGee was 6th at the Top Gun and won at Coshocton, while Kazimer won at Avon Lake and placed well at every other tourney. Nemec, only a sophomore, has won three tournaments, including a fall over Lehotay, but her bid to become the first female state qualifier is likely to fall short at this rough district.

Brascetta has had a great freshman year. He was 6th at the Ironman, losing to Stieber and Sako and 4th at the Top Gun. He won the GMVWA and dominates the Goshen District with one exception – the incredible Carter. They went into overtime with Brascetta finally getting the win. Carter is difficult to wrestle – very strong with good movement and some unorthodox techniques, plus the crowd is always on his side. So am I. He was 1st at Bellbrook, Lebanon, and Western Brown (over Schilling), and 3rd at GMVWA. Greenlee and Davidson are both district returnees who have done well this year, while Jacobs and Harting have been consistent placers. Do not be surprised to see folks with other last names qualify here.

The most crowded district is at Fostoria. I count at least seven wrestlers talented enough to wrestle at the state level. The hottest wrestler in the last few weeks has been the freshman Mirman. A junior high state champion last year, he has been getting better every week. He was 4th at North Canton (losing to Burkhart), and 3rd at the MIT, losing only to Sako and beating Manley, Gambucci, and Hannan. That was December. In January he won at both the Gorman and the Dies. It is exciting that once again Highland has an outstanding team. It harkens back to the past when legendary coach, for more than a decade, Jim Florian led them to a state title. It will not be easy for Mirman to qualify. Ward was a district semi-finalist last year, while Hunlock and Gambucci have district experience. Gambucci, the lead-off man for the powerful Lexington squad was 1st at Northwood and 2nd at the Gorman and 5th at the MIT. His two losses to Mirman have been by a total of three points. Cramer has won two big tourneys and has also been strong in January. He had a tough Ohio Duals, losing badly to DiJulius and Brascetta, but defeating Garabrandt. Romanchik is another excellent freshman with plenty of experience, including junior high state placement (he was 2nd to Mirman last year), while Ackerman and Sidoti will need to be very fortunate.

I'm not sure what we'll see at Steubenville. Burkhart has had a great year, but Garabrandt has some excellent credentials. Burkhart, only a freshmen, won at North Canton defeating Gray and Mirman, but did not place at the Top Gun, losing to Brascetta 3-2. Garabrandt was a district 3rd last year, and he exploded at the state meet reaching the semi-finals (before losing to Taylor – how many times have I written those four words), and finishing 4th. He seems to have trouble with weight, failing to

wrestle at the MIT, Top Gun, or the Ironman at 103#. However, should he be comfortable at this class, he could be a finalist. Bertubin and Lehotay (Meadowbrook) are solid OVAC wrestlers (3rd and 4th) and Fishking leads a rather weak Columbus group. Only the top duo at this district will cause much noise at the state meet.

112#

PROJECTED CHAMPION: DAVID TAYLOR (GRAHAM)

Top Contenders

2	Westfall (Perry)	16	Stepp (Jackson)
3	Inghram (University School)	17	Storts (Springfield Shawnee)
4	Minnard (Fairfield Union)	18	Gould (Lexington)
5	Young (Highland)	19	Pace (Big Walnut)
6	Ditcher (Claymont)	20	Vargo (Akron St. Vincent)
7	Strasbaugh (Orrville)	21	Holy (Lake Catholic)
8	Worthington (Shelby)	22	Von Neumann (Carroll)
9	A. Miller (Beaver Local)	23	McGraw (Fairless)
10	McGovern (Columbus DeSales)	24	Kazimer (Kenston)
11	Stone (Oak Harbor)	25	Maggard (Eaton)
12	B. Miller (Defiance)	26	Kessinger (West Holmes)
13	McLaughlin (Canal Fulton NW)	27	Wilshire (Buckeye Local)
14	Brower (Bellbrook)	28	Beemer (Wapakoneta)
15	Cook (Toledo Central Catholic)	29	Bright (Granville)

What more can we say about David Taylor? He, as a junior, already has to be considered one of the greatest lightweights in Ohio history – maybe, the greatest. He has over 100 victories against two losses and will dominate this weight class once again. He outscored his four state opponents 68-6, and in his eight state bouts has gone the full six minutes just once (Gilchrist). He is one for the ages.

The two most likely final round opponents for Taylor are both at Firestone. Westfall has been 4th (103#) and 6th (112#) the past two years wrestling for Lake Catholic, but has moved to Perry. He has wrestled all of the good lightweights the last two years, but he has been even better this year. He won all four tournaments entered in impressive fashion, and should be ready for anything. Inghram was a district champ and state runner-up last year losing to Taylor 17-1 in the finals. This year he was 1st at North Canton and 2nd at Brecksville (losing to Tessari) and the Top Gun (Taylor, 19-4). He and Taylor will be seeded apart should both win their district which is, obviously, a major incentive. Both have defeated Minnard at States (Westfall two years ago and Inghram last year). Strausbaugh was 6th last year and is probably third best at this district. He won the WIT and was a solid 4th at the Top Gun. State qualifier McLaughlin is left to fight for the fourth state berth with a cadre of fine wrestlers. He went 1-2 at States last year. Holy, Vargo, and Kazimir are the major competition, while McGraw is the dark horse contender.

Taylor will have no trouble at Goshen, but there are four other returning state qualifiers. By far the best of this quartet is Minnard. He was 3rd at 103# after majoring both McLaughlin and Worthington to reach the semi-finals. He has been a crusher this year winning, within my view, at Wadsworth and Sheridan. He has been scoring points in large quantities and should be away from Taylor at States. That makes him finalist material. State qualifiers Brower, Stepp, and Storts also return. Storts won at Licking Hts. (Ash) and Troy, while Brower was 1st at Bellbrook, 2nd at Edgewood, and 5th at GMVWA. He wrestles a much tougher schedule than Storts. Stepp was 2nd at Western Brown and went 1-2 at States losing to Westfall. I think Storts might be the odd man out. Also watch for Von Neumann – winner at Mt. Vernon and Troy – and Maggard.

As will often be the case, there is great depth at Fostoria. There are four returning state qualifiers although only one placed. That was Young, who was 5th including a loss to Minnard and wins over McLaughlin, Storts, and Strasbaugh. He was an easy district champ here last year and should do so again. He has run up some big scores this year, winning at the Dies, finishing 2nd at North Canton (to Inghram) and 3rd at the MIT. He'll need to pull some upset to better last year's finish. I think Worthington is second best (as he was last year) and should do better than his 1-2 result at last year's states. Stone missed state placement by two points last year, while B. Miller drew Taylor in the first round and couldn't bounce back. State alternate Gould will again challenge for a state berth. One to watch is Cook who won at Tiffin and was 2nd at the CIT, including a 3-2 win over McGovern who had just dropped down. I may have under-rated him. Beemer was 2nd at Wapakoneta and 3rd at Oak Harbor and is a dark horse candidate.

Ditcher was the Steubenville District champ at 119# last year and went 1-2 in Columbus, losing his placement bout in overtime. Apparently he will compete at 112# and should place. He was 3rd at the Top Gun, losing only to (you guessed it) Taylor and was 5th at the MIT, losing to state champ Sammy White and Young (by a point). District runner-up Arizona Miller lost last year to Minnard in the finals and went 1-2 at States, but defeating B. J. Miller for the mythical Miller family title. He won the giant OVAC tourney and was 3rd at Southview. I'm thinking McGovern should do very well at this class, but that has yet to be proven. He was one bout from qualification last year. This is not an overly strong district so those listed like Pace, Kessinger, and Wilshire have a real opportunity to qualify.

119#

PROJECTED CHAMPION: JOHN PAPESH (AURORA)

Top Contenders

2	Neibert (Graham)	16	Scavuzzo (Revere)
3	Garbrandt (Claymont)	17	Petrie (Monroe)
4	Gilchrist (Jefferson)	18	Williams (Wyoming)
5	Garringer (Miami Trace)	19	Voss (Canal Winchester)
6	Miller (Oak Harbor)	20	Rininger (Highland)
7	Jones (Licking Hts.)	21	Martin (Watterson)
8	Perez (Wausean)	22	Liechty (Fairview)
9	Thompson (Beaver Local)	23	Campbell (Marlington)
10	Lynch (Napoleon)	24	Warner (Greenville)
11	Kehn (Sheridan)	25	Ford (Southeast)
12	Rumple (Galion)	26	Mellinger (West Branch)
13	Kocheff (Kenston)	27	Hupp (Marietta)
14	Brunk (Elida)	28	Tomlin (Bellbrook)
15	Van Dyne (Cambridge)	29	Noll (Amanda Clearcreek)
		30	Hile (Lexington)

The top ten or so wrestlers are terrific making this one of the finest weight classes in Division II. There is not a lot of depth beyond that top group, but they will provide a multitude of fireworks. I'm particularly excited about the top quartet all of whom have been 3rd or better at least once. There are three seedable wrestlers and the pairings, if all goes as expected should be fine. Garbrandt would get the top seed with Neibert and Papesh bracketed on the other side in the most likely scenario. Before we explore that a little further let's briefly introduce the top quartet in seedable order.

Garbrandt, now a sophomore, was brilliant last year. He ripped through his district never needing the full six minutes to get the win. In Columbus he shut out Westfall and Gilchrist (winning 1-0) and then beat Neibert (4-2) for the title. He has wrestled something of an erratic schedule this year – missing some events and being at different weight classes at others. At this class he won the MIT over Ciccarello in overtime. If healthy and prepared he is very difficult to defeat.

Neibert was 6th in Division I as a freshman at Beaver Creek before moving to Graham. Last year he beat Papesh in the semis, but fell to Garbrandt in the finals. This year he was 3rd at the Ironman, losing only to state champ Sammy White in the quarterfinals. He crushed everybody at GMVWA and won the Top Gun over Papesh. He benefits from the momentum inevitably generated by the fabulous Graham team.

Papesh has already been a three-time state placer (4-3-3), but has never made the finals. He lost early as a freshman, but the semi-final round has been his jinx the last two years. He was 6th at the Ironman, 4th at Brecksville, and 2nd at the Top Gun – losing only to the very best. He has been around a long time (he beat Zak Thomusseit when

they were freshmen 103's) and seems overdue. Neibert has won the last three against him, but they have been very close (3-1 OT, 5-4, and 1-0). Can that continue?

Gilchrist is a senior with great credentials. Two years ago he went 45-1, losing only to Taylor in the state finals. He is the only wrestler to extend Taylor to six minutes at the state level. Last year he took that loss to Garbrandt in the semis and ended up 4th – losing to Papesh 2-1 otu. This year he is again undefeated, winning at Southview, Riverside, and the Dies. Since the beginning of his sophomore year he is 129-5.

In my initial scenario – barring upset, a huge assumption – the semi-finals would be Neibert vs. Papesh and Gilchrist vs. Garbrandt. Should Gilchrist win the district the odds are 2 of 3 that they would reverse semi-final opponents. I'm not sure there is an advantage either way. The only thing that I am convinced of is if this contest gets played out on a thousand parallel planets, each contestant would win about equal number of times.

The Firestone District has very little depth after the top duo. I struggled to find other wrestlers with state placement potential, but that search yielded little. State alternate Scavuzzo might be the best bet with Kocheff or Campbell somewhere in the mix. I've also rated Ford and Mellinger, but I'm certain there are others with equal abilities. Perhaps Roch (Canal Fulton NW) is one such possibility.

Neibert stands alone at Goshen. The next tier starts with Garringer who won at the SWOCA and was 8th at Brecksville after losing to Opfer in the quarterfinals. Last year he was 5th at 112# after losing in the first round to Gilchrist and after three consolation wins losing again to him in the consolation semi-finals. It would be a real upset for him to beat one of my top quartet, but everyone else is certainly in range. State qualifiers Petrie and Williams are here, but I think they may struggle to qualify again. Warner is strong and should be a real factor at this district. Tomlin, Kehn, and Hochwalt (Oakwood) are other possibilities. The real dark horse is Hupp who has won several times this year. He wrestles a low profile schedule, but has good talent.

Garbrandt, fit and healthy, would have little real trouble at Steubenville. The two biggest obstacles would be Jones and Thompson. Jones is a two-time Division III place winner (8-5) whose school has moved up one classification. He was a district champ and state semi-finalist before defaulting to Sergent and losing to Pope. This year he won three local tournaments and was 5th at the MIT – including a win over Hillock and a loss by fall to Garbrandt. Thompson was the district runner-up to Ditcher at this class, but finished 8th in Columbus, including a win over Ditcher. He was a solid 2nd at the OVAC. State alternate Voss is up two weight classes, but should be a top contender for the fourth berth along with another state alternate, Van Dyne. Van Dyne was 2nd at Sheridan. Add in Martin and Noll and this is probably the deepest district at this weight class. Don't overlook Kendjorsky (Buckeye Local) whose OVAC performance (3rd) makes him a player.

The Fostoria District is in disarray with uneven results and surprising newcomers. The one constant, however, has been the increasing brilliance of freshman Ian Miller. A junior high state champ last year (5th the year before) he has vaulted to the top of my list at this district. He was 2-2 at the Ironman – losing to state champion Sam White, but beating Wallander. He was a strong 4th at the MIT, beating state runner-up Hall and Stoll, and just losing to Ciccarello in the semis, 10-8. A big January came next, winning at Oak Harbor and Perrysburg and beating Garbrandt on a last second move at the Ohio Duals. The only “downer” was getting pinned by Neibert. He will win a state title some day. State alternate Lynch and state qualifier Perez traded victories last year with Perez, winning the big one – the district go-to-state bout. He went 1-2 at Columbus. Neither has been sensational this year, but they’re experienced and battle proven. I’ve gotten very few results on state qualifier Rumble, but he cannot be overlooked. Any of this trio, though, could be upset with Brunk, Liechty, Rininger, and Gonzalez (Defiance) waiting in the wings. Three long shots are Hile, Heisser (Fostoria) and Hahn (Eastwood), which sounds like a law firm.

125#

PROJECTED CHAMPION: JACOB VAUGHAN (COLUMBUS DESALES)

Top Contenders

2	Armstrong (Graham)	17	Witt (Oak Harbor)
3	Baxter (Perkins)	18	Lay (Greenon)
4	Silver (Eaton)	19	Knotek (Walsh Jesuit)
5	Leek (Howland)	20	Jacobs (West Holmes)
6	Kostandares (Revere)	21	Becker (Minerva)
7	Meyer (Ravenna)	22	Risdon (Harrison Central)
8	Rose (Cambridge)	23	Bolton (Bellbrook)
9	Roddy (University)	24	Cook (Toledo Central Catholic)
10	King (Benedictine)	25	Longeretta (River View)
11	Nakama (Big Walnut)	26	Isaacs (Valley View)
12	Flores (Eastwood)	27	Springer (East Liverpool)
13	Wilbur (Hamilton Twp.)	28	Schlegel (Maumee)
14	Devito (Lexington)	29	Hazlett (Kenston)
15	Beemer (Bath)	30	Jackson (Shelby)
16	Neff (Miami Trace)		

This is a weight class that provides opportunity for a wide range of wrestlers. There is no dominant superstar like we see at 112# nor is there a superb quartet of state finalists like is present at 119#. Many could win the title here, and even more have a chance to place.

My favorite at this weight class is the solid junior from Columbus DeSales, Jacob Vaughn. He placed 5th as a freshman, but lost three close bouts last year and ended up 8th. There are a number in this field who have beaten him in the past – Meyer, Baxter – but, I believe, he has improved the most over the last 12 months. He was 2nd at 130# at

Brecksville, losing to an out-of-state wrestler, but beating Hancock and Fields. Yes, that Fields, and it was a solid 5-1 triumph. At the CIT he was 3rd losing to Pretty in the semi-finals in overtime, and at the Ohio Duals he majored Neff and beat Armstrong. He is so solid and strong that he is never out of a bout.

Some of his stiffest competition will come from the Goshen District. Armstrong, wrestling for Kenton Ridge, was a district runner-up and went 1-2 at States defeating Meyer, but getting pinned twice. Now at Graham and with workout partners like Neibert and Stephens he has further blossomed. He was 7th at the Ironman and won the GMVWA (with a dominating win over Fayette and an overtime win over Silvers) and Top Gun (beating Meyers and Roddy). He could easily win it all. Silvers was 1st at Mt. Vernon and then 2nd at GMVWA and 3rd at the Top Gun. A state qualifier last year he was pinned by Vaughn in the placement bout. Also here are state qualifiers Neff and Lay. Neff was 7th last year at 103#, while Lay, like Silvers, is a two time state qualifier. This is a very fine foursome and they stand above the rest of the contenders here with the exception of Bolton. He was 6th last year at this district, but wrestles a less testing schedule than the rest of this group. It may cost him.

The slippery Baxter was 7th last year, and, is probably, best out of Fostoria. A very personable young man off the mat, he is unorthodox and hard to handle on it. His matches often have big scores as he is at his best when folks are rolling around. He lost to Vaughn in the first round last year 22-10, but then beat him for 7th, 6-5. He was 2nd at North Canton (to Chapman) and 2nd at the Brecksville (beating King, Kostandares and Chapman) before meeting Pretty in the finals. He took Pretty down, but ended up losing by fall. It's a little unclear behind him. Flores, a defending district champ and two-time state qualifier, has been in and out of the lineup. When he is "on" he can be very good. DeVito is a returning state qualifier who I may have under-rated. He was 2nd at Northwood and the Gorman, although he did not place at the MIT. Beemer was a district 6th place finisher at 119# last year. He wrestles a relatively weak schedule, winning most recently at Lima. The wrestler to watch, though, is freshman Konnor Witt. A two-time junior high state placemaker, he has recently won at Perrysburg and Oak Harbor after not placing at Medina. As they did three years ago with Tank, Witt, and Magrum, Oak Harbor has another great freshman group lead by Miller and Witt. At the State Duals he defeated Knotek, but lost badly to Armstrong. There are a number of other possibilities some of whom I listed in the grid and others like the Hursts (one at Norwalk and one at Defiance) and Thees (Celina) who I mention now.

The Firestone District is loaded with viable contenders. I've ranked nine here and they're all good. Leek was a state alternate at Perry in Division I last year – making the semi-finals but losing to state champ Squire, 4-1, and former state runner-up Rini, 4-3. He's the real deal, but I'm not sure at what weight class. He has competed in at least three going as low as 119#. I think he'll end up here because it gives him his best shot at a final round appearance. This is just a guess since inquiries indicate flexibility. Meyer is a two time state placer (7-4) who was 4th at Brecksville and 5th at the Top Gun where Armstrong soundly beat him. I've ranked Kostandares ahead based on his win over Meyer for 3rd at Brecksville, and his runner-up finish at the Top Gun. A state

alternate last year, I've always seen him as exceptionally talented, but only now does he seem able to capitalize on it. King is a two time state placer (8-7) even though he has lost his first-round bout each time. He seems able to win the absolutely critical bout to qualify or place. The freshman Roddy has been tremendous. At last year's state junior high tournament I wandered over, more in curiosity, to see Brian's brother. He ended up 5th with a solid, but not spectacular performance. How wrong I was (again). He was 5th at North Canton and failed to place at Brecksville, losing to Neff. Then at the Ohio Duals he beat Armstrong 8-6 and finished 2nd at the Top Gun, beating Nakama, but losing to Armstrong. He is moving up a steep learning curve. I like Becker to challenge very strongly for a state berth with 1st place finishes at Coshocton and the WIT. Knotek has been something of an enigma. I believe he has superior talent that hasn't quite yet expressed itself consistently. At Brecksville he beat the #1 seed (a two-time state champ) in the first round, lost in overtime to Kostandares, and then failed to place. He lost to Neff at the State Duals, but then easily beat Flores. With Randazzo apparently competing at 130# there is a little more room for advancement here.

Vaughn heads up a very deep weight class at Steubenville. Some good people are going to get left home. Rose is a two time state placer (8-5) who has won titles at the OVAC, Sheridan, and Barnesville, but failed to place at Brecksville. He should get a low to middle place this year. Risdon, Jacobs, and Nakama are all returning state qualifiers and already you can see that the numbers are not going to fit. Add in state alternate Wilbur, who is very good, and state alternate Longoretta and it is getting very crowded. Bring in Springer, two titles and an OVAC runner-up, Layman (Granville) and Barnett (Sheridan) and it is clearly chaotic.

