

# **2011 HIGH SCHOOL WRESTLING FORECAST**

**(40<sup>th</sup> ANNUAL EDITION)**

Written By:  
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## PREFACE

The production of this report from my handwritten copy is no easy job. I forget words, use weird punctuation, and my handwriting gets worse with each successive weight class. The typists who transform such material into what you are reading today deserve tremendous accolades. Chief among them is my long-suffering cousin, Nancy Dimitris, and her colleague Vickie Billow. Next time you see them thank them and re-express my gratitude for their work.

The first of these reports was written in 1972 in what was a much different world than today. Newspaper coverage in most areas of the state was spotty and inconsistent at best, and non-existent in many places. There was no Internet (which I believe has impacted wrestling, perhaps, more than any other sport) and teams generally wrestled within a few miles of their school. At that time I was in a unique position – working for a large company that had many newspaper subscriptions, working near the wonderful Cleveland Public Library that had multiple data sources, and developing many statewide contacts via the television shows. All this provided me with an information base that was difficult to duplicate, and provided resources for printing and distributing paper copies.

Today it has all changed. Now there is a constant flow of information. I am awash in data, as teams compete not only in statewide events, but in tournaments that bring together teams from many different areas of the country. I am amazed at the efforts made by many to disseminate data and the high quality of analysis at some sites.

Finally, over the years I kept copies, at first on film and then later on ¾" tape, of virtually all of the telecasts in which I took part. I have donated that entire collection to Cable Nine Television, who will serve as a non-profit repository of that material. They are working to provide an index of what is available, and, perhaps, how best it can be obtained. I am grateful for their help in this endeavor since much of the material is irreplaceable and my attic was a less than ideal storage place. The initial cost of this material was certainly more than a million dollars in current dollars, and its preservation seems important to me.

## Introduction

The object of these annual reports encompasses two basic goals. First is to acquaint everyone with the basic character of each weight class and identify the participants who are likely to play a major role in its resolution. In addition, each individual district is examined as to whom its representatives might be. Second is to stimulate interest in the whole State tournament process throughout Ohio. Naturally, accuracy is also of primary concern, so care is taken to develop the most comprehensive list possible of outstanding wrestlers, though of necessity, the evaluation of their final place is, in part, subjective. This report was written during a ten-day period ending January 23, based on the information available at that time. Because this material was written by that time (and in some 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.

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

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

<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)**

### Robert's Rules For Reading Wrestling Reports

Bob Berg is a Cleveland native who moved to Atlanta, Georgia and, once there, began to write a wrestling preview organized like this one. It was bright and funny and about as accurate as these things can ever be. He decided last year to leave the forecasting business, but his legacy, at least a small portion of it bears on this document as well. I am formally naming them Berg's Rules of Reading and am reproducing them below.

One word about the "rankings," as they are oftentimes misunderstood. If it turns out that our #17 wrestler beat our #8 wrestler during the year, there may be several explanations as to why we have the winner at #17 and the loser at #8:

- a) We may not have that particular result in our database. Our bad, but even in this era of incredible technology and information flow, we just don't have all the results, so we operate with something less than full information. As Hyman Roth said in *Godfather II*, "this is the business we've chosen."
- b) We may have known the result, but discounted it (a very important technique in the prognosticator's bag of tricks – if a result appears to be aberrant or we don't like it, we just ignore it!) for any number of reasons, including injuries, weight issues, conditioning issues (e.g., for those wrestlers coming out after football season), SAT forfeits, etc.
- c) We may have known the result, but trumped it based on each wrestler's full body of work, rather than just that one result. As we've all come to learn, the transitive property of inequities (if  $A > B$ , and if  $B > C$ , then  $A > C$ ) may work in algebra, but "if A beats B, and B beats C, then C will beat A" is a formula for disaster in the wrestling prognostication business.
- d) Similarly, we may know the results but, especially if it was prior to the first of the year, we may believe that the loser of that particular bout has improved substantially and would win the rematch.
- e) Or, finally (and, in all probability, most likely), we may just have gotten it wrong. To paraphrase Forest Gump, "stuff happens." That's ok, we will live with our mistakes, hope they are infrequent and, most importantly, continue to understand that, ultimately, the outcomes of wrestling contests are determined on the mats, not on the pages of this report.

**BRAKEMAN REPORT AUDIT**

(How first choices fared)

	<u>2008</u>	<u>2009</u>	<u>2010</u>
Won Title	27	28	29
Finished Second	7	6	5
Third	5	4	5
Fourth	1	0	0
Lower than Fourth	<u>2</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>3</u>
Total	42	42	42

**BRAKEMAN REPORT AUDIT**

(Won State Title)

	<u>2008</u>	<u>2009</u>	<u>2010</u>
Ranked First	27	28	29
Ranked Second	7	3	6
Ranked Third	2	6	3
Ranked Fourth	2	2	1
Ranked Lower Than 4 <sup>th</sup>	<u>4</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>3</u> *
	42	42	42

\*Gordon 5<sup>th</sup>, Matacic 7<sup>th</sup>, and Oney ranked 9<sup>th</sup>.

**CHAMPIONSHIP ROUNDS STATE VICTORIES % ANALYSIS  
(Only Inter-District Bouts)**

<u>2008</u>		<u>2009</u>		<u>2010</u>	
1	Mentor/Harding 59.3%	1	Perry 60.7%	1	Ashland 67.0%
2	Perry 57.7%	2	Firestone 54.3%	2	Goshen 58.5%
3	Ontario/Fostoria 55.1%	3	Goshen 54.2%	3	Maple Hts. 57.8%
4	Firestone 53.9%	4	Fairmont 53.5%	4	Marion Harding 52.9%
5	Fairmont 52.9%	5	Maple Hts. 52.6%	5	Fairmont 51.9%
6	Heath 52.7%	6	Owens 51.5%	6	Owens 50.0%
7	Goshen 50.0%	7	Fairfield 50.0%	7	Firestone 50.0%
8	Owens 46.9%	8	Mentor 48.0%	8	Mentor 47.4%
9	Maple Hts. 46.9%	9	Heath 45.4%	9	Darby 44.9%
10	Steubenville 40.0%	10	Fostoria 44.8%	10	Heath 38.2%
11	Darby 39.8%	11	Steubenville 41.7%	11	Fairfield 36.8%
12	Fairfield 38.4%	12	Darby 38.6%	12	Claymont 36.4%

**2010 STATE VICTORIES % BY DISTRICT ANALYSIS**

(Only Inter-District Bouts)\*

	<u>Ashland</u>	<u>Mentor</u>	<u>Darby</u>	<u>Fairfield</u>
Championship Rounds	67.0%	47.4%	44.9%	36.8%
Consolation Rounds	<u>49.3%</u>	<u>48.9%</u>	<u>54.5%</u>	<u>46.8%</u>
Total	60.2%	48.1%	49.7%	42.0%

  

	<u>Firestone</u>	<u>Harding</u>	<u>Claymont</u>	<u>Goshen</u>
Championship Rounds	50.0%	52.9%	36.4%	58.5%
Consolation Rounds	<u>61.5%</u>	<u>51.1%</u>	<u>39.8%</u>	<u>47.5%</u>
Total	55.4%	52.0%	38.1%	53.8%

  

	<u>Maple Hts.</u>	<u>Owens</u>	<u>Heath</u>	<u>Fairmont</u>
Championship Rounds	57.8%	50.0%	38.2%	51.9%
Consolation Rounds	<u>51.9%</u>	<u>42.7%</u>	<u>52.1%</u>	<u>53.3%</u>
Total	55.3%	46.6%	45.4%	52.6%

\*Does not include intra-district bouts.

**2010 STATE CHAMPIONSHIP ROUND ANALYSIS  
(Inter-District Bouts Only)**

		<u>First Round</u>			<u>2nd/3rd/4th Round</u>			<u>Overall</u>		
		W&L			W&L			W&L		
		Record	%	Rank	Record	%	Rank	Record	%	Rank
1	Ashland	36-20	64.3%	1	39-17	69.6%	1	75-37	67.0%	1
2	Goshen	30-26	53.6%	5	32-18	64.0%	2	62-44	58.3%	2
3	Maple Hts.	*33-22	60.0%	2	30-24	55.6%	3	63-46	57.8%	3
4	Harding	31-25	55.4%	3	23-23	50.0%	5	54-48	52.9%	4
5	Fairmont	30-26	53.6%	5	24-24	50.0%	5	54-50	51.9%	5
6	Owens	*26-29	47.3%	9	24-21	53.3%	4	50-50	50.0%	6
7	Firestone	29-27	51.8%	7	23-25	47.9%	7	52-52	50.0%	7
8	Mentor	27-29	48.2%	8	19-22	46.3%	8	46-51	47.4%	8
9	Darby	31-25	55.4%	3	13-29	31.0%	12	44-54	44.9%	9
10	Heath	22-34	39.3%	10	12-21	36.4%	10	34-55	38.2%	10
11	Fairfield	18-38	32.1%	12	14-17	45.2%	9	32-55	36.8%	11
12	Claymont	22-34	39.3%	10	10-22	31.3%	11	32-56	36.4%	12

\*One Bye

**TOTAL STATE VICTORIES % BY DISTRICT ANALYSIS**

(Championship and Consolation Rounds)

<u>2008</u>		<u>2009</u>		<u>2010</u>				
1	Perry	56.9%	1	Perry	60.6%	1	Ashland	60.2%
2	Firestone	55.0%	2	Maple Hts.	60.0%	2	Firestone	55.4%
3	Heath	54.0%	3	Mentor	52.8%	3	Maple Hts.	55.3%
4	Mentor/Harding	53.4%	4	Firestone	51.7%	4	Goshen	53.8%
5	Goshen	52.4%	5	Fairmont	51.1%	5	Fairmont	52.6%
6	Fairmont	57.3%	6	Fostoria	50.7%	6	Harding	52.0%
7	Ontario/Fostoria	50.8%	7	Goshen	50.5%	7	Darby	49.7%
8	Maple Hts.	49.5%	8	Heath	46.8%	8	Mentor	48.1%
9	Darby	46.3%	9	Owens	46.5%	9	Owens	46.6%
10	Owens	44.6%	10	Fairfield	46.1%	10	Heath	45.4%
11	Fairfield	42.4%	11	Steubenville	40.9%	11	Fairfield	42.0%
12	Steubenville	41.3%	12	Darby	39.1%	12	Claymont	38.1%

**STATE QUALIFIERS BY SECTIONAL**

**Mentor**

Fitch	16
Maple Hts.	14
Hoover	13
N. Royalton	13

**Firestone**

West Branch	17
Walsh	16
Hoover	12
Lake Catholic	11

**Maple Hts.**

Brooklyn	25
Salem NW	13
Rootstown	7
Beachwood	6

**Ashland**

Wadsworth	27
Southview	18
Rogers	6
Harding	5

**Harding**

Shelby	19
Highland	14
Wauseon	13
Shawnee	10

**Owens**

Huron	15
Archbold	14
Plymouth	14
Elmwood	13

**Darby**

Watkins	19
Westerville	16
Centerville	14
Pickerington	7

**Claymont**

Clearcreek	17
Buckeye Local	16
Licking Hts.	14
Meadowbrook	9

**Heath**

Barnesville	18
Utica	17
Cardington	11
Jackson	10

**Fairfield**

Elder	21
Moeller	17
Centerville	10
Western Brown	8

**Goshen**

Tipp City	20
Eaton	15
Chillicothe	14
Goshen	7

**Fairmont**

Leman	23
Clinton-Massie	16
Lima CC	9
Carey	8

## Division I

Last April, I had the privilege of watching an exceptional documentary, “Pinned” at the prestigious Cleveland Film Festival. It was a wonderful film dealing with wrestling in northeastern Ohio—and to some extent throughout the state. “Pinned” was accepted and shown at a number of film festivals including ones in Hollywood, Columbus, and Montana. The DVD, which includes extensive footage, not included in the screen version, is now available for purchase. Mike and Pat Norman, makers of the film have a website [www.pinnedmovie.com](http://www.pinnedmovie.com) where all of the information relating to the film can be found. I highly recommend this film to you as an honest look at one facet of high school wrestling.

### 103 #

#### **PROJECTED CHAMPION: BRANDON THOMPSON (SOLON)**

##### Top Contenders

2	Bavery (Massillon Perry)	15	Barklay (Centerville)
3	Evans (Mansfield Senior)	16	Bailey (Glen Oak)
4	Spearman (Lancaster)	17	Kakos (Franklin Hts.)
5	Ziegler (St. Ignatius)	18	Gallagher (Willoughby South)
6	Mancini (Boardman)	19	Hornack (Medina)
7	Krumheuer (Midpark)	20	Dickson (North Ridgeville)
8	Mullucey (Coffman)	21	Tepe (Moeller)
9	Torres (Elyria)	22	Boggs (Riverside)
10	Victoria (Mason)	23	Davis (Clay)
11	Sparks (Marysville)	24	Ervin (Glen Este)
12	Daly (Lakota East)	25	Long (Miamisburg)
13	Barden (Fairfield)	26	Straughter (Reynoldsburg)
14	Heidkamp (Butler)	27	Diaz (Lorain)

Not to begin on a negative note, but this is probably the weakest group of 103's that we've seen in Division I since 2002. There is, as the weight class is currently constituted, only one wrestler with past state experience, and there are surprisingly few freshmen with placement potential (most of them are in Division II and III). Clearly, this creates a golden opportunity for someone on a hot weekend to take home an unexpected state title.

Still, there is a clear favorite and that has to be the Solon sophomore, Brandon Thompson. A junior high state placer, he was on his way, I thought, to state qualification last year before injury forced a default. This year he won at Solon (over Assad in overtime) and North Coast (beating Krumheuer and Clary handily) and was 3<sup>rd</sup> at the Powerade after a semi-final overtime loss (his only defeat). Some of his toughest competition will come out of his own Mentor District. Bavery, only a freshman, could well be his biggest rival. He was 4<sup>th</sup> at the Junior High States winning seven



consolation bouts after an early loss. He has gotten much better since then. He failed to place at the Ironman, but gave the No. 1 ranked wrestler a stiff battle before losing 6-3. Since then he was 3<sup>rd</sup> at Medina and 2<sup>nd</sup> at the Top Gun both times losing to Tomasello. Thompson and he should be in opposite half brackets at the states. There are two strong candidates for the last pair of qualifying slots. Ziegler, behind DiCamillo last year, was 2<sup>nd</sup> at Brecksville and 4<sup>th</sup> at the CIT, while Mancini won at Kenston and was 5<sup>th</sup> at the Top Gun. That leaves Kenston runner-up Gallagher, perhaps a shade small, and Boggs, 5<sup>th</sup> at Medina, needing a mild upset to qualify, while Dies champ Bailey may be putting on a late season spurt.

There are some question marks at Darby. Spearman had a tough district performance last year going in as a sectional champ with strong qualification potential and winning only one of three bouts. This year he has been dominant winning at Mount Vernon and Tiffin. Mullucey was 1<sup>st</sup> at Coffman and a solid 4<sup>th</sup> at Medina - - losing early to Bavery and winning a raft of consolation bouts before losing to him again in the consolation finals. Sparks was 3<sup>rd</sup> at the Top Gun, but lost to Mancini, 19-4, who finished fifth. There is a seeming inconsistency, but he is clearly capable of qualification. As always, this is written before I know what Dayton teams will travel to this district. For the sake of continuity I will make some assumptions, but, understand, they are strictly my own. At any rate Kakos and Barklay are probably next best. The latter was 2<sup>nd</sup> at Fairfield, 5<sup>th</sup> at GMVWA, and 6<sup>th</sup> at North Canton showing consistency. Kakos won two district bouts at this weight class last year and won handily at Ready. Both Straughter and Wimer (Central Crossing) can be safely labeled as long-shots.

There is some high place potential at Lorain. Evans is a senior whose time has probably come. He was a district semi-finalist last year, but was injured in that bout and had to default down to 6<sup>th</sup>. This year he won at the Gorman and Perrysburg, but both times in relatively unchallenging weight classes. He has not faced many of the best boys. Krumheuer qualified two years ago as a freshman, but was a state alternate last year - - losing to Millin and Montgomery. He was 3<sup>rd</sup> at North Coast and 4<sup>th</sup> at North Canton, and he has not yet dominated in this his third year at this weight class. Torres is a good-looking freshman who was 7<sup>th</sup> at both the Ironman and Brecksville - - indicative of good things to come. A junior high state placer he'll be pushed to get better. Diaz and Dickson are possibilities with the latter boy putting together a long winning streak at one point. Hornack placed at the Top Gun and wrestled tough against the top boys. He went 2-2 at Medina losing to Bavery. Irvine, highly rated in Toledo failed to place at the CIT but still might be a possible upset threat.

The field seems relatively weak at Fairfield. Victoria won the SWOCA, but was 6<sup>th</sup> at Medina losing to Burcher, Mullucey and Boggs after reaching the semi-finals. Tepe, 2<sup>nd</sup> at the SWOCA, did not place at the CIT. Heidkamp was runner-up at the GMVWA and looks to be a good bet to qualify. Daly looks capable of the big upset, but sustainability may not yet be there, while Long and Ervin may have enough to qualify. Barden, if at this weight class could also score heavily.

**112 #**

**PROJECTED CHAMPION: GEORGE DICAMILLO (ST. IGNATIUS)**

Top Contenders

2	Bright (St. Edward)	15	Branham (Miamisburg)
3	Murdock (Coffman)	16	Herrera (Westerville North)
4	Timchenko (Massillon Perry)	17	Ellis (Riverside)
5	Perry (Howland)	18	Chang (Reynoldsburg)
6	Windsor (Wayne)	19	DuPratt (Olmsted Falls)
7	Kowal (Princeton)	20	Pauley (Mt. Vernon)
8	Noble (Lebanon)	21	Suer (Elder)
9	Screptock (Clay)	22	Nguyen (Holland Springfield)
10	Shump (Barberton)	23	Kihn (Fairmont)
11	Luria (Mason)	24	Fausnight (North Canton)
12	Penzone (Liberty)	25	Yates (Anthony Wayne)
13	Mendel/Walsh (Moeller)	26	Harder (Sylvania Northview)
14	Jones (Wadsworth)		

Rivalries are one of the linchpins of sports as they add passion and tradition to athletic competition. The best of them are usually teams that are geographically close and share certain similarities. A huge rivalry in Northeastern Ohio is that between St. Ignatius and St. Edward. Both west side Cleveland area schools, competition between them seems to occur in virtually every sport and at almost any time. One manifestation is at this weight class with George DiCamillo at its center.

Last year DiCamillo won his first 35 bouts including a stirring overtime win over the sensational St. Edward freshman, Dean Heil, at the Ironman. Despite an upset loss in the district finals, it still seemed that the 103# title would be decided by these two in their state confrontation. This time it was Heil who won and cruised to the title the next night. Fast forward to this year and this weight and again DiCamillo is undefeated, the Ironman and Brecksville champ, and the favorite to capture the state title. His victory over Taylor at the Ironman final was one of the real highlights of that tournament. His biggest obstacle is once again from St. Edward in the form of Edgar Bright. Bright was a semi-finalist at this weight class last year losing on a takedown in overtime (think about the team ramifications had it been his takedown) and dropping to 6<sup>th</sup>. At the Ironman Bright handled Blair's Max Hvolbeck in an early bout, but failed to make weight on Saturday. Since then he has been on a tear winning at Medina and beating the top two 112's in Illinois just a few days ago. Interestingly DiCamillo beat two-time Ohio junior high champ Jared Cortez (now in Illinois) 8-6 at the Ironman while Bright won 5-4 over the same opponent. There will be no seeding here so it is entirely possible that DiCamillo could have another very similar semi-final match-up.

Not to be overlooked here is Ryan Murdock, the leader at the Darby District. He was 5<sup>th</sup> at 103# last year - - losing twice to Garcia. This year his only loss was an overtime semi-final loss to Langdon preventing a match-up with Bright. Three other Central District wrestlers should have legitimate state aspirations with Herrera probably the best

and Chang and Pauley close behind. Chang was 2<sup>nd</sup> at Kenston, Elgin and the Panther demonstrating good consistence. There are three fine Dayton area 112's at least one of whom should compete here I'm guessing it might be state qualifier Windsor who was 2<sup>nd</sup> at Troy and 3<sup>rd</sup> at the GMVWA. One to watch here is the freshman Penzone - - 3<sup>rd</sup> at junior high states - - who has started to get acclimated at 112#. He was 7<sup>th</sup> at Brecksville and won at Elgin over Chang, 10-4. He could be a finalist at this district.

DiCamillo has some very good competition at Mentor. Timchenko, at Olentangy Orange last year, was a state quarter-finalist last year losing to Bright, 6-2, and finishing 7<sup>th</sup>. He was 4<sup>th</sup> at Medina to Murdock after losing again to Bright, 3-1, and won the King of the Mountain. His 4<sup>th</sup> at the Top Gun saw him knocked out of the championship bracket by Taylor. Perry, also a state qualifier went 2-3 and finished 8<sup>th</sup> including a huge upset win over Selmon. He was 2<sup>nd</sup> at 119# at Hudson in an injury default, but he cannot be overlooked. Shump was the district runner-up last year, but a 15-11 first round loss to Noble spun him into the consolations where he ended up with a 1-2 record. This is an excellent quartet augmented, in particular, by the excellent Ellis - - two district wins and runner-up at Solon - - and Fausnight.

Bright will not have it as tough at Lorain. Screptock is probably second best after winning at Solon and a 4<sup>th</sup> at Brecksville including a 5-0 win over state qualifier Jones. The latter boy was 4<sup>th</sup> at North Canton and 5<sup>th</sup> at Brecksville. He was 1-2 at Columbus last year, but that victory was a crucial win team-wise. DuPratt has been very active winning at Willoughby South and being a consistent placer while Nguyen and Yates could be challengers.

There could be real depth at Fairfield depending, at least somewhat on the Dayton sectionals split. One to watch is the mercurial Kowal who crushed the field at the SWOCA - - beating Noble 10-2 in the finals. He was 4<sup>th</sup> at the GMVWA losing 16-13 in the semi-finals and then dropping the consolation finals to Windsor. He has talent. State placer Noble was 8<sup>th</sup> last year, but provides some what inconsistent results, but at the top of his game he could improve last year's placement. I don't know whether it will be state qualifier Walsh or Mendel at this weight class for Moeller but either could qualify. Mendel was at the SWOCA and CIT. I like Branham for the fourth slot. He was 3<sup>rd</sup> at North Canton and 1<sup>st</sup> at Bradley, but stumbled a bit at the GMVWA. A state qualifier last year he drew Heil in the first round. Luria qualified two years ago, but missed out last year. He was 5<sup>th</sup> at the MIT wrestling a close bout with Murdock. Suer and Kihn are also very good, but if most of the Dayton folks go in this direction it will be difficult.

**119 #**

**PROJECTED CHAMPION: JOHN DILLON (BOARDMAN)**

Top Contenders

2	Heil (St. Edward)	16	Daniels (Elder)
3	Newhouse (Massillon Perry)	17	Asadorian (Olmsted Falls)
4	DiSabato (Davidson)	18	Mi. Yurkovich (North Royalton)
5	MacVeigh (Moeller)	19	Puska (Edgewood)
6	Byrd (LaSalle)	20	Spinkston (Lorain)
7	Fehr (Barberton)	21	Wakser (North Canton)
8	Vinas (Twinsburg)	22	Shea (Loveland)
9	McClay (Massillon)	23	DiMarino (North Olmsted)
10	Strope (Lancaster)	24	Levitsky (Parma)
11	Artrip (Mason)	25	Cannon (Elyria)
12	Birr (Mayfield)	26	Pruchinski (Brecksville)
13	Hunter (Pickerington Central)	27	Davis (Lancaster)
14	Long (St. Ignatius)	28	Pittman (Butler)
15	Longwell (Darby)		

The conventional wisdom is that the brilliant sophomore Heil will win at this weight class. Last year he was 2<sup>nd</sup> at the Ironman, but lost only once more during the year upsetting DiCamillo in the semi-finals and soundly defeating Young to take the state title. This year after an injury plagued Ironman he won that brutally tough 119# weight class at Medina beating state runner-up Newhouse, 5-4 and three-time state runner-up Tyler Heminger (12-6). He defeated Newhouse again at the state duals (7-6) and has beaten Micah Jordan twice by a combined score of 14-1. He is a robust looking 119 pounder so size should not be an issue.

Newhouse was, perhaps a bit of a surprise state runner-up at 112#, but he won his first two bouts easily and then beat Bright in overtime before falling to two-time champ Mines in the finals. That was a bout where he seemed nervous and tentative and did not wrestle his best. This year he was a semi-finalist at the Ironman and recorded a pin against Heil during which, so I've heard, Heil was injured. He was 3<sup>rd</sup> at the Ironman and won the King of the Mountain.

The wildcard here is the irrepressible Dillon. A fabulous youth wrestler he ended that career with a state junior high title. He missed most of his freshman year, but finished a strong 3<sup>rd</sup> in Columbus. Last year there were discussions about weight classes and again he missed a month - - and wrestling at 125# where he nevertheless finished 4<sup>th</sup> after losing a one-point bout to the very good McCombs. This year he is undefeated and essentially unchallenged winning at the Top Gun and Kenston at 125. He will be at this weight and will be a most formidable foe.

The district distribution is terribly unbalanced with Mentor having at least eight state worthy wrestlers including Dillon and Newhouse while Heil faces far, far less at Lorain. Heil and Newhouse will be seeded apart if Newhouse wins that difficult district. No

matter what, you would anticipate Heil having to defeat both Newhouse and Dillon at states. My view is that Dillon is too big and too good for both of them. The question, as it always is, will be if the focus and motivation are present. If so, I believe Dillon will win.

The 119# Mentor District will be the most difficult one in the state from which to qualify. Dillon and Newhouse will, of course, lead the way, but there is enormous talent breathing down their neck. Vinas was the state alternate at 112# last year - - losing to eventual two-time state champion Kory Mines, 6-3, in his go-to-state bout. This year he was 1<sup>st</sup> at Solon and 3<sup>rd</sup> at the Dies - - losing to Fehr and was 7<sup>th</sup> at Brecksville - - losing to Pizzuto who he had beaten at Solon and DiSabato. Fehr was the district runner-up to Bright last year - - losing 4-2 - - but, unbelievably drew Mines in the first round and finished with a 1-2 record. He was champion this year at the Dies and Cuyahoga Hts. McClay, now a sophomore, was one bout from states last year losing a one-pointer to Ague in the consolation semi-finals. A true talent he won at the WIT and the Gorman this year. Mike Yurkovich won two district bouts last year and placed at Brecksville this year, while Long had been on the periphery of qualifying for several years. He was up a weight class last year with two-time state champion Robinson at 119#. He was 4<sup>th</sup> at the CIT and 6<sup>th</sup> at Brecksville including wins over McLaughlin and Yurkovich. Birr is a former state qualifier who missed out last year losing to Newhouse and Vinas. That still leaves Wakser - - 2<sup>nd</sup> at North Canton and 6<sup>th</sup> at Medina - - and Levitsky - - 1<sup>st</sup> at Kenston and 3<sup>rd</sup> at Hudson - - to be accounted. You would have to think about other options if you had originally planned to be at this weight class.

While the Mentor District is incredibly difficult Heil stands alone at Lorain. I've had, in fact, problems generating names that have qualification potential, but we know that four will indeed make it. Were we in Dayton teams could select their district and possibly alleviate the inequity we see here. Asadorian has been a steady placer, including an 8<sup>th</sup> at Medina, 7<sup>th</sup> at the Dies and 3<sup>rd</sup> at Willoughby South. These are results that may not set your pulse racing, but they may be good enough. Pruchinski was 5<sup>th</sup> at the Dies while DiMarino placed 1<sup>st</sup> at Willoughby South and 3<sup>rd</sup> at Kenston. Cannon was part of that Elyria surge at Brecksville while Spinkston and Matos are other possibilities. Perhaps, the Toledo boys can help with Mason, but in any event put Heil's name in ink and leave everything else blank.

There are some household names at Fairfield as some of this group are multiple qualifiers. MacVeigh looks to be the best at this district after winning both the SWOCA and the CIT. He was a state qualifier last year, but lost a couple of close bouts. Byrd is a two-time placer who has finished 7<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> - - including a semi-final appearance last year losing to Squire. He was 3<sup>rd</sup> at both the CIT - - losing 5-4 to MacVeigh - - and GMVWA, where Micah Jordan defeated him 7-6. Artrip qualified as both a freshman and sophomore, but missed last year due to injury. He was 6<sup>th</sup> two years ago, but has struggled to stay healthy. He was 6<sup>th</sup> at Medina winning three bouts to the semi-finals and then having to forfeit. Daniels qualified last year at 112#, but failed to win a bout. He has not been as effective this year finishing 6<sup>th</sup> at the SWOCA and not competing at the CIT. While all of this group has past state experience they are not immune to upsets. Puska was a bout from States last year, but had to default and finished 6<sup>th</sup>. This year he has won at Scioto and Edgewood and was 5<sup>th</sup> at the SWOCA losing to MacVeigh, 9-6 in the quarterfinals. Shea and Cox could also be role players here.

Three-time state qualifier DiSabato heads the Darby district and he seems primed to make a long state run in this his last opportunity. I've had three separate coaches tell me how terrific he is wrestling. He has certainly made the effort with those three qualifications - - and an 8<sup>th</sup> place finish as a sophomore. He was 1<sup>st</sup> at DeSales and 4<sup>th</sup> at Brecksville, twice losing to Spangler. Strobe qualified two years ago at 103#, but missed out last year finishing 5<sup>th</sup> at the district. This year he has won at Mt. Vernon and Tiffin and in a less crowded year would have good placement chances. Longwell qualified at 112# last year and was 7<sup>th</sup> at the very tough Medina weight class. Hunter was overtime loss from placing last year and was 4<sup>th</sup> at North Canton and 5<sup>th</sup> at the GMVWA. He'll have to ramp up those kind of numbers to place. Davis is this district's prime backup although there is the expectation of several Dayton area contenders competing here.

### 125 #

#### **PROJECTED CHAMPION: KAGAN SQUIRE (WADSWORTH)**

##### Top Contenders

2	Labry (Twinsburg)	15	Gonzalez (Mason)
3	Ward (Moeller)	16	Day (Fairfield)
4	Stevens (Beavercreek)	17	Cochrane (Troy)
5	McNulty (Mayfield)	18	Smoot (Teays Valley)
6	Scholtz (Strongsville)	19	Elden (Northview)
7	Victor (Mentor)	20	Edwards (Lorain)
8	Campbell (Harrison)	21	Haslam (Westland)
9	Scheidel (St. Edward)	22	Iafelice (Parma)
10	Abdel-Salem (Lakewood)	23	Davis (Lancaster)
11	Hammer (Colerain)	24	Bast (Massillon Perry)
12	Denlinger (Fairmont)	25	Ryan (Liberty)
13	Garcia (Elyria)	26	Shiekh Holland Springfield)
14	Ma. Yurkovich (North Royalton)		

Right now there is substantial uncertainty as to who will show up at this weight class. Will Dillon decide 119# is too tough a cut and remain at 125#? Or will Inchaurregui return to 125# in a strategic move of uncertain value? Whatever the case Kagan Squire will be the one certainty - - as the favorite at this weight class.

Squire was 3<sup>rd</sup> at 112# as a freshman losing a 2-1 semi-final battle to two-time champ Sako. Then last year he provided critical team points for Wadsworth on his way to the finals - - before being overpowered there by another two-time champ, Jerome Robinson. This year he was 4<sup>th</sup> at the Ironman losing two close bouts to the highly ranked Cisneros, and then won over Labry to clinch the Brecksville. Squire is a much different wrestler than older brother, Brad, but they share one trait - - the ability to make a 3-1 victory seem like six minutes of domination. You know that Squire will score his points during the six minutes of action, but that body length and defense does not allow you to do the same. There are some exciting and dangerous wrestlers in the field, but Squire seems a clear step above all except, perhaps, a late-arriving Dillon.

Squire should have few problems at the Lorain district. That is assuming that Inchaurregu stays at 130# where his probability of winning a title is somewhat higher. I think there are six wrestlers one step below Squire all of whom have about an equal chance to get one of the three remaining spots. Scholtz was a state alternate at 112# last year losing a 3-0 bout to Griffith in his go-to-state bout--a fine recovery from a 4<sup>th</sup> place finish at his sectional. This year he was 3<sup>rd</sup> at Solon and 2<sup>nd</sup> at Medina and is much better than I remembered. Scheidel, a newcomer to the St. Ed's lineup started slowly, but was 3<sup>rd</sup> at Medina, losing only to the champion Campbell. He has become a steady presence in that lineup. Garcia was part of that early surge at Brecksville beating both Wiseman and Lee Wilson before Squire brought him back to earth in the semis. As a freshman he won two district bouts last year. Abdel-Salem missed state qualification by one bout and he leads a trio of excellent brothers at Lakewood. He was 1<sup>st</sup> at Midpark, Columbia Station and Avon Lake defeating state runner-up Brian Spangler at the last mentioned. Edwards has been excellent at this weight class with Inchaurregui moving up while state alternate Elden heads the Toledo contingent.

