

**2012  
HIGH SCHOOL  
WRESTLING  
FORECAST**

(41<sup>st</sup> ANNUAL EDITION)

Written By:  
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January 22, 2012

## 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, who worked this year with Denise Bellamy and Kelly Liskay. 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 22, 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.brecksvillevrestling.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 this 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>2009</u> | <u>2010</u> | <u>2011</u> |           |            | <u>Total</u> |
|-------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-----------|------------|--------------|
|                   |             |             | <u>I</u>    | <u>II</u> | <u>III</u> |              |
| Won Title         | 28          | 29          | 9           | 8         | 13         | 30           |
| Finished Second   | 6           | 5           | 2           | 5         | 1          | 8            |
| Third             | 4           | 5           | 1           | 0         | 0          | 1            |
| Fourth            | 0           | 0           | 0           | 0         | 0          | 0            |
| Lower than Fourth | <u>4</u>    | <u>3</u>    | <u>2</u>    | <u>1</u>  | <u>0</u>   | <u>3</u>     |
| Total             | 42          | 42          | 14          | 14        | 14         | 42           |

**BRAKEMAN REPORT AUDIT**

(Won State Title)

|                                   | <u>2009</u> | <u>2010</u> | <u>2011</u> |             |            | <u>Total</u> |
|-----------------------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|------------|--------------|
|                                   |             |             | <u>I</u>    | <u>II</u>   | <u>III</u> |              |
| Ranked First                      | 28          | 29          | 9           | 8           | 13         | 30           |
| Ranked Second                     | 3           | 6           | 2           | 3           | 0          | 5            |
| Ranked Third                      | 6           | 3           | 1           | 1           | 1          | 3            |
| Ranked Fourth                     | 2           | 1           | 0           | 0           | 0          | 0            |
| Ranked Lower Than 4 <sup>th</sup> | <u>3</u>    | <u>3</u>    | <u>2</u> *  | <u>2</u> ** | <u>0</u>   | <u>4</u>     |
| Total                             | 42          | 42          | 14          | 14          | 14         | 42           |

\*Baker and Delande ranked 5<sup>th</sup>

\*\* Hackworth and Ryba were ranked 7th

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

| <b>2008</b> |                  |       | <b>2009</b> |              |       | <b>2010</b> |                |       | <b>2011</b> |               |       |
|-------------|------------------|-------|-------------|--------------|-------|-------------|----------------|-------|-------------|---------------|-------|
| 1           | Mentor/Harding   | 59.3% | 1           | Perry        | 60.7% | 1           | Ashland        | 67.0% | 1           | Lorain        | 60.8% |
| 2           | Perry            | 57.7% | 2           | Firestone    | 54.3% | 2           | Goshen         | 58.5% | 2           | Mentor        | 58.6% |
| 3           | Ontario/Fostoria | 55.1% | 3           | Goshen       | 54.2% | 3           | Maple Hts.     | 57.8% | 3           | Garfield Hts. | 56.3% |
| 4           | Firestone        | 53.9% | 4           | Fairmont     | 53.5% | 4           | Marion Harding | 52.9% | 4           | Goshen        | 54.9% |
| 5           | Fairmont         | 52.9% | 5           | Maple Hts.   | 52.6% | 5           | Fairmont       | 51.9% | 5           | Firestone     | 54.5% |
| 6           | Heath            | 52.7% | 6           | Owens        | 51.5% | 6           | Owens          | 50.0% | 6           | Owens         | 54.4% |
| 7           | Goshen           | 50.0% | 7           | Fairfield    | 50.0% | 7           | Firestone      | 50.0% | 7           | Harding       | 49.5% |
| 8           | Owens            | 46.9% | 8           | Mentor       | 48.0% | 8           | Mentor         | 47.4% | 8           | Fairmont      | 46.4% |
| 9           | Maple Hts.       | 46.9% | 9           | Heath        | 45.4% | 9           | Darby          | 44.9% | 9           | Coshocton     | 41.5% |
| 10          | Steubenville     | 40.0% | 10          | Fostoria     | 44.8% | 10          | Heath          | 38.2% | 10          | East          | 39.8% |
| 11          | Darby            | 39.8% | 11          | Steubenville | 41.7% | 11          | Fairfield      | 36.8% | 11          | Darby         | 37.6% |
| 12          | Fairfield        | 38.4% | 12          | Darby        | 38.6% | 12          | Claymont       | 36.4% | 12          | Fairfield     | 35.3% |

**2011 STATE VICTORIES % BY DISTRICT ANALYSIS**  
(Only Inter-District Bouts)\*

|                     | <u>Mentor</u> | <u>Lorain</u> | <u>Fairmont</u> | <u>Darby</u> |
|---------------------|---------------|---------------|-----------------|--------------|
| Championship Rounds | 58.6%         | 60.8%         | 35.3%           | 37.6%        |
| Consolation Rounds  | <u>58.2%</u>  | <u>53.2%</u>  | <u>51.5%</u>    | <u>37.1%</u> |
| Total               | 58.5%         | 57.8%         | 44.0%           | 37.4%        |

  

|                     | <u>Harding</u> | <u>Firestone</u> | <u>Goshen</u> | <u>East</u>  |
|---------------------|----------------|------------------|---------------|--------------|
| Championship Rounds | 49.5%          | 54.5%            | 54.9%         | 39.8%        |
| Consolation Rounds  | <u>58.2%</u>   | <u>48.4%</u>     | <u>44.4%</u>  | <u>48.0%</u> |
| Total               | 53.6%          | 51.7%            | 50.3%         | 44.0%        |

  

|                     | <u>Garfield</u> | <u>Owens</u> | <u>Fairmont</u> | <u>Coshocton</u> |
|---------------------|-----------------|--------------|-----------------|------------------|
| Championship Rounds | 56.3%           | 54.4%        | 46.4%           | 41.5%            |
| Consolation Rounds  | <u>58.7%</u>    | <u>48.9%</u> | <u>53.4%</u>    | <u>38.1%</u>     |
| Total               | 57.4%           | 51.8%        | 49.7%           | 39.9%            |

\*Does not include intra-district bouts.

**WRESTLING SCORE SHEET**

8 points for a 1<sup>st</sup> place, 7 points for a 2<sup>nd</sup> place.... and so on.

|               | <u>Entrants</u> | <u>Placers</u> | <u>%</u> | <u>Champs</u> | <u>Runners-up</u> | <u>Points</u> |
|---------------|-----------------|----------------|----------|---------------|-------------------|---------------|
| Mentor        | 56              | 37             | 66.1%    | 5             | 4                 | 174           |
| Lorain        | 56              | 35             | 62.5%    | 5             | 7                 | 169           |
| Fairmont      | 56              | 23             | 41.1%    | 1             | 3                 | 93            |
| Darby         | 56              | 17             | 30.4%    | 3             | 0                 | 68            |
| Firestone     | 56              | 31             | 55.4%    | 4             | 5                 | 144           |
| Harding       | 56              | 30             | 53.6%    | 1             | 6                 | 137           |
| Goshen        | 56              | 24             | 42.9%    | 9             | 2                 | 128           |
| East          | 56              | 27             | 48.2%    | 0             | 1                 | 95            |
| Garfield Hts. | 56              | 37             | 66.1%    | 4             | 5                 | 173           |
| Owens         | 56              | 31             | 55.4%    | 6             | 4                 | 136           |
| Fairmont      | 56              | 23             | 41.1%    | 3             | 2                 | 112           |
| Coshocton     | 56              | 21             | 37.5%    | 1             | 3                 | 83            |

THURSDAY RESULTS

|           | <u>1<sup>st</sup> Rd<br/>Champ</u> | <u>1<sup>st</sup> Rd.<br/>Consy.</u> | <u>Total</u> | <u>%</u> | <u>Number of Wrestlers<br/>Who Went 0-2</u> |
|-----------|------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|--------------|----------|---|
| Mentor    | 37-19                              | 12-7                                 | 49-26        | 65.3%    | 7   |
| Lorain    | 40-16                              | 9-7                                  | 49-23        | 68.1%    | 7   |
| Darby     | 19-37                              | 16-21                                | 35-58        | 37.6%    | 21  |
| Fairfield | 16-40                              | 19-21                                | 35-61        | 36.5%    | 21  |
| Firestone | 34-22                              | 10-12                                | 44-34        | 56.4%    | 12  |
| Harding   | 31-25                              | 16-9                                 | 47-34        | 58.0%    | 9   |
| East      | 25-31                              | 15-16                                | 40-47        | 46.0%    | 16  |
| Goshen    | 22-34                              | 15-19                                | 37-53        | 41.1%    | 19  |
| Garfield  | 34-22                              | 13-9                                 | 47-31        | 60.3%    | 9   |
| Owens     | 28-28                              | 14-14                                | 42-42        | 50.0%    | 14  |
| Coshocton | 22-34                              | 15-19                                | 37-53        | 41.1%    | 19  |
| Fairmont  | 28-28                              | 14-14                                | 42-42        | 50.0%    | 14  |

OHIO HIGH SCHOOL STATE WRESTLING HISTORY

|                              |          |            |
|------------------------------|----------|------------|
| Number of one-time champs    | 1204     |            |
| Number of two-time champs    | 242      |            |
| Number of three-time champs  | 52       |            |
| Number of four-time champs   | 22       |            |
| Total number of individuals  | 1,520    |            |
| Total number of state titles | 1,932    |            |
| Division I                   | 74 years | 897 Titles |
| Division II                  | 41 years | 550 Titles |
| Division III                 | 36 years | 485 Titles |

FAMOUS FIRSTS

|                        | <u>Division I</u>                     | <u>Division II</u>                 | <u>Division III</u>                       |
|------------------------|---------------------------------------|------------------------------------|---|
| First State Champ      | R Brdar<br>1938 John Hay              | T. Bauer<br>1971 Col. DeSales      | R. Johnson<br>1976 Crestview              |
| First Two-Time Champ   | F. Schleicher<br>1938-39 Cleve.Rhodes | B. Dieli<br>1971-72 Ready          | R. Johnson<br>1976-77 Crestview           |
| First Three-Time Champ | J. Matteucci<br>1946-48 Cleve. West   | J. Hanson<br>1972-74 Richmond Hts. | E. Potokar<br>1976-78-79<br>Richmond Hts. |
| First Four-Time Champ  | W. Wineberg<br>1991-94 Fairfield      | M. Zimmer<br>1976-79 Col. DeSales  | D. Hanson<br>1984-87<br>Richmond Hts.     |

First Champs

| <u>District</u> | <u>Division I</u>             | <u>Division II</u>            | <u>Division III</u>               |
|-----------------|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Northeast       | R. Brdar<br>1938 John Hay     | J. Tompkins<br>1971 Mogadore  | E. Potokar<br>1976 Richmond Hts.  |
| East/Southeast  | G. Cherokee<br>1939 Shadyside | M. Davey<br>1972 Circleville  | J. Pryor<br>1976 Barnesville      |
| Central         | G. Joseph<br>1960 Whitehall   | T. Bauer<br>1971 Col. DeSales | T. Adrian<br>1976 Licking Hts.    |
| Northwest       | D. Stagg<br>1956 Whitmer      | D. Gundlach<br>1971 Huron     | R. Johnson<br>1976 Crestview      |
| Southwest       | C. Cayles<br>UNL Princeton    | D. Howell<br>1973 Oakwood     | S. Knowles<br>1984 Springfield CC |

|  | <u>Division I</u>          | <u>Division II</u>       | <u>Division III</u>        |
|--|----------------------------|--------------------------|----------------------------|
| First Team Title                           | John Hay                   | Columbus DeSales         | Licking Hts.               |
| First Team Title Coach                     | Harold Kester              | Bob Triano               | Ken Ash                    |
| First Team to<br>Score 100 points          | St. Edward<br>1979 – 149.5 | Coventry<br>1978 – 158.5 | Bishop Ready<br>1982 – 119 |
| First Team to<br>Score 200 points          | Walsh<br>1995 – 203        | Graham<br>2007 – 208.5   | -----                      |
| First Team with three<br>Individual Champs | John Hay*<br>1940          | Columbus DeSales<br>1971 | Licking Hts.<br>1976       |

Shadyside also had three champs, but Hay's came earlier.

|                     | <u>Division I</u>     | <u>Division II</u>  | <u>Division III</u>  |
|---------------------|-----------------------|---------------------|----------------------|
| First Team 4 Champs | Shadyside - 1942      | Coventry - 1978     | Richmond Hts. - 1979 |
| First Team 5 Champs | Cleveland West - 1951 | Walsh Jesuit - 1997 | Richmond Hts. - 1984 |
| First Team 6 Champs | Cleveland West - 1951 | Graham - 2009       | -----                |
| First Team 7 Champs | -----                 | Graham – 2009       | -----                |

DIVISION I CHAMPS BY DISTRICT

|                | <u>1938-49</u> | <u>1950-59</u> | <u>1960-69</u> | <u>1970-79</u> | <u>1980-89</u> | <u>1990-99</u> | <u>2000-11</u> | <u>Total</u> |
|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|--------------|
| Northeast      | 111            | 90             | 77             | 87             | 111            | 88             | 118            | 682          |
| East/Southeast | 9              | 12             | 5              | 0              | 0              | 0              | 0              | 26           |
| Northwest      | 0              | 3              | 21             | 15             | 6              | 6              | 4              | 55           |
| Central        | 0              | 0              | 6              | 14             | 3              | 19             | 17             | 59           |
| Southwest      | <u>0</u>       | <u>0</u>       | <u>1</u>       | <u>13</u>      | <u>10</u>      | <u>22</u>      | <u>29</u>      | <u>75</u>    |
| Total          | 120            | 105            | 110            | 129            | 130            | 135            | 168            | 897          |

DIVISION II CHAMPS BY DISTRICT

|                | <u>1971-79</u> | <u>1980-89</u> | <u>1990-99</u> | <u>2000-11</u> | <u>Total</u> |
|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|--------------|
| Northeast      | 66             | 59             | 76             | 59             | 260          |
| East/Southeast | 1              | 10             | 9              | 14             | 34           |
| Northwest      | 19             | 29             | 20             | 30             | 98           |
| Central        | 25             | 18             | 12             | 13             | 68           |
| Southwest      | <u>6</u>       | <u>14</u>      | <u>18</u>      | <u>52</u>      | <u>90</u>    |
| Total          | 117            | 130            | 135            | 168            | 550          |

DIVISION III CHAMPS BY DISTRICT

|                | <u>1976-79</u> | <u>1980-89</u> | <u>1990-99</u> | <u>2000-11</u> | <u>Total</u> |
|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|--------------|
| Northeast      | 26             | 46             | 45             | 54             | 171          |
| East/Southeast | 1              | 15             | 13             | 9              | 38           |
| Northwest      | 12             | 29             | 49             | 55             | 145          |
| Central        | 13             | 30             | 15             | 15             | 73           |
| Southwest      | <u>0</u>       | <u>10</u>      | <u>13</u>      | <u>35</u>      | <u>58</u>    |
| Total          | 52             | 130            | 135            | 168            | 485          |

STATE FINALIST RECORDS

|                   | <u>Finalists</u> | <u>Record</u> | <u>%</u> |
|-------------------|------------------|---------------|----------|
| St. Edward        | 155              | 96-59         | 61.9%    |
| Graham            | 85               | 62-23         | 72.9%    |
| Maple Hts.        | 77               | 48-29         | 62.3%    |
| Walsh             | 66               | 43-23         | 65.2%    |
| Columbus DeSales  | 52               | 35-17         | 67.3%    |
| Garfield Hts.     | 52               | 23-29         | 44.2%    |
| Euclid/Shore      | 48               | 26-22         | 54.2%    |
| Richmond Hts.     | 47               | 30-17         | 63.8%    |
| Sandusky St. Mary | 47               | 30-17         | 63.8%    |
| Cleveland West    | 43               | 28-15         | 65.1%    |
| Chanel            | 40               | 26-14         | 65.0%    |
| Bishop Ready      | 38               | 28-10         | 73.7%    |

CHAMPIONS  
(Chronological Order)

|                         | <u>Division I</u>                          | <u>Division II</u>                         | <u>Division III</u>                             |
|-------------------------|--|--|---|
| First                   | R. Brdar<br>1938 – 95#<br>John Hay         | T. Bauer<br>1971 – 98#<br>Columbus DeSales | R. Johnson<br>1976 – 98#<br>Crestview           |
| 100 <sup>th</sup> Champ | D. Walsh<br>1947 – 186#<br>John Hay        | K. Foxx<br>1978 – 155#<br>Coventry         | F. McKeon<br>1983 – 155#<br>Ledgemont           |
| 200 <sup>th</sup> Champ | J. Farrar<br>1957 – 154#<br>Garfield Hts.  | P. Ohi<br>1986 – 126#<br>Ontario           | J. Abbott<br>1991 – 130#<br>West :Liberty Salem |
| 300 <sup>th</sup> Champ | J. Green<br>1966 – 165#<br>Toledo South    | L. Spurlock<br>1994 – 103#<br>Bellevue     | B. Endicott<br>1998 – 171#<br>Elmwood           |
| 400 <sup>th</sup> Champ | S. LaScala<br>1975 – 98#<br>Maple Hts.     | J. Wooten<br>2001 – 125#<br>Graham         | W. Van Sickle<br>2005 – 215#<br>Liberty Center  |
| 500 <sup>th</sup> Champ | T. Darbyshire<br>1982 – 167#<br>Troy       | C. Skonieczny<br>2008 – 135#<br>Walsh      |   |
| 600 <sup>th</sup> Champ | T. Hayden<br>1990 – 135#<br>Kent Roosevelt |  |   |
| 700 <sup>th</sup> Champ | G. Faunda<br>1992 – 215#<br>Fitch          |  |   |
| 800 <sup>th</sup> Champ | T. Jameson<br>2005 – 103#<br>Fitch         |  |   |

In a recent article on baseball the author identified the player he felt over the entire history of the sport was most identified with each major league team. For instance, he selected Babe Ruth for the New York Yankees and Bob Feller for my beloved Cleveland Indians.

Listed below are wrestlers whom I feel are the face of the school when it comes to wrestling. Feel free to disagree.

St. Edward – Alan Fried  
Graham – David Taylor  
Maple Hts. – Tommy Milkovich  
Walsh Jesuit – Joe Heskett  
Columbus DeSales – Mark Zimmer, Luke Fickell  
Garfield Hts. – Frank Fiore  
Euclid – Steve Piscopo  
Richmond Hts. – Dan Hanson  
Sandusky St. Mary – Jared Opfer  
Cleveland West – John Matteucci  
Chanel – J. Jagers

Ready – Tommy Rowlands  
Coventry – John McGhee  
John Marshall – Jim Dregalla  
Nordonia – Dane Tussel  
St. Ignatius – Mike Buddie  
VASJ – Bob Golic  
Bridgeport – Robby Douglas  
West Tech – John Sforzo  
Steubenville – Charlie Keenan  
Beaver Local – Carl Hoppel  
Troy Christian – Zach Toal

## DIVISION I

### 106 #

#### **PROJECTED CHAMPION: DAVID BAVERY (MASSILLON PERRY)**

##### Top Contenders

|    |                                |    |                              |
|----|--------------------------------|----|------------------------------|
| 2. | Assad (Brecksville)            | 14 | Davis (Clay)                 |
| 3  | Torres (Elyria)                | 15 | Torti (Olentangy)            |
| 4  | Riley (Mt. Vernon)             | 16 | Gray (Wadsworth)             |
| 5  | Noble (Lebanon)                | 17 | Ferrito (St. Ignatius)       |
| 6  | Rahmani (Marysville)           | 18 | DiSabato (Westerville North) |
| 7  | Mancini (Boardman)             | 19 | Davis (Fairfield)            |
| 8  | Gutierrez (Pickerington North) | 20 | Barklay (Centerville)        |
| 9  | Kramer (Mentor)                | 21 | Dickson (North Ridgeville)   |
| 10 | Ziegler (Moeller)              | 22 | Tucker (Loveland)            |
| 11 | Wimer (Grove City)             | 23 | Diaz (Lorain)                |
| 12 | Nace (Teays Valley)            | 24 | Steigner (Madison)           |
| 13 | Bentley (St. Edward)           | 25 | Ervin (Glen Este)            |

As currently constituted there are 11 state champions and 9 state runners-up returning to compete in this year's Division I tournament. On the other hand, there is not great depth, with several weight classes having a few great boys at the top followed by a sizable gap to the next tier of participants. There will also be far more seeding situations which will help level the competition and bring the bracket gods into line (if that, indeed, is possible).

At the beginning of the year David Bavery was the obvious choice to win at 106#. As a freshman he finished as state runner-up losing to Thompson, 2-0, in the finals. He specialized in low scoring bouts shutting out his first three state opponents, while only scoring a total of seven points. However, this year it has been a bit bumpier ride than anticipated. He did not look good at the Ironman, but bounced back looking great at Medina (dominating) and King of the Mountain. However, at the Top Gun he was upset early and fought back to take 3<sup>rd</sup>, but without ever really taking charge. He's still the favorite, but by a much smaller margin.

The Mentor District should help him develop some real momentum going into Columbus. The only major obstacle is Mancini, who missed state placement by a point last year after a 4<sup>th</sup> place district finish. He has moved down from 113# and took 5<sup>th</sup> at the Top Gun, losing in overtime to Rahmani and defaulting to Bavery. State alternate Kramer – who was at 113# -- has made the journey to 106#, and was a quarter-finalist before getting pinned by Mancini. If he gets comfortable with the weight, he'll qualify out of this district. CIT runner-up Ferritto is the frontrunner for the last qualifying spot, but he struggled a bit at Brecksville, failing to place after being pinned by Rahmani.

Steigner, winner of two district bouts last year, and junior high placer Hoberney, could conceivably make it out.

The dynamite district is at Ashland, but I'm not sure anyone has the firepower to stop Bavery. The little Torres was terrific at Brecksville, beating Rahmani, Martin, and Pool in order before losing to the much taller Michel. He was a district semi-finalist last year, losing a one-pointer and having to default down to 6<sup>th</sup>. Assad has been injured all year, but we all know how good he is – trained by one of the best as a youth wrestler. He was runner-up to Kolodzik at the junior high states, and he seems very capable of going that far this year. State qualifier Davis returns, but will face pressure from every part of the bracket. He failed to place at Brecksville and was 3<sup>rd</sup> at Perrysburg. State alternate Diaz (beaten by Davis) also returns, with Irvine and Dickson also factors in the bracket. Bentley, 4<sup>th</sup> in the junior highs, is very good, but small and can be overpowered. Still, he has beaten a lot of good people this year, and could be a surprise qualifier. I also like Gray, and if Wadsworth gets on a roll he could qualify. He was 8<sup>th</sup> at the very deep Brecksville weight class.

The district serving Columbus has always been one of the weakest performing districts at the state level, but I anticipate a rising performance the next few years. There seem to be a lot of good young wrestlers in that area and that is certainly true at 106#. I count five or six performers, any of whom could place at the state level. Rahmani was the somewhat shocking winner at the Top Gun, beating Burcher, Mancini and Martin in order – two of them in overtime. What a confidence booster, and his coach, Shawn Andrew, predicted a month ago that he was on the fast track. Still he was 4<sup>th</sup> at Brecksville, losing to Torres and being shut out, 5-0, by Nace. He was a junior high runner-up last year to Kelly. Gutierrez seems to have been wrestling forever. He was a Division II state qualifier for Columbus DeSales (his second trip) and took a strong 7<sup>th</sup>. He won at Solon and was 2<sup>nd</sup> at Medina. Not the greatest athlete in the world, he is a real scrapper and hard to beat. Riley has been at 113# all year, but is scheduled to go down to 106# shortly. After his performance at the SWOCA and GMVWA you have to believe that he will be an important factor in the resolution of this weight class. State alternate Torti, Nace, and Wimer are all good. Nace was 3<sup>rd</sup> at Brecksville and Wimer was 4<sup>th</sup> at Medina. The most recent DiSabato model was a semi-finalist at Medina before dropping to 6<sup>th</sup>, including being “majored” by Wimer. He's good, but it looks like an uphill climb.

With Victoria apparently at 113#, there is nobody here that should overly trouble the top contenders. Ziegler won the SWOCA and was 3<sup>rd</sup> at the CIT, losing to Pool. He's a fine freshman with a high ratio of falls. The wildcard here is Noble, who can be very tough. He won at Troy, pinning Heidkamp and Barklay. He was 5<sup>th</sup> at 113# at the SWOCA. He was actually a state qualifier, but some rule about multiple penalties (?) put him on the sidelines. Heidkamp was 3<sup>rd</sup> at Troy and 4<sup>th</sup> at the GMVWA, demonstrating his consistent performances. Barklay, Ervin and, maybe, Tucker all have qualification chances.

**113 #**

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

Top Contenders

|    |                         |    |                              |
|----|-------------------------|----|------------------------------|
| 2  | Assad (Brecksville)     | 13 | Watson (Centerville)         |
| 3  | Moore (St. Edward)      | 14 | Krumheuer (Midpark)          |
| 4  | Victoria (Mason)        | 15 | Milano (LaSalle)             |
| 5  | Spearman (Lancaster)    | 16 | Chang (Reynoldsburg)         |
| 6  | Ziegler (St. Ignatius)  | 17 | Daly (Lakota East)           |
| 7  | Hornack (Medina)        | 18 | Fausnight (Hoover)           |
| 8  | Sparks (Marysville)     | 19 | Ballagher (Willoughby South) |
| 9  | Screptock (Clay)        | 20 | Cotton (Lake)                |
| 10 | DuPratt (Olmsted Falls) | 21 | Valenti (Darby)              |
| 11 | Barden (Fairfield)      | 22 | Kihn (Fairmont)              |
| 12 | Mullucey (Coffman)      | 23 | Lugo (Normandy)              |

This is a weight class that has an uneven geographical dispersal with one district having six or seven state quality individuals, while another might have two or three. There are also three seedable wrestlers which will help level out the competition.