130#

PROJECTED CHAMPION: BRIAN STEPHENS (GRAHAM)

Top Contenders

2	Severance (Sheridan)	16	Osterloh (McClain)
3	Collins (Coshocton)	17	Brink (Buckeye Valley)
4	Hightower (University)	18	Kaplan (Fairview Park)
5	Lucas (Fairless)	19	James (Norwood)
6	Jameson (Indian Hill)	20	Maiwurn (Orrville)
7	Meillo (Padua)	21	Hayes (Holy Name)
8	Randazzo (Lake Catholic)	22	Costa (Edison)
9	McClintock (Galion)	23	Duckett (Toledo Central Catholic)
10	Shaw (Minerva)	24	Maiwurm (Orrville)
11	Brown (Tallmadge)	25	Zappitelli (Conneaut)
12	Reeser (Miami Trace)	26	Richey (Big Walnut)
13	Pazyniak (West Geauga)	27	Robinson (Milton Union)
14	Munafu (Perkins)	28	Banda (Oak Harbor)
15	McHugh (Bellbrook)	29	Prezzia (St. Clairsville)

This is a weak weight class and you're going to see people scurrying in this direction. There is a boatload of good 125's and I can't imagine that a few of them aren't going to see "the weight of opportunity". We've already seen some movement. Pazyniak is down from 135# and Randazzo looks (especially after his CIT win) like he is coming to stay at 130#. It seems like this migration will last right up to sectionals.

While this weight class may not be strong, the top choice is very, very good. Stephens was 6th in Division I as a freshman two years ago, and was 3rd last year at 125#. Stephens had roared through the district beating current teammate Tucker Armstrong in the final. At States he beat two excellent wrestlers in the first two rounds – Chapman and Vaughan. Then came the titanic struggle with eventual champ Dean that had its moments of controversy, but ended tied at 12-12. Dean then won it in overtime, and Stephens took 3rd. This year he was 5th at the Ironman and an easy 1st at GMVWA. He won at the Top Gun, given a good bout only by D'Alessandro.

The two most likely challengers exit Steubenville. Severance really fooled me last year. I knew he was good, but not that good. After two district scares – 12-9 over Nakama and 11-10 over Vaughan he entered the state meet as a district champ. He then pinned in both the quarter and semi-finals before losing to Dean. It had to be a breathtaking two weeks. Now with a target on his back he will likely be Stephens' biggest obstacle. Collins was a Division III place winner last year after losing to Hancock, 5-4, in the first round. This year he has been crushing everyone, admittedly not at Brecksville or the Top Gun, and looks ready to challenge for a higher place. He is likely to be in the same half (or even quarter) as Stephens – not good – because Severance and Stephen will be seeded apart. The solution is to win the district. The rest of that district is rather frail. Brink, Prezizia, and, maybe, Costa are somewhere in the bracket, but look for a surprise or two.

The Firestone District, as usual, is the most crowded. I count nine potential qualifiers which means that more than half the good wrestlers will not get a ticket to Columbus. It will be, I suspect, a topsy-turvy district with much dependent on how sectional results impact bracket position. Unusually, no one here, at least at this time, has previous state experience. The young Hightower and the senior Lucas might be a millimeter ahead of the rest, but that will not count for much when competition begins. Hightower was 2nd at North Canton, 3rd at the Top Gun, and 7th at Brecksville. He is a coming star. Lucas has never qualified and does not wrestle a high-powered schedule. However, he was 3rd at North Canton losing only to state champion Squire. Shaw has been tough lately, winning at the WIT, finishing 2nd to Collins at Coshocton and getting 4th at the Top Gun – losing in overtime to Hightower. Brown has an upset win over Parra, while finishing 2nd at the Dies and Pazyniak won at Kenston. A key figure is Randazzo. Stuck in the morass at 125# he moved up and won the CIT at this class. Now well fed and confident, he could grab a middle place. Zappitelli and Maiwurm are also state-capable, but it will be a long, difficult road to qualification.

Stephens will have few problems at Goshen. Reeser, Osterloh, and Jameson are returning state qualifiers, but one has struggled while the other two have not competed

recently. Reeser went 1-2 at the state level, but has moved up two weight classes. He was 6th at the SWOCA and had an absolutely awful tournament at Brecksville (sick? injured?). This gives McHugh, James, Robinson and a host of others a solid chance at state qualification. Of this group McHugh would seem to stand above the rest with a 1st at Bellbrook and Edgewood.

State qualifier Melillo is an excellent talent, but has had trouble staying healthy. When at 100% he can wrestle with just about everyone here – except Stephens – but he has missed a lot of this year. He was the district runner-up at this class last year, but after an opening win, lost to Fondale and Sheppard. He defaulted out at Brecksville and has not competed since. McClintock, a former state qualifier, would look to be best with the title at the Gorman and a win at the NOL Duals. After that it is wide open with, perhaps, Kaplan and Munafo next in line. I like Hayes, 5th at the CIT, and he could be a surprise at this weight class.

135#

PROJECTED CHAMPION: CHASE SKONIECZNY (WALSH JESUIT)

Top Contenders

2	Wukie (University School)	14	Wray (Rossford)
3	Gaskins (Sheridan)	15	Gresock (Highland)
4	Ryan (Howland)	16	Cintron (Alliance)
5	Regula (Claymont)	17	Fey (Norwood)
6	A. Stine (Edison)	18	Markoff (Fostoria)
7	Johnson (Milton Union)	19	Kopecky (Franklin)
8	Fee (Lake Catholic)	20	McMorrow (Orrville)
9	Harmon (Indian Lake)	21	Moffatt (Whitehall)
10	Dittrich (Copley)	22	Combs (Bryan)
11	Meyer/Bair (Graham)	23	Burrows (Lexington)
12	Beemer (Wapakoneta)	24	Worley (Big Walnut)
13	Moeglin (New Lexington)	25	Ecker (Watterson)

The first 33 state tournaments were competitions with every school, no matter how large or small, competing against each other in one classification. Then, in 1971, the tournament was split in half with the creation of a Division II category. It has been a fabulous success with some of the best wrestling and best teams competing in this classification. The champion at this weight class will be the 500th crowned in Division II starting with Tom Bauer in 1971.

This is another relatively weak weight class with little depth – especially in the northwest area. I picked Skonieczny to win last year, but a late drop by the then undefeated Espinoza upset the applecart. Still Skonieczny had a great year finishing 3rd. It has gotten better this season. He won at Brecksville and the Big 8, and was 2nd at the Ironman (defaulted down 4-0) and Top Gun. Both losses were to current two-time state

champs. He has wrestled with confidence and has looked better on his feet. He was a state junior high champion in the 7th grade, but has been shut out since then. It's his turn again now.

I think there are two principal contenders. One is Brad Wukie who was a state runner-up last year at 119#. He had a great run – winning a district title over a formidable field and then winning three tough state bouts before losing in overtime to Longstreath in the final. Oh, and by the way, he was a freshman. He is up three weight classes and it hasn't been all that easy. He was 2nd at North Canton to the powerful Speelman, 3rd at the Top Gun, losing to Skonieczny by five and beating Regula in overtime, and 5th at Brecksville. The other major obstacle is Gaskins who was 4th at this weight class. He lost only twice at the state meet – both times to Fraley, and won four solidly wrestled consolation bouts. He is even better this year and has finalist potential.

The Firestone District is easily the best. Skonieczny and Wukie have a better portfolio of credentials, but I think Ryan may be just as tough. He was 3rd at the Perry Division I district last year, losing only to state runner-up Haas. After a first round win over Cory Hayes he lost in one of those extended overtimes to eventual state champ Palivoda, and then caught Birt in the consolations and failed to place. He faces district competition that will not be that much easier than what he'll see in Columbus. Fee should get the fourth berth, although his CIT results were somewhat less than expected. That may provide an opening for Dittrich, Cintron, or McMorrow.

Gaskins also has a tough district. Regula, 4th at both the MIT and Top Gun, cannot be overlooked. A former state qualifier, his losses at Medina were both close – to Grandominico, while Meyer upset him at the Top Gun, but finished behind him. Stine is 31-0 at Edison, winning the OVAC and pretty much everything else with good solid wrestling. This trio would seem to be a quantum jump ahead of anyone else at this district.

There are a half-dozen candidates at Goshen – the top three with legitimate placement hopes. The real question is how good will Mark Meyer be come tournament time. A junior high state place winner, he shares this weight class with Jordan Bair (if that isn't playing up to the coach), but I think we'll see Meyer at tournament time. He was 6th at the Top Gun with some big wins. More conventional choices here are former state qualifier Johnson and state alternate Harmon. Johnson was 1st at Indian Lake and Troy, and 3rd at the GMVWA. At Indian Lake he beat two-time state placer Jordan Thome in the finals. At the GMVWA he wrestled a great tournament, losing only to two-time state champion Ryan Gambill. Harmon, who apparently has some type of lingering injury, was 2nd at Clyde and 4th at Indian Lake, both times having to default. He was also the runner-up at Troy and 6th at GMVWA, where he was a semi-finalist before losing to Kolodzik. Backing up this trio are Moeglin, Kopecky, and Fry, but their presence will not deter other challengers.

For some reason I'm finding very few names at Fostoria. Generally, I'm bombarded by possibilities in that very strong district, but at the moment that is not the case. Beemer

was the state alternate last year, but has missed some time after winning at Fairmont. Wray has been particularly busy while winning at Edison (getting the OW for defeating Dinda), finishing 2nd at Marion Harding and 3rd at Lima. Gresock and Markoff are other possibilities. The former placing at every tourney, while Markoff, overcoming some Indiana genes, was 4th at Tiffin and sharp in the NOL Duals.

140#

PROJECTED CHAMPION: AARON SULZER (HOLY NAME)

Top Contenders

2	Dukes (Ravenna)	16	Henline (Coventry)
3	Stephens (Graham)	17	Eddy (Harrison Central)
4	Neff (Miami Trace)	18	Fondale (New Lexington)
5	Gifford (Logan Elm)	19	McKee (Highland)
6	Riedy (Bellevue)	20	Scaglia (Kenton Ridge)
7	Delpra (West Geauga)	21	Rector (Carrollton)
8	Ray (Cambridge)	22	Fraley (Streetsboro)
9	Schell (Greenon)	23	Brancker (Edison)
10	Starr (Franklin)	24	Newell (Kenston)
11	Mellor (River View)	25	Penhorwood (Benjamin Logan)
12	Johnson (Maumee)	26	Ursetti (Tallmadge)
13	Bernardo (Columbus DeSales)	27	Rich (Clyde)
14	Combs (Bryan)	28	Burks (Lexington)
15	Hurley (Walsh Jesuit)	29	Tackett (Hamilton Twp.)

Sulzer and Dukes met in the first round of States last year with Sulzer taking a 2-1 decision and using that as a jumping off point to win a state title. He upset the undefeated Espinoza in overtime to cap a masterly tournament of clutch wrestling. Duke made similar use winning four consecutive consolation bouts before losing to Skonieczny and finishing 4th. If the pairings are right (67% chance), these two could meet again in the final round instead of the first. There has been an interim match in the Brecksville semis where Dukes took a 3-1 decision. My view is that Sulzer will reverse that result when the chips are down on an unseasonably (hopefully) warm Saturday night.

The strongest sectional boasts neither of these wrestlers, but Goshen hosts a half dozen potential placers. The best looks more and more likely to be Matt Stephens. Last year we televised the Junior High State finals and Stephens got very little "face" time. He pinned in 72 seconds in a display of powerful wrestling. He slipped right into the 140# spot vacated by state runner-up Newland and has had few problems. He was 1st at the GMVWA majoring Gombash and was 4th at the Top Gun, losing to Messerall and Neff in ultimate overtime – a verdict I don't think will be repeated. Even at the Ironman in his varsity experience he was 5th losing to Sulzer 7-3. I see him as the biggest threat to a Sulzer/Dukes match-up. Neff was a qualifier at 145# last year and missed placement by two points. He was, as mentioned, 3rd at the Top Gun, losing to

Dukes in the semi-finals. He was 3rd at the SWOCA at 152#, but failed to place at the Brecksville up two weight classes. State placer Gifford was 7th last year at this weight class as a sophomore. This year he is undefeated although not wrestling the most demanding of schedules. Nonetheless, he showed few problems dealing with more experienced wrestlers. State qualifiers Starr and Schell are also at this weight class and, already, it's getting crowded. Starr went two and out, but has won at Franklin and Western Brown this year along with a 3rd at Coffman. I have not seen scores for Schell recently but he was 8th last year at 130#. Fondale will certainly mount a challenge after a at 5th at the MIT and may have moved ahead of Schell. Starr, however, beat him 8-2. That leaves Penhorwood and Scaglia with, likely, nowhere to go.

Dukes should have very little trouble at Firestone. Not only did he win the Top Gun, but was 2nd at Brecksville. In the final round he had moved ahead of the excellent Habat, but wore down in the third period. However, I was very impressed by those first four minutes. Delpra is a returning state qualifier with placement potential. He was 7th at the top Gun and 2nd at both Kenston and the Mayfield Big 8. After this duo it is wide open. Fraley and Henline have both had some good results, but normally not against top tier competition. Hurley, Ursetti, and Newell are all possibilities, but the first named never quite gets healthy. Hatch (University School) is a long shot here.

Sulzer has one major obstacle at Fostoria in state qualifier Dawson Riedy. Still, Sulzer was a finalist at the Ironman and the CIT besides his 4th place finish at Brecksville. Riedy was 6th at Brecksville, losing to Sulzer, 3-1, in the consolation semi-finals. He has won at Clyde and Bellevue. Last year he went 1-2 at States. After this top duo the remainder of the competition is at a somewhat lower level. I think Johnson, 1st at Bellevue and 2nd at Waite, Perrysburg, and Tiffin is next best with some placement chances. McKee, from the resurgent Highland squad, and Combs might be marginal favorites for the fourth spot, but with a host of other contenders.

There are quite a number of rather similar wrestlers at Steubenville. Marginally, the best of this group is state qualifier Ray who had a very tough draw at Columbus. After a first round victory he gave Skonieczny an excellent match losing 10-8 and then dropped a 13-6 decision to Dukes. He was 2nd at Sheridan (to Gaskins) and 3rd at the OVAC at 145#. State alternate Mellor is next in line with Bernardo, Eddy, and Rector close behind. Bernardo has a certain flair that on a hot weekend could get him a place at Columbus.

145#

PROJECTED CHAMPION: BEN JORDAN (GRAHAM)

Top Contenders

2	Tank (Oak Harbor)	15	Christman (Indian Lake)
3	Fraley (Miami Trace)	16	Vocke (Napoleon)
4	Painter (Aurora)	17	Martycz (Kenton Ridge)
5	Leonard (Norton)	18	Huffman (Eastwood)
6	Canty (Columbus DeSales)	19	Shockey (Fairless)
7	McGookey (Perkins)	20	Dulaney (Whitehall)
8	Hoover (West Holmes)	21	Massillo (Van Wert)
9	Szucs (Holy Name)	22	Swank (University School)
10	Dynes (Claymont)	23	Bruggeman (Bellbrook)
11	Pearce (Poland Seminary)	24	Graves (Maumee)
12	Shiff (Findlay)	25	Hildenbrand (Franklin)
13	Stine (Edison)	26	Ringle (Norwalk)
14	Piechuta (Marlington)	27	Moore (Warrensville)

A final round match-up of Ben Jordan versus Kirk Tank would generate an enormous amount of interest throughout the wrestling community. Jordan has had an absolutely brilliant career winning a state title as both a freshman and a sophomore and suffering a one-point loss in last year's state final. No one could have done better in fending off the expectations and pressure he has faced in his career. So many big wins – like beating three-time champion Jameson at the Top Gun – and so many individual tournament titles on a state championship team. It has been a remarkable run by an outstanding wrestler. Tank, too, has had four great years – state qualification each time and two placements (4th and 2nd). Tank has a choice to make – 145# or 152#. Clearly with his record all that really matters is a state title, he has accomplished everything else. So what Graham opponent gives him the best chance to win? In my view history has shown that beating Boyd is a low probability event – so bring on Jordan.

Jordan should win. Early in the year I thought he was wrestling not to lose rather than going out and being aggressive – using his athleticism and talent to score points not prevent them. All those 2-1 and 2-0 scores kept the opponent in the match. Now, I notice we are seeing more scoring. Tank will be happy to keep it close for five minutes because he has a great one-minute spurt – so Jordan has to pressure him right from the start. Tank can win if he can get ahead and use his riding ability to sit on it. It should be interesting.

Fraley is the only possible issue for Jordan at Goshen. He was 3rd last year losing 6-5 to Leonard in the quarterfinals, but winning five other bouts. It gave him a 53-4 record. This year he won at the SWOCA and was 3rd at Brecksville, losing only to three-time champ Jameson in the semi-finals. He beat Canty, 4-3, in the consolation finals. He was also 3rd at the Top Gun, losing to Jordan 8-2 in the semi-finals. He should be a high placer – possibly a finalist since he'll be away from Jordan. The rest of this district

is miles behind the top two and will be very happy just to have qualified. I give Christman and Martycz a slight advantage over several others.

Tank, on the other hand will face a more varied assortment of competitors. McGooney was 8th last year, losing by ten early to Jordan. He won at Fremont Ross and was 5th at Brecksville, losing by fall to state champion Toal in the semi-finals and to Canty, 1-0. Szucs was 6th last year at 140#, but hasn't had the results you might come to expect. He missed Brecksville and was 6th at the CIT, losing three bouts after reaching the semi-finals. Schiff has missed much of the year because of a serious injury, but has recently returned. He was a district semi-finalist last year before inexplicably losing twice Saturday afternoon with one fall in less than 60 seconds. If totally fit he could well outperform his current ranking. They'll be a lot sniping at the four front-runners from a cadre of capable wrestlers. Vocke and Hoffman are sound, experienced wrestlers who will pounce on mistake, while Graves and Ringle are also strong. Graves, for example, has been 2nd at Waite, Bellevue and Tiffin. A wrestler to watch in the future is Massillo. A junior high state place winner last year he won at the Hamilton Twp., was 2nd at Oak Harbor, and finished a strong 4th at the GMVWA. He may be a year away from qualification.

Painter has been at 152# all year, but I have been assured by the highest possible Aurora source that he will compete at 145# at tourney time. He and Leonard make a strong one-two punch at Firestone. Painter was 8th at this weight class last year – beating Neff, but being shut out by Tank. He has been very good at the higher weight finishing 5th at Brecksville and 2nd at the Top Gun to Kusar. He could be a finalist here. Leonard was 6th at 135# last year after making the state semi-finals. His 10-1 loss to Pelton pushed him deep into the consolations. This year he was 2nd at Solon (to Pearce) and 1st at the Dies where he beat D-3 state champ Stiltner, 5-4. Apparently missing here is state qualifier David Lee (Akron St. Vincent) who has left the team – at least for the moment. He would have had a top ten ranking. Pearce, champ at Solon and Kenston, and Swank, 6th at the Top Gun, are two solid prospects for the last two spots, but the powerful Shockey, just coming off the disabled list may circumvent those plans. Now that Piechuta has moved down to 145# he will muddy the waters when it comes to those last two berths. He was 6th at North Canton (to Timoteo) and was 7th at the Top Gun—losing early and close to Greco and then wending his way through the myriad consolation rounds. All this was at 152#. It puts Swank suddenly in the role of underdog.

I only have five names at Steubenville, but they are all good. Canty has been wrestling very well lately, winning at the CIT and finishing 4th at Brecksville. A state qualifier last year, he lost two one-point decisions on Thursday and was quickly gone. It won't happen this year! Hoover was also a state qualifier after a runner-up district finish, and went 1-2 including a first-round loss to Carlo. He was 2nd at the MIT, losing to Suba, after an overtime win over Dynes. Tow years ago he met Tank in the first round and also went 1-2. He needs to find a couple more wins at the state level this year. Dynes is also a returning state qualifier who got Tank in the first round and was pinned. He lost to Neff in overtime and was eliminated. He was 3rd at the MIT and 4th at the Top

Gun – powerful reasons for eventual state placement. Stine won the OVAC at this class, while Dulaney won at Perrysburg and was 2nd at the Ash. They'll be fighting for that fourth slot.