The best district, by far, is at Fairfield. I count, as it currently stands, five wrestlers with past state tournament experience. Ward, now a junior, is a transfer from Goshen where he was a state qualifier and finished 8<sup>th</sup> his freshman year. He was 8<sup>th</sup> at the Ironman and 2<sup>nd</sup> at 130# at the SWOCA. Most recently he won the CIT - - pinning Lee Wilson in the final. It is rare when a wrestler gets a statewide reputation for a particular move - - for example, the Joe Heskett cradle or the Jimmy Mason spiral - - but Stevens has apparently done so. He was 3<sup>rd</sup> last year at this weight class winning five bouts, three by fall and the other two scoring in double figures. His only loss was a quick fall to Gus Sako. This year he was 3<sup>rd</sup> at the SWOCA and remains one of the most dangerous opponents at this weight class. At Medina, however, injury shut him down after an early loss and he failed to place. Hammer qualified at 119# last year and was this year 2<sup>nd</sup> at Fairfield losing to a Tennessee state placer, 5-1. Campbell is difficult to pigeon-hole. A returning state qualifier who was 1<sup>st</sup> at Medina and 2<sup>nd</sup> at the SWOCA, but only 4<sup>th</sup> at Fairfield. State qualifier Day is also here along with Gonzalez who beat Stevens, 8-1, while getting 4<sup>th</sup> at the MIT and 5<sup>th</sup> at the SWOCA. Denlinger, a state junior high champ two years ago capped a fine freshman year by getting a district 5<sup>th</sup> and just missing qualification. This year he was 8<sup>th</sup> at Brecksville losing two close bouts in an excellent field. I'm thinking several of this group may end up at Darby.

The Mentor district features a quartet of excellent wrestlers all of whom have a state experience. Labry was 4<sup>th</sup> two years ago as a freshman at 103#. That was the year that the qualifiers from this district swept the first four places at States. Last year, however, after a good district run which ended with a loss to two-time state champion Robinson, he went 1-2 at Columbus losing early to Regan. This year he won at Solon and the Dies and was 2<sup>nd</sup> to Squire at Brecksville with a good draw he has finalist potential. McNulty is always a mystery. He is a three-time state qualifier who was 5<sup>th</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> his first two years, but did not win a state bout last year. He wins when I think he'll lose and loses when it seems he should win. He was 3<sup>rd</sup> at the Top Gun losing to Scholtz in overtime and was perfect at the Ohio Duals. Not many wrestlers are four-time state qualifiers. Victor qualified two years ago as a freshman and lost in the state quarterfinals to Labry. Last year, at districts, Labry again defeated him and he ended

up a takedown short of qualification. This year he won at Solon and North Coast and should qualify out of this district. Yurkovich lost to Labry in the district semi-finals last year and came back to beat Turek and get to Columbus. He went 1-2 at that venue. lafelice, 1<sup>st</sup> at Hudson, is a possible backup if the pairings are ugly as is the Massillon Perry youngster, Bast. Clearly, Labry looks to be the dominant factor at this district.

The Darby district will look attractive to the Dayton boys since there is little depth. I have Cochran already slotted there after being a state alternate last year - - missing out after a 5-4 loss to McSorley in his go-to-state bout. This year he was 1<sup>st</sup> at Troy and Edgewood and 4<sup>th</sup> at the GMVWA. Smoot was 6<sup>th</sup> at Brecksville and I liked his aggressiveness. He likes to score and will take an occasional chance. I think he's the best in the Columbus area. Davis, 1<sup>st</sup> at Mt. Vernon, and Haslam are both solid performers. Haslam was one bout from States last year but has had a bit of a slow start this year. I haven't seen sophomore Jake Ryan competing lately, but he won two district bouts last year and would be a factor should he compete.

### **130 #**

#### **PROJECTED CHAMPION: ANTHONY COLLICA (SOLON)**

##### Top Contenders

2	Icarlone (Mayfield)	14	Miller (Lakota East)
3	Montgomery (Madison)	15	Sweeney (Mentor)
4	Gray (Wadsworth)	16	Gilbert (Lebanon)
5	Baran (Brecksville)	17	T. Dailey (Massillon Perry)
6	Amenta (Clay)	18	Bauer (Western Brown)
7	Inchaurregui (Lorain)	19	Heffernan (St. Edward)
8	Forrider (Marysville)	20	Nace (Teays Valley)
9	Brunner (North Olmsted)	21	Boone (Liberty)
10	McDougle (Gahanna Lincoln)	22	Roth (Perrysburg)
11	Brown (Lake)	23	Kearns (Glen Este)
12	D'Urso (Springboro)	24	Perri (Strongsville)
13	Selmon (Princeton)	25	Walker (Copley)
		26	Grine (Fremont Ross)

One of the fascinating things about evaluating baseball players is determining the value added by their batting. Do we want homeruns and RBI's, batting average, walks, stolen bases, extra base consistency and what trade-offs are best since it is a rare player who does it all. As it turns out one of the most efficient statistics is park-corrected OPS --in other words on-base percentage plus slugging average. Nothing like that has ever been done in wrestling - - do we want speed, strength, technique, power, takedown ability and so on. Everybody weighs these factors differently in contemplating the perfect wrestler. While no one has ever rigorously tried to analyze such variables or even discover if it is possible, match-ups between wrestlers who exemplify these traits always catches our attention - - precisely because it is an anecdotal way to think about this topic. That is why 130# will be such an interesting weight class.



Montgomery is a pinning machine - - a 25-1 record with 24 falls. His only loss has been to Carlone at the Top Gun. A junior high state runner-up (to Micah Jordan) two years ago he was a state quarter-finalist at 103# last year, losing to Heil, and finished 7<sup>th</sup>. This year he wins everywhere except for that Top Gun semi-final. Obviously, you cannot relax with a lead since a pinner only needs his move once. Inchaurregui is strong, powerful and experienced. A three-time state qualifier and two-time placer he has lots of hard earned knowledge to blend with his other talents, but has never made it past the state quarter-finals. Carlone is solid, conservative, and good on top. He was 7<sup>th</sup> last year and this year has been 2<sup>nd</sup> at both Brecksville (Fickel) and the Top Gun (DiJulius). Collica, a state junior high runner-up two years ago, qualified last year and beat Gray handily in the first round. Then a 9-8 loss to Myers (who had also defeated him in junior high state final), put him into a tailspin and he did not place. Great on his feet he cannot get behind like he did with Maticic, but otherwise I see him squeaking out some close wins to win it. Carlone, Collica, and Montgomery all exit the same district (Mentor) so the projected champ should get a very good state draw.

Even with three of the top four contenders at Mentor that does not exhaust the talent pool. Brown, a transfer, was 2<sup>nd</sup> at North Canton losing only to Gray in extended overtime. A former state qualifier at Tallmadge he is a top choice for the last qualifying spot. However, state qualifier Sweeney could also be here - - and I've ranked him at both this weight class and 135#. Also look toward the freshman Tony Dailey who will eventually be a superstar. A junior high state champion last year he placed at both Brecksville and the Top Gun and is still on the steeply rising portion of the learning curve. He has upset potential.

Inchaurregui faces a very crowded field at Lorain. There are four other returning state qualifiers at this district and several other excellent possibilities. Baran qualified at 119# last year, but lost twice on Thursday including a 1-0 decision to Forrider. This year he defeated both Gray and Forrider in overtime to finish 4<sup>th</sup> at Brecksville. He then won at the Dies over Walker. Gray was 5<sup>th</sup> at Columbus last year at 112# including a monumental win over Bright. He was 5<sup>th</sup> at Brecksville and 1<sup>st</sup> at North Canton, but may be a shade-small. Amenta was 6<sup>th</sup> at Brecksville - - losing two overtimes - - and the number of bouts that need extra time is a good indication of how close these competitors are grouped. He went 1-2 at the state level last year at this weight class and won at Oak Harbor. His coaches have done a good job of developing a rugged schedule to prepare for the rigors of this district. Brunner qualified at 125#, but did not win a state bout (or score). This year it will be different, if he can get there. With wins at both Kenston and Willoughby South and a 3<sup>rd</sup> at Solon he has shown tremendous development. There is terrific depth here. Heffernan, certainly a name to conjure with, is quickly getting better and will challenge the top boys while Perri, Grine and Walker are just at the wrong weight class.

There are no such issues at Darby, McDougle is very good winning at Elgin and 3<sup>rd</sup> at Fairfield, but injury problems hampered him at Medina where he was 8<sup>th</sup>. He was a quarter-finalist at States last year, but Newhouse and Gray eliminated him. Forrider, now a sophomore, also made it to States and took an 8<sup>th</sup>. This year he was 4<sup>th</sup> at the Top Gun including a loss to Montgomery and 7<sup>th</sup> at Brecksville where he didn't seem sharp. There is not placement potential below this duo with Boone, Nace, and Ryan

offered up as possibilities. We might see a couple of other contenders from the Dayton area as well.

There are some uncertainties at Fairfield. State placer Selmon has been at both this weight class and 125#. This seems to make more sense, both strategically and weight-wise. He has not had the kind of results I anticipated after placing two years ago. Bauer is also a former state qualifier who remains a consistent placer. He will have to very sharp to place at Columbus with the huge influx of northern talent. D'Urso took the Medina title after Music was unable to wrestle after being injured in his semi-final. A state qualifier last year he unluckily drew Corrill and Inchaurregui in his first two bouts and didn't make it to Friday. Miller might be a surprise at the state level. He won the SWOCA upsetting just about every seeded wrestler and winning the OW as well. It shows that he will be a dangerous opponent for everyone.

### 135 #

#### **PROJECTED CHAMPION: TY DAVIS (LAKOTA WEST)**

##### Top Contenders

2	Shivener (Springboro)	14	Banko (Garfield Hts.)
3	Griffith (Medina)	15	Campbell (Anderson)
4	Ad Sams (Fairfield)	16	Alger (Westerville North)
5	Sweeney (Mentor)	17	McIntosh (Brush)
6	Taylor (Cuyahoga Falls)	18	Kelly (North Olmsted)
7	Good (Brecksville)	19	Dawson (Olentangy Orange)
8	Sponseller (Jackson)	20	McNulty (Mayfield)
9	Riley (Mt. Vernon)	21	Nicholson (Jerome)
10	Barber (St. Edward)	22	Kamczyc (Elyria)
11	Diemert (Riverside)	23	Jamous (Mason)
12	Baughman (Wadsworth)	24	Marshall (Copley)
13	Burrows (McKinley)	25	Meyers (Glen Este)
		26	Ransom (Madison)

In the past weight classes tend to, at least to a great extent, equalize in terms of degree of difficulty. In a process akin to Brownian movement the flow of information caused wrestlers to move up and down in weight to maximize their potential outcome. That still happens today, although the alpha weight system does serve, at least in a small way, as a retarding force. Somehow this has all bypassed this weight class that currently seems far less strenuous than what we normally see in Division I. Alger has already decided, apparently, to compete here, and I suspect Sweeney is not far behind. Look for others to ponder this opportunity.

The top two contenders, and in my mind the only two that could win this weight class, both come from the Southwest district although Shivener could compete at Darby. Two years ago Davis won three close state bouts at 130# before losing to Fayette in the finals. Only a sophomore and great on his feet he looked like a future state champion. Last year at this weight class he ripped through his district no opponent coming even

close and then won his first state bout 15-0. Then the sophomore Martin staggered him in the quarterfinals and Davis lost twice more to finish 8<sup>th</sup>. This year he crushed the opposition in winning the SWOCA and was 3<sup>rd</sup> at Brecksville – losing to Stieber (who did those seedings, Nick) by a surprising 10-0 score. There is no question in my mind that he is one of our most talented middleweights.

Shivener was part of that fabulous 2007 class at the junior high states winning at 114# ahead of DeHart, Witt, Carlone, and, yes, Davis. He was 8<sup>th</sup> two years ago and, like Davis, ripped through his district last year. And, again, like Davis, suffered a quarterfinal upset after a first-round blowout. However, he scored big points in beating Amenta, Carlone, and a pair of Hammers to finish 3<sup>rd</sup>. Springboro does not wrestle the most difficult of schedules, but Shivener, at 140#, was 3<sup>rd</sup> at Medina losing only to Dailey.

I'm never sure of the thought process coaches use in selecting a district in the southwest - - and, frankly, how is that even fair when the huge bottleneck at 119# at Mentor is mandated - - but Shivener would be well served to stay at Fairfield. In that regard he and Davis would be separated at the state level whereas winning the district at Darby would still give the pairings orcs a one-third chance of having them in the same half-bracket at States.

In that case Fairfield would be the strongest district. The younger Sams, a state qualifier as a freshman, would be third best here. He was 1<sup>st</sup> at Kenston defeating Kazimer in the finals and 2<sup>nd</sup> at the SWOCA losing to Davis, 10-1. He certainly looked tough on top at Kenston. Campbell was a state alternate last year losing his go-to-state bout to the elder Sams, 7-5. He was 5<sup>th</sup> at the SWOCA (a 3-0 lose to Adam) and this talented junior is a solid choice for the fourth slot. Jamous and Meyers are the back-ups with a chance to move up - - particularly if Shivener goes to Darby.

Griffith was in that very tough 112 pound weight class last year and finished 8<sup>th</sup> beating both Collica and Daniels. He was 2<sup>nd</sup> at Medina collecting four consecutive pins before falling in the finals to county rival Mirman, 13-6 - - a bout where Mirman was the far more physical of the two boys. He was 3<sup>rd</sup> at the Top Gun beating Sweeney and Caserta, but losing badly to Skonieczny. He should win this weight class at Lorain. State qualifier Good is a solid performer who was 2<sup>nd</sup> (to Stieber) at Brecksville riding a good draw all the way to the finals. He was 4<sup>th</sup> at the Dies, however, losing to Taylor who he'll likely see again at this district. Taylor won two district bouts last year and lost only to Benedict at the Dies. If Barber (or Heffernan) is at this weight they will be a factor. Both have missed much of the year, but are very good. Kelly, Baughman, and the surprising Kamczyc could also play a role here. The last named was a completely unexpected semi-finalist at Brecksville.

Surprisingly, I am hard-pressed to find serious contenders at Mentor. That is why I expect to see state qualifier Sweeney at this weight class. A number of the 135's at this district were at North Canton where Sponseller finished ahead of all of them in gaining the second place medal. A sectional champ last year he was 2-2 at districts. Burrows, McIntosh, and Marshall are all possibilities, but the younger McNulty is starting to gain traction. However Diemert, just down from 140# might be third-best here after Sweeney

and Sponseller. He was an impressive 2<sup>nd</sup> at Solon while Banko, 2<sup>nd</sup> at Kenston is directly behind him. Banko could be a real factor after dropping from 140# and seizing this opportunity.

Riley is the top guy at Darby and has good placement possibilities. He was 8<sup>th</sup> last year after just qualifying in fourth place after a very tough semi-final loss. He was 4<sup>th</sup> at the SWOCA losing to Davis, but has won at tournaments in Columbus - - especially at Mt. Vernon. The heavier McDougale is second best and won at the Panther Invitational and was 2<sup>nd</sup> at Elgin. Alger should do well at this weight class with Nicholson and Dawson a pinner, close behind.

### 140 #

#### **PROJECTED CHAMPION: ZACH DAILEY (MASSILLON PERRY)**

##### Top Contenders

2	Au. Sams (Fairfield)	15	Gill (Davidson)
3	McIntyre (Mason)	16	Basinski (Amherst Steele)
4	Claxton (Brush)	17	Hauber (Central Crossing)
5	Luft (Teays Valley)	18	Blumenthal (Twinsburg)
6	Ball (Wadsworth)	19	Horner (Mt. Vernon)
7	Hammer (Medina)	20	Pietropinto (Mayfield)
8	Ramsey (Lakewood)	21	Tomayko/Nedolast (Copley)
9	Kohler (Clay)	22	Boyd (Marysville)
10	Willis (Beavercreek)	23	Brokaw (Newark)
11	Howes (Pickerington North)	24	Iverson (Madison)
12	Meyer (Moeller)	25	Davis (Middletown)
13	Johnson (Fremont Ross)	26	Gupko (Nordonia)
14	Thoman (Springboro)	27	Allen (Lakota West)
		28	Rice (Barberton)

One of the real issues for successful wrestlers is bouncing back from a difficult tournament loss. We saw that at 135# where former state runner-up Ty Davis lost last year in the quarterfinals and didn't place. The same thing happened here with Zach Dailey. A junior high state champion he was a state semi-finalist as a freshman before losing to the eventual champ Fayette and ending up 4<sup>th</sup>. Then last year after another sensational season he was upset in the state quarterfinals and failed to place. This year he was 5<sup>th</sup> at the Ironman and an impressive 1<sup>st</sup> at Medina beating Shivener, McIntyre, and majoring Warner. He was 3<sup>rd</sup> at the Top Gun losing a titanic struggle with Brascetta, 3-2. At his best he is a clear step ahead of anyone else here.

Dailey emerges from the weakest district. The major impediment is likely to be Claxton who was 6<sup>th</sup> last year after reaching the semi-finals. This year he was 1<sup>st</sup> at Riverside and 2<sup>nd</sup> at North Canton losing a one-pointer to Fox. The rest of this district does not have a lot of entrants with long resumes - - especially with Diemert and Banko dropping to 135#. The redheaded Blumenthal has been a consistent placer, but has yet to be in the top four in any of them. Pietropinto had a big win over Gill at the Ohio Duals while

Iverson has some recent successes and has just dropped to 140#. A longshot might be Rice who was 2<sup>nd</sup> at the Dies.

The story is much different at Lorain. Hammer was terrific at last year's state meet reaching the semi-finals before losing a tiebreaker decision to Egnor and finishing 4<sup>th</sup>. It has not been quite so smooth this year. He lost a 9-0 decision to Howes in the first round at Medina and then won five consolation bouts before losing to Shivener and getting pinned by McIntyre to finish 6<sup>th</sup>. At the Top Gun he lost to Dobben and then to Monebrake to grab a 7<sup>th</sup>. Hmm. These are not the results one would expect and you might surmise that some nagging injury is impeding effectiveness. Ball was also a state semi-finalist, but dropped to 6<sup>th</sup> with three losses. This year he was 4<sup>th</sup> at North Canton and Brecksville losing the close bouts he usually wins. At Brecksville, for example, he lost a 2-1 overtime bout to Romanchik and a 1-0 contest to Luft. He needs to find a better balance between offense and defense so that he avoids the attrition continually close bouts inflict. He has the talent to score a little more heavily. State qualifier Ramsey also returns and he was 1<sup>st</sup> at Avon Lake and Columbia Station. Kohler fits in here somewhere after missing qualification by one bout last year. He took the title at Solon, but struggled at Mentor losing to Basinski who he could well meet at this district again. Johnson is another candidate with Basinski - - the latter finishing 5<sup>th</sup> at Brecksville after a 2<sup>nd</sup> at Avon Lake to Ramsey and the former winning at Tiffin. Zepp and Tomayko are other possibilities. However, the "sleeper" here might be Gupko who was 3<sup>rd</sup> at Solon and lost 5-4 to Claxton at North Canton.

I don't think any of the qualifiers from Darby are likely to upset Dailey, but they should grab a couple placements. Luft was a state alternate last year losing, 5-4, to Gill in his go-to-state bout, but won't happen again. He was first at Bradley and Pickerington and finished a strong 3<sup>rd</sup> at Brecksville after an early overtime loss to Blumenthal. Some of his victims included Ball, Basinski and Hook. Howes was a sectional champ, but an overtime district quarterfinal loss led to a failure to qualify. He was 5<sup>th</sup> at Solon and 2<sup>nd</sup> at Pickerington and had the big win over Ball. Gill was a state qualifier last year and went 1-2 losing a one-point bout to Riegle to place. He failed to place at Brecksville losing close bouts to Basinski and Blumenthal. His track record suggests he'll be sharp in February. Hauber, Horner, and Brokaw should compete for the last state berth with Hauber having had a more successful year, Horner, however had two district wins last season. Boyd who beat Kohler at Brecksville is a darkhorse contender.

It's a strong grouping at Fairfield led by two excellent wrestlers. Sams, a senior, was a state semi-finalist last year before losing a close bout to eventual champion Gordon, and eventually finished 5<sup>th</sup>. This year he won at Kenston and Fairfield, but dropped a 3-2 decision to McIntyre at the SWOCA finals. A consistent and solid performer he has finalist possibilities. McIntyre qualified at 145# last year, but has come down a weight class. At Medina he gave Dailey his closest bout, losing 6-4, and ended up 5<sup>th</sup>. Meyer was a state junior high champ who is beginning to come into his own. He was 2<sup>nd</sup> at the CIT losing only to Romanchik. Willis, a state qualifier at Carroll has transferred to Beaver creek, but has missed some time. He went 1-2 at last year's States, but will have to hold off Davis, Thoman, and Allen to return. Thoman who placed at 135# will switch places with Shivener, but will do well even up a weight class.

**145#**

**PROJECTED CHAMPION; MATT VANCUREN (ST. EDWARD)**

Top Contenders

2	Range (Brush)	14	Ashton (Mentor)
3	Wenger (Wadsworth)	15	Globke (Middletown)
4	Lemon (Massillon Perry)	16	Corder (Pickerington North)
5	DeLande (Davidson)	17	Giffin (Harrison)
6	Garrison (Copley)	18	Montgomery (Madison)
7	Snyder (Liberty)	19	Magoteaux (Piqua)
8	Wright (Elyria)	20	Adkins (Euclid)
9	Sizemore (Moeller)	21	Hardy (Central Crossing)
10	Toprani (Olentangy Orange)	22	Denman (Riverside)
11	Mescher (Mason)	23	Spangler (Sidney)
12	Newton (Perrysburg)	24	Williams (Mt. Healthy)
13	Wilder (Princeton)	25	Skelding (Whitmer)
		26	Sandman (Elder)

It took me about three minutes at the 145# final at Medina to realize that Van Curen was probably the best takedown artist at this weight class. However, it was the next three minutes that concerned me as he gave away a 6-2 advantage and barely beat the excellent Stitzlein. Only a junior VanCuren has an interesting history. He was a state qualifier as a freshman but lost both his bouts in Columbus. He had an excellent regular season as a sophomore losing a tight 6-4 district final to the stubborn Ball. At states he again failed to get past Thursday losing in overtime to Marsico and by fall to Ruffing - - both of whom, by the way, placed. This year he won at Medina and was perfect at the Ohio Duals defeating Lemon in the finals. I think he can win it if he learns to close out his "won" bouts and if he can win that first round state pairing and exorcise some old demons.

One of his biggest threats will exit that same Lorain district putting him in the opposite half-bracket at States. Wenger qualified at 152# last year reaching the quarterfinals before Habat and Swan sent him to the sidelines. He had low places at the Ironman and Brecksville and earned a 3<sup>rd</sup> at North Canton after a narrow semi-final loss. He was battling injuries all year, but once healthy he is difficult to score against. Garrison is also a returning qualifier capturing a district 3<sup>rd</sup> after losing in the semis to VanCuren, 12-6, he went 1-2 losing a one-point placement bout. He was 4<sup>th</sup> at the MIT -losing in the first round - - and then winning endless consolation bouts, and was 1<sup>st</sup> at the Dies. Wright, 7<sup>th</sup> at Brecksville, will be a player as will, possibly Skelding or Dominique. The one to watch, though, is the freshman Newton, a junior high state runner-up last year. Most recently he was 3<sup>rd</sup> at Perrysburg.

Another major threat to VanCuren is the powerful Devon Range - - trying to join his ever smiling Dad as father and son state champions, and break the Jordan monopoly. He was 5<sup>th</sup> last year losing a relatively close 7-5 decision to eventual champ Languis. This year he was 1<sup>st</sup> at Riverside and 3<sup>rd</sup> at North Canton losing a 1-0 decision to Bloniak.

Both of these were at 152#. Rather short, even at 145#, he is quick and very strong. He'll lead the Mentor district with state qualifier Lemon only a half-step behind. He was 8<sup>th</sup> last year and was 3<sup>rd</sup> at Medina (over Garrison) and 2<sup>nd</sup> at the Top Gun - - the only wrestler to go the distance with Bo Jordan. After this duo it's a little sketchy here with, maybe, Ashton, 6<sup>th</sup> at the Top Gun, as next best. Montgomery, 2<sup>nd</sup> at North Coast and 8<sup>th</sup> at the Top Gun is also a possibility with Denman and Iverson as other thoughts.

Two state qualifiers may have also distanced themselves from the rest of the field at Darby. Neither won a state bout last year, but that is unlikely to be replicated this time around. DeLande was 4<sup>th</sup> at Brecksville losing twice to state third placer Fee. He looks to be a very good athlete. Snyder was most recently 2<sup>nd</sup> at Elgin after failing to place at Brecksville - - when DeLande beat him 5-0 in the consolations. Toprani was 5<sup>th</sup> at North Canton and 8<sup>th</sup> at Brecksville losing in consolations to DeLande, 4-2. I liked what I saw of Corder - - 3<sup>rd</sup> at both Solon and Pickerington - - while Hardy and Spangler have some distance to make up.

There are no superstars at Fairfield - - at least not yet. However, the freshman Dakota Sizemore may well be on such a path. A junior high state champion he was 3<sup>rd</sup> at the SWOCA losing only to Johnny Carpenter by two points. Wright pinned him at the Ironman, but I wonder if he'll blossom early. Mescher, 2<sup>nd</sup> at the SWOCA and 5<sup>th</sup> at Medina, is a good qualification choice here, but it will be a crowded field. Wilder who was 4<sup>th</sup> at the SWOCA, but 8<sup>th</sup> at the GMVWA (at 152#) should be a factor while Globke and Giffin are both good and won two district bouts last year. Globke was 2<sup>nd</sup> at Fairfield while Giffin was 8<sup>th</sup> at Medina and both placed at the SWOCA. Sandman, a great name for a wrestler, and Magoteaux, another two-win district qualifier, should also be handled with care. Watch out for Williams - - just down from 152# - - who could create that one big upset.

## 152 #

### **PROJECTED CHAMPION: MARK MARTIN (ST. EDWARD)**

#### Top Contenders

- |    |                               |    |                              |
|----|-------------------------------|----|------------------------------|
| 2  | Hammer (Medina)               | 14 | Griffith (Ashland)           |
| 3  | Bryant (Piqua)                | 15 | Catanzarite (Wooster)        |
| 4  | McMahon (Stow)                | 16 | Blum (Moeller)               |
| 5  | Corba (Beavercreek)           | 17 | Kowaleski (Grove City)       |
| 6  | Robertson (Maple Hts.)        | 18 | Fenton (Findlay)             |
| 7  | Hardtke (Elder)               | 19 | Barr (Brecksville)           |
| 8  | Petrime (Massillon Perry)     | 20 | Miller (Marysville)          |
| 9  | Thomas (Liberty)              | 21 | Stroschein (Gahanna-Lincoln) |
| 10 | Graziani (Boardman)           | 22 | Hysell (Central Crossing)    |
| 11 | Hendershot (Willoughby South) | 23 | Whitcomb-Dixon (Sycamore)    |
| 12 | E. Walden (Mason)             | 24 | Price (Elyria)               |
| 13 | Mickley (Davidson)            | 25 | Palma (Sandusky)             |
|    |                               | 26 | Dillinger (Western Brown)    |

In the past you could be relatively sure that the very best wrestler at most weight classes was competing in Division I. We are now in a cycle where that is no longer true. It seems likely that a dual meet between the best Division I team that could be assembled would easily lose to a combined Division II and III squad. The one state championship dream with a 48-man bracket held over three days has many attractive features. For example at this weight class my choice Martin, as good as he is, would be an unlikely winner in a one bracket tournament because of the individual brilliance we see in the other two classifications.

Martin was one of the principal reasons St. Edward nearly maintained its streak of consecutive titles last year. Wrestling brilliantly he upset Davis in the quarter-finals and reached the state championship bout against Gordon. In a bout that had a full measure of excitement and drama. Martin had chances to the very end. This year he was 5<sup>th</sup> at the Ironman, losing to Stephens, and 3<sup>rd</sup> at Medina falling to Miller. This is a big weight jump for him, but he has worked relatively hard to alleviate any size issues. This is not a particular strong weight class, but it should provide sufficient challenges for all within it.

One of the top challengers will exit Lorain with Martin. Hammer was 7<sup>th</sup> last year at this weight class including wins over both Abounader and Swan. This year he was 4<sup>th</sup> at Medina losing to Martin, 8-4, and 2<sup>nd</sup> at the Top Gun winning Bryant and Poyser, but losing 12-3 to Stephens. There is a significant fall off after this twosome with the last two qualifying spots almost literally available for the asking. Griffith, 2<sup>nd</sup> at Marion Harding and 3<sup>rd</sup> at the Gorman is one possibility while Fenton and Barr, 2<sup>nd</sup> at the Dies and 7<sup>th</sup> at Brecksville, are two others. Expect to see names coming out of this district that will be unfamiliar to most fans.

One of the districts with real depth is at Fairfield. Bryant was 5<sup>th</sup> at this weight class last year and has spent most of his time at 160# this season. He was 2<sup>nd</sup> at North Canton and 3<sup>rd</sup> at the Top Gun (this time at 152#) losing only a one-point decision to Hammer. He has finalist potential. Corba and Hardtke are long-time opponents who are no more than a point or two apart. They were finalists at the SWOCA with Corba winning while Hardtke went on to finish 2<sup>nd</sup> at the CIT and 3<sup>rd</sup> at Brecksville. Walden was 3<sup>rd</sup> at the SWOCA while state alternate Blum was 5<sup>th</sup> and followed it up with a 4<sup>th</sup> at the CIT. Whitcomb-Dixon and perhaps, Dillinger are also solid contenders.

It's a crowded group at Lorain as well. McMahon wrestled for Cuyahoga Falls last year, but some kind of strange re-districting pushed him over to Stow. He had a shaky district, but should qualify this time. He pinned Robertson to win at Hudson. Robertson, only a sophomore, possesses exceptional talent. He was 2<sup>nd</sup> at Hudson and 1<sup>st</sup> at Franklin Hts., but has not wrestled the usually tough Maple Hts. schedule. Petrime is down a weight after qualifying at 160# last year. He was 5<sup>th</sup> at the Top Gun losing to Bryant (15-2) and Hetterscheidt, and was 6<sup>th</sup> at Medina losing by 10 to Martin and getting pinned by Bloniak. I would not normally rate him this high based on these results, but his past track record is good. Hendershot, winner at Solon and Willoughby South, and Graziani, 1<sup>st</sup> at Kenston, could both qualify - - especially if Petrime remains out of form. Catazarite and Price are, perhaps, a bit behind this top quintet.



The Darby district looks for some stability. Thomas has been the top performer so far - winning at Liberty and finishing a solid 4<sup>th</sup> at Brecksville. Mickley has been up and down. He was soundly beaten by Price in the first round at Brecksville (an anomaly?) won three consolation bouts and succumbed to Thomas. I struggled with his ranking. Kowaleski and Hysell have been consistent finalists in smaller tournaments and we'll shortly see how that translates to the district competition. Miller and Stroschein appear towards the bottom of this list, but that margin is clearly not insurmountable.

### 160#

#### **PROJECTED CHAMPION: DOMENIC ABOUNADER (ST. EDWARD)**

##### Top Contenders

- |    |                             |    |                             |
|----|-----------------------------|----|-----------------------------|
| 2  | Roddy (Brecksville)         | 15 | Forro (Mentor)              |
| 3  | Brandenburg (Wadsworth)     | 16 | Darby (Midpark)             |
| 4  | Lay (Loveland)              | 17 | Arrendale (Massillon Perry) |
| 5  | Pickett (Central Crossing)  | 18 | Fitzpatrick (Oakhills)      |
| 6  | Swan (Strongsville)         | 19 | Roper (Euclid)              |
| 7  | Teis (North Canton)         | 20 | Tricker (Howland)           |
| 8  | Kimbrell (Fairmont)         | 21 | Goudy (Wayne)               |
| 9  | Brown (Westerville Central) | 22 | Mayberry (Piqua)            |
| 10 | Bradberry (Lakota West)     | 23 | Smith (Bedford)             |
| 11 | A. Walden (Mason)           | 24 | Mundell (North Ridgeville)  |
| 12 | Zayed (North Olmsted)       | 25 | Hall (Middletown)           |
| 13 | Fuhr ((Elder)               | 26 | Haumesser (Normandy)        |
| 14 | Stuckart (Westlake)         | 27 | Kaczkowski (Liberty)        |
|    |                             | 28 | Coles (Grove City)          |

This is an extremely unbalanced weight class from the district perspective with most of the experience and potential at Lorain. Of the five returning Division I state qualifiers four are from that district and they are backed up by another quartet, all of whom have district success. Interestingly, all eight are from the two northeastern sectionals making both of those very difficult competitions. It highlights a real imbalance that points to a continuing de-emphasis in the Toledo area among the larger schools. Last year 45 of the 56 state qualifiers were from the Northeast, suggesting the need for more emphasis in the west.

Abounader had a very eventful freshman year. Coming off a junior high state title he was able to reach the varsity level about mid-year. He had a fabulous district run outscoring his four opponents 46-3, and it was looking like the Comar, Habat, Harger trio of top contenders was about to get a new member. After a 10-1 first round win Abounader lost by four to the eventual champ Comar and then, astoundingly, was pinned by Hammer, who he had beaten 13-2 the weekend before. This year Abounader was late because of St. Edward's football title run, but he did capture the Medina, beating the Ironman runner-up Witt, 6-4.

As I mentioned, this district is loaded. Roddy, 5<sup>th</sup> last year, was 3<sup>rd</sup> at Brecksville, losing only to the excellent Walters in overtime and 1<sup>st</sup> at the Dies over Lamancusa. Both Swan and Brandenburg – state placers last year – have missed most of the season because of injuries. Normally, with experienced wrestlers, I see that as a possible plus since they enter the post-season fresh and healthy. But these have been long layoffs so it clouds very slightly their projection. At any rate, Brandenburg was a critical 5<sup>th</sup> last year, losing only to Marsh and Mason and was a critical cog in the team title. Swan was 8<sup>th</sup> at 152#, but did win at Solon over the slow starting Walters. Darby, Zayed, and Mundell all won at least two district bouts last year, and Zayed has had a great year, winning at Kenston and Willoughby South, but unfortunately he might be at the wrong district.