Thompson is the defending champ and he wrestled a smooth, mistake-free tournament, content to build up small leads and then vigorously maintain them. However, when Hornack made a mistake in the semis he rapidly transformed it into a fall. He had a quick fall to win at Solon and his only two losses were to out-of-state wrestlers. He is not an overwhelming favorite – it's often difficult to move up from 103# (now 106#) -- but he certainly has the best shot at the title.

Also at Mentor is Ziegler who was 5<sup>th</sup> last year and who wrestled exceptionally well the last few weeks of the year. Quite frankly, I thought he had Victoria beat in the quarter-finals, and kind of gave it away. He has continuing injury issues this year – having most recently defaulted at the CIT. If healthy, he'll place again. State alternate Gallagher has an excellent chance of qualifying, though, like last year he seems a little small for the weight. Fausnight beat Cotton at North Canton, but finished behind him at the Top Gun. Their ongoing battle could decide the fourth qualifying spot. Lugo, with two district wins at this weight class last year, could also be a factor.

As we'll often see, the best district will be at Ashland. It's really loaded at this weight class. Assad was the state runner-up in D-3 last year to Tomasello, losing 7-4 and was 3<sup>rd</sup> the year before. He has lost some very close bouts this year, finishing 6<sup>th</sup> at the Ironman and 4<sup>th</sup> at the Beast of the East. He has a history with Thompson, losing to him in overtime at Solon last year, and, if memory serves, defeating him at the junior high states when they were 8<sup>th</sup> graders (Mr. Thompson will know this). Moore has certainly paid his dues and has been exceptional in this his first full varsity season. He was 4<sup>th</sup> at the Ironman, beating Assad 3-1, and pinned against Blair. He has finalist potential. Hornack was a state semi-finalist last year, losing to Thompson and falling to 4<sup>th</sup>. He is

still adjusting to 113#--5<sup>th</sup> at Medina and 4<sup>th</sup> at the Top Gun. The freshman Sreptock, 5<sup>th</sup> at junior highs, won at Brecksville over the Georgia state champion to win the tournament for Clay. It was a brilliant piece of wrestling and is he ever tough on the top. Very impressive. Krumheuer was 7<sup>th</sup> last year and such is the depth of the field that this three-time state qualifier could be "on the bubble". He won at Midpark and was 2<sup>nd</sup> at the North Coast, losing to Thompson. He was 6<sup>th</sup> at North Canton, but he always finds a way to make the top four at districts. Olmsted Falls seems everywhere and DuPratt has wrestled a lot. He has won or placed at every venue except at the tough Medina field. A state qualifier last year, he was 8<sup>th</sup> after pulling a huge upset over Murdock.

There are once again a lot of solid wrestlers emerging from Darby. Three – Mullucey, Sparks, and Spearman – are state qualifiers, while Chang was an alternate and Valenti and Davis finished 6<sup>th</sup> at district. The three returning qualifiers all wrestled at 103# last year and each won at least one bout, with Spearman capturing 6<sup>th</sup> place. This year we saw Spearman get 2<sup>nd</sup> at Medina (to Tomasello) and shutting out both Burcher and Fausnight. Sparks was 5<sup>th</sup> at Brecksville, defeating Daly and Becker, but losing to Sreptock. Chang missed state qualification by a point last year, and this year's group is even better.

Victoria, if at this weight and healthy, is the flag bearer for the Fairfield District. He was 3<sup>rd</sup> last year, losing to Bavery, 1-0 in the semi-finals. In what might be a foreshadowing bout he beat Spearman in overtime in the consolation semi-finals. He has missed this entire year to date so there is an aura of mystery about him. Watson missed a lot of last season, but he was a district runner-up and won a state bout last year. He beat Barden to win at Fairfield, but was 6<sup>th</sup> at the GMVWA, losing to Riley, 16-4, in the first bout and then fighting his way back. State qualifier Barden and Milano, (3<sup>rd</sup> at the CIT and 4<sup>th</sup> at the GMVWA) are, maybe, next best now that Noble has dropped. However, don't overlook state qualifier Daly who was 4<sup>th</sup> at the SWOCA and 6<sup>th</sup> at Brecksville. Still to be heard from is state qualifier Kihn who has spent time at 120#, but may move down with Parrett wrestling so well.

The pairings should be interesting. Thompson will get the first seed, while Assad and Victoria will be in the other half bracket. The runner-up at Ashland could possibly be in the same quarter bracket as Thompson, which would be the revenge of the bracket monsters. No matter, this will be a very good bracket from line 1 through line 16.

**120 #**

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

Top Contenders

|    |                          |    |                             |
|----|--------------------------|----|-----------------------------|
| 2  | McClay (Massillon)       | 14 | Straugher (Reynoldsberg)    |
| 3  | Byrd (LaSalle)           | 15 | Duran (Solon)               |
| 4  | Windsor (Wayne)          | 16 | Shoemaker (Grove City)      |
| 5  | Canon (Elyria)           | 17 | Mendel (Moeller)            |
| 6  | Heffernan (St. Edward)   | 18 | Bloss (Franklin Hts.)       |
| 7  | Matos (Amherst)          | 19 | Getto (Medina)              |
| 8  | Parrett (Fairmont)       | 20 | Phillips (Massillon Petty)  |
| 9  | Shump (Barberton)        | 21 | Gordon (St. Xavier)         |
| 10 | Puska (Edgewood)         | 22 | Bartinelli (North Royalton) |
| 11 | Carson (Lake)            | 23 | Peskar (Normandy)           |
| 12 | Penzone (liberty)        | 24 | Edwards (Lorain)            |
| 13 | Pruchinski (Brecksville) | 25 | Lucas (Olentangy)           |

One of the more charismatic wrestlers in the field is the mercurial George DiCamillo. Ranked #1 in the country, he won four times at Brecksville, three times at the Ironman, and very likely twice at Columbus. His last loss was to Heil in the state semi-finals his sophomore year, but his state title did not come easily as the outrageously good Bright took him into overtime – that and an absolutely horrid call that negated a regulation DiCamillo takedown. The only close bout he had this year was with the talented McClay, who he is likely to see at least once more. We will miss him in Ohio with his bright smile and lightning quick takedowns. If he wins, in fact whoever wins, at this weight class will become the 900<sup>th</sup> champion crowned in Division I.

McClay was 3<sup>rd</sup> last year, losing 5-1 to Bright in the semi-finals and will be at the Mentor District with DiCamillo—that is if he can still make 120#. He was 3<sup>rd</sup> at the Ironman, losing 1-0 to DiCamillo, but apparently failed to make weight at the Gorman. Only a junior, he has huge potential. Shump is a two-time state qualifier who is a bit of a mystery. He can be very good, but not every time, possibly because of recurring injury issues. He knocked off one of the top West Virginia 120's, 11-4, but went 0-2 at Brecksville. The rest of this district is pretty pedestrian with junior high champ Carson (3<sup>rd</sup> at the Top Gun), Vermont state placer Duran and, maybe, Phillips next best. Martinelli and Peskar are also possibilities.

Byrd was the state runner-up to Heil last year after upsetting Dillon in the semi-finals in a rather strange bout. He was 3<sup>rd</sup> at the GMVWA, losing to the Kentucky state champ, and 1<sup>st</sup> at the CIT over D-2 state champ Mike Rix. He'll be seeded away from DiCamillo and with McClay, assuming DiCamillo beats McClay who, lest we forget, did pin him at last year's district. That means Byrd will have to beat both of them to win it all. Parrett qualified last year as a freshman, but drew Dillon in the first round. He beat his teammate Kihn to win the Firebird and then won the SWOCA in a Parrett versus Parrott

bout. He was 7<sup>th</sup> at Brecksville, but has gotten much better in just this year. Windsor is a two time qualifier who has yet to place, losing his state placement bout to a wrestler he had beaten the previous weekend. He was 2<sup>nd</sup> at the GMVWA and if he has a hot weekend no one beats him easily. State alternate Mendel (5<sup>th</sup> at the CIT) and Puska (3<sup>rd</sup> at the SWOCA) are prime candidates for the other spot, with Gordon also in the mix.

The sad news at Darby is that Timchenko is out for the year with a knee injury. Like a utility infielder for the Indians, he has gone from Columbus to Cleveland (well Massillon) and back. A great talent, he was 5<sup>th</sup> last year, but he still has next year. That leaves state qualifier Bloss and state alternate Straughter as potential leaders here. I like the young Penzone and Shoemaker, but this will be a district you'll want to draw into.

It's a little strange to see a weight class at Ashland with only one returning state qualifier. At the moment only Matos has embraced the Columbus experience going 1-2 last year, losing to the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> place finishers. He was a semi-finalist at Brecksville before getting swamped by DiCamillo and ending up 4<sup>th</sup>. He definitely has podium potential this year. Three state alternates are also here, Getto (112#), Pruchinski (119#), and Heffernan (130#). The latter boy has made a very tough cut, but the jury is still out as to how he will perform three weekends in a row. At the moment he is 2-1 with a big win over Mendel. There is no question that he is a superior wrestler so it will be interesting to watch how this all plays out. On his good days Canon can be very good. He was 2<sup>nd</sup> at Brecksville beating a junior high state champ (Kaminski) and Ohio state champ (Rix) and a Georgia state titlist.

## 126 #

### **PROJECTED CHAMPION: DEAN HEIL (ST. EDWARD)**

#### Top Contenders

|    |                           |    |                         |
|----|---------------------------|----|-------------------------|
| 2  | Dillon (Fitch)            | 15 | DeMio (Strongsville)    |
| 3  | Fiorucci (Olentangy)      | 16 | Wakser (Hoover)         |
| 4  | Fehr (Barberton)          | 17 | Levitsky (Parma)        |
| 5  | Murdock (Coffman)         | 18 | McCurdy (Hayes)         |
| 6  | Branham (Miamisburg)      | 19 | Trunzo (North Royalton) |
| 7  | Screptock (Clay)          | 20 | Donatelli (Darby)       |
| 8  | Kowal (Princeton)         | 21 | Repko (Elyria)          |
| 9  | Good (Brecksville)        | 22 | Davis (Sidney)          |
| 10 | Jones (Wadsworth)         | 23 | Boggs (Riverside)       |
| 11 | Gonzalez (Mason)          | 24 | Driscoll (Bradley)      |
| 12 | Abdel-Salem (Lakewood)    | 25 | Huffman (Fairmont)      |
| 13 | Ziegler (Moeller)         | 26 | Kakos (Franklin Hts.)   |
| 14 | Asadorian (Olmsted Falls) |    |                         |

I always felt that the greatest individual effort I had ever seen at the Ironman was watching freshman Chris Phillips defeat three nationally top ranked wrestlers to win the title. This year seventh seeded Dean Heil (seventh seeded after two state titles???)

had a transcendent Saturday afternoon beating two of the top five wrestlers in the country during the day. Then Saturday, as a huge underdog, he went nose-to-nose with the top ranked Gulibon and then in a scramble took him down and pinned him. It had to be one of the top five moments in Ironman history.

I first saw Heil winning a junior high state title, but to my chagrin I have picked against him the last two years (as I did with Jim Jordan many years ago) – first with DiCamillo, and then Dillon. No more. He has had another fabulous year, wrestling a dynamite schedule and emerging essentially unscathed. Incredibly consistent, he is already half way to four state titles.

Who knoweth three time state placer John Dillon? At times literally invincible, gliding from one move to the next, and scoring seemingly at will. At other junctures, someone who looks almost disinterested and disengaged from the contest. His semi-final bout with Byrd was bizarre as after just missing with one takedown, rarely shot again. Most recently he was 2<sup>nd</sup> at the Top Gun, losing to Jordan, 7-4, in the final. He can, I believe, almost match Heil on strength and speed, but, as of yet, not on consistency.

Heil emerges from a sound district. Three other competitors have previous state experience with Screenshot placing 4<sup>th</sup>, losing only to DiCamillo and McClay. Tall and lanky, Screenshot is very good on top. He was 2<sup>nd</sup> at Brecksville, losing to Fehr, but has fashioned another good year. Good and Jones also have wrestled in Columbus, but neither has placed. Both have had injury issues, but Good has missed far more time. Jones came back and placed at Brecksville, but was “teched” by Heil at the Ohio Duals. DeMio missed state qualification last year on a 1-0 overtime decision, was 3<sup>rd</sup> at Solon, but failed to place at Medina. Abdel-Salem defeated state qualifier Matos, winning Avon Lake and should be a factor, along with Asadorian, 3<sup>rd</sup> at Medina. A dark horse candidate is the sophomore, Repko, who was a fine youth wrestler.

It is not a strong competition at Mentor. Dillon should cruise to the title, with Coby Fehr the only other wrestler with state experience. Fehr won at Brecksville defeating state placer Screenshot in the finals and winning from the #8 seed. Levitsky, Trunzo, and Boggs all have district wins and should compete for the last two spots. Wakser was 4<sup>th</sup> at both North Canton and the Top Gun and cannot be overlooked.

There is some depth at Fairfield, but it's mostly with wrestlers who are, at best, low to middle placers. Branham, Kowal, and Gonzalez are all returning state qualifiers and only Branham has a win at that level (over Kowal). Kowal was 2<sup>nd</sup> at the SWOCA and 4<sup>th</sup> at the GMVWA, while Gonzalez placed at Medina. I like Ziegler, 3<sup>rd</sup> at the CIT and SWOCA, as the fourth qualifier with state alternate Davis, a Top Gun placer, a strong contender. Huffman and Donigan are long shots with this kind of depth.

Two of the top contenders will come out of Darby. The big question is whether Fiorucci will make the cut to 126#. The way I look at it Fiorucci, a three time state placer, has done everything but win a state title. The finalist two years ago, he'll want to maximize his chances to win a title. With the hornet's nest at 132#, maybe 126#, even with Heil

might give him a better chance to win it all. Fiorucci will have a body length and leverage advantage at 126#, so I think we'll see him here. He was 3<sup>rd</sup> at the Top Gun, losing to Montgomery and won at Medina. Murdock was shocked by DuPratt in the first round at Columbus, but he came back to place 6<sup>th</sup>, losing later on a tie-breaker to McClay. He was 2<sup>nd</sup> at Medina and 1<sup>st</sup> at Coffman. He'll place for the third time in his career. I think the trio of McCurdy, Donatelli, and Kakos, who coincidentally have all won two district bouts, should battle for the last two berths.

### **132 #**

#### **PROJECTED CHAMPION: JOEY WARD (MOELLER)**

##### Top Contenders

|    |                                |    |                      |
|----|--------------------------------|----|----------------------|
| 2  | Bright (St. Edward)            | 13 | DeCesare (Nordonia)  |
| 3  | Squire (Wadsworth)             | 14 | Nace (Teays Valley)  |
| 4  | Montgomery (Madison)           | 15 | Mickovic (Twinsburg) |
| 5  | Denlinger (Fairmont)           | 16 | Tomayko (Copley)     |
| 6  | Strope (Lancaster)             | 17 | DeGroff (Lake)       |
| 7  | Conine (Clay)                  | 18 | Wesley (Loveland)    |
| 8  | Bast (Massillon Perry)         | 19 | Edwards (Lorain)     |
| 9  | Victor (Mentor)                | 20 | Brown (Lakota East)  |
| 10 | D. McDougale (Gahanna Lincoln) | 21 | Steed (Glen Oak)     |
| 11 | Wilson (Davidson)              | 22 | Kunzler (Highland)   |
| 12 | Abdel-Salem (Lakewood)         |    |                      |

To my mind the most compelling weight class at this year's tournament is at 132#. We have three absolutely outstanding wrestlers with fabulous credentials whose only goal is to win the state. Nothing else, I suspect, is acceptable. Each of the three deserves a paragraph here and we'll go in seedable order.

Ward is a two time placer and the only one of this heavily decorated trio with a state title. He beat Squire 2-1 in the tie-breaker after cruising through his first three bouts. He was 5<sup>th</sup> at the Ironman, losing to the then #1 ranked Mark Grey, 5-3, and #2 ranked Cisneros, 3-2. He crushed the field at the SWOCA, and went undefeated at the Clash. Finally, he beat Fickel for the second time, this time by six, to win the Top Gun. He is gritty, tough and unforgiving.

Squire has been 3<sup>rd</sup> – 2<sup>nd</sup> – 2<sup>nd</sup> and should he fail to win here, will go down as one of the best wrestlers never to win a state title. A distinction he fervently hopes to avoid. He beat Ward early in the season last year, but as mentioned, lost to him in the state finals after a hideously tough semi-final bout with Labry. He has had nagging injuries all year and has not been as sharp as normal. He lost to Bright at the Ironman and failed to place, but won at North Canton. Fickel beat him at Brecksville and he has taken some

recuperation time since then. Like Ward, he is conservative, difficult to score on and generally error free.

Bright, a junior is a two-time placer who lost to DiCamillo in overtime. Up three weight classes, he in no way looks small or outsized. He was the runner-up at the Ironman, beating Squire and Cisneros. He won the key bout at the Clash, but lost a controversial overtime decision against Grey in the Blair dual meet. Bright beat Ward at the Ohio duals in yet another close bout.

Squire and Bright will be at the same district with the champion there drawing away from Ward. That means Ward will have to beat both opponents to take the title. Bouts between this trio will clearly be close, low-scoring, maybe overtime, and subject to the vagaries of officiating. The numbers say it will be Bright, but my choice, on nothing more than a hunch, is Ward.

Let's hope Squire and Bright are apart at this district level. Abdel-Salem has state experience and I think he'll make it to Columbus again. Kunzler also has been a state qualifier. Conine, DeCesare, and Tomayko are all good with the final outcome in doubt. Most of this group will struggle to place – whoever qualifies.

Denlinger was a state placer last year from the Fairfield District and is second only to Ward at this venue. They were finalists at the SWOCA with Ward winning 13-3, but Denlinger did beat the Kentucky champion Ruschell. I wouldn't be surprised if he moved back to 138# for a relatively easy qualification run but, if not, Wesley and Brown the consolation finalist at Fairfield are next best.

If any of the top trio are to be upset it might be Montgomery – a dangerous pinner - who can take advantage of even a momentary lapse. A two time placer (7<sup>th</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup>), he most recently won at the Top Gun and also has titles at Riverside and Perry, along with a 2<sup>nd</sup> at Brecksville. A state semi-finalist last year, he may have trouble matching up with my top trio. State qualifier Victor (2<sup>nd</sup> to Montgomery at the Top Gun) should have an easy road to qualification. He will be away from Montgomery at districts. The fast improving Bast, 4<sup>th</sup> at the Top Gun, is next best, with the fourth spot wide open. Two freshman – state junior high champ DeGroff and Steed – might factor into the equation, with Mickovic, now at the right weight, also in contention.

There is good depth again at Darby, even if Fiorucci moves to 126# and Boswell stays at 138#. Strobe and D. McDougle are both state qualifiers who know their way around a mat. Nace beat McDougle by a point and Lee Wilson may finally be healthy. This latter boy – a transfer from Columbus DeSales – has always had a lot of talent, but has had injury issues. If sound, he'll qualify.

**138 #**

**PROJECTED CHAMPION: MITCH NEWHOUSE (MASSILLON PERRY)**

Top Contenders

|    |                               |    |                            |
|----|-------------------------------|----|----------------------------|
| 2  | Barber (St. Edward)           | 13 | McIntyre (Mason)           |
| 3  | Forrider (Marysville)         | 14 | Bloch (Lakota West)        |
| 4  | Ryan (Liberty)                | 15 | Warstler (Wadsworth)       |
| 5  | Labry (Twinsburg)             | 16 | Boswell (Canal Winchester) |
| 6  | Hammer (Medina)               | 17 | Ratay (Hoover)             |
| 7  | Amenta (Clay)                 | 18 | Walker (Copley)            |
| 8  | Ashton (Mentor)               | 19 | Taylor (Cuyahoga Falls)    |
| 9  | Garcia (Lorain)               | 20 | Asher (Hamilton)           |
| 10 | Sams (Fairfield)              | 21 | Restifo (Solon)            |
| 11 | K. McDougle (Gahanna Lincoln) | 22 | Miller (Lancaster)         |
| 12 | Banko (Garfield Hts.)         | 23 | Kramer (Beavercreek)       |
|    |                               | 24 | Roth (Perrysburg)          |

With 132# featuring three exceptional title contenders, 138# has suddenly bulked up with a number of top notch performers. I count nine wrestlers I would not feel nervous about selecting as a top pick. I have further assumed that state runner-up Burrows will compete, if at all, at 145#. Also, in a strange way the seeding process may be a strong positive in the pairings.

The Mentor District is crowded and confusing. My feeling is that Labry will stay at 138# where his chances are, by most calculations, for a state title higher than at 132#, which he made the first week of the season. Newhouse and Labry are the two best at this district. Newhouse was 2<sup>nd</sup> to Mines at 112# two years ago, but after losing 3-2 to Heil in the quarter-finals last year, couldn't come back in the consolations. He was 6<sup>th</sup> at the Ironman, splitting two bouts with Barber and losing to Skonieczny. He was 3<sup>rd</sup> at Medina, a hugely controversial 2<sup>nd</sup> at the King of the Mountain, and 3<sup>rd</sup> at the Top Gun, losing to Skonieczny and pinning Hammer. Labry, 3<sup>rd</sup> last year, won at Solon and Liberty, and was 3<sup>rd</sup> at Brecksville. He has split two bouts with Ryan. Last year his semi-final loss to Squire was one of the most gut wrenching I have every witnessed. It speaks well of him that he came back to take 3<sup>rd</sup>. State qualifier Ashton won at Solon and should qualify once more. However Taylor, also with state experience, may be on shaky ground with Banko looking very strong and Restifo and Ratay also in the picture. Ratay, for example, was 2<sup>nd</sup> at North Canton and 4<sup>th</sup> at Medina.

Like Mentor, the Ashland District also shows a strong field and this time has three powerhouse wrestlers in the foreground. Barber was 4<sup>th</sup> at 135# last year losing 3-1 to Burrows in the semi-finals. As mentioned, he split two bouts with Newhouse and ended up 5<sup>th</sup> at the Ironman. He went 5-1 at the Clash and has shown amazing improvement. Amenta is a bit of an enigma. He always seems to lose some close early decision and then roars back in the consolations. Last year he was 3<sup>rd</sup> at both the district and state

level and he was 4<sup>th</sup> this year at Brecksville, losing a tight bout to Labry. Hammer was 7<sup>th</sup> last year at Columbus and had a wonderful tournament at Medina beating the Michigan state champ and Newhouse to take the title. He can be very good. Perhaps, just a baby step behind this trio is state qualifier Garcia who now represents Lorain. He has, at last count, won four titles and cannot be overlooked. State qualifier Warstler faces a tough path for a repeat trip, but he has overcome bigger odds than this in the past – like last year. Funderberg, Walker, and Roth are all good, but there is only so much space in the state bracket.

With Amenta and Labry both seedable wrestlers, the district champions at these two districts should be in opposite half-brackets and with the depth each possesses, should scatter great wrestlers relatively evenly.

The Darby District will be very strong even if Boswell moves down to 132#. Forrider and Ryan are a formidable duo with, in my mind, finalist potential. Forrider was 6<sup>th</sup> in Columbus losing twice to Gray after winning the district crown at 130#. He was only seeded fourth at Brecksville, but dominated his first four opponents (including Denlinger and Warstler). He took the title with an ultimate overtime win over Ryan. Only a junior, he will be difficult to beat. Ryan, also a junior, has made a large leap forward after a sparkling sophomore season. As mentioned, he was a very narrow 2<sup>nd</sup> at Brecksville, defeating McDougle, upsetting Amenta in three overtimes, and avenging an early loss against Labry. He has a tough, grind it out style which has been augmented with more aggressive action this year. He most recently won at Elgin, shutting out D-3 choice Nelson and beating state qualifier Campbell in the semi-finals. McDougle, the other brother, should also qualify along with D-2 state qualifier Boswell. Miller is at the edge of qualification and will “get out” if one of the top quartet struggles.

It’s a bit confusing at Fairmont. Sams, another junior, was a district runner-up and after a first round stumble came back to get 8<sup>th</sup>. He missed Kenston, but came back to get 3<sup>rd</sup>, losing to Garcia, 5-0. I still think he might be the best at this district. McIntyre and Bloch were both state qualifiers last year, but never saw Friday in Columbus. McIntyre failed to place at Medina after winning three early bouts, but losing to Rohskopf and Ratay. Bloch drew Forrider in the first round at States and kept it close before losing 7-5. This year he was only 5<sup>th</sup> at the SWOCA, but was 3<sup>rd</sup> at the GMVWA. Asher (3<sup>rd</sup> at the SWOCA), Kramer, and Morgan are also possibilities. I expected to see state qualifier Gilbert competing here, but have yet to see his name in agate.

This is one of those too close to call weights, but I think Newhouse has the best chance of claiming the trophy. However, Labry, Barber, and Amenta are all “nip and tuck” behind with the Columbus duo of Ryan and Forrider looking for a title. The hot weekend warrior could be Hammer, if he can bottle and preserve that Medina tournament energy.