152#

PROJECTED CHAMPION: COBY BOYD (GRAHAM)

Top Contenders

2	Schott (Marlington)	16	Rubesich (Howland))
3	Timoteo (Highland)	17	Stout (Utica)
4	Carlo (Fairview Park)	18	Lee (Vincent Warren)
5	Boso (Akron Springfield)	19	Emery (Indian Creek)
6	Gregor (Buckeye)	20	McKenzie (Carroll)
7	M. Gallik (Lexington)	21	Edwards (Greenville)
8	Karaffa (Ravenna)	22	Conrad (Ross)
9	Drummond (Napoleon)	23	Oktavec (Streetsboro)
10	Bidwill (Conneaut)	24	King (Milton Union)
11	Stout (Buckeye Valley)	25	Kitner (Big Walnut)
12	Bailey (Washington CH)	26	Renner (New Philadelphia)
13	Raber (Orrville)	27	Spence (Walsh Jesuit)
14	Mullins (Perry)	28	Mallarnee (Oak Harbor)
15	Ray (Indian Lake)	29	

If Tank is, as anticipated, at 145#, Coby Boyd will have only one major obstacle on his path to a second state title. He is already a three-time state placer (6-3-1) and one of the most ferocious pinners in the middleweights since Joe Heskett. His only loss this year was in the Ironman finals to the #1 wrestler in the country at this weight class and that was on an overtime tiebreaker. He has been a superb four-year starter who quite easily could have won another title or two (that two overtime loss in the semis to Kriwinsky two years ago and the semi-final loss to Friery when a freshman).

The only real barrier is Schott. He has been terrific all year at 160#, going undefeated until Cubberly mauled him in the Top Gun finals. Prior to that Schott had shutout Tate and pinned Garbrandt. Except for that one bout no one has been close to him. Now down at 152# he'll give Boyd something to think during boring classes. Overall, he has traded a #2 ranking at 160# for one at 152#.

There is little else to say at this weight class. It is easily the weakest weight class in Division II headed by one of the state's best wrestlers. The most competitive district is at Fostoria – even without Tank. There are two returning state qualifiers and three other good competitors. Timoteo was a state quarter-finalist at this class last year and then lost two bouts by a total of three points and failed to place. This year he won at the Dies and Gorman and was 5th at North Canton and the MIT. At the MIT he lost to Kusar (quite close) and Tank. Carlo was 6th last year at 145#, including a quarterfinal loss by

fall to Boyd. He has wrestled a comfortable schedule winning at Clyde and Southview and is, at this writing, undefeated. Gregor has had a busy schedule, winning at Oak Harbor and Norwalk, and finishing 3rd at the Dies after being shutout by Timoteo. Drummond was a state alternate two years ago, but struggled last year at the district level. He and Gallik (8th at the MIT, and 3rd at Northwood) should battle for the last state spot.

The field, after Schott, at Firestone is very competitive and should provide some interesting match-ups. Many of the wrestlers at this venue look like potential middle to low placers at the state level if they can get there. A number of them have district experience, but only Boso, two years ago, has competed at the state level. Boso went 2-2 at last year's district, but has come back strong this year – winning at Northwest and losing, 8-3, to Timoteo in the Dies final. Karaffa has made a big step forward this year. He lost in the first round at Brecksville 9-8 to the excellent Greco and after three wins fell to Carraher. He was a semi-finalist at the Top Gun, losing to Painter and ended up 4th with another narrow loss to Greco. If he can sustain this momentum he should qualify. Bidwill and Mullins met for two tournament titles with the former winning both. Raber, the young sophomore, was 3rd at the WIT, while Oktavec won at Wadsworth and was 4th at Hudson behind Rubesich. All of them have an upward climb to qualify.

I must be missing all kinds of data out of the Steubenville District. I'm just not finding many names to put on my grid. In the Eastern District this weight class has been dominated by Division III wrestlers, while the Central District has not yet performed as anticipated. I keep thinking Carfagna will have a breakout year or that Kitner or one of the Stouts will post huge numbers. I've listed Stout (the one from Buckeye Valley) who has been best here after some solid performances. I wouldn't be surprised if some 145's wrestle here.

There is very little at Goshen that will trouble Boyd's sleep. He should have very little difficulty subduing all that are here, and the battle is definitely for 2nd (and 3rd and 4th) place. Bailey and Ray would seem to have an inside track based on their good district performances of last year. Bailey, in particular, was two points from qualification. Lee won at Sheridan and was 2-2 at last year's district. The southwestern boys have been placers, but very few have won a tournament. McKenzie was 4th at the CIT, while Edwards was 6th at the GMVWA. Since we have pretty much a level playing field after Boyd the key, oftentimes, to qualification is a strong sectional performance. A good spot in the bracket sheet can be worth a lot in circumstances like these.

160#

PROJECTED CHAMPION: ERIC CUBBERLY (EASTWOOD)

Top Contenders

2	Mannier (Graham)	16	Neely (Upper Sandusky)
3	Bittenger (Beaver Local)	17	Giachetti (Oak Harbor)
4	Garbrandt (Claymont)	18	Krownapple (River Valley)
5	Kilroy (Padua)	19	Snider (Hamilton Twp.)
6	Cheatham (Walsh Jesuit)	20	Rosch (Canal Winchester)
7	Thurn (Clyde)	21	Snider (Valley View)
8	Pool (Benjamin Logan)	22	Novicky (Willard)
9	Walters (West Geauga)	23	Hamilton (Salem)
10	Tate (Akron St. Vincent)	24	Witt (Indian Lake)
11	Bragg (Morgan)	25	Brown (Highland)
12	Brown (Napoleon)	26	Gilmore (Dover)
13	Harris (Greenville)	27	Bates (West Branch)
14	Sexton (Franklin)	28	Recknagel (Rossford)
15	Sarosy (Perry)	29	Cardone (Toledo Central Catholic)

In the past, weight classes tended to even out. As information accumulated about the competitive disposition of each weight class, coaches and wrestlers began to make rational calculations. They analyzed their opportunities at the various weight classes against the goals each wrestler had in mind (do I want to be a district qualifier? State qualifier? State placer? State champ?). Then something like a risk/reward calculation was done and wrestlers began to drift to their optimal weight class. There was a kind of Brownian motion that smoothed out the weight classes, taking wrestlers from a crowded weight class to one that seemed less populated. In some instances this meant some fairly dramatic weight losses as certification time neared. Now, with alpha weights done early, we see greater disparity in weight class talent. A good example is at this class and the one that precedes it. There seems to be almost a vacuum at 152#, whereas at 160# there are at least a dozen superior wrestlers.

The best of this group is the exciting Cubberly. The defending state champ was a dominating winner at Brecksville and the Top Gun – defeating, at the latter, many of the top contenders in Division II. His only loss was in the Ironman semi-finals when the Georgia state champ (and a very impressive one) decisioned him – a match in which Cubberly was injured. He is a three-time state placer (8-3-1), and came very close to winning his sophomore year. I have him at 72-2 since the beginning of his junior year.

The Fostoria District offers a wide variety of challengers for Cubberly. The rugged Kilroy, a Cadet National Champion, was 3rd at this tough district, beating Nino twice – not bad for a freshman. At States he drew state placer Rhoads in the first round and failed to place. The Brecksville Tournament was a great test, with a bracket full of excellent 160's. Kilroy lost in the quarterfinals to Cheatham, but came back for 3rd, defeating Pankewicz, Bryan, Georgia runner-up Banks, and, finally, Cheatham. Thurn

could easily have placed last year. He lost a pair of one-point decisions after reaching the state quarter-finals. He and Michaels have been switching off between this weight class and 171# with Thurn apparently ticketed for here. He won at Clyde and Southview and may be under-rated here. He'll be away from Cubberly and certainly has high placement potential. The rest of this district is good, but probably at a level below the top trio. Neely won at Tiffin, while Novicky was a district semi-finalist last year. They'll be top contenders for that fourth state berth. A strong contender is Giachetti – winner of two tournaments – surrounded by a host of great workout partners at Oak Harbor. Add in the young Recknagel and Brown and this is an excellent district. The real dark horse here is Brown from Napoleon. He certainly has qualification chances after that top trio.

There is also a very strong trio at Firestone. Cheatham was a state placer at 1781#, but has moved to this crowded weight class, though I don't know why. He won the Big 8 (over Walters) and was 4th at Brecksville. Walters went 2-2 at districts last year, but has gotten both bigger and better this year. He was 1st at Kenston, 2nd at the Big 8, and 5th at the Top Gun, defeating Tate (again), but losing to Cubberly (badly) and Mannier. Tate still looks third best here with an excellent chance to return to Columbus. Sarosy and Hamilton are very capable and will be the early co-favorites for that last berth.

Mannier, now a junior, has won two district titles, but has yet to place at states. That will be rectified this year. He was 4th at the Ironman and 1st at the GMVWA, while finishing 3rd at the Top Gun. He defeated Garbrandt and Tate, losing only to Cubberly. He'll want to draw away from Cubberly – 67% probability --- and pressure everyone else. Pool is the only real challenger. He was 5th last year at 152#, losing twice to Garbrandt – both on falls. He was 1st at North Union and Franklin, but has not, to my knowledge, wrestled any of the other top contenders. I like state alternate Sexton next best, though I was disappointed by his 8th place finish at the MIT. He made up for that with a win at Coffman, a 2nd at Franklin, and a 3rd at Western Brown. Greenville has moved to Division II and so Harris will have a chance to qualify at this level. Snider, Witt, and Robinson are just three of his other challengers.

I see some upsets at Steubenville. I've rated Bittenger the best at this district based on some powerful wins this year – none more impressive than his win over Danny Michaels in the finals at Southview. His only loss, and it was a bit of a surprise, was to Skoff in the finals at the OVAC. He was 8th at this weight class last year. Garbrandt, now a junior, went into states with nine losses but had a first round fall over Pool and then upset Kusar. Cubberly got him 74 seconds, but he ended up 4th. He was 2nd at the MIT to D-1 choice Kline and was 4th at the Top Gun, losing to Mannier and Schott. Bragg is a returning district champ who went 1-2 at the state meet. He has won at Licking Hts., Coshocton, and Barnesville, and that makes it a trio of top stars at this district. I've listed a wide variety of possibilities for the fourth berth with that spot still well up in the air.

#171

PROJECTED CHAMPION: ZAC THOMUSSEIT (GRAHAM)

Top Contenders

2	Mills (University School)	16	Van Sickle (West Holmes)
3	Roth (Eastwood)	17	Lauth (St. Marys Memorial)
4	Michaels (Clyde)	18	Cope (Indian Lake)
5	Witt (Oak Harbor)	19	Wheeler (Perry)
6	Griffin (Canal Fulton NW)	20	Ousley (Vinton County)
7	Michael (Valley View)	21	Howell (Harrison Central)
8	Rhoads (Hillsboro)	22	Boggs (Ravenna)
9	Nino (Toledo Central Catholic)	23	Ford (Circleville)
10	Teague (Cambridge)	24	Heldt (Dover)
11	Woods (Claymont)	25	Schaal (Buckeye Local)
12	Donze (Tallmadge)	26	Collins (Bellbrook)
13	Shipp (Wapakoneta)	27	Ponchak (Morgan)
14	Stygler (Columbus DeSales)	28	Rice (Conneaut)
15	Lochtefeld (Lexington)	29	Franklin (Big Walnut)
		30	Weber (Wauseon)

This is just another terrific weight class with a multitude of fine wrestlers in competition. There is no clear-cut favorite with five very strong contenders, none of whom has attained dominance over the rest. If we were to wrestle this weight class for a half dozen successive weekends we'd see a radically changing order each time. Not only that, the next half-dozen wrestlers are all very good. In many years they would be top five contenders with few worries about escaping from their district.

The top choice has to be Thomusseit who has not lost to anyone this year in Division II. He has beaten Mills and Witt and finished ahead of Roth. He was 4th last year at 160#, losing in the semi-finals (with wins over Mills and Nino) and was 6th three years ago at 103# (losing to Papesch in the semi-finals). This year he won at the Top Gun and GMVWA and was 3rd at the Ironman, losing only to "wunderkind" Chris Phillips. He may be helped by the team momentum that will be generated by this spectacular Graham team.

The Fostoria District is sensational. Roth is a transfer from Whitmer where he was a state qualifier in Division I last year. He started slowly, losing to Witt the first week, but has begun to pour it on now. He was 3rd at Brecksville, losing to Mills and 3rd at the Top Gun again losing to Mills. He defeated Witt in their dual meet. Michaels was 3rd at 145# last year, losing a classic semi-final bout to Coby Boyd 18-14. This year he is making the huge jump to 171# even though he has made 160#. The logic flow is clear. He wants to win a state title and 171# is somewhat the better of two very difficult choices. He won at Clyde, Coffman, and Hamilton Twp., but was 2nd (at 160#) to Bittenger at Southview. Witt is also terrific. He was a state semi-finalist last year before losing to Sponseller and finishing 5th (with a win over Mills). He was 7th the year before.

He was 1st at Oak Harbor and Perrysburg, and 2nd at the MIT to Roddy. He was 5th at the Ironman and beat Michaels 3-2 in the dual. That's three great wrestlers, but, wait, there's more (infomercial material), Nino cannot be overlooked. A state qualifier last year, he took Thomusseit into overtime before losing and then had to come right back and wrestle Mills. He won at Tiffin (with his closest match, 12-1) and the CIT (pinning in the semi-finals and finals). State qualifier Shipp is also back with wins at Wapkoneta and Fairmount and 2nd at Oak Harbor (to Witt). Lauth and Weber are both good as is Ladd (Elida) and Trisel (Celina).

Mills was 7th at the rugged Ironman (losing to Roddy in the quarter-finals), but he was 1st at North Canton and 2nd at Brecksville (Phillips) and Top Gun (Thomusseit). He was 6th last year. Griffin was 7th at 171# at last year's States and cannot be overlooked. He got off to a bit of a rocky start at 189#, but now at 171# he won at Northwest and was 2nd at the Dies. Donze was 6th last year after a district 4th, which included a run to the semi-finals. This year he was only a 5th at the Dies, losing 4-3 to Griffin. He seems to wrestle his best at crunch time. There is a drop-off after this trio. Wheeler, another transfer from Lake Catholic won two district bouts last year being eliminated by Tate. He missed the early part of this season, but snapped up a 3rd at Waite. Rice has been at 160#, but could also go here, while Boggs and Fadoul (Aurora) are long-shots.

Thomusseit will not have it as easy as some of his Graham brethren at the district. Michaels was a D-3 state qualifier two years ago at Carlisle at 189# - going 1-2. Now at Valley View he has had a great year winning at Valley View and Bellbrook and finishing 5th at GMVWA after a loss to state placer Rhoads. That was avenged 6-2 at Bellbrook. Rhoads, a three-time state qualifier and a placer two years ago, returns for his last state tournament. He's won two important tournaments and his lowest result was a 4th at GMVWA. That followed a close semi-final loss to Yant. Cope and Ousley were close to qualification last year and should lead the pack looking for the last entry to States.

Perhaps, the weakest district, but it isn't bad, is at Steubenville. I may have badly under-valued Teague who won at the OVAC and Sheridan and was 3rd at Barnesville. He was 6th at Brecksville, losing to Phillips (no disgrace) in the quarter-finals and then falling to 6th. Woods was a state qualifier at Indian Valley and gave up 44 points in his two state bouts losing 24-9 and 20-17. He has clearly worked on his defense this year with a 4th at the MIT and a 6th at the Top Gun. Stygler is now at 171# and was 3rd at the CIT. A real dark horse here is Van Sickle who was 2nd at the WIT, 5th at the MIT, and 7th at the Top Gun. That is a strong, solid schedule with good success. He should qualify.

189#

PROJECTED CHAMPION: CODY MAGRUM (OAK HARBOR)

Top Contenders

2	Foster (Eastwood)	16	Wittkamp (Elida)
3	Bailey (Walsh Jesuit)	17	Day (Valley View)
4	M. Thomusseit (Graham)	18	Hufford (Tiffin Columbian)
5	Andrews (Clyde)	19	Wenger (Fairless)
6	Wetherell (Cambridge)	20	Klingerman (Hebron Lakewood)
7	Angelotta (West Geauga)	21	Sill (Perry)
8	Marshall (Indian Lake)	22	Henderson (Louisville)
9	Gallik (Lexington)	23	Ludwig (Beaver Local)
10	Anthony (Greenon)	24	Henderson (Toledo Central Catholic)
11	Wilcox (Hamilton Twp.)	25	McIntosh (Miami Trace)
12	Carpenter (Sheridan)	26	Brentlinger (Benjamin Logan)
13	Dilley (Amanda Clearcreek)	27	Thompson (Tallmadge)
14	Rosen (University School)	28	Maxworthy (Buckeye)
15	Talbert (Akron Springfield)	29	Sanford (Finneytown)
		30	Tope (Canal Winchester)

The epic battles between Magrum and Foster continue for yet another year. It seems that we have seen them go at it since the age of knighthood – since Sandy Cageao was young. They attend nearby schools and wrestle in the same weight classes and they are both extremely successful. Three years ago Magrum was 7th, while Foster was 4th. Two years ago Magrum won his first state title, while Foster was upset in the first round and didn't place. Last year it seemed turned around as Foster crushed Magrum 8-0 in the district final. It made no difference. Magrum drew away from Thompson and rolled into the finals, while Thompson nipped Foster 3-2. And so it was that Magrum took his second title, 3-1 over Thompson. This year Magrum was 2nd at the Ironman, while Foster was 4th. Magrum won their individual bout when Foster clearly was still in football shape. Since then Foster was 2nd at Brecksville and 1st at the Top Gun, while Magrum won at the MIT, Perrysburg and Oak harbor. He also won at the dual meet 4-2. So does Foster have one last Herculean effort to upset Magrum one last time? Maybe so, but this time he might save it for Columbus.

Let me add that Magrum has been one of the great upper weight wrestlers in Ohio. When, next year, we start to think about the best high school wrestlers in Ohio during the first decade of the 21st century his name must certainly be prominently mentioned.

Their district is by far the best. Andrews and Gallik both have previous state experience and know their way around a wrestling mat. Andrews was at 215# much of the year, winning three tournaments there and now one at 189#. He'll be a real load for anyone – including the top duo. Gallik was twice a D-3 state qualifier, but has never placed going 1-4. This is his last chance to turn it around. Waiting in the wings are Wittkamp and Hufford, both rock steady placers who'll need that big upset to qualify. Maxworth and

Henderson are also possible factors with Gallik, in all likelihood, the principal target. The Northeast District wrestlers have won the last four titles at this weight class – the longest such streak in Division II. It will take a monumental effort to extend that streak with Foster and Magrum at their weight class.

However, the Northeast District does have a legitimate prospect coming out of Firestone. Bailey was 4th at this weight class last year – losing 7-6 in the first round then winning four consolation bouts, the first one a 5-4 win over Andrews. He was 2nd at the Top Gun to Foster, losing by six and 4th at Brecksville, losing to eventual champ Lamberg, 9-8. Angelotta has made great progress during the past year and has solid placement potential. He was 5th at the Top Gun losing to Bailey by seven. After him there are a host of possibilities. The steady Rosen always seems to place, while Talbert has done much the same. Wenger is relatively small and quick and may give the bigger boys problems.

It's a nice steady group of contenders at Goshen. Thomusseit placed at 130# and has moved up seven weight classes – a large jump even in that family. I'm guessing he is probably a 160-pounder unable to dislodge Mannier, but he may have found a more congenial niche at 189#. He was 2nd at the GMVWA and 3rd at the Top Gun, losing only to Bailey. He would certainly set a state record by placing in consecutive years at weight classes set so far apart. State qualifier Marshall is second best, winning at Indian Lake Indian and finishing 2nd at Troy and Clyde, losing by four points to Andrews. Last year he drew Weakley in the first round and wrestled well losing 9-5. Anthony was a district semi-finalist last year before losing twice and falling to 5th. He was a solid 5th at the MIT and has won several smaller tournaments. Day has three times been a tourney finalist and is a candidate for qualification. McIntosh was 3rd at the Junior High States, losing to Phillips, and is a rising star. He might qualify as early as this year.

Wetherell should dominate the action at Steubenville. He had an unhappy Brecksville tournament, but since then was 1st at the OVAC and at Sheridan. Carpenter has been successful at 215#, but will be a real "load" at this weight class. Wilcox and Dilley are strong in the Columbus area, while Ludwig, 5th at the OVAC, may do well from the east. Except for Wetherell the other three qualifiers may struggle in Columbus.