The district at Mentor is not nearly so blessed with talent. Teis won the Top Gun, pinning Forro for the title. These look to be the marginally best wrestlers at this location with Forro 3<sup>rd</sup> at Solon and Teis 4<sup>th</sup> at North Canton. Both boys just missed qualification last year, finishing as a state alternate, with Teis losing a tough 3-1 go to state bout. Arrendale was at 130# last year, but has had to bulk up to make the team. He is not going to be the biggest 160-pounder, but he does have good skills. He was 4<sup>th</sup> at Medina. Tricker, like Forro, has moved down a weight class and will match up with folks like Roper and Haumesser, who have past district success. Smith and Jones (if here), while lending an air of anonymity to the bracket, are both very good and could qualify here.

It's a compact group at Fairfield and one difficult to decipher. Kimbrell, champion at Fairmont, was 5<sup>th</sup> at Brecksville defeating Bradberry, the SWOCA champ, 11-2. Bradberry was 2<sup>nd</sup> at Olentangy and beat Fitzpatrick at the SWOCA. Also here is state qualifier Walden who went 1-2 in Columbus and was 4<sup>th</sup> at the SWOCA and 5<sup>th</sup> at Medina. There are a lot of credentials here, but they don't show much consistency. Factor in Hall who beat Bryant, won at Edgewood and Franklin, but was only 5<sup>th</sup> at the SWOCA, and the need for more data looks critical. Also here, after time at 171#, is the excellent Fuhr who was 2<sup>nd</sup> at the SWOCA at 171#. The real mystery is the final weight class for the freshman Gunner Lay. A two-time junior high state champ he has been wrestling at 189# all year, but I was told in no uncertain terms we would see him at this weight class. If he is here and the weight makes sense and is not a problem, he can place at 160#. He was 3<sup>rd</sup> at the SWOCA and 1<sup>st</sup> at Fairfield. at 189 pounds. He is truly a talent and at this weight with the caveats given above, he will be a force to be reckoned with. Keep in mind he won his last junior high state title at 176#, but in all likelihood was cutting little if any weight.

Things are much calmer at Darby. Pickett, a D-3 state qualifier and placer for Westfall last year, has made the move to Central Crossing. He was 1<sup>st</sup> at Mt. Vernon and 3<sup>rd</sup> at North Canton so the transition seems to have been seamless. Brown, a state alternate last year, was 2<sup>nd</sup> at West Jefferson and 3<sup>rd</sup> at the Top Gun. He'll challenge Pickett for the top spot. Goudy, Coles and Mayberry are my top choices to battle for the last two spots with Kaczkowski in reserve. Mayberry was 6<sup>th</sup> at the Top Gun after Bryant moved down. Low places are probably the best this qualifying group can hope for.

**171#**

**PROJECTED CHAMPION: IAN KORB (ELDER)**

Top Contenders

2	Coleman (Mayfield)	14	O'Hara (Chardon)
3	Walker (Springboro)	15	Aziz (Midpark)
4	Davis (St. Edward)	16	Abdulhabib (Wadsworth)
5	Baker (Twinsburg)	17	Boff (Perrysburg)
6	Willett (Brecksville)	18	Louive (Massillon)
7	Cloyne (Clay)	19	Hughes (Grove City)
8	Newburg (Northmont)	20	Grayson (Springfield)
9	Estes (Lakota West)	21	Ellis (Whitmer)
10	Knabe (Loveland)	22	Jones (Brush)
11	Bowens (Darby)	23	Suess (Mason)
12	Dowdley (Glenville)	24	Jameson (Fitch)
13	Montgomery (Mt. Vernon)	25	Moore (Edgewood)

Last year seniors dominated the weight classes between 140# and 160#. In those four classes seniors swept the top four places dominating the competition in an almost unprecedented manner. In the normal type of progression we would be seeing some top placers at those weight classes moving up to challenge those who have remained at 171#. Instead, we have a relatively static condition that favors the incumbents from last year.

The best of this group is Ian Korb, who was 3<sup>rd</sup> last year, losing only to Wheeler in the semi-finals, and 8<sup>th</sup> the year before. He has been campaigning with great success at 189#, defeating Gresham in two very close bouts to win at both Brecksville and the SWOCA. When I watched him last year the term that came to mind was "workmanlike," but I think he has moved beyond that. Now he is more confident, scoring more heavily, and looking to dominate. An exceptional student – he's going to Penn – he is augmenting analysis with aggressiveness.

Winning this title won't be easy even with a slightly diminished field. There are four or five serious contenders and two will exit at Mentor. Coleman is looking to become a four-time state placer – a relatively rare occurrence for upper weight wrestlers. He has finished 5<sup>th</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup>, and 6<sup>th</sup> – twice losing to the eventual champ in the semi-finals. He really has paid his dues and you'd like to see him have the opportunity to wrestle on Saturday night. This year he was 2<sup>nd</sup> at Brecksville to Chris Phillips and 5<sup>th</sup> at the Top Gun, losing in the semi-finals (when else) to O'Neill. Baker qualified last year as a sophomore going 1-2, losing both times to seniors. This year he took the title at Solon and was 3<sup>rd</sup> at Brecksville, losing 5-3 to Chris Phillips in the semi-finals. He was 2<sup>nd</sup> at the Dies and has crafted a fine record. Dowdley was a rare Cleveland Senate state qualifier, and he has great potential. He lost to two-time state champ Josh Demas 6-3, in the first round, but wrestled well. I saw him at Kenston where he placed 3<sup>rd</sup> at 189#, and he should be a very big 171-pounder. Louive, 4<sup>th</sup> at the Gorman and champion at

the WIT, heads a rather sparse group looking to get the fourth spot. O'Hara, 2<sup>nd</sup> at Kenston and 3<sup>rd</sup> at Solon, is also a contender, with Jameson, an overtime loser to Coleman, a possibility. I suspect Jones, who dropped to 160# recently, may review the competition and think about this option again.

Korb will face some intriguing match-ups in the Southwest District. State qualifier Walker, at 189# much of the year, will be an enormous factor at this weight class. Only a junior, he is already a two time state qualifier though without a victory there – a streak that will end this year. Powerfully built, he was 4<sup>th</sup> at Medina, losing close bouts to Utley and Wheeler, and could give Korb problems. Newburg was a district qualifier last year, winning one bout as a sophomore while posting an excellent 32-11 record. Suddenly catching fire at the GMVWA, he defeats former state champion Ryan and then Brandt to take the title. I think Korb, however, will beat him on his feet. SWOCA champion Estes is next best and he was solid at Brecksville, losing to people like Coleman and Baker. Knabe has been a consistent placer, winning at Fairfield, finishing 3<sup>rd</sup> at the SWOCA and 7<sup>th</sup> at Brecksville. That's five solid candidates, with Grayson, champion at Troy, and Moore, 1<sup>st</sup> at Edgewood, also in the picture.

There are also some potential placers at Lorain. Davis was the starting 152-pounder for St. Edward most of last year, but was eventually overtaken by Abounader, my choice this year at 160#. This year he started the season at 160# and placed at the Ironman, but moved here upon Abounader's return. He was 3<sup>rd</sup> at Medina, losing only to Cramer – in fact, the only wrestler Cramer did not pin – and has won all three bouts in Illinois and lost only to Coleman at the Ohio Duals. Todd Haverdill is a magician with big men as virtually every year one of his protégés makes waves at Columbus. Think about it – Linden (2<sup>nd</sup>), Vaughn (2<sup>nd</sup>), Lanigan (2<sup>nd</sup>), Lang (1<sup>st</sup>), Johnson (1<sup>st</sup>), Leahy (3<sup>rd</sup>), Nemunatis (4<sup>th</sup>) – all just the past 4 years and most of them hardly household names. This year it's Willett (and Roddy) and both should place. Willett, 3<sup>rd</sup> at the Dies and 5<sup>th</sup> at Brecksville (all losses to non-Division I foes). Cloyne is the only returning state qualifier (it was not a good trip), and has been very solid. He was 2<sup>nd</sup> at Solon and Perrysburg and 6<sup>th</sup> at the Ironman. The last berth is up for grabs. Boff had two district wins last year, while Aziz was 1<sup>st</sup> at North Coast and 3<sup>rd</sup> at North Canton. I look for Abdulhabib to also contend since John Gramuglia also has a great touch with upper weight wrestlers.

While the cupboard is not bare at Darby, it cannot be said to be well stocked. Bowens, 5<sup>th</sup> at the Medina, looks to be the number one guy. A state qualifier last year, he should be the Central District's best hope for placement. Montgomery, who won two district bouts last year, was 4<sup>th</sup> at the SWOCA and he, too, should qualify. Another possibility is the senior, Hughes, who had district experience last year. I think we may see a few Dayton area contenders migrate in this direction looking for new opportunities.

**189 #**

**PROJECTED CHAMPION: SAM WHEELER (COPLEY)**

Top Contenders

2	Suvak (St. Edward)	15	Carman (Centerville)
3	Hyland (Elder)	16	Gigliotti (Medina)
4	Curtis (Brunswick)	17	Mees (North Ridgeville)
5	Tayse (Massillon Perry)	18	Ferrell (Green)
6	Trautwein (Fremont Ross)	19	Ramirez (Hamilton)
7	Thornberry (Moeller)	20	Fry (Mt. Vernon)
8	Brown (Gahanna Lincoln)	21	Owens (Wadsworth)
9	Yurko (Nordonia)	22	Gutapfel (Harrison)
10	Wilson (Lake)	23	Rowe (Barberton)
11	Leidecker (Teays Valley)	24	Schoen (Toledo St. John)
12	Winkler (Northmont)	25	Archacki (Normandy)
13	Palmisano (Willoughby South)	26	Archer (Liberty)
14	Conner (Fairmont)	27	Miller (Marysville)
		28	Bridges (Anthony Wayne)

Last March, after the state tournament, I would have bet the mortgage that Sam Wheeler would've been one of my safest choices in 2011. He won his first 53 bouts last year at 171# only to be out-maneuvered by two-time state placer Josh Demas in the state finals. Given the blessings of quickness and strength, you had to figure a year's improvement would make him untouchable. That's the way Oklahoma saw it too, giving him a full ride this past autumn. However, now I'm seeing a few small chinks in the armor as we move to 189#. He was 7<sup>th</sup> at the Ironman, losing twice to wrestlers who don't have a full ride to Oklahoma. He was 3<sup>rd</sup> at Medina, losing to Utley, but beating Schaefer and Walker in the consolations. He did win handily at the Dies and it should be noted that he has not lost to a Division I foe. I expect to see the 11<sup>th</sup> grade version (with enhancements) of Wheeler at States.

Wheeler will have tremendous competition at Lorain with three of my top four choices competing at this locale. Suvak has had a fabulous year. He has beaten Hyland, Tayse, and Schaefer, while finishing 2<sup>nd</sup> at the Medina and going undefeated at the Ohio Duals. He was a state alternate last year, losing his go-to-state bout to Randolph. That had a major impact on the state team results a week before the state meet even began. Curtis was a state quarter-finalist last year at 215# and has moved down this year. He was 1<sup>st</sup> at Scioto and Hudson, and was 3<sup>rd</sup> at the Dies. State qualifier Trautwein was also a state quarter-finalist, but failed to place after losses to eventual champ Nick Miller and Hyland. He was 1<sup>st</sup> at Tiffin and 2<sup>nd</sup> at Oak Harbor, losing to the suddenly fierce Cramer. That is a high-powered quartet, but I also like North Canton champ Yurko, who would easily qualify out of any other district, but will have to work very hard to do so here. Gigliotti, a Medina placer, and Schoen are both very good, with Mees and Bridges also in play. There will be excellent match-ups from the very first round.

None of the other districts are nearly as deep. Should Wheeler falter, the powerful Hyland could take the title. He was a first round state loser last year, but battled back with four consolation wins (had he made it five he could have been seeded away from Wheeler) and finished 4<sup>th</sup>. This year he was 1<sup>st</sup> at the SWOCA and 5<sup>th</sup> at Brecksville at 215# and was 2<sup>nd</sup> at the CIT at this weight class to Schafer. Thornberry, a two-time junior high state champion, is part of that young and rapidly improving Moeller squad. He was 3<sup>rd</sup> at the CIT, losing in overtime to Hyland and 4<sup>th</sup> at the SWOCA, losing to Gresham and Lay. It'll be tough keeping him off the top step of the podium in the next couple of years. Conner, 1<sup>st</sup> at the Firebird, and 7<sup>th</sup> at Brecksville, is another young star in the making. He pinned Lay, for example, at the Brecksville. Add in Powell, Ramirez, and Gutapfel and it will be a very representative quartet of qualifiers emerging from Fairfield.

Another two-time junior high state champion is the current Massillon Perry sophomore, JoJo Tayse. Last year he qualified out of Mentor as the district champion, but quickly lost twice on Thursday and was eliminated. Still, it was clear that he is a star in the making. This year he was 3<sup>rd</sup> at the Top Gun, losing only to Huston Evans by a 6-4 decision. He was 6<sup>th</sup> at the vicious 189# weight class at Medina, losing 5-3 to Suvak in the semi-finals. Wilson was a state quarter-finalist at Columbus, but failed to place. He was 3<sup>rd</sup> at North Canton, losing narrowly to Yurko and 7<sup>th</sup> at Medina. The last two slots are still not spoken for. Palmisano, the winner at Kenston, and, maybe, Rowe or Ferrell, are possible choices along with Owens another Wadsworth big man who is likely to make a strong post-season push.

There are two returning Central District state qualifiers at Darby, each of whom went 1-2 in Columbus. Brown has been a solid placer doing so in four tourneys this year, but has yet to win one, getting second place at Fairfield and Pickerington. Leidecker, who may end up at 171#, won at Bradley and placed at three other venues. I somehow expect Winkler here from the Dayton area and he, too, qualified at 171#, but caught a tough draw, losing to Wheeler and Baker. I also like the powerful Carman, 3<sup>rd</sup> at Fairfield and Fry, yet another wrestler who specializes in low-to-middle placements. Add to this package Miller and Archer and the results could be surprising.

**215 #**

**PROJECTED CHAMPION: NICK TAVANELLO (WADSWORTH)**

Top Contenders

2	Wise (Massillon Perry)	15	King. (Scioto)
3	Walz (St. Edward)	16	Gaghen (Clay)
4	Fruehauf (Moeller)	17	Knoch (Davidson)
5	Carter (Perrysburg)	18	Johnson (Elder)
6	Jackson (Springboro)	19	Willis (Lorain)
7	Gott (Elyria)	20	Andriot (Oak Hills)
8	Isham (Harrison)	21	Hemlick (Lake)
9	Patrick (Maple Hts.)	22	Ransom (Madison)
10	Williams (Rhodes)	23	Sanders (St. Charles)
11	Odierno (New Albany)	24	Cuenot (Glen Oak)
12	Howard (Brush)	25	Neu (Midpark)
13	Tschantz (Barberton)	26	Hunter (Centerville)
14	Venable (Hamilton)		

I have been televising wrestling since 1968 and have had the privilege of announcing any number of great bouts. Still, one that will always stand out was the last 60 seconds of the 215# final last year between Tavanello and Rose. The pressure and excitement with both an individual and team championship on the line made for compelling drama. Both boys were sensational and the final takedown deep in the third period was a fitting conclusion to one of the great state tournaments.

Tavanello has had a fantastic first two years of varsity wrestling. He was 3<sup>rd</sup> at 215# as a freshman – the only 9<sup>th</sup> grader to place that high at this weight, while posting 42 wins. Last year he was 2<sup>nd</sup> at both the Ironman and Brecksville, but never lost again after that. This year he was 3<sup>rd</sup> at the Ironman, losing a semi-final bout where, at least that day, he was the better wrestler – the small mats hurting his takedown game and the opponent's passivity not declaimed. However, in the feature bout at Brecksville he upended Division II champ Logan Erb in a bout that hinged on another third period takedown. There are, however, no quarantines this year; There is some solid competition at this class where upsets are not that unusual.

There are two wrestlers who have the best shot at Tavanello. Wise won last year's district with relative ease collecting three falls in the process. He raced to the semi-finals before losing by two to Rose and finished 4<sup>th</sup>. This year he was 3<sup>rd</sup> at Medina, losing to Walz 3-1 and 3<sup>rd</sup> at the Top Gun, falling to Erb by a point. He did beat Walz at the Ohio Duals, 7-5 to even their series. Walz was 5<sup>th</sup> at the Ironman and 1<sup>st</sup> at Medina and is wrestling very well on his feet. Last year as a sophomore he qualified 3<sup>rd</sup> out of his district, but failed to score. He is steadily getting better.

Tavanello and Walz both compete at Lorain. It will be a most formidable site. Carter is one of the best Division I wrestlers in the Toledo area and was a state alternate last

year, losing to Tavanello and Walz. He was 3<sup>rd</sup> at North Canton, losing again to Tavanello, and pretty much unchallenged since. Gott was 4<sup>th</sup> at the Ironman and Brecksville as he rebounds from last year's disappointment as a state alternate. I thought he peaked early last year and wonder if that will happen once again. That's four very fine contenders, but Gaghen, a Brecksville placer and Wills, a consistent finalist, have solid upset potential, while Neu won two district bouts last year.

Wise should have little trouble at the Mentor District again this year. As a father of twins it's embarrassing that I have trouble differentiating Irayel and Isayel Williams. It's Irayel at this weight class and he is a returning state qualifier. He was 8<sup>th</sup> at 189# and has responded well at this weight class. Watch for him. Tschantz, champion at the Dies, and Patrick are both good, while Howard is, as of this writing, undefeated, winning at Avon Lake and Riverside. Ransom was 2<sup>nd</sup> at Hudson (behind Patrick) and 3<sup>rd</sup> at North Coast. Add in two Stark County competitors – Cuenot and Hemlick – and the battle for the last three spots will certainly be competitive, while Wise marches to this title.

The Darby District looks a lot like Mentor with the major difference that the dominant superstar (Wise) is absent. Odierno, last year's state alternate, won at Liberty and Upper Arlington, but we have not seen him at some of the major tournaments. Both Knoch and Sanders had two district wins and both have won at least one tournament this year. Watch for King, who was 1st at Scioto and 3<sup>rd</sup> at Pickerington, and might be second best behind Odierno, Hunter, one of the Centerville big men, will probably be here with, perhaps, others from that area. Hunter was 5<sup>th</sup> at the GMVWA and would be very competitive here.

It could be very exciting at Fairfield. Fruehauf, only a nine-grader, was a state junior high champion at heavy weight last year, and is another of the Moeller wunderkids. He was 2<sup>nd</sup> at the SWOCA, losing 1-0 to Hyland and 2<sup>nd</sup> at the CIT. He has placement potential. Jackson, who could be at Darby, was a state qualifier last year, but got Tavanello in the first round. At Medina he lost to Walz, 18-5, but then came back with some solid consolation wins to place 4<sup>th</sup> right behind Wise. Isham was 3<sup>rd</sup> at the SWOCA and 1<sup>st</sup> at Fairfield and, in between, 5<sup>th</sup> at Medina, losing a 6-5 decision to Wise. This would seem to be the top 215's at this district with Johnson, moving in as Hyland moved down, and Venable close behind. Add in Andriot and, maybe, Nye and it's a fun competition.



**285**

**PROJECTED CHAMPION: KYLE ROSE (CENTERVILLE)**

Top Contenders

2	Kuhar (St. Edward)	15	Pipkins (Maple Hts.)
3	Nusekabel (Elder)	16	Reesman (Howland)
4	Mayes (Massillon Perry)	17	Wright (Butler)
5	Jackson (Hamilton)	18	Crutcher (Glenville)
6	El-Geroushi (Darby)	19	Thirkeld (Marysville)
7	Mitchell (Withrow)	20	Hiss (Copley)
8	Fleming (Liberty)	21	Crowley (Wadsworth)
9	Everett (Glen Oak)	22	Kellems (Harrison)
10	Norton (Milford)	23	Wendorf (Lake)
11	Frank (Avon Lake)	24	Denny (Moeller)
12	Brown (Sandusky)	25	Reynard (Grove City)
13	Elflein (Pickerington North)	26	Rhodes (Cuyahoga Falls)
14	Gray (Clay)	27	Bowman (Lakota East)

I think this is generally seen as a two-man battle between Rose and Kuhar, but that kind of thinking is particularly dangerous when dealing with heavyweights. A relatively inconsequential mistake at 112# looms far larger at this weight class where it might well spell elimination. There are a lot of new faces at this weight class since only four wrestlers who qualified for state action were underclassmen. There is a lot less history here than we often see at a weight class, all of which can lead to surprises.

Rose is an exceptional athlete. I first saw him at junior high states where he was Chris Phillips final victim when he posted his third junior high title. He was 5<sup>th</sup> at 215# as a sophomore and, of course, was runner-up last year in that memorable bout with Tavanello. He has not been in the past super aggressive, witness that he scored 8 points total in his three state wins last year, but clearly, when needed, he can put numbers on the scoreboard. I'm guessing he weighs 235 pounds, which will make him somewhat lighter than the average qualifier.

Kuhar, now a junior, was 4<sup>th</sup> last year in what had to be a most nerve-wracking set of bouts. He opened with a 4-3 win, won in the tie breaker, lost in the tie breaker, and pinned in the tie breaker, before losing to Gladstone in the consolation finals. His fall in overtime appeared at one point to be a critical component in a team victory. This year he has not lost, including a big win at Medina. He would, I think, have about 20 pounds on Rose.

Since both boys are all-state football player their late start may keep them fresher than some of the other competitors. Kuhar is stubborn defensively, but I think Rose, with superior quickness, will be able to score off his feet and win what would be a well-earned state title.

The Southwest District is loaded with good heavyweights. One would expect that some of them will emigrate over to Darby, but that is an area that also has some strength at this weight class. We've already written about Rose, but there is much more. Nusekabel is one of the four who was in this state bracket last year going 1-2. He was 1<sup>st</sup> at the SWOCA and CIT, but was 3<sup>rd</sup> at Brecksville, losing to Fleming. Kuhar beat him 3-1 at the Duals so he is clearly able to compete. Jackson was also a state qualifier, and like Nusekabel went 1-2 in Columbus. I thought he might be the best in Cincinnati this year, but he was 3<sup>rd</sup> at the SWOCA (losing to Mitchell) and 3<sup>rd</sup> at Fairfield (losing to Rose 10-1). Nonetheless, he has high placement potential. I don't know much about Mitchell, but he was 2<sup>nd</sup> at the SWOCA – defeating Jackson and losing to Nusekabel, 6-5. He won three district bouts last year, but it was Jackson who took that state spot away from him. Norton, a transfer from Princeton, was 1<sup>st</sup> at Kenston and 4<sup>th</sup> at the SWOCA. He likes to score and will take a chance to do so. Wright was a finalist at the GMVWA, losing to Rose in the finals after winning at the Firebird. Kellers, Denny, and Bowman are all top-notch heavyweights, but unless there is a mass exodus to Darby there may be too many ahead of them.

Those Dayton area wrestlers will find some tough competition here at Darby. I saw El-Geroushi at Medina and he looked good. He was 2<sup>nd</sup> to Kuhar, losing 3-1, and was 1<sup>st</sup> at Bradley and 2<sup>nd</sup> at Pickerington. Fleming was a finalist at Brecksville, defeating Nusekabel before having to default in the finals. He won at Liberty and was 3<sup>rd</sup> at Elgin. Elflein, 4<sup>th</sup> at Medina and Solon may be next best, while Reynard is a possibility. State qualifier Thirkeld may have some catching up to do.

Kuhar should have little trouble at Lorain. Frank was the state alternate, losing his go-to-state bout to Kuhar on a fall. He was 1<sup>st</sup> at Lorain this year. The mammoth Brown is getting better and he can be a handful. He was 1<sup>st</sup> at Upper Arlington, 2<sup>nd</sup> at Clyde, and 5<sup>th</sup> at Medina. Kuhar beat him 8-4 in the semi-finals and then he lost a one-pointer to Endicott. Gray is a feisty heavyweight and that isn't bad. He was a semi-finalist at Solon and won at Brecksville. That leaves Hiss, Crowley, and Rhodes needing a mild upset.

I like Mayes at Mentor. He was 7<sup>th</sup> at Medina after losing to Kuhar in the first round, and was 3<sup>rd</sup> at the King of the Mountain. He lost to Kuhar, 3-1, at the Ohio Duals and will look forward to the post-season that he missed last year. Reesman qualified two years ago, and should be a factor as a senior. He wrestles a schedule that is not easy to follow. Everitt, 1<sup>st</sup> at Solon and the WIT, has good qualification chances. He was 3<sup>rd</sup> at the Dies, including a win over Rhodes. Pipkins got a late start with Maple Hts. Football success, but he could end up being very good. He won two district bouts last year and beat Rhodes, 13-7 to win at Hudson. Crutcher is huge and was a district semi-finalist last year before losing an overtime bout that sent him plummeting to 6<sup>th</sup>. He was 5<sup>th</sup> at Kenston, but as his conditioning improves he will be a load.

## 2010 TEAM SCORE

The state tournament was, to my mind, one of the best in recent history. Besides the usual fine wrestling there were a number of compelling stories. The first female competitor, Logan Stieber's fourth state title, and many others – but to me the team competition in Division I, the first one in many years, was really the story. Here was St. Edward trying for their 14<sup>th</sup> consecutive title and really challenged by another team, while Wadsworth was looking to be the first public school to win since 1977 with a home-grown team of tremendous balance. It was a confrontation that generated enormous interest and, as it turned out, the reality was even better than the expectation. Both teams wrestled brilliantly, eventually putting six men in the finals so that almost every bout Saturday night had team implications. After it was over and a 4.5 point margin for Wadsworth finalized, there were a million what ifs. What if Martin had not been pinned in the last desperate seconds and Wadsworth would have had to win the last two bouts? What if Heil had won a major forcing the same two win scenario? What if Bright had won the overtime bout against Newhouse or even Gray? However let's look at the numbers analytically.

Wadsworth's four state champs scored 102 points  
St Edward's four state champs scored 103 points.

Wadsworth's two runners-up scored 41.5 points  
St. Edward's two runners-up scored 40.5 points.

Overall then the Big Six (the finalists) both scored 143.5 points for their team.

Let's look at bonus points.

Wadsworth had 3 majors, 2 tech falls, and 7 falls for 20 bonus points.  
St. Edwards had 2 majors, 5 tech falls, and 6 falls for 21.5 bonus points.

In the championship rounds: Wadsworth was 26-8  
St. Edwards was 27-7

In the consolation rounds: Wadsworth was 9-7  
St. Edwards was 1-6

Clearly, staying away from individual analysis, Wadsworth won on depth. They won 8 more consolation bouts negating the quality that St. Edwards has always been proud of – depth of scoring. Wadsworth sent 12 wrestlers to state and everyone scored.

## TEAMS

1. St. Edward      The 14th consecutive state championship just barely eluded them, but I thought it was one of the prouder moments in their great history. They set a new state record for points by a runner-up team (167.5) and battled a more experienced team to the very end. This year they seek to begin a new streak, but it may not be easy with Massillon Perry and the still dangerous Wadsworth squad not far behind. Heil and Bright are finalist material at the lower weights, but their back seven beginning with VanCuren is where they need to score. They cannot allow two or three of this group to have a bad weekend. Perhaps, Heffernan or Scheidel can help. This is a team that does not have a senior in the starting line-up.
2. Massillon Perry      They have been state runners-up six times since 2003, but this may be their best chance to capture the team trophy. They match in numbers, but the point production potential might be slightly less. The three lightweights Bavery, Timchenko, and Newhouse need to score heavily, while Dailey needs to be a finalist. Lemon and Petrima have state experience, but they need big numbers from Tayse, Wise, and Mayes. It's a bookend team – first three weights and last three with Dailey and Lemon in the middle. If the younger Dailey and Arrendale score, St. Ed's will have real worries.
3. Wadsworth      Their brilliant victory last year was the result of superior depth, which is not, at least as I see it now, as readily present. Still, Tavanello and Squire are finalist material, while Gray had some key wins last year. The middleweights are critical with Ball, Wenger, and Brandenburg having to score heavily if they are to move up. Jone and Owens could be helpers, with Baughman in reserve.
4. Elder      The terrific upper weight trio of Korb, Hyland, and Nusekabel should be worth at least 50 points. Where further help will come from is problematical. Hardtke is the best hope since state qualifier Daniels may be in a bit of a slump, while Fuhr and Suer are a distant possibility.

5. Moeller This might be a real stretch, but I really like their freshmen. MacVeigh, Walsh and Ward have past state experience and will need to score heavily. The young guys Fruehauf, Titornberry, Sizemore and Meyer may be a year away, but they have the talent to score.
6. Mayfield Coleman, McNulty and Carlone have all placed at the state level and should do so again. They need Birr to somehow get to Columbus and a Pietropinto or young McNulty to go crazy. It couldn't hurt if the older McNulty did the same.
7. Brecksville They have a quartet of potential state scorers in Baran, Good, Roddy, and Willett. There is little chance for help behind this group so they'll have to score heavily to reach the top five.
8. Medina The Hammer brothers both placed last year as did Griffith. Gigliotti could be a help, but there is no one else after him.
9. Springboro Again, it's Shivener, Walker, Jackson and D'Urso in the foreground with Thuman maybe a helper. The first should score heavily and that may be enough.
10. Mason They have a lot of possibilities, but no sure point getters. I could see five or six state qualifiers – Victoria, Luria, Artrip, McIntyre, Gonzalez and the Waldens – but who in this group has top four expectations. Another key will be Artrip's health at the dynamite 119# weight class.
11. Twinsburg Labry has finalist potential, while Baker, if wrestling with confidence, has high placement potential. The key is getting Vinas out of that devilish 119# weight class since he can score at the state level.
12. Clay Amenta and Cloyne have past state experience, while Kohler and Screptock have placement potential. Gaghen and Gray are possible qualifiers, but the Toledo boys have struggled at the district level the last few years.

## Division II

### 103#

#### **PROJECTED CHAMPION: CODY BURCHER (CLAYMONT)**

##### Top Contenders

2	Rix (Akron St. Vincent)	14	Nemec (Crestwood)
3	Tutolo (Walsh Jesuit)	15	Walker (Napoleon)
4	Martin (Wapakoneta)	16	Carter (Hillsboro)
5	Minnick (Clyde)	17	Maple (Jefferson)
6	Plummer (Chaminade)	18	Davisson (New Lexington)
7	Taton (Lake Catholic)	19	Becker (Padua)
8	Gutierrez (DeSales)	20	Schoeppner (Canton South)
9	Torti (Olentangy)	21	Kehn (Sheridan)
10	Crabtree (Graham)	22	Nethers (Licking Valley)
11	Craig (Steubenville)	23	Dees (Perry)
12	Pool (Toledo Central Catholic)	24	Henderson (Beaver Local)
13	Kopp (Tiffin)	25	Baum (Urbana)
		26	Morrow (Wauseon)

Like we saw in Division I, the 103# weight class is substantially weaker than is usually the case. In the past few years we've had champions like David Taylor, Ty Mitch, Nick Blascetta and Ryan Taylor winning in stronger, deeper weight classes. We are at a somewhat lower level this year with a decided lack of depth and fewer potential superstars making their first appearance. Seven of last year's eight place winners have moved to higher weight classes and only two others with state experience return. This is likely to be a title decided by fortunate bracketing, solid match management, and a large dollop of good luck.

The obvious choice (though not mine) is Mike Rix, the one returning placewinner, who was 4<sup>th</sup> last year. I was high on him last year, particularly for his clever leg rides and ability to win close bouts. He won two close bouts to reach the semi-finals before losing to eventual champ Ryan Taylor and finishing 4<sup>th</sup>. He won his three bouts by a total of four points, demonstrating, once again, that match management strength. This year he has, apparently, struggled to make this weight. He was absent at Solon and at 112# at Brecksville where he went 1-2. He did wrestle at this weight class at the Ironman where he went 2-2, losing to Tutolo. Then this weekend he came back to 103# and won the CIT defeating Smith and Plummer. Assuming he reaches 103#, he'll be tough to beat with his size and riding ability. I think you'll want to wrestle him early in a tournament, and you'll want to get that first takedown. If he makes it to Saturday night he will be far bigger than any possible opponent.

My choice is the exceptional freshman Cody Burcher. He was the state junior high champ at 90# last year and has grown into a solid 103-pounder. He was devastating at

Medina with four first period falls, with victims including SWOCA champ Ruben Victoria and #2 seed Trey Davisson. Tomasello wore him down in the final – no disgrace since he is #1 in the nation – and Burcher had some good early shots. He had all falls at 112# at Barnesville and he gains from Claymont's solid scheduling. Another plus is a relatively easy district situation that should leave him in good shape for Columbus.

Firestone probably has the best display of 103 pounders. Rix is a possible finalist if he can manage the weight issue, but three freshmen should play prominent roles. Tutolo, a fine youth wrestler, placed at the Ironman – no easy task – beating Crabtree and Rix. At the Ohio Duals he quickly pinned Nemec, and again majored Crabtree, 10-0. My barber, Karen, insists that I rank him high or suffer a poor haircut. Taton, a state junior high placer, was a semi-finalist at Brecksville, but dropped to 5<sup>th</sup>, losing a tight 2-1 consolation bout to Martin and beating Gutierrez. Nemec has been a consistent placer as the Nemec clan holds down this weight class for the fifth consecutive year at Crestwood. He was 3<sup>rd</sup> at Kenston and 1<sup>st</sup> at Hudson and Aurora. Maple, most recently 2<sup>nd</sup> at the Dies, is another solid performer. He was one win from States last year. That leaves Schoepner and Dees needing upset wins to qualify.