**145 #**

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

Top Contenders

|    |                            |    |                            |
|----|----------------------------|----|----------------------------|
| 2  | Scheidel (St. Edward)      | 15 | Thoman (Springboro)        |
| 3  | Zeman (Avon)               | 16 | Newton (Perrysburg)        |
| 4  | Burrows (Canton McKinley)  | 17 | Marcelli (Jackson)         |
| 5  | Baran (Brecksville)        | 18 | McGuinea (Twinsburg)       |
| 6  | Campbell (Anderson)        | 19 | Driscoll (Bradley)         |
| 7  | Luft (Teays Valley)        | 20 | Boyd (Marysville)          |
| 8  | Brunner (North Olmsted)    | 21 | Nedolast (Copley)          |
| 9  | Baughman (Wadsworth)       | 22 | Denman (Riverside)         |
| 10 | Fosco (Olentangy)          | 23 | Tullius (Canal Winchester) |
| 11 | Neyer (Fairfield)          | 24 | Horner (Mt. Vernon)        |
| 12 | Connick (Chardon)          | 25 | McPherson (Beavercreek)    |
| 13 | T. Dailey (Masillon Perry) | 26 | Feckley (Lakewood)         |
| 14 | Meyer (Moeller)            |    |                            |

With Thompson and Collica winning state titles last year, Solon vaulted into the all time top twenty in terms of individual titles won (17). They figure to add to that number this year with both champions returning and looking solid. Collica came in as the 130# favorite last year, but was shocked at the district level when Carlone took the title with a second period fall. Regaining his confidence, Collica reached the finals at Columbus, built up an early lead, and hung on to beat Carlone, 7-6. He has been spectacular this year, including pins in the finals at Solon and North Coast.

All three of his closest challengers will come from the two northern districts. At his Mentor District I expect to see state runner-up Ruben Burrows, who shocked most people (including me) with a brilliant run to the finals, including an enormous upset of Ty Davis and a hard fought win over Barber. He has missed the entire year so far, but I'm sure he'll be in top form for tournaments. Connick was a state qualifier at 135# last year, but I think he's a clear step behind the top duo. He won at the King of the Hill, but was 2<sup>nd</sup> at Solon and 3<sup>rd</sup> at Kenston. Tony Dailey was 5<sup>th</sup> at that star studded weight class at the Top Gun and 5<sup>th</sup> at Medina as well. We'll see if he's quite ready for podium work in Columbus. There are a raft of other possibilities with Marcelli, Denman, and McGuinea the most visible candidates.

As is almost always the case, the Ashland District is loaded, with two wrestlers clearly in the forefront. Zeman was a D-2 runner-up last year losing to Bo Jordan in the finals. He won handsomely at Avon Lake and made the Ironman quarter-finals getting "teched" twice (once by Z. Dailey) by a combined score of 34-3. Those were his last two losses as he has bounced back with a vengeance, including a win at Elgin. Scheidel was 6<sup>th</sup> at the Ironman and was 5-1 at the Clash, losing only to nationally ranked Hall in overtime. However, he is upset prone, losing a close bout to Baughman at the Ohio Duals. While I know Zeman beat Scheidel at the Ironman, I still think the latter boy will win this

district. State qualifiers Brunner and Baran also return, along with Baughman. Baran, the district champ, went 1-2 beating Ryan and losing to Forrider, while Brunner went 0-2 two years. Clearly, we know that state alternate Baughman has upset potential, while Newton, who is very good, and Nedolast can score.

Collica will be away from the Ashland champ and so that should be a huge incentive for Zeman and Scheidel. Also remember that Zeman, Scheidel, and Brunner exit the same sectional making that a critical title as well.

Luft and Fosco are both state placers coming out of Darby. Luft was 6<sup>th</sup> including wins over Hammer and McIntyre. I see him as a solid performer, but an unlikely finalist. He was 3<sup>rd</sup> at Brecksville after being upset by McNulty. He won at Teays Valley, Olentangy, and Pickerington, and should win this. Fosco was 6<sup>th</sup> in Division II after reaching the semi-finals and upsetting Faust. He'll need to have his game in place to do that here (or at the more difficult 138#). He was 4<sup>th</sup> at Medina (losing by 10 to Faust) and failed to place at the Top Gun. I think Driscoll – 8<sup>th</sup> in D-2 last year – has probably moved into the second spot at this district, with Boyd, Horner, and Tullius, all experienced performers, in the same vicinity. It likely will depend somewhat on the pairings at this district.

There is not much depth at Fairmont, but the top four are very good, all with solid state experience. There is not much to differentiate them. Campbell seems best. He was 2<sup>nd</sup> at the SWOCA, beating Neyer, 8-1, and Meyer, 11-0. He backed that up with a title at Fairfield. He went 1-2 in Columbus last year. Neyer and Meyer – a telecaster's nightmare should they meet – have had strangely different years. Meyer was 8<sup>th</sup> last year and was 4<sup>th</sup> at the SWOCA, losing to Neyer, 14-0 for 3<sup>rd</sup>. He struggled at the Clash, going 1-4, but bounced back to take 2<sup>nd</sup> at the CIT. He has had some strange results. Neyer went 1-2 at the state level and was 3<sup>rd</sup> at the CIT and 1<sup>st</sup> at Kenston and Fairfield. Thoman has wrestled an almost invisible schedule, but he was a state qualifier and worked all year with state champ, Cody Shivener.

**152#**

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

Top Contenders

|    |                       |    |                               |
|----|-----------------------|----|-------------------------------|
| 2  | DeLande (Davidson)    | 14 | Gordon (Wadsworth)            |
| 3  | Sizemore (Moeller)    | 15 | Lees (St. Ignatius)           |
| 4  | Ashton (Mentor)       | 16 | Rininger (Highland)           |
| 5  | VanCuren (St. Edward) | 17 | Zoller (Bradley)              |
| 6  | Barr (Brecksville)    | 18 | Buchanan (Tecumseh)           |
| 7  | Spangler (Sidney)     | 19 | Fitzgerald (Green)            |
| 8  | Walden (Mason)        | 20 | Keeler (Hoover)               |
| 9  | Iverson (Madison)     | 21 | Ferrell (Teays Valley)        |
| 10 | Price (Elyria)        | 22 | Lauffer (Fairfield)           |
| 11 | Davis (Middletown)    | 23 | Sunkle (Pickerington Central) |
| 12 | Heyob (St. Xavier)    | 24 | Stafford (Maple Hts.)         |
| 13 | Basinski (Amherst)    | 25 | Duffy (Centerville)           |

It would appear to be a titanic struggle between a pair of state champions at this weight class, but there could be complicating factors. However, if this weight class follows the script so many pundits have laid out, that final round bout will capture a huge amount of attention.

Zach Dailey pretty much cruised to the 140# title last year with only the semi-final against the very, very conservative Gupko being relative close. He was clearly the best wrestler at that weight class. This year he was at 145# for the Ironman, finishing 3<sup>rd</sup> after a narrow loss to Milonas. Since then he has been at 152# and, frankly, looked a lot better. He won handily at Medina and the King of the Mountain, and was 2<sup>nd</sup> to Bo Jordan at the Top Gun, losing 2-0. He looks very ready.

I don't know how DeLande looks since he has yet to compete – with an experienced wrestler that may be an advantage with fewer bumps and bruises. Last year he wrestled 48 times (winning 46), but will not come close that that number in 2012. He won at 145# last year in a strange weight class where the other finalist was a district fourth place finisher. DeLande had a tough quarter-final bout with Ashton winning 6-5 and beating McMahon in a rather tight 9-6 bout semi-final. Watching his progress will be fascinating. Dailey and DeLande will, of course, be seeded apart.

There will be some interesting strategic thinking at the Mentor District. Dailey is undoubtedly the dominant figure, but what happens next will be illuminating. Both state placer McMahon and state qualifier Graziani have been at 160# all year, but can move to 152# (which McMahon has done at least once). With Dailey and a presumably healthy DeLande at 152#, and the Mentor 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> place finishers in DeLande's half bracket, third place at States might be the best possible outcome. On the other hand, 160# is somewhat weaker with no one or two wrestlers clearly looking dominant. I know

the prevailing knee-jerk reaction is that low is always best, but that should include a realistic assessment of a wrestler's goals and the probability of achieving them. It's a decision that doesn't have to be made for another month as I write this so the final determination should still be undecided. As for this report, I'm leaving both at 160#.

Given that circumstance, state placer Ashton and state qualifier Iverson stand next in line. Ashton was 4<sup>th</sup> last year, losing that one pointer to DeLande and by two to Range. He looked sensational at Solon, but has had injury issues since then (missing Brecksville) and coming back at the Top Gun and failing to place. Iverson was 4<sup>th</sup> at the Top Gun after failing to place at Brecksville. Lees has beaten Iverson and was 3<sup>rd</sup> at the CIT and placed at Brecksville. Fitzgerald, who beat Stitzlein to win at Smithville, Top Gun Placer Keeler, and, maybe, Stafford come next.

The Ashland District is not quite as strong as is usually the case. Price was a state qualifier last year after losing a first round bout at district and making his way through the consolations. He was 4<sup>th</sup> at Brecksville and has been a steady performer. Van Curen is a two-time state qualifier who had injury issues and didn't get out last year. He has been a bit of a mystery, never quite able to cash in on his initial promise. A talented wrestler, this is his last chance to win some bouts in Columbus. The rest of the field has far fewer credentials. Barr was 3<sup>rd</sup> at Brecksville and he has gotten much better, while state alternate Basinski is a well coached placement machine. I like Barr and Van Curen as finalist here, with Price and Basinski as qualifiers. However, Gordon, who is also quickly getting better, and Rininger, form a solid Medina County team.

DeLande heads the list at the rather depleted Darby District. State qualifier Zoller returns with Hauber just about even with him. I've got Ferrell and Sunkle on my lists with, maybe, Elgin placer Holloway a possibility. Should DeLande not compete you will want to draw into this group.

While I had trouble finding names at Darby that is not the case at Fairfield. I count five returning state qualifiers and at least one other wrestler who has vaulted over that qualifying group. The lead wrestler is probably Sizemore who qualified as a freshman, but lost to McMahon and Wenger in a tie-breaker. He was 5<sup>th</sup> at the Ironman beating Bergman, Klosz, and Van Curen, and won the SWOCA over Walden. He was 4-2 at the Clash and was runaway winner at the CIT. Spangler pulled a huge first round upset defeating co-favorite Wenger and finished 8<sup>th</sup>. He was 6<sup>th</sup> at the Top Gun. Walden was runner-up at the SWOCA, keeping it close with Sizemore, and was 4<sup>th</sup> at Medina. Davis and Buchanan are returning state qualifiers who will need to be sharp to go again. Heyob, 3<sup>rd</sup> at the SWOCA and 2<sup>nd</sup> at the CIT, has a better shot especially if he gets a favorable draw. That leaves Lauffer, Duffy, and Whitcomb-Dixon – all solid performers – having to wrestle the weekend of their life at districts.

**160 #**

**PROJECTED CHAMPION: JACOB DAVIS (ST. EDWARD)**

Top Contenders

|    |                             |    |                          |
|----|-----------------------------|----|--------------------------|
| 2  | McMahon (Stow)              | 13 | Kresevic (Solon)         |
| 3  | Daniels (Liberty)           | 14 | Schmidt (Miamisburg)     |
| 4  | Hardtke (Elder)             | 15 | Viliminovic (Highland)   |
| 5  | Corba (Beavercreek)         | 16 | Wilson (Moeller)         |
| 6  | Graziani (Boardman)         | 17 | Mickley (Davidson)       |
| 7  | Robertson (Maple Hts.)      | 18 | Smith (Colerain)         |
| 8  | Hiles (Brecksville)         | 19 | Liewellyn (Perrysburg)   |
| 9  | Roper (Euclid)              | 20 | Bond (Lancaster)         |
| 10 | Miller (Marysville)         | 21 | LeBrun (Strongsville)    |
| 11 | Arrendale (Massillon Perry) | 22 | McGrew (West Carrollton) |
| 12 | Globke (Middletown)         | 23 | McCourt (Coffman)        |

There are only two weight classes in Division I that do not boast at least one returning state finalist--this one and the awkward competition at 195#. There are some relatively strong districts, but if you are looking to be a state finalist this is the weight class for you. Let's start by profiling each district in terms of potential qualifiers.

The strongest district is at Mentor. There are four returning state qualifiers - two of whom placed. McMahon was 5<sup>th</sup> at 145# and, as previously discussed, may well wrestle at 152#. He's won at Midpark and Hudson (over Robertson), and wrestles a style that plays well at the state level. Graziani was the district champ at 152#. Robertson was 7<sup>th</sup> last year, beating Graziani in the state placement bout. A very young junior he is still filling out and will have a strength issue with some of the competition. He was 2<sup>nd</sup> at Hudson and 1<sup>st</sup> at Dover. Roper, an under-the-radar guy, is very good. He was 1<sup>st</sup> at Riverside and Perry, but a weaker schedule may put him at risk. He lost his state placement bout in overtime last year. Two names pop up that could upend this quartet. Arrendale has wrestled a rugged schedule finishing 4<sup>th</sup> at both Medina and the Top Gun, and both in overtime. Kresevic is a good steady grinder and punishes opponent's errors. He could qualify.

The Ashland District could use an infusion of 160's and may get a couple from 170#. As it is state placer Davis leads the way after getting 5<sup>th</sup> at 171#. Wrestling up a weight class last year (state champion Abounader was at 160#), he lost only to Korb (by one point) and Willett (in overtime). This year he was a semi-finalist at the Ironman and undefeated at the Ohio Duals. Hiles also qualified last year at 140#, and went 1-2. He was 4<sup>th</sup> at Brecksville, losing to Daniels and Hardtke. Viliminovic, a steady placer, looks next best, with a yawning chasm after him. I'm thinking Perrysburg champ Llewellyn or LeBrun might be next best, with Sommer a possibility.

We're not overloaded with experienced talent at Darby. Daniels was very impressive at Brecksville winning the title in a smooth workmanlike manner. He beat Hardtke and Hiles on his way to the crown, and he has definite placement potential. State qualifier Miller was 6<sup>th</sup> at Brecksville, but his 6<sup>th</sup> place finish at Columbus was no accident. He won three tough consolation bouts after a close first round loss. His losses were all close. After this duo I'm thinking state alternate McCourt, Bond and, maybe, Mickley. They're a step below the top duo.

The district at Fairfield will not suffer for lack of competitors given what looks like a crowded bracket. Topping the list are Hardtke and Corba, whose competition has been a steady and ongoing one for several years. At the moment Hardtke, perhaps, holds the upper hand, winning at the CIT and SWOCA, although he outpointed Corba, 7-6 that night. Both were state qualifiers last year with Corba beating Hardtke 5-3 in the consolations to finish 4<sup>th</sup>, while Hardtke dropped to 5<sup>th</sup>. Their battles have been going on longer than the Thirty Year War and will clearly continue. Globke has been on the periphery of qualification, while Schmidt won at GMVWA and was 2<sup>nd</sup> to Poyser at North Canton. Wilson, Smith, and McGrew are all possibilities, with the first continuing to show improving outcomes. I would expect at least two placers from this district.

### 170 #

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

##### Top Contenders

- |    |                             |    |                                  |
|----|-----------------------------|----|----------------------------------|
| 2  | Pickett (Central Crossing)  | 13 | Olson (Kenston)                  |
| 3  | Kimbrell (Fairmont)         | 14 | Shepherd (Garfield Hts.)         |
| 4  | Newburg (Northmont)         | 15 | Funk (Lancaster)                 |
| 5  | Kluk (Highland)             | 16 | Belaia-Martinouk (North Olmsted) |
| 6  | Estes (Lakota West)         | 17 | Koncek (Midpark)                 |
| 7  | Fox (Scioto)                | 18 | Millin (Massillon Perry)         |
| 8  | Blum (Moeller)              | 19 | Davis (Mason)                    |
| 9  | Bowens (Darby)              | 20 | Caywood (Maumee)                 |
| 10 | Kamczyc (Elyria)            | 21 | Coleman (Maple Hts.)             |
| 11 | Brown (Westerville Central) | 22 | Moore (Edgewood)                 |
| 12 | Hall (Middletown)           | 23 | Kokitka (Olmsted Falls)          |
|    |                             | 24 | Toth (Parma)                     |

This weight class shares certain similarities with 132# in that there is a trio of terrific wrestlers positioned to win a state title. They might not, in total, have quite the credentials of that group, but they are all of state championship caliber.

The favorite has to be defending state champ Mark Martin, up two weight classes from last year. After finishing 2<sup>nd</sup> at 138# two years ago, Martin won at 152# rather easily, never really threatened during the tournament. This year he won the Ironman with a

dramatic last second takedown after majoring (or worse) his other four opponents. He has one overtime loss (to a Florida wrestler) this year.

Pickett is also very good. He was 4<sup>th</sup> at 160# and is much better this year. His only loss was at North Canton to Wiercioch, ranked #2 in the country, and observers said there was little to choose between the two. He won big at Olentangy (over Estes) and Medina, and his best win was 8-2 over the stubborn O'Neill.

Kimbrell has been scintillating all year, rolling up enormous scores against everyone. He won the Firebird (22-8 final), the SWOCA (11-2 final), and Brecksville (16-2 final). We telecast his bout and he was very impressive. He was a state semi-finalist last year, lost to Abounader, and fell to 6<sup>th</sup>, losing his last three bouts by a combined 25-1 margin, including a 6-1 loss to Pickett.

There will be no seeding here so one of this trio will have a much safer road to the final than the other two. I came very close to picking Pickett, but Martin is the champion until someone beats him.

Martin has, I believe, the safest path to Columbus. There are no other returning state qualifiers, and quite frankly, no one who should come within half-dozen points of the Ed's strongman. Kamczyc was 5<sup>th</sup> at Brecksville, while Koncek – one bout from States last year – won at Midpark and North Coast. Kokitka and Caywood (lots of hard "K" names) are also possibilities as is Belaia-Martinouk, runner-up at Solon and Kenston. An uncertainty here is the weight that Kluk (another hard "K") will compete at. After he lost to Boff at Medina there were already rumors about immediately wanting to drop to 170#. Apparently that will be test-marketed soon. I will tentatively rank him at both weight classes. The battle here is for second, third, and fourth.

Pickett has a slightly more difficult situation. Bowens was a state qualifier last year and has moved forward from that. He was 2<sup>nd</sup> at Pickerington and 1<sup>st</sup> at Teays Valley, while finishing 3<sup>rd</sup> at Medina. He has been a consistent high placer. Fox won at Pickerington and his 17-5 win over Bowens seemed persuasive to me. Brown was the runner-up to O'Neill at the Top Gun vaulting him into finalist contention (if away from Pickett) at this district. Funk has also done well and is just one upset win from Value City Arena. Competition for the three spots below Pickett should be entertaining.

Kimbrell has the most competition with three other state qualifiers in the field. I think Newburg is the best of this bunch, finishing 7<sup>th</sup> after losing to eventual champ Baker. He won by technical fall in the finals at the GMVWA. He will be away from Kimbrell at States and will hope that one of the other two champs is in the other half-bracket. Estes was 8<sup>th</sup> last year and has wrestled well, but still gets dinged by the big guys. He's missed some time and may head for 160#. Blum is the up-and-comer. He was a state quarter-finalist at 152# before losing a 21-8 decision to Martin and a 2-1 bout to Hardtke and failing to place. He was 3<sup>rd</sup> at the SWOCA and 1<sup>st</sup> at the CIT, pinning Zang in the finals. Danis is good and Moore had two district wins last year, while Hall, 4<sup>th</sup> at the SWOCA, remains the principal upset threat.

There is a vacuum at 171# at Mentor. The top performer looks to be Olson who was 1<sup>st</sup> at Solon and Kenston and placed at Elgin. Shepherd and Coleman are two physical wrestlers from old time powers Garfield Heights and Maple Heights, and both have a solid shot at qualification. The surprise could be Millin who is just rounding into shape, while Toth could be a surprise here.

### **182 #**

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

##### Top Contenders

- |                            |                                  |
|----------------------------|----------------------------------|
| 2 Baker (Twinsburg)        | 13 Sues (Mason)                  |
| 3 Walker (Springboro)      | 14 Balog/Jameson (Fitch)         |
| 4 Lay (Loveland)           | 15 Wheeler (Copley)              |
| 5 Scales (Colerain)        | 16 Lybarger (Mount Vernon)       |
| 6 Boff (Perrysburg)        | 17 Jones (St. Xavier)            |
| 7 Kluk (Highland)          | 18 Medina (Lorain)               |
| 8 Leidecker (Teays Valley) | 19 Spangler (Massillon Perry)    |
| 9 Louive (Massillon)       | 20 Aziz (Midpark)                |
| 10 Murray (Mayfield)       | 21 Grayson (Springfield)         |
| 11 Pfarr (Marysville)      | 22 Foster (Pickerington Central) |
| 12 Kohlhofer (Springfield) | 23 McGrath (Bradley)             |

Another great weight class featuring two returning state champs, a dynamic sophomore pinning machine, a powerful returning state placer, and two senior state qualifiers with placement skills. This will be a weight that will garner a lot of attention.

The silky smooth Abounader was tremendously impressive, winning the 160# state title last year. You could not call any of the matches close as he glided from victory to victory. This year he was 2<sup>nd</sup> at the Ironman to former D-2 champ Huston Evans. He was undefeated at the Clash and has not been often challenged this year. He goes in as the favorite.

That may be the kiss of death. Korb was everybody's favorite last year, but it was Baker that took home the title. It was a brilliantly wrestled tournament – beating the tough Willett in the semis and then pushing Korb to the breaking point to win in overtime. This year he won at Brecksville, again proving most people wrong – defeating the Georgia superstar with two brilliantly timed takedowns. He is a short 182 pounder who could probably make 170#, but enormously strong and looking for a challenge. I think we just gave him an enormous one.

Walker scares me. He is so big and so strong it's difficult to picture anyone defeating him. He was 4<sup>th</sup> last year losing by a point to Kolb in the semi-finals and losing in

overtime for 3<sup>rd</sup> and losing a seed. Even if you're a state champ you'll prefer to draw away from him in Columbus.

Two time junior high champ Lay never made 160# last year, but he was 7<sup>th</sup> at 189# losing to Tayse and Suvak. He is a tremendous pinner and it's like wrestling a stick of dynamite. It can go off at anytime. He had all pins winning the SWOCA and dominated at Fairfield. He had four falls at Brecksville, but Baker out maneuvered him in the semi-final and he was 3<sup>rd</sup> after beating Leidecker. Maybe not this year for Lay, but he'll be on the top step of the podium after this.

Louive is another great pinner, while Leidecker is a more conventional stylist, both were state quarter-finalist last year, but somehow failed to place. I don't think that can happen two years in a row.

Abounader and Baker will be seeded apart so the pairings should be very straightforward and fair. It will set up some great wrestling in every round.

Baker and Louive should dominate at Mentor and will hopefully be paired apart. Four other wrestlers will fight for the last two spots. Murray, a recent transfer to Mayfield, has been a high placer all year, and should do well after strong performances at Kenston (1<sup>st</sup>), Solon (4<sup>th</sup>) and the Top Gun (3<sup>rd</sup>). Balog (I expected Jameson) was 2<sup>nd</sup> for Fitch at the Top Gun which puts him into a strong contention role. Spangler, at least when I'm not watching, has had a solid year at Perry with more upside still to be captured, while Halaska is the long shot.

Abounader has some solid competition. Kluk was 1-2 in state competition last year in D-2, and has moved up two weight classes—or, maybe, not. As mentioned in the previous essay he may decide to compete at 170#. He was 3<sup>rd</sup> at Medina, losing to Boff and a solid 1<sup>st</sup> at North Canton. State qualifier Boff was 2<sup>nd</sup> at Medina and just recently won at Perrysburg. Baker beat him by just two points in Columbus. State qualifier Kohlhofer returns and I think he is "on the bubble" here. Medina, Aziz, and Wheeler are all potential challengers. There are lots of good people here. In terms of upset specialists I think Linville might fit that bill.

Leidecker has few worries at Darby. I have lots of names but not quite so much in performance. I like the young Pfarr who was 4<sup>th</sup> at Brecksville and the Top Gun, both times losing to Murray. Lybarger and Foster are possibilities, with McGrath, 2<sup>nd</sup> at Teays Valley, perhaps jumping ahead of one of them. It seems likely that only one of this group will place.

Lay and Walker are well ahead of everyone else at Fairmont – with one exception – the fast improving Tegray Scales. He won at Sycamore and was 5<sup>th</sup> at the SWOCA, but it was his 3<sup>rd</sup> at Fairfield that caught my eye. After being pinned by Lay at the SWOCA he took him to the ultimate overtime before losing in the semi-final. Suess, down from 195#, and Jones, have opportunities here, while Grayson, 3<sup>rd</sup> at the GMVWA, could be a surprise.

**195 #**

**PROJECTED CHAMPION: JO JO TAYSE (MASSILLON PERRY)**

**Top Contenders**

|    |                              |    |                          |
|----|------------------------------|----|--------------------------|
| 2  | Suvak (St. Edwards)          | 13 | Campbell (Twinsburg)     |
| 3  | Carter (Perrysburg)          | 14 | Conel (Chardon)          |
| 4  | Rosborough (Riverside)       | 15 | Mather (Sycamore)        |
| 5  | Knabe (Loveland)             | 16 | Braun (Kenston)          |
| 6  | Thornberry (Moeller)         | 17 | Murphy (Brecksville)     |
| 7  | Conner (Fairmont)            | 18 | Lowery (Upper Arlington) |
| 8  | Williams-Revels (Maple Hts.) | 19 | Archacki (Normandy)      |
| 9  | Burton (Lakota East)         | 20 | Chavez (Fremont Ross)    |
| 10 | Tschantz (Barberton)         | 21 | Mayberry (Kilbourne)     |
| 11 | Miller/Taylor (Marysville)   | 22 | Dick (Grove City)        |
| 12 | Hardrick (Wayne)             | 23 | Kamba (Orange)           |

While wrestling has always emphasized that it is a sport for boys of any size, the reality is that it is most popular with boys of average size and less. Particularly today, when many sports feature bigger and taller athletes, wrestling has reserved space for those of comparable athletic skills, but lacking above normal stature. It is a sport that provides superior athletic opportunity and competition for those left behind by the dictates of 6'3" and/or 200 plus pounds. That is why it was disappointing to see the profile of the new weight classes that was somehow dictated to the states by folks who lack a sense of what wrestling is all about. Claiming that the normal distribution of boys favors their alignment ignores the fact that the right hand side of that normal curve often plays sports other than wrestling. I take my hat off to Michigan for ignoring these new weight classes, and given the almost complete opposition to their implementation in Ohio, I wish that the OHSAA had had the courage to do the same – at least until a full hearing could be given to the proposed changes. I read where the perpetrators of this new system talked to dozens of coaches from every part of the country—most of whom endorsed the idea. I have yet to have one coach in Ohio indicate that they were interviewed, and the coaches I know almost unanimously dislike it.