215#

PROJECTED CHAMPION: MATT FISHER (PERKINS)

Top Contenders

2	Pummill (Valley View)	14	Poucher (West Geauga)
3	Houska (Highland)	15	Renward (Bellevue)
4	Pickerel (Toledo Central Catholic)	16	Lias (Hubbard)
5	Snyder (Hillsboro)	17	Plunkett (Carrollton)
6	Taylor (Indian Lake)	18	Erb (Wapakoneta)
7	Busick (Steubenville)	19	Thompson (Tallmadge)
8	Gidcumb (John Glenn)	20	Baker (Oak Harbor)
9	Schlarb (New Philadelphia)	21	Stanley (New Lexington)
10	White (Graham)	22	Webber (Claymont)
11	DeRoia (Walsh Jesuit)	23	Pavlik (Ravenna)
12	Whitehead (Columbus deSales)	24	Korth (new Albany)
13	Hale (Eastwood)	25	Barnett (Eaton)

This is actually the last of the 42 weight classes to be examined and written up. The top choice is an obvious one based on 2 ½ years of sustained excellence. Fisher first hit the state meet as a sophomore and immediately made an impact reaching the semi-finals before losing a narrow decision to Srock and finishing 4th. Last year, again at 189#, he reached the finals with his 46th win, but lost to Weakley, who won the bout on his feet. This year he is undefeated (on the mat) winning at the Ironman, North Canton, and Fremont Ross and forfeiting to Scales, due to injury, in the finals at Brecksville, a bout that I would have loved to have seen. Big, strong, and very powerful, he is difficult to score against, and wins bouts by a process of attrition. Sometimes, the score at the end seems a lot closer than what was just witnessed, but Fisher never seems in real danger.

He emerges from an excellent district. Houska, still just a junior, was an easy winner at the Gorman, was 2nd at North Canton to Fisher (7-2), and 3rd at the MIT, losing to Division I state runner-up Cogar (12-3). A district semi-finalist last year, he lost his two Saturday afternoon bouts by a total of three points and became a state alternate. One of those losses was to Pickerel who is also back. I think Houska has passed his fellow junior, but Pickerel is still very good. He lost to Pummill in the first round (9-8) and then won three bouts to finish 7th. He should do even better this year after winning at Tiffin and finishing 2nd to Scales at the CIT. Hale and Renward are top contenders for that fourth berth, with Baker and Rippke (Maumee) also in the mix. A future star is Erb who won at Fairmont, Oak harbor, and Wapakoneta and is only a freshman. He was 3rd at the Junior High States last year and clearly has a most promising future.

There is a quartet of “heavy hitters” at Goshen, any of whom could be a finalist. Pummill was 3rd at last year’s district, and then made the state semifinals before losing to Srock and falling to 4th. This year he is undefeated winning at four tournaments

including the GMVWA, and beating Snyder twice and Taylor. He has strongest finalist potential. Snyder has had a great four-year career twice qualifying for States, but going 1-2 each time. Last year Pickerel closed the door on his chances. This year he has won every tourney except those where Pummill showed up. This is definitely a high place year for him. Taylor was a state qualifier at 285# last year going two and out. This year at 215# he has been excellent – three times being a tournament finalist (two firsts) and a 5th at GMVWA. He has losses to both Snyder and Pummill. White continues to get better and this sophomore is now one of the top dozen or so wrestlers in the state at this weight class. He won two district bouts last year at 189#, but has been even better at 215# this year. He was 8th at the Ironman and 4th at the GMVWA – losing to Snyder by a single point. His problem may be in discovering the best way to work through this difficult bracket. Below this group we have Stanley and Barnett with Ford (Circleville) a possibility though I suspect (he and others) will quickly note the quality difference at this district between 215# and 285#.

There are a number of strong performers at Steubenville, too. The quartet of Busick, Gidcumb, Schlarb, and Whitehead all have placement potential. The first two were both state qualifiers last year who came within one bout of placement – Gidcumb missing out by a single point. He won at St. Clairsville and Coshocton this year and could be a real factor. Busick rounding out of football shape and into wrestling fitness was 2nd at Barnesville, but won the OVAC. He is very good. Schlarb was a district semi-finalist who lost to Gidcumb in overtime in his go-to-state bout. He would like to avoid that fate as he won this year at the WIT overwhelming the field. Whitehead has been a little slow rounding into form, but was 3rd at the CIT. He was 6th at Brecksville, but did not lose to any D-2 rivals. Plunkett and Weber, who have traded victories, might be next best with Korth also in the picture.

The cupboard is just about bare at Firestone. I'm not sure I can remember a time at this district when a weight class had so few names that are recognizable. My guess is that when we see the four state qualifiers they'll not be household words. I've put DeRoia at the top of my list with Poucher and Lias somewhere in the mix. It'll be like one of the mysteries I read when I cannot even identify any of the suspects.

285#

PROJECTED CHAMPION: JOHN HILES (COLUMBUS DESALES)

Top Contenders

2	Walls (Graham)	14	Willford (Meigs)
3	Hawkins (West Holmes)	15	Ciraldo (Walsh Jesuit)
4	Donna (Tiffin)	16	Wolfe (Beaver Local)
5	Williams (Woodward)	17	Jackson (Benjamin Logan)
6	Betz (Marlington)	18	Torrence (Norwalk)
7	Sanchez (Napoleon)	19	Williams (Geneva)
8	Britt (Clear Fork)	20	Van Sickle (Sheridan)
9	Bickham (Hebron Lakewood)	21	Slapnicker (West Geauga)
10	Brooks (Bellevue)	22	Ford (Circleville)
11	Hager (Ravenna)	23	Neal (St. Marys Memorial)
12	Jackson (Claymont)	24	Benson (Chillicothe)
13	Magestro (Canal Fulton NW)	25	Cooper (River View)

We had some great heavyweight champions in Division II the past few years. Wrestlers who have excelled for two or three years at a weight class that is difficult, unpredictable, and leaves one feeling that one or the other of the two contestants could be on the edge of disaster. We've had two-time champ Dustin Fox, now ranked #1 in the Nation, two-time finalist and one-time champ Matt Guhn, and two-time champ and three-time finalist Nathan Sharp. That tradition should continue with John Hiles – who has finished 3rd and 2nd the past two years. Ironically, he was 3rd and 2nd at the junior high states, but never got that last chance for a title. Well, the opportunity is here this year at the high school level, and I anticipate Hiles finally cashing in on his years of hard work. Last year he lost to Sharp in overtime for the title in a terrific struggle (incidentally Sharp was a phenomenal 5-0 in overtime during his state appearances). Hiles has won everything this year except for a highly dubious overtime defeat at the Beast of the East (one that won't make the referees' Hall of Fame). He had five falls at Brecksville and that will keep the referees out of the picture.

His principal rival is likely to be Wall, who was a junior high state champ. Walls, now a junior, has been 6th and 4th the last two years, losing to Hiles two years ago. He was 5th at the Ironman and 2nd at the GMVWA (losing to Prichard) and was 1st at the Top gun (beating Hawkins in overtime). He exits by far the easiest district, one that you will want to draw into (except for Walls). None of the remaining qualifiers (whoever they may be) are likely to be more than very low placers. But it does provide plenty of district opportunities. I think boys from the southeast, like Ford, Willford, and fast moving Van Sickle have good chances to qualify.

Hawkins was 8th last year losing to both Sharp and Walls (no disgrace). This year he won the WIT and MIT and was 2nd at the Top Gun – losing to Walls 2-1, but decisioning Betz. His district is far more challenging than the one facing Walls. He has Hiles, of

course, at the top, but Bickham and Jackson are both solid. Jackson had a district 6th, losing to Hiles, and has been 8th at both the Ironman and the Top Gun. Bickham had a big win at Sheridan – finishing ahead of both Van Sickle and Ford. The OVAC champ, Wolfe, is also a strong contender and he was a runner-up at Southview losing to D-3 choice Stocum, 3-1. That leaves Coshocton champ Cooper, Spence (Amanda Clearcreek) and Dugan (Steubenville) with low probability chances.

The deepest district is at Fostoria. Donna was a surprise state semi-finalist last year before getting pinned by Hiles, decisioned by Walls, and falling to 6th. He has already won at Norwalk, Fremont Ross, and Clyde this year and was 2nd at Tiffin to Southwick. Williams was a Division I state qualifier last year and won a state bout. He has not wrestled many of the competitors he will see at this district, but, on the other hand, they haven't seen him. Sanchez (will he go 215?) seems likely to wrestle here. Relatively small, but exceedingly quick and deceptively strong, he is 30-2 this year losing only to Southwick and Hawkins. He should get a place. Britt, a returning qualifier, has been caught a couple of times finishing 3rd at the Gorman (losing to Windom) and 2nd at Norwalk (to Donna). He almost derailed Hiles in the first round last year, losing 5-4 then being eliminated by Hawkins. Brooks was 2-2 at last year's district getting majored by Donna. This year he won at Bellevue and was an excellent 7th at Brecksville. That's five solid choices, but Torrence, Neal, and Windom (Lexington) are all possibilities, as well. I'm sure we'll see at least one surprise here.

Betz has had a great season, building on his state qualification efforts last year. At Columbus he met Walls in the first round and wasn't able to bounce back. This year he has won at North Canton and was 3rd at the Top Gun, losing to Hawkins by two and beating Ciraldo in overtime. Hager and Magestro wrestled for 5th and 6th at last year's district, but it will not unduly stress probability if they were to meet for the title. Magestro has two first place finishes and two sixth place results and has been busier than Hager. Ciraldo has begun to really progress and he had that strong 4th at the Top Gun. That's my top quartet with Williams, Slapnicker, and Jones (Harvey) as possible back-ups.

TEAMS

1. Graham

This will be their eighth consecutive team title and tenth overall extending both of their D-2 marks. It will also be Jeff Jordan's eighth title tying him with Bill Barger for 4th on the all-time coaching list. Last year they became the fifth team (and first in D-2) to score over 200 points when they brought home 208.5. This year they could surpass the record set last year by St. Edward (229) for most points in school classification. They also have an opportunity to tie or even beat the most hallowed of records – the six individual state champions produced by Cleveland West in 1951. I count eight classes where individual state titles are possible and four where they will be solid favorites. Not only that, the nation's #1 team loses only three seniors and anyone who attends the State Junior High Meet knows that they have tremendous talent in the pipeline
2. Oak Harbor

There is likely to be a tremendous battle for 2nd place since no team has more than three, sure big-time scorers. For Oak Harbor two-time champ Magrum, runner-up Tank, and placer Witt have been doing it for four years. Magrum needs to continue to beat Foster. Tank has to be at just the right weight class, and Witt has to outdo himself at the rough 171# weight class. If the freshman Miller is as good as I think he is at 119#, and Cramer, Stone, Konner Witt, and Baker can help they'll be hard to separate from the runner-up trophy.
3. Eastwood

They, too, have three primary scorers in state champ Cubberly, Roth, and Foster. Two of those are likely to go head-to-head with the Oak Harbor stars and need to gain at least a split. If Flores can have one, great hot weekend, and Hoffman and Hale pitch in, second place could belong to them.
4. Walsh Jesuit

They potentially, have four boys who could be in the top three. Skonieczny and DiJulius look to be finalists, while Bailey should place very high. They need Cheatham to have a personal best weekend and score well at the tough 160# class. After that the long shots like Hurley, Ciraldo, and DeRoia have to pitch in.

5. University School State runners-up Inghram and Wukie have moved up some weight classes, but still look effective. Mills is a real load, but 171# is very tough. If the freshman Roddy and Hightower can help, they'll be in the hunt.
6. Columbus DeSales I see two champions in Hiles and Vaughan and that's a lot of points to start off with. Add in good performances by Canty and McGovern and some scoring by Whitehead, Bernardo, and Stygler and the new regime will be off to a great start..
7. Claymont If only they could round up a few more Gar(a)brandts Graham would have to start worrying. They need to get the first three weight classes set up with state champ Cody Garbrandt in top form. Add Dynes and Regula in the middle and yet another Garbrandt and Woods toward the end and you could score a lot of points. Two keys would be getting Ditcher deep into the tournament and Jackson to score there. If all this happens, they're right in the battle.
8. Aurora This is strictly a three-man team, but those three are very good. Mitch and Papesh could both be finalists, with Painter also scoring big. The key is to get Painter at just the right weight class.
9. Ravenna The surprise state runner-up last year, they just might fool us again. Dukes could be a finalist and Meyer is very good at the not-so-strong 125# class. If Hayes suddenly reverts to powerhouse form at 103# they'll have a Top Ten look. After that Hager has to help.
10. Highland They have some excellent wrestlers at just the right weight classes. Mirman and Young lead off the first two weight classes with tremendous power and Houska can close at 215#. Add in Timoteo in the middle and get help from some of the others and they could challenge for the top five.

Division III

In the past few years there has been little competition or drama surrounding the team titles in Division I and II. Only in Division III have we had some exciting battles, and one of the best was last year when Troy Christian and Marion Pleasant battled down to the wire. On the surface it seems difficult to understand how Pleasant didn't win. They had, for example, 12 state qualifiers to 8 for Troy Christian. They placed 9 while Troy Christian had 8. While Troy Christian had 5 finalists to 3 for Pleasant, both placed 5 in the top 3. Pleasant won 34 state bouts, including 23 in the championship round while Troy Christian won 27 with 21 in the championship round and, in fact, Pleasant scored 6 more advancement and placement points than Troy Christian. The critical difference was bonus points. This is what won the tournament for Troy Christian. They scored 29.0 bonus points (11 falls/defaults, 2 technical falls, and four majors) compared to 20.5 points for Pleasant (4 falls/defaults, 5 technical falls, and five majors). That 8.5 point differential erased the six extra advancement and placement points and created the 2.5 point margin of victory. The unheralded Cody Libengood, who finished 6th, scored 5.5 bonus points, the same number as both of Marion Pleasant's state champs combined. In a way he was the unexpected hero of this drama.

103

PROJECTED CHAMPION: HUNTER STIEBER (MONROEVILLE)

Top Contenders

2	Hancock (Troy Christian)	16	Powers (CVCA)
3	Yeary/Harrison (Reading)	17	Fusco (Hartley)
4	Strine (Hillsdale)	18	Klinger (Cuyahoga Hts.)
5	Tschantz (Chanel)	19	Ankrom (Bloom Carroll)
6	Pierce (North Union)	20	Harrington (Sandusky St. Mary)
7	Aranjo (Delta)	21	Thompson (Brookfield)
8	Triskett (VASJ)	22	Hall (Preble Shawnee)
9	Elchert (Arcadia)	23	Hamilton (Waynedale).
10	Spreng (Loudonville)	24	Deaton (Blanchester)
11	Adams (Madison Plains)	25	Kapper (Manchester)
12	Barlow (Heath)	26	Pizzuto (Jackson Milton)
13	Glosser (Otsego)	27	Dronzek (Beachwood)
14	Ferguson (Montpelier)	28	A. Merschman (Delphos St. John)
15	Reed (Waterford)	29	Johnston (Bluffton)
		30	Arthur (Greeneview)

The biggest story in Ohio wrestling this year has been the emergence of the Monroeville Four, three freshmen and a sophomore possessing incredible talent. At the Ironman they captured three individual titles – matching the combined total of Graham, Blair, and St. Edward. At the powerful Brecksville Holiday Tournament they won four titles and only one other team won more than one. The igniter is Hunter Stieber the second of

two brothers and, quite possibly, the best 103 pounder in the country. Last year his brother, Logan, took this title with three first period falls and a 20-5 technical fall in the finals. Hunter, a two time junior high state champion and Cadet National titleholder, should have little more trouble. Undefeated, he has beaten my Division I and II selections, and he faces very few problems in Division III. Curiously, brother following brother at the same weight class in consecutive years was last done in 2002-03, also in Division III, by Jordan and Kevin Lipp at 112#. The last time it happened in Division I, if you accept the official results, was in 1978-1979 when the twins Randy and Ray Jenkins won consecutive titles also at 112#.

As mentioned, I'm struggling big time to come up with reasonable challengers for Stieber. The Owens District returns two state qualifiers, but there are questions. Aranjó, a senior, was the district runner-up last year, but has wrestled only once this year for a variety of reasons. If he shows up at sectionals healthy and bout-ready, he is a state placer, but I'm not sure that's a high probability event. Elchert had an interesting district. His three wins nailed down 4th place and a state berth, but his two losses were by a combined 30-1 margin – and both his state bouts ended in falls. This year he has been a steady placer, including a win at Arcadia. He should make it to Columbus again, but placement will be difficult. Ferguson has a 1st at Stryker and a 2nd at Richmond Hts. in the D-3 Classic. He could well be second best here if Aranjó, who notched a second period pin against him in last year's sectional, does not compete. Glosser was 3rd at Hudson defeating the excellent Kazimir in the process, and then was 2nd at Tiffin. On a hot weekend he would qualify. With so much uncertainty, people like Harrington, Stacy (Liberty Center), and Reid (Hicksville) have a real opportunity. I particularly like Harrington's chances.

The best and deepest district is at Maple Hts. There are at least eight wrestlers, who could quality out of other districts, competing here. It is a district with five returning district qualifiers and a solid influx of new talent, although no one here can challenge Stieber. Strine grabbed the last state qualifying spot last year and went 1-2 losing to Libengood and Householder. He was 2nd at the WIT and 1st at Black River, but does not wrestle a high-powered schedule. His past experience is no guarantee of a return trip. Graham Coghill is a great coach of low weight wrestlers (and everyone else, too) and he always has outstanding lightweights. He lost Dakota Hayes (4th last year) who went back to Ravenna, but the young Tschantz is really improving. He was 3rd at Solon and 5th at Mayfield (in a strong field) and should qualify. Right with this duo are two wrestlers who competed at 112# last year – both of whom, in fact, were district qualifiers. Triskett won two district bouts last year and now at 103# won at both Hawken and the D-3 Classic. Klinger was champ at Woodridge and has posted a 15-3 record. His scores have shown a sharp trend upward and he, clearly, will be a factor. This is a solid quartet, but the sophomore Spreng has the talent to sweep by most of this group. He was a district quarter-finalist last year before having to default out of the consolation round. He was 3rd at the Gorman and should challenge everyone here. The wild card here is Powers who has some very good results and some that were less strong. On a hot weekend he could qualify. Another wrestler in that same category is Thompson who won a district bout last year. He's a goer who can score in bunches.

Kapper and Hamilton, from the southern part of this district, have possibilities – especially the first mentioned. He was 2nd at Northwest. Long shots might include the younger Pizzuto and Dronzek, who pinned Klinger. This district will be a dog fight from the very first round with interesting battles on every mat. It reminds me of last year when there were some incredible bouts like Strine losing to Hayes 16-15, but beating Thompson in a crucial consolation bout 23-20. Expect more of the same this year.

There is nowhere near that depth at Heath. While all sixteen district qualifiers at 103# last year were underclassmen, the top eight have all moved up. That leaves a wide-open field this time around. Most of the best 103's are from the Columbus area. I think Pierce might be the strongest of this group as confirmed by his victory at North Union, including a 6-0 win in the finals. Right with him is the junior, Adams, who won 36 bouts last year, including one at the district level. Junior high place winner Barlow has been very good – 1st at Whitehall and Licking County and 2nd at North Union (to Pierce). Fusco is also a possibility after a 30+ win season last year as is Reichle. Waterford is generally short in numbers, but they so often have a couple of strong contenders (a Kern or Schott or any number of Langs) and this year is no exception. Reed lost two close district bouts last year after a first round fall. If anyone is going to break the Columbus monopoly at this weight class it will likely be him. Knowlton (Bellaire) and Ankrom are other possibilities.

There is an air of mystery at Fairmont. Yeary, a state qualifier last year, was putting together a dominant year at 103# including a 2nd at the SWOCA, when suddenly, since the New Year, he has competed only at 112#. I am ranking him here, but also listing his capable backup, Harrison, as a possibility. Right behind him, and showing great improvement, is the sophomore Hancock. He has split a pair of bouts with Brascetta and was 6th at Brecksville – losing on a fall to Stieber and narrowly to Hayes. Like Libengood last year, he could be a critical point scorer for Troy Christian. Hall looks to be next best with a win at Franklin and several other high placements. That leaves one open spot which might fall to Arthur who had a slow start, Deaton, or Merschman.