There are some question marks at Goshen. Crabtree, a transfer from Northwest, won the GMVWA, but did not place at either the Ironman or Top Gun. Martin beat him 8-2 at the Top Gun and Torti pinned him at the Ohio Duals. He still may be the best at Goshen. Plummer has made real progress. He was 1<sup>st</sup> at Bellbrook, Xenia, and Franklin and 5<sup>th</sup> at the CIT, losing to Rix, 1-0, and Ziegler by two. One of his victories is over Carter who looks to be third best with Davisson or Kehn another step behind. There are a lot of uncertainties and I think we'll see at least one surprise qualifier.

Two of the top contenders should emerge from Harding. The sophomore Martin was a district runner-up last year, but went home without a victory from Columbus. A tough grinder, he seems able to bounce back from a deficit or a defeat with no loss in confidence. He was 2<sup>nd</sup> at the Firebird and 4<sup>th</sup> at both Brecksville and the Top Gun, losing to Burcher in 41 seconds at the latter. He puts up solid results every time and should place. Minnick was 4<sup>th</sup> at the Junior High States last year, and has been coming on strong for Clyde. He was 1<sup>st</sup> at West Jefferson beating Carter 14-2 in the final and also won his home tournament. He and Martin should dominate here. I like Pool next best. He was one bout from States last year. He was 8<sup>th</sup> at Brecksville – losing to Martin, 12-4 – and 1<sup>st</sup> at Sylvania Southview. State qualifier Walker has had a low profile year, but is a solid senior. Kopp, 3<sup>rd</sup> at Tiffin and 2<sup>nd</sup> at Clyde (to Minnick, 2-1) along with Wilson are the two biggest threats to the top four. Becker might have long shot possibilities.

Burcher should dominate at CEast. Torti and Gutierrez are the principal threats. Gutierrez was 1<sup>st</sup> at Scioto, 2<sup>nd</sup> at DeSales and 6<sup>th</sup> at Brecksville, wrestling a busy schedule. A state qualifier last year, he has developed a certain consistency. Torti failed to place at Medina (as the #3 seed), but won at Olentangy and had a great Ohio Duals, pinning Crabtree and beating Nemec. Craig, 8<sup>th</sup> at the Top Gun, went 1-2 at last

year's district, but should do much better this time. Henderson, winner of the Hoppel, and Nethers, should he slide down from 112#, are the next best.

## 112#

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

#### Top Contenders

2	Stainbrook (Walsh Jesuit)	15	Tepper (Bay)
3	Langdon (Claymont)	16	Simpson (Clermont NE)
4	November (West Geauga)	17	Trigg (Washington CH)
5	Graham (West Branch)	18	Baitt (Jefferson)
6	Price (Licking Hts.)	19	Smith (Minerva)
7	Mason (Padua)	20	Kuenzler (Highland)
8	Miller (Carrollton)	21	Alger (Crestwood)
9	Ott (Eaton)	22	Miller (Clyde)
10	Fee (Lake Catholic)	23	Pontius (Wauseon)
11	Hill (Greenville)	24	Flynn (Revere)
12	Bowsier (Kenton Ridge)	25	Bowlick (Oak Harbor)
13	Brady (Canal Winchester)	26	Williams (East Liverpool)
14	Maurice (Bellfontaine)	27	Willis (Port Clinton)
		28	Plaughter (Shawnee)

One of the surest winners in the Jeff Jordan stable of potential champions is the junior Ryan Taylor. He has developed into one of the best lightweights in the state over the past fifteen months, and that learning curve is still on a solid upward arc. His big win last year was winning the opening bout of the Blair dual over Hvolbeck and setting in motion the events that led to a team victory and the #1 ranking in the country. He cruised through the state tournament with three major decisions and a fall. This year he was an Ironman finalist overcoming an early 4-0 deficit against the excellent DiCamillo to take a 5-4 lead only to lose at the very end. He was a takedown machine at the GMVWA and the Top Gun and, quite frankly, is probably without a real challenger in Division II. You have to admit – Graham has had pretty good luck with unrelated kids named Taylor.

The two biggest “threats” are Langdon and Stainbrook. Langdon, at this weight class last year, lost a state semi-final bout in one of those convoluted overtimes and ended up 4<sup>th</sup> (in overtime). Nobody ever did outscore him in regulation time. He was 2<sup>nd</sup> at Medina, beating Murdock, but losing to Bright and 3<sup>rd</sup> at the Top Gun, losing to Timchenko, but beating Stainbrook, 2-1. One thing he won't have to worry about is wrestling his worst bout of the year. It already happened in a 17-2 loss at 119# to Border. Stainbrook, at 103# and Streetsboro last year, was a district champ and state semi-finalist last year, and ended up 3<sup>rd</sup>. This year he was 5<sup>th</sup> at the Ironman – losing to Taylor – and the Top Gun – again losing to Taylor (8-4). I believe he is the only Division II wrestler who has lost to Taylor by less than 8 points. I ranked him ahead of Langdon for two reasons. First, I believe him to be slightly more consistent, but far more



important is the seeding possibilities. Assuming district titles, Taylor and Stainbrook will be seeded, while Langdon, losing that overtime consolation final to Cash last year, now has a so-so chance of drawing into Taylor.

The Firestone District has a strong quartet of 112's and you hope that pairings (two come out of the same sectional) don't force two of them to wrestle off for a state ticket. November and Graham were both state qualifiers at 112# last year (but never met). Disappointingly, they only won one bout between them. This year November beat a strong field at Kenston and Aurora and, somehow, looks more muscular. Graham had a very impressive win over Shump to win the Dies, pinned Baitt to win at Riverside. On a hot weekend he is terrific. Fee, 5<sup>th</sup> last year at 103#, has not had a comfortable introduction to 112#. He was 5<sup>th</sup> at Solon and the CIT (the latter at 119#). Junior high state placer Baitt would seem to be significantly behind this top quartet, with Alger and Flynn other possibilities.

Langdon heads a good district at CEast. Miller and Price both placed at States at 103# last year, with Price winning their individual match-up, 8-3. Both have seemingly few problems at this weight class, while winning local events. State alternate Smith was mostly recently 5<sup>th</sup> at Elgin, finishing behind Brady. However, he won the Hoppel defeating Williams in the finals. It is likely only one of this trio will qualify which should make for some interesting action.

There will be a series of exciting confrontations at Goshen, though none will involve the front runner Taylor. I count six good candidates for the three remaining state slots, with bracketing critical. Winning your sectional good will be very important. Three of the hopeful six have previous state experience with Hill and Ott both making the quarter-finals at 103#, while Maurice was shut out at 112#. Simpson and Trigg were both state alternates last year, with the former losing his go-to-state bout on that last tie-breaker to Hill. So much for history. This year I've seen no scores for Hill so he has been out of the lineup. Most recently Ott placed at the Top Gun over Bowsier, but lost to him when they both placed at the GMVWA. Maurice has had an up and down year, with a couple of unexpected losses and some big wins. Simpson won at Reading and Madeira, while Trigg placed 6<sup>th</sup> at the Top Gun (but had losing technical falls) and won at Circleville. Now that we've cleared that up the rankings are obvious.

The weakest district is clearly at Harding. Mason is the only returning state qualifier from last year where he went 1-2 at this weight class. This year he was 3<sup>rd</sup> at Brecksville and 2<sup>nd</sup> at the CIT, but went 1-2 at the Ironman. He should win this district. Kuenzler qualified two years ago and has been at 119# on something of a part-time basis. I expect to see him here if they bring Bloniak down to 119#. After that there are a lot of possible choices. I do wonder whether state qualifier Lang might try and reach this weight class but, if not, I think Tepper has the best chance of qualification. He has been a consistent placer with past district experience. Perrysburg champ Pontius is another viable option, with Miller, Plaughter, and Bowlick possibilities.

**119#**

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

Top Contenders

2	Fiorucci (Olentangy)	15	Logan (Perkins)
3	Cash (Aurora)	16	Armstrong (Kenton Ridge)
4	Beemer (Wapakoneta)	17	Skaggs (New Richmond)
5	Campbell (Lexington)	18	Lange (Indian Lake)
6	Gunter (Coventry)	19	Rowe (Fairless)
7	Morris (Canton South)	20	Black (Jonathan Alder)
8	Lang (Norwalk)	21	Kopp (Tiffin)
9	Kostandaras (Walsh Jesuit)	22	Riggle (East Liverpool)
10	McKernan (Ross)	23	Croft/ Arthur (Lima Shawnee)
11	Wilhelm (Canal Fulton NW)	24	Arbogast (Elida)
12	Parsons (Licking Valley)	25	McFadden (Miami Trace)
13	Coates (Lake Catholic)	26	Warner (Indian Valley)
14	Llewellyn (Steubenville)	27	Dodson (Bellevue)

This is a nicely balanced weight class with reasonable depth, four solid districts, good geographical dispersion, and as it currently stands, three seedable wrestlers. It is also the weight class where yet another Jordan will be introduced to the state tournament process. It is quite a phenomenon. The Jordans of St. Paris won eight state titles in the 80's and have five more in this burgeoning century. Micah is a former state junior high champion with impeccable credentials and some fine takedown. He won the GMVWA that finished with three decisions, including a very close bout with Max Byrd, and then took the Top Gun, decisioning a pair of state runners-up, Mitch, Newhouse and Trevor Fiorucci. He is not yet unbeatable as Heil proved at the Ironman and as it currently stands there are at least three people in the field with a chance of beating him. But the odds of that get longer each day as he continues to improve.

I think we'll see some movement out of this weight class. It's a bit of a desert at 125# so some folks are going, at a minimum, to ponder the efficacy of an upward move. Jordan might play some role in this decision making process, but the crowded field here and the apparently open spaces there will be the principal consideration.

At the beginning of the season I thought Ryan Cash would be the principal threat at this weight class. He was a solid 3<sup>rd</sup> at 112# in Columbus, losing only to eventual champ Miller, and looking exceptional on his feet. He has not seemed quite the same so far this year. He won at Aurora, but barely beat Johns, 8-7. He was 1<sup>st</sup> at Hudson and 5<sup>th</sup> at Brecksville, losing by five to Beemer and to DiSabato. Since then great dual meet scores, so things may be getting better. I suspect he misses Mitch as a workout partner.

Fiorucci was 2<sup>nd</sup> at 103# last year, losing to Taylor. Up two weights, I thought he might be slightly undersized, but he is “right there” size wise. He won at Olentangy and North Canton, and was 4<sup>th</sup> at that brutal weight at Medina. He lost to Heminger and Newhouse by two. He was 2<sup>nd</sup> at the Top Gun, losing to Jordan, 4-1, about the same margin as at the Ohio Duals. The third major threat is Campbell who was runner-up at 112# after a surprising run. He won at 125# at Liberty (foreshadowing?), but has also been at 119# much of the year. At the Gorman he was 2<sup>nd</sup>, losing in overtime to the excellent sophomore McClay in overtime.

Jordan should have little trouble at the Goshen District. Skaggs and McKernan are both returning state qualifiers who went 1-2 in Columbus. McKernan has been the more successful and consistent of the two this year, with 3<sup>rd</sup>s at Fairfield, Franklin, and the SWOCA. I did say he was the more consistent. Skaggs, up two weight classes, has had some struggles, but is likely to qualify. Armstrong, who won at Troy, might be the fourth qualifier, but McFadden, 8<sup>th</sup> at the Top Gun despite losing, 7-1, to Armstrong, and Lange are in the picture.

Like Jordan, Fiorucci should trample the rest of the field at his district. Parsons was the state alternate at this weight class after reaching the semi-finals. He won at the Licking County meet and has also been a steady placer. Llewellyn was 7<sup>th</sup> at the Top Gun and he is one of the leaders of an improving Steubenville Team. That's three possibilities, but Blacka, winner at Clinton Massie, and Riggle cannot be overlooked, while Warner is another half step behind. We may get only one state placer out of this group.

Cash will have a much busier time at Firestone. Gunter has had a sterling year, finishing 2<sup>nd</sup> at the Dies and 3<sup>rd</sup> at the North Coast, losing only to a Pennsylvania placer. Kostandaras, another exceptional junior high placer, is as good as advertised. He was 5<sup>th</sup> at the Top Gun, losing only to Newhouse and Beemer. Wilhelm was one bout from States last year, losing to Leonetti after a nice run. Most recently he was 4<sup>th</sup> at the Dies in a tough weight class, losing to Gunter and Vinas. Coates also missed qualification by one bout, falling to state placer Morris. This year he was 3<sup>rd</sup> at Solon, losing to Pizzuto, but did not compete at Brecksville or the CIT. I like the freshman Gibson, but he's still a year away and Rowe, who won two bouts at districts last year. The big question mark at this district and for the entire weight class is Joey Morris. He won four consolation bouts to finish 5<sup>th</sup> in Columbus, but to my knowledge has yet to wrestle this season. However, he is listed on the roster and is certified. My guess is that he may show up here.

There are lots of good contenders at Harding. We've talked about Campbell and pondered his eventual destination, but there is plenty to challenge him here. I was very impressed with Beemer at Brecksville. Last year he lost a couple of one point district bouts to finish 4<sup>th</sup> and then, as the fates so often decree, drew Brascetta in the first round. He went on to win four consolations ala Joe Morris to finish 5<sup>th</sup>. This year he was 2<sup>nd</sup> at Brecksville, beating Birr and dominating Cash before losing to Pizzuto. He was 3<sup>rd</sup> at the Top Gun, losing only to Jordan, and he seems ready. State placer Lang is here, up two weight classes, but a steady performer where state qualifier Logan will

match up with him again. Kopp, Dodson and Arbogast are consistent performers, who could squeeze into one of the top four places. While Joe Arthur (a name I have not seen connected with Shawnee since 1981) or Brady Croft has good upset potential.

### 125#

#### **PROJECTED CHAMPION: JOSH NELSON (OAKWOOD)**

##### Top Contenders

2	Smith (Kenston)	14	Lawson (Valley View)
3	Reed (Canfield)	15	Thompson (London)
4	Hutchins (Canal Winchester)	16	Leedy (Toledo Central Catholic)
5	Scherer (River View)	17	Addis (Norwood)
6	McComas (Beaver Local)	18	Mercer (East Liverpool)
7	Hackworth (Oak Harbor)	19	Byrd (Ross)
8	Wilson (DeSales)	20	Snyder (Perkins)
9	Webb (Miami Trace)	21	Cart (Revere)
10	McDermitt/Croft (Shawnee)	22	Montana (Norwalk)
11	Kager (Crestwood)	23	Perry (Hubbard)
12	Yarnell (Wauseon)	24	Ratcliff (Bethel-Tate)
13	Gessic (Perry)	25	Pauff (Elida)

I think this weight class will be a magnet, drawing exceptional wrestlers from 119# and 130#. With Jordan and a large number of other potential placers at 119#, and DiJulius and Fickel at 130# this will look like a far more congenial location. We've already seen it with Reed dropping and there will be others as well. It would not surprise me if the eventual champion is at some other weight even as I write this.

If you are looking for one wrestler to win just one big bout, Tre Smith might be the guy. He is strong, athletic, and aggressive, the kind of wrestler everyone loves to watch. He qualified the past two years losing to two-time state runner-up Drew Stone in the first round in 2009 and again in the state semi-finals last year in a 12-10 barnburner. He ended up 5<sup>th</sup>. What is surprising is how many times he gets pinned – partly because of his aggressiveness and partly because of fatigue. Whatever, he was 2<sup>nd</sup> at Solon and Kenston, losing by fall to Labry and Dillon and 3<sup>rd</sup> at Elgin, losing by fall to Hutchins – and destroying a Heminger/Smith confrontation. I don't think he can win it, but it is really difficult to identify who will beat him.

One of the candidates will be at Firestone. As mentioned, Reed has dropped from 130# - where he was 3<sup>rd</sup> at Medina, losing on a slam – down to this weight class and finishing 2<sup>nd</sup> at the Dies to Labry. Reed was the state quarterfinalist at this weight class last year, but found the loser's bracket (finishing 5<sup>th</sup>) after losing to Smith by fall. I think these two have separated themselves from the rest of the district field. The trio of Kager, Cart, and Gessic are likely next best. Kager won at Aurora and was a finalist at North Canton, while finishing 4<sup>th</sup> at Kenston. One to watch is the freshman Gessic, a state

junior champ last year, and a big winner at Riverside and Willoughby South. Add in Perry and, maybe, Potts and it will be a good competition.

Two other challengers jump out at CEast. Hutchins and Scherer were both district runners-up last year with Scherer finishing 7<sup>th</sup> at 112#. Most recently he was 2<sup>nd</sup> at the Top Gun beating Decatur and Webb (11-1) before losing to the excellent Dillon. Hutchins is a two-time state quarter-finalist, both times losing to a Graham superstar (Brascetta and Jordan) at that point. Unless Micah moves up it looks like that is one obstacle overcome. This year he was 1<sup>st</sup> at Cambridge and Marysville, but only 5<sup>th</sup> At Medina (losing to Scholtz in overtime). At Elgin he pinned Smith, while ahead, finishing 2<sup>nd</sup> to Heminger. I also really like the sophomore Wilson who was 1<sup>st</sup> at Scioto, 2<sup>nd</sup> at the CIT to Joey Ward and 7<sup>th</sup> at Brecksville. Add in McComas, who was 5<sup>th</sup> two years ago after reaching the semi-finals. Last year he missed qualification by two points, but has already won three tourneys this season. Also back is Thompson who did qualify last year at this weight class, but drew DiJulius in the first round. He was 5<sup>th</sup> at the GMVWA and 7<sup>th</sup> at Elgin so there's still a way to go. Former state qualifier Mercer will be at this crowded district, along with Warner and Morehouse.

One of the most formidable contenders will come out of Goshen. Nelson was 4<sup>th</sup> last year – a semi-final loser to Mitch – and has been even better the past six weeks. He has four tournament titles including the GMVWA, while also winning at the Firebird, Bellbrook and Valley View. He should win the title on consistency. Webb is a two-time qualifier who was 8<sup>th</sup> last year. He lost to Nelson in the consolation finals at districts, however, 15-1. This year he was 3<sup>rd</sup> at the GMVWA and 5<sup>th</sup> at the Top Gun, losing to Scherer, 11-1. The rest of this district is well behind this top duo. Lawson has three top three finishes, while Addis has had success again this year. I also like Ratcliff, Kern and Byrd.

There is still need for clarification at Harding. Returning state qualifier Hackworth was 1<sup>st</sup> at Oak Harbor and Perrysburg, but struggled winning just one bout. McDermitt, a state alternate last year, has been successful at 130# all year – two tourney titles – while Croft wrestled here, now it appears that McDermitt may move down. Leedy, a transfer, has also dropped and was 3<sup>rd</sup> at the CIT, losing early to Fasnacht, another possibility here. Add in Yarnell – this is where I expect to find him – Montana and Snyder, and it could be, at least, a spirited competition.

**130#**

**PROJECTED CHAMPION: JOHNNI DIJULIUS (WALSH JESUIT)**

Top Contenders

2	Fickel (Padua)	15	Cramer (Oak Harbor)
3	Hile (Lexington)	16	DeLorge (Avon)
4	Nicely (Wauseon)	17	Tucker (Minerva)
5	Caserta (Olentangy)	18	Jones (Ross)
6	Skonieczny (Akron St. Vincent)	19	Raper (Fairless)
7	Lee (Oakwood)	20	Estock (West Branch)
8	Westfall (Norton)	21	Willis (West Geauga)
9	Meeks (Lima Bath)	22	Jones (Bexley)
10	Schultz (Indian Lakes)	23	Struble (Bryan)
11	Tullius (Canal Winchester)	24	Pastor (Port Clinton)
12	Rohskopf (West Holmes)	25	Maynard (licking Hts.)
13	Blankenship (Canal Fulton NW)	26	Newland (Benjamin Logan)
14	Mercer (East Liverpool)	27	Ratcliff (Bethel-Tate)

This has all the earmarks of a classic two-man battle with a sensational two-time state champion meeting a two-time state placer anxious to capture his first state title. They will not be seeded apart so there will be a one-third probability that their meeting would be in the semi-finals.

DiJulius, headed for Ohio State, could easily be going for his fourth state title. As a freshman 130-pounder he lost an overtime thriller to Ty Mitch after having defeated him the previous week. He beat Drew Stone in the finals the last two years. DiJulius has only lost three times the last three years – all to out-of-staters – and he is a good big match wrestler. His finals bout last year opened with two minutes of whirlwind DiJulius action that essentially sewed up the title. It could be argued that should DiJulius win, he has been the most successful wrestler in Walsh's glorious history. Three state titles matches that of Heskett, Knupp and Musser, and only the last named was a four-time finalist.

Fickel was 3<sup>rd</sup> as a freshman and 4<sup>th</sup> last year at this weight. He has had an unhappy knack of finding the toughest weight class - last year, for example, in with Bo Jordan and Nate Skonieczny. Still, Fickel lost a 6-5 semi-final heartbreaker last year, losing a golden opportunity to see Jordan in the finals. This year he smoothly moved through the Brecksville field, winning over Gray and Carlone the last two rounds. He was 5<sup>th</sup> at the Ironman, losing a 3-1 decision to DiJulius in a consolation round. He'll be a decided underdog, but he should make it very interesting.

Both DiJulius and Fickel exit extremely crowded districts. At Firestone a pair of wrestlers is a large, respectful step behind DiJulius and slightly further back lurks about a half dozen hopefuls. Westfall was a district semi-finalist last year, but lost to DiJulius (16-0) and came back to qualify over the excellent Reed. He ended up 8<sup>th</sup>. Remarkably

all five of his bouts ended in falls. He has missed the entire season up until this weekend when he fashioned a 3<sup>rd</sup> place finish at the Dies. The other member of this duo is the freshman Ryan Skonieczny. Yet another of that accomplished family, but this time grappling for Akron St. Vincent. A state junior high champion last year, he is the record breaking fourth brother to achieve that result. I saw him at Solon where he beat the excellent Brunner on his way to finishing 2<sup>nd</sup>. At Brecksville he lost to state qualifiers Amenta in the tie breaker, and Baran by a point. He will be very good, very soon. Blankenship and Raper both went 2-2 at the district level last year, while Wills won once. None of this group has yet stepped up and started winning tournaments, but, instead, they have become consistent placers. Estock, yet another possibility, was 2<sup>nd</sup> at Riverside and 5<sup>th</sup> at the Dies, and that is pretty much the type of pattern exhibited by this third group.

The competition is tougher at Harding, but the pattern almost identically the same – Fickel on top with a very strong twosome just slightly below and then about a half-dozen possibilities. Hile is looking to become a three-time state placer, finishing 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> the last two years. He has never made it to the semi-finals, although last year he upset district champion Warner in the first round only to lose to eventual runner-up Mellinger in the next. He has twice wrestled Fickel at districts and lost both times. A pinner, he won at Liberty and the Gorman (that was an unprecedented fourth title), and he should capture a medium to high place. Nicely also has state experience going 1-2 at 125# last year. Part of a particularly good Wauseon team, there is still no certainty as to whether Nicely will be at 130# or 135#. My guess is that Yarnell will go at 125#, leaving Nicely here. At any rate, he most recently won at Perrysburg at 135# and will be excellent at either class. Remember he went 13-12 with Nate Skonieczny at the Ohio Duals. Meeks is coming down one weight class after missing state qualification by a single point last year. He, too, has been at 135# where he won at Allen East. With Mirman, DaFonseca, and Faust – all state placers at 135# - you have to figure Meek and/or Nicely will opt for this weight. I also like DeLorge, who was 2-2 at the district level last year. He was 3<sup>rd</sup> at Avon Lake, down from 135# last year. The young Cramer may be ready to vault over some of this group. He's been a solid placer, while Pastor (6<sup>th</sup> at the Top Gun) and Struble may provide some upset action.

Caserta and Rohskopf head the East District that has far less depth. Caserta, a state qualifier at 125# last year, went two and out, losing to Nicely, 8-7. This year he was 4<sup>th</sup> at Medina and was 2<sup>nd</sup> at Olentangy to Carlone. Rohskopf was the MVP at Smithville, but was injured at Medina and has missed time. He, too, was a state qualifier, but got Mitch and DaFonseca back-to-back and was quickly a spectator. Mercer, qualified two years ago, but failed last year. He, too, has missed some time this year. Tucker was one bout from States last year, but has fallen to Tullius in these rankings. Add in Maynard and Jones and nobody but the top two are guaranteed wrestling in March.

Lee has taken the lead at this weight class at Goshen. He won the giant GMVWA with a series of sharp decisions, moved down to win at 125# at the Firebird, and moved up to 135# to finish 2<sup>nd</sup> at Valley View, and the won at this weight class at Bellbrook. Yes, he's been busy and he has been winning. State alternate Schultz was 4<sup>th</sup> at the

GMVWA and went down 12-9 to Lee at that time, not an insurmountable margin. State alternate Jones had Bo Jordan in last year's district semi-finals and couldn't come back to qualify. He was 2<sup>nd</sup> at Franklin and has been at 135# much of the year. Newland, Ratcliff and Sexton will battle for the last berth.

### 135#

#### **PROJECTED CHAMPION: NATE SKONIECZNY (WALSH JESUIT)**

##### Top Contenders

2	Mirman (Highland)	14	Hupp (West Branch)
3	Garrison (Graham)	15	Fosco (Olentangy)
4	Faust (Lexington)	16	Hickerson (Maumee)
5	Benedict (Canfield)	17	Jolley (West Holmes)
6	DaFonseca (Padua)	18	Monaco (University School)
7	Kazimer (Kenston)	19	Wright (Franklin)
8	Edwards (Greenville)	20	Hunick (Hillsboro)
9	Skulina (Streetsboro)	21	Patterson (Tri-Valley)
10	Boswell (Canal Winchester)	22	Alspaugh (Valley View)
11	McGhee (Steubenville)	23	Thomas (Tippecanoe)
12	Dunlap (Licking Hts.)	24	Stalder (Athens)
13	Mault (Lima Bath)		

Nate Skonieczny is a wrestler who has won virtually everything; everything but a state title bout. As a freshman he reached the state finals narrowly losing to two-time champ Zach Neibert. Last year he won the Ironman and Apple Valley, beat Bo Jordan to win the Top Gun, and going into the state semi-finals had won 48 consecutive matches. However, this time the freshman phenomenon Jordan beat him 3-1, dropping Skonieczny to 3<sup>rd</sup>. At the Ironman this year he took 3<sup>rd</sup> after a one-point loss to Stieber. He'll be the favorite this year, but it will be no cakewalk. I'd like to see him be more aggressive against his top rivals. He is good enough to score far more.

There are only two wrestlers at this weight class who can really challenge him. Mirman, after some ups and downs, put together a great junior year finishing 2<sup>nd</sup> to Isaac Jordon, 7-2. This year he was 7<sup>th</sup> at the Ironman, losing to Stieber and Dailey, while beating Garrison, 8-6, in an exciting battle. He won a succession of high scoring bouts to win at Medina, beating county rival Griffith in the final 13-6. It was more of the same at the Dies as he defeated a stubborn Benedict for the title. He has enjoyed winning those up tempo bouts. Garrison, apparently from Texas, is very good. He placed at the Ironman, won the GMVWA without a seed, and was 2<sup>nd</sup> at the Top Gun. In that bout Skonieczny had to go three extra periods to win – this after a narrow 4-3 Ohio Duals win.

Skonieczny and Mirman will be seeded apart with one of them getting stuck with Garrison. It's a 50-50 probability, but one of them will certainly have an easier path to the final.



Skonieczny should have no more than solid opposition at Firestone. The trio of Benedict, Kazimer and Skulina should be the favorites for the three state spots after Skonieczny. Unfortunately, three of the four are in one sectional that could cause bracketing issues. Benedict and Kazimer were both state alternates last year with both missing States by a takedown or less. Benedict, in particular, lost 5-3 in his go-to-state bout to Mellinger and then watched him reach the state finals. All three have been solid placers with Benedict a 2<sup>nd</sup> at the Dies and 4<sup>th</sup> at Medina, Kazimer getting a 3<sup>rd</sup> at Solon and a 2<sup>nd</sup> at Kenston, while Skulina was 1<sup>st</sup> at Aurora and Hudson. Other possibilities might be Hupp or Dugger. If Monaco competes here he could also play a role in its outcome.

Three placers head the field at Harding. Mirman, of course, was 2<sup>nd</sup> while Faust was a semi-finalist who fell to 5<sup>th</sup>, and DaFonseca was 6<sup>th</sup>. All three are very experienced, with DaFonseca most recently winning at the CIT while Faust won again at the Gorman by technical fall. Not much margin of error here for anyone else. Mault and Hickerson are potential candidates for the fourth state ticket, but we may see Nicely here, though I once doubted it, which would just about nail down this bracket.

Garrison seems to be thriving in the Graham wrestling room and nobody at this district will keep him up at night. Former state qualifier Edwards was 5<sup>th</sup> at the GMVWA, but lost 19-3 to Garrison. He is still a force at the district. The other spots are wide open. Hunick won at Bellbrook and Thomas was 2<sup>nd</sup> at Troy, while Wright was one bout from placing at the GMVWA, and Alspaugh has district experience. There's no use in going on. Those last two slots could go to almost anyone.

There is some good journeyman talent at CEast. Boswell and McGhee are both returning state qualifiers who have yet to place. The former was 2<sup>nd</sup> at the Panther Invitational and 1<sup>st</sup> at Cambridge, while McGhee was 5<sup>th</sup> at the Top Gun. Interestingly, Boswell missed his sophomore year when his family moved to Italy—a more than fair trade-off Dunlap is also a returning qualifier who has missed some time this year. I think Jolley and Fosco both could qualify, especially if Dunlap is not at 100%. Add in Stalder and Patterson and it will be a busy district.

**140#**

**PROJECTED CHAMPION: NICK BRASCETTA (GRAHAM)**

Top Contenders

2	Romanchik (Padua)	14	Bryan (Lake Catholic)
3	Fee (Lake Catholic) if here	15	Viengmany (Toledo CC)
4	Warner (Claymont)	16	Lazear (Athens)
5	Fox (Field)	17	Straight (Whitehall)
6	Bergman (Oak Harbor)	18	Rouse (Revere)
7	Rininger (Highland)	19	Santos (Olentangy)
8	Quisenberry (Kenton Ridge)	20	Doner (Celina)
9	Campbell (Perkins)	21	Marshall (Chaminade)
10	Monebrake (Eaton)	22	Mercuri (West Geauga)
11	Skonieczny (Walsh Jesuit)	23	Wohrle (Bradley)
12	Brezovec (Aurora)	24	Crowley (Tecumseh)
13	Berger (Cambridge)	25	Caris (Eastwood)
		26	Schenk (Perry)

There are so many exceptional performers at Graham that we often fail to appreciate the fabulous careers fashioned by many of them. One such wrestler is the current 140 pounder Nick Brascetta. As a freshman he was 3<sup>rd</sup> at 103#, losing a semi-final match-up with three-time champion Ty Mitch. Then came his signature sophomore year at 103# that included an Ironman title, a state title, a perfect record, and a #1 national ranking. Last year at 119# Brascetta finished at 44-2, both losses to Mitch, including a 7-4 defeat in the state finals. Have Ty Mitch on the Aurora basketball team (admittedly unlikely) and Brascetta could conceivably be looking at a fourth state title. This year Brascetta moved up four weight classes to 140# and has lost only once to the top ranked Henderson of Pennsylvania. Other than that, he was 3<sup>rd</sup> at the Ironman and 1<sup>st</sup> at the GMVWA and Top Gun. This is a good weight class, especially if Fee moves down to 140#, but Brascetta is a clear favorite.

The best district is at Harding where there is good depth that includes some with high placement potential. Romanchik is the lead man at this district, an appellation that is well deserved. He was 4<sup>th</sup> as a freshman, losing to Brascetta in the consolation finals. He was a state qualifier as a sophomore, but failed to place, and then last year he lost only to DiJulius by two points and finished 3<sup>rd</sup>. That was important since he will be seeded away from Brascetta. This year he was 4<sup>th</sup> at the Ironman, losing to Tessari and then to Brascetta. He was 2<sup>nd</sup> at Brecksville to Tessari and an easy first at the CIT. Bergman, Campbell, and Rininger are closely bunched behind with the latter two having previous state experience. Bergman just won at Perrysburg, while Rininger was 3<sup>rd</sup> at the Dies. All of this trio have placement potential. A second trio of wrestlers located somewhat further down the mountain includes Viengmany, Doner, and Caris. The first named was 3<sup>rd</sup> at the CIT and may have the best shot at upsetting one of the top quartet.

It's a solid district at Goshen, but no one here will trouble Brascetta. Quisenberry has had a sparkling season winning at Troy, getting a 2<sup>nd</sup> at the GMVWA and holding Brascetta to a 6-3 margin, and placing at the Top Gun despite an injury, after losing to Brascetta 23-8. Monebrake went 2-2 at this district weight class last year and has continued to move forward. He was 1<sup>st</sup> at the Firebird and 3<sup>rd</sup> at the GMVWA, losing only to Brascetta. Placing at the Top Gun sets him up for what might be a long post-season run. State qualifier Lazear is next in line with Marshall, Crowley, and West close by. Marshall beat Bryan for 5<sup>th</sup>, 3-1, at the CIT.