As it stands this year 195# is one of the weakest weight classes throughout Division I. I think that that is likely to be a three man competition, but with plenty of opportunity for upsets and surprises. Two of those top contenders come out of the Ashland District, so that there may be asymmetrical pairings issues.

Jo Jo Tayse was a dominating junior high wrestler (two titles) who began to really hit his stride last year. He was a state semi-finalist before losing, by a point, to the eventual champ, Sam Wheeler, and dropping to 5<sup>th</sup>, that included a 1-0 loss to Suvak. He was 4<sup>th</sup> at the Ironman, twice losing to Suvak (1-0 and 7-4) primarily because of his problems on the bottom. Since then he won at Medina (over Lehner) and at the Top Gun (over Rosborough). I think "his time" has arrived.

Beating Suvak will not be easy. He was 3<sup>rd</sup> at the Ironman and was undefeated at the Clash. Very good on top, he is not nearly as aggressive on his feet, but his experience has made him very difficult to score against. He won't give away any bouts and you make mistakes at your own risk with him.

Carter might well be the best athlete in the weight class and still has an enormous upside. He was at 215# last year, but didn't get out of the vicious Ashland District last year (the four qualifiers placed 1-2-3-6), losing one point bouts to Walz and Gott. This year he has moved down to 195#. He was undefeated at Springfield and pinned his way through Perrysburg, but was 3<sup>rd</sup> at Medina, losing a one-point bout (again) to Lehner. If some weekend he puts it altogether he will be close to unbelievable.

Both Suvak and Carter exit the Ashland District. Tayse will likely have to beat both of these competitors to win the title. Schoen, winner at the CIT over Thornberry, will be right behind this top duo with strong placement capabilities. Murphy, the Brecksville sophomore, placed at Brecksville, and coach Haverdill has had excellent success developing big men. The last spot is pretty much a cipher at the moment with Chavez or Carpenter, perhaps, possibilities.

Tayse faces a much tougher portfolio of opponents. Rosborough went 1-2 in Columbus last year after qualifying fourth out of the Mentor District at 171#. That win was a third period fall over Knabe. This year he won at Solon and Riverside and was 4<sup>th</sup> at Medina, losing to Tayse and Carter. Last week he was 2<sup>nd</sup> at the Top Gun again losing to Tayse. Williams-Revels has been, slowly, approaching 195#, while filling in at 220# on occasion. He was 4<sup>th</sup> at this district last year losing a semi-final bout to Tayse by a point. If he is fit and comfortable at this weight class he should qualify again. There are three high potential wrestlers with state placement skills if only they can get there. Campbell was the state alternate last year, losing an overtime bout to Williams-Revels. Actually a 182 pounder (but beating Baker out in the wrestle-off would be tough), he was 3<sup>rd</sup> at Solon, but failed to place at that tough Brecksville weight class. Tshantz was at 215# last year winning two bouts and has made the drop to 195#. He was impressive at Brecksville finishing 3<sup>rd</sup> after being upset in the quarter finals. He beat Kamba, Burton, and Szed (revenge) in his sprint through the consolations. Watch for him. Braun won a state bout two years ago, but didn't make it out last year. He was 4<sup>th</sup> at Solon, 2<sup>nd</sup> at Kenston and 1<sup>st</sup> at Elgin, and has the experience needed to win close bouts. The wildcard is Conel who won at Kenston and has had a good second half of the season.

The field is a little thin at Darby. District champ Miller has missed the entire year, but I was told he is likely to return. If he can compete at close to 100% he'll win the district once again. If not, the district will be wide open. Mayberry and Dick are highly rated, but have no more than district experience. If Miller cannot wrestler Taylor, the 220 pounder, could move to this weight class and achieve success. He was an impressive 3<sup>rd</sup> at the Top Gun and may now be the best wrestler here at this district. State alternate Lowery is a senior this year, but like Miller has apparently yet to compete.

Kamba placed at Brecksville, while Chowoe has twice been a runner-up. This weight class has yet to cohere at this district.

There is a trio of returning state qualifiers at Fairfield, all with good credentials. Thornberry was 8<sup>th</sup> last year – a real accomplishment for a freshman at this weight class. He, however, has not had quite the same strong results he had last year (ongoing injuries?). He was 6<sup>th</sup> at the Ironman with a tough draw, but pinned Lehner in the consolations. He lost to Burton in the quarter-finals at the SWOCA, but did get 3<sup>rd</sup>, and was a 7-6 loser to Schoen in the CIT finals. He was shaky at the Ohio Duals, losing by fall to Tayse and majored by Suvak. He needs to right the ship, but easily has the talent to do so. Conner was the district runner-up last year, but went 1-2 in Columbus being majored by Suvak. He won the GMVWA and has good placement potential. Knabe also qualified last year, but had little success in Columbus. He was 1<sup>st</sup> at the SWOCA crushing everyone, but did not wrestle Thornberry or Suess, and then was 1<sup>st</sup> at Fairfield. I saw him as the runner-up at Brecksville and he may, at least at this moment, be the best at this district. Burton and Mather have been finalists multiple times this year, while Hardrick has possibilities.

## 220 #

### **PROJECTED CHAMPION: TY WALZ (ST. EDWARD)**

#### Top Contenders

|    |                       |    |                          |
|----|-----------------------|----|--------------------------|
| 2  | Frueauf (Moeller)     | 12 | Nye (Springfield)        |
| 3  | Ransom (Madison)      | 13 | Sandy (Fairfield)        |
| 4  | Johnson (Elder)       | 14 | Gray (Clay)              |
| 5  | Patrick (Maple Hts.)  | 15 | Asriyan (Strongsville)   |
| 6  | Stinemetz (Olentangy) | 16 | Millin (Massillon Perry) |
| 7  | Rowe (Barberton)      | 17 | Backenstoe (Davidson)    |
| 8  | King (Scioto)         | 18 | Marshall (Lancaster)     |
| 9  | Gutapfel (Harrison)   | 19 | Jones (Newark)           |
| 10 | Cuenot (Glen Oak)     | 20 | McCarroll (Findlay)      |
| 11 | Martin (Butler)       | 21 | Jenkin (Cloverleaf)      |

This is a weight class that seems to have a clear line of demarcation, with the top seven (representing all four districts) a clear step ahead of the rest of the field. Where that line stays steady or moves in one direction or another will be something to watch during the rest of the season.

Everyone seems on board with state runner-up Ty Walz winning his first state title, but there remain some serious obstacles. Walz was 2<sup>nd</sup> last year, losing to Tavanello by the almost identical scores both in their district and state contests. This year he was a disappointing 5<sup>th</sup> at the Ironman, losing to Vizzcarondo (Pa.) and Frueauf (4-3). Since that second week he has been untouchable going 6-0 at the Clash and beating Frueauf

at the Ohio Duals. He has had a disconcerting pattern of losing when least expected which, hopefully, has evaporated.

There is very little to challenge him at Ashland. The younger Gray has had some big wins, while McCarroll had a dynamite early season performance for Findlay. Jenkin won recently at Midpark and has district experience while Asriyan can possibly be a qualifier. Clearly, it's a struggle to identify candidates and this may not be sorted out until district weekend.

There is a lot more talent at Mentor. Patrick ended up 6<sup>th</sup>, in Columbus splitting two bouts with Rahkim Johnson and losing to Walz by 6-4. He was 1<sup>st</sup> at Hudson and Dover and his great leverage is a problem for everyone. Ransom was also 1-2 last year, losing to Frueauf in the first round. He won at Riverside and Brecksville (over Johnson in overtime) and was 2<sup>nd</sup> to Meadows at the Top Gun. He could be a finalist. Rowe and Cuenot have solid district experience. The former was just one bout from state qualification, and has continued to win this year. Rowe was 4<sup>th</sup> at Brecksville (losing twice to Coon), while Cuenot was 2<sup>nd</sup> at Solon and 3<sup>rd</sup> at the GMVWA. Millin could be a factor, as might Agee.

Stinemetz qualified in D-2 last year, but a rough draw put him out early. He has been a consistent placer with, for example, a 4<sup>th</sup> at the Top Gun and Medina, and winning at Olentangy. King, also a state qualifier last year, is his only real threat, having won at Scioto and finishing 2<sup>nd</sup> at Pickerington. The sophomore Backenstoe is probably still a year away, while Jones and Marshall are possibilities. Only the top two will be threats in Columbus.

The deepest district is probably at Fairfield where as many as three qualifiers here could place. Frueauf, now a sophomore, had a fabulous freshman year reaching the state semi-finals (including a fall over Ransom) before losing to Tavanello and falling to 4<sup>th</sup>, which also included a win over Patrick. He was 4<sup>th</sup> at the Ironman, including the big win over Walz and an easy 1<sup>st</sup> at the CIT. He had a perfect record at the Clash, but there were some issues at the SWOCA about which I remain hazy. At any rate, he lost to Gutapfel and ended up 3<sup>rd</sup>. Johnson was 5<sup>th</sup> last year after winning the district (which included a win over Frueauf). He won the SWOCA with a close finals win over Gutapfel and was 2<sup>nd</sup> in overtime at Brecksville to Ransom. Still on the steep inclined of the learning scale he is excellent athleticism and continues to improve. Gutapfel is a dangerous pinner and should qualify with state qualifier Martin (1<sup>st</sup> at the GMVWA) in the fourth spot. I don't want to forget about Sandy (runner-up at Kenston), or Nye (second at the GMVWA)--either one could upset one of the top four.

**285 #**

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

Top Contenders

|    |                             |    |                       |
|----|-----------------------------|----|-----------------------|
| 2  | Kuhar (St. Edward)          | 13 | Morgan (Lakeside)     |
| 3  | Elfein (Pickerington North) | 14 | Rich (Troy)           |
| 4  | Mayes (Massillon Perry)     | 15 | Mowery (Jerome)       |
| 5  | Fleming (Liberty)           | 16 | Hill (Beavercreek)    |
| 6  | Gray (Clay)                 | 17 | Reagan (Brunswick)    |
| 7  | Everett (Glen Oak)          | 18 | Neihaus (Colerain)    |
| 8  | Pipkins (Maple Hts.)        | 19 | Vanover (Kings)       |
| 9  | Thirkeld (Marysville)       | 20 | McGeachy (Fitch)      |
| 10 | Young (Olentangy)           | 21 | Dolton (Fremont Ross) |
| 11 | Bowman (Lakota East)        | 22 | Teldodi (Mason)       |
| 12 | Morgan (John Adams)         | 23 | Daniels (Northwest)   |

This weight class is often subject to turmoil, confusion and rumor since there are injuries, upsets, and controversies over and above what we see at most weights. It is particularly true this year where new “information” seems to become available on a weekly basis. Here is what we think we know. First, the two best heavyweights in the Fairfield District are out for the year. Nusekabel, third last year, and Denny, a returning state qualifier, both suffered serious knee injuries that will require surgery to repair. Mayes, 4<sup>th</sup> last year, was still well over the weight limit at the end of December, and his status, at that time, was still very much in doubt. Hoff, 5<sup>th</sup> last year, had not decided whether to compete, and remains very questionable. State runner-up Kuhar missed the enormously important Blair Academy dual meet and he continues to be bedeviled by nagging injuries.

So! At the beginning of the season Kuhar seemed an easy selection, after all, he was the state runner-up last year and has the size and skills to match any type of heavyweight he might encounter. He was 2<sup>nd</sup> at the Ironman to Black and was undefeated at the Clash, but than missed the Ohio Duals and Blair match. Then it seemed Tavanello might be the right choice. People were saying he was too fat, too short, and too out of shape to win. He looked like none of these things at Brecksville (well he is short) as he racked up a bunch of quick pins to reach the finals. There he met the much larger Fleming, and while Tavanello won, you could see that he couldn't move the really big boys around like he could at 215#. Now scores of 1-0 are, unfortunately, relatively common at heavyweight, but they have the dual negatives of getting the referee involved and keeping the opponent in the bout.

So I thought, maybe I should pick a real big guy who is healthy, moves well, and keeps things close, but as mentioned, Mayes and Hoff may not compete, and besides, maybe all these maybes are distracting from what happens on the mat.

As mentioned, Kuhar was 4<sup>th</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> the past two years and has all of the qualities of a good heavyweight. Tavanello, of course, was a three time placer and two time champ at 215# and is undefeated at heavyweight this year. They both emerge from Ashland and will be in opposite half-brackets at States. Gray, who was 6<sup>th</sup> last year is also at Ashland and he is very good. He was 3<sup>rd</sup> at Brecksville, losing a very well wrestled 7-6 bout to Fleming. People like Reagan and Dolton, who both won two district bouts last year, need to be considered.

Clearly Mayes and Hoff would be the two top contenders at Mentor, but their presence is certainly in doubt. Hoff took Kuhar into overtime in the state semi-finals and would certainly have had finalist potential. As it is state qualifier Everett – 1<sup>st</sup> at Smithville and 2<sup>nd</sup> at Solon – should lead the way with the vastly improved Pipkins moved into the second spot. Hoff beat him 3-2 in his go-to-state bout last year. Also missing here is state qualifier Vince Morgan, who has not competed so far this year, although his appearance is supposed to be imminent. However, Kenston champ Chuck Morgan has state possibilities, along with McGeachy, 6<sup>th</sup> at the Top Gun. In summary, Mayes, Hoff, and Vince Morgan may be absent from this event – if so there are a lot of possible candidates for Columbus. If not, Mayes, Hoff, Everitt, and Pipkins are the likely qualifiers.

The one area of stability is at Darby. It will feature four returning state qualifiers plus a couple of other qualification possibilities. Three of the qualifiers did so last year and all three of them went 1-2. Elflein won at Medina, Pickerington and Solon (pinning Everett) and seems primed to secure a high podium spot. Fleming is right behind him losing that 1-0 bout to Tavanello in the Brecksville final and winning at Liberty. These are both boys who will wrestle a lot of 2-1 bouts in overtime. Young qualified in D-2 last year and has had an active season this year. He was 3<sup>rd</sup> at the Top Gun, losing a 1-0 bout to Thirkeld and 1<sup>st</sup> at Olentangy. Thirkeld missed all of last year after making it to states two years ago. His runner-up finish at the Top Gun validates his return after a solid 5<sup>th</sup> at Brecksville – where Fleming did beat him. Mowery and Akutsu are other possibilities, but this top quartet is solid.

With Nusekabel and Denny out, the Fairfield District has been de-fanged. Nobody left in the competition has won even two district bouts at 285#, and this will clearly be the district you will want to draw into. Two names come to the top of the list – Bowman, who won the SWOCA and at Fairfield, and Rich who was 1<sup>st</sup> at Troy and 3<sup>rd</sup> at the GMVWA. They have had the most consistent results. Beyond that think about Vanover – a three time tournament finalist and Neihaus, who seems to be improving. That leaves Hill, Daniels and, maybe, Teldodi just on the outside.

## TEAMS

1. St. Edward—This may be one of the finest teams in the proud history of St. Edward wrestling. Their 26<sup>th</sup> team title would seem to be just a formality as they have as many as ten potential finalists. The team scoring record in Division I which they established in 2007 of 229 points is well within range as are the six individual state titles that Cleveland West earned in 1951. Whether the Graham marks established in 2009 of seven champions and 282 points can be reached is still problematical.
2. Massillon Perry—In many years this team would have St. Ed's Coach Urbas thrashing around in his sleep with worry. They have a quartet of big-time performers in Bavery, Dailey, Newhouse, and Tayse with possible backup scorers like Arrendale and the younger Dailey. If Mayes can compete they'll score well over 125 points.
3. Moeller—The "team of the future" continues to progress though there have been a few bumps in the road. Frueauf and Sizemore have been the best of the sophomores, but Thornberry and, particularly, Meyer have some struggles. Of course, the core of the team is state champion Ward who has been exceptional. Blum and the Zieglers should contribute, but the loss of their heavyweight Denny was a real blow.
4. Brecksville—This is truly a team of mystery. On paper they should score at a high level, but there are son many unknowns. The would need both of the Assad boys to score heavily,, but we have barely seen them this year while state qualifier Good has also been in the long-time missing category. Still, they have Baran, Barr, and Hiles in the middle with the youngsters Murphy and Lang at the upper weight classes. Add in Pruchinski and, maybe, Marotta and they'll end up as a Top Five squad.
5. Wadsworth—No longer are they loaded at virtually every weight class, but two-time champ Tavanello and three-time placer Squire should score heavily. They need Baughman to make waves at 145# and for Gordon, Jones and Warstler to somehow make it to Columbus.
6. Marysville—Forrider has to be the prime mover on this team with Sparks and T. Miller as significant helpers. Thirkeld can score at the state level and Pfarr, Boyd and Taylor should be able to contribute. The key elements are for M. Miller to be healthy and for Rahmani to duplicate his Top Gun results.

7. Clay—This is a fine team that could easily move into the Top Five if they can get through that difficult Marion District and then have a weekend to remember in Columbus. Amenta, Gray, and Screptock are all experienced campaigners while the younger Screptock was brilliant at Brecksville. The key is for Conine, Davis, and at least one other helper to make it through the district.
8. Solon—State champions Collica and Thompson should score between 45 and 50 points, but Kresevic and Restifo have difficult district situations. If Hoff shows up and is in shape they move into the Top Five.
9. Maple Hts.—If it happens it will be in the upper weights. The final trio of Williams-Revels, Patrick, and Pipkins is one of the best in the state while Robertson should score heavily at 160#. If Coleman is out for the year that is a real blow because who will pick up the slack?
10. Twinsburg—Labry and Baker are both in tough weight classes, but that shouldn't stop them from scoring heavily. Campbell and Mickovic have skills , but one is wrestling up a weight class and the other is in a tough weight class.
11. Olentangy—The quartet of Fiorucci, Fosco, Stinemetz and Young all have previous state experience and should get good state pairings coming off strong district performances. They could easily move into the Top Ten.

## Division II

### 106#

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

##### Top Contenders

|    |                          |    |                          |
|----|--------------------------|----|--------------------------|
| 2  | Michel (Edison)          | 11 | Stickley (Graham)        |
| 3  | Kelly (Bellbrook)        | 12 | Crabtree (River Valley)  |
| 4  | Bennett (CVCA)           | 13 | Zemaitis (Crestwood)     |
| 5  | Pool (Toledo CC)         | 14 | Carter (Hillsboro)       |
| 6  | Martin (Wapakoneta)      | 15 | Dees (Perry)             |
| 7  | Taton (Lake Catholic)    | 16 | May (Eaton)              |
| 8  | Brown (Steubenville)     | 17 | Kahlenbeck (Bethel-Tate) |
| 9  | Kopp (Tiffin Columbian)  | 18 | Patterson (Meadowbrook)  |
| 10 | Henderson (Beaver Local) | 19 | Zappitella (Conneaut)    |

Have you ever been in a situation where your view on an issue is diametrically opposed to that of a person whose knowledge and integrity is off the charts? I face that dilemma when thinking about Cody Burcher's state finals bout against Mike Rix at 103. On his choice, he selected down was ridden out by Rix—who was a very big 103#-- and lost 1-0. I felt from the start he should have chosen neutral and utilized his more than considerable takedown skills. After all, Rix's greatest strength was his ability to ride as demonstrated in his 1-0 semi-final victory. Coach Toukonen, who knows ten times as much wrestling as I do, vehemently disagrees. I'm hoping we can just agree to disagree—just as long as he doesn't pick down again.

I wrote earlier about the transition taking place in Ohio wrestling with an emphasis on mat skills that create new strategic paradigms. It has now become possible to ride two minutes in a close bout without stalling points, and, with that possibility in place, a coach and wrestler may need to re-consider the "knee jerk" reaction to always go down.

The sophomore Burcher gets this year what many of us have often wished for in real life, a second chance. He has been at 113# most of the year with solid success, but has been overpowered on occasion – finishing 3<sup>rd</sup> at Medina after being shutout by Spearman and losing to Assad in a dual. He was, most recently, 7<sup>th</sup> at the Top Gun losing in 3 OT to Rahmani and then to state D-1 runner-up Bavery. I suspect that part of that was finally getting down to weight. Still he faces a varied field that contains wrestlers new and old who exhibit a wide range of wrestling skills.

There will be challengers from every district, but the deepest pool of talent is at Marion. Michel, tall and wiry, is very tough on top which may well bother Burcher. He was 7<sup>th</sup> last year –twice losing on first period falls. This year he was 3<sup>rd</sup> at North Canton and 1<sup>st</sup> at Brecksville where he was very impressive defeating Gray, Taton, and Torres. Martin,

Kopp, and Pool are also returning state qualifiers with last named getting 8<sup>th</sup> in 2011. They are all very good. Martin is a steady placer—7<sup>th</sup> at Brecksville and a sparkling 2<sup>nd</sup> at the Top Gun. Pool, the same type of steady wrestler, was 6<sup>th</sup> at Brecksville and the champion at the CIT. Martin was the district champ here last year, but could not convert that into state placement. Two great freshmen are here –Stickley and Cheek. The first named was 5<sup>th</sup> at the junior high states, and has shown continuing improvement during the year. Cheek won at North Canton, but can't make the Edison team with Michel and Howard ahead of him.

I telecasted the junior high states last year and two-time champ Cameron Kelly was very impressive. He has but one defeat this year and was 3<sup>rd</sup> at the GMVWA. If he is bracketed away from Burcher and Michel, he could be a finalist. Still that one loss was a strange one 9-3 to another junior high champ May—who is still a little small for weight class. State alternate Carter will be a powerful force, maybe a district finalist, after losing his go-to-state bout on a slam last year. Kahlenbeck, who was 3<sup>rd</sup> at the SWOCA might be fourth best. The talent pool is not deep here so this quartet may receive few challenges.

I'm seeing some interesting competition forming at Claymont so Burcher could have a few problems. Crabtree was a D-3 state qualifier last year and has moved up this year. He, for example, won easily at Nelsonville over Bell. Brown and Henderson may be next best. As I write this Henderson is undefeated while Brown was 6<sup>th</sup> at the Top Gun – finishing ahead of Burcher. Henderson was a district semi-finalist last year losing to Burcher 6-1. Other possibilities are Patterson and Potts.

There is solid depth at Alliance, but no real superstars. Taton qualified last year, but didn't score a point in Columbus losing two low scoring bouts to Craig and Kopp. He was 5<sup>th</sup> at Brecksville defeating Pool. Zemaitis won at Riverside (but was 3<sup>rd</sup> at Kenston) and along with Taton has the most experience. However, another freshmen, Bennett, may well be best here finishing 3<sup>rd</sup> at Medina and 4<sup>th</sup> at the Top Gun. Long and slithery he is difficult to deal with. He split two bouts with Bavary at the latter tournament. Don't be surprised if one or even two relative unknown qualify. I look for Dees (1<sup>st</sup> at Riverside and 3<sup>rd</sup> at Kenston) to qualify with, perhaps Zappitella as next best.

**113#**

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

Top Contenders

|    |                           |    |                          |
|----|---------------------------|----|--------------------------|
| 2  | Langdon (Claymont)        | 12 | Maurice (Bellefontaine)  |
| 3  | Schoeppner (Canton South) | 13 | Seipel (Graham)          |
| 4  | Howard (Edison)           | 14 | Mossing (Toledo CC)      |
| 5  | Tutolo (Lake Catholic)    | 15 | Price (Licking Hts.)     |
| 6  | Smith (Minerva)           | 16 | Parsons (Warren)         |
| 7  | Miller (Carrollton)       | 17 | Edwards (River Valley)   |
| 8  | Hooks (New Richmond)      | 18 | Plaughter (Lima Shawnee) |
| 9  | Nemec (Crestwood)         | 19 | Maple (Jefferson)        |
| 10 | Craig (Steubenville)      | 20 | Pidgeon (West Branch)    |
| 11 | Plummer (Chaminade)       | 21 | Jackson (Athens)         |

Don't let anybody kid you. At least in Division 2 there won't be much head scratching, hand wringing, or sleepless nights when choosing winners at most weight classes. In at least 10 of the 14 weight classes there is really only one reasonable choice if you have been paying even minimal attention. That's not to say that all of them are guaranteed titles- injuries, illness, and an unexpected bad match can all derail a wrestler who on most days would be the top performer. Still, paraphrasing what Damon Runyon once wrote, "The race is not always to the swift, nor the battle to the strong nor favor to the men of skill – but that is the way to forecast"

Here at 113#, two-time state champion Nathan Tomasallo will be a heavy favorite –and rightfully so. Besides his two state titles, he twice won at the Ironman and his last loss was more than two years ago at the Top Gun to Ryan Taylor 8-7. He exerts constant pressure for the full six minutes, never better demonstrated than in his Ironman semi-final where down 5-0 in the first period he came back to make it 10-9 before getting a last second fall- against a top-notch opponent. He should be dominant against most opponents.