112 #

PROJECTED CHAMPION: CAM TESSARI (MONROEVILLE)

Top Contenders

2	Reynolds (Pleasant)	16	Glenn (Otsego)
3	Libengood (Troy Christian)	17	Porter (Bellaire)
4	Tinch (Mt. Gilead)	18	Majoy (Edison)
5	Poling (North Union)	19	Hoskins (Greeneview)
6	Yoder (Martins Ferry)	20	Colombo (Independence)
7	Heminger (Northmor)	21	Tolson (Delta)
8	B. Merschman (Delphos St. John)	22	Anthony (Carlisle)
9	Mallos (Cuyahoga Hts.)	23	Bailes (Mogadore)
10	Riedlinger (Arcadia)	24	Jacober (Beachwood)
11	Pizzuto (Jackson Milton)	25	Adams (Hicksville)
12	Branham (West Jefferson)	26	Parker (Mohawk)
13	Lee (Elmwood)	27	Grandstaff (Coldwater)
14	Petersheim (Waynedale)	28	Breisch (Covington)
15	Cattran (Bloom Carroll)	29	Fleetwood (Margaretta)
		30	Fano (Waterloo)

The usual flow of events runs something like this. Each year there is a talented influx of newcomers at 103# who provide exceptional competition. Then the following year most move up to 112# and join some holdovers to create a very difficult weight class. It didn't happen that way this year. In 2007 the 103# class was relatively weak, and, even then, more than usual grew into higher than 112# weight classes. Not only that, most of the 112-pounders also moved up, including I believe, all eight placers. That leaves a weight class where there is real opportunity for glory.

The wrestler most likely to profit from this is the least well known of the Monroeville Four, Cam Tessari. A former junior high state champion and Cadet National place winner, Tessari is well equipped to win a state title at this weight class. Tessari was a semi-final loser at the Ironman, dropping a decision to the inimitable David Taylor. At Brecksville, unseeded, he beat former Division I state champion Steve Mitcheff rather easily in the quarter finals; then shrugged off a 4-point throw by Division I state placer Jerome Robinson to win ten of the next eleven points and win 10-5 in the semi-finals; before shutting out Division II state runner-up James Inghram. It was very impressive. He will be a strong favorite to win at this weight class.

The sternest tests for Tessari are likely to come from the Heath District. Reynolds has spent most of the year (as far as I can tell) at 119#, but I have mixed messages as to whether he will be at 112#. If so, he jumps into the immediate foreground for Tessari. Reynolds lost by a point to Householder in the district finals at 103# and ended up 5th with two narrow wins over Libengood. In his second sojourn at 112# at Brecksville he was pinned by Chanel's Kiefer in his first bout and then immediately lost in the consolation round. I chalk that up to a tough weight cut during the holidays. He has

been reasonably successful at 119#, including a North Union title over state qualifiers Shepard and Thomas. He'll need to make a decision, although 112# would seem to be the easier weight class. Tinch has also moved around, wrestling as high as 125# (1st at Northridge), but most likely ending up at 112# -- where he finished a solid 2nd at Marion Harding. He was 7th last year at 103# and could move up a few notches this time. Poling was also a state qualifier at 112#, and was a quarter-final loser to Harbart. He does not wrestle an overly tough schedule, but won a big title at North Union. A senior who won 40 bouts last year he, too, has state placement potential. The fourth state berth is wide open. The best bet is Yoder who lost a critical 7-6 bout to Poling in last year's quarterfinals. He won again at Barnesville and heads a relatively weak Eastern District group at this weight class. Right with him is Cattran, who was a bout from state qualification at 103# last year. He already has 20 wins and a title at Union Local. Other possibilities are Porter and Barker (Barnesville), but the dark horses here are a pair of freshmen. Heminger was 3rd at Marion Harding and 2nd at the Gorman, including a 25-12 win over Gould. Branham beat Cattran, 4-1, and can go with the top boys. After this district the qualifiers will be too tired to beat Tessari.

The Maple Hts. District, as it now stands, is uncharacteristically weak. Kiefer, the powerhouse 112# from Chanel, who pinned Reynolds while reaching the semi-finals at Brecksville, is out for the year. He looked to be the best at this district. As it now stands, unless some of the 119's move down (and I have seen no sign of that) this will be a district that will be challenging for lower to middle places at Columbus. Mallos is the kind of wrestler you like to watch. He is aggressive, likes to score, and maintains constant motion. He qualified for States at 103# last year, but lost twice 17-13 and 8-5. He should do better this year. Right with him is Pizzuto, 3rd at Solon and 1st at Jackson Milton, whose overtime loss to Kovach probably cost him a state berth last year. I liked what I saw of Petersheim at the D-3 Classic as he won the title allowing virtually no offensive points against him the entire tourney. At the state duals Libengood beat him by a single point, 4-3. Bailes and Colombo were both district semi-finalists who ended up wrestling each other for 5th place. Bailes was 3rd at Northwest and 1st at Manchester. State junior high placer Jacober and, maybe, Fano are possibilities.

Tessari should have very few problems at the Owens District. State alternate Glenn is a district possibility to get a state berth, as is the experienced senior Riedlinger. If the younger Lee is healthy he could well finish ahead of either of them. He beat Riedlinger earlier in the year at Arcadia. Factor in Majoy and, maybe, Fleetwood or Parker, and the competition for the last three berths sounds a little more exciting. Tolson has had some big wins and might be a factor here, as well as Adams.

Libengood would appear to dominate at Fairmont. He was 6th last year at Columbus and was a pivotal figure in Troy Christian's run to a state title. He wrestles a very difficult schedule compared to most of his opponents at this district. Last year he entered sectional wrestling with a 9-9 record and yet never had to wrestle six minutes in winning this district at 103#. It will be much the same this year with his real tests beginning at the state level. His advantage is that he'll be entering the state bracket as a district champ. Also here is state placer Merschman who finished 8th last year. A

fourth place district qualifier (badly beaten by Libengood and Yeary) he won two state consolation bouts. His 15-13 overtime win was a classic. This year he has been at 119#, but the move down should get him to Columbus. I think Hoskins might be third best based on a 7-2 win over Anthony at the GMVWA. Both these boys have district experience. Hoskins also beat Breisch in overtime and he, too, has district experience after going 2-2 last year. This quintet will be challenged by Grandstaff and, possibly, Yeary if he stays at 112#. Also look for Leuthold (Badin) to pull an upset.

119

PROJECTED CHAMPION: LOGAN STIEBER (MONROEVILLE)

Top Contenders

2	Householder (West Jefferson)	14	Stasa (Evergreen)
3	Hall (Tuslaw)	15	Goldberg (Miami East)
4	Harbert (Garrettsville Garfield)	16	Rayfield (Delta)
5	Kovach (Chanel)	17	Sommers (CVCA)
6	Shepard (Sparta Highland)	18	Border (Caldwell)
7	Lopez (Patrick Henry)	19	Traver (Genoa)
8	Thomas (Bloom Carroll)	20	Faykus (Bellaire)
9	Wooten (West Liberty Salem)	21	Panno (Blanchester)
10	Dennis (Lutheran West)	22	Gase (Calvert)
11	Graves (Paint Valley)	23	Brown (Manchester)
12	J. Carpenter (Madeira)	24	Duhigg (VASJ)
13	Begg (Bluffton)	25	Walter (Carey)
		26	Herron (Covington)

Should I be correct and the three Monroeville lightweights win as anticipated, it will be a most extraordinary accomplishment. No team in Division III or in Division II has ever swept the first three weight classes at a state meet. It's reasonably rare for wrestlers from the same school to win the first two weight classes. As for the first three in a row – it's happened only twice in back-to-back years, and it goes back even further than the last time my beloved Indians won a World Series. In both 1946 and 1947 Bill Buckingham, John Matteucci and either Joe DiBello (1947) or Jack Saunders (1946) swept the first three weight classes.

The heaviest favorite of this trio will be Logan Stieber, but he could have the toughest competition. Stieber, ranked first in the nation, is a two-time Cadet National Champ and a defending state champion. He is tremendous in all three positions. Often the great Ohio high school wrestlers have been takedown machines with limited mat skills. What is impressive with the Monroeville wrestlers is their great riding ability. Watching them, for example, at Brecksville you had to marvel at their great technique and tenacity on top. Stieber has lost only once in his high school career (to the remarkable Taylor) and that number will not increase this year.

The biggest question about this weight class is who will show up here at sectional time. There are three possibilities of real note, but their intentions are still not totally clear. Opfer gave Stieber a good bout at Brecksville, losing 4-2, but I never thought he had winning chances. I see him at 125#. State champion Sergent is another question mark. Supposedly committed to 119# he has wrestled at 125# since Brecksville. I again will rate him at that class. Finally, Householder has been at 119# or 125#. I see him staying at 119# knowing that, under my assumed conditions, he would be seeded away from Stieber, but with Hall.

I would like to have seen a Householder/Stieber bout last year, but Hayes dumped Householder in overtime. Interestingly when they wrestled for 3rd, Householder won 12-0. He has now been 4th and 3rd, and this time he should meet Stieber in the finals. He has had few problems at 125# or 119# this year (he's 21-0), but it will not be a cakewalk to the finals. I see at least three boys who could challenge him. Next best at his district are a quartet of state qualifiers and a returning state alternate. It makes this easily the toughest district. Interestingly the four other returning qualifiers went 1-8 at Columbus last year. Graves was not only the first Paint Valley wrestler to qualify for state action, he was the first one I had ever heard of. He beat Shepard twice at districts to finish 3rd, but then lost twice on Thursday at Columbus. This year he has remained at 119# and recently won easily at London. Shepard and Thomas also lost twice after finishing 4th out of their district weight classes. They both have low state placement potential, but they'll need to escape this district first. I rate Shepard a little higher because of his point scoring ability. I think Border has the best opportunity to upset this top quartet. He lost a 6-5 go-to-state bout to Tinch last year, but has rebounded with wins at Shadyside and Barnesville. Faykus, the only one of that quartet of state qualifiers to win a bout in Columbus, has struggled at 119# and will need to "step it up" to return there. It's a great district and it's possible that Reynolds – always a tough bout for Householder – may join this group.

State runner-up Hall returns at this weight class and we could have a repeat of the 103# state final from last year. Hall got a great pairing in Columbus being away from both Stieber and Householder and he took full advantage. Narrow wins over Tinch and Reynolds propelled him into the finals where Stieber defeated him. Very solid (like his brother) he has had few problems this year, winning most recently at Northwest. He'll be joined at Maple Hts. by three other state qualifiers. Harbert looked great at last year's district, beating the other three qualifiers, Marmaros, Kovach, and Dennis. A semi-finalist in Columbus, he lost in that round to Opfer and finished a solid 4th. Now a junior, he was only 6th at Wadsworth – a surprising result. Dennis, a two-time state qualifier, placed 7th two years ago, but after a great first round win over Lopez, lost twice and did not place. He has been a steady placer at 119# and 125# all year. The biggest improvement, though, has been made by Kovach. He caught Opfer in the first round of States and it was two and out. This year he won at the Mayfield Big 8 and was 4th at Solon in a strong field, and 6th at Brecksville (which featured Steiber, Opfer, Sergent, and Papesch). At the state duals he pinned all three wrestlers including Reynolds and Panno. Hall will have trouble beating him. Right with this quartet is the rapidly improving Sommers. He could beat any of this top quartet, and I think Dennis could be

vulnerable. Brown is certainly a solid possibility, if something happens to one of the top quartet while Duhigg, injured all year, should return.

At Owens, Lopez will be Stieber's chief rival. Last year he won his first 41 bouts before losing to Opfer in the semi-finals and finishing 3rd. He ended up 7th at States and was one of the more impressive freshmen there. This year he has been equally impressive winning most bouts with overpowering ease – for example, a 17-4 final win at the "A" Classic. State qualifiers Rayfield and Traver are also back, but they are a step below this top duo. However, Rayfield was 7th at the GMVWA against a strong field. Who I think may have surpassed them is the senior, Matt Stasa. A district semi-finalist last year, he got pinned by two-time state champ Harrington and couldn't come back in the consolation round. He won at Sylvania Southview besting a good field. Add in Walter and Gase and it is a very representative field.

I sense a certain disarray at Fairmont. It is difficult to decide who the real frontrunners are. There are three returning state qualifiers, but by year's end the flashy freshman from Madeira might be best. Let's start with the returnees. Wooten was a district finalist last year and after a first round loss won two bouts to finish 8th. Goldberg qualified at 103# and went 1-2 at Columbus including an exciting 17-13 first round triumph. He has had some problems at 119#, but has done better lately (3rd at Clyde). Begg was also 1-2 at Columbus with a win over Dandurand. He looked good beating state placer Merschman, 15-5, to win at Allen County. The freshman is Johnny Carpenter, who was 4th at junior high states and has had an outstanding first year – winning at Madeira and finishing a solid 4th at the always tough SWOCA. That leaves Panno, state alternate Herron and Johnson (Reading) as possible outsiders.

125

PROJECTED CHAMPION: TROY OPFER (SANDUSKY ST. MARY)

Top Contenders

2	Sergent (Troy Christian)	16	Widder (Waynedale)
3	Pope (Pleasant)	17	Orrill (Chanel)
4	D. Carpenter (Madeira)	18	Callahan (Carlisle)
5	Clark (Reading)	19	Kuzma/Dandurand (Hopewell Loudon)
6	Carnahan (Paulding)	20	Donahue (Tuslaw)
7	Mascioli (Jackson Milton)	21	Johnson (Monroeville)
8	Morris (CVCA)	22	Cardiero (Girard)
9	Carrisalez (Delta)	23	McSwords (Martins Ferry)
10	Coulter (Cardington Lincoln)	24	Shellhouse (Mohawk)
11	Biddle (Liberty Center)	25	Smith (Bloom Carroll)
12	Ziegler (Mechanicsburg)	26	Timmerman (Coldwater)
13	Foster (Bellaire St. John)	27	Fisher (Allen East)
14	M. Gualtieri (West Jefferson)	28	Hook (Nelsonville York)
15	Oney (South Central)	29	Hernandez (Elmwood)
		30	Burge (Norwayne)

There should be a great four-way battle for this state title as a quartet of outstanding seniors converges at this weight class. This will be a remarkable shootout with complicated seeding issues. Sergent should be away from Opfer and Pope, with Carpenter (should he fail to beat Sergent at the district) also in that same half making for a very unbalanced bracket. Let's look at the contenders.

This is the last year we'll be seeing an Opfer brother and what a run it has been. At the moment the four of them wrestled 15 seasons and placed at States every time. At the moment that includes eight titles, two runner-up medals, three thirds, and two fifth place results. In terms of consistency (15 of 15) it cannot be surpassed. Troy, the last brother, has finished 3rd, 2nd, and 2nd the past three years and this is his last chance for a title. He has lost extremely close final round bouts each of the last two years. He has beaten Sergent three of their four meetings, but Sergent won the one that really counted. He'll be a relatively small 125#, but that shouldn't count for much.

Like Opfer, Sergent has placed each year (4th, 2nd, 1st) and is amazingly quick. A Junior National title holder, he knows just how and when to win. He has twice lost to Pope – giving up an early big move and then unable to catch up, but beat him at the state meet two years ago. As I mentioned last year, I think he is more conservative than he should be since he is lightning quick and has an arsenal of great moves. He'll also be a relatively small 125-pounder.

Pope has been 7th and 3rd in his career. Opfer and Sergent have each, at some time, knocked him out of the championship bracket. He was 5-1 at States last year and all five of his victories were dominating. He'll have to beat Opfer and Sergent to win it all, and that is not out of the question. He has already beaten Sergent twice.

Carpenter has been 7th and 4th – both times at difficult weight classes. In 2005 he lost to Opfer and Toal, while last year Hancock handled him. He will be the biggest of the quartet, but also the one needing the biggest upsets to win. He exits with Sergent so that may give him two shots at him.

I think this will end up as yet another Opfer against Sergent battle. At Brecksville Opfer got an early lead on a scramble that could have gone either way. Opfer is the better rider and he was able to use the clock to maintain the lead for a time. Down by one with under a minute to go Sergent pushed it up a couple of notches and launched a whirlwind attack. Opfer was able to hold him off only with brilliant defense. If Sergent could wrestle six full minutes that way he would win, but I don't think that will happen and Opfer finally wins the big one.

Sergent and Carpenter do not exhaust the possibilities at Fairmont. Clark has been 5th and 4th the last two years, and at many weight classes that would make you a prime candidate to win it all. He was 2nd at Madeira, losing to Carpenter, 13-8, and 1st at Reading at 130#. A returning district champ, his choice is Sergent and Carpenter here or Kolodzik and Hancock at 130#. State qualifier Ziegler should gain the fourth berth.

He went 1-2 at Columbus after losing by major decision to Pope in the first round. This is a very good quartet, but a second foursome could cause some issues. Timmerman was a district semi-finalist at this weight class last year before getting TF'ed by Carpenter and losing to Schweikart. Callahan is down two weight classes after being a district semi-finalist at 135# last year – then losing to state champion Thome and Eavers. He is the best choice to upset one of the top quartet. The other two in this group are Fisher (currently 19-2) and Borton (Clinton Massie).

The district at Owens is crowded, but no one here can truly challenge Opfer. At the moment I count six other state qualifiers at this class, some here, perhaps to avoid Stieber. With 130# somewhat weaker at this district do not be surprised to see some movement – perhaps one or two moving up, and now that 119# seems somewhat empty, a couple moving back down. I'm thinking maybe Karnes or Bodenbender will move up – and that is where I'll rank them. Let's talk about who is left to challenge Opfer. The top two are probably Carnahan and Carrisalez – both of whom were at this weight class last year. At that time Carnahan won their semi-final meeting, 5-4, and took the district title, while Carrisalez was 3rd. The vagaries of the bracket at Columbus had these two wrestle off to place with Carnahan winning and taking 6th. Both have been good this year with Carrisalez 2nd at Perrysburg and 4th at the GMVWA, while Carnahan just keeps winning. State qualifier Oney and Johnson are also here with solid chances. Oney, only a freshman last year, was a district finalist beating, among others, state placer Karnes 8-2. However, at Columbus Oney went 1-2 while Karnes got a 6th. Johnson looks to be a small 125-pounder and has followed his teammates to the Ironman and Brecksville. He is battle-hardened. There is an interesting situation at Hopewell-Loudon. State qualifier Dandurand has been out most of the year and Kuzma has filled in brilliantly going 19-4. Somebody will have to move if Dandurand returns. State qualifier Biddle is also here and he missed a second qualification last year by losing to Pezzin twice. Add in Shellhouse, Hernandez and Cavinder (Riverdale) and this is a very crowded district.

Pope has looked great this year and many think he wins the state title no matter who is there. He could have placement company with the young Gualtieri (Marco) and Coulter. Coulter has been particularly impressive winning, for example, at the Gorman pinning Farkas in the semis and beating Division II state qualifier DeVito 9-3 in the finals. Foster is 15-1 and is probably the best out of the Eastern District with a win at St. Johns and Shadyside and a 3rd at Barnesville. Other possibilities are Smith, Hook and Boyd (Caldwell) – all of whom are needing at least one solid upset to quality.

The Maple Hts. District is by far the weakest. Certainly the wrestler with the most credentials is clearly Mascioli – already a two time state qualifier. He is a master of knowing when to win. Last year he lost his sectional final 12-0, but then pulled out a district 3rd after losing in the semis. At Columbus he won his first two bouts before losing to two-time champ Harrington and nailing down a 5th. He'll need his entire arsenal of tools to better that this year. Morris, something of an enigma, might be best here. He did not place at North Canton despite losing to Mattingly by only 6-5 in the quarters. He was 5th at the MIT and has had some excellent dual meet wins. At the top

of his game he is the best here. Widder, champ at the D-3 Classic, might be next best with the excellent freshman Orrill right behind (Widder won at their dual 9-5). Orrill was 4th at the Mayfield Big 8 and was a place winner at Junior High States last year. I also like Cardiero who won at Jackson Milton and was a district qualifier in Division II last year. I'm thinking, maybe, a Donahue is the big upset threat with Burge and Dankle (Cuyahoga Hts.) still in the picture.