The mercurial Warner is light years ahead of everyone at CEast. He has been 5<sup>th</sup> the last two years, while dominating his area. This year he won at Barnesville and was 2<sup>nd</sup> at Medina, losing only to Dailey. He looked good at the Top Gun, finishing 2<sup>nd</sup> to Brascetta. With the right draw he could be a finalist in Columbus. It's a very weak district and finding viable state candidates is difficult. It's possible, in fact, that we may see a few 135's move back. As it is, Straight and Santos might be next best, with Wohrle (a great name from the past) also in the mix. A key element would be Tyler Berger, a state qualifier from the distant past. He would likely be second best here.

I could not have been more surprised two years ago when a ninth-grader qualified for States from Field. I mean Field? I thought it was a fluke. But last year there he was again and this time T. J. Fox placed, losing only to probable four-time state qualifiers Fickel and Hile. Well, no surprises this year. Fox is probably best at Firestone. He was 4<sup>th</sup> at the Top Gun, losing twice to Dailey 3-0 and 1-0. Factor in his title at North Canton and we're talking high placement potential. Nic Skonieczny, currently injured, is likely second-best here as he works his way back into top form. Bryan, despite some strange scores, should probably qualify, while Brezovec seems a solid fourth choice. He has made real progress this year. After that Schenk, Mercuri or Roose, maybe.

## 145#

### **PROJECTED CHAMPION: BO JORDAN (GRAHAM)**

#### Top Contenders

- |    |                                  |    |                               |
|----|----------------------------------|----|-------------------------------|
| 2  | M. Fee (Lake Catholic)           | 14 | Scaglia (Kenton Ridge)        |
| 3  | Stitzlein (West Holmes)          | 15 | Severino (Ashtabula Edgewood) |
| 4  | Beauch (Toledo Central Catholic) | 16 | Edwards (Greenville)          |
| 5  | Kooser (Oakwood)                 | 17 | Trejo (Wauseon)               |
| 6  | Massillo (Van Wert)              | 18 | S. Williams (Tiffin)          |
| 7  | Novak (Walsh Jesuit)             | 19 | Wells (Aurora)                |
| 8  | Horovitz (Crestwood)             | 20 | Bowers (Miami Trace)          |
| 9  | Zeman (Avon)                     | 21 | Bates (West Branch)           |
| 10 | Burkhart (Carrollton)            | 22 | Davis (Norwalk)               |
| 11 | Allen (DeSales)                  | 23 | Swartz (Beaver Local)         |
| 12 | Bray (Wilmington)                | 24 | Snyder (Perkins)              |
| 13 | Budka (Vermillion)               | 25 | Zoller (Bexley)               |
|    |                                  | 26 | Gatalyak (Orange)             |

I was never a real big basketball fan, but I retain at least a modicum of interest every winter for both college and professional teams. We would occasionally, when I was in college, go down to the old Cleveland Arena to see an NBA game since the Cincinnati Royals played seven “home” games here. I vividly remember seeing Oscar Robertson for the first time and realizing that I was in the presence of something special.

At a different level, it’s the way you feel when you see Bo Jordan in action this year. He’s at a different level than all the rest of the competitors, and somehow the outcome never seems in doubt. Last year he finished 39-1, losing only an overtime decision to Nate Skonieczny, but avenging that a month later to win a state title. He also defeated three-time state champ Jamie Clark in the dual meet and had a critical win in the Blair victory. This year he is much better. He won the Ironman final 9-1 and crushed all opposition at the GMVWA. At the Top Gun the closest score was 13-5 and all the rest were falls. Already you see opponents begin to stall from the opening whistle and fans prepare themselves for six minutes of backing up. Absent some huge ladle of bad luck, he should have little trouble winning his second state title.

There are some other good wrestlers at this weight class coming out of Goshen. Kooser has had a fantastic year. He won at Bellbrook, Valley View and the Firebird and was 2<sup>nd</sup> at the mammoth GMVWA, losing only to Bo Jordan by technical fall. Last year at 130# he qualified for Columbus and captured an 8<sup>th</sup> place. He seems to have found the perfect niche at this weight class. Scaglia had a fine post-season last year at this weight class qualifying for States where he lost twice. This year he won at Troy, but had a terrible GMVWA, getting pinned in the first round and failing to place. He’ll need to replicate last season with an end of the year flurry. In the meantime Bray and Edwards may have overtaken him. Bray was 4<sup>th</sup> at the GMVWA, including the fall over Scaglia, and 3<sup>rd</sup> at Edgewood. Edwards was 5<sup>th</sup> at the GMVWA but, unlike Bray who was one bout from States last year, did not compete at the district level. Two other possibilities are Bowers, who was 2-2 at districts before being knocked out by Bray and Saunders, the champion at Gallia. Francis, winner at Marian Harding, might be yet another candidate.

There are three returning state qualifiers at Harding, all of whom have placement possibilities. Beach, a two-time qualifier, has not met with good fortune in Columbus in the past. He is 1-4 in those two trips, but he should be better that this year. He was a quarter-finalist at the Ironman and 2<sup>nd</sup> at Brecksville, losing to Orrill in a close final. He was 3<sup>rd</sup> at the CIT, again losing to Orrill and thankful for Chanel’s small enrollment. Massillo, a fine youth wrestler, was 8<sup>th</sup> last year after going 0-2 as a sophomore. He was 3<sup>rd</sup> at the GMVWA, defeating Bray, but losing in overtime to Kooser. Zeman was a state quarter-finalist, but then had a particular nasty draw, losing to Bo Jordan and Kyle Warner. A champion at Avon Lake, he does not wrestle the schedule of the other two. Budka has the inside track for the last spot. He was one bout from States last year at 152# and won at Vermillion after getting a 3<sup>rd</sup> at Avon Lake – up a weight class. Seth Williams has made a leap forward winning at Tiffin and Clyde, and should be a factor here. Snyder and Davis are other possibilities, but I’m still looking for Jake Trejo. Now

a sophomore and, apparently injured, he would slot right in here for Wauseon after a freshman season that saw 34 victories.

There are three excellent state candidates at CEast, but after that the cupboard is bare. Burkhart placed as both a freshman and sophomore at 103# for Carrollton. Now a senior and wrestling at 145# for Claymont, he has one last post-season effort. He was 2<sup>nd</sup> at Barnesville and 5<sup>th</sup> at the Top Gun, but failed to place at Medina. Very experienced, he should do well in close bouts. Stitzlein has moved past him. He was an easy 1<sup>st</sup> at the WIT and 2<sup>nd</sup> at Medina, beating Lemon and Giffin. In the finals he fell behind Van Curen early – taken down three times – but roared back only to lose 8-7. He was 3<sup>rd</sup> at the Top Gun, losing only to Bo Jordan. Somebody has done a great job with him. Last year he qualified at 135#, but drew Isaac Jordan in the first round and lost to Kazimer in the tie-breaker immediately thereafter. He has made immense progress. Allen is one of the leaders at DeSales. He won his home tourney, but failed to place at Brecksville, losing 14-12 to Wenger and 9-8 to Sandman – great efforts. He had to forfeit the second day at the CIT and finished 6<sup>th</sup>. Swartz and Zollar are other thoughts with Scipio a possibility.

State third-placer Fee is back after a hugely successful football season and could again be a finalist. He was 3<sup>rd</sup> at Brecksville, losing only to Orrill on his first appearance back on the mats, but then reversed that outcome with Orrill to win the CIT. He will be seeded away from Jordan at the state meet. After a brilliant junior year, I thought Horovitz was a sure state qualifier. However, a bad weekend culminated by a two-point loss to Gallagher kept him at home. Crestwood has an exceptional squad this year with a powerful line-up, in particular from 145# to 189#. Horovitz, as the igniter, needs to keep the team moving. He was 1<sup>st</sup> at Kenston and Hudson and 2<sup>nd</sup> at Aurora, but was pinned by Novak at the Ohio Duals. Novak always seemed to miss part of the season, but he is also a two-time state qualifier - so, maybe, he is just saving himself for the tournaments. Severino, champ at Riverside, and Bates are likely the favorites for that fourth slot. Still, Wells, and perhaps Gatalyak, may be successful challengers.

**152#**

**PROJECTED CHAMPION: IAN MILLER (OAK HARBOR)**

Top Contenders

2	Stephens (Graham)	14	Covington (Athens)
3	Bloniak (Highland)	15	Thayer (Buckeye)
4	Klosz (Holy Name)	16	Otero (Circleville)
5	Porter (Crestwood)	17	Ponchak (Morgan)
6	Hetterscheidt (Olentangy)	18	Isaacs (Valley View)
7	LeBoeuf (Oakwood)	19	Ferguson (DeSales)
8	Gallagher (Aurora)	20	Dickey (Edgewood)
9	King (Lake Catholic)	21	Burcher (Indian Valley)
10	I. Williams (Tiffin)	22	Mossing (Toledo CC)
11	Poyser (Louisville)	23	Cash (Jefferson)
12	Sherrock (Springfield NW)	24	Galbraith (Carrollton)
13	Kutzli (Wauseon)	25	Buchanan (Tecumseh)

If there had been a team Miller at last year's state meet it would have outscored all but four teams – Wadsworth, St. Edward, Graham, and Monroeville. Yes, it was a great year to have the surname Miller, as eight unrelated (as far as I know) wrestlers named Miller made it to Columbus. There was Curtis, Chris, and Kaleb, along with Joey, Nick and Ian, plus Arizona and one who just used initials, B.J. They won three individual state titles (Nick, B.J., and Ian) and had three other placers, as well. They ranged in weight class from 103# to 189#, and represented just about every part of Ohio and all but one finished with at least one victory.

This year there are likely to be fewer Millers in the bracket sheet (five were seniors last year), but one of them, Ian, will likely be one of the contestants in what I see as one of the most anticipated match-ups of 2011. Miller was 3<sup>rd</sup> as a sophomore and began his junior year at 140# where he finished 2<sup>nd</sup> to the #1 ranked Villalonga at the Ironman and then won at Medina. Sometime after that be it for team reasons, growth, strategy, or Felipe, he moved to 145#. That set up a potential highlight battle with my top choice at that weight, Matt Stephens. It never happened, as we'll discuss in the next paragraph, and Miller cruised to the title winning by technical fall in the final. This year Miller won the Ironman and was ranked 2<sup>nd</sup> in the country after his strong performance there. He had four falls, including one in the finals, and one major decision in dominating at Medina, and is wrestling at an exceedingly high level this year. He will be very tough to beat.

Still, that "dream" match-up will not go away. Stephens is back and is the only real obstacle to a second Miller state title. He was 4<sup>th</sup> as a freshman at 140#, and runner-up the next year, losing to three-time champ Hightower in the finals. Last year, on collision course with Miller, he met three-time placer Ice in the semi-finals, a wrestler he had previously defeated. Still Ice opened with a strong takedown and following an escape

Stephens matched it with an even more physical takedown. Ice was clearly injured and was awarded the match by disqualification. Stephens was inconsolable. Ice, not surprisingly, was not the same wrestler 24 hours later and quickly lost the final. This year Stephens won the GMVWA, beating DeHart by default and Fullenkamp by a single point. At the Ironman Stephens was 3<sup>rd</sup>, losing by a point in the semi-finals to the wrestler Miller defeated by two points.

Again, Miller and Stephens will be seeded apart with, for the third time, a finals match-up clearly in play. The key here is Mark Martin of St. Edward. Stephens shut him out at the Ironman 3-0, but Martin “got in on” Stephens a couple of times, but could not convert. At Medina Martin was never really in the bout as Miller dominated 10-1.

There are a couple of wrestlers vacillating between 152# and 160#. One of those is state qualifier Will LeBoeuf who could go either way. Strategically, there is little difference unless Isaac Jordan is unable to compete – which as of now seems unlikely. So I’ve ranked him here on the general premise that if given a choice most coaches and wrestlers choose the lower weight class. He trails only Stephens at this district. He was 4<sup>th</sup> at the savage 152# weight class at GMVWA. At 160# he was 2<sup>nd</sup> at the Firebird and 1<sup>st</sup> at Bellbrook and Valley View. Sherrock, 5<sup>th</sup> at the GMVWA, is next best and has been a solid performer all year. The last berth might fall to Covington who has won at least three tournaments with an Isaacs or Buchanan possibly in play. However, don’t overlook Otero who has just made the drop to 152#.

There is very little depth at CEast. Hetterscheidt is the clear leader after qualifying at this weight class last year. This year he was 1<sup>st</sup> at Olentangy and 5<sup>th</sup> at a very rugged weight class at Medina. A strong 4<sup>th</sup> at the Top Gun cements his status as a top contender for a high place at States. Rather unusually most of the best contenders flow out of the Columbus area. Ferguson, Galbraith, and Scott all have district victories on their resumes and should do well at this somewhat depleted district. However, Ponchak and Burcher will challenge from the East, with Overholt also in the mix. Should Higgins move down permanently he would challenge for the top spot.

There is real strength and depth at Harding. Miller of course, is the alpha wrestler, but at least three other competitors have powerful state potential. The sophomore Klosz was 6<sup>th</sup> last year, including a narrow loss to Stephens. Extremely talented, he easily won the CIT, shutting out Hardtke in the final. He also dominated at Lorain and will be difficult to defeat. Bloniak was 8<sup>th</sup> last year at this weight class, losing close bouts to Gresham and Martin. He was 2<sup>nd</sup> at Medina, pinning Petrim and majoring Hammer before running into Miller. He also crushed the field at North Canton and the Dies, pinning Hetterscheidt at the first named tournament. Williams has been winning big in the northwest at places like Tiffin and Clyde. He lost his go-to-state bout last year to Beauch, 2-0. That’s a very strong quartet, but another such is not that far behind. Mossing was a semi-finalist at Brecksville, while Kutzli was 5<sup>th</sup> there and 3<sup>rd</sup> at Perrysburg. He lost last year’s district quarterfinal to Bloniak, 4-2. Thayer was 2-2 at the district level last year, losing to Beauch and Klosz, 4-2. Somewhat concerning was

the 5<sup>th</sup> place finish at the Dies. Add in Horn and Caywood (another great name from the past) and it's quite a lineup.

There are four really solid contenders at Firestone and then what appears to be a sharp drop-off. Porter was a district finalist last year, losing a 6-4 decision to Fee. A state quarter-finalist, he eventually ended up 7<sup>th</sup>. This year, up two weight classes, he won at Aurora, finished 2<sup>nd</sup> at Kenston, captured 3<sup>rd</sup> at Hudson, and was undefeated at the Ohio Duals. Gallagher has missed almost the entire year after his state qualification of last year. Very determined, he'll be much fresher than most of his competition. King looked tremendous at Brecksville, winning the title in impressive fashion. He was only 5<sup>th</sup> at the CIT, but was clearly not himself during the competition. Gallagher beat him 8-6 in their district confrontation. Poyser was 4<sup>th</sup> at North Canton behind Bloniak and 6<sup>th</sup> at the Top Gun, including a narrow loss to Hetterscheidt. Backing up this quartet are Dickey, Cash, and Sill.

### 160#

#### **PROJECTED CHAMPION: ISAAC JORDAN (GRAHAM)**

##### Top Contenders

2	Witt (Oak Harbor)	15	Bulstrom (Canton South)
3	Martin (Toledo Central Catholic)	16	Riker (New Philadelphia)
4	Higgins (Bradley)	17	Gadd (Olentangy)
5	Lamancusa (West Branch)	18	Short (Hillsboro)
6	Boyce (Minerva)	19	Kucera (Sparta Highland)
7	Matarrese (Crestview)	20	Mirto (Canfield)
8	Watkins (Tipp City)	21	Tharpe (Bellbrook)
9	Tanier (Wauseon)	22	Lias (Hubbard)
10	Fleming (Port Clinton)	23	Burge (Wilmington)
11	Eddy (Harrison Central)	24	Viliminovic (Highland)
12	Johnson (Shelby)	25	Jones (Tri-Valley)
13	Metz (Lexington)	26	Lawler (University School)
14	Stephens (Bellevue)		

Well, we have a potential dream match-up between Graham and Oak Harbor at 152#, and if that's not enough we could have an encore at the very next weight. Isaac Jordan was 3<sup>rd</sup> at 112# as a freshman, losing only to three-time champ Ty Mitch and then powered his way to a state title at 135# last year. Now he will compete, after returning from injury, with another four weight class increase. It is, coincidentally, exactly the same career path that the incomparable Steve Luke followed in high school and which led to three state titles and eventually an NCAA crown. Jordan was hurt in the first week of the season and has not participated since then. He seems a relatively small 160-pounder, but that may be more perception than reality. I am anxious to see him this January.



Konner Witt was a state runner-up at 152# last year and like Jordan, has an older brother who won a state title (or three as in Jordan's case). I thought he showed great improvement last year and that continues in this his senior season. At the Ironman he was 2<sup>nd</sup> to Phillips at 171# in, frankly, a not overly strong weight class. I thought he looked great for his first time down to 160# at Medina – at least until his final round loss to Abounader. Fortunately, he and Jordan will be seeded apart so their meeting, should it occur, will be in the finals.

This is one of the better weight classes in Division II. But, if you are looking to be a finalist, it might be better than the one that precedes it. After all, Jordan is injured and up eight weight classes in two years and there might be a hint of vulnerability. In this case, by the way, I think the seedings may work against Jordan. He'll want to wrestle Witt early when they both have to make weight. Give him 24 hours and Witt with that lanky frame will be at 180 pounds on Saturday night. How big a concern that would be with the Graham brain trust is not known to me, but there are ways around it.

Witt emerges from a solid district that will test him, but not overly much. The best is Martin who was 4<sup>th</sup> at 152# last year, and is a tough, stubborn competitor. His four state wins last year were all by one or two points, including one in overtime. Witt did beat him in the district finals. Martin was one win from placing at the Ironman and 2<sup>nd</sup> at Brecksville when he was injured in the semi-finals and was forced to forfeit the final. He was also 2<sup>nd</sup> at the CIT to Walters. Tanier went 1-2 at states last year, and has built on that this year. He was 8<sup>th</sup> at Brecksville, but looked a little shaky on his feet. At Perrysburg he was a solid 2<sup>nd</sup> losing only to Witt (10-0). There are a lot of possibilities for the last berth. Stephens was the state alternate at this weight class, but was 2<sup>nd</sup> at Bellevue to Johnson, and 2<sup>nd</sup> to Fleming at Avon Lake by a 9-2 margin. Metz won the Gorman over Johnson (2-1). Viliminovic was most recently 3<sup>rd</sup> at the Dies. It's rather difficult to tease out the exact order from that kind of data.

Jordan should pretty much have things his own way at Goshen. The principal challenger is likely to be the determined Watkins who was the state alternate at 145# last year. Undeclared to this point, he has not wrestled an overly testing schedule to-date, winning last at Troy. Short started the year at 171# with a win at Franklin but was at 160# in his 3<sup>rd</sup> place finish at Bellbrook. Tharpe was 6<sup>th</sup> in last year's district at 152#, but was 4<sup>th</sup> at Bellbrook, losing to Short, 13-10. The 5<sup>th</sup> at Edgewood is also a bit worrisome. Burge and Parks are two other possibilities for at least two achievable state tickets.

There are also qualification opportunities at Firestone. Lamancusa posted a perfect regular season record last year, lost his sectional final, and then only managed a district 5<sup>th</sup> just failing to qualify. This year he has again been outstanding with a win at Riverside, a strong 2<sup>nd</sup> to Roddy at the Dies, and two finalist berths. He has to be the frontrunner this year. I had state qualifier Matarrese right behind him, but I saw him get hurt during the Kenston final and he is not yet back. A state qualifier last year, he won at Aurora and was 2<sup>nd</sup> at Hudson before the injury. Mirto and Lias both won two district bouts last year, but Mirto hasn't been winning much at the big tournaments, while Lias

has been at 171#. I kind of thought Lawler, an exceptional youth wrestler a few years ago, might surface here, but there are a lot of forfeits for University School right now. That leaves Bulstrom, who has won a couple of tournaments, as a possible choice with everything else in confusion.

It is a very interesting district at East. Higgins was a state qualifier at 135# last year, but has moved to this weight class without missing a beat. I thought, after seeing him, that he would place last year, but he was unlucky. This year I'm sure that he will place. He has a couple tourney titles, including one at Bradley. He may decide to move down to 152#, but that final decision will undoubtedly come later. Boyce, now a junior, made it to Columbus last year and lost in the first round to Witt 8-5, and then in overtime in the next round. He has been a constant finalist, winning, for example, at both the Hoppel and Cambridge, but losing at Elgin. He was an impressive 3<sup>rd</sup> at Medina beating Viliminovic, Barlow, and Arrendale and losing only to Witt. Lamancusa beat him 5-2 in the Dual. Riker had a great start last season, but did not qualify. This year he won again at the WIT, and seems headed in the right direction. As a sophomore Eddy was a district quarter-finalist before losing an 11-9 thriller to state qualifier Zang. This year he won at Dover and was twice a finalist. Gadd and Kucera may supplant the last two. Gadd had three wins at Medina, but just failed to place. Impressively, he was at 171# at the Ohio Duals and beat state placer Ryba. Kucera is the Marion Harding champ and is a definite threat.

## #171

### PROJECTED CHAMPION: JAKE CRAMER (OAK HARBOR)

#### Top Contenders

2	Gresham (Goshen)	14	Lawrence (Southeast)
3	Ryan (Graham)	15	Taylor (Gallia)
4	McCall (Wauseon)	16	Braun (Kenston)
5	McNamara (Aurora)	17	Adkinson (Bellevue)
6	Kluk (Highland)	18	Kuhn (Marlington)
7	Ryba (Crestwood)	19	Riggs (Bradley)
8	King (Hebron Lakewood)	20	Lutes (Minerva)
9	Gryniuk (Washington CH)	21	Ratliff (Shelby)
10	Clark (Whitehall)	22	Cole-Young (Kenton Ridge)
11	Baker (Alder)	23	Daniels (Warrensville)
12	Smith (Clyde)	24	Pohlman (Oakwood)
13	Zang (Hartley)	25	Walter (River View)
		26	Wilson (Monroe)

It is a terrific foursome sitting at this weight class and one can hardly imagine a better pair of semi-finals if they are matched against one another. It would also be a contrast in styles with blinding speed pitted against brute strength and crafty management meeting up with go-for-broke exuberance. There will be no seeding at this weight class since only Ryan and Gresham are seedable and they emerge from the same district.

Let us hope the pairings gods work in our favor and separate the champs – since the top four exit but two districts and that would provide balanced competition.

Gresham has been the early favorite even while spending most of the year at 189#. He was 8<sup>th</sup> as a freshman at 135# and 3<sup>rd</sup> last year at 152#, losing 1-0 in the semi-finals to three-time champ Hightower. He was 2<sup>nd</sup> at both the SWOCA and Brecksville, losing two narrow bouts to Korb with both of them up a weight class. He has great credentials, but then they all do.

Ryan has put up big numbers. He was a sophomore state champion at 160# and then a runner-up to Wukie at that weight class last year. It was a puzzling bout in that Ryan was strangely passive and lost on a well-deserved stalling call. As good as he is, one might have expected a more aggressive approach. This year he was 3<sup>rd</sup> at the Ironman (losing 2-1 to Witt) and 3<sup>rd</sup> at the GMVWA after being upset by Newburg. He took the Top Gun beating the always-tough O'Neill in overtime. He'll need to be at his best to win, but that is certainly possible.

McCall is a powerful wrestler who has spent time this year at 189#. He was 1<sup>st</sup> at Perrysburg, but only 4<sup>th</sup> at Brecksville during his first week at 171#. He matched up with Cramer in the Ohio Duals, winning 8-5, but at 189# that likely favored him. He was 5<sup>th</sup> last year at that weight class, losing to Christman and Lamberg. He is one of the leaders of an exceptional Wauseon team.

Cramer is the wild card here. He, too was 5<sup>th</sup> last year at Columbus but at 140# after starting his high school career at about 103#. He, too, has spent considerable time at 189#, twice beating the excellent Trautwein at that weight class. He was sensational at Medina showing blinding speed blended with sufficient power to pin four of his five opponents including Robinson in the finals. He does not, however, have the raw strength of some of the larger 171's. He can win especially if he draws away from the 171's that have exceptional horsepower. Should Cramer take the title that could give Oak Harbor three consecutive titles – reminiscent of the three they won with Tank, Witt and Magrum.

The Harding sectional not only features McCall and Cramer, but will also showcase the exceptional sophomore Kluk. Last year, as a ninth grader he captured a district 3<sup>rd</sup> at 160# and finished 7<sup>th</sup> after losing a quarter-final rout to Ryan. He has been injured all year, but surfaced this past weekend at this weight. If physically sound, he should qualify. That leaves one spot available, with Adkinson 2-2 at last year's district, a potential qualifier. However Smith, winner at Perrysburg, may have passed him. Ratliff and Sustar are also in play, but just barely.

There is much the same situation at Goshen. Ryan and Gresham should dominate, but Gryniuk a state qualifier last year, should nail that third place medal. He was 4<sup>th</sup> at the GMVWA to Ryan and 3<sup>rd</sup> at the Top Gun, losing early to Bender, but coming back strong. The powerful Taylor is a possibility, but Cole, Young, Pohlman, and Wilson will all be in the battle for that last qualification opening.

There are some solid contenders at Firestone, but I think they may be a half-step behind that top quartet. Three of them qualified last year with all of them winning at least one bout and Ryba placing 5<sup>th</sup>. He is up two weight classes and has a couple of upset losses. He was 1<sup>st</sup> at Aurora and Kenston, but lost by five points to McNamara in the Hudson final. McNamara has had some injury issues, but he sure knows how to win. He lost to Kluk by just 9-7 last year, and he has a consistency that makes him good in every bout. Braun was a surprise qualifier (at least to me) last year, and he may have to replicate that again this year. He was 6<sup>th</sup> at Solon and did not place at Kenston, but he was clearly a second-half wrestler last year. Two other possibilities show up in Portage County. Lawrence won two district bouts last year and, most recently, was 4<sup>th</sup> at a very tough Dies weight class. Kuhn is the other possibility from that area with Daniels and Szep also looking for an opening.

There are some really fine 171-pounders at the CEast District and when they look at other districts they have to wonder why is it so tough everywhere else. However, there are some uncertainties even here as to whether state placer Kullman will stay at 189 pounds or drop back down to 171#. My guess is that they'll leave Lutes here and keep Kullman at what now looks to be an easier weight class. Clark, King, Zang and Baker all have previous state experience, with King finishing 8<sup>th</sup> at this weight class. Baker and Clark both had a "bagel" in the state win column, but can build on that experience. Baker most recently won at Elgin, but was also the champion at Clinton Massie. Clark won at Logan, Elm and Ready, while King took titles at Licking County and Coffman. Add in Zang's win and clearly this quartet has pretty well dominated the weight class in this area. Riggs and Lutes are also consistent winners, with Walters also scoring well. This is a very difficult district, indeed.

### 189#

#### **PROJECTED CHAMPION: HUSTON EVANS (GRAHAM)**

##### Top Contenders

2	Blankenship (Alder)	14	Kelton (River View)
3	Eshelman (Milton Union)	15	Eiler (Tecumseh)
4	Monroe (Crestwood)	16	Rambo (Mansfield Madison)
5	Lockhart (Coventry)	17	Harble (Licking Valley)
6	Johnson (Dover)	18	Seiler (Wauseon)
7	Kullman (Minerva)	19	Kent (Granville)
8	Ashburn (Streetsboro)	20	Hirschy (Van Wert)
9	Recknagel (Rossford)	21	Flanagan (Canfield)
10	Melchiorre (Walsh Jesuit)	22	Brausch (Wilmington)
11	Maglecic (Norwood)	23	Hogan (Shelby)
12	Lehner (Lexington)	24	Hughes (Bay)
13	Auletta (Orange)	25	Austing (Fenwick)

Huston Evans has already had a splendid career and seems to be writing a new chapter every month. A state junior high champion, he jumped right in as a freshman at 152# finishing 2<sup>nd</sup> to the takedown artist McGookey. Last year at 171# he beat the favored Lamberg 9-8 on his way to a state title. This year he was 2<sup>nd</sup> at the Ironman, losing a close 2-1 final to the #1 ranked Morgan McIntosh and defeated Utley in the semi-finals. He crushed the field at the GMVWA and beat Tayse and Utley on his way to winning the Top Gun. He will be a heavy favorite in March.

He'll be in charge of a good district at Goshen. Eshelman was a state qualifier at 160# two years ago, but did see district action last year. This year he won at Edgewood and Troy and was a strong 2<sup>nd</sup> to Evans at the GMVWA. He has good placement potential. Maglecic lost a 6-4 first round decision to Blankenship and failed to place. He was a big winner at Bellbrook while Eiler, who he beat to go to states, has also improved. He won at Valley View and DeSales and was 3<sup>rd</sup> at the GMVWA, losing by fall to Evans. Brausch has caught my eye several times and has been a consistent placer. Austing is a bit of a long shot here.

The best district is at East. Assuming I'm right about Kullman, there'll be four returning state qualifiers. The most successful last year was Blankenship, who won three bouts – all of them very close to finish 4<sup>th</sup>. He does not appear to wrestle a terribly testing schedule, but I've not seen evidence of a loss this year. He was a big winner most recently at Elgin. Kullman placed at 160# where three wins got him 6<sup>th</sup> place. This year he has wrestled a busy schedule, winning at Cambridge, getting 2<sup>nd</sup> at the Hoppel and getting injured at Elgin. Kelton had a brutal draw on the first day of States, catching two-time champion Tomusseit and then Cross. A consistent placer, he should vie for possible placement. The wrestler most likely to challenge Blankenship here is Keith Johnson. He was 7<sup>th</sup> last year with wins over King and Gryniuk. He was a solid 4<sup>th</sup> at the Top Gun losing only to Utley and Tayse (by a takedown). There are two very good back-ups at East. Harble was injured just a bout from his state opportunity, while Kent missed qualification by a single win. Kent won at West Jefferson, while Harble won over Leidecker at Olentangy. Also here is Keenan, and the world seems a little brighter place with a Charlie Keenan once again competing for the Big Red (bring on a Moxley).

There is not quite the same quantity of talent at Harding. Recknagel qualified at this weight class last year, but just failed to place. He won over Zang at Marion Harding, was 3<sup>rd</sup> at Oak Harbor behind Cramer and Trautwein, and has seemingly won a million dual meets. Rambo and Seiler are more experienced, but the sophomore Lehner is quickly moving forward. He just won at Clyde after finishing 3<sup>rd</sup> at the Gorman behind O'Neill and Gross, and defeating Hogan and Rambo. Hirschy, Hughes and Hogan also have possibilities here, but the pairings will be important.

There is a solid quintet of hopefuls at Firestone, at least a couple of whom should take a low-to-middle place. Monroe hasn't been the dominator I expected this year, but he did win at Aurora (by a point), but was 2<sup>nd</sup> at Kenston and 3<sup>rd</sup> at Hudson. He did beat Melchiorre at the Ohio Duals, but lost to Cramer. He was 8<sup>th</sup> last year at States, including a win over Recknagel and a 3-2 loss to Blankenship. Melchiorre was "two and

out” at Columbus, but I thought he did a great job in qualifying. He’s been out most of the year and just now getting into shape. I saw the sophomore Ashburn early last year and didn’t take much notice. However, he missed state qualification by two points, and continues to improve this year. He finished ahead of Monroe at Hudson and was 7<sup>th</sup> at the Top Gun. He should make it this time. Lockhart qualified at 152# last year and lost to Gresham in the first round, 3-1. He ended up going 1-2. Now at 189# he was 2<sup>nd</sup> to Wheeler at the Dies and won at the North Coast. Auletta, a transfer, was 4<sup>th</sup> at Kenston, and was one bout from States. This is a great group with Flanagan, a possible, back-up

## 215#

### **PROJECTED CHAMPION: TRAVIS MCINTOSH (MIAMI TRACE)**

#### Top Contenders

2	Erb (Wapakoneta)	15	Brown (Big Walnut)
3	Shaw (Washington CH)	16	Lowry (Crestwood)
4.	Ward (Clyde)	17	Burks (Lexington)
5	Day (Valley View)	18	Stinemetz (Olentangy)
6	Silvus (Springfield Shawnee)	19	Gordon (Granville)
7	Redman (Licking Valley)	20	Vinson (Kenmore)
8	Thompson (Mansfield Madison)	21	Miller (Perry)
9	Meyer (Graham)	22	Minch (Celina)
10	Stone (Akron St. Vincent)	23	McGee (Oak Harbor)
11	Johnston (Claymont)	24	Moray (Steubenville)
12	Krall (Wauseon)	25	Leto (Norwalk)
13	Jackson (Hartley)	26	James (West Branch)
14	Padavick (Geneva)	27	Kiracofe (Lima Bath)

There haven’t been a lot of runaway victories at this weight class in Division II. The last five championships have been decided by one point – and two of those were overtime struggles. The last winner to gain a decision by more than one point was Jason Marshall in 2005. This year should be little different. The top contenders met at the Top Gun with McIntosh winning in that four overtime marathon 3-2. It should be a warning to McIntosh, since Erb seems to have an uncanny ability to reverse those results – just ask Jake Henderson.