The biggest obstacle is likely to be the excellent Luke Langdon down from 120# where he won at both Barnesville and Medina. A three-time state placer (3<sup>rd</sup>,4<sup>th</sup>,4<sup>th</sup>). He has lost the last two years in the semi-finals--including a heartbreaking loss to Campbell in overtime two years ago. He'll be a very large 113 pounder with the experience to punish Tomasello should a mistake occur. Still, he was shut out by Tomasello at the Top Gun, 5-0, but, again, that was his first weekend down at weight.

Schoeppner, 4<sup>th</sup> last year at 103, leads the rest of the field, which while relatively deep is not overly strong. He'll exit the same district as Tomasello and should be away from him in Columbus. There will be no seeding at this weight class so Langdon will have to beat both Schoeppner and Tomasello to win.

The districts play out relatively well. At Alliance Tomasello will be will be joined by state qualifier Nemec with Tutolo, if at this weight, the best choice as the fourth qualifier. Tutolo looked very strong beating Plummer for the CIT title. There is a little depth so a Maple or Pidgeon could qualify on a hot weekend. The first named was one- point away from Columbus last year.

Goshen returns three state qualifiers –Plummer, Hooks, and Parsons-none of whom placed last year and went a combined 2-6in Columbus. Hooks was 2<sup>nd</sup> at the SWOCA while Plummer did likewise at GMVWA. Hooks was very impressive with some big wins on his way to the finals. Plummer was also 2<sup>nd</sup> at the CIT and both boys have placement potential. The last spot should be a battle between state alternate Jackson and district 6<sup>th</sup> Duffy. Parsons wrestles in a kind of out- of- the- way area, but beat Plummer 13-5 at last year's districts and lost to Minnick, 10-9 at States.

The dynamite district is at Claymont, where there are six returning state qualifiers- five of whom have placed at least once. Some good people are going to be left out and so much will depend on the pairings. The Buckeye Local sectional will feature three of the six (Langdon, Smith, and Miller) who have six State placements and if the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> place finishers there end up in the same half bracket with Price and Craig it will be a real donnybrook.

Let's take a quick look at this group. Smith was 5<sup>th</sup> last year losing a one-pointer to Rix in the first round and then winning three close bouts in the consolations. Smith was 5<sup>th</sup> at the Top Gun. Miller has placed 7<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> the last two years losing only to the best in state action. Price was 6<sup>th</sup> two years ago while Craig was 6<sup>th</sup> last year—losing to Smith, 1-0. Craig was 7<sup>th</sup> at the Top Gun again losing to Smith in the process. Edwards, up from D-3, is also a returning state qualifier who was recently 3<sup>rd</sup> at Elgin.

There will be three returning State qualifiers at Marion with the added ingredient of two high placing freshmen from last year's junior high tournament. I like state qualifier Howard the best after his impressive performance at Brecksville where he finished 3<sup>rd</sup>. State placer Maurice and state qualifier Plaughner should be next in line, but I really like both Seipel (3<sup>rd</sup> at Jr. High) and Mossing (2<sup>nd</sup> at Jr. High). I think they'll both make it to Columbus.

**120#**

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

Top Contenders

|    |                       |    |                            |
|----|-----------------------|----|----------------------------|
| 2  | Stainbrook (Walsh)    | 13 | Parsons (Licking Valley)   |
| 3  | Rix (ASV)             | 14 | Pontious (Wauseon)         |
| 4  | Gessic (Perry)        | 15 | Kirk (Buckeye Local)       |
| 5  | Minnick (Clyde)       | 16 | Pizzino (Harrison Central) |
| 6  | Perry (Howland)       | 17 | Booher (Milton Union)      |
| 7  | Kaminski (Padua)      | 18 | Chafin (Eaton)             |
| 8  | Trigg (Washington CH) | 19 | Hasson (Beaver Local)      |
| 9  | Dobben (CVCA)         | 20 | Baitt (Jefferson)          |
| 10 | Skaggs (New Richmond) | 21 | Tepper (Bay)               |
| 11 | Parada (Steubenville) | 22 | Kern (Circleville)         |
| 12 | Hagan (Toledo CC)     | 23 | Evans (Mans. Madison)      |

This is absolutely terrific weight class headed by a tremendous wrestler who I believe is somewhat undervalued by many. Ryan Taylor will be seeking his third State title and will be a solid favorite to do so. But it will not be easy as there look to be some wrestlers with exceptional credentials challenging him for that title. Taylor, a junior high state champ, was behind Brascetta (that was the year he was ranked #1 in the nation) his freshmen year and would undoubtedly would have placed had he been able to compete. Since then he won at 103# as a sophomore—with all victories at least major decisions —and won at all 112# last year with only Stainbrook keeping it close. This year he was 2<sup>nd</sup> to DiCamillo at the Ironman (for the second time) and was undefeated at the Clash and was named the best at his weight class. He is very, very good. I believe three-time placer Langdon will be at 113 and that two-time state runner-up Campbell will move up to 126. That still leaves Stainbrook, the runner-up last year, as a formidable threat and 103-pound state champ Mike Rix as yet another possible obstacle. Both boys are very good on top and should they get an early lead ( that will not be easy) they will make Taylor really work for that third title.

The Alliance district is easily the best. Stainbrook, sixth third and second the last three years, knows how to win and, as mentioned, is difficult to score against. In his first three bouts at Columbus he outscored his opponents by a combined 24-0 score. He was runner-up at the Top Gun to Taylor losing a 7-3 decision—remarkably close to his 6-3 loss to Taylor in the state finals. Rix took the 103 pound title last year winning three one-point bouts in the process—the last two by 1-0. He has not been quite as effective, at least early on, at this weight class where his evident size advantage of last year has evaporated. The district winner, assuming it's one of this duo, will be seeded away from Taylor which will be much better than the trophy that they give at the district level. Gessic was a state alternate at 125# last year and apparently defeated Stainbrook, 3-2 at the Ohio Duals on his way to an undefeated season. Dobben, a State junior high champ, upset two-time runner-up Campbell at Medina before getting pinned by him in

the consolation finals. He was 7<sup>th</sup> at the Top Gun. State qualifier Perry is a proven winner with Baitt a real long-shot to qualify. It will be an exceptional district competition.

I could well be wrong about Campbell moving up to 126# and, if so, the competition at Marion will be even more entertaining. Even absent, we will still have state qualifiers Minick, junior high champ Kaminski, the excellent freshmen Hagan, and perhaps state qualifier Bowshier (although I've ranked him at 126#). There will also be a number of wrestlers who were one bout from Columbus last year, like Booher and Pontious who will battle the freshmen. Other possibilities might be Tepper and Evans.

With Langdon at 112 the Claymont district looks very weak. Parada might be best with Parsons and, maybe, Warner (pushing up to 120# after Burcher and Langdon move down) challenging him. The freshmen Hasson and Pizzino could play a role here with Good having an outside shot. Parada was a solid 4<sup>th</sup> at the Top Gun and this junior keeps getting better.

Now that the Tipp City Sectional is out of the Goshen district there are some weak weight classes clearly apparent at this venue. Last year, for example, Graham was 9-0 in the first round while the rest of the district was 13-34. Removing them from the Goshen District, while a brilliant strategic ploy by the Southwest District board, will substantially water down the quality of the district qualifiers out of Goshen while making Marion, the best performing district last year, even more difficult for state worthy wrestlers to qualify. At this weight class, state qualifiers Trigg and Skaggs look clearly best with Chafin (two district wins last year) and Kern nominally the next best. Trigg is a tenacious wrestler finishing 7<sup>th</sup> at the Top Gun and 6<sup>th</sup> at the GMVWA.

### 126#

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

##### Top Contenders

|    |                         |    |                          |
|----|-------------------------|----|--------------------------|
| 2  | Campbell (Lexington)    | 13 | Logan (Perkins)          |
| 3  | Kostandaras (Walsh)     | 14 | Knul (Circleville)       |
| 4  | Mason (Padua)           | 15 | Simonelli (CVCA)         |
| 5  | Warner (Indian Valley)  | 16 | Ott (Eaton)              |
| 6  | Kowalski (Tri-Valley)   | 17 | Dickey (Ash. Edgewood)   |
| 7  | Mossing (Toledo CC)     | 18 | Gunter (Coventry)        |
| 8  | Bowshier (Kenton Ridge) | 19 | Liewellyn (Steubenville) |
| 9  | Miller (Clyde)          | 20 | Dillon (Claymont)        |
| 10 | Gibson (ASV)            | 21 | Carter (Bethel Tate)     |
| 11 | Fee (Lake Catholic)     | 22 | Swartz (Beaver Local)    |
| 12 | Blacka (Alder)          | 23 | Hensley (Ross)           |

This should be one of the best weight classes given that my assumption as to who will compete is accurate. The front-runner here is defending State champion Micah Jordan and he was very impressive last year, particularly by the poise he showed in the finals against two-time state runner-up Calvin Campbell. Thrown on his back in the first period and down by four or five, he methodically worked his way to a 9-6 victory. Many freshmen (and upper classmen) might have panicked in that situation, but it was business as usual for Jordan. This year he started a bit slowly-failing to place at that hellacious 126-pound weight class at the Ironman, but defeating Mason by 6. However, at the Clash he went 5-1 losing only to the nationally ranked Dance in overtime, and he won at the Top Gun beating the formidable John Dillon in the final.

I think we'll find Campbell at this same weight class at Marion even though he has competed much of the year at 120#. I'm thinking it's a tough cut—ergo first day loss at Medina to Dobbens- -and Taylor stands to dominate 120#. Campbell is already a two-time state runner-up with an exceptional resume lacking only a state title. His best chance may well be here. After all, he came close, very close to beating Jordan last year and they'll be separated at the state level. Whichever weight class he chooses Campbell will be a huge factor.

Add in Mason (5<sup>th</sup>), Mossing (7<sup>th</sup>) and the sophomore Bowshier (7<sup>th</sup>) and this becomes, perhaps, the best district weight class anywhere in the State. That does not even include state qualifiers Miller and Logan, which creates a logjam of almost epic proportions. Some people are likely to blink especially since 132# is not overly strong and/or Bowshier can possibly compete at 120 (as, of course, can Campbell). Mason beat my D-3 pick to win the CIT and was 3<sup>rd</sup> at Brecksville losing an 8-7 bout to Screptock. Mossing was 4<sup>th</sup> at the CIT and 5<sup>th</sup> at Brecksville.

None of the other districts are nearly as strong. At Claymont Warner returns after a surprising run at last year's state meet where he went 4-1 (losing only in 58 seconds to Campbell) and finishing 3<sup>rd</sup>. He'll be seeded away from the Marion champ and that may have some small advantage. State placer Blacka (8<sup>th</sup>) also returns along with state qualifier Liewellyn (who Blacka, defeated, 5-0, to place last year). The wrestler to watch is Kowalski, a freshman at Tri-Valley, who was a junior high state champ last year after finishing 2<sup>nd</sup> as 7<sup>th</sup> grader. He was a semi-finalist at Brecksville losing a close bout to Coby Fehr, but defeated state placer Mossing twice and lost 1-0 bout to Mason. Dillon and Swartz are other possibilities.

There are a lot of potential at Alliance, but Kostandares leads this group. A district champ last year he was upset in the first round, but came back to get 6<sup>th</sup>. Now a sophomore he won handily at Solon and missed placing at the Ironman by a takedown. He's a top four wrestler even at this weight class. Fee and Gibson are both former qualifiers who have good placement potential. Gibson lost to Campbell and Mossing last year, but it was close with Mossing. Simonelli and Dickey were both state alternates while Gunter had a district 6<sup>th</sup>. This is a difficult district with some good folks likely to be left home.

The district you'll probably want to draw into is at Goshen. Knul and Ott are former state qualifiers who have yet to achieve substantial success at the state level. Ott failed to place at GMVWA and was 3<sup>rd</sup> at the Firebird. Knul has done well at several small tourneys. Carter and Hensley had some district wins last year with Carter, this year, finishing 2<sup>nd</sup> at Madeira. Middleton, a dark-horse, was 7<sup>th</sup> at the GMVWA and that is good enough to make him a contender.

## 132#

### **PROJECTED CHAMPION: BRENT FICKEL (PADUA)**

#### Top Contenders

|    |                          |    |                          |
|----|--------------------------|----|--------------------------|
| 2  | Skonieczny (ASV)         | 12 | Ratcliff (Bethel-Tate)   |
| 3  | McDermitt (Lima Shawnee) | 13 | Gresh (Oak Harbor)       |
| 4  | Kager (Crestwood)        | 14 | Conley (Sheridan)        |
| 5  | Scherer (Riverview)      | 15 | Henkle (Graham)          |
| 6  | Byrd (Ross)              | 16 | Wrobel (Lake Catholic)   |
| 7  | Thompson (London)        | 17 | McKitrick (Steubenville) |
| 8  | Decatur (CVCA)           | 18 | Peterson (Revere)        |
| 9  | Salmon (Perkins)         | 19 | Roberts (Greenville)     |
| 10 | Lang (Norwalk)           | 20 | Avery (Claymont)         |
| 11 | Foster (Beaver Local)    | 21 | Loxterman (Perry)        |

It looks a little thin 132 right now, but I anticipate some movement, both up and down, that will strengthen it. At the moment, however it is a place of opportunity.

If you were developing an illustrated dictionary it's likely you would use a picture of Brent Fickel next to the definition of close, heart-breaking defeats. Fickel has had a lot of them. He is desperately hoping not to become the first wrestler to be a four-time semi-finalist who never wrestled on Saturday night. He lost to Neibert in the semi-finals. as a freshmen, and then came two gut-wrenching, one-point, semi-final losses to Mellinger and Benedict—both times where I saw him as the better wrestler. He has two 3<sup>rd</sup> place finishes and a 4<sup>th</sup>, but this year he should win it. He was a solid 1<sup>st</sup> at Brecksville, beating Squire in a terrific semi-final bout his second win over an old nemesis, placed at the Ironman, and was undefeated at the Ohio Duals—defeating former state runner-up Fiorucci. It's clearly his time and I anticipate a lot of painful memories will be swept away.

The top contender will also exit at Marion in the person of Collin McDermit, 3<sup>rd</sup> in 2011. Last year, he lost early to McComas, in overtime, but then swept away the competition to finish 3<sup>rd</sup>. An aggressive wrestler, he pinned or scored in double figures in every bout except his 9-7 overtime loss. Most recently he crushed the field at Marion Harding while scoring almost at will in the top position. However, he does not wrestle anywhere near the schedule that confronts Fickel. State placer Lang and state qualifier Salmons should

fill out the qualification requirement at Marion with the sophomore Henkle and Gresh possibilities as well. This will be a strong group of qualifiers you will not want to meet in the first round.

There are three top-notch talents at Alliance, but the fourth state berth is wide open. Ryan Skonieczny, now a sophomore, was 8<sup>th</sup> last year losing a narrow 4-3 bout to Scherer in the consolations after a tumultuous 13-11 first round of defeat to McDermitt. This will be an interesting test to see if the younger (the other two are seniors) wrestler (Skonieczny) who wrestles a much tougher schedule has surpassed them. Skonieczny was second at Solon, won 3 bouts at the Ironman, and was 7<sup>th</sup> at Brecksville. Decatur was 6<sup>th</sup> last year in D-3, but has a big upside potential. He was a semi-finalist at Medina dropped to 5<sup>th</sup>, but did lose to Skonieczny at the Ironman. Kager went 1-2 at the state meet last year losing his placement bout to my choice to win the title last year 10-7. He had a major decision over DeCesare to win at Kenston and won easily at Hudson. Skonieczny beat him by a point at last year's districts. The last state berth should feature Peterson, Loxterman, or junior high placer Wrobel any of whom could qualify

Scherer was 4<sup>th</sup> last year after a first-round loss winning four consolation bouts before getting "teched" by McDermitt. I don't think he has lost this year though the only Warsaw paper I've seen is in Polish. Most recently he won at Coshocton and he has dominated his part of the state. Thompson and Foster are both returning state qualifiers with, perhaps, low placement potential. Thompson was a state quarter-finalist last year. State alternate McKitrick, on that excellent Steubenville squad, and Avery are both state ready, but may be battling for just one spot.

The Goshen district won't be sending shivers down anyone's spine. Byrd qualified last year, but lost to Thompson by six and to McDermitt, in a barnburner, 13-11. He was 4<sup>th</sup> at SWOCA losing to a pair of state champs and won at Fairfield. He should place. After that it's by guess and by golly with Ratcliff (5<sup>th</sup> at the SWOCA) and Conley, two district wins last year, as the most viable candidates. After that Roberts (3<sup>rd</sup> at Troy) and Keller are in the next tier.

**138#**

**PROJECTED CHAMPION: NICK SKONIECZNY (WALSH)**

Top Contenders

|    |                        |    |                           |
|----|------------------------|----|---------------------------|
| 2  | Rohskopf (West Holmes) | 12 | Schram (Bellbrook)        |
| 3  | Nicely (Wauson)        | 13 | Gershom (Hebron Lakewood) |
| 4  | Majoy (Edison)         | 14 | Stalder (Athens)          |
| 5  | Fejedelem (Crestwood)  | 15 | Dobben (CVCA)             |
| 6  | Campbell (Perkins)     | 16 | Tassone (U.S.)            |
| 7  | Struble (Bryan)        | 17 | Flores (Clyde)            |
| 8  | Ladich (Field)         | 18 | Romero (Franklin)         |
| 9  | Jones (Ross)           | 19 | Herron (Claymont)         |
| 10 | Hobley (Steubenville)  | 20 | Valentine (Wapakoneta)    |
| 11 | Cramer (Oak Harbor)    | 21 | Davis (Philo)             |

One of the most riveting bouts in last year's State finals was the battle royal between Nate Skonieczny and Case Garrison. Skonieczny eventually won his first state title (after a 2<sup>nd</sup> and a 3<sup>rd</sup>) with a takedown in overtime in a bout that no one should have lost. I expected a repeat this year, but Garrison, a two-time Texas State champ and the grandson of the great Dallas Cowboy running back Walt Garrison, sadly tore up his knee and is out for a year. In my mind that gives Skonechzny free rein at this weight class. He won the Ironman and was ranked #1 in the country, but lost one of those 2-1 endless tie-breaker bouts on a ride-out. He, at times, seems overly defensive, but I think we'll see more firepower in this, his last high school tournament.

He should have very little trouble at the Alliance district. Maybe, I'm looking in the wrong places, but I'm struggling to find the requisite four qualifiers here. Tassone was a state qualifier when the world was still young and Fejedelem was two points from Columbus last year and they would seem to be next best after Skonieczny. However, the gap between them is very wide. Zach Dobben was junior high state runner-up last year, but did not place at Medina. Maybe, a Ladich or Smosny will qualify though what I think will happen is that some of the 145 pounders in a crowded weight at this district might drop should there alpha weight allow. I don't want to overlook Ladich. He has gotten much better rather quickly, perhaps, helped by having Fox for a workout partner. He was a solid 5<sup>th</sup> at the Top Gun including a win over D-1 state qualifier Ashton.

The deepest district is at Marion which should be allocated six or seven state berths if we were to calculate strictly on the quality of entrants. Majoy was second last year to Stieber, but that was a different division, a different weight class and a different year. He failed to place at Brecksville and lost quickly at the Ohio Duals. Still you can't count him out since he came on strong last year, and may well so do again. However, State quarter-finalist Nicely beat Majoy 13-8 at Brecksville and has moved into the top spot at this district. Wauseon continues to produce outstanding dual meet teams with some individual state-quality firepower as well. State qualifier Cameron Campbell won a bout

at states last year and essentially remains at last year's weight class. Another fine Padua middleweight, Fasnacht, also qualified for Columbus, but lost two one-sided bouts. He was 3<sup>rd</sup> at the CIT, but failed to place at Brecksville and will need to be sharp to earn a return trip to Columbus. State alternate Struble missed qualification after a loss to Nicely, but has had a great senior season and should be a factor here. Newland, Flores, and Valentine all had intermediate district success last year, but need a breakout weekend to qualify, I think Gresh will opt for 132#, but Cramer, one bout from possible state qualification could be a viable candidate.

Rohskopf is well ahead of the competition at Claymont and has finalist potential should he draw away from Skonieczny, He qualified at 130# last year finishing 7<sup>th</sup> in a senior-dominated weight class. He was 2<sup>nd</sup> at Medina losing only to Hammer and 2<sup>nd</sup> at the Top Gun, but was teched in the finals by Skonieczny. Even so he seems to have made another strong improvement this year. After him the cupboard is pretty much bare at Claymont. State alternates Hobley and Gershom seem next in line with, maybe, Herron next best along Davis, 2-2, in last year's district. A rising star might be the younger Scherer who has a solid opportunity here.

It's pretty much the same story at Goshen minus even the usual one returning state qualifier. At this point in time no one has shown dominance within the district. My favorite is state alternate Jones who lost a 4-3 decision in his go-to-state bout. He won the prestigious SWOCA, but was 6<sup>th</sup> at Fairfield. Still he seems to be the best at this district. The freshman Schram (5th at the junior high states) is a future star with Romero and Stalder two other possibilities. I expect, come the release of the state pairings on Sunday morning we will see some unfamiliar names representing this district in the bracket.

## 145#

### **PROJECTED CHAMPION: BLAKE KASTL (GRAHAM)**

#### Top Contenders

- |    |                       |    |                         |
|----|-----------------------|----|-------------------------|
| 2  | Faust (Lexington)     | 14 | Snyder (Perkins)        |
| 3  | Fox (Field)           | 15 | Klose (Howland)         |
| 4  | Warner (Claymont)     | 16 | Schenz (Big Walnut)     |
| 5  | Klosz (Holy Name)     | 17 | Coffman (Edison)        |
| 6  | Skonieczny (Walsh)    | 18 | Straight (Whitehall)    |
| 7  | McGhee (Steubenville) | 19 | Faulkner (West Branch)  |
| 8  | Viengmany (Toledo CC) | 20 | Doughty (Norwalk)       |
| 9  | Dobben (CVCA)         | 21 | Foreman (New Lexington) |
| 10 | McNulty (Padua)       | 22 | Cross (Geneva)          |
| 11 | Bower (Miami Trace)   | 23 | Leppla (Cambridge)      |
| 12 | Monaco (U.S.)         | 24 | Belknap (Hoban)         |
| 13 | Schenk (Perry)        | 25 | Cropper (Coventry)      |
|    |                       | 26 | Zimmerman (Wyoming)     |

Almost every weight class to this point has had a well-defined pre-tournament favorite with sparkling credentials and almost unanimous support as the “top guy”. This weight class is refreshingly different. Bracketed by Skonieczny (#1 in the country in some polls) and Bo Jordan (#1 in the country in all polls) it has attracted a stellar field led by a quintet of outstanding wrestlers any one of whom would be a worthy champion. The problem, at least of a sort, is that three of them exit the same district making, possibly, for asymmetrical pairings, but more on that later.

The powerhouse district is, of course, at Marion. While the 145-pound weight is loaded at this district, so, too, is the 152-pound field creating impossible choices for some very good competitors. They must look with envy at Claymont and Goshen where wrestlers with far less talent and credentials will easily qualify. Let’s look at each of the top trio here.

Faust has made amazing strides. He is a top echelon wrestler who hasn’t quite taken that last tiny step needed to beat the best. He was a state semi-finalist as a sophomore losing to Isaac Jordan and sliding to 5<sup>th</sup>, then last year he entered the district at 45-0, lost a 2-1 quarter-final bout and dropped to 3<sup>rd</sup>. In Columbus he inexplicably lost to Fosco in the quarter-finals, lost a tie-breaker to Mirman and finished 5<sup>th</sup> again (beating Fosco 15-6 and this year 22-6). At the Ironman he had Kastl in the semi-finals and dropped a 3-1 bout with poor decision-making and finished losing to state champion Zach Dailey, 1-0. At Medina he again lost a 2-1 tie-breaker to the Michigan state champion on a third caution after being the more aggressive wrestler. It wouldn’t take much for him to win it.

Kastl was 4<sup>th</sup> last year in California (Gilroy High School) and has fit right into the Graham lineup. He was 2<sup>nd</sup> at the Ironman beating Faust in the semis and then “giving away” his lead and the match to Milonas of Blair in the finals. He had five falls at The Clash and then lost a one takedown bout to the nationally ranked Jake Short of Simley. He won at the Top Gun beating Warner by four and McGhee by five. He is very solid and dependable with fabulous workout partners (Bo and Ike).

Klosz was 6<sup>th</sup> two years ago and 3<sup>rd</sup> in 2011 losing only to Bo Jordan in the semi-finals and then watching Zeman, who he defeated at districts, make the finals. This year he has been at 152#, but will apparently compete at this weight class. He was 6<sup>th</sup> at the Ironman 152# and is undefeated and pretty much unchallenged otherwise.

The fourth competitor in this brilliant quintet is T.J. Fox who will compete at Alliance. He was 7<sup>th</sup> two years ago and 2<sup>nd</sup> last year losing to Brascetta in the finale. He was 2<sup>nd</sup> at North Canton losing to Chisko from Canon McMillan, but otherwise wrestles a pretty low profile schedule. Steady and conservative he is not prone to error and will not give away a point or a bout. He was 2<sup>nd</sup> at the Top Gun –beating Warner by five, but losing to Kastl by four.

Finally, there is the long-time star from Claymont, Kyle Warner. He has been at 152# most of the year – winning at Barnesville and finishing 2<sup>nd</sup> at Medina to division 1 state champ Zach Dailey. He has already set a record of sorts finishing 5<sup>th</sup> the last three years--a streak he hopes not to extend in 2012. Both his losses last year at States were by one point so he is very close to being on the top step of the podium. Kastl defeated him 7-3 at the Ohio Duals, but it was his first week down at this weight class.