130

PROJECTED CHAMPION: DANIEL KOLODZIK (MIAMI VALLEY)

Top Contenders

2	Hancock (Troy Christian)	17	DeHart (Covington)
3	V. Gualtieri (West Jefferson)	18	Essenmacher (New London)
4	Coomes (Pleasant)	19	Deady (Triad)
5	Karnes (Edgerton)	20	Holt (Martins Ferry)
6	Marmaros (Beachwood)	21	Curcio (Toledo Christian)
7	Canter (Bellaire)	22	Everhart (Mt. Gilead)
8	Clark (Union Local)	23	Foos (Otsego)
9	Miller (Brookfield)	24	Bodenbender (Tinora)
10	Powers (CVCA)	25	Freiberg (Cardinal)
11	Neer (Northmor)	26	Beekman (Margaretta)
12	Almanza (Patrick Henry)	27	Klaus (Mechanicsburg)
13	Vitallo (Waynedale)	28	Collier (Chanel)
14	Thoreson (Berkshire)	29	Smith (Delta)
15	Costello (Sandusky St. Mary)	30	Redd (Archbold)
16	Nuzum (Bluffton)	31	Paus (Clinton Massie)

At one time I thought that this weight class might serve as a relatively peaceful interlude between incredibly fierce battles at 125# and 135#. Now that Kolodzik and Gualtieri have moved down to 130# it does not look nearly as calm. Some of the 125's that were hoping for bigger meals and easier brackets may now re-think their options.

Kolodzik has been a marvel. A two-time junior high state champion (defeating Tony Jameson and Brad Squire in his two finals) and a two-time state champion (and a 4th), he has been the greatest one-man team in history. At the end of last year I thought he was the best 125-pounder in the state not named Palmer. This year he was 4th at the Ironman, losing to Palmer and to the top ranked Johnston (in overtime) and swept through the GMVWA beating two-time champ Gambill in the finals. All this was at 135# in preparation for the state tourney. There are only a couple of wrestlers who can challenge him in Columbus, as he looks to win his third crown.

The second choice here, and a relatively easy one, is the solid junior from Troy Christian, Zac Hancock. Wrestling up a weight as a freshman, he finished 6th at 130# and then last year was runner-up to two-time champ Kolozik at 125# after also losing to him in a close district bout. This year at the Ironman he beat D-I state runner-up Sulzer

and lost a narrow 8-7 verdict to Blair's highly rated Anthony Valles. He ended up 6th after losing to state runner-up Stephens of Graham. The Brecksville was a washout with injury issues, but at the state duals he pinned Coomes and Vitallo. That was followed by a sensational 7-0 win over Stephens in a rematch. The question is which Hancock will Kolodzik see in the state finals – the one who battled him to a 6-4 decision in the district semi-finals, or the one who lost 11-0 in the state finals. If it's the former case, we could have a real battle on a not so distant Saturday night.

Kolodzik and Hancock tower over the rest of the field at Fairmont. I thought state qualifier Eavers and Callahan might be here, but they have moved to different venues. As it is Deady – a district 6th last year – and the undefeated Nuzum might be real tentative choices for the last two spots. One to watch is the freshman DeHart who was a junior high state runner-up last year. He was 4th at GMVWA and 1st at Lincolnview, and by year's end may surpass all but the top duo here. Klaus and Paus are long-shots with Siefker (Delphos Jefferson) just barely in the picture. Look for the top two to be in the finals and, perhaps, the freshman to win a state bout or two.

The biggest challenge for the top duo is likely to emerge from the Heath District. A trio of possibilities will exit that district with upset potential. Gualtieri knows all about upsets. He upended two-time state champ Gambill at 135# by a convincing 12-7 score. Last year after going 43-5 and winning his sectional Gualtieri did not compete at the district level. One who did was Coomes who raced through the district competition and then, somewhat surprisingly, reached the state semi-finals before being pinned by Kolodzik and falling to 5th. This year he won at the Midwest Classic and was 2nd at North Union to the onrushing Collins. He struggled at Brecksville (as did Hancock), but was pinned by Hancock at the State Duals. He'll need a late season surge to better that 5th place finish. Also here is two-time state placer Clark who has been 6th and 5th the past two years. His big hang-up has been winning that first round bout, which he has yet to do. He has won again this year at Barnesville, Shadyside, and Union Local. State alternate Canter also returns looking, this time, to squeeze into one of the top four slots. He missed by one point last year. Clark defeated him 3-1 in his finals win at Shadyside. Also back is the senior Holt who qualified as a freshman and has been prone to injury during the intervening time. As I write this he has won the only three bouts he has wrestled this year. Can he be ready by February? Everhart and, particularly Neer, will be tough to beat. Neer was a district finalist last year, but has missed some time this year. Everhart defeated Neer and has good upset potential. Some good people are going to be left the way it's structured right now. Look for movement either up or down for several of these boys. One of them might be Morgan (Trimble)

While Karnes has been at 125# I wouldn't be surprised to see him (and others) move to this more congenial weight class. Karnes was 3rd at the 119# district and then wrestled brilliantly in making the state semi-finals and losing to Hall 12-7. He finished up 6th. He'll have to do the same thing to repeat that placement at either 125# or 130#. Almanza and state qualifier Essenmacher met in the "A" Classic finals with the former taking his fourth tournament title. Both boys have solid district placement chances. There are a number of other possible contenders. Curcio and Foos have both been

good with steady placement at tournaments big and small. A dark horse candidate is Beekman (Margaretta), who lost to Almanza, 5-4, and wrestles a tough schedule. I almost forgot Costello who could get to the States on a hot weekend. Other possibilities are Smith, Redd, and Correll (Calvert).

The most intriguing district is at Maple Hts. Thoreson, a state qualifier two years ago, defeated Mascioli twice last year – once by fall and once 12-0 in the sectional finals. Yet, Mascioli was 5th in the state while Thoreson failed even to qualify. This year Thoreson was 3rd at Solon and 4th at Kenston, both times losing critically close semi-final bouts. He beat D’Alessandro in the dual (leading 5-3 at default), but did not look good at the Top Gun. Until he learns to win the close ones he will handcuff his talent. Others have probably passed him. Marmaros is one who knows exactly how to win. Not the greatest athlete in the world he has still been 6th the last two years, confounding “experts” like me. Tall and rather gangly he was 2nd at Solon, defeating Thoreson in the semis. He has wrestled at least once at 125# but this would seem to be the best place to be. There are three state alternates at this weight class – Thoreson, Miller, and Freilberg – and they will be a hungry group at Maple Hts. The one I like the best right now is Miller who was at this class last year, and who has wrestled a succession of strong bouts. Also, keep an eye on Vitallo. He was very good at the D-3 Classic, winning at this weight class. He was 2-2 at this district weight class last year. Also check out the freshman Collier, one of the solid freshmen on the Chanel team. Finally, Powers, 5th at North Canton is the wildcard. If he wrestles at full potential he will qualify.

135

PROJECTED CHAMPION: RYAN GAMBILL (MIAMI EAST)

Top Contenders

2	Thome (Troy Christian)	16	Rayl (Bluffton)
3	Smith (Tuslaw)	17	Noernberg (Cuyahoga Hts.)
4	Malave (Lutheran West)	18	Schweikart (Williamsburg)
5	Eavers (Greeneview)	19	Chapman (Hopewell Loudon)
6	Foster (Bellaire St. John)	20	Fullenkamp (Versailles)
7	Reindel (Stritch)	21	Beckley (Indian Valley)
8	Block (Johnstown Monroe)	22	Kunk (Coldwater)
9	Cooperider (Pleasant)	23	Bemmes (Reading)
10	Weatherholt (Garaway)	24	Rayfield (Delta)
11	Neuenschwander (Dalton)	25	Trusnik (Chanel)
12	Johnson (Otsego)	26	O’Bradovich (Sandy Valley)
13	Smith (Carlisle)	27	Coblentz (Waynedale)
14	Sonnenberg (VanBuren)	28	Espinoza (Millbury Lake)
15	Curcio (Toledo Christian)	29	Rinehart (Plymouth)

This will be the 33rd year of Division III competition at the state meet and for much of that time the Southwestern District was seen as the weakest area. Wrestlers from other

areas would hope to draw a southwestern wrestler in the first round. Yes, there were exceptions. For a period of time West Liberty Salem (featuring the Dernlan brothers) was well respected, but most of the time the perception of the weakness prevailed. Contrast that with the events of this year. Troy Christian defending their team title with a squadron of superior wrestlers, two other wrestlers searching for their third state title, and highly respected wrestlers at virtually every weight class.

One of the wrestlers going for his third title is Ryan Gambill, and, yes, his biggest challenge is likely to come from his own district. Gambill has been a real phenomenon. He wrestled brilliantly as a freshman to win at 112# and then was 7th at that absolutely brutal 119# weight class as a sophomore (Kolodzik was 4th). Last year he was one level above everyone while winning at 130# -- beating Schumaker by 10, D'Allesandro by 14, and Demas by 5. He lost to Kolodzik this year 5-3 at the GMVWA finals and was upset by Gualtieri, but he always seems to lose one or two until state time. He'll go down as one of the greatest D-3 wrestlers ever to have competed in the Southwestern District.

That state title is not assured. The junior, Thome, is very good. He was 6th at the 119# class as a freshman and was 4th last year after losing an 11-9 overtime heartbreaker to Demas. Many expected that he and Gambill would reprise their sectional and district finals bout in the state finals – bouts Gambill had won 13-6 and 14-8. This year Thome was 8th at the Ironman and 2nd at Brecksville – beating Mencini and pinning state runner-up Wukie before losing to Skonieczny. He'll get three shots at Gambill, but the third one will be the one that counts.

This duo towers over the Fairmont District. However Eavers, 8th at 135# last year, should qualify and will have state placement opportunities. He was 2nd at Elyria Catholic, 5th at the GMVWA, and a dominating 1st at Bellbrook. Also returning are state qualifiers Schweikart and Smith who are definitely “on the bubble” here. I wouldn't be surprised to see one or both move to 130# (Alpha weights approving). Both are solid performers with good credentials, but the margin for error at this weight is very small. There are at least three other contenders. Fullenkamp, the recent winner at Plymouth and 7th at the GMVWA, is an outstanding freshman who was 5th at the junior high states. Rayl won two district bouts last year and has been a terror in the Lima area, losing only once this year. Bemmes won at Madeira and Reading and was a semi-finalist at the SWOCA. He beat Monesmith (Preble Shawnee) another contender, 14-3 at Reading. Also in the mix is the young Kunk who may have to wait until next year to qualify. There will be incredible competition underneath the Gambill-Thome confrontation at this district.

None of the other districts are nearly this strong. At Heath the major question is the eventual landing spot for Zolman and that appears to be 140#. With his departure and Falk's season ending injury, the anticipated depth has evaporated.

There still is a quartet of solid contenders for the four state berths. As a freshman last year Shane Foster was a district semi-finalist losing there to Coomes 4-2, and

eventually falling to 5th – a state alternate. He went 30-6 overall. This year he is undefeated – the OVAC is tomorrow – and has won a pair of tournaments. Block now seems clearly best in the Central District. He went 2-2 at last year's district (eliminated in a 10-9 bout) and has won at Licking Hts. and Licking County. Weatherholt wrestles a difficult schedule to follow. He won at Beallsville and was 2nd at Aurora this year. Last year, at 130#, he was a district semi-finalist and after a loss to Clark he beat Canter to qualify. He went 1-2 at States after a tough first-round match-up. Cooperider is a new starter for Pleasant, but he has stepped right in. He won at the Midwest Classic and North Union and went 3-2 at Brecksville, losing to Skonieczny and Mencini. That is a solid quartet, but there is much behind it. The two best are Beckley and O'Bradovich and they still have qualification chances.

I am not overly impressed with the strength or depth at this weight class at Owens. As mentioned I would not be surprised to see movement in the middle weights at this location. At the moment the frontrunner has to be the defending district champion Josh Reindel. He plowed through last year's relatively weak district (the four qualifiers went 1-8 at States) without much trouble and won his first round bout in Columbus. He most recently won at Oak Harbor. Still only a junior, he wrestles with poise. Johnson, who was a district 3rd, also returns and was undefeated at the Suburban League Duals. Otsego has really rejuvenated its wrestling program and has four or five state candidates. Also here are Curcio and Chapman, two solid wrestlers with steady placement results. Curcio was a state alternate last year and was a takedown away from Columbus. Chapman has been winning steadily at 140# and will be a factor. Watch out for Sonnenberg. He was 7th and 3rd at the last two junior high state tournaments. He has been as low as 130#, but I think this "A" Classic champ will opt for this weight. He could well qualify. That leaves Rayfield, Espinoza and Rinehart with a big hill to climb.

There are some real opportunities at Maple Hts. for those able to grab them. Returning state qualifier Smith is already at this class and should get to Columbus again. He was 2nd at Northwest to Price and has senior experience. The wrestler he beat in his go-to-state bout, Josh Malave, is back and may have gone past him. Malave won at Black River and Elyria Catholic, including a win over state placer Eavers. He is currently 21-1 and was a district semi-finalist last year. I'm guessing state qualifier Josh Neuenschwander will also examine the advantages here and move down from 140#. He was 3rd at this weight in last year's district and went 1-2 at the state level – beating Cawley, but getting pinned twice in less than a minute. The sophomore Noernberg was 2-2 at districts last year as a freshman and should do better this year. He has wrestled a tougher schedule than many here. He won at Woodridge and was 2nd at Cuyahoga Hts. losing 4-2 to state Division I placer Dinda. Two other possibilities are Trusnik (2-2 at last year's district) and Coblentz (champion at the D-3 Classic).

140 #

PROJECTED CHAMPION: KEVIN CLORAN (MADEIRA)

Top Contenders

2	Schumaker (Arcadia)	16	Pike (Greeneview)
3	Chilson (Bellaire)	17	Alexander (Elmwood)
4	Zolman (Northmor)	18	French (Middletown Madison)
5	Reisz (Beallsville)	19	Neuberger (Edison)
6	Pfister (Black River)	20	McGillvray (Miami East)
7	McDaniel (Pleasant)	21	Jones (Waterford)
8	Burns (Troy Christian)	22	Woody (Chippewa)
9	Clum (Spencerville)	23	Chatterton (Dixie)
10	McCreary (Fairbanks)	24	Kwiat (Calvert)
11	Ash (Wayndale)	25	Martin (West Jefferson)
12	Schafer (Chanel)	26	Snyder (Port Clinton)
13	Pajestka (Cuyahoga Hts.)	27	Patton (Madison Plains)
14	Gombash (Delta)	28	Bill (Clearview)
15	Young (Norwayne)	29	Shonkwiler (Westfall)

While many weight classes in Division III have one or two substantial favorites that is not the case here. It looks to be a wide open affair with two state runners-up and a number of state placers and qualifiers, all thrown together. This could be even more complicated if Nelson were to drop to 140# (assuming an accommodating alpha weight) or one of the other top-notch 145's moves down.

Cloran is the obvious choice here, but somehow I'm worried. It's probably a tough cut for him and the bracket is so deep there is no respite. Chilson and Zolman are very good, and Pfister, on a good day, can beat anyone. Still, Cloran has the talent, experience and incentive to win it all. The unknown factor is Schumaker who has the talent to beat anyone here. Give him a good draw, a little luck, and he could be on the top step of the podium.

The Heath District is very crowded now that Zolman has elected to participate at this weight class. Should Nelson spring a sectional surprise and compete, the bracket sheet would be frenetic. As it is I have eight viable state contenders. Chilson was a huge surprise last year. He raced through the 135# district bracket giving up only one point in three of those wins and eking out a 5-4 win over Zolman. He then had absolutely no trouble zipping through the first three state rounds before Casey Thome majored him 21-11 in the final. This year Reisz beat him at Shadyside, but other than that blip he has been great. Zolman was 4th last year, losing to Thome in the quarterfinals. I've wondered (probably not all that often) had Zolman beaten Chilson at districts whether he would have been the finalist. He missed much of this year with injuries, but is reported healthy now. Reisz has been beating everyone. A state placer as a freshman, he went back last year, but lightning didn't strike that time. McDaniel was also something of a surprise qualifier last year, making the finals before losing to Chilson.

He went 1-2 and for a time it looked like those two advancements might be the difference. This year he's taken titles at North Union and the Midwest Classic. He did not place at Brecksville, but had a telling 12-10 win over Schafer. I've always been impressed with state qualifier McCreary who went 1-2 in Columbus last year. I keep expecting a huge breakout year. Patton is under the radar, but he has chances here while Shonkwiler is a long-shot. Two to keep an eye on are Jones and Martin. Jones, in particular has been on the periphery of success. Last year he won his first two district bouts, but then lost in overtime to McDaniel and by one point to Merryman and failed to qualify.

The Maple Hts. District is also loaded. There are six wrestlers with state placement ability currently scheduled to be at this class. I think the ferocious Pfister might be the best of this group. He was a district finalist last year (losing to Jenkins in the final), and then crushed his first two state foes to reach the semi-finals. He has made a major jump forward over the summer and has been unbeaten at 140# and 145#. Ash has been at 145# much of the year winning, for example, the D-3 Classic at that weight class – and doing so in commanding fashion. A state qualifier last year, he drew Toal in the first round and failed to place. Pajestka is already a three-time state qualifier, but has not yet placed going 1-6 in his last three efforts. He has not been overly lucky getting Falk for example, in the first round last year. Recently he won at both Cuyahoga Hts. and Woodridge – tech falling the excellent Fraley in the latter final. His only losses were at Brecksville where he finished 7th. Schafer is also a three-time state qualifier, placing his freshman year. He has wrestled the best schedule – winning at the Mayfield Big 8 and Solon, but failing to place at Brecksville. That's four excellent contenders. However, state qualifier (twice) Young is also here and, if healthy, cannot be overlooked. He again won the WIT, beating Woody 6-5, but was hurt at the Dies. Woody lost an overtime battle to go to state last year and he has been a solid performer (and Ash rival) for years. That's six quality wrestlers and we can't forget about Bill (Clearview) who has been on the periphery of this group.

Schumaker is a three time state placer (6-5-3) who is overdue to wrestle on Saturday night. Since the beginning of his sophomore year he has lost only twice outside the state meet. A state semi-finalist last year he was dumped 14-4 by two-time state champ Ryan Gambill. This year his only loss was to Betts wrestling up at 145#. Gombash qualified at this weight class last year and went 1-2 at Columbus. This year he was 1st at Perrysburg and 2nd at the GMVWA in what has been a great year. He'll be Schumaker's only rival at this district. The last two spots will be wide open. State qualifier Alexander is up three weight classes after a short visit to Columbus last spring. He was 2nd at Arcadia (to Sonnenberg), and had some struggles at this higher weight. Look for him to be a real factor by districts. Neuberger was 2-2 at the Division II District last year and should do well this year. He won at Edison and was 2nd at Bellevue and Plymouth losing to Schumaker at the latter event. After that it might be a Snyder (Port Clinton) or Kwiat (Calvert) or

It's another very crowded field at Fairmont. State runner-up Cloran is down a weight class in what was a real surprise. At last year's district he beat Burns in the quarter

finals after 8 ½ minutes of wrestling 3-2 otu and then beat Fose 3-2 in the finals – a critical win in my mind. At the States he used that #1 seed to good advantage trouncing Lonsinger and state runner-up Skaggs in the first two rounds. An upset one-point win put him in the finals where he lost a heartbreaker in overtime. This year he was 3rd at the SWOCA (losing in overtime to Leland) and a dominating 1st at Madeira. Burns has dropped down with him and will again be a factor. He ended up 7th last year after a narrow first round loss to Howe. At the State Duals he beat Ash, but lost to McDaniel. He placed at the Ironman, but was not sharp at Brecksville where he finished behind Pajestka. State qualifier Clum and Pike are both back, but are certainly not assured of a return trip to Columbus. Clum won at Allen County, Lincolnview, and Marion Harding, but had only token opposition at the first two events. Pike won at Bellbrook (over Chatterton) and Elyria Catholic and was 4th at the GMVWA. Neither boy placed at Columbus, although Clum was a quarter-finalist. He also beat Pike 7-6 for 3rd at the district. State alternate McGillvray defeated Chatterton for 5th last year, and both boys are back. McGillvray was impressive winning at Clyde and was 7th at GMVWA. Chatterton beat Woody to win at the D-3 Classic and was 2nd at Bellbrook. French was also a state alternate last year and may have moved ahead of some of those listed above. He was 1st at Deer Park, Blanchester, and Norwood – all in impressive fashion. He'll have to decide between 135# or 140# at sectionals. It won't be an easy decision.