I’ve had McIntosh at the top of my lists since Christmas, but now I’m worried. He beat Erb and that always seems to inspire him. McIntosh was 2<sup>nd</sup> last year at 189#, losing to the “irresistible force,” Max Thomusseit. This year he has dominated, winning the GMVWA over the excellent Shaw and, as mentioned, defeating Erb in the Top Gun final. He is big and mobile and likes to score. Erb gives perception (or reality) of massiveness. He was 4<sup>th</sup> at this weight class as a freshman, but missed out his sophomore year when he was pincerred at the district level by the eventual state finalists. Last year he was 6<sup>th</sup> at Brecksville and ironically the three eventual state champs (Tavanello, Hayes, and Erb) all wrestled that night – and all three lost finishing

2<sup>nd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup>, and 6<sup>th</sup>. At any rate, Erb was 2<sup>nd</sup> at the district and the following weekend came back to win his last three state bouts to win the title. This year he has lost only to Tavanello (on a late 3<sup>rd</sup> period takedown) and McIntosh. They'll be seeded and should they meet, I think the referee will be the critical (perhaps deciding) component of the outcome. We'll see if aggressiveness is rewarded.

It's a compact list of contenders at Goshen, but they are all excellent. We've talked about McIntosh, but Riley Shaw, a junior, is very good. He was 4<sup>th</sup> at this weight class as a tenth-grader and won over 40 bouts. He was 2<sup>nd</sup> at the GMVWA and 3<sup>rd</sup> at the Top Gun, losing to McIntosh each time. In all likelihood Erb will have to beat them both to repeat. Day also qualified at this weight class as a sophomore, but quickly lost twice. He has won the last two weeks at Valley View and Bellbrook. Silvus, up from 171#, was 3<sup>rd</sup> at the GMVWA, losing only to McIntosh. Meyer was 7<sup>th</sup> as a freshman (at 140#), but was the state alternate last year missing a return after losing to Day in that ultimate tie-breaker. He was 4<sup>th</sup> at GMVWA, losing to McIntosh and Silvus, but failed to place at the Top Gun after losing to Shaw. There are five quality performers here, but only four can go.

Erb should win his district this year, but not without some mild peril. Ward, who was the state alternate at 189# last year losing to Recknagel by a takedown, has gone wild this year. Undefeated in 25 bouts, he has won 20 of them by fall. Beware. Krall was a state quarter-finalist in Division III at this weight class wrestling for Liberty Center, but now is at Wauseon. He was 2<sup>nd</sup> at 285# at Perrysburg and has performed well at both weight classes. Thompson and Burks have a long personal history with Thompson winning at the Gorman to take the title. Thompson was the state alternate last year, while Burks went 2-2 after drawing Erb in the first round. Minch, McGee, and the freshman, Leto, are other possibilities, along with Kiracofe, and they each have some solid success this year. This is a very attractive district bracket.

The Firestone District does not have near the firepower that we've seen in the previous two paragraphs. Stone qualified last year at 215# as a sophomore and went 1-2 and losing to Shaw. He is much better this year, winning at Solon and placing at Brecksville and the CIT. He has low-to-middle placement potential. I saw Padavick win at Kenston as he did at Riverside and he, too, is much improved. However, his schedule does not match up well with some of the top boys. Lowry has had a breakout season placing at four tournaments and winning at Aurora. He should qualify. Vinson is my fourth choice at this district, but it's really a wide-open affair. Miller and James are not far behind as are another half-dozen possibilities.

It's a terribly crowded district at CEast with excellent match-ups from the first round on a mathematical certainty. Three of the top contenders have previous state experience – Redman, Jackson, and Brown – but they went a combined 1-6. Since there are, surprisingly enough, no major tournaments in the Columbus area judgments are often weak for lack of data. Redman is the returning district champion, but is only ranked third in the Central District. He faces a strong group of local 215's with state qualifier Brown and Jackson, along with the excellent Stinemetz, also in the picture.

The Eastern District does not have the same depth of quality, but Johnston matches up well and Gunn, Shurina, and Shalosky have upset hopes. The entanglements are many here, but I see Redman, Jackson, and Johnston qualifying, with Brown, Stinemetz, and Gordon battling for last spot.

### 285#

#### **PROJECTED CHAMPION: TREVOR STRICKLAND (CLYDE)**

##### Top Contenders

2	Eckroth (Steubenville)	15	Buckler (Eaton)
3	Lugo (Akron St. Vincent)	16	Fleck (Wapakoneta)
4	Wagoner (Shelby)	17	Forsee (New Richmond)
5	Pavlik (Ravenna)	18	Willis (Grandville)
6	Higgins (Marlington)	19	Cox (Mansfield Madison)
7	Young (Olentangy)	20	Blue (Valley View)
8	Lee (New Lexington)	21	Sharp (West Branch)
9	Maxworthy (Buckeye)	22	Ramos (Norwalk)
10	Pressley (Canal Winchester)	23	Shough (Bellefontaine)
11	Zappitella (Lake Catholic)	24	Mantush (Kenston)
12	Griffith (Big Walnut)	25	Pickerel (Toledo Central Catholic)
13	Settles (Hamilton Twp.)	26	Felton (Minerva)
14	Nawalaniec (Benedictine)	27	Ford (Circleville)

As has been the case for the past few years, the heavyweight division is muddled and undefined. Only four underclassmen (only one of whom placed) were in last year's state bracket, so there are a lot of relatively new faces to consider. The last dominating figure was seven years ago when two-time champ (and, later, NCAA titlist) Dustin Fox reigned in Division II – although Nathan Sharp, the master of the overtime win, was also a two-time winner. What we do know is that the last three champions came from the Eastern/Southeastern District. That could well be the case again this year with the return of state placer John Eckroth, but there are least a half dozen other solid contenders. Let's look at each of the districts.

The deepest district is the one at Columbus East. There are as many as eight potential contenders for the four qualifying slots. The uber heavyweight here is returning state placer John Eckroth. He was 4<sup>th</sup> last year, beating both incumbent state qualifiers at Firestone – Pavlik and Higgins. He was 2<sup>nd</sup> at the Top Gun, losing a close bout to Mayes in the final. As the only returning heavyweight placer, he is one of the top favorites to win it all. In mathematics the transitive property is in force if when A is greater than B, and B is greater than C, then A is greater than C. That is not happening here, as it rarely does at the heavyweight class. Settles is also a returning qualifier, but he drew eventual champ Carpenter in the first round and ended up going 1-2. He won at Hamilton Twp., but has not wrestled an overly demanding schedule. Griffith won at both Cambridge and Marion Harding, but was only 6<sup>th</sup> at Elgin, though he did default his



last consolation bout. Pressley broke his arm at last year's sectional and missed district action. He is a mammoth heavyweight and got a late start this year getting down to weight. He holds a win over Griffith, but was 8<sup>th</sup> at Medina, losing an overtime bout and a 2-1 decision to Mayes, the soon to be Top Gun runner-up. Willis won two bouts at 215# last year and has twice been a finalist at important tournaments, while Felton, yet another contender, was 1<sup>st</sup> at the Hoppel. A real impressive long shot is Young, 4<sup>th</sup> at the Top Gun and 5<sup>th</sup> at North Canton. He did not have a good result at Medina, but he is one to watch. Clearly, with this many possibilities, body types, and possible pairings, identifying the qualifiers is perilous. Let's go with Eckroth, Pressley, Settles, and Young.

There is no shortage of state candidates at Harding as well. The top guy is clearly the rather awesome Strickland. He was 6<sup>th</sup> at 215# last year, but has really blossomed in his senior season. At 6'6" he has great leverage and strength which has propelled him to titles at Clyde, West Jefferson, and Edison among others. He is a superior pinner ending bouts before extraneous factors can interfere. The only wrestler close to Strickland at this district is Nick Wagoner. He was 2-2 at last year's district and has won at Bellevue and the Gorman. He anchors a fine Shelby squad. Maxworthy has missed almost the entire year, but returned with a big win at the Dies. We didn't see him at the district level last year, but at least after this initial weekend of competition he looks like a player. Fleck had two district wins last year and was 2<sup>nd</sup> at the Firebird and 6<sup>th</sup> at Brecksville which included a tough overtime loss to the eventual runner-up. He struggled at the Top Gun, losing initially to Young. Cox, Pickerel, and Ramos have all produced some solid outcomes and could replace either Maxworthy or Fleck (or both) in Columbus.

Both Pavlik and Higgins saw state action last year, but neither placed and only Pavlik won a bout. Pavlik was 3<sup>rd</sup> at the Top Gun and 2<sup>nd</sup> at Kenston in the best heavyweight bout I've seen this year – a 13-12 four overtime thriller. (Why can't we catch that kind on the telecast?) I think, however, that Lugo has leapfrogged (is that a word?) the two state qualifiers. He's been very busy – 2<sup>nd</sup> CIT, 3<sup>rd</sup> Solon, 4<sup>th</sup> Brecksville, and 5<sup>th</sup> Ironman. That touches about every base, but titleholder and that may happen in February. He is a mobile big man who doesn't tire. He was the state alternate last year, losing 3-1, to Higgins in his go-to-state bout. It shouldn't happen this time around. Zappitella has two district wins last year and was 4<sup>th</sup> at the CIT and 5<sup>th</sup> at Brecksville. He completes the top quartet. Mantush is on the "smaller" side, but is able to out condition folks. He's been a consistent placer, including a 4<sup>th</sup> at Elgin. Nawalaniec won at both Riverside and Willoughby South, but I don't know if his schedule has prepared him for the upcoming rigors. Sharp, there are actually two of them competing for West Branch, has upset potential.

There is not nearly the depth or quality at Goshen. Lee was a state qualifier two years ago, but I have essentially no results on his progress. He was the alternate here last year, losing two close bouts. Buckler won two district bouts last year and was one of only five underclassmen in the Goshen bracket. This year he was 3<sup>rd</sup> at the GMVWA and 7<sup>th</sup> at the Top Gun, losing to Mayes and Pavlik and pinning Bovey. Add in Forsee, Ford, and Shough for possible depth, but the surprise is Blue from Valley View.

Besides rhyming nicely, he has won at Bellbrook, Franklin, and Valley View and cannot be overlooked. Valley View has had some good big men the last few years – Focht and the Day brothers – and this may be another.

## TEAMS

1. Graham They scored about 60 points less last year than in 2009, but it was still the second highest point total ever recorded in Division II action. This year they have nine potential finalists – though some erosion will undoubtedly occur. Still, there is no question that they will win their 11<sup>th</sup> consecutive title, and when Micah Jordan is a senior they'll be looking for their 14<sup>th</sup> straight and surpassing the great St. Edward record.
2. Oak Harbor It seems that every year they have a great trio of wrestlers (Tank, Witt, Magrum or Stone, Miller, Witt) and this year is no exception. Miller will have a tough struggle with Stephens, while Witt and Cramer may not even be most people's favorite. Add in Bergman and, maybe Hackworth and that should get you 80 points.
3. Walsh Jesuit They are not a great dual meet team, but DiJulius and Skonieczny should generate 50 points and Stainbrook should place. Tack on some extra effort from Novak, Tutolo, and Melchiorre and the runner-up trophy could be in sight. That will be even more likely should Kostandaras have a hot weekend at 119#.
4. Highland Mirman and Bloniak have had great years and should both place in the top four. Kluk is a great young talent who should be fresh at 171#, and it's time for Rininger to make one all-out effort. It would help if Kunzler, the younger Bloniak, or Viliminovic could help.
5. Claymont Always a fine team with a superior coaching staff, they seem to uncover new talent every year. Burcher, Langdon, and Warner are a formidable trio and all of them were finalists at Medina. Add in former state placer Burkhart (who needs to step it up) and Johnston and they can hold the top five ranking.
6. Padua Fickel and Romanchik are possible finalists while DaFonseca has placement ability. It's time for Mason to get a place at 112#, while Becker could conceivably help.
7. Olentangy Fiorucci and Hetterscheidt are proven scorers while Caserta, Stinemetz, and Fosco could help. Young may be better than we think and add points at 285#. They need Stinemetz to have a couple hot weekends.

8. Crestwood A fine dual meet team that needs to prove it can place wrestlers in the top four. Their lineup from 145# through 215# is great, but we need to see some of them deep in the consolations. Ryba, Monroe, and Porter should all score well and Matarrese needs to get healthy. Horovitz has had a shaky period, but he could still be a big-time scorer. Then, if Lowry, Nemeč, or Kager can help, a top five finish is inevitable.
9. Lake Catholic State 3<sup>rd</sup> placer Fee is very good and King and Zappitella could also score well. The younger Fee doesn't look like the same wrestler we saw last year so that needs to be fixed and Taton and Bryan need to help. And what about Lestock?
10. Wauseon Another team like Crestwood with nice dual meet balance, but in need of some heavy state scorers. We know McCall has that potential, but Nicely, Krall, Seiler, and Kutzli have to do more. Tanier and Yarnell could also help.
11. Oakwood They have four wrestlers with previous state experience, all of whom could score 10 to 15 points. It won't happen, but if they can get two of the four to do so and add a little help from others, they are a top ten team.
12. Aurora It all depends on Cash, Gallagher, and McNamara, but that's not a bad place to be if Wells or Brezovic can help. We might see a blissful smile or two from the coach.
13. Toledo Central Catholic Martin and Beauch should score heavily, but where will other points come from? Perhaps a Mossing, Leedy, or Pickerel will surprise.

## Division III

### 103 #

#### **PROJECTED CHAMPION: NATHAN TOMASELLO (CVCA)**

#### Top Contenders

2	Fields (Pleasant)	14	Barnes (Girard)
3	Smith (Ready)	15	Crabtree (River Valley)
4	Assad (Chanel)	16	Slonkosky (Versailles)
5	Clary (Dayton Christian)	17	Alvarado (CHCA)
6	Reese (Mechanicsburg)	18	McCoy (Swanton)
7	Ulinski (Woodmore)	19	Rush (Miami East)
8	J. Michel (Edison)	20	Fletcher (Utica)
9	Keller (Delta)	21	Roginsky (Brooklyn)
10	Outward (Martins Ferry)	22	Sowers (Union Local)
11	Durbin (Mapleton)	23	Macke (Deer Park)
12	R. Behringer (Ayersville)	24	Martin (Riverside)
13	Hozan (Black River)	25	Thomas (Westfall)
		26	McKnight (Carlisle)

It is rather unusual that three of the top five placers at this weight class last year have returned to do battle once more, including the defending state champion. Generally, we see almost all 103's migrate to higher weight classes the following year to be replaced in many instances by some exceptional freshmen, and we have some of those as well this year.

Nonetheless, the towering figure (at least metaphorically) at this weight is defending champ Nathan Tomasello. A junior high state runner-up (by one point to Jered Cortez) he started last year with a 4<sup>th</sup> at the Ironman and that vaulted him almost immediately into the upper echelon at what was a solid weight class. Interestingly, he met Brian Spangler three successive weekends and won each time – though, as one might expect, by successively smaller margins. This year he won at the Ironman, defeating the #1 ranked wrestler in the country and then cruised through the Medina, defeating two excellent freshmen in the process.

Fields is a pinning machine (3 each at the district and state level), and gave Tomasello a solid semi-final battle in a 7-5 loss. He then lost another narrow decision to Steiner before rebounding with a third period fall to finish 5<sup>th</sup>. He has won everything entered this year in dominating style, and does not appear to have been pushed by anyone. His biggest win was a first period fall over Gutherrez – a placer at Brecksville. Still, he has not wrestled anything like the schedule encountered by Tomasello. That will be the difference in March.

Assad was part of that brutal Brooklyn sectional that produced the top three state place winners. He was 3<sup>rd</sup> at Columbus, beating Steiner twice, including a fall in the consolation finals. He wrestled Tomasello only in the sectional finals, losing a 16-5 decision. This year he was 2<sup>nd</sup> at Solon, losing a tremendous struggle to Thompson, the Division I stalwart, in overtime and then won handily at Pickerington. He was 1<sup>st</sup> at Brecksville, with only his quarterfinal bout with the freshman Clary close (9-7), and 3<sup>rd</sup> at the CIT losing in overtime to Smith. He'll be away from Tomasello at States and that could mean finalist duty on Saturday night.

Three superior freshmen may, and I use that word advisedly, compete at this weight class. In the next paragraph I'll write about Clary and Reese, while Smith will be covered when dealing with the Coshocton District. There is some strategy here, Clary has been at 103# all year, and size-wise that seems a perfect fit. Smith and Reese, on the other hand, have been at 112# all year. Strategically, 112# is not nearly as strong as this weight class that, in addition, has the number one wrestler in the country, Tomasello, sitting at the top. An argument could be made that everything else being equal, which it rarely is, that 112# might be the place to be.

There is a large drop-off after Tomasello and Assad at the Garfield District. Hozan was 2<sup>nd</sup> at Marian Harding, Black River, and the Gorman, and has put together a fine season. Durbin, 6<sup>th</sup> at the junior high states last year, won most recently at Plymouth, but I was more impressed with his victory at Lorain where he defeated the excellent Maple. Barnes won two bouts at this district level last year, and will be a factor if at this weight class, while a Roginsky or Tschiegg (Orrville) is a long shot.

Two of the best freshmen at this weight class will compete at the Fairmont District. Clary won last year at 96# at the Junior High States, and he is very impressive. I saw him at Brecksville where he finished 3<sup>rd</sup>, losing only to Assad, and that was by a 9-7 score. He has finalist ability and it could even happen this year. Right behind him is Reese, who was 3<sup>rd</sup> in the junior high states at Clary's weight class and is also strong. In the preview he beat the excellent Heidkamp 10-0 at 103#, but has spent most of the year at 112#. It will be an interesting decision since no one dominates at 112# like Tomasello does at 103#. Similarly to what we saw at the Garfield District, there is a big drop-off after the top duo. The young Alvarado has some nice wins, but over suspect competition, while Slonkosky was 4<sup>th</sup> at the GMVWA and 2<sup>nd</sup> at Plymouth behind Durbin. Macke had a district win last year, while Rush won impressively at Troy. If the two freshmen are both at this weight class, there is likely to be a three-way battle for two spots, with Rush and Slonkosky facing off with Alvarado. All these boys are from the Southwest District and it looks like the contingent from the Northwest will be shut out. Maybe, Martin or Mengerink can be a factor.

It's a crowded district at Owens, but the top qualifiers are probably middle-to-low placers at best. The top quartet includes Michel, Keller, Ulinski, and Behringer and the pairings will be important here. I put Michel as marginally the best, but he looked inconsistent at Brecksville, and Assad blew him out 12-1 in the dual. Keller was 3<sup>rd</sup> at the GMVWA, losing only to Crabtree. Ulinski, a fine youth wrestler, has been a consistent finalist and

won at Woodmore and Bellevue, while Behringer won several smaller tourneys. Behringer is the only one of this quartet with past district experience, going 2-2 at this weight class last year. There are plenty of other possibilities. McCoy has district experience. He lost to Behringer in overtime last year, and was 2<sup>nd</sup> at Woodmore. However, Ulinski beat him 17-1 in the finals. Martin and Cunningham could also be factors but, for now, it's the Big Four and everyone else.

Much as we saw at the Garfield District, there is a large chasm between the top duo at Coshocton and the rest of the competition. As mentioned, Fields is having a great year, but Smith may be just as good. He was a state junior high champ last year, and has rolled through the competition at 112# this year. Now down at 103#, he was 2<sup>nd</sup> at the CIT, losing in overtime to Rix, but defeating Assad, also in an extended overtime. So it is likely he'll be at this weight class, and Hall can go at 112#. Still, I wonder if it makes sense to cut to 103# (after great success at 112#) so you can challenge the number one 103-pounder in the country, or stay at 112# and see another freshman as the projected champ.

Both he and Fields have high placement potential. The last two qualifying spots will be a wide-open affair where I expect at least one relative unknown to surprise. Still the two favorites, as little as that term means here, are Outward and Crabtree. The former was 2<sup>nd</sup> at Barnesville and won two district bouts last year, while the latter has been a consistent finalist. Look for Fletcher, Thomas or, maybe, Sowers to also play a role here.

### 112 #

#### **PROJECTED CHAMPION: JACOB DANISHEK (DAYTON CHRISTIAN)**

##### Top Contenders

2	Steiner (Waynesville)	16	Regoli (Bloom Carroll)
3	Smith (Ready) - - if here	17	A. Durbin (Crestview)
4	Dauch (Sandusky St. Mary)	18	Seagraves (Miami East)
5	Reese (Mechanicsburg)	19	Edwards (River Valley)
6	C. Michel (Edison)	20	Davis (Versailles)
7	Hall (Ready)	21	Britton (Norwayne)
8	Carter (Northridge)	22	Smith (Cory Rawson)
9	Harter (Waynedale)	23	Chuha (Cuyahoga Hts.)
10	Johns (Cardinal)	24	Datkun (Woodmore)
11	Feucht (West Jefferson)	25	Reeder (Springfield NE)
12	Gross (Beachwood)	26	Ferguson (Elmwood)
13	Sandlin (Carlisle)	27	Klavinger (Genoa)
14	Ferguson (Manchester)	28	Callarik (St. Clairsville)
15	Bartrug (River)	29	Lepley (Coshocton)

As I mentioned in the previous essay, three of the top five 103's from last year have remained at that weight class while several other state qualifiers have gone up at least

two weight classes. That has created a bit of a vacuum at this weight, with far fewer established wrestlers than in the past. When similar circumstances occurred in 2008 we ended up with two freshmen wrestling for the state title. While that is unlikely this year, there are possibly four exceptional freshmen at this weight class – one of whom I anticipate winning the title.

Jacob Danishek is another in a long line of highly credentialed freshmen that emerge from the grade school and junior high state tournament process. They all seem to have resumes that reach back to the first grade, skill sets that were once strictly the province of high schoolers and, perhaps, be slightly older than your average high school freshman. Danishek has already won two grade school state titles and a junior high crown (along with a 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup>), and has the poise of a much older wrestler. He was very impressive at Brecksville. He defeated state placer Cam Michel, 10-3, in the first round, pinned two-time state qualifier Bobby Mason in the quarter-finals, and majored Solon champ Mike Screptock in the semi-finals before getting overpowered by Ironman champion DiCamillo. He exits a very difficult Fairmont District, but that should prepare him well for his first trip to Columbus.

Danishek will not be the only outstanding freshman at this weight class. Junior high state champion Sammy Gross will surely be here, while junior high state champion Bobby Smith and 3<sup>rd</sup> place finisher Austin Reese have spent the vast majority of the season here. My guess is that with Tomasello and Assad at 103#, and a tremendous assortment of stars at 119#, this weight class becomes a magnet that will draw Reese, perhaps Smith, and several others.

The Fairmont District will be very good. One of Danishek's most persistent foes is likely to be Cody Steiner, a state quarter-finalist the past two years – where last year he lost to Assad in the tie-breaker, he ended up 4<sup>th</sup> in 2010 at 103#. He was 2<sup>nd</sup> at the GMVWA, one of only three Division III wrestlers to make the finals, losing to the superb Ryan Taylor. A crowd-pleasing wrestler, his two bouts before the finals were 12-10 and 16-13 (over the excellent Kowal) he should be "away" from Danishek at States. Carter was 6<sup>th</sup> last year, but I have seen few results this year. State qualifier Seagraves finished 4<sup>th</sup> in his district, but then upset district champ Cam Michel in the first round. He might be on the bubble, finishing only 5<sup>th</sup> at Troy. Another freshman to watch is Jimmy Sandlin, another startlingly good youth wrestler who was 3<sup>rd</sup> last year. If Reese is here, that's six solid contenders for four spots. Add in Zach Smith and Davis, who were only one win from qualification and this is a dynamite group.

Another very crowded weight class is at Coshocton, though not quite at the level as we see at Fairmont. The key element is the freshman Bobby Smith should he decide to return at 112#. A junior high state champ he vaults over three state qualifiers who we'll meet in a moment. If he opts for 103#, that brings his sidekick Hall into play. He captured a district 3<sup>rd</sup> at this weight class last year, but went 0-2 in Columbus after a first round loss to Mansfield. He had two tough one point losses at the CIT to finish 5<sup>th</sup>, but he is very capable. Feucht, Bartrug and Regoli all have state experience, but were a combined 2-6 at States last year after falling in the first round. Last year Bartrug



defeated the others at the district level, but that order may not hold as Feucht won at West Jefferson and has wrestled a strong schedule. The darkhorse candidate is Jonathan Edwards. He won at Madison Plains in impressive fashion beating district quarter finalist Hoffman 16-0 in the finals. Add in Lepley and Callarik, both of whom were close to state qualification last year, and the competition should really be intense by the district quarter finals.

There are some solid possibilities at Garfield. I was impressed with Johns (saw him at both sectionals and districts) and thought he should have qualified at the tough 103# district. He missed out by a point. This year he has campaigned with great success at 119#, but I expect to see him here. The freshman, Gross, is going to be very, very good. He won at Beachwood and was 3<sup>rd</sup> at Kenston, losing only to the tough senior, November. State qualifier Ferguson, tall and lanky, is very good on top. He most recently won at the Gorman in impressive fashion. Harter has won three tournaments this year and leads off a group of excellent Waynedale lightweights. He drew state champion Dronzek in the first round of districts last year and ended up going 2-2. I'm looking at Britton or Chuha as possibilities, but the top quartet with good bracketing should qualify.

I'm seeing very little at Owens. Milan Edison has two wrestlers who could easily qualify – Cam Michel and Howard, but only the former will compete here. State qualifier Durbin is also good, but was outscored 26-2 at Columbus last year and looked shaky at Medina. Tiffin and Woodmore champion Datkun is a possibility, as are Klavinger and Ferguson, and Showman, but this is not a formidable group. The big news would be if state runner-up Cade Mansfield should suddenly appear at this weight class. He has been wrestling at 125# all year, but rumors abound about drops to 119# and even 112#. If here, he would be a very large 112-pounder, he wasn't small last year, and as a competitor, a favorite in any bout at this district in which he competed. The question as it always is, would be the impact on his performance, if any, with such a move. Such a move would certainly alter the landscape at this weight class. The mystery here might be state placer Joe Dauch. Out all year with a broken ankle, he is due back soon and, possibly, at this weight class or 130#. If here, he could very well move to the top of the district and place higher than the 6<sup>th</sup> he reached last year.

**119 #**

**PROJECTED CHAMPION: TYLER HEMINGER (NORTHMOR)**

Top Contenders

2	Goebel (Elmwood)	15	Perez (Tuslaw)
3	Pizzuto (Jackson-Milton)	16	Von Behren (Dixie)
4	Branham (West Jefferson)	17	Timmons (Lakota)
5	W. Spangler (Keystone)	18	Howard (Edison)
6	Mansfield (Ayersville) – if here	19	Burge (Norwayne)
7	McLaughlin (Nelsonville York)	20	Hill (Carlisle)
8	Border (Caldwell)	21	Talbott (River)
9	Nelson (Waynedale)	22	Brodman (Carey)
10	Tschantz (Chanel)	23	Wilbanks (Brookville)
11	Guerra (Sandusky St. Mary)	24	Colvin (Delta)
12	Hall (Ready)	25	Graham (Columbus Grove)
13	Hilty (Fremont St. Joseph)	26	Crosier (Barnesville)
14	Hiltibran (Mechanicsburg)	27	Campbell (Pymatuning Valley)

There is little doubt that, as currently configured, this is one of the two deepest weight classes in Division III. By my count there are as many as eight returning state placers and several others with state experience. My view is that some of that number may opt for 125# where Myers is the kingpin, but where there is nothing like the depth of quality that we see here.

Certainly, the sentimental favorite has to be Tyler Heminger – a three-time runner-up hoping to avoid becoming the first four-time runner-up in Ohio history. All three of his state final losses have been to Monroeville superstars – the last two to Hunter Stieber. As a freshman he came closest to upsetting the Monroeville quartet when he took Tessari to his back and nearly pinned him tying the score at 9-9. However, Tessari recovered to pull out a 12-9 decision. Interestingly, Heminger has never had a close bout in his nine state wins, the closest being a 12-3 quarterfinal decision two years ago. With over 160 wins already, he will come close to 190 lifetime victories. This year at Medina he defeated state champion Goebel, 4-3, and state runner-up Fiorucci, 7-5, before losing to state champion Heil in the finals at that dynamite weight class.

A pair of seniors will be two of Heminger's many threats at this weight class. Goebel was the 103# state champion two years ago and was 3<sup>rd</sup> at 112# last year. In that two year span he went 104-2. This season, as mentioned, he lost a 4-3 bout to Heminger at Medina and ended up 5<sup>th</sup> after a second loss to Division I state runner-up Newhouse. Vinnie Pizzuto was 4<sup>th</sup> last year, upsetting Goebel in the state quarterfinals and then losing to him (in the tie breaker) for 3<sup>rd</sup> place. He was 2<sup>nd</sup> at Solon to Vinas (in overtime) and then won the title at Brecksville, defeating Vinas in the quarterfinals this time and Spangler (who beat him twice last year) in the semi-finals. He has shown substantial improvement, and may be Heminger's biggest challenge.

State runner-up Mansfield, a junior, should he opt to move down to 119#, cannot be overlooked. He does not wrestle the schedule of the top trio, but it clearly did not bother him last year. He won a pair of tough one-point bouts to make the finals, but was overpowered by the powerful Dronzek.

The district dynamics are interesting nowhere more so than at Coshocton. Heminger, of course, is the kingpin here, but there are so many strong competitors. The senior, Branham, was a state semi-finalist last year before losing to Stieber and dropping to 5<sup>th</sup>. He had 50 wins last year and this should be his third state qualification at this weight class. He won handily at West Jefferson but lost up a weight class, at the Ohio Duals. McLaughlin, a junior, is already a two time state qualifier, placing 5<sup>th</sup> two years ago. He gave Heminger a real battle in last year's district finals, 11-8. At the States he lost to Stieber, 6-0, in the quarterfinals and then was quickly eliminated in the next round. A prolific scorer, he hasn't done quite as well on big stages such as Brecksville where he went 3-2, but failed to place. Border, only a junior, is often overlooked, but he has twice placed at the state level (4<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup>), while losing only to the very best. Last year it was to state champions Goebel and Dronzek. This year, most impressively, he beat the excellent Langdon, 11-2, at Barnesville. The big question revolves around the moves at Bishop Ready, if Smith is at 103#, then state qualifier Hall will be at 112#, if not Hall wrestles here. He will need good pairings to make it out at this weight class. Talbott, a state alternate last year, is good while Crosier may be overmatched.

It's also very crowded at Garfield. Pizzuto, as mentioned, has had an excellent year but he will face severe challenges. William Spangler, one of the twins, was 5<sup>th</sup> last year, but by a circuitous route. At the districts he beat Pizzuto in overtime and then beat the eventual state champ Dronzek, 9-3, in the finals. In Columbus he quickly sped to the semi-finals losing to Mansfield by a single point, denying him a second bout with Dronzek and ending up 5<sup>th</sup> after a loss to state champion Goebel. He looked very good at Brecksville, losing only to Pizzuto and finishing 3<sup>rd</sup>. The sophomore, Nelson, was a district champ at this weight class as a ninth grader (for Tuslaw), but a quarter-final loss to Branham and overtime defeat by Haas took him off the awards podium. Now at Waynedale, he has been outstanding, winning three important tournaments. The big unknown is Cody Tschantz. A state qualifier last year, he has been out with lingering injuries all year. Word is that he may return at this weight class – fresh and very physical – or at 125#. He would be a huge plus in Chanel's quest for a team title. I also like the sophomore, Perez, while Burge and Campbell are solid journeymen. They'll all have a tough road out of this district.

Goebel and Mansfield (if here) are the two best at Owens, but state qualifier Guerra had a strong second half last year. Sandusky St. Mary is not the team we saw a few years ago, but they still produce some solid wrestlers. Guerra should qualify again, but placement will be difficult. State alternate Timmons has the inside track for the fourth state ticket; with Hilty and Howard up a weight class probably his biggest competition.

The qualifying group out of Fairmont will have difficulties emerging from the first round. State qualifier Hiltbran and Von Behren are the best here, but were 1-4 at the state

level. They both represent excellent Division III programs in their district. Hill won at Valley View and Wilbanks was a state alternate at 112# last year, while Brodman garnered two wins at the district level. He was 3<sup>rd</sup> at Tiffin, but lost to both Von Behren and Wilbanks last year.

### 125 #

#### **PROJECTED CHAMPION: STEPHEN MYERS (READING)**

##### Top Contenders

2	B. Spangler (Keystone)	15	Cantrell (Coshocton)
3	Mansfield (Ayresville) – if here	16	Shellhouse (Mohawk)
4	Wiseman (Jackson-Milton)	17	Hermann (Waterloo)
5	Ankrom (Bloom Carroll)	18	Richter (Monroe Center)
6	Haas (McComb)	19	DeCesare (Chanel)
7	Van Vleet (Edgerton)	20	Lump (Paint Valley)
8	Harris (Beachwood)	21	Weirauch (Archbold)
9	Decatur (CVCA)	22	Merschman (Delphos St. John)
10	Smith (Greeneview)	23	Dilts (Fredericktown)
11	Lee (Elmwood)	24	Post (Coldwater)
12	Wooten (West Liberty Salem)	25	Guerra (Sandusky St. Mary)
13	Batdorf (Crestview)	26	Heyd (Garrettsville Garfield)
14	Brinkman (Bluffton)	27	McCormick (Lima Central Catholic)

One of the most impressive freshman wrestlers I saw last year was the 112 pounder from Cincinnati Moeller, Stephen Myers. He opened the year with a 4<sup>th</sup> at the Ironman in an exceptional weight class, won the SWOCA, and finished 3<sup>rd</sup> in Columbus, losing by a point to two-time champ Mines in the semi-finals. Now we find him wrestling at Reading with no apparent loss in efficiency, winning the SWOCA at 125# and finding the perfect weight class in Division III. A former junior high state champion, he is particularly good on his feet and is an aggressive scorer. He should dominate everyone at this weight class, although he is certainly not upset-proof.