The bracketing gods could be out to get us here. Fox (and Dobben and Nic Skonieczny) are all seedable out of Alliance while Klosz fills that bill at Marion. That means the champ from those two brackets will be apart, putting the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> place finisher at Marion in the same half as the Alliance champ. There would then be a 50% chance that Warner would also be in that “half- bracket of death” leaving the Marion champ with clear sailing while his four principal adversaries were all in the other half bracket. This could be a huge impact item.

With Faust, Kastl, and apparently Klosz all at Marion there will be few (like one) qualifying spots open. I don't know what state qualifier Bergman will do – although I'm guessing 152#. That leaves state alternates Viengmany and Synder with no margin for error. However, don't overlook Brecksville runner-up and 3<sup>rd</sup> place finisher McNulty, a transfer from Mayfield with an excellent skill set. Also in play are Brecksville placer Coffman, the solid Doughty and Henderson. What a district.

I'm not sure what to expect at Alliance, and maybe, neither is Fox. Nic Skonieczny was 3<sup>rd</sup> last year (losing only to Brascetta), but he has missed the entire year due to injury. I am told he is unlikely to compete, and then I'm told he'll be back. Dobben was 3<sup>rd</sup> in D-3 last year losing only to Tessari. However, this year he failed to place at either Medina or the Ironman and was “teched” by Kastl at the latter tournament. However, he did get 7<sup>th</sup> at the Top Gun including a win over state placer Fosco. Monaco has been bedeviled by injuries, but qualified last year at 135. He lost in the semis at Kenston 1-0 to Neyer and then was apparently injured. State alternate Klose was 3<sup>rd</sup> at Hudson and has state possibilities. There are a raft of other good wrestlers including Faulkner, Cross, Belknap, and Cropper. However, I think the onrushing Schenk might be the top choice for the 4<sup>th</sup> spot. He won recently at Perry.

While Warner is dominant at Claymont there still remains three tickets to the Value City arena. State Qualifier McGhee went 1-2 at the state meet last year and is a standout performer for that fine Steubenville team. He was 4<sup>th</sup> at the Top Gun losing to Warner and Kastl. After that it is anyone's guess. State alternate Schenz came close to qualifications last year and has to feel he's in a good position here. Straight and Leppla are two other candidates, as well.

I'm really struggling for names at Goshen. State qualifier Bowers was at 152# early, but has apparently decided, and rightly so, that this might be his best choice. He went 1-2 at States last year and collected 40 victories during the year. He was 7<sup>th</sup> at GMVWA (that was his first week down) losing to a pair of D-3 wrestlers –Fahrer and Sandlin. District

placer Foreman (6<sup>th</sup>) will be a factor at this district while Zimmerman and Wright are other potential qualifiers.

### 152#

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

##### Top Contenders

|    |                             |    |                          |
|----|-----------------------------|----|--------------------------|
| 2  | Burns (Edison)              | 13 | Yarnell (Wauseon)        |
| 3  | Williams (Tiffin Columbian) | 14 | Cash (Jefferson)         |
| 4  | Bergman (Oak Harbor)        | 15 | Brown (Marietta)         |
| 5  | Spohn (New Lexington)       | 16 | Kimble/Weininger (Dover) |
| 6  | Stitzlein (West Holmes)     | 17 | Pidgeon (West Branch)    |
| 7  | Downs (Woodridge)           | 18 | Caris (Eastwood)         |
| 8  | Ponchak (Morgan)            | 19 | Gonzalez (Wyoming)       |
| 9  | Mays (Steubenville)         | 20 | Reaser (Ravenna)         |
| 10 | Edwards (Greenville)        | 21 | Davis (Norwalk)          |
| 11 | Green (Elida)               | 22 | Duffy (West Geauga)      |
| 12 | Peters (Claymont)           |    |                          |

We're getting to the point where Bo Jordan can start to be compared to the greatest wrestler ever produced in Ohio. Fourteen months from now we'll likely be thinking about him in the context of a Tommy Milkovich, Mike Deanna, Jim Jordan, David Taylor and, perhaps a half dozen others. He pinned everyone well before the end of the second period last year in Columbus and has won two Ironman titles in two attempts. His record is about 108-1 and it is the ease with which he wins that is mesmerizing. This will be the 75<sup>th</sup> Ohio State wrestling tournament after which we should select a diamond jubilee team. Where does Bo fit in?

A second, more practical question is the eventual weight class for defending state champ Kyle Burns, who took the D-3 at state title at 145# last avenging an early-season defeat to Dan Orrill, 5-4. It was a bruising, hard-fought battle with six minutes of movement by both contestants and yet the officials felt obligated to award three stalling points –one of which proved to be the eventual winner. Burns won another last second battle to take the title at Brecksville wresting the title away from Quinn. He will be at the same district as Jordan so if he stays at 152# he'll be away from him in Columbus. The other choice is that donnybrook at 145#.

As is almost always the case it will be a loaded competition at Marion, with some state worthy kids left home. In the creation of district tournaments that draw from two or three geographical areas (as happens here) thought should be given to providing the fairest playing field for all contestants. It would have been relatively easy to provide relative parity for both Marion and Goshen.

At any rate Jordan and Burns will also see state qualifiers Bergman (or so I suspect) and Williams at this district—and they are both excellent. Coincidentally they were both 6<sup>th</sup> last year. Williams won most recently at Tiffin while Bergman was 3<sup>rd</sup> at Medina losing only a 10-7 semi-final to D-1 state champion Zach Dailey. This quartet is probably the best four wrestlers at this weight class in the state-but as we hear in the infomercials, wait, there is much more. Yarnell was a state alternate at 125# last year missing qualifications by two points. Caris and Davis are both solid performers, but watch out for Green who lost, 6-4, to Williams at Tiffin. This second foursome is very good, but they'll have to be at their absolute best to have a chance of qualification.

The other three districts look rather sparse in comparison with Marion. As it currently stands state alternate Downs (or teammate Minns) has the best credentials with district placer (6<sup>th</sup>) Cash close by. Pidgeon who was 2-2 at the district level last year and was 4<sup>th</sup> at Riverside could also create waves with Jones a possible fourth contender. Two other possibilities might be Tassone moving back to 152# or someone like Duffy or Reaser having a hot weekend. Also in play, or so I believe, is that the difficulty in finding strong candidates at this weight class might tempt some of the ten 145's we discussed at Alliance in the last essay to migrate in this direction. I think that during the next six weeks this weight class could have a number of new participants.

There is far more depth at Claymont even with Warner at 145#. State qualifier Stitzlein is a bit of an enigma, but he can be very good. He was a state quarter-finalist last year before losing to Zeman, 21-5, and could not come back. This year he was 7<sup>th</sup> at Medina and a strong 3<sup>rd</sup> at the Top Gun and remains a real threat at the state level. Ponchak and Peters wrestled for 5<sup>th</sup> at last year's districts with the former winning by two. Peters has been at 160 much of the year with a 2<sup>nd</sup> at Barnesville at that weight. Ponchak won big at Nelsonville and has placement potential. Weininger won at Dover and placed at St.Clairsville, but must beat out Kimble to keep this spot in the lineup. We might see him at 145#The freshmen Mays was a fine youth wrestler finishing 2<sup>nd</sup> at last year's junior high state tournament. He may well work his way into the top four here as he currently owns a 16-3 record.

Again, there is a dearth of big names at Goshen. Edwards is up from 135# where he was one win from state qualification last year. He was a very sound third 3<sup>rd</sup> at the GMVWA and one point away from being a finalist. He followed that up with an impressive win at Troy beating Heyob, 8-4. Spohn was 5<sup>th</sup> at Medina defeating Stitzlein in overtime and losing to Bergman by only three. Gonzalez won two bouts at districts last year while Brown has scored well for Marietta. Barr was 3<sup>rd</sup> at both Gallia and Nelsonville losing to Ponchak 2-1 at the latter date.

**160#**

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

**Top Contenders**

|    |                          |    |                       |
|----|--------------------------|----|-----------------------|
| 2  | Poyser (Louisville)      | 14 | Sherman (Buckeye)     |
| 3  | Metz (Lexington)         | 15 | Ford (Hillsboro)      |
| 4  | Boyce (Minerva)          | 16 | Whisler (Howland)     |
| 5  | Burge (Wilmington)       | 17 | Minns (Woodridge)     |
| 6  | Scarberry (Walsh)        | 18 | Carome (Goshen)       |
| 7  | Endres (Dover)           | 19 | Schuette (Wauseon)    |
| 8  | Eddy (Harrison Central)  | 20 | Sill (Perry)          |
| 9  | Hasley (Marietta)        | 21 | Golden (Indian Lake)  |
| 10 | Rutherford (Edison)      | 22 | McClellan (CVCA)      |
| 11 | Allen (Columbus DeSales) | 23 | Eippert (West Geauga) |
| 12 | Paynter (West Branch)    | 24 | Buckner (Bellevue)    |
| 13 | Kucera (Sparta Highland) |    |                       |

This is Isaac Jordan's second year at this weight class and while he seemed a little undersized last year that is not the case today. It seems a long time ago that he was 3<sup>rd</sup> at 112 as a freshman, but he has won the last two years at 138# and 160#. One thing that that impresses me a lot about the Graham wrestlers is their poise. In last year's final many saw Jordan as the underdog against the bigger Witt--down from 171#. In a 1-1 bout Jordan got what appeared to be the winning takedown with 35 seconds to go. Then, ill-advisedly, he tried to hang onto the bigger Witt--first losing a stalling point and then the escape as well. For many that managerial mistake might have been on their mind as the overtime began, but Jordan cast it aside and again took Witt down to get his second state title. This year he won his first Ironman and went undefeated at The Clash including a win over Epperly. He cruised to the title at the Top Gun pinning his nearest rival Poyser. He is a huge favorite here.

There are a number of other solid wrestlers at Marion with several having state placement opportunities. Rutherford qualified in D-3 at 171# last year, but has moved down one notch. He was 7<sup>th</sup> at Brecksville and 2-1 at the Ohio Duals defeating Ripke, but losing to Stanley. Metz, however, might be the one to watch. He was the state alternate at this weight class last year losing a pair of 3-2 bouts in both his go-to-state matches, and was 5<sup>th</sup> at Medina including a win over Boyce. Golden and Sherman are other possibilities, but Schuette who's really a 152-pounder could pull the upset. Davis and Buckner are two other thoughts.

I think Poyser has finalist potential if he can draw away from Jordan. He was a state semi-finalist last year, but plummeting to 6<sup>th</sup> after losing three consecutive falls--the first to Stephens. This year his biggest title was at North Canton and had been undefeated until losing to Jordan at the Top Gun. Scarberry always seems to do a little better than anticipated finishing 2<sup>nd</sup> at Solon and placing at the Powerade. He was a state alternate

last year losing his go-to-state bout 2-0. I like Paynter and Sill and think, maybe that, one of the Woodridge boys-Downs or Minns-might compete here. A good, solid dark-horse candidate is the freshman Whisler who won the junior high state title at 145# last year. He was only 5<sup>th</sup> at Hudson, but was at one of the tougher weight classes. Don't forget about Eippert or Khatib, but McClellan could be a big plus for CVCA if he could qualify.

There are some solid performers at Claymont. Boyce is a two-time state qualifier who lost his state placement bout by a heartbreaking 8-7 score. He won handily at Coshocton and was 5<sup>th</sup> at the Top Gun including a win over Scarberry. He should reach the podium on this his third try, and bracketed away from Jordan and Poyser he could be a finalist. Endres qualified at 152# last year, but was a Thursday night casualty. There were 13 seniors in that bracket and Poyser was the only underclassmen to place. Endres defeated Eddy, 9-7, and both boys should qualify. I also like Kucera, one bout from States and Overholt. However, the wrestler to watch is Allen. The once proud Columbus DeSales program is in decline and Allen is the one of the last vestiges of state hope. He placed at Brecksville and should escape, if narrowly, this district.

I haven't had much to say about Goshen at the last few weight classes, but there are a couple of top ten competitors here. Burge has been at 170# part of the year, but he is now back down to 160. He was second GMVWA losing a narrow finals bout. He was 1-2 at Columbus – both losses to eventual placers. Hasley was also a state qualifier and is one of the best wrestlers that Marietta has produced in the past few years. He went “two and out” last year, but has podium potential. There is a big drop-off after this duo Carome won two district bouts last year while Ford finished 6<sup>th</sup> at that level. The latter only a sophomore has spent substantial time at 170. Carome was 4<sup>th</sup> at the SWOCA while long-shot possibility English was 6<sup>th</sup>.

### **170#**

#### **PROJECTED CHAMPION: BRANDON O'NEILL (CLEAR FORK)**

##### Top Contenders

|    |                            |    |                        |
|----|----------------------------|----|------------------------|
| 2  | Moore (Clyde)              | 13 | Page (West Branch)     |
| 3  | Jones (Tri-Valley)         | 14 | Bollas (Aurora)        |
| 4  | Running (Clinton Massie)   | 15 | Smith (Coshocton)      |
| 5  | Gray (CVCA)                | 16 | Mounts (Kenton Ridge)  |
| 6  | Taylor (Gallia)            | 17 | Squire (Lake Catholic) |
| 7  | Brokaw (Ravenna Southeast) | 18 | Nyamor (Wyoming)       |
| 8  | Howarth (Steubenville)     | 19 | Huelskamp (Geneva)     |
| 9  | Thayer (Buckeye)           | 20 | Hengstler (Wapakoneta) |
| 10 | Kasper (Lexington)         | 21 | Reid (New Richmond)    |
| 11 | Mancuso (Edison)           | 22 | Bryan (West Geauga)    |
| 12 | Adkinson (Bellevue)        | 23 | Roller (Cambridge)     |

This weight class bears some similarity to 145 insofar as there is no clear favorite and there is little differentiation between what appears to be the top contenders. The difference is that at 145 I could visualize any of that top quintet winning the title while, here, it's far more difficult to see any one on that top step. There were 14 seniors in this bracket last year so there is not a deep reservoir of talent returning at the same weight class.

The Marion district is clearly the deepest. I watched O'Neill two years ago give Utley a tremendous bout in the state quarter-finals losing eventually by three points. His speed and strength even then were clearly at the top of the charts. However, he lost his next bout and failed to place. Last year after Dye moved to 160, I had him ranked second to Phillips (and he would be in the opposite half-bracket) ,but it didn't happen. He was a first-round upset victim and eventually finished 7<sup>th</sup>. Now up in D-2 he has had a great year although he has not been at some of the more demanding tourneys. Based on pure physical ability he should be, at a minimum, a finalist. Right behind O'Neill is the junior, Chris Moore, now at Clyde. He was 8<sup>th</sup> last year--losing a one-point first round bout then winning two bouts, and then again, losing another one-pointer. He was 1<sup>st</sup> at Edison (a quick fall over Mancuso) and "teched" Findley to win at Lorain. I think there is a gap between this duo and the rest of the district. Mancuso, Kasper, Thayer, and Hengstler were all low to medium placers at the holiday tournaments in Cleveland with the first showing slightly better. The other candidate is the Avon Lake champion Adkinson and it should be a battle royale for the last two state berths. Don't forget about the Troy champion, Mounts who has upset potential coming up from the south.

Somehow Gray was always overshadowed by the stars of the CVCA team, he always seemed easy to overlook- a wrestler without a signature win. That changed at Medina with a 11-5 win over Martinez--and it wasn't a fluke. Gray was one point from States last year and this year ended up 2<sup>nd</sup> at Medina losing only to the exceptional Pickett. He should do well at what is a somewhat depleted Alliance District. State qualifier Brokaw returns and should reach Columbus once again--this time with placement potential. After that look to the Aurora sophomore, with a great wrestling name, George Bollas, who won at Perry. After this threesome, folks like Squire, 3<sup>rd</sup> at Solon, Page, the Riverside champ, and Huelskamp, 3<sup>rd</sup> at Kenston come into play, along with the senior Bryan, if he can remain healthy.

Goshen has two contenders for high placement among its four qualifiers. Running, who was 6<sup>th</sup> last year in D-3, which included a technical fall victory over Jordan Cole and a narrow one-point (7-6), loss to the redoubtable Prather. One might think that that he is following the template developed by his older brother Corby who was also 6<sup>th</sup> as a sophomore and then made a quantum leap forward to win state titles the next two years. Are we seeing history repeat itself? We do know that Running dominated at Fairfield and Clinton Massie. Taylor captured a district 3<sup>rd</sup> last year, but had an extraordinarily tough draw at Columbus (Cramer and McCall) and went 1-2. Dominant in the southeast quadrant of the State he looks to improve on that this year. With both

Ford and Burge dropping to 160# there is a huge drop-off after this top pair. Nyamor who won two district bouts last year might be next best with Reid a possibility.

State placer Jones stands out at Claymont. He narrowly defeated both Kluk and Lamancusa in hard-fought battles at the state tournament last year before losing to Jordan and then nailing down a 4<sup>th</sup> place finish. This year he was a finalist before losing to the “superhuman Kimbrell. This boy is a real talent. Howarth is next best winning two district bouts last year and anchoring the upper weight part of the Steubenville line-up. After that, maybe, Roller or Coshocton champ Smith can play a role here with Dennis also a possibility.

## 182#

### PROJECTED CHAMPION: HUSTON EVANS (GRAHAM)

#### Top Contenders

|    |                         |    |                             |
|----|-------------------------|----|-----------------------------|
| 2  | Gresham (Goshen)        | 13 | Ferguson (Columbus DeSales) |
| 3  | Cole (Edison)           | 14 | Tackett (Gallia)            |
| 4  | Adkins (ASV)            | 15 | Wicker (Steubenville)       |
| 5  | Smith (Clyde)           | 16 | White (New Richmond)        |
| 6  | Alexander (Norwalk)     | 17 | Miscuk (East Liverpool)     |
| 7  | Harble (Licking Valley) | 18 | Asburn (Streetsboro)        |
| 8  | Deming (Perry)          | 19 | Havener (CVCA)              |
| 9  | Walters (Riverview)     | 20 | Brown (Wapakoneta)          |
| 10 | Headrick (Coventry)     | 21 | Day (Kenton Ridge)          |
| 11 | Harlow (Warren)         | 22 | Wilson (Monroe)             |
| 12 | Rutherford (Norton)     |    |                             |

This weight class is strictly a two-man battle. Gresham and Evans are giants for whom the ground shakes as they work their way through this bracket. Both have been (or are) State champions with exceptional records, and one gets the feeling that mutual respect does not extend into mutual friendship.

Gresham was 8<sup>th</sup> as a freshman and then 3<sup>rd</sup> the next year losing only to three-time champ Hightower in the semi-finals. I thought he would drop to 171# last year, but he stayed up to challenge defending champion Evans. Evans won in one of those ultimate tie-breaker bouts at the district level, but Gresham got ahead early at States and won 5-2 for his first state title. He was at the Ironman this year, got hurt early, and has not wrestled since. He will be fresh for the state tournament process.

Evans has been a prodigy. He won two junior high state titles and was 2<sup>nd</sup> his freshmen year at 152#, I still remember him stomping off after the loss, not happy he was a freshman runner-up, but madder than a hornet for losing. He rectified that sophomore year winning at 171 after upsetting Lamberg in the semis. Then came the loss last year.

This year he won the Ironman beating Abounader, was undefeated at The Clash, and took home another Top Gun title. He was disappointed he didn't get another chance against Gresham at the Ironman, but his wish may come true in March.

My choice is Evans who I think will use last year's loss as a spur to reverse that result. It will not be easy because he has wrestled a very difficult schedule. It is clear to me that either of these boys would be prohibitive favorites at 195. They exit different districts so they will be seeded apart and, that unlike last year, there will be just one meeting for all the marbles.

There are some podium potential wrestlers behind Evans at Marion. Cole was 8<sup>th</sup> in D-3 last year while Alexander made it to Columbus, but lost twice including a 24-9 tech fail to Evans. Both should make it back. Cole was 6<sup>th</sup> at Brecksville and 2<sup>nd</sup> at North Canton and had three falls at the Ohio Duals including one over Groff. Alexander won the Gorman with an overtime win over state placer Beck, and was 2<sup>nd</sup> at Kenston. Neither of this duo is assured of a State berth. State alternate Smith--he missed qualification by one point-- was a big winner at Lorain, and should be a solid threat. I also like Brown 1st at the Firebird, in what will be a crowded field. Day won at Troy and was 4<sup>th</sup> at the GMVWA and cannot be overlooked.

Gresham will have it much easier. I have uncovered several possibilities with state alternate Harlow probably the best. An aggressive, scoring wrestler he should qualify this time. Willis, White, and Wilson are the top contenders for the last two spots with district placer White (6<sup>th</sup>) nominally the favorite. The dark horse here is the powerful Tackett who won at Gallia and Nelsonville last year.

I have six names at Alliance, but none of them of have had dominating seasons. Adkins was a district 6<sup>th</sup> last year and this year was 3<sup>rd</sup> at Solon and 7<sup>th</sup> at Brecksville and the Ironman. He has been a consistent placer in tournaments large and small. Deming won two district bouts and hit the trifecta this year--1<sup>st</sup> at Riverside, 2<sup>nd</sup> at Perry and 3<sup>rd</sup> at Kenston. Headrick was a state alternate last year while Ashburn, good in the past, has fought injuries all year. The freshman Rutherford, 2<sup>nd</sup> last year at the junior high states, was 2<sup>nd</sup> at Hudson and should qualify while Havener looks like the guy who might pull that one big upset.

State qualifier Harble is the kingpin at Claymont after going 1-2 in Columbus last year. He won handily at Lickling Valley and was 2<sup>nd</sup> at Olentangy (to Leidecker) and 2<sup>nd</sup> at Coshocton (to Bresciani). Walters also went 1-2 in Columbus losing his State placement bout by one point to Delane King. I have also seen him at 220# and there is some kind of disconnect here. The last two spots are "up for grabs" Ferguson won two districts bouts last year while Wicker has performed well for Steubenville. It looks like, maybe, Miscuk might also have an opportunity here.

**195#**

**PROJECTED CHAMPION: JOSH LEHNER (LEXINGTON)**

Top Contenders

|    |                              |    |                          |
|----|------------------------------|----|--------------------------|
| 2  | Zody (Triway)                | 12 | Thomas (Marlington)      |
| 3  | Szep (Lake Catholic)         | 13 | Shaw (Washington CH)     |
| 4  | Thompson (Mansfield Madison) | 14 | King (Kenton)            |
| 5  | Auletta (Orange)             | 15 | Crum (Hamilton Twp.)     |
| 6  | Nichols (Perry)              | 16 | Gilbert (Eaton)          |
| 7  | Robinson (London)            | 17 | McGowan (Licking Valley) |
| 8  | Harris (Urbana)              | 18 | Hunt (Canton South)      |
| 9  | Keenan (Steubenville)        | 19 | Workman (Perkins)        |
| 10 | Harding (Claymont)           | 20 | Taw (Brookside)          |
| 11 | Shurina (Harrison Central)   | 21 | Redinger (Chaminade)     |

I wonder if at least some of 195's in a quiet moment hope that the injured Gresham is working out every day, eating sparsely, and not remembering that angry look Huston Evans had on his face late on a Saturday night in March. Were Gresham at this weight class he would be a strong favorite to win, if not, and that seems to be the consensus, it's a wide-open competition.

The centerpiece district is at Marion. The big junior, Lehner, was 7<sup>th</sup> last year with signs of a high upside. This year he won at the Gorman and was 2<sup>nd</sup> at Medina losing by a point to D-1 star Tayse. He went 2-2 at the Ironman and seems ready to take a giant step forward. Thompson qualified at 215# last year going 1-2 with a win over Day. He was 2<sup>nd</sup> to Zody at Mansfield and 2<sup>nd</sup> at the Gorman to Lehner. In between he won convincingly at Tiffin. He, too, has finalist potential. Harris was a state alternate last year and he won most recently at Troy. I'm not sure whether he can "go" with the top duo. The sophomore Workman had a tough draw at Medina losing to Lehner and Zody, but he could place here. He won at Liberty. Two long-shot possibilities are King and Taw. The latter boy was 1<sup>st</sup> at Hawken and 2<sup>nd</sup> at Vermillion. I've known his great-grandfather (he's closing in on 96) for many years, and if he can harness the energy and determination in that gene pool he could do well, pull an upset, and qualify.

There is some solid talent at Alliance. Zody was a D-3 State qualifier last year and won a state bout before being eliminated. He was 1<sup>st</sup> at Mansfield (over Thompson) and Smithville (over Hilty) and placed 5<sup>th</sup> at Medina after an early loss. Nichols was a state alternate--losing twice on a dismal Saturday afternoon. He was 2<sup>nd</sup> to the excellent Rosborough, 1-0, at Riverside, and lost narrowly to Conel and Auletta to finish 4<sup>th</sup> at Kenston and then won handily at Perry. Auletta has been a steady placer (Solon, Kenston) and won at the North Coast Classic. Szep has even been better getting to the final everywhere including Brecksville. Add in Thomas and Hunt and this is a rock-solid competition.

One of the nice things about following wrestling is seeing next generation names pop up like a Sefert at Beallsville, Caywood in Toledo, Primm at John Adams, and of course a Charlie Keenan at Steubenville. It cannot be easy following a legend. At any rate Keenan will be in a five-man donnybrook at Claymont. Robinson might lead the way, but Harding, McCowen, and Crum will all be players. The competition within the district will be close, but the winners may well struggle in Columbus. Let's take a quick look at the participants. Robinson won a couple of district bouts last year as a junior and has followed that up with a 6<sup>th</sup> at the SWOCA. He was rated #1 in the Columbus area. Crum, the titlist at Licking Hts. and McGowan, 1<sup>st</sup> at Licking Valley and 2<sup>nd</sup> at Olentangy, are other strong Central District performers. Harding was 2<sup>nd</sup> at Barnesville and 6<sup>th</sup> at the Top Gun. Keenan, now a junior, was 5<sup>th</sup> at the Top Gun after reaching the semi-finals and defeated Harding as well.