145

PROJECTED CHAMPION: ZACH TOAL (TROY CHRISTIAN)

Top Contenders

2	Nelson (Madison Plains)	16	Dye (Patrick Henry)
3	Stiltner (Waynedale)	17	Washington (Carlisle)
4	Kosky (Bellaire St. John)	18	Rufenacht (Archbold)
5	Skaggs (Jackson Milton)	19	Hoerig (Mohawk)
6	Levy (West Liberty Salem)	20	Hunter (Manchester)
7	McCoy (Pleasant)	21	J. Schafer (Chanel)
8	Petrella (Hartley)	22	Oliver (Versailles)
9	Porter (Bellaire)	23	Redden (West Jefferson)
10	Howe (Blanchester)	24	Goebel (Edgerton)
11	Schalk (Hopewell Loudon)	25	Hayes (Madeira)
12	Rado (Woodridge)	26	Hickin (CVCA)
13	Betts (Elmwood)	27	Noernberg (Cuyahoga Hts.)
14	Border (Caldwell)	28	Collinsworth (Huron)
15	Cawley (Norwalk St. Paul)	29	Pokorny (VASJ)
		30	Espinoza (Genoa)

This is the best weight class in Division III. It features three state champions, a state runner-up, and returning state qualifiers seemingly without number. Also in the mix is a Junior High State champion from last year and several wrestlers returning after absences with injury. It is an embarrassment of riches. Let's look at the contenders.

Toal, only a junior, was 3rd at 112# as freshmen, and then jumped up five weight classes to win at 140#. He defeated state champ Josh Falk at both the district and state level. This year he was 5th at the Ironman – losing to his nemesis Ben Jordan, 2-1, and the number one ranked Mario Mason, 3-2. At Brecksville he cruised to the finals where he beat three-time Division I state champion Tony Jameson, 11-9. It was Jameson's second defeat in three years. I mark him as the favorite. By the way, what a middle of the lineup for Troy Christian – Sergent, Hancock, Thome, Burns, and Toal. Superb.

Stiltner won at this weight class last year in a surprise – at least to me. He was by far the lowest ranked wrestler in the 42 weight classes to triumph (I had him 10th) and he did it with some clutch wrestling. He avenged an earlier defeat in the semis over Hill and then won an overtime battle with Cloran. I always feel that nerves impact the slick technique wrestlers far more than those who depend primarily on power. He won the D-3 Classic at 152#, but has since moved into the cauldron at 145#.

Nelson won two years ago and, coincidentally, was the lowest ranked wrestler to win that year. Last year he ran roughshod over his district and easily won his first two state bouts. However, Falk beat him 7-4 in the semi-finals and he ended up defaulting to 4th place. This year he has again been brilliant.

As I see it Toal and Stiltner will be seeded in opposite halves with Nelson drawing into one of them for a semi-final confrontation. I like Toal to win, but Nelson, should he draw into Stiltner, might be the somewhat unexpected finalist. That's of course, if the other legitimate contenders don't upset one (or more) of this top trio.

Despite the presence of a state champ and a state runner-up the Maple Hts. District may be the least strong. Stiltner has been discussed. Skaggs was a runner-up at 135# two years ago losing to Joe Skoff in the finals, and that was from a 4th place district finish. Last year he was a district 3rd and after a first round fall lost to Cloran (who he had beaten the previous year in the same round) and failed to place. This year he should again qualify and he cannot be overlooked by anyone following wins at Solon, Jackson Milton, and Elyria Catholic. It gets a little shaky after this duo, but Rado is a strong third contender here. He won at Wadsworth and Woodridge and had two district wins last year. I think what might happen is that some of the 140's in that very crowded weight class at this district might opt to move up. Maybe, a Hunter or Woody might see it as a better qualification possibility. Absent that, look for Hickin, Pokorny, or Noernberg to get that fourth spot. One other possibility is Schafer who was a strong 3rd at the Mayfield Big 8.

There are five good contenders for the three spots behind Toal at Fairmont. Levy is already a two time state qualifier and was 8th last year at this weight class. Howe was also a state qualifier nabbing a district 3rd at 135#. He got an 8th place medal beating Johnson and Reindel in the consolations. He was 1st at Reading and Blanchester, and lost only to Andrew Schafer at the Ohio Duals. Also back is Washington – a district runner-up at 140# -- and who had tough sledding at Columbus. He has struggled a bit at this high weight class, but he came on strong at the end of last year and may do so

again. I know he has competed at 140#, but I suspect, based on the talent at that weight class in this district that he will end up here. Should any of this group falter Oliver and Hayes, both very good are waiting in the wings.

The most crowded district is at Heath. Nelson, of course, would be the prime mover, but there is high quality talent just beneath him. Kosky won three state bouts before defaulting to 6th and is a savvy, experienced wrestler. He has competed at 145# and 152# and will choose, perhaps based on his OVAC results at the higher weight, in which direction to go. Mark him up as a factor at either weight class. Porter also was a state qualifier and went 1-2 at Columbus. He beat a tough field at Shadyside that included Kosky, Border, and Jefferis. His 20-1 record suggests strong placement chances. McCoy can be erratic, but he can be a big match wrestler. He won two district bouts and has built on that. He was 2nd at the Midwest Classic to Messerall and won handsomely at North Union. At Brecksville he was pinned by the excellent McGookey in the first round and then won six consecutive consolation bouts including wins over state qualifier Lee, Herrick, and Schreiner. He ended up 6th, losing again to McGookey – this time in overtime. At the Ohio Duals Toal beat him in a closely fought bout 3-2. He could be a state placer or a district victim. Petrella is much more consistent, but does not wrestle as tough a schedule. He won two district bouts, but lost to Porter. Border, a state qualifier two years ago, had a nightmarish district last season and failed to win a bout. He has put that behind him, beating Kosky to finish 2nd at Shadyside. His only losses have been to high-powered opponents. That is six excellent competitors (assuming Kosky is at 145#), but Redden, a Washington Court House move-in, and Robinson are possibilities. Missing here is Michael Falk (Grandview Hts.) who had an excellent freshman season and almost assuredly would have been a major factor at one of the middle weights. Injuries have eliminated his sophomore season.

There are some question marks at Owens. Can state placer Lucas Schalk come back after a year and a half layoff from injuries and be effective? Will state junior high champ Xavier Dye stay at 145# or drop at this lower weight class? I wish I knew the answers. Cawley is the other returning state qualifier and he is something of a wild man. He likes to score and his bouts are often wild frantic episodes. He won two critical overtime bouts to qualify last year (10-8 and 8-6), but struggled at the state level. He won at the Gorman, but was 5th at the D-3 Classic. He is dangerous. Betts and Hoerig are both consistent placers and solid threats to qualify. Betts beat Schumaker earlier in the year and has wrestled a tough schedule. Dye is terrific and a likely state champion in the future. He may be ready for a sampling of state competition this year. Goebel has to decide the optimal weight class and then commit to it. He lost to Dye 7-6 in overtime. Espinoza and Collinsworth are other thoughts.

152 #

PROJECTED CHAMPION: JEDD MOORE (PLEASANT)

Top Contenders

2	Kusar (CVCA)	16	Bracken (Johnstown Monroe)
3	Foley (Worthington Christian)	17	McMillion (Covington)
4	Short (Archbold)	18	Jackson (Grand Valley)
5	Merryman (Shadyside)	19	Moyer (Sandy Valley)
6	True (Arcadia)	20	Reidenbach (Loudonville)
7	Kayatin (Lima Central Catholic)	21	Angevine (Reading)
8	Wagner (Genoa)	22	Schaffer (Seneca East)
9	Bender (Brookfield)	23	Kobilarczyk (Tuslaw)
10	Randolph (Belpre)	24	Gilmore (Indian Valley)
11	Groudle (VASJ)	25	Howard (Edison)
12	Walters (Chanel)	26	Krill (Edgerton)
13	Runyon (Blanchester)	27	Boreing (Deer Park)
14	Keller (Woodridge)	28	Mark (Northwestern)
15	K. Burns (Troy Christian)	29	Pajestka (Cuyahoga Hts.)
		30	Means (Plymouth)

There will be no suspense at this weight class. Defending state champ Jedd Moore is one of the best in the country. He was 2nd as a sophomore in Division I, losing only to 4-time champ Lance Palmer in the finals. Last year he had absolutely no problems winning the title with three technical falls and an 11-4 decision over Robel Campbell. He has lost only once in the past two years (He split a pair of bouts with Cubberly last year), and won the NHSCA Juniors title. He is absolutely superb on his feet taking down the opposition at will and never giving him respite.

The one opponent with at least a chance of victory is Jared Kusar. Already a three-time state qualifier he was 3rd two years ago in Division II, losing only to Colt Sponseller. Last year I figured he was Cubberly's biggest obstacle, but a major 10-9 upset by Garbrandt took him out in the quarter-finals. This year he was 5th at the Ironman defeating Gobin and majoring Heflin. He was knocked out of the championship bracket by the #1 ranked Alex Meade, 5-0. He won at North Canton defeating Division I state place winner Brett Ewing 17-5. At Medina he faced my Division I choice Jesse Dong in the finals and hit a late 4-point move to win 5-4. So he has real upset potential. The question remains can he nullify Moore's fabulous takedown skills. The tentative answer is "highly unlikely".

The Heath District should do very well at this weight class in Columbus. There are three other returning state qualifiers in addition to Moore at this site. Foley grabbed a district 4th at this weight including a big win over Packard. He was 1-2 at states losing two reasonable close bouts to placers. This year he was 2nd at the D-3 Classic to state champion Stiltner, and beat Porter to win at St. Xavier. Merryman is up three weight classes, but it has not slowed him down as his 24-1 record attests. He lost two one-

point bouts at States the first night. This year he has titles at Union Local, Barnesville, and Shadyside. His only loss was to an out-of-state wrestler at St. Clairsville. Randolph qualified two years ago, but injuries held him back at last year's district. He's back up to 152# this year and that is a good omen. None of this trio has guaranteed qualification. Bracken was 2nd at Licking County and has district credentials, while Gilmore was 2nd at Coshocton, losing only to Mellor. A recovered Moyer would also be a possibility.

Kusar should have relatively little trouble at Maple Hts. Next best is likely Bender who was district finalist at this weight class last year – his likely fate again this year. He went 1-2 at Columbus losing to True in the consolation rounds. He won at Elyria Catholic at 160#, but will compete at this weight class. After this duo chaos reigns. I have a list of about eight names with district placement possibilities. Walters, only a freshman, was 4th at the Mayfield Big Eight and 3-0 at the Ohio Duals. A junior high place winner last year (4th) he has defeated state qualifier Runyon. He should have the steepest learning curve of this group. Dropping to 52# is state alternate Groudle who immediately becomes a factor at this class. Last year he lost to Stiltner, 4-2, in the semi-finals and then missed qualification by one point. Factor in Keller (6th at Wadsworth), Reidenbach (3rd at Gorman), and Jackson (4th at D-3 Classic) and, perhaps, one of those will qualify. Other thoughts include Pajestka, mark, and Kobilarczyk.

Last year I ranked Mason True 8th in the state so it was a little surprising to discover on the last Sunday in February that he had not qualified out of the Owens District. A quarter-final loss to Lee and a one-point defeat at the hands of Kwiat had apparently eliminated him. Then with Lee unable to compete True stepped in and had a solid tournament finishing 7th. He has been exceptionally good this season and I was very impressed with his 17-5 win over Hendon at Northwood. The rest of this year he has been equally strong, but, perhaps, this is the time to qualify in the normal manner. I like Short and Wagner for two more of the state berths. Short had two district wins last year and has been dynamite at 160# for most of the year. I'm expecting big things. Wagner won at Sylvania Southview, but drew Tankin the first round of medina and didn't make it through the tortuous consolation process. He'll have to be in top form to qualify. After that it's unclear. Keill has been hurt while Schaffer who won two district bouts and lost a 3-1 decision to True, was only 5th at Plymouth. Howard or Means might just sneak in to a qualifying spot.

Fairmont will be the weakest of the four districts at this weight class. Moving into the foreground is Scott Kayatin who was a district semi-finalist at this weight class last year and then lost three straight close bouts. This year he won at 160# at Allen County in dominating fashion, then crushed the opposition at the "A" Classic at 152#. I think he might be the best here. Runyon, now only a junior, qualified at 140# last year in a bit of a surprise. He did not wrestle well at Columbus (nerves?) and was outscored 24-0 in his two bouts. McMillion, 7th at GMVWA, factors into possible district placement with Angevine, Boreing, and, maybe Rackley looking to score. The under-the-radar candidate might be Kyle Burns who is progressing rapidly.

160 #

PROJECTED CHAMPION: STEVE WILSON (PLEASANT)

Top Contenders

2	Raber (Triway)	15	Mehling (Grandview Hts.)
3	Skoff (Bridgeport)	16	Panno (Blanchester)
4	Heasley (Worthington Christian)	17	Marthey (Tuslaw)
5	Kwiat (Calvert)	18	Stacey (Liberty Center)
6	Lee (Elmwood)	19	Hathaway (Woodridge)
7	Beam (Waynedale)	20	Uhlenhake (Coldwater)
8	Utley (CVCA)	21	Wagner (Greeneview)
9	Ortocani (Sandusky St. Mary)	22	Patti (Margaretta)
10	Packard (Belpre)	23	Meade (Cuyahoga Hts.)
11	Jones/Keplinger (Troy Christian)	24	Kleman (Lakota)
12	Norway (Nelsonville York)	25	Ramoe (Wellington)
13	Meyer (Reading)	26	Hrabek (Fostoria St. Wedelion)
14	Lewis (West Liberty Salem)		

Steve Wilson will be a heavy favorite to defend his title at 160#. Last year he went 48-1 and placed for the third time at the state level. He had three falls and a major decision at the districts last year, and pretty much cruised to the state finals before winning a hard fought decision over Tice in the finals. This year his only loss was in the finals at Brecksville to Cubberly during which he was injured and eventually had to default. Provided he is healthy there is no one here who can successfully challenge him.

While Wilson may dominate the Heath District, the other three qualifiers will all have placement potential. Skoff was a state semi-finalist last year at 152# before losing to Campbell and ending up 4th. This year he is undefeated as I write this, undoubtedly gearing up for his titanic struggle with Bittenger at the OVAC. His 25 wins have won four tournaments and he should be away from Wilson at the state meet. Heasley, like Skoff, was also a district runner-up losing to Wilson 15-4 last year. Losing only to Tice and Yant at the states, he finished a strong 5th. I saw him win the D-3 Classic and he seems to have finalist potential. The win at St. Xavier was very impressive. That would leave but one state berth available with two exciting southeast wrestlers the main contenders. The obvious choice is state alternate Packard who won 44 times last year and was one bout from states. He was 5th at Medina losing narrowly to Kline and then being upset by Utley. Only a junior, he continues to improve partly because of the middleweights that surround him in the Belpre line-up. However, Norway, also a junior, is intriguing. He has already won four tournaments, pinning almost everyone and defeating a defending state champion from West Virginia. He was only 1-2 at the district level last year losing a pair of major decisions. Has he improved that much in a year? We shall see. Mehling is a long shot possibility along with Mickle (west Jefferson).

Those Columbus qualifiers look very strong, but there will be challengers – particularly from the Northwest. Two state qualifiers return to Owens, each with possibilities. Kwiat was 6th at 152# losing to Moore and Skoff. He has wrestled an active schedule this year, winning at Lincolnview and finishing a strong 2nd at the GMVWA, at the BG Duals he beat Haxton and Ortolani, losing only to Kilroy. He should place again. Lee actually finished ahead of Kwiat at districts, but then couldn't compete. The 5th place district finisher then stepped in and finished 7th. This year he has been solid, but not yet spectacular. He was 4th at Medina, losing to Kline and then the freshman Utley. Ortocani, in my mind, was a lock to qualify at 145# last year. He was 52-6 with a sectional title and wrestled well against tough competition. Yet a bad afternoon, including an overtime loss put him out. He gets a second chance this year, after another good campaign. I see Stacey, down from 189#, Patti, Kleman, or Hrabek as the best shot for the fourth berth. Shattuck (Stritch) is a long shot.

Raber on a hot weekend could be a state finalist. Last year in Division II he captured a district 4th and a ticket to Columbus. After a first round loss to Sponseller he beat both Kilroy and Thurn before losing to Phil Dukes in overtime. A first period pin of Bittinger nailed down 7th place. This year he ripped through the WIT and was 2nd at North Canton to Schott after beating Utley. He can be very good. There is a drop-off to the next trio of Utley, Beam, and Marthey. Marthey was a district 6th at the weight class this year missing state qualification by two points. At Medina he failed to place, losing to Allen and Lewis. The sophomore Beam is still a work in progress, but he will be very good. He was 3rd at the D-3 Classic, losing to Heasley in the semis and then beating Mehling. He was 3-0 at the Ohio Duals and will be a major factor at the district level. The one to really watch, though, is Utley. He was 3rd at the junior high states last year, and is showing tremendous improvement as a freshman. Of course, it helps having Kusar as a workout partner. He was 3rd at Medina beating Lee and Packard, and 7th at the Ironman, losing only to the eventual champ, 8-3, and to Mannier, 4-2. He is nearly ready for prime time. Hathaway, Ramage, and, maybe, Meade have a chance if any of the top four should stumble.

I think the qualifiers from the Southwest District will struggle. Both Lewis and Panno were state qualifiers last year, but both failed to win a bout at states. Lewis was 7th at Medina, but finished behind three Division II wrestlers. I think Meyer might have passed both after winning at Reading and Madeira and finishing 2nd at the SWOCA. Keplinger has wrestled much of the year at Troy Christian, but the one to watch is Brad Jones. He could be a critical extra state qualifier. Other possibilities are Wagner and Uhlennake.

171 #

PROJECTED CHAMPION: CHRIS PHILLIPS (MONROEVILLE)

Top Contenders

2	Yant (Delta)	16	Walker (Belpre)
3	Adams (Pleasant)	17	Kleman (Lakota)
4	Jenkins (Woodridge)	18	Akins (Troy Christian)
5	Schaefer (Northwestern)	19	Worthington (Crestview)
6	Panzano (Columbus Academy)	20	Hall (Covington)
7	Kunk (Coldwater)	21	Stewart (River)
8	Smyers (Northwayne)	22	Shafrath (Chippewa)
9	Schwab (Clinton Massie)	23	Irwin (Worthington Christian)
10	Zody (Triway)	24	Miller (Oberlin)
11	Jump (Grandview Hts.)	25	Leonard (Springfield NE)
12	Boyce (Collins Western Reserve)	26	Seislove (Calvert)
13	Tucker (Martins Ferry)	27	Melvin (Brooklyn)
14	Herr (Bluffton)	28	Hutchinson (Allen East)
15	Ackley (Elmwood)	29	Bowden (South Range)

I've been watching (and analyzing) wrestling for fifty years and I've never seen anything like it – nothing that even compares with it. A 15-year old freshman wrestling for Monroeville, of all places, comes out and beats everyone put before him. Everything he does works. It's like Roy Hobbs in The Natural – whatever he wants to do he does. I saw Chris Phillips in his first varsity experience defeat, in a single day, three of the best 171's in the country from Blair, Graham, and St Edward. He did it while battling the flu and he did it his way, ten takedowns for Phillips and none for the three opponents. That was followed up by a dominating win at Brecksville that included a 23-10 win over the Georgia state runner-up. Amazing. I mean there were certainly clues that this might happen eventually – three junior high state titles and a Cadet National title, but as a freshman at 171#.

His only real rival will also be at the Owens District. Yant was the district champion at 160# and finished 4th at states after losing to eventual state champion Wilson in the semi-finals. His only loss this year was in the finals at the GMVWA to Thomusseit, 3-1, in overtime. Very powerful, he does not have the moves and techniques of Phillips and can only win if he somehow catches and pins him.

This leaves only two spots open for the rest of the Owens District. Three boys who wrestled at 160# last year would seem to have the inside track. State alternate Boyce missed state qualification in the 30 second sudden death period after making the district semi-finals. He was 2nd at Clyde (to Michaels), 1st at Edison and 3rd at Tiffin. Ackley had a district 6th after also being a semi-finalist and losing, 15-0, to Yant. Worthington can be up and down – was 3rd at the Gorman and lost in overtime to Ackley last year. Kleman or Seislove are the other possibilities. Kleman has been tantalizingly good for some time – maybe, this is the year he qualifies.