The Fairmont District is very likely the most experienced, including five former state qualifiers. Haas, a defending district champion, went into last year's state meet with a 40-1 record and promptly got pinned in 51 seconds by a fourth seed. He then won four bouts – two in overtime and won by a point – to finish 4<sup>th</sup>. A two-time state qualifier, he'll be tough to beat. Smith and Wooten both qualified last year, but were shut out in Columbus. This year Smith won at Elyria Catholic and was a solid runner-up at the GMVWA in an impressive piece of work that included four falls, including one over state placer Keaton Webb. Wooten was 2<sup>nd</sup> at Troy, but at least last year was well behind Haas. Merschman was 4<sup>th</sup> at this district weight last year (losing to Smith) and he lost twice at Columbus. He has been at 130# much of the year with reasonable success, but faces a crowded field here. That's a total of five returning state qualifiers, but I sense some vulnerability and, if so, district placers Post, Brinkman, McCormick and

Shellhouse are all potential threats. Myers will coast here, but the other three qualifiers will have surmounted some real obstacles.

There is some confusion at Owens. Mansfield, if 112#, is too tough a cut and 119# looks overly crowded, may elect to stay right here at 125#. It would not be a bad choice. As mentioned, a state runner-up last year, he showed a critical ability to win close bouts even as a sophomore. Lee placed 7<sup>th</sup> at 103# last year and, apparently out of necessity, will move up three weight classes. I'm guessing he's a 119-pounder, but will leave that spot to former state champion Goebel, not a bad idea, actually. Still he has not yet had the same sort of success as he had last year. He went 0-2 at Medina and has had a few other losses along the way. Still, the Elmwood boys have been excellent in the post season so there's plenty of reason for optimism. Van Vleet caught me by surprise last year. Only a freshman, he sprinted out to 46 victories and a state berth where he lost to Tschantz by two and Haas by one. This year has provided equal success and he lost to Mansfield, 6-5, the first weekend of the year. Weirauch missed state qualification by a single point in an 8-7 loss last year, but should be the fourth qualifier this time. There are two wild cards here. First, the other Guerra twin has looked far better recently and could well be a factor. Also, Seth Batdorf, a junior high placer for Crestview, has begun to post some impressive scores. On a steep learning curve he can become a dangerous opponent.

After examining the powerhouse field at 119# in the Coshocton District, there is a sharp decline at this weight class. We may well see migration in this direction to augment the current slate. Two-time state qualifier, Ankrom, and state qualifier Cantrell, return and head the field with the first named the best shot at a middle-to-high place. This will be his last opportunity and he has found exactly the right weight class. Cantrell was 8<sup>th</sup> last year at 112#, but will need to step it up to better that this year. Dilts and Richter are possibilities, as is Corey Lump, but this is a group that may be only marginally better than another half-dozen contenders. I like Richter the best and suspect he'll return to this weight class for the post-season. Maybe, Lang, a name long associated with Waterford, is a possibility here.

There is some real potential at Garfield. Brian Spangler was 2<sup>nd</sup> last year at 103#, losing to Tomasello in the finals, 6-4. Now up three weight classes, he was 4<sup>th</sup> at Brecksville and, most recently, 1st at Chippewa. Wiseman, a tough and wily competitor, was 3<sup>rd</sup> at Brecksville beating Spangler in overtime after losing in one of the early rounds, Wiseman was 7<sup>th</sup> two years ago, but had a tough draw at States last year, losing to the second and third place finishers. I expected the sophomore Decatur to be tearing up people this year, but it hasn't happened. He was 6<sup>th</sup> at Medina in a weak field where he did make the semi-finals, and went 1-2 at the Ironman. Still Wiseman only beat him by a point in their go-to-state bout last year. Only a sophomore, he could be more than ready by the post-season. The freshman, Harris, a state junior high champ last year, has placement potential. He was 1<sup>st</sup> at Beachwood and 3<sup>rd</sup> at Kenston, losing only to Tre Smith by three points. Another young freshman making real progress is DeCesare. Chanel wrestles a tough schedule, but DeCesare placed at Solon and Pickerington and recently beat Branham at the Ohio Duals. He could drop to

119# and Tschantz, if wrestling, might be at this weight class, certainly changing the dynamics. I also like Hermann, but he may end up a win short of qualification. The issue here might be Grier. He was at 125# at the Dies, finishing 4<sup>th</sup> - - but I'm wondering if he will stay there. As just noted, it's a crowded district, especially in contrast to 130#, where the top four outmatch everyone else. I'll rank him at 130#, but you may find him here.

### 130 #

#### **PROJECTED CHAMPION: JOHNNY MATAVIC (JACKSON-MILTON)**

##### Top Contenders

2	Jacober (Beachwood)	15	Lovejoy (Allen East)
3	Kinnemond (Shadyside)	16	Carroll (Northmor)
4	Ratay (CVCA)	17	Leitwein (Nelsonville York)
5	Music (Crestview)	18	Henderson (Mariemont)
6	Grier (Norwayne)	19	McCoy (Pleasant)
7	Sanders (Badin)	20	Diven (Waterloo)
8	Kern (Delta)	21	Deeter (Covington)
9	Emmitt (Elmwood)	22	Hughes (Utica)
10	Beatty (Arcanum)	23	Reichert (Sandusky St. Mary)
11	Parker (Mohawk)	24	Buxton (Dixie)
12	Reichle (West Jefferson)	25	Lulfs (Evergreen)
13	Amburgey (New London)	26	Cline (Caldwell)
14	Fortune (West Salem Northwestern)	27	Williams (Northridge)

Rather surprisingly, this is very likely the weakest weight class in Division III. I say surprisingly because my expectation was that with Stieber and Tessari at the next two weight classes we would see a migration down to 130#. Now that still might happen, at least to some extent, but it is beginning to look more doubtful.

The conventional choice is Johnny Maticic the defending champion at this weight class. A tough, gritty competitor – the classic Jackson-Milton wrestler – he seemingly willed his way to a state title. He was 7<sup>th</sup> as a sophomore, and clearly built upon that last year. At a weight class where he seemed slated for a low place he took advantage of every opportunity. A district runner-up to Kovach, he, nonetheless, got a favorable pairing and cruised into the semi-finals. That was followed by two overtime struggles, including a finals win over Kovach. What impressed me is that he gave up a very late takedown that tied a seemingly won state title bout, but came right back to get a quick takedown in overtime. This year he had a very impressive win over Collica to take the Solon title and was 3<sup>rd</sup> at Brecksville, losing to Carlone. A real positive is the very strong schedule that he wrestles, which set him up for the tough bouts to come.

It has been noted in past reports that Jacober cuts little or no weight and thus always seems to be wrestling much larger opponents. That is not quite as evident this year as he comes back from injury. He was 4<sup>th</sup> last year at 125# - a takedown short of a

potential final round match-up with Logan Stieber. I saw him this year at Kenston and he was clearly not in optimal shape (which would help alleviate the usual size disadvantage) and his timing was still not sharp. Time should resolve both those issues and he has some of the best technique around. He is in the same district as Maticic so they should be in different half brackets in Columbus.

With both Maticic and Jacober exiting at Garfield, there is not much room for error by anyone else. Grier, who could well inch down to 125#, is a two-time state qualifier who has been one win from placing both years. I've not seen his name in agate this year (except for the win at Ashland), but he should continue a solid performer. Ratay was 7<sup>th</sup> two years ago as a freshman, but missed the post season last year. Now up at 130#, he was 6<sup>th</sup> at Medina defaulting his two consolation bouts after an injury in his semi-final loss. He went 2-2 at the Ironman, while providing me with analytical insights after the semi-finals. That's four potential qualifiers, but there are several other possibilities. Fortune, who has been at 135# much of the year, will apparently have a decision to make – to cut here or stay at 135# - while Diven and Powell (Tuslaw) are other possibilities. I think we'll see Fortune here vying with Grier and Ratay for one of those last two spots.

There is still a lot of uncertainty and maneuvering going on in the Northwest at these lower middleweights. At this weight class, though, it seems certain that Wyatt Music will be the lead wrestler. He was 7<sup>th</sup> as a freshman, winning three consolation bouts after an early loss. Clearly encouraged by this somewhat surprising (at least to me) result, he has clearly improved again this year. He was 1<sup>st</sup> at Mansfield, but injured at Medina in the semi-finals and has missed a lot of time. Kern wrestled Music for 7<sup>th</sup> at the State meet and ended up losing a 4-0 bout. He has now transferred from Liberty Center to Delta and should be a factor at this weight class. He, too, has missed considerable time adding to the uncertainty here. State qualifier Emmitt returns to this weight class where he was a first round victim of Maticic. He has wrestled an aggressive schedule and has clear placement potential. Amburgey is the fourth state qualifier at Owens, but he has also seen plenty of action at 135#. Still, he should be here, but is again as last year, on the qualification bubble. Lulfs won two district bouts last year and could be a factor. I have, for reasons stated in the next essay, rated Laney at 135#. He, however, may compete here and would battle for one of the last two qualification spots.

It is not a scintillating field at Coshocton. The clear standout is Chase Kinnemond, the exciting sophomore from Shadyside. He has clear finalist potential and will be a very large 130 pounder. He was 5<sup>th</sup> at 125# last year after making it to the state semi-finals (and Logan Stieber). This year after a late start because of football, he won at Barnesville and Shadyside and looked particularly good at the latter. There is a rather amorphous group of about six wrestlers below Kinnemond, any of whom could qualify. Only Leitwein has previous state experience, but that does not separate him from this group. Carroll, Reichle, and McCoy are all from the Columbus area. Of this grouping I like Reichle the best based on a strong performance at West Jefferson where he lost to West Virginia state champion Bauer in overtime. He was undefeated at the Ohio Duals at 135#. Cline may be a surprise. He was 2<sup>nd</sup> at Barnesville, losing 3-1 to Kinnemond

and his district experience. Also in that same category is Williams who went 2-2 at the district level and defeated Cline last year.

Some intriguing contenders will be at Fairmont. Part of that is because some of the top wrestlers are from schools without big wrestling traditions like Arcanum, Mariemont and Badin. It is also one of the deepest, with five returning state qualifiers. Beatty was 8<sup>th</sup> last year after a district runner-up finish. He won most recently at Troy after finishing 5<sup>th</sup> at the GMVWA, and has strong placement potential again this year. Sanders is now a senior and it's his last opportunity to place. Always highly regarded, he went 1-2 at Columbus last year. He has won some small tourneys and was 4<sup>th</sup> at the SWOCA, losing twice to Seth Gilbert. Henderson qualified two years ago, but does not wrestle a strong schedule. Last year he was a state alternate, losing a one-point contest in his go-to-state bout. Lovejoy was the victor in that bout and then drew Heminger and Music back-to-back at States. He has had another strong season with finalist performances at Allen East, Marion Harding, and Edison – but he and Henderson will have yet another state qualifier, Kyle Parker, to worry about. Parker last qualified three years ago and just missed last year. He was 2<sup>nd</sup> at Tiffin in his first week at 130#. That's five names, but Deeter went 6-5 with Beatty at Troy and was a district qualifier at this weight class last year. Buxton is, yet, another possibility.

### 135 #

#### **PROJECTED CHAMPION: HUNTER STIEBER (MONROEVILLE)**

##### Top Contenders

2	Marshall (Troy Christian)	14	Moore/Studer (Norwayne)
3	Nelson (Waynedale)	15	Stuckey (Archbold)
4	Majoy (Edison)	16	Friede (Union Local)
5	Walden (Chanel)	17	Clemens (Wayne Trace)
6	Powers (CVCA)	18	Widmer (Gibsonburg)
7	Kelly (Reading)	19	Ratcliff (West Jefferson)
8	Baker (Shadyside)	20	Baldrige (Northmor)
9	Carpenter (Girard)	21	Loxley (Arcanum)
10	Laney (Hicksville)	22	Larrick (Carey)
11	Guilford (Badin)	23	Halcomb (Hopewell-Loudon)
12	Moody (Nelsonville-York)	24	Hansel (Newark Catholic)
13	Davis (Bellaire)	25	Vogelhuber (Dalton)

We have experienced only a single decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, but it seems likely that at the end of that time period the Monroeville Four will still evoke wonder. No quartet of teammates in Ohio has ever performed the miracles crafted by the Stiebers, Tessari, and Phillips, nor do I expect their accomplishments to be duplicated during the next 90 years. It seems almost a certainty that they will capture 16 state titles while winning something in excess of 600 bouts. In total they have lost only one bout to an Ohio wrestler – Logan Stieber losing as a freshman to the incomparable David Taylor – and,



at various times, been ranked number one in the country at their weight class. We shall not see their likes again.

There is no one at this weight class who should inconvenience Stieber on his march to a fourth state title. He defeated a very strong field at the Ironman, handling the #1 ranked Ormsbee in the finals, and blasted his way through the Brecksville defeating former state runner-up Davis 10-0 in the process. The weight gain, up three classes, has served him well as he looks stronger and more confident than in the past. Like his three partners, Stieber excels in all three phases of wrestling and this should serve as the foundation on which he will undoubtedly build a successful collegiate career.

Stieber should become the 20<sup>th</sup> four-time state champion in Ohio history. I well remember when Mark Zimmer became the first in 1979, and the enormous amount of interest that it generated. At that time it seemed likely that it would be a rare occurrence since it took 40 years of state competition to generate the first four-timer. This year we are likely to see three more inductees into this exclusive club as we will have averaged about one four-time champ a year since 2000. Factors such as high powered youth wrestling, three divisions, and “red shirting” middle school wrestlers are all partial explanations for this growth.

Unless you have reasonable expectations of winning a state title, it is often an optimal strategy to wrestle at the same weight as a superstar. Those weight classes are often “cleared out” by the sure champ making state qualification and placement far more probable. For example, at Owens Amburgey and Laney are both state qualifiers who have such a decision to make. I’ve ranked Amburgey at 130#, but I believe Laney may compete here. He was 1-2 at Columbus at 125# after finishing 2<sup>nd</sup> to Logan Stieber at districts. The one to watch is Majoy, who has some recent big wins (e.g. Walden) and will be away from Stieber at Districts. Last year he was at 140# where he was a semi-finalist before losing to Goebel and Maneese, in his go-to-state bout by one point. Stuckey was also a district semi-finalist, losing to Burns and Emmitt. That leaves Widmer (40 wins last year) and the younger Amburgey to pull an upset.

The best district is probably at Garfield. There are four returning state qualifiers, three of who have taken home placement medals. The sophomore Nelson is very good. He was at 140# last year at Tuslaw where he lost the district final in overtime and then won a couple of tough consolation bouts to finish 8<sup>th</sup>. He was 2<sup>nd</sup> at Liberty and 1<sup>st</sup> at Elgin in what should be an outstanding sophomore season. Two years ago Powers took 4<sup>th</sup> at 112# as his older brother won a state title. He seemed ready to move that forward the following year, but had a shaky district. After a nerve-wracking overtime win in the quarterfinals he lost to Jacober by one and Carpenter by two and was in the stands in Columbus. This year at 135# it has not been easy. He was a semi-finalist at Medina, but two quick losses and an injury dropped him to 6<sup>th</sup>. I see that as a temporary setback and he should qualify this time. Walden and Carpenter both got out last year, finishing 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> at the 125# district competition. Walden then rode three victories to a 6<sup>th</sup> place finish, while Carpenter went 1-2. That could well be the four qualifiers, however

either Moore or Studer should represent Norwayne and both have upset potential, while Vogelhuber stands ready in the wings.

Most of the best wrestlers at this weight class at Coshocton will come from the Eastern/Southwestern District, but the quartet of qualifiers, whoever they are, will not present a formidable line-up. Baker has won at Barnesville (over Friede) and Shadyside (over Davis). He went 2-2 at the district level last year, but has clearly improved. Friede won at West Jefferson and has been a consistent winner all year. Davis, a state qualifier two years ago, was a district 5<sup>th</sup> last year, and I could see him wrestling at 130#. Moody was 8<sup>th</sup> two years ago, but failed to advance last year. He was 7<sup>th</sup> at Brecksville in a positive showing. Ratcliff may be the best out of the Central District, and caught my eye with his fall over Walden at the Ohio Duals. Baldrige, 2<sup>nd</sup> at Gorman, Hansel and Gaffney (Pleasant) are other thoughts.

There is some depth at Fairmont. I thought Jordan Marshall was one of the best Division III freshmen last year, and he cruised to a district title win by a 15-3 score. However, after a first round state win he lost to the very physical Shane Brown by two points and was eliminated the next round. I still think he is very good and he, with a good paring (i.e. away from Stieber) could easily be a finalist. He was 3<sup>rd</sup> at GMVWA, losing only a three-point decision to Case Garrison. Watch for him. Kelly was a district runner-up to Marshall last year and went 1-2 with a tough draw. He was 6<sup>th</sup> at the SWOCA and it can't hurt having Myers as a workout partner. Right behind this duo is the senior, Guilford. He was a district semi-finalist last year, but lost a 6-5 decision, and then another to just miss out on a state berth. This year he was a semi-finalist at the SWOGA and ended up a solid 4<sup>th</sup> at 140#. He was also 2<sup>nd</sup> (to Kelly) at Reading and should qualify. Clemens, Loxley, and a host of others are in the hunt for the last spot

### 140 #

#### **PROJECTED CHAMPION: CAM TESSARI (MONROEVILLE)**

##### Top Contenders

2	Brown (Manchester)	15	Kosky (Bellaire St. John)
3	Dankle (Cuyahoga Hts.)	16	Bierman (Badin)
4	Collier (Chanel)	17	Muntz (Monroe Central)
5	Gerber (Garaway)	18	Pierce (Black River)
6	Lawrence (Garrettsville Garfield)	19	Musser (Delphos St. John)
7	McLaughlin (Carlisle)	20	Alexander (Centerburg)
8	Dobben (CVCA)	21	Vega (Hicksville)
9	Wilson (Bluffton)	22	Hershey (West Salem Northwestern)
10	Mancuso (Edison)	23	Grys (Collins Western Reserve)
11	Parker (Mohawk)	24	Reeder (Springfield NE)
12	Bucci (Clear Fork)	25	Stickley (Shenandoah)
13	Hook (Nelsonville-York)	26	Tomaino (Jackson Milton)
14	Bockmore (Wellington)	27	Nye (Upper Sandusky)

When the slightly younger trio of Monroeville superstars joined older brother Logan Stieber in 2008 the one least publicized was Cam Tessari. A former state junior high champion, he was overlooked, at least somewhat, as the other three all posted undefeated seasons with Phillips, after his spectacular Ironman debut, garnering massive (and deserved) acclaim. However, over time Tessari is becoming recognized as something very special. A fierce rider, he put together an undefeated junior season, including an Ironman title – and he destroyed the field at Brecksville. He has wrestled just one bad bout in the past two years and that was the loss in this year's Ironman finals. Like we have seen so often, wrestlers going for a fourth state title often face something of a depleted field as opponents target more congenial weight classes. This year with Stieber and Tessari at consecutive weight classes that will be a more difficult task.

The Garfield District is in disarray at this point in time. Both Shane Brown and Josh Lawrence have competed at this weight class, but have spent most of the year at 145#. They face a tough decision. Should they stay at 145# where they could potentially have state championship opportunities, albeit in a difficult and crowded weight class (assuming Martinez does not compete there), or do they move to 140# where state championship hopes are very slim, but high placement probabilities are significantly better. At the same time, I wonder about state placer Jimmy Dankle. I would have expected him at this weight class, but he has not competed so far this year, nor has he certified.

At least for the moment let's leave Brown and Lawrence here and put Dankle on the active list too. If so, this district is easily the best at this weight class. I thought that Brown looked super tough last year. His district semi-final with Mike Kovach was a classic gut check with both boys physically extended to the limit. Despite that incredibly tough loss Brown came back an hour later to qualify – and eventually finish 3<sup>rd</sup> at the district level. In Columbus he upset Kyle Burns in the first round and Jordan Marshall in the next. An ultimate overtime loss in the semi-finals to eventual champ Maticic cost him a finals berth and he ended up 5<sup>th</sup>. Most recently he was champion at the Gorman defeating the excellent Maneese for the title. He'll be a handful at either weight class. Collier has missed virtually the entire season with injuries and just returned to action last weekend. He is already a three time state qualifier but, amazingly, has never placed. I can't remember since we moved from four places to six places (1969) anyone who qualified four times and never placed. It won't happen this year as Collier should clearly get a middle to high placement in 2011. Lawrence was the state alternate at 135#, losing a 2-1 squeaker to Petersheim in his go-go-state bout. He has been excellent this year, but if it appears Collier, Brown and Dankle will compete here, he will have little margin for error. There is a lot of depth behind this trio. Dobben was a state alternate last year, losing twice to Brown at the districts. He was 7<sup>th</sup> at Medina and, only a sophomore, getting better. Bockmore gave Maticic a good bout in the district quarter finals and then lost in overtime to Dobben. He has won several tournaments this year including Elyria Catholic and Chippewa. Other possibilities are Hershey, Pierce and Marthey. Dankle, should he appear, has been a state semi-finalist the last two years,

losing in each case to the eventual champion (Tessari and Oney). If healthy, he might get another opportunity against Tessari at this weight class.

Tessari faces almost non-existent competition at Owens. Mancuso has crafted a solid year and went 5-1 in a loss to Collier in the dual meet. An unexpected contender might be Bucci, a recent winner at the Gorman. State alternate Vega, Palmer (Patrick Henry), Grys, and Fahrer (Delta) are possibilities, but no one here can go six minutes with Tessari.

There is also very little depth at Coshocton. The top guy is state placer Gerber who got an 8<sup>th</sup> at 130#. He opened the season with a 3<sup>rd</sup> at 152# at Aurora, but has finally reached 140# where he has placement possibilities. Hook qualified last year as a sophomore and drew Tessari in the first round and was out by Thursday evening. He was 8<sup>th</sup> at Brecksville. Kosky and Muntz were finalists at Shadyside, with Kosky taking the title. However, the wrestler to watch in this area might be the senior Stickley, who was 2<sup>nd</sup> at Barnesville (to Division II powerhouse Warner) and pinned Muntz. In terms of experience, though, both Kosky and Muntz were just one win from States last year. In the Columbus area Alexander and Corns are marginally the best.

There will be solid competition at Fairmont. McLaughlin qualified last year at 135#, but went "two and out" after losing a tight consolation bout. The then freshman Wilson drew eventual champ, Oney, in the first round at Columbus and suffered the same fate. Both are back and should get some state wins this year. Wilson was 1<sup>st</sup> at Allen East and has had a great dual meet record. Parker was close to state qualification last year as he missed by a bout at 130#, and has been a consistent finalist this year. I also like Bierman, Reeder and Musser to push the top four at this district. One caveat needs to be mentioned. State placer Johnny Carpenter has competed at 140#, but my belief is that it is part of a process to keep as many options as possible in play. However, should he compete at this weight class, it would profoundly impact the current competitive landscape.

**145 #**

**PROJECTED CHAMPION: DAN ORRILL (CHANEL)**

Top Contenders

2	Sonnenberg (Van Buren)	15	Gulash (Shadyside)
3	Burns (Edison)	16	Stanley (Waynedale)
4	Carpenter (Madeira)	17	Hall (Girard)
5	Cowell (Archbold)	18	Harper (West Jefferson)
6	Giffin (Fairport Harbor)	19	Hahn (Lima Central Catholic)
7	Maneese (Clear Fork)	20	Mardis (Newcomerstown)
8	Snyder (Rootstown)	21	Nolte (St. Clairsville)
9	Clark (Monroeville)	22	Collins (Jackson Milton)
10	Mattin (Delta)	23	Pinkstock (Centerburg)
11	Heldenbrand (Hillsdale)	24	Taylor (Elyria Catholic)
12	Escobedo (Gibsonburg)	25	Williams (Brookville)
13	Niner (Liberty Center)	26	Thompson (North Union)
14	Gase (Calvert)	27	McAdams (Greeneview)

This is one of the two deepest and strongest weight classes in Division III – at least as presently constituted. It could get stronger if it turns out that Felipe Martinez will compete here for Genoa, or it could become somewhat less difficult if Brown or Carpenter or Sonnenberg move down as persistent rumors would have you believe. Even if Martinez decides to compete at 152# there will be a domino effect that could send DeHart, and maybe others, to this weight class. For simplicity, let's look at it as it stands on a mid-January snowy morning.

There are six returning state qualifiers at Owens. I like Burns the best and this fine junior has finalist potential. He was 6<sup>th</sup> as a freshman at 125#, winning three state bouts including one over Matacic. Last year at 130# he was a district runner-up (a 3-2 loss to Lopez), but was upset by Brown in the first round in Columbus. He then won five consolation bouts to finish 3<sup>rd</sup>, including a win over Brown. This year he was 5<sup>th</sup> at Brecksville. After some early season tournament wins, he lost close bouts to Wenger and Fee. His only other loss was in overtime to Orrill. He is not a big 145-pounder, but there will be a lot of smaller ones this year. Cowell, also a junior and two-time state qualifier, leads an improving Archbold team. He lost a close district finals last year to eventual state champ Oney, but failed to place after a first round state win. He won 111 bouts his first two varsity years, and at his current pace could easily exceed 200. Maneese is a key component of a very strong Clear Fork team. This is a squad that has become an unexpected (at least to me) powerhouse in their area, and demonstrates how a good program can be constructed. Maneese was a state quarter-finalist last year before losing back-to-back bouts to Sonnenberg and Bruewer. This year he was 2<sup>nd</sup> at the Gorman, losing to Brown. Clark was 7<sup>th</sup> last year in his second trip to Columbus, and lost a tough overtime quarter-final bout to eventual runner-up Gualtieri. He failed to place at Brecksville, losing a pair of one point bouts. Only four freshmen qualified for state action in the last seven weight classes last year with Zach

Niner being one of them. He went a commendable 1-2 (the same record all four of them had), but at this crowded district may struggle for a return state ticket. Escobedo started the year at 152# and has moved down to this weight class. He qualified at 135# last year, but had a brutal draw and was outscored 4-5 in his two bouts. He'll do better this year, if he can get there. Add in the excellent youngster, Mattin, and this is an excruciatingly difficult district. I think Burns and Cowell are top-heavy favorites to qualify with Maneese and Clark (if he can quit losing one point bouts) as next best. Niner and Escobedo will have to look then for at least one upset win. The key might be how rapidly Mattin progresses. He could end up shoving some of the more experienced boys out. Should Martinez declare for this weight class (assuming eligibility, weight and conditioning), everything changes – not only at this weight class, but at those adjacent to it. If he is at 152# some of this group like Escobedo may decide to move up hoping he'll clear out the weight class making it easier to qualify and place.

The top five wrestlers at Garfield are even stronger. Orrill has had fabulous wins at Solon, Pickerington and Brecksville, and beaten Burns in a dual meet. He was a state semi-finalist last year, losing to Tessari and finishing 5<sup>th</sup>. In a season dedicated to a slightly older brother tragically killed in a car accident in October, he has touched every base so far this year. I've already (at 140#) talked about how tough Brown is, so suffice it to say that he would be a high impact participant at this weight class should he decide to compete here. Giffin is a one-man team for Fairport Harbor and has done an incredible job. He was a district champ last year, but drew into the toughest district fourth-placer and lost in the first round and then, after a win, lost his placement bout to two-time placer Campbell. I'd like to see him place this year. Snyder seems often to be overlooked. Last year he split two bouts with Orrill at the district level winning the first 8-1. He drew Sonnenberg at States, losing 13-8 and eventually went 1-2 overall. He has come down from 152# and you wonder whether he may go back to a somewhat easier weight class. His last win was at Chippewa where he blitzed the field. Heldenbrand was a state alternate last year, losing a district semi-final to Nelson and then, unluckily, catching Orrill on the way back. He does not wrestle the rigorous schedule faced by many at this weight class, but he clearly has the talent to qualify. That leaves Stanley, who is quickly getting better, Taylor, and Hall with a lot of work to do if they hope to qualify.

It's strictly a two-man competition at Fairmont. Sonnenberg won his first 44 bouts last year before losing to Tessari in the state finals. It followed up a 7<sup>th</sup> place finish as a sophomore and validated the potential that was spotted early on. He has missed eight weeks and wrestles an easy schedule, but he still remains an enormous challenge to anyone who wants the title at this weight class. It's difficult to see Carpenter dropping to 140# since he can win it at this weight class. As presently constituted at least five wrestlers have a double figure probability of taking the title – and he is one of that quintet. A three-time state placer (3-4-5), he has dropped a place each year. He'll reverse that order this year after big wins at the SWOCA and Fairfield. Gase was a state alternate last year at a tough weight class and is probably third best, while Hahn, Williams, and McAdams battle for the last spot.

As strong as the other districts are currently configured, that is how weak it is at Coshocton. Mardis missed state qualification last year after a 9-8 loss, but Gulash may be the best now after winning at Shadyside and Barnesville, beating Burkhart in the finals. Nolte should also be a factor, with Harper (West Jefferson), Leasure (Caldwell) and Pinkstock also in play. You'll want to draw into this district in the first round at States.

### 152 #

#### **PROJECTED CHAMPION: FELIPE MARTINEZ (GENOA)**

##### Top Contenders

2	Prezzia (St. Clairsville)	16	Blair (Tuslaw)
3	DeHart (Covington)	17	Lance (Chippewa)
4	Fullenkamp (Versailles)	18	Kimberlin (Edison)
5	Beam (Waynedale)	19	Kinzel (Clear Fork)
6	Kiefer (Chanel)	20	McConnell (Seneca East)
7	Cummins (Cardington)	21	Miller (Waterford)
8	Erwin (Mechanicsburg)	22	Hemmelgarn (Coldwater)
9	Yant (Delta)	23	Tate (Ready)
10	Cartwright (Mohawk)	24	Kordik (Troy Christian)
11	Dues (Allen East)	25	Szitas (Grand Valley)
12	Topp (West Salem Northwestern)	26	Bishop (Brooklyn)
13	King (Huron)	27	Potts (Monroe Central)
14	Osborn (Brookville)	28	Brooke (South Range)
15	Minillo (Grandview Hts.)	29	Gullifer (Upper Sandusky)

The Division III portion was the first one completed and went to the typist (my dear first cousin Nancy Dimitris) on January 16. At that time there were rather vague rumors swirling about the reappearance of Felipe Martinez. The report thus mentioned him as, perhaps, a possibility, impossible to accurately evaluate at the time of the writing. Now it seems reasonably likely that the two-time state champion Martinez will eventually compete at 152#. There is no way at this moment that I can ascertain all of the implications of that fact not only at this weight class, but at the ones adjacent to it. You will note that I have projected him as the likely champion (how could I not?), but that assumes good health, solid conditioning, and no other issues. I have not moved DeHart to 145# though that, I suppose, could happen nor any of the other top contenders to 160#. What you see below is what I wrote in the middle of January.

I see a three-way struggle at 152# with each of the top trio having about equal chances of winning. All of them have outstanding credentials with substantial state experience and well over 100 victories. They will face a relatively strong field with some real upset potential in the next echelon of competitors.

Prezzia would face the most difficult road to the title having to defeat both DeHart and Fullenkamp to do so. He will be seeded away from whoever wins that Fairmont District,

and thus with the runner-up. A four-year state qualifier, he has been 4<sup>th</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> the last two years, each time losing a one point semi-final bout to the eventual champion. He has got to believe it's his turn to wrestle on Saturday night, and I believe he is exactly at the right weight class to do so. An aggressive point scorer, his biggest handicap may be a schedule that does not overly test him.

DeHart is one of those all-around students who excels in every venue. A fine baseball player, and ranked first in his graduating class, he has also been sensational on the mats – on track to win 190 bouts. The only disappointment for this three-time state placer (6<sup>th</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup>, and 2<sup>nd</sup>) is that he has lost his final bout each year. It had to be a bitter pill last year as he lost the state title to Burns after having defeated him 5-0 the previous weekend. The scholarship to Duke, however, is a far bigger prize and he has one more year to cash in a state title. He beat Fullenkamp in the dual meet, but finished 3<sup>rd</sup> at the GMVWA after having to default to Stephens in the semi-finals.

Fullenkamp was 3<sup>rd</sup> last year at 152#, losing a 3-0 bout to Jefferis in the semi-finals. Like so many of the Versailles wrestlers, he is a strong finisher and his 5-4 loss to Stephens, who is very good, in the finals of the GMVWA is indicative of his ability. He and DeHart exit the same sectional, so it is possible that they could meet on three consecutive weekends. That, generally, means low scoring bouts toward the end of that process.

As one might expect, DeHart will dominate the Fairmont District. The sophomore Erwin is next best and has good placement potential. He was a state alternate at this weight class last year, losing two very close bouts at the districts. An excellent youth wrestler, he will be a top contender next year. Cartwright was a state qualifier two years ago, but failed to qualify last year. He has been at 160#, but will likely compete here in the post-season. He was a finalist at Tiffin. That's four possible qualifiers. But Dues ranks just about even with the last two. He won at Allen East and Marion Harding, and has district experience. One to watch is Osborn who won two district bouts last year and was 2<sup>nd</sup> at Fairfield. Others include Hemmelgarn, 2<sup>nd</sup> at Troy, and Gullifer. The big mystery is Kordik who the kids tell me is good, but who I have not seen

After Prezzia, state qualifier Cummins is probably next best at Coshocton. He had a district 3<sup>rd</sup> last year and then lost his opening bout at states and then bounced back to win four consolation bouts before falling to Prezzia, 7-1, and finishing 4<sup>th</sup>. It was an impressive run as he defeated four seniors in the process. Most recently he won the Gorman against a solid field. He has wrestled once at 145#, but I don't see him stepping into that hornets' nest. There is not a lot of qualification potential after this duo. Miller won at Shadyside and Gallia (MVP), but struck out at last year's districts. Minillo might be stronger, while Tate and Potts are possibilities. I keep waiting for Barlow to head to this weight class, but I think he may have a higher probability of being a finalist at 160# - and he may think so too.