There is something of a vacuum at Goshen. The younger Shaw was 3<sup>rd</sup> at the GMVWA and a win from placing at the Top Gun and leads the way. He did not have a good district last year, but many of the faces have changed. Gilbert, a district qualifier, placed at the GMVWA and won at the Firebird. Perhaps, Ward or Redinger can be a factor here, but there is sure to be at least one unknown going to Columbus.

**220#**

**PROJECTED CHAMPION: MATT MEADOWS (CVCA)**

Top Contenders

- |    |                      |    |                            |
|----|----------------------|----|----------------------------|
| 2  | Ward (Clyde)         | 12 | Shurina (Harrison Central) |
| 3  | Krall (Wauseon)      | 13 | Farrow (Whitehall)         |
| 4. | Day (Valley View)    | 14 | Polling (Elida)            |
| 5  | Stone (ASV)          | 15 | Baker (Streetsboro)        |
| 6  | Miller (Perry)       | 16 | Goss (Crestwood)           |
| 7  | Johnson (Claymont)   | 17 | Ridder (Alder)             |
| 8  | Moray (Steubenville) | 18 | Overfield (Port Clinton)   |
| 9  | Vinson (ASV)         | 19 | Woodruff (Greenville)      |
| 10 | Carrow (Buckeye)     | 20 | Wilson (Ash Edgewood)      |
| 11 | Wadkins (Triway)     | 21 | Pettiford (Washington CH)  |

It is a bit of a toss-up as to which wrestler is the best 220-pounder in Ohio. Is it Walz, Frueauf, Smith or Meadows, but there is little question as to best performer in Division 2. Matt Meadows has become a heavy favorite to win his first state title at this weight class. He was 3<sup>rd</sup> last year in D-3 losing only to two-time champ Ethan Hayes in a close bout. This year he was 3<sup>rd</sup> at the Ironman losing to the powerful Snyder by a point and finishing ahead of Frueauf (who he beat) and Waltz. He had little trouble at Medina-pinning for the title and won at the Top Gun beating Ransom and Stinemetz.

He emerges from the Alliance district which is probably the strongest. Stone was a state semi-finalist last year, but a loss to eventual champ McIntosh sent him spinning down to 6<sup>th</sup>. He was 1<sup>st</sup> at Solon this year, but was injured at the Ironman and is still recuperating. Miller was a district runner-up, last year, but lost twice at Columbus including a 6-5 heartbreaker to Krall. He won at both Kenston and Perry this year and was third at Riverside. Wadkins is the fourth wrestler with state experience like Meadows in D-3. That's a solid quartet, but a second foursome state alternate Vinson, Goss, Wilson, and Baker is not far behind. Vinson, in particular, losing his district semi-final to Miller by a solitary point has to be a favorite to qualify this year.

While the field is not deep at Marion the top duo is very good. Ward was 3<sup>rd</sup> last year losing only to McIntosh. He has been at heavyweight much of the year, but recently dropped. I think he is likely Meadows' biggest obstacle. He was 1<sup>st</sup> at Lorain and spent all last year working out with the towering Strickland so Meadows will not intimidate him. Krall went 1-2 in Columbus finishing up a fine sophomore year. He was 5<sup>th</sup> at Brecksville, but took D-1 stalwart, Rahkim Johnson, into overtime before losing. He defeated Stinemetz at the Ohio Duals and should place this year. I like the Buckeye bruiser Carrow for the third spot with Overfield and Poling possibilities for the fourth berth.

I thought that Shurina was the only returning state qualifier at Claymont and he finished 1-2 at the state level. However, it now appears that 171-pound state qualifier Walters (also 1-2) may be at this weight class. At a minimum we know he won at Coshocton at this weight class. Add in the powerful Johnson, champion at Barnesville, and a state alternate last year after losing to Shurina in overtime, and this is a sound trio. However, none of them are a shoo-in to qualify. Moray was 3<sup>rd</sup> at the Top Gun pinning Johnson in the process. Ridder, who had a losing record a junior, defeated the excellent Coon at Nelsonville giving us all pause to reconsider rankings. Also in the field is Farrow, ranked first in the Columbus area with strong district experience as well. It should be a highly entertaining process to watch this district unfold. If nothing else it gives everyone second thought about who goes and who doesn't.

As has been typically the case there is a very shallow talent pool at Goshen. The one returning state qualifier is a wrestler with some potential upside. Bryan Day qualified 4<sup>th</sup> out of Goshen, but, interestingly, gave eventual state champ Travis McIntosh a tough district semi-final losing 4-3. He lost one of those ultimate tie-breakers (to Stone) in the first round in Columbus and shortly thereafter became a spectator. This year I have him winning at Franklin and he should capture this district title. Other possibilities include the Troy champion, Woodruff, and the powerhouse Gallia titlist, Mullins, who had two district wins last year. Also, in play is GMVWA placer (4<sup>th</sup>) Pettiford who drew Day in the first round of districts. Bridwell, second to Day, at Franklin is also a viable contender.

**285#**

**PROJECTED CHAMPION: RILEY SHAW (WASHINGTON COURTHOUSE)**

Top Contenders

|    |                             |    |                          |
|----|-----------------------------|----|--------------------------|
| 2  | Brown (Sandusky)            | 12 | Nawalaniec (Benedictine) |
| 3  | Sharp (West Branch)         | 13 | Sparks (Spring Shawnee)  |
| 4  | Higgins (Marlington)        | 14 | Gusan (Walnut Ridge)     |
| 5  | Pickereel (Toledo CC)       | 15 | Hodge (Canton South)     |
| 6  | Forsee (New Richmond)       | 16 | Griffith (Big Walnut)    |
| 7  | Harmon (Benjamin Logan)     | 17 | Gosnell (Coventry)       |
| 8  | Castillo (New Philadelphia) | 18 | Blum (Wyoming)           |
| 9  | Miller (Perry)              | 19 | Bovey (Graham)           |
| 10 | Kuhlwein (Alder)            | 20 | Brumley (ASV)            |
| 11 | Cox (Mansfield Madison)     | 21 | Lehr (Dover)             |

Nobody was more surprised than me when Riley Shaw claimed the heavyweight title last year. After all, I had ranked him, as did everyone else, at 215 where he had competed all year. It was a brilliant tactical decision as it moved him away from fearsome McIntosh/Erb duo and put him in the heavyweight class that lacked star power. In addition, he was exactly the kind of opponent--tall, rangy, and mobile that might give the similarly constructed (but much taller) Strickland a lot of trouble. As rarely happens in everyday life it worked perfectly beating the massive Higgins in overtime in the semis and decisioning Strickland for the title.

Will it work again? Originally only three D-2 heavyweights had state experience and Shaw had defeated two of them last year. However, the reclassification of schools has added two additional players into the mix. He was scheduled to wrestle at the Ironman, but was apparently unable to compete. He did win the GMVWA with five falls in less than 7 ½ minutes and has not recently been challenged- not always a good thing. His title at the Top Gun was captured with relative ease as he never had to go the full six minutes and three of his bouts ended in first period falls.

Two of Shaw's toughest rivals will compete at Alliance. As mentioned Higgins was a State semi-finalist losing in overtime to Shaw and finishing 5<sup>th</sup>. Sharp, always a great name in West Branch lore was also a state qualifier going 1-2 after a first-round loss to Strickland. He won at Riverside and has strong placement potential. The last two spots are wide open. Nawalaniec won two district bouts last year and should qualify this time around. He went 3-1 with Higgins at the district. He most recent title was at Kinley I think Billy Miller might have the best shot at the fourth spot, but Hodge and Gosnell are both possibilities, too. Junior high state champ Brumley was 3<sup>rd</sup> at Solon and is showing impressive progress, though, next year might be logical timeline.

Shaw's biggest (and I mean that literally) obstacle will exit the relatively deep Marion district. Brown was 7<sup>th</sup> last year in D-1 competition losing both his state bouts by a point

or two. He was 2<sup>nd</sup> at Medina pinning state qualifier Young, but losing to the excellent Elfein in the finals, 3-2. Brown is not only big, but he also knows his way around the mat. Right behind him is state alternate Pickerel who was 4<sup>th</sup> at Brecksville losing by fall to Tavanello in the semi-finals. Cox lost twice to Pickerel in finishing 6<sup>th</sup> at the district, and remains a potential contender, but after a win at Ashland he was only 4<sup>th</sup> at Tiffin and 3<sup>rd</sup> at the Gorman. Harmon, the Gorman champ and 2<sup>nd</sup> at the GMVWA, has moved ahead of him, but Shaw pinned him early in that GMVWA final. Hardman and Newland are long-shots here while Bovey has been "toughened up" with the difficult schedule he wrestles. They'll send a very competitive quartet to Columbus at this district.

Shaw has little to fear at Goshen. Forsee was the district runner-up, but Shaw pinned him in 37 seconds. Only a sophomore last year he won 34 bouts, but dropped both his state bouts. This year he was 3<sup>rd</sup> at the SWOCA losing only to eventual champ Bowman. Sparks was one bout away from state competition last year, but wrestles a less than demanding schedule. Blum is my fourth choice here with Cash waiting in the wings.

The weakest district looks to be Claymont. Where all four of last year's qualifiers have either graduated or moved to D-1. Castillo was the state alternate defeating Kuhlwein for a district 5<sup>th</sup>. Both return with Kuhlwein a recent champ at Nelsonville. Gusan won a couple of district bouts last year and was the champion at West Jefferson. Add in the veteran Lehr and Griffith 3<sup>rd</sup> at Marion Harding and this will be a competitive district-although Columbus may prove to be a different and far more difficult story.

## TEAMS

Over the past eleven years there has been surprisingly little variation in the team points needed to make the Top Ten in Division II. The average in that time frame—chosen to match the current reign of Graham—is 39.9 points with every year falling within plus/minus six points of that average. That would mean on average a champion and a fourth place winner or two third place winners and a sixth would be enough to propel a team into the Top Ten.

1. Graham—They have won eleven consecutive titles and will surely extend that streak to an even dozen this year—just one behind the all-time record set by St. Edward. Last year's 230.5 points were the second highest total ever achieved—not only in D-2—but in all three school classifications. The 200 point barrier—thought like the speed of light to be unbreakable—has now been surpassed the last five years by Graham. This year they have six potential finalist—half of them named Jordan—but, except for the little guys there does not seem enough depth to reach 200 points.
2. CVCA—Tomasello and Meadows look like sure finalists, but they need to have Gray, Decatur and one of the Dobben boys to place to generate additional scoring. Perhaps, the little Bennett boy can be a real help as well. Had they remained in D-3 they would be engraving the team trophy this weekend.
3. Walsh Jesuit—They scored over 100 points last year to snag the runner-up trophy away from Oak Harbor. They need Nick Skonieczny to be healthy and productive at 145# and Scarberry to help out at 160#. With 60 points from Stainbrook, Kostandaras, and Nate Skonieczny that might be just enough to retain that hard-earned trophy.
4. Lexington—It is not out of the realm of possibility that they could put three wrestlers—Lehner, Campbell, and Faust—in the finals, a relatively rare occurrence for teams not named Graham. They need Metz and Kasper to help. But this is a fine squad.
5. Claymont—This, too, is a team with a trio of potential finalists in Burcher, Langdon, and Warner. Extra help could come from Johnson, Harding, and Peters, and, maybe, Dillon or Avery. With a little could fortune they could rise as high as 3<sup>rd</sup>. Qualifying out of one of the easier districts could also be a help.

6. Milan Edison—Another team just barely in D-2 and wondering what it would have been like to spend one additional year in the cozy confines of D-3. Burns should be a finalist, but he sure made me a little nervous at Brecksville. Michel and Howard should score heavily at the two lower weights while state runner-up Majoy needs to turn on the after-burners. I am never sure what Cole will do, but he could be a real helper, while Rutherford, Mancuso, and Coffman add depth. They have some upside here.
7. Akron St. Vincent—This is a team that could be in the Top Five or fall out of the Top Fifteen. They need state champion Rix to prosper at 120# and for Stone to get real healthy. Add in the brilliant sophomore Skonieczny, Gibson, and Adkins and that should generate some additional state scoring. Brumley is going to be great, but that might be a little further down the road.
8. Padua—Fickel and Mason should put 40 points on the board and as discussed that's Top Ten territory. Perhaps, junior high state champion Kaminski, transfer McNulty, or returning state qualifier Fausnight can help.
9. Clyde—They need to score heavily at the upper weights, and with Ward, Moore, and Smith they have a trio of warriors to do so. Add in state qualifiers Miller and Minnick at the lower weights and there is a hint of Top Five in the air.
10. Lake Catholic—The little guys—Taton, Tutolo, and Fee—have to be at their absolute peak while Szep has to score at 195#. Can freshman Wrobel help them enough to make the Top Ten?
11. Washington Courthouse—They were a Top Ten team last year with Shaw scoring the majority of the points. He should bring home 25 to 28 points this year, but where will they get another dozen? They'll look to Trigg and Pettiford for that with the younger Shaw as the back-up.

## Division III

### 106 #

#### **PROJECTED CHAMPION: MATT KOLODZIK (MIAMI VALLEY)**

##### Top Contenders

|    |                             |    |                            |
|----|-----------------------------|----|----------------------------|
| 2  | Fields (Pleasant)           | 13 | Ohl (Newark Catholic)      |
| 3  | Ganger (Troy Christian)     | 14 | McCoy (Swanton)            |
| 4  | Ulinski (Woodmore)          | 15 | Vidika (Black River)       |
| 5  | Keller (Delta)              | 16 | Keysor (Columbus Grove)    |
| 6  | Behringer (Ayersville)      | 17 | McCartney (Grand Valley)   |
| 7  | Coffey (Archbold)           | 18 | Young (West Salem NW)      |
| 8  | Mays (Nelsonville)          | 19 | Mengerink (Upper Sandusky) |
| 9  | Tschiegg (Orrville)         | 20 | Border (Caldwell)          |
| 10 | Martin (Riverdale)          | 21 | Bemerer (Reading)          |
| 11 | Orr (Cuyahoga Hts.)         | 22 | Wrigley (Madison Plains)   |
| 12 | Mecklenburg (Lutheran West) |    |                            |

Wrestlers who have won three junior high state titles and participated at the high school level have, to this date, NEVER lost a state tournament bout and have all been four-time champ (with Martinez yet to go). As I figure it now they are 76-0. That bodes well for the freshman Matt Kolodzik who became a three-timer last year. So far, he has done absolutely nothing to persuade me that he will be the one to call a halt to this streak. He was brilliant at the Ironman, finishing 2<sup>nd</sup> in one of the best fields ever assembled at that weight class, and is undefeated elsewhere. His most recent win was at Perrysburg where he beat Keller, 14-0. Like his older brother Daniel, now at Princeton, he is a one-man team for Miami Valley which doesn't win many duals but has a terrific team winning percentage.

It will not be an easy win – not with the senior pinning machine Zon Fields in the picture. Already a two-time placer, he has been a state semi-finalist two consecutive years each time losing to the near invincible Nathan Tomasello. No seeding will be in play here so let's hope that this year Fields draws away from the favorite.

Kolodzik is essentially part of a two-man district. The only other possible state placer is the excellent Ganger who was 1<sup>st</sup> at Edison and Plymouth and an impressive 2<sup>nd</sup> at the GMVWA losing only to Kolodzik (in 51 seconds). The landscape beyond these two at Fairmont seems bleak indeed. Taking a couple wild guesses, I would look at Bemerer, a sixth seed at the SWOCA, Logsdon, and district qualifier Keysor. There'll be some surprises here.

A far more crowded district will take place at Owens. All four of the qualifiers (whoever they end up being) will have placement potential. I've counted eight worthy candidates and it's a shame we can't have a couple of them migrate to Fairmont. Interestingly, only

one of the eight is a freshman and all but one have, at least, prior district experience. Ulinski and Keller are returning state qualifiers who have had outstanding years to date. Ulinski, for example, won at Woodmore and Bellevue and placed 2<sup>nd</sup> at Tiffin. Behringer, a senior, has been 113# all year and moving down displaces his younger brother. He lost to Keller last year in his go-to-state bout. McCoy, 1<sup>st</sup> at Northwood, also missed Columbus by one bout and ended up a district 6<sup>th</sup>. Martin won two district bouts last year and was 1<sup>st</sup> at Arcadia. Mengerink also won two district bouts and has been a consistent placer. Coffey has come on strong while Smith has come out of nowhere (actually he was 5<sup>th</sup> at the Junior High State meet) to win at St. John and take 2<sup>nd</sup> at the Gorman. A complicating factor, among all the others, is that four of the eight exit the same sectional possibly putting someone at risk and confounding the district bracket. Certainly Ryan Behringer sees a far easier 113 pound district bracket although that is clearly not true at the state level. So who qualifies? I look for Ulinski and Keller to easily qualify with Behringer getting the third slot. I like Coffey (not the drink) for the fourth berth with Smith fully capable of the big upset. That leaves those whose last names begin with "M" (McCoy, Mengerink, Martin) falling just short.

Fields dominated at Heath, but there are some potential state placers there. Mays, 4<sup>th</sup> at the Junior High State Meet, has had a great youth career and just needs to get healthy. He matches up well with everyone here, but Fields. Ohi won again, this time at Coshocton and should get the fourth berth. That's a tidy trio with, perhaps, Border or Wrigley next in line.

The Garfield district is surprisingly weak at this weight class where they generally excel. Having a single placer, all things considered, will be a good performance. Tschiegg is the most experienced with two district wins and a 2<sup>nd</sup> at Smithville. Orr has won at Willoughby South and Columbia and should be a qualifier. Vidika won at Hillsdale and Marion Harding, and should do well at this depleted district. Mechlenberg and Ullman are probably next best with McCartney and Young long-shots.

**113 #**

**PROJECTED CHAMPION: SAMMY GROSS (BEACHWOOD)**

Top Contenders

|    |                          |     |                             |
|----|--------------------------|-----|-----------------------------|
| 2  | Reese (Mechanicsburg)    | 13  | Behringer (Ayersville)      |
| 3  | Clary (Dayton Christian) | 14  | Dailey (Delta)              |
| 4  | Durbin (Mapleton)        | 15  | Carter (Northridge)         |
| 5  | Hancock (Troy Christian) | 16  | Thomas (Westfall)           |
| 6  | Seagraves (Miami East)   | 17  | Dilger (Norwalk St. Paul)   |
| 7  | Hozan (Black River)      | 18  | Cunningham (New London)     |
| 8  | Frye (Cuyahoga Hts.)     | 19  | Shannon (Amanda Clearcreek) |
| 9  | Outward (Martins Ferry)  | 20  | Morgan (Bucyrus)            |
| 10 | Alvarado (CHCA)          | 21  | McKnight (Carlisle)         |
| 11 | Malkus (Berkshire)       | 22. | Tupps (Galion)              |
| 12 | Minnard (Bloom-Carroll)  |     |                             |

There has been a tremendous amount of strategic thinking, tactical planning, and bracket simulation in the first three weight classes. This is truly the area of strength in Division III and with so many good wrestlers everyone is maneuvering to put themselves in the best possible position. Is Clary going 106# or 113#? How about Reese – is he at 113# or 120#? And then there is Mansfield – who knows what plan he'll develop. Still it comes down to who wrestles the best--a simplification that rarely helps in forecasts.

My choice here is the sophomore Sammy Gross who was 3<sup>rd</sup> last year losing only to the eventual champ Danishek in the first round. This year he has been sensational winning at Beachwood, Liberty, and Kenston--the latter with a 23-9 victory over the excellent Mancini. He will likely be seeded away from the Fairmont champion. Not that I believe that will be a particularly crucial aspect of this competition.

Gross faces a competitive district at Garfield, but one that he should be able to handle. State qualifier Durbin was undefeated last year until his district final against Tomasello, but ended up with a difficult state draw going 1-2 with losses to Smith (2-1) and Michel. His big win at Plymouth shutting out Hancock was an eye opener. Hozan, after a first round loss to Fields won a couple bouts and got 8<sup>th</sup>. He defeated both Carter and Alvarado to do so. I liked what I saw of Malkus at Solon while Frye was one win from qualification last year but lost to Gross. Frye has been steady all year and, remember, it took Gross to keep him out of Columbus last year. A nice solid district.

The powerhouse area will be at Fairmont. As I see it now six of my top eleven will wrestle there and that assumes that Steiner stays at 120#. Five of this group has previous state experience while the sixth, only a freshman is outstanding. Reese and Clary competed often last year with Clary, I think, having the advantage until Columbus. At any rate, Clary defeated Reese to take the district title and both wrestled very well at

Columbus with Reese losing to Tomasello and Clary to Assad. Reese did beat Clary for 3<sup>rd</sup>. Both have continued to prosper this year. However, the freshman Hancock is another one to watch. He won at Edison beating state placer Michel, and was 3<sup>rd</sup> at the GMVWA, losing only to Riley. Alvarado and Carter both qualified at 103# last year each failing to place (though Carter was 6<sup>th</sup> two years ago). Alvarado won most recently at Madeira and Lima CC while Carter was 2<sup>nd</sup> at Franklin. Seagraves is a two-time qualifier who both years has pulled a first-round upset and then lost his next two bouts. Add in state alternate McKnight and this should be great competition with Alvarado and Carter looking like they might get left behind.

The Heath District lacks depth but the top quartet is solid. State qualifier Outward copped a state win last year and has had continued success this year. State alternate Thomas and district placer Shannon are also good, but one of them may fail to qualify this time as well. That's because the exceptional freshman Minnard has begun to gain confidence and he will be a handful. He won recently at West Jefferson and despite the crowded field, has low state placement potential already this year.

There is, as presently, constituted very little at Owens. All those solid 106's and yet not a whole lot here. Now that could change – Mansfield could drop to 112# or Behringer move up, but at this point in time, it's wide open. I expect somebody good from Ayersville to be here – let's say Kyle Behringer, for the moment – and district qualifiers like Cunningham or Morgan are possibilities, though Dilger beat Cunningham 8-2. Certainly Tupps who was 2<sup>nd</sup> at Gorman might rank above any in this group. However, the one to watch is Dailey who has put together a couple of good performances lately. Still, I think we might see some of the excess 106's make a move here.

## 120 #

### **PROJECTED CHAMPION: ZACH NELSON (WAYNE DALE)**

#### Top Contenders

|    |                         |    |                        |
|----|-------------------------|----|------------------------|
| 2  | Mansfield (Ayersville)  | 13 | Hoskins (Greeneview)   |
| 3  | Steiner (Waynesville)   | 14 | Roginsky 9Brooklyn)    |
| 4  | Johns (Cardinal)        | 15 | Wilbanks (Brookville)  |
| 5  | Lee (Elmwood)           | 16 | Slonkosky (Versailles) |
| 6  | Showman (Seneca East)   | 17 | Friedman (Beachwood)   |
| 7  | Ferguson (Manchester)   | 18 | Ohl (Newark Catholic)  |
| 8  | Stiner (Keystone)       | 19 | Smith (Cory Rawson)    |
| 9  | Eggers (Archbold)       | 20 | White (Black River)    |
| 10 | Ziegler (Mechanicsburg) | 21 | Grys (Western Reserve) |
| 11 | Regoli (Bloom-Carroll)  | 22 | Scott (Ready)          |
| 12 | Lepley (Coshocton)      | 23 | Stahl (Wayne Trace)    |

This is yet another weight class where it is likely that we will not know the full ensemble of entrants until the week of sectionals. As I visualize it now, it would seem to be a five man race for the top spot featuring wrestlers from three different districts. It's one of the weight classes where if we add access to the multiverse, we might find that any of the five, in a given weekend, takes home the top prize. Of course, with access, we could construct a probability wave that would provide, for each wrestler, their chance of winning. If so, I think Zach Nelson might have the highest (say 35%) of winning.

As a freshman, Nelson, wrestling for Tuslaw, ripped through the district (I watched him beat Decatur), winning the title with style. At States he majored Kern in the first round and then, inexplicably, lost twice. Last year, in an episode that brought no credit to anyone (including the OHSAA) he and his brother were declared ineligible to wrestle for Waynedale. This year, safely away from the bureaucrats, he has embarked on a quest to make up for lost time. Most recently he went undefeated at the Ohio Duals beating Reese, 7-5, in the process.

He'll be at Garfield with Casey Johns, who also has winning chances. A first round loser to Steiner last year he came back to win four consolation bouts before losing to Gross and finishing 4<sup>th</sup>. He does not wrestle an overly aggressive schedule. But, on the other hand, he should be fresh at tournament time.

Two of my five top contenders will compete at Owens. Mansfield is a bit of a mystery. Two years ago he wrestled brilliantly making it to the finals at 112# before falling to state champ Dronzek. Then, last year, after competing at 126# for most of the year, wrestled at 112# for the tournaments. It didn't work out well--be it injury, illness, or just a bad afternoon--he didn't "get out" of the district. This year, again at 126# he has been excellent dominating most opponents (Montpelier, Lincolnview, etc.). Lee was 7<sup>th</sup> two years ago, but, like Mansfield, failed to qualify last year. He was impressive at Medina reaching the finals before losing to Langdon. Both of these boys have reasonable chances to win.

Steiner was the state runner-up last year (and 4<sup>th</sup> the year before), losing to the freshman phenom Danishek, 11-9, for the second week in a row. This year he was 4<sup>th</sup> at the GMVWA in a terrific weight class. His consolation finals opponent was D-1 state runner-up Max Byrd. He has, in the past, beaten both Lee and Johns at the state level, and he is a pinner as well. The pairings should be good with Steiner being a bit of the wild card, meaning he might have to defeat three of this top five to win the title.