Two-time state qualifier Adams leads the Heath District. He won his district title last year 12-1 and was a state semi-finalist before losing a 11-0 barnburner to Kennedy and finishing 6th. This year he won the Midwest Classic and at North Union, and was 4th at Brecksville losing to Mills and Roth. He should move up a couple of places at Columbus this year. State qualifier Panzano also returns and was 8th at Wadsworth after winning several smaller tourneys. Yant beat him by technical fall last year. Jump was 2nd at Hamilton Twp. Losing to Michaels, but I've liked him since last year. He did not, however, wrestle at the D-3 Classic so it is difficult to judge his progress. He won two district bouts last year and I think only Adams and Panzano surpassed him here. Other possibilities include Chase Tucker, hopefully fully healthy once more, district qualifier Walker, and, perhaps, Stewart. Don't overlook Irwin – 4th at the D-3 Classic – for a possible upset.

Two wrestlers stand out at Fairmont. Kunk was a district finalist last year and wrestled two of the more amazing bouts at the Schott. He lost to Cartwright 20-12 in the first round and then came a couple of hours later and won 20-17. I'm guessing he is the first wrestler to have bouts where 20 points were scored back-to-back. Down from 189#, he has to be a co-favorite at this district. The other contender would be state placer Levi Schwab who finished 8th last year. Another rugged Clinton Massie product, he was 1st at Blanchester and 3rd at Fairfield. Akins and Hall had a tremendous district battle with the former winning 7-6 in overtime and vaulting him to a 6th place finish. I don't see either of them challenging the top duo. Leonard or Hutchinson are other thoughts.

The district with the greatest depth is at Maple Hts. There are four potential placers including three emerging from one sectional. One can only hope that pairings do not automatically knock out one of the quartet. What is odd is that the top four were all at different weight classes last year. Jenkins was the state alternate at 189# last year losing only to Neff and Porter at that level. This year he won at Woodridge and Wadsworth, knocking off Faiella in the process. A bit of an unknown, he has good placement prospects. Schaefer was also a state alternate (at 160#) after qualifying two years ago as a sophomore and winning a state bout. This year he won at Black River and Gorman in impressive fashion. He looks very good. Smyers qualified two years ago and was at 152# last year and failed to make district action. This year he won the WIT and beat Zody in the process. The latter boy was a Division II contender last year at 171#. He was 3rd at the WIT and placed at two other events. Should the pairings gods (of demons?) be unkind contenders like Schafrath, Miller, and Melvin would have greatly increased opportunities. Bowden is another candidate with possibilities here.

189 #

PROJECTED CHAMPION: NATHAN JONES (TROY CHRISTIAN)

Top Contenders

2	Neff (Waynedale)	16	Bayly (Toledo Christian)
3	Miller (Delphos Jefferson)	17	Kocevar (Trinity)
4	Kirhan (Mohawk)	18	Mann (Barnesville)
5	Bowers (Pleasant)	19	Cheesman (Crestview)
6	Oliver (Versailles)	20	Shreve (Martins Ferry)
7	Dues (Allen East)	21	Fabry (West Jefferson)
8	K. Schaefer (Northwestern)	22	Chmura (Oberlin)
9	McClory (Liberty Center)	23	Rosolowski (Cuyahoga Hts.)
10	Maloy (Ridgewood)	24	Straus (Kirtland)
11	Godsey (Delta)	25	Kahl (Shadyside)
12	Meyers (Johnstown Monroe)	26	Welfle (Norwalk St. Paul)
13	White (Calvert)	27	Spiker (Rootstown)
14	Starr (River)	28	Reville (Wayne Trace)
15	Fay (Woodridge)	29	Gobrogge (Patrick Henry)

I'm looking forward to this weight class because it may well be one of the most exciting in Division III. There are five outstanding wrestlers vying for the top step of the podium and none of them can be considered a heavy favorite. As we saw all too often last year the vagaries of chance and ill fortune can derail the best of wrestlers.

My choice is Nathan Jones, a two-time Division I state qualifier who transferred from Sidney to Troy Christian. He was 8th as a sophomore, but went two and out last year after facing a tough draw. This year he was 8th at the incredibly tough Ironman with wins over Bailey and Thomusseit and 5th at Brecksville, including a big win over Bowers to clinch the team title. One thing that should help him is the team competition and the momentum Troy Christian is likely to build in defending their team title. It won't be easy, but his experience should be a critical factor in navigating what will be a perilous bracket sheet.

The powerful Neff will have revenge in mind at Columbus after White beat him 8-4 in the Ohio Duals. He was 3rd at this weight class last year, defeating Kirian in a great first round match-up, and then splitting two bouts with Miller (losing by fall early and winning in overtime for 3rd). He raced through the D-3 Classic and should have little trouble in winning his district.

Miller is a stick of dynamite with explosive force. A great pinner, he was 4th last year including a win over Kirian and the aforementioned split with Neff. Nobody has really challenged him this year – and that's not good – but he and Jones exit the same district and should be apart in the state bracket. He was 52-3 last year, losing only once before the state meet.

Kirin comes from a great wrestling family. He was 4th as a sophomore, but had injury problems almost all of last year and finished 6th. He won at Tiffin and has to be considered as a potential finalist. With Miller and Jones at the same sectional you'll have to beat both to win it all.

Bowers was a bit of a magician last year. Wrestling up at least one weight class at 215# he won three close bouts to make the district finals and won a bout at state scoring two unexpected team points. This year he won the Midwest Classic and North Union and was 6th at Brecksville. Winning his district and getting a favorable draw could make him a state semi-finalist and then, who knows, maybe he has one last rabbit to pull out of a hat.

With Jones and Miller both at Fairmont that district will be very difficult. Still, Oliver is a returning state qualifier with a win at that level. He was 2nd to Miller at Plymouth and 4th at the GMVWA ahead of Godsey and White. He'll be away from Jones at the District level (same sectional), and if Miller is also in the other half (a one in three chance) he could be a district finalist. State alternate Dues has twice lost to Miller by fall in a tournament final, but he should be the fourth qualifier with reasonable decent pairings. Welling, Reuille --- who beat White, and Running (Clinton Massie) would seem to have little chance of escaping this district.

Neff faces a much easier task at Maple Hts. I am guessing that junior high state champion Kurtis Schaefer will be here and he has been very good, winning at Black River and finishing 2nd at the Gorman after a one-point loss to state qualifier Gallik. After that everything is a little hazy with Kocevar or Fay probably third best, and then a wild scramble thereafter. I'm thinking that Chmura, Spiker, and Rosolowski (who I believe will end up at 189#) are next in what could be a long line of hopefuls. The wrestler who might be the biggest surprise is Straus. He could easily grab a state ticket.

There are up to seven contenders for the last three spots behind Bowers. State qualifier Maloy has to be one of the favorites to capture one of those trips to Columbus. He wrestles in a media black hole, but anyone who won 45 bouts last year and finished 4th in the district cannot be overlooked. He was 3rd at North Union behind Bowers and 4th at Coshocton. Lane missed state qualification by a point last year, while Meyers was 6th at the district level. It now appears that Lane (Grandview Hts.) will not compete giving Meyers, perhaps, a somewhat larger margin of error. Fabry and Shook are also strong, with the former moving down from 215# where he had a 1-2 district record. Former state qualifier Starr is the best out of the East with Kahl and Mann somewhat behind him. He won at Union Local, but may have to really hustle to beat out the Columbus boys for another trip to states. The loss of Lane, however, does open up the competition.

As at Owens and Maple Hts., one wrestler – Kirian in this case – would seem to stand above the rest. However, his advantage is smaller than those two enjoy and, perhaps, more tenuous. State qualifiers McClory and White return with Godsey, Bayly, and

Cheesman clearly in that same picture. McClory is the mystery. A state qualifier at 215# last year, he has dropped to 189# with great success. He was 1st at Marion Harding, placing ahead of Alexander. White, also a returning state qualifier, has placed at Lincolnview and the GMVWA, but lost to Godsey among others. Last year he beat Cheesman and split with Bayly at district before losing on a technical fall to Kirian. Godsey has been solid and appears to have passed White. Cheesman was 3rd at the Gorman while state alternate Bayly has just moved down from 215#. I think McClory, Godsey and White (by a whisker) will qualify with Kirian, while Bayly just misses again. Long shots are Welfle – who always seems to get a place – and Gobrogge from a resurgent Patrick Henry team.

215

PROJECTED CHAMPION: TRAVIS PORTER (BERKSHIRE)

Top Contenders

2	Randall (Greeneview)	16	McKnight (Carlisle)
3	Akin (Triway)	17	Aurand (Elmwood)
4	Hesson (Caldwell)	18	Magyar (Northwayne)
5	Ewing (Northwestern)	19	Kibler (Elgin)
6	Waderker (Belpre)	20	Moore (Deer Park)
7	Hummel (Millbury Lake)	21	McHugh (Lutheran West)
8	Artrip (Loudonville)	22	Bondy (Monroe Central)
9	Uhlenhake (Coldwater)	23	Castillo (Ayersville)
10	Zang (Hartley)	24	Costlow (Steubenville CC)
11	Beam (Waynedale)	25	Skleres (Pymatuning Valley)
12	Skelton (Northmor)	26	Sousa (Crestview)
13	Running (Clinton Massie)	27	Barnes (Spencerville)
14	Ault (Woodmore)	28	Litman (Sandy Valley)
15	Stover (Calvert)	29	Petratis (VASJ)

This should be one of the more interesting weight classes in Division III. It features a number of closely matched competitors from every corner of the state. In recent years most Division III state champs are from the very top of my rankings. Last year for example, nine of the champs were ranked first in this report, three were ranked second, and one was ranked third. However, there is always at least one outlier. Last year it was Stiltner (ranked 10th) and before that Nelson (ranked 17th). This weight class could produce such a champion this year.

Undaunted – my choice is the undefeated Berkshire senior Travis Porter. He has placed 8th and 7th the last two years in Columbus at 189#. This year he won at Solon and Kenston, but his biggest win was over my heavyweight choice Don Stocum in a dual. It proved to me he could handle the bigger 215's he'll face on the tourney trail. Strong and experienced, he'll need both attributes in a process where he'll face a wide variety of good wrestlers.

Porter must escape from the best and deepest district at this weight class. Artrip was a state alternate last year and finished runner-up at the Wadsworth tourney. Akin was 6th at the D-2 district last year and was 3rd at the WIT, including a fall over Magyar. Ewing was 2-2 at least year's district and was 2nd at the Gorman, losing only to Houska and pinning Artrip. However, Porter beat him 12-0 last year. Beam and Magyar are both possibilities here. Magyar won two district bouts last year and lost a narrow 10-8 decision to McElligott. He was 4th at the WIT. Beam tech-falled Litman to win the D-3 Classic and didn't go six minutes in any of his bouts. This is a formidable district. The trio of McHugh, Skleres, and Petraitis is another step further back.

The Owens District still has an air of uncertainty. State qualifier Zach White is ranked at 189#, but could conceivably end up competing here. If so, it raises the bar for everyone else at this class and could scramble the eventual outcome. As it is the trio of Hummel, Ault, and Aurand look to be the best at this time. Hummel won the "A" Classic over Ault 5-1, and has won at Hopewell-Loudon and Northwood. Ault, in addition to 2nd at the "A" Classic, won at Bellevue, and was 6th at last year's district. Aurand won at Arcadia and was the state alternate at this weight class last year. In the Suburban League Duals he beat both Hummel (9-8) and Ault (3-2) by a single point. The fourth spot – assuming White, McClory and Bayly are safely ensconced at 189# - is wide open. Stover and Castillo are probably next in line, but the sophomore Sousa is building momentum. With great workout partners he could be a factor.

Hesson is one of the two state placers returning at this weight class – he was 7th – and he has high placement potential. He crushed the field at Shadyside and beat the redoubtable Busick to win at Barnesville. His only loss, 3-2, was to Waderker in a dual. These two could well be district finalists. Waderker was 2-2 at last year's district, but may be hindered by a schedule insufficiently challenging. Skelton and Zang are the best in the Columbus area, but may not match up well with the top two here. Skelton won at Tiffin and was 3rd at the Gorman, but lost to Waderker and Hesson at last year's district. Behind this top quartet are the undefeated Costlow, Bondy, and Litman, all with past district experience. Watch for Kibler (Elgin) who lost 12-10 in the Northridge finals and took the Riverside title 10-9.

There is likely to be a powerful quartet emerging from Fairmont. Randall was 5th last year at states after making the semi-finals. He was 3rd at GMVWA and Bellbrook – both times finishing behind D-2 stars Pummill and Snyder. He has finalist potential. State alternate Uhlenhake is undefeated this year leading a strong Coldwater squad. He had 40 victories last year, but lost 15-0 to Randall in the district quarter-finals. Running was the state alternate at 189# last year, losing to state placer Miller in the semi-finals. I have him at 23-1 this year and he may have surpassed Uhlenhake. He had a most impressive tournament winning at Fairfield. State qualifier McKnight is the fourth in this group, and should qualify, but not easily. The one to watch is Moore who has won at Deer Park, Madeira, and Reading, but has not, to my knowledge, wrestled any of the top quartet. Barnes is another possibility after a 2nd place finish at Allen County.

285#

PROJECTED CHAMPION: DON STOCUM (KIRTLAND)

Top Contenders

2	Southwick (Otsego)	16	Widman (Fremont St. Joseph)
3	Edington (Pleasant)	17	Reynolds (Greeneview)
4	McElligott (Chanel)	18	Budde (Fisher Catholic)
5	Addis (Hartley)	19	Krugh (Springfield NE)
6	Murray (Norwayne)	20	Schenkel (Caldwell)
7	Doughty (Norwalk St. Paul)	21	Obringer/Binkley (Spencerville)
8	Bose (Reading)	22	Lesh (Dixie)
9	Smith (Blanchester)	23	Reinhardt (Plymouth)
10	Stone (Cardington Lincoln)	24	West (Bridgeport)
11	Schwochow (Brecksville)	25	Donley (Waynedale)
12	Hamilton (South Central)	26	Clawson (Jackson Mil)
13	Woodford (Martins Ferry)	27	Ruckman (Beallsville)
14	Bergman (Stritch)	28	Snyder (Brooklyn)
15	Treon (Versailles)	29	Flegal (Hicksville)
		30	Calvan (Fostoria St. Wedelion)

The era of Cameron Wade, Jesse Campbell, and all of the other fine Division III heavyweights ended last March. Unfortunately, it ended rather sadly in a bout that was neither well wrestled nor well refereed. Amazingly, 14 of the 16 wrestlers in the state bracket have graduated with only one of that returning duo having even one state victory. It should make for a wide-open slam-bang affair with lots of new names, lots of upsets, and, perhaps, a surprise champion.

In my mind two contenders stand above the others. One, of course, is Jacob Southwick who was 4th last year while winning three state bouts. Undefeated this year, he has two big wins – beating Sanchez by six, and division II placer Donna by four. The other is the powerful Don Stocum, who last year failed to emerge from the extremely rugged Maple Hts. District – no disgrace since the qualifying four all finished in the top six at Columbus. This year he won at the D-3 Classic, North Coast, and Southview and did so in a generally dominating manner.

Stocum heads a solid trio of performers at Maple Hts. McElligott lost an overtime bout last year in his go-to-state bout at 215# after a strong season for Chanel. This year he has performed well at heavyweight losing a one-point match to the excellent McCarthy in Solon in the Solon finals, and was 2nd again at the Mayfield Big 8. At Brecksville he was pinned by Division II choice Hiles and had to default out. I think Stocum may be too strong for him. Murray had some district success last year and followed it up with a runner-up finish at the WIT this year. He should qualify this time around. The fourth state berth is up “for grabs”. I’m probably missing some solid contenders, but, maybe, a Snyder, Donley, or Clawson is that fourth qualifier.

It's far more crowded at Owens. Ten of last year's district qualifiers return with Southwick well ahead of the other nine. District semi-finalist Doughty is a big junior with good experience. He was 2nd at the Gorman and at the D-3 Classic. Note, however, that Stocum beat him 16-5. Hamilton had 39 wins at 215# last year and was a district quarter-finalist. He won at Plymouth and gave Ironman runner-up Meder a strong battle at Black River, losing 12-8. He beat Treon at Plymouth and also finished ahead of Reinhardt and Torrence. I think Bergman and Widman might end up battling for that last berth, but the paring could be critical. Widman, who was 2nd at Northwood, lost to Bergman last year. Flegal and Calvin, the "A" Classic finalists are also in the hunt here.

The top two heavyweights at Heath both come from the Columbus area, and both should have good placement chances. Edington came out of nowhere to make the district finals and qualify for state action. This year he won the Midwest Classic and North Union, and was 3-0 at the Ohio Duals. A tough first round match-up hurt him at Brecksville (where he was the #2 seed) and he failed to place. Addis lost one of those 2-1 in several overtimes in his go-to-state bout last year. That won't happen again. He won the Ash Invitational and has been solid at every event. He could be a district finalist. Budde and Stone are two other Columbus area wrestlers with district credentials. Both went 2-2 at that level and that could foretell a Central District sweep. However, Schenkel has only lost once this year and along with Woodford, West, and Ruckman from the OVAR could provide some upsets. However, none of this group has ever reached the district level.

There are a boatload of possibilities at Fairmont and the problem is sorting them all out. At least on the surface two names stand out – state qualifier (at 215#) Smith and state alternate Treon. However, Bose beat Smith to win at Reading and also took the title at Madeira, and both Schwochow and Reynolds finished ahead of Treon at the GMVWA. Schwochow had a particularly strong run at the powerful tournament reaching the semi-finals. Add in Lesh (3rd at the D-3 Classic and 1st at Bellbrook) and Krugh and that is a solid group of contenders. But, wait, both Binkley and Obringer will come from that one Northwestern sectional, and both have done well. Binkley won at Allen County and Lincolnview. I look for Bose, Smith, and Schwochow to qualify with the fourth spot more a question of bracket placement and style issues than anything else.

TEAMS

1. Marion Pleasant- It will again be a tremendous two team struggle for the Division III state title. Last year I chose Pleasant, but a combination of exceptional wrestling by Troy Christian and their ability to pick up bonus points won the day. The 150+ points scored by Pleasant was the highest of any runner-up team in any classification in Ohio wrestling history. This year I, again, think Pleasant's superior numbers and outstanding wrestlers will be enough to win the title, but that is dependent on getting eleven wrestlers (or so) through this district and then wrestling well in Columbus. Moore and Wilson should win again and all the rest should get some kind of place--with Pope and Edington leading the way. The key might be getting Reynolds to exactly the right weight class.
2. Troy Christian- The superstars from 125# to 145# should score somewhere in the neighborhood of 100 points while Jones should add at least 20 more. That wouldn't have been enough last year and it may not win it this year either. So, the young Hancock, Libengood or one of the upperweights has to help. They emerge from an easier district so taking district titles gets them easier first round opponents and they have very smartly capitalized on it by generating those extra bonus points. They won last year, and may well do so again.
3. Monroeville- The four superstars should score about 100 points--which would win in some years, but will only get them 3rd place this time around. The huge numbers advantage generated by Pleasant and Troy Christian are way too much to overcome. Still four state champions, if it happens, ought to be reason enough for a great celebration.
4. Waynedale- This is a team that should have lots of opportunities to score at the state level, but the question is, will they. State champion Stiltner and Neff are proven winners, but Ash, Vitallo, Petersheim, Coblentz, and the Beams need to demonstrate their prowess. You have to believe that at least a couple of this group will do so.
5. Delta- This will require that a lot goes right for Delta on the state tournament weekend. Yant must be a finalist and Gombash and Carrisalez have to place well, while Aranjio must be healthy and fit at 103#. Add in some good work by Rayfield and Godsey and this won't seem like such a big stretch.

6. Chanel- Schafer, Kovach, McElligott, and Tschantz are all potential scorers, but they are really going to miss Kiefer at 112#. They need some of the younger teammates like Orrill, J. Schafer, Walters, Collier, and Trusnik to qualify and then score.
7. CVCA- The mystery team who could be 4th or 40th. Kusar is the one proven superstar, but needs to draw away from Moore. Morris and Utley look like potential scorers, but what Powers, Sommers, Hickin, etc. I do is still up in the air.
8. Northmor- Mike Skelton has coached for 30 years and seems ready to retire. A Top Ten finish would be a nice going away gift. Zolman is solid while Skelton and Neer should do some scoring. If young Hemingewr is as good as I think that will help even more.