After the logjam at 145# in the Owens District, things look pretty quiet at this weight class. It leads one to believe that there may be some upward movement by February.



State qualifiers Yant and King lead the way, but neither won a bout at Columbus. Kinzel was 2<sup>nd</sup> at the Gorman, losing, 3-2, to Cummins in the finals. Kimberlin was a district semi-finalist last year, losing twice on falls to get 5<sup>th</sup>. He failed to place at Brecksville, but was in every bout, and lost by two to Dues at Edison. McConnell was as low as 145#, but he will probably be here. He won three district bouts last year. Factor in Tonelli and, maybe, Rade and it will be competitive at this district.

There are a lot of state contenders at Garfield, but two stand out. Beam was the district runner-up at this weight class last year, winning his three bouts 11-6, 11-6, and 11-7 (that's real consistency). He beat King in the first round, but then lost to a two-time champ and later was quickly eliminated. He won at Liberty and is Waynedale's best upper weight. Kiefer always seems to be on the periphery of being really good but, so far, he hasn't taken that last step. Injured as a freshman, he has qualified the last two years and failed to place. Last year he was part of that run of bad luck for Chanel, having to default out of the tournament in the first round. This year he was 1<sup>st</sup> at Pickerington and 2<sup>nd</sup> at Solon and Brecksville. It's time for him to place. There is a glut of contenders for the last two spots. State qualifier Topp will certainly be in the mix, but lost to the sophomore Blair in the first round at Medina and failed to place. Bishop lost a couple of narrow district decisions (and won two others), while Szitas was a junior high placer. Brooke and Hides are also strong and if Lance competes at this weight that will just add to the uncertainty. The pairings will be crucial and the bouts will be very close. I'm guessing that Topp will rebound, while Blair will also make it through with Lance as the alternate.

### 160 #

#### **PROJECTED CHAMPION: CODY WALTERS (CHANEL)**

##### Top Contenders

2	Prather (West Jefferson)	15	Rose (Martins Ferry)
3	Hall (Chippewa)	16	Leahy (Swanton)
4	Barlow (Heath)	17	Gray (CVCA)
5	Campbell (Elyria Catholic)	18	Spieth (Liberty Center)
6	Running (Clinton Massie)	19	Stahl (Wayne Trace)
7	Gerken (Keystone)	20	Peters (Northmor)
8	Hall (Crestview)	21	Rufenacht (Archbold)
9	Toal (Troy Christian)	22	Price (Mohawk)
10	Mays (Nelsonville-York)	23	Wolford (Delta)
11	Dye (Sandusky St. Mary)	24	Conyers (Allen East)
12	Ziegler (Cardinal)	25	Behnken (Brookville)
13	Cole (Edison)	26	Tipton (Amanda Clearcreek)
14	Laughlin (Carlisle)	27	Elliott (Tuslaw)

This is one of those pesky weight classes where any of a half dozen wrestlers could win without causing the least bit of surprise. It's the kind of competition where if it was held four weekends in a row, four different contestants would emerge victorious. At the

season's onset I was reasonably sure Cody Walters would take the title, but now doubts are creeping in. Let's look, at least, at the top foursome.

Walter is a three-time state qualifier, 7<sup>th</sup> as a freshman and 3<sup>rd</sup> as a sophomore at 152#, losing only in overtime in the latter year. Last year, again at 152#, he was a district champ, but was barred from competing at the last minute at States because of a contagious skin condition. He was the only one of the 672 state qualifiers to suffer that fate. This year he won at Brecksville and Pickerington, but was 2<sup>nd</sup> at Solon (to Swan). At the Ohio Duals Prather won in a mild upset, but Walters has not quite dominated as anticipated. Still, his mistake-free style plays well at big meets.

Prather is a two-time placer (8<sup>th</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup>) and was a semi-finalist last year, losing to two-time champ Howe, 6-5. This year he is undefeated with a signature win over Walters. Walters had beaten him two years ago in a close bout, but there is little to choose between them at this time.

Hall is the wrestler here who can get very hot. He was 4<sup>th</sup> two years ago, losing to Walters in the consolation finals, and 4<sup>th</sup> last year in a rather strange bracket. This year he has primarily been at 171#, winning at Chippewa and most recently the Dies. He has beaten some top people over the years – Xavier Dye, Cody Rodgers, Matt Meadows – but must sustain that firepower over three days.

Barlow is a three-time placer, including a 4<sup>th</sup> at 103#, a 6<sup>th</sup> at 119#, and another 4<sup>th</sup> at 135# last year. He is a smart, savvy wrestler who has already won 10 consolation bouts at the state tournament level. A placer at Medina and a winner most everywhere else, he needs that one perfect weekend to win it all.

This top four emerge two-by-two from Garfield and Coshocton so there is an excellent chance we'll see two in each half bracket, and possibly, all four with an opportunity to be semi-finalists. Despite Prather's win, I still think Walters' body of work is more impressive, but he will have to be in top form to do so. Make no mistake, Prather is very good and it will be absolutely no surprise if he wins.

The Garfield District is clearly the strongest and somebody good will be left home. Walters and Hall lead the way, but Campbell and Gerken are close. Campbell is one of those crowd-pleasing, hell-for-leather wrestlers who just want to score points. He was injured much of last year and subsequently not in great shape, but captured a district 3<sup>rd</sup>, including a 12-6 win over Gerken. At States he might have set a record by losing two consecutive overtime bouts on Thursday while scoring 20 points (14-12 [SV] and 9-8 [UTB] ). He was 2<sup>nd</sup> at Elyria Catholic, losing on a default, and 1<sup>st</sup> at Columbia Station defeating the excellent Stuckart. Gerken was a Division II qualifier in 2009 and made it out in Division III last year. He was an impressive 4<sup>th</sup> at Brecksville, losing by a point to Tony Martin in the semis, and 1<sup>st</sup> at Chippewa. Ziegler is clearly state material, but just hasn't gotten there yet. Last year he lost to Beam and Campbell. He does not wrestle a tough schedule, which may hurt him some. Gray has moved down from 171#, but we could see him at either weight class.

Prather and Barlow will dominate at Coshocton. Mays and Rose are probably next best, the former placing at Brecksville, and the latter winning at Barnesville. Mays was a win away from state qualification last year. Peters and Tipton are possible players, but those last two spots could fall to a couple of relative unknowns.

It's a bit of an unsettled situation at Owens. There are three returning state qualifiers, but none are assured of qualification. Hall and Leahy gained district fourths last year, but failed to win a bout in Columbus. Hall, part of a fine Crestview team, was 2-2 at Medina, losing to Speith. He has been at 152# lately, but after all this activity.....? Leahy won at Elyria Catholic (on that default), but was 2<sup>nd</sup> at Woodmore. Cole, a qualifier two years ago, won at Edison, but was pinned by Walters in the Dual. A coming star is Wyatt Dye (brother of Spencer), who beat Leahy at Woodmore. A junior high state runner-up last year, he is showing rapid improvement. Speith went 2-2 at the district level and placed at Medina, while Wolford and Rufenacht are other possibilities.

There isn't much depth at Fairmont. Two young wrestlers will likely be the kingpins. Wyatt Running (Colby's brother) qualified at 145# as a 9<sup>th</sup> grader last year and went 1-2 at the state level, including a tough overtime loss in the consolation. He was at 171# early in the year, finishing 2<sup>nd</sup> at 171# at Clinton Massie, and 2<sup>nd</sup> at 160# at Fairfield to a Tennessee wrestler. Toal (Zach's brother), only a freshman, was a state junior high champ and has spent considerable time at 171#. He was 5<sup>th</sup> at that weight at the GMVWA. Stahl, who was a bout from states last year, is on the Wayne Trace team list, but has yet to certify. If here, he might be a factor, while Laughlin, Price and Behnken are other possibilities, especially the first named.

### 171 #

#### **PROJECTED CHAMPION: CHRIS PHILLIPS (MONROEVILLE)**

##### Top Contenders

2	Dye (Patrick Henry)	15	Hood (Buckeye Central)
3	O'Neill(Clear Fork)	16	Langermeier (West Jefferson)
4	Groff (Sandy Valley)	17	Shapiro (Beachwood)
5	Oberdick (Martins Ferry)	18	Lovejoy (Allen East)
6	Robinson (Heath)	19	Kwiat (Calvert)
7	Bender (Loudonville )	20	Montgomery (Crestview)
8	Stock (Garrettsville Garfield)	21	Goings (West Liberty Salem)
9	Brandt (Versailles)	22	Myers (Hillsdale)
10	Linton (Rootstown)	23	Rayner (Caldwell)
11	Elling (Liberty Center)	24	Johnson (Upper Sandusky)
12	Porter (Chanel)	25	Windau (Columbus Grove)
13	Bresciani (Coshocton)	26	Heidinger (Columbia Station)
14	Siefker (Ottawa Glandorf)		

Ohio has produced a large number of exceptional upper weight wrestlers for at least 65 years, superstars who have won multiple state titles and then went on to win NCAA championships. Yet an argument can certainly be made that, at least at the high school level, Chris Phillips is the best that we have yet seen. Virtually every four-time champion began his high school career at one of the two introductory weight classes (only John McGhee comes to mind as one who started somewhat higher), and none won their first title at 171#. Phillips, a three-time junior high state champion, won the Ironman during his first week of varsity competition in sensational style, and has never looked back. His only loss, as a sophomore, was something of a fluke aided and abetted by those small Ironman mats that cost him several takedowns. There is no question, at least in my mind, that he would have won four titles if there had been only one class in Ohio after beating Roddy as a freshman and Heflin as a sophomore. He should become Ohio's 22<sup>nd</sup> four-time champ and the only one who has done it at the same weight class.

And, yet, strangely, I still have concerns. Phillips looks somehow smaller (lifting?) than last year and to the untrained eye, a shade less passionate. Most opponents look to slow the bout down (stalling) and Phillips must continually chase. It's difficult to keep good technique when running after folks, and it certainly can become tiring to put up with. With the excellent Dye and O'Neil waiting for a mistake, Phillips must retain his patience and his good humor.

It's a powerhouse district at Owens. Phillips, of course, leads the way, but Dye and O'Neill also exit this site. Dye was 4<sup>th</sup> last year, losing in the semi-finals to Utlely, but beating Groff and Oberdick. He was a district runner-up to Phillips, beating O'Neill, 10-7, in the process. He missed the early portion of the year, but blasted through Woodmore on his return. O'Neill is very strong and difficult to score against. Utlely beat him 3-0 in the state quarterfinals and then he inexplicably lost and failed to place. He won the Gorman over the tough Gross at 189# last week. State qualifier Hood is also here and has the inside track on the fourth qualifying spot, but I think Elling may have passed him after a very strong 4<sup>th</sup> at Medina. Add in Montgomery, who lost his go-to-state bout, 16-11, last year, and also placed at Medina, and it will be an exciting competition.

It will be very competitive, as well, at Coshocton. Groff, a sophomore, and Oberdick, a junior, will be at it again replicating their struggles last year. Oberdick won their sectional final, but both qualified out of the district. Oberdick finished 6<sup>th</sup>, while Groff went 1-2. This year Groff won at Barnesville in overtime, but both should place this year. However, both may be looking up at state qualifier Mason Robinson who was 2<sup>nd</sup> at Medina. The fourth spot could end up being a confrontation between state qualifier Bresciani and the fast improving Langermeier. Rayner might be a long shot here.

Brandt should be the top performer at a rather quiet Fairmont District. He was the only underclassman to qualify at this weight class last year and he went 1-2 at the states beating Linton, but losing to Gross and Oberdick. He won at Plymouth and was a very strong 2<sup>nd</sup> at the GMVWA, losing by a single point to Newburg and beating Gryniuk.

Siefker and Lovejoy were both close to qualification, but fell one win short. This year Lovejoy won handily at Allen East and Marion Harding, while Siefker torments opponents at the small northwestern tourneys. There is yet another Kwiat, this one Daniel, and he is rapidly improving, winning, for example, at Tiffin. Windau and Johnson will challenge as well as Goings.

There are at least six solid contenders at Garfield and the sorting out process should be interesting. Linton is the only returning state qualifier after reaching the district finals. He went 0-2 in Columbus. The wrestler who is coming on strong is the sophomore Stock. He was a very impressive freshman last year going 2-2 at districts and losing only to state champion Raber and three-time qualifier Meadows. He won at Jackson-Milton and was 2<sup>nd</sup> at Aurora (to Ryba by a point). He beat Linton 9-8 so he is right there. Bender has been around a long time, but has never quite made it to Columbus. He was the alternate last year, losing a close semi-final to Raber and then to Meadows. He beat Linton by six points to win at Chippewa. Porter has had a tough schedule. He was 3rd at Solon and 1st at Pickerington and the CIT, but failed to place at Brecksville. Shapiro has had a sound year, while Myers, a move-in from Northmor, was a sectional champ last year.

### 189 #

#### **PROJECTED CHAMPION: ALEX UTLEY (CVCA)**

##### Top Contenders

2	Schaefer (West Salem Northwestern)	16	Van Winkle (Clinton Massie)
3	Schafer (Chanel)	17	Brettrager (Kirtland)
4	Rodgers (Mechanicsburg)	18	Cole (Sandy Valley)
5	Gross (Norwalk St. Paul)	19	Wiggers (Belpre)
6	Ishmael (North Baltimore)	20	Heiling (Delphos St. John)
7	Wellington (VASJ)	21	Chenetski (Amanda Clearcreek)
8	Wilken (Monroeville)	22	Scott (Lockland)
9	Bremke (Oberlin)	23	McClenathan (Cardington)
10	Baker (Elmwood)	24	Baffa (Fairview Park)
11	Rollison (River Valley)	25	Petroff (Crestview)
12	Sheehy (Genoa)	26	Shannon (North College Hill)
13	Zody (Triway)	27	Sigler (Union Local)
14	Zelasko (Garrettsville Garfield)	28	McGuire (Fredericktown)
15	LeForce (Carlisle)	29	Thornton (Upper Sandusky)

With superstar Phillips at 171#, this has become a marquee weight class with four excellent wrestlers at least one full step ahead of the rest of the field. All four are seniors with exceptional track records and the ability to win this weight class despite the stern competition. Three of the four exit the same district (Garfield Hts.) so the pairings will be great if Rodgers is opposite the Garfield champ, or terribly unbalanced should that not be the case.

The popular favorite is the powerful Utleby, who has certainly paid his dues. He was 3<sup>rd</sup> as a freshman and then 2<sup>nd</sup> the past two years, losing in each case to a superstar, three-time champ Zach Toal, and potentially four-time champ Chris Phillips. An outstanding athlete (and football player), Utleby was 3<sup>rd</sup> at the Ironman, losing to Evans, but beating Gresham, and 1<sup>st</sup> at Medina beating Walker, Wheeler (by one) and pinning Suvak in the finals. He is moving up a weight class, but that doesn't appear to be an issue. He is a tremendously determined wrestler who combines physicality with good technique.

Kurt Schaefer has been my choice at this weight class the last two years, but has twice been rebuffed by two-time state champion Corey Running who, thankfully, has graduated. Like Utleby, Schaefer has paid his dues, finishing 3<sup>rd</sup> two years ago (losing 17-9) to Running) and 2<sup>nd</sup> last year at that brutal weight class by a heartbreakingly close 7-6 score to Running. The potential match-up with Utleby at Medina didn't occur as Schaefer lost by a point in a low scoring bout to Suvak in the quarter-finals and to Division II state runner-up Wheeler by the same 3-2 score in the consolation round. Interestingly, Utleby beat Wheeler by that same 3-2 score. There is a tinge of inconsistency with Schaefer as witnessed by his 8-0 win over Beam last year in the league meet, followed the very next weekend by a sectional loss to the same opponent. The wildcard here is Jon Schafer (note the spelling difference), who couldn't make the Chanel team at 160# and became a very small 189-pounder. Still, he managed state qualification with an exciting overtime win that gave him a 4<sup>th</sup> place district finish. He went 1-2 in Columbus, losing eventually to Beam for the third time in two weeks. This year he is not a small 189# wrestler and he has begun to dominate. He swept through the Solon Tourney, defeating Yurko by twelve in the final, and then easily beat state qualifiers Brown and Leidecker at Pickerington. His only loss was a narrow 9-7 bout with Gresham at Brecksville. He has some slick takedowns blended with unexpected power to make him a dark-horse candidate at this weight class.

All three of this trio will exit the Garfield Hts. District making for some fabulous competition. As mentioned, the champion should be away from the other two and will have a 67% chance of having Rodgers in the other half as well.

Cody Rodgers was a state junior high runner-up four years ago, but has yet to make Saturday night at the high school level. He was 4<sup>th</sup> at 171# two years ago, and dropped to 160# last year. Eventual champ Raber defeated him in the semi-finals, and a critical consolation loss to Hall dropped him to 5<sup>th</sup>, negating what now looks like a critical seeding opportunity. Now up two weight classes, he has wrestled extremely well this year, but does not face the level of competition the other three face.

With three of the big four at Garfield there is little room for error at this district. Bremke was a district semi-finalist last year and then lost to Schaefer and Schafer – the latter defeat in overtime. Wellington qualified at 171# last year, but has not wrestled an overly aggressive schedule, at least up to now. This is the duo with the most credentials, but watch out for Zody. He was 1<sup>st</sup> at Smithville and 5<sup>th</sup> at North Canton. Baffa beat Bremke 10-2 in winning at Columbia Station, but lost badly to Gross. The sophomore

Zelasko has continued to impress, while the younger Brettrager is getting much better. That is a lot of candidates for, very likely, one state berth.

Rodgers should be fresh for the rigors of the state after a cakewalk at Fairmont. I am really struggling for names – where is Josh Lowe when I really need him? The two most likely possibilities are the sophomore LeForce and the shrunk down 215# Van Winkle. Fill in with Shannon, Heiling and, maybe, Goodrich and think about Thornton as a long-shot. If you like surprises this might be the district for you.

There are a lot more possibilities at Owens. Gross wrestled a brilliant state tourney last year – reaching the semi-finals (and Phillips) and finishing 5<sup>th</sup>.--all this from a fourth place district finisher. This year he won at Lorain and was 2<sup>nd</sup> at the Gorman in a close bout with O'Neill. Wilken, now a junior, also qualified, but went 0-2 in Columbus. Still, it was a huge step forward and sets the stage for better wins this year. All the Ishmael wrestlers specialize in the quick fall, and Dalton is no exception. He was a district semi-finalist at the 171 pound class as a freshman, but then lost to Phillips and Gross to finish 5<sup>th</sup>. He is very dangerous. Sheehy and Baker are also here, with the former just missing state qualification and the latter losing to Wilken, 3-1, in his go-to-state bout. This is a solid quintet, all of whom – depending on the draw – could grab a low place. Add in Petroff and they fit snugly under the Big Four.

There are a lot of names at Coshocton, but not so many credentials. No one here has reached state qualification, but there are several who came reasonably close. I like Chenetski in the Columbus area, with McClenathan and McGuire as possibilities. McClenathan went 2-2 at last year's district, while McGuire dropped a 9-8 decision to him. Wiggers, from the southeast also had a 2-2 record and won this year at Logan Elm. Also good here is the Shadyside and Barnesville champ Parker Cole, and Rollison, undefeated as I write this.now,

**215 #**

**PROJECTED CHAMPION: ETHAN HAYES (DIXIE)**

Top Contenders

2	Meadows (CVCA)	15	Raymond (Upper Sandusky)
3	Smith (Chanel)	16	Klotz (Lakota)
4	Miller (Delphos Jefferson)	17	Weber (Loudonville)
5	Drumm (Heath)	18	Pulfer (Lehman)
6	Whisler (Crestview)	19	Bowling (Fremont St. Joseph)
7	Bellamy (Sandusky St. Mary)	20	Coole (Martins Ferry)
8	Leach (Union Local)	21	Saunders (Girard)
9	Hefflinger (Liberty Center)	22	Skleres (Pymatuning Valley)
10	Johnson (Swanton)	23	Sehorne (Carlisle)
11	Wyant (Orrville)	24	Satterthwaite (Grandview Hts.)
12	Fultz (West Jefferson)	25	Elfers (Reading)
13	Little (Meigs)	26	Livengood (Norwalk St. Paul)
14	Szymanski (Stritch)		

At best it's likely to be a two man battle at this weight class, but, at least at the moment, defending state champion Ethan Hayes is the clear favorite. A somewhat surprising state runner-up two years ago he wrestled an aggressive schedule last year that paid off with a relatively easy title. Except for a close semi-final with Allerding, he had solid margins in the other three state bouts, including a 9-4 win over Schafrath in the final. His only Ohio loss last year was to Division I champ Nick Tavanello, but he bounced back by dominating virtually every other competitor. Dixie has become a solid program over the past few years in the Southwest and Hayes solidified that progress, winning the school's first state title.

While wrestlers like Miller (whose brother beat Hayes for the title two years ago) and Smith have reasonable upset potential, the one wrestler who may have a real chance at Hayes is the junior, Matt Meadows. He was 7<sup>th</sup> last year at 160# and has made the big jump to 215#. He was 7<sup>th</sup> at the Ironman, losing a pair of one-point bouts, including a 3-2 defeat by Walz. In their rematch at the Medina finals Walz again won a close bout with a late takedown, 3-1. He'll keep his bout with Hayes close and then hope to score big in the third period to fashion a real upset.

Miller keeps getting better. He won his first 43 bouts last year before being majored by two-time state champ Running in the district finals. He went 1-2 at the state meet to cap a successful sophomore year. This has been another year of constant winning, including titles at Allen East and Plymouth. He should be away from Hayes at states and that gives him finalist hopes. There is a big gap between Hayes and Miller and the rest of the Fairmont District. Pulfer was one win from state qualification last year, losing to Grubenhoff and then losing the 5<sup>th</sup> place bout. It cost him a state trip as Grubenhoff was injured and the alternate got the state berth. Raymond was 2<sup>nd</sup> at Tiffin and 3<sup>rd</sup> at



Plymouth behind Pulfer and has a solid chance of qualification. I put Boyd, Homans, and Elfers needing an upset to make the state bracket.

Meadows won't have it nearly that easy at Garfield. Smith, now a junior, just keeps getting better. He was 1<sup>st</sup> at Pickerington, 2<sup>nd</sup> at Solon (a 7-6 loss), and 3<sup>rd</sup> at Brecksville, losing only to Tavanello, avenging the Solon loss, and pinning Hyland (4<sup>th</sup> in Division I) and Gott. He beat Fultz at the Ohio Duals and lost to Hayes by just two points, 5-3. State qualifier Wyant returns and was 2<sup>nd</sup> at the WIT after going 1-2 in Columbus. The last qualification ticket falls toward Saunders who went 2-2 at districts and just won at Jackson-Milton. Weber, 3<sup>rd</sup> at West Jefferson and 1<sup>st</sup> at Mt. Vernon and Skleres are also possibilities, with Zuberer most likely headed to 285 pounds.

Both Owens and Coshocton boast crowded fields. At Owens there are six solid contenders and a couple of long shots. All four of the state qualifiers at this district return at this same weight. Johnson, who won the district last year, went 1-2 in Columbus and just failed to place. He won at Plymouth in overtime and lost to Hefflinger in the Dual. Whisler, who was 3<sup>rd</sup> at the district, was the only placer, finishing 8<sup>th</sup>. This year he was a Medina semi-finalist, losing to Meadows by two and then defaulting down to 6<sup>th</sup>. Klotz, who was 4<sup>th</sup> at the district, went 0-2 at States, losing in the first round to Hayes. This year he won at Lima Central and has been a consistent dual meet tournament winner. The three that qualified last year (Krall is at 215# at Wauseon) share no guarantees. Hefflinger is a good athlete and is getting better quickly. His win over Johnson may be a sign of things to come. Bellamy lost in overtime to Johnson and in overtime last year to Whisler. He is about ready to roll. Szymanski has generated a lot interested in Toledo and he is a strong competitor. Add in Bowling and this is a very good district.

There are also three returning state qualifiers at Coshocton. Drumm went 1-2 at 189# and was 2<sup>nd</sup> at Licking County to Redman and 1<sup>st</sup> at Whitehall. He looks to be the best in the Columbus area. Fultz has had an up-and-down year. He went 0-2 in Columbus at 189# and I actually expected him to be at that weight once again. He was, for example, only 5<sup>th</sup> at West Jefferson and didn't make the finals at Olentangy. Wright, who was 5<sup>th</sup> at 215# last year, is still at last look on the Northmor roster, but has not certified. When you think about – three returning qualifiers – but one not wrestling, one showing some inconsistency, and only one rolling forward – means there is some real opportunity. There are plenty of other options here. Michael Little was a state alternate at 189# last year after reaching the semi-finals, but was pinned twice in a combined time of 85 seconds to fall to 5<sup>th</sup>. He had all pins at Gallia this year. Coole and Leach are both good OVAC wrestlers with district experience. Leach won at Shadyside and was 2<sup>nd</sup> at Barnesville and Union Local, while Coole was 3<sup>rd</sup> at Barnesville. Satterthwaite had two district wins last year and is primed to take advantage of this opportunity. A surprise entrant might be the unheralded Jacob Coon – winner of several small tourneys. He won three bouts at Brecksville, but failed to place. What caught my attention was a 9-0 win over state placer Whisler. Hmmm.

**285#**

**PROJECTED CHAMPION: MIMMO LYTLE (SWANTON))**

Top Contenders

2	Endicott (Crestview)	15	Taylor (Paint Valley)
3	Stenger (Clinton Massie)	16	Damschroeder (Carey)
4	Silverio (Shadyside)	17	Turner (Amanda Clearcreek)
5	Majoy (Huron)	18	Rodgers (Wellington)
6	Johnson (Dixie)	19	Chesser (Margaretta)
7	Flinner (Triway)	20	Sisson (Pleasant)
8	Kelbly (Smithville)	21	Gillen (Liberty Center)
9	Richards (Garaway)	22	Barrett (Chanel)
10	Reusser (Orrville)	23	Pohlman (Delphos St. John)
11	Eyerly (Ontario)	24	Smith (Lakota)
12	Moser (Tinora)	25	Fulk (Crooksville)
13	Zuberer (Kirtland)	26	Newton (National Trail)
14	Srock (Chippewa)	27	Dennie (Archbold)

There were nine underclassmen in the bracket sheet at this weight class last year and it looks like all of them are competing again this year. That might suggest a relatively clear pecking order based on past results, but that kind of analysis is often marginally productive when dealing with the notoriously unpredictable heavyweights. That was particularly true last year, with six overtime bouts and six that ended quickly in the first period in “one move” bouts. Still imperfect data generally trumps no data and three of the four returning placers would seem to enjoy the upper hand.

During the Revolutionary War a certain Captain John Lytle served with distinction and then returned to his beloved wife Polly Wilson. He is almost surely the progenitor of both Mimmo Lytle and me. My question is why is Mimmo very big, very strong, and very athletic, whereas I am not – although I could probably beat him at golf. It’s about this time I’ll probably find out that he is the junior champ at the Swanton Country Club. At any rate, Lytle is the highest returning placer, pinning in 12 seconds to finish 3<sup>rd</sup> – and is, already, a two-time state placer. Undefeated this year, he has not wrestled an overly aggressive schedule, and his huge number of quick falls may ironically erode his conditioning.

The mammoth Stenger was 5<sup>th</sup> last year, losing by a point to runner-up Dailey and then getting caught early by Lytle in the consolations. He has good movement for a big man and there is no question that one mistake wrestling him will cost you the bout. Clinton-Massie was at Brecksville last year, but apparently did not compete at any of the big holiday tournaments this time. He, too, has had a large number of quick falls this year in a less than frightening schedule.

Endicott, on the other hand, has been tested several times. He was 7<sup>th</sup> last year, losing to eventual champ Obringer and to Stenger by fall. Another very large heavyweight, he was 1<sup>st</sup> at the Gorman and 3<sup>rd</sup> at Medina, losing only to El-Geroushi (3-1), and defeating

a bevy of good Division I heavies – Kellems, Pressley, Brown, and Elflein. He exits the same district at Lytle, which should put them apart in Columbus.

That Owens District is easily the strongest. Lytle and Endicott are just the top of a large iceberg. Majoy also qualified last year and went 1-2, losing both his bouts (including one to Stenger) on that ultimate tiebreaker. Lytle beat him 8-1 at Plymouth, but he has had many other successes. Eyerly is also a returning state qualifier, who was most recently 2<sup>nd</sup> at the Gorman. I like Chesser who went 1-2 at districts, but has been a consistent high placer. However, Moser is the one who could make it in the top four. He was the state alternate last year after reaching the district semi-finals. He has been very good this year. Gillen and Dennie are dark-horse candidates.

Stenger will face some sporadic competition at Fairmont. Cody Johnson was a sectional 4<sup>th</sup> last year and then won four district consolation bouts to qualify 4<sup>th</sup> after losing 2-1 to Stenger. Johnson took his sectional 4<sup>th</sup> and district 4<sup>th</sup> and converted it into a state 8<sup>th</sup> using advanced math. This year he was undefeated at the Ohio Duals. It looks like Raymond will go at 215#, which provides more space for folks like Martin, Pohlman, Wilder and Firestone. The last two qualifiers – whoever they are – will be real underdogs at States.

There are two wrestlers that stand out at Coshocton and have reasonable placement potential. Silverio was a district 3<sup>rd</sup> and went 1-2 at States, losing an ultimate tiebreaker to Endicott and a one-pointer to Jewell – so he had placement ability even then. He was 1<sup>st</sup> at Shadyside and Barnesville this year. Richards was 4<sup>th</sup> at this district, losing to Silverio in the consolation finals. He drew Lytle in the first round and was soon eliminated. He was 1<sup>st</sup> at Aurora and with Silverio should dominate this district. Like the Fairmont District, the bottom two spots are wide open. State alternate Taylor is a logical third choice, while Sisson and Turner lead the Columbus contingent. Fulk and Neff are other possibilities who have had district victories.

We have seen almost every weight class at the Garfield District showing good depth and some title contenders. This is not true at 285#. One sure outcome is that it will be a wide open affair with no big favorites and, consequently, no sure things. Leading the way is two-time state qualifier Flinner, who has a knack for winning at the district level – getting the last qualifying spot the past two years. In a nasty coincidence he drew state champion Tyler Oberinger in the first round both times and has never gotten to wrestle on Friday. He was 3<sup>rd</sup> at the WIT and a strong 2<sup>nd</sup> at North Canton. Kelbly pinned Flinner at the WIT, where he finished 2<sup>nd</sup> to the powerful Everett (champion of Solon) by a 1-0 score. Reusser won at Woodridge, was 4<sup>th</sup> at the WIT (losing to Flinner) and placed at the Top Gun. He has shown good consistency. Zuberer, a 215 pounder if need be, might fit better here. He is also a consistent placer headed by finalist appearances at Willoughby South and Lorain. Srock and Rodgers have done well, with Srock winning their head-to-head meeting at Chippewa. Also don't forget about Barrett. He wrestles a tough schedule that distorts his records, but prepares him well.

## TEAMS

1. Chanel

They won four team titles in the 1980's – all in Division II – and have been runner-up six other times. They are the only team that has won a team trophy in all three classifications – They were runner-up in Division I in 1984. It has been 23 years since the last title and they are overdue. They have a beautifully balanced line-up that starts with Assad at 103# and contains at least eight other wrestlers who can score at the state level. The mainstays are Walters, Orrill, Assad, and Collier, but Walden and Porter are possible helpers. The key, however, will come from two wrestlers who have made astounding improvement – Schafer and Smith. They'll need at least 100 points to win and I think they've got them.
2. CVCA

Should Chanel falter or retain the incredibly bad luck that befell them last year, CVCA is prime to jump in. Utley and Tomasello are finalists, with Meadows close behind. The four middleweights Decatur, Ratay, Powers, and Dobben will have to score big. They feature many of the same weight classes at Chanel so we may see many head-to-head matches at both districts and states.
3. Monroeville

The Big Four minus one can still score about 80 points. They'll need Clark to max out his production and hope Wilken can do the same. The defending champs will not go quietly.
4. West Jefferson

Another team with a lot of wrestlers on the periphery of scoring. Branham and Prather are both excellent with the latter boy having finalist potential. It's up to Feucht, Reichle, Fultz and Langermeier to help.
5. Crestview

Endicott should be a big-time scorer, while Whisler and Music (totally healthy) will have to be at their very best. Then Hall and Montgomery need to chip in, while the freshman Batdorf scores like an upperclassman. This could be a stretch, but there are a lot of possibilities.
6. Jackson-Milton

This has the look of a three-man squad, but also one that can score over 50 points. I think Maticic and Pizzuto are solid, but Wiseman has to bring his A-game. Maybe Tomaino or Collins can help.

7. Waynedale A team that could easily move into the top five if everyone contributes. The Nelson boys should score more heavily this year, while Harter and Beam pick up extra points. Stanley could be a key element at 145#.
8. Edison This is a team with a number of potential scorers, but only one sure point getter – Burns. However, Michel, Mancuso, Majoy, Howard, and Cole will need to chip in with at least a few points.
9. Keystone Strictly a three man team that hinges on two factors – Can the Spanglers score as heavily as last year up a total of four weight classes, and can Gerken convert his mid-season form into post-season points?
10. Elmwood Goebel could well be a finalist at 119# and Lee and Emmitt both have state experience. If the big guy Baker can help, they could just sneak into the Top Ten.