The Garfield district has more than just Nelson and Johns. Ferguson is a two-time state qualifier including a 7<sup>th</sup> last year. Very tall and slender, he is very good on top and difficult to defeat. You'll want to stay away from him. He last won at the Gorman. That leaves one spot open for Stiner, two district wins last year, district placer Roginsky, White, and Friedman. The last mentioned would be a huge plus for Beachwood's team chances if he can qualify.

The Owens district is also loaded after Mansfield and Lee. Showman was a state placer last year winning 40 bouts while Eggers also qualified at 103#. I'm thinking Grys and Smith have the most upset potential and that we may see a couple of the current 126's drop.

Steiner will not be pushed overly hard at Fairmont. Wilbanks and Slonkosky are both returning state alternates who have good qualification chances, but are substantially behind Steiner. Hoskins won at Clinton-Massie and was 7<sup>th</sup> at GMVWA – losing there to Steiner, 4-0. Stahl is another possibility with two district wins last year. But the dark horse candidate here is freshman Joseph Ziegler. He was 3<sup>rd</sup> at the junior high state meet, and has jumped into the forefront at this district. He has been as high as 132#, but I think we'll see him on the other side of Hiltibran by tournament time.

The Heath district probably has the least to offer at this weight class. Regoli is a two-time state qualifier with loads of experience and should be the bellwether out of this district. State alternate Leppley missed state qualification when Regoli beat him last year in their go-to-state bout. He was 4<sup>th</sup> at Smithville losing to Cole Ziegler (two district wins last year), 11-1. After this trio we might see Ohl (though he may stay at 126#) or Scott.

### 126 #

#### **PROJECTED CHAMPION: BOBBY SMITH (BISHOP READY)**

##### Top Contenders

|    |                               |    |                                 |
|----|-------------------------------|----|---------------------------------|
| 2  | W. Spangler (Keystone)        | 14 | Hermann (Waterloo)              |
| 3  | McLaughlin (Nelsonville-York) | 15 | Leist (Carey)                   |
| 4  | C. Laney (Hicksville)         | 16 | Gross (Norwalk St. Paul)        |
| 5  | Hiltibran (Mechanicsburg)     | 17 | Reeder (Genoa)                  |
| 6  | Perez (Tuslaw)                | 18 | Rayner (Caldwell)               |
| 7  | Feucht (West Jefferson)       | 19 | Dauch (Margaretta)              |
| 8  | Brodman (Calvert)             | 20 | Knepper Garrettsville Garfield) |
| 9  | VonBehren (Dixie)             | 21 | Ibarra (Madeira)                |
| 10 | Chuha (Cuyahoga Hts.)         | 22 | Berry (West Salem NW)           |
| 11 | Ferguson (Elmwood)            | 23 | Miller (Wayne Trace)            |
| 12 | Crosier (Barnesville)         | 24 | Miller (Pymatuning Valley)      |
| 13 | Reichert (Sandusky St. Mary)  | 25 | Dilts (Fredericktown)           |

When you have what looks like a two-man battle for a state title, you hope as a wrestling fan (and a telecaster), that they are apart in the bracket. If they are seedable wrestlers, (in the top three the previous year), that obstacle is surmounted, but that is not the case here. Neither boy here was in the top three – so if they both win their district, there is still a one in three chance of being in the same half-bracket.

Spangler, a senior, has been a state semi-finalist the past two years, losing last year to eventual champ Heminger. He has ended up 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> in what has been a stellar career. He opened the season 3<sup>rd</sup> at Avon Lake, but has been just about perfect since then.

Smith was a junior high state champ two years ago and spent most of last year at 112#, and very successfully. He then moved down to the far more difficult 103# class and finished 5<sup>th</sup>, losing to Assad in the semi-final in a slow moving bout (which Assad relishes) on the tie-breaker. He finished 5<sup>th</sup> after a 2-1 loss to Reese. He has been 126# all year and is no way size-handicapped --- winning for example at Liberty and finishing 2<sup>nd</sup> to Mason at the CIT. I think youth beats experience at this weight class.

I won't be saying this often, but I think the Heath District qualifiers at this weight class might be arguably the strongest quartet in Columbus. Smith leads the way, but there is a lot more talent here. McLaughlin, a three-time state qualifier, is overdue to get on the podium again. He was 5<sup>th</sup> as a freshman, but has gone 2-4 since then. He won at Nelsonville and placed at Brecksville, and it's time for the last big push. Feucht, a two-time state qualifier, has also had it tough in Columbus going 1-4 as a freshman and sophomore. He won most recently at West Jefferson with an impressive 12-2 decision over the tough Knul. Crosier won two district bouts last year and was champ at Barnesville and St. Clairsville. Add in Rayner, Dilts, and maybe, Ohl (if not at 120#), and this is a very solid competition.

Spangler will not have to face nearly this depth of competition at Garfield. Perez is a returning state qualifier and looks to better his 0-2 mark last year. He was 2<sup>nd</sup> at Edison losing by two to Beau Minnick, but lost at the Ohio Duals to McLaughlin (by 10) and Hiltibran (by two). I haven't seen him there yet, but I am assured that state qualifier Chuha will be moving down to 126#. Last year he was one of those fortunate state alternates who gets into the state meet on an injury issue. He had a terrible draw losing to Goebel and McLaughlin by a combined 33-5 score. This year he won at Beachwood and Cuyahoga Heights at 132# and will be far more formidable this year. I like Hermann for the fourth spot. He was 2<sup>nd</sup> at Aurora and has placed every other time. Also look to Knepper, Berry, and Miller to contend for a state ticket with the first named very dangerous.

I count as many as seven former state qualifiers potentially participating at this weight class at the Owens District. Cody Laney has moved down two weight classes to challenge here. He was a state semi-finalist last year capitalizing on a great draw he earned as a district champ. He ended up 5<sup>th</sup> and has built on that this year. None of the other five state qualifiers from last year placed and had a combined 3-10 record. How do we sort all this out? In my mind Brodman, Reichert (if he can keep this weight), and Ferguson might be marginally ahead of Leist, Gross, Reeder, and Dauch (if able to compete). It is an unusual situation to have this many state experienced wrestlers grouped at one district. You have to believe some movement, but 132# is nearly as crowded. The qualifiers are likely to be exhausted by the time they get to Columbus.

State placer Hiltibran and state qualifier VonBehren are pretty much the whole show at Fairmont. Hiltibran was 6<sup>th</sup> last year beating both McLaughlin and Brodman. VonBehren was 2<sup>nd</sup> at Edgewood and is at the same weight class as last year. Ibarra, Rush, Miller and, maybe, Becker are possibilities to get the last two spots.

### 132 #

#### **PROJECTED CHAMPION: JACOB BORDER (CALDWELL)**

##### Top Contenders

|    |                              |    |                            |
|----|------------------------------|----|----------------------------|
| 2  | Danishek (Dayton Christian)  | 14 | Talbott (River)            |
| 3  | Niner (Liberty Center)       | 15 | Webster (Trimble)          |
| 4  | VanVleet (Edgerton)          | 16 | Emch (Woodmore)            |
| 5  | Sandlin (Carlisle)           | 17 | Lewis (Arcadia)            |
| 6  | B. Spangler (Keystone)       | 18 | Lipinski (Brookville)      |
| 7  | Timmons (Lakota)             | 19 | Dilley (Amanda Clearcreek) |
| 8  | Clemens (Wayne Trace)        | 20 | Wardell (Waynedale)        |
| 9  | Grier (Norwayne)             | 21 | Alexander (Pleasant)       |
| 10 | Campbell (Pymatuning Valley) | 22 | Laney (Hicksville)         |
| 11 | Guerra (Sandusky St. Mary)   | 23 | Post (Coldwater)           |
| 12 | Price (Archbold)             |    |                            |
| 13 | Diven Waterloo)              |    |                            |

There are a lot of similarities between this weight class and the preceding one. In both cases, we have two wrestlers that look to be a half-step ahead of the rest of the fields, a crowded group of contenders, several of whom have finalist potential with the right pairing, uncertainty as to what wrestlers will be at what weight classes, and a bevy of potential qualifiers at Owens. The big difference is that the two top-ranked wrestlers: Jacob Danishek and Jeremy Border will be seeded apart – if they win their district.

One other similarity to 126# is that one of my top duo is a sophomore and other is a senior. Danishek, the sophomore, immediately made good on his undeniable youth success by taking the 112# title as a freshman. Combining quickness, speed, and technique, he crafted a 40-1 record losing only to D-1 champ, DiCamillo at Brecksville. This year up essentially three weight classes (and sometimes more), there has been a period of adjustment. He has been manhandled a couple of times, but is now settling in at 132#. He was 3<sup>rd</sup> at Brecksville after a second-round loss defeating McLaughlin, McDougle, and Conine.

Border, the senior, is a three-time state placer finishing 2<sup>nd</sup> to the otherworldly Myers last year after three easy wins. He won handily at Barnesville and he won't see too many challenges along the river. I think that this time the senior will be too strong and too experience for Danishek in a battle that should be close and exciting.

There is some experience talent joining Border at Heath. Talbott and Webster both went 1-2 in Columbus last year while completing very successful seasons. Webster won recently at Gallia and is essentially at the same weight class as last year. Talbott won 47 bouts last year and has followed that up with a string of victories up from 125#. State qualifier Leitwein would have been an easy choice for qualification, but his season ending injury opens the door for folks like Dilley, Alexander, and Dilts – if he moves back to 132#.

Danishek will have to deal with an exceptional freshman, Jason Sandlin, a junior high state champ last year and exceptional performer. He won at Madeira and was 2<sup>nd</sup> to Kentucky state champ Ahern at the GMVWA. He will almost surely be on the podium Saturday night. Wayne Trace has developed a fine team over the last few years with Kameron Clemens serving as the linchpin. He was a state qualifier at 135# last year, drew Stieber in the first round and ended up 1-2 for the weekend. This year he won at Arcadia and Lima Central and will be looking for a better draw at States. Lipinski and Post are the strongest candidates for the fourth spot – assuming that is that Black wrestles at 138#.

The Garfield district has some exceptional wrestlers. A couple could derail a Danishek-Border final. Former state runner-up Spangler was 2<sup>nd</sup> just two years ago at 103# losing to Tomasello in the finals. Last year, up three weight classes, he went a surprising 0-2 in Columbus while being outscored 18-3 (one of the losses was to Border). It seemed out of character, but he opened this season winning at Avon Lake. At full throttle this two-time state placer could be a finalist. Grier qualified two years ago, but was a state alternate last year losing to Spangler and Wiseman. He was 2<sup>nd</sup> at Smithville and has placed at all other venues. I saw Campbell twice last year and thought he looked terrific. He qualified at 119# after reaching the district semi-finals, but was unable to compete at Columbus. Most recently he was 2<sup>nd</sup> at Perry, but had to default in the finals to Montgomery. If healthy, he will be in Columbus. Diven is the fourth state qualifier at this district and ended up going 0-2 in Columbus. I think Wardell has the best chance of squeezing past one of this quartet.

Again the Owens District presents a wide range of options. A key element at this competition will be the weight class that most attracts Zach Niner. Again, as always, it will depend first and foremost as to where he can perform at optimal levels. After that a calculation has to be made as to which gives him the greatest probability of a state title. In my mind it is 138# by a razor-thin margin, but I've ranked him at both weight classes. Timmons was 5<sup>th</sup> at 119# last year and could do even better this time around. He won at Gibsonburg and rolled through his dual meet schedule. I have heard talk of 126#, but why? A co-equal at the top of this district is VanVleet who was a state semi-finalist before losing to Border and dropping to 4<sup>th</sup>. He beat Harris and Decatur last year. That leaves state qualifiers Guerra and Price in the last two qualifying spots making up an excellent foursome of potential qualifiers. Emch, however, has had a big year winning at Woodmore and Tiffin and has a solid chance of making it through districts. The younger Laney, Fidler, and Lewis are other thoughts.

**138 #**

**PROJECTED CHAMPION: ZANE NELSON (WAYNE DALE)**

Top Contenders

|    |                              |    |                            |
|----|------------------------------|----|----------------------------|
| 2  | Niner (Liberty Center)       | 13 | Moore (Norwayne)           |
| 3  | Kern (Delta)                 | 14 | Guerra (Sandusky St. Mary) |
| 4  | Harris (Beachwood)           | 15 | Meeks (Bath)               |
| 5  | Deeter (Covington)           | 16 | Marthey (Tuslaw)           |
| 6  | Black (Mechanicsburg)        | 17 | Blanton (South Central)    |
| 7  | Batdorf (Crestview)          | 18 | Lidderdale (Sandy Valley)  |
| 8  | Cline (Caldwell)             | 19 | Bender (Loudonville)       |
| 9  | Baker (Shadyside)            | 20 | Williams (Northridge)      |
| 10 | Carpenter (Girard)           | 21 | Tecco (Mariemont)          |
| 11 | Baldrige (Northmor)          | 22 | Robson (Western Reserve)   |
| 12 | McCormick (Lima Cent. Cath.) | 23 | Datz (Madison Plains)      |

This is one of those weight classes that seem to lack form and structure – a rather amorphous mass of competitors that still hasn't become focused. It seems to me any of the top rated boys has at least some finite chance of winning, making the “experts” look bad for nth time.

At any rate in the spirit of consistency, I am selecting Zane Nelson and when was the last time twins won state titles separated by three weight classes. Anyway, I'm partial to twins – I have a set of identical boys and may become grandfather to another set if things go well in Switzerland, and maybe, this is some kind of omen. We've already heard of the Nelsons' trial and tribulations of last year, but two years ago this lad placed at 140#. He went 3-0 at the Ohio Duals and pinned state runner-up Majoy in 54 seconds. I think he is ready.

The Garfield district is solid. The sophomore Harris was 7<sup>th</sup> last year at 125# and seems comfortable at this weight class. He is very good, should be in the opposite half-bracket from Nelson, and could easily (probably not all that easy) be a finalist. Carpenter is a good solid kid who was 2<sup>nd</sup> at Riverside and qualified at 135# last year. A tough first round loss did him in. Marthey won two district matches last year and would be the anticipated fourth qualifier. However, watch out for the two aspiring freshmen – the younger Moore, 2<sup>nd</sup> at the Junior High and Bender who was 5<sup>th</sup>.

An equally good district is at Owens which also features two returning state placers. Niner, one of the Liberty Center stars, was a semi-finalist at Medina losing to Rohskopf in a tight bout and falling to 5<sup>th</sup>. He was also 5<sup>th</sup> at last year's state meet where he split a pair of bouts with Moody. Kern has been 8<sup>th</sup> the last two years --- once for Liberty Center and once for Delta while qualifying the last three years. His enormously big win at GMVWA suggests he is ready for bigger things. State qualifier Batdorf also returns – although he never wrestled for Liberty Center – and should be a factor at this weight

class. The last spot is wide open with Guerra, Blanton, and, maybe, Robson should he return to this weight class.

There are some solid performers at Heath in what is a geographically dispersed weight class. Moody was 6<sup>th</sup> last year after losing a heartbreaking 6-5 bout to Majoy. He's been hurt much of the year and wrestled sporadically, but did win at Nelsonville in dominating style. Baker and Baldrige are also returning qualifiers with good credentials. Baker had the only win between them when he beat Carpenter in the first round at Columbus. The key element may be the rapidly improving Cline who could score well on a hot weekend. The last spot will be fiercely contested with Lidderdale (two district wins last year), state alternate Williams, and Cline all in the mix. Look for a surprise from Datz or Reynard.

There are also three returning state qualifiers at Fairmont with Deeter, 4<sup>th</sup> last year, Black and McCormick returning. Deeter, a fourth place district qualifier, defeated district champ Reichle in the first round and then wrestled well (helped along by some inexplicable Beachwood strategy) to beat Jacober in the quarters. A narrow semi-final loss dropped him to 4<sup>th</sup> when Jacober majored him in the consolation finals. Still it was a first-rate performance from one who was not expected to do nearly as well. He was, most recently 1<sup>st</sup> at Troy and 6<sup>th</sup> at the GMVWA, and Black who went 1-2 last year, should both qualify. However, both have missed much of the year falling, perhaps, a little behind schedule. Meeks and Tecco might be next best, but there are probably equally good people hidden somewhere in the picturesque southwest.

### 145 #

#### **PROJECTED CHAMPION: JORDAN MARSHALL (TROY CHRISTIAN)**

##### Top Contenders

- |    |                           |    |                           |
|----|---------------------------|----|---------------------------|
| 2  | Cowell (Archbold)         | 13 | Davis (Bellaire)          |
| 3  | Music (Crestview)         | 14 | Hook (Nelsonville-York)   |
| 4  | Wilson (Bluffton)         | 15 | Moore (Norwayne)          |
| 5  | Fahrer (Delta)            | 16 | Larick (Carey)            |
| 6  | Sandlin (Carlisle)        | 17 | Barnett (South Central)   |
| 7  | Lovejoy (Allen East)      | 18 | Bishop (Brooklyn)         |
| 8  | Gulash (Shadyside)        | 19 | Mickley (East Knox)       |
| 9  | Eufracio (Fostoria)       | 20 | Torgerson (Cuyahoga Hts.) |
| 10 | Ratcliff (West Jefferson) | 21 | Widmer (Gibsonburg)       |
| 11 | Stanley (Waynedale)       | 22 | Cotterman (Wayne Trace)   |
| 12 | Emmitt (Elmwood)          | 23 | King (Hawken)             |
|    |                           | 24 | Plumly (Barnesville)      |

In the last half-dozen years or so Troy Christian has produced some superb wrestlers including Toal, Hancock, Sergeant, and the Thomes. This year two juniors will add to that list with Jordan Marshall at this weight class being one of them. A two-time state

qualifier he was 3<sup>rd</sup> last year losing a semi-final bout to Stieber, 8-1, and the only one to take him the full six minutes. Nobody else came close to Marshall. If healthy, he should sweep away most of the opposition here.

That's not to say that there aren't some very good wrestlers throughout the state or in this district at 145#. Wilson, at Fairmont with Marshall, was 4<sup>th</sup> last year losing only to Cowell and Dobben. He's had another splendid year and could be a finalist since he'll be "away" from Marshall. Lovejoy was 7<sup>th</sup> last year at 130# including a win over Kern. This year he won at Marion Harding and was 2<sup>nd</sup> at Allen County to Wilson by an 8-5 score. Also at Fairmont is the exciting sophomore Jimmy Sandlin who qualified last year at 112#. He has won at Madeira and was 6<sup>th</sup> at the GMVWA adjusting nicely to large gain in size. Cotterman looks next best, but it will be a tough mountain to scale.

There is also terrific depth at Owens. It looks like the Archbold middleweights will all drop a weight class to enhance their team chances and that would put Cowell here. He was a semi-finalist last year with a win over Wilson but lost to the rugged Brown and dropped to 5<sup>th</sup>. He could be a finalist here on a hot weekend. Music was 7<sup>th</sup> two years ago, but missed much of last season with injuries. Healthy again, he could well be on the upper steps of the podium this year. Fahrer was 2<sup>nd</sup> at GMVWA and has built on his 7<sup>th</sup> place finish last year. Only a sophomore, favorable bracketing could push him into the top four. State qualifier Emmitt and Eufrazio, who beat him 4-3 earlier in the year, are probably the two expected to battle for the last qualifying berth, but I really like Widmer, Larick, and Barnett as well. They would all be better off if they lived near Cleveland.

With so much power at these last two districts, the Claymont folks will have to work extra hard. Gulash, Hook and Davis are all returning state qualifiers with only the first named able to have his hand raised – finishing 6<sup>th</sup>. However, Gulash has missed much of the year with injuries while Hook has struggled, losing two of three at the Ohio Duals, failing to place at Brecksville, and losing to Ratcliff at Nelsonville (who also won at West Jefferson). Davis won at Union Local and he and Ratcliff seemed to have moved ahead of Hook. Williams and Plumly are other possibilities, but watch for Mickley. I'm not sure anybody from East Knox has ever been in this report, but Mickley was a district semi-finalist last year.

This is one of the rare times at Garfield where, as it now stands, there will be nobody with state experience at this weight class. Moore and Bishop both have 6<sup>th</sup> place district finishes, but the one to watch is the younger Stanley who is wrestling very well. He won two district bouts last year. King is a fast-improving sophomore while Torgerson has dropped to 152# to play a role here. A long-shot possibility might be Hawken winner Benedict. Right now this looks like the place to be.

**152 #**

**PROJECTED CHAMPION: MAX ERWIN (MECHANICSBURG)**

Top Contenders

|    |                         |    |                           |
|----|-------------------------|----|---------------------------|
| 2  | Quinn (Shadyside)       | 13 | Szitas (Grand Valley)     |
| 3  | Blumenthal (Beachwood)  | 14 | Gibson (Bloom-Carroll)    |
| 4  | Stanley (Waynedale)     | 15 | Buxton (Dixie)            |
| 5  | Mattin (Delta)          | 16 | Hodge (Tusky Valley)      |
| 6  | Heldenbrand (Hillsdale) | 17 | Blair (Tuslaw)            |
| 7  | Ripke (Archbold)        | 18 | Visconti (Northmor)       |
| 8  | Fortune (West Salem NW) | 19 | Leasure (Caldwell)        |
| 9  | Williams (Brookville)   | 20 | Valle (Sherwood Fairview) |
| 10 | Escobedo (Gibsonburg)   | 21 | Vencill (Northridge)      |
| 11 | Studer (Norwayne)       | 22 | Ramage (Western Reserve)  |
| 12 | McConnell (Seneca East) | 23 | Temple (Wayne Trace)      |

Originally, it seemed like Max Erwin would be kind of a slam dunk choice at this weight class. After all, he won 46 bouts at this weight class as a sophomore – including four at the state level where he finished 5<sup>th</sup>. This year he continues to generate impressive results consistent with the favorite at a weight class.

However, some impediments to the above scenario have recently surfaced. Blumenthal has transferred to Beachwood, from Twinsburg, where he missed D-1 state qualification by one point. He was 1<sup>st</sup> at Liberty and Kenston and 2<sup>nd</sup> at Hawken and looms as a top contender at this weight class. Quinn missed much of last year with injuries and his runner-up finish at Barnesville (where he was pinned in 50 seconds) didn't ring any bells. However, he looked exceptional at Brecksville, outwrestling state champion Kyle Burns for most of the final before succumbing on a last second takedown. It was a very impressive performance, but is it sustainable?

Easily the district will convene at Garfield. Six or maybe seven of the top fifteen will be here with some good folks being left home -- though I would not be surprised to see a couple opts for the far easier 160# weight class. State qualifier Heldenbrand qualified at 140# last year, but has been at 160# much of the year. He won at Hillsdale and Black River and may elect to stay at 160#. Fortune is a pinner who was a district finalist last year, but was 0-2 in Columbus. He was 6<sup>th</sup> at Medina and I wonder if the far easier 145# weight class is in his future. Stanley has also been at 160# much of the year and, like Hildenbrand, must carefully consider his options. He was a state alternate at 145# last year, losing twice on Sunday afternoon (snowstorm). He beat the excellent Rutherford handily at the Ohio Duals. Studer was a district 6<sup>th</sup> at 135# and is the last of the fine middleweights Norwayne puts on the mat. He was 3<sup>rd</sup> at Smithville in a tough weight class. Blair won two district bouts at this weight class last year. He'll be in the picture if a couple of boys decide 160# is a more congenial weight class. Finally, there is Szitas – two points from Columbus last year – but often overlooked. Most recently he

won against a solid field at Perry and will be a factor here. At this district, the first order of business will be to discover who will be wrestling at what weight class.

Erwin will have no such problems at Fairmont. The only real challenger will be state qualifier Williams who went 0-2 in Columbus at 138#. A placer at the GMVWA he should already be looking for Columbus lodgings for the first weekend in March. Buxton was 2<sup>nd</sup> at Edgewood and has qualification talent while Vencill with two district wins last year and a win this year at Tipp City should also get out. . Buettner and Temple are other possibilities.

Quinn is in a crowded if not overly credentialed field at Heath. There are two returning state qualifiers in Gibson and Hodge, neither of whom was able to secure a win in Columbus. Both, however, had tough first rounds catching Erwin and Burns respectively. Most recently, Hodge was 6<sup>th</sup> at Coshocton while I have Gibson 4<sup>th</sup> at West Jefferson and 3<sup>rd</sup> at Union Local. Visconti may have passed this duo, while Leasure and Potts are also possibilities. After Quinn, I don't see many state placers here.

With Cowell apparently slated at 145# there does not appear to be finalist possibilities at Owens. Ripke did qualify at this weight class last year, but couldn't get past Thursday. He's been at 160# all year with solid success. Escobedo qualified two years ago, but lost one of those ultimate tie breakers in the district semi-finals last year and then came face-to-face with Cowell in his go-to-state bout. After a slow start he won at Woodmore and should qualify. The big news is that state qualifier Mattin is back in the lineup at this weight class. Mattin qualified at 145# last year (losing only to Burns), but then got pinned twice on the following Thursday. In his first action he was 3<sup>rd</sup> at Perrysburg. McConnell missed qualification by one bout last year and just comes off a big win at Plymouth. Valle, a state alternate last year, and Ramage will be favorites for qualification if one of the front-runners falter.

**160 #**

**PROJECTED CHAMPION: AARON YONKER (GARRETTSVILLE GARFIELD)**

Top Contenders

|    |                           |    |                              |
|----|---------------------------|----|------------------------------|
| 2  | Conyers (Allen East)      | 12 | Ziegler (Ridgewood)          |
| 3  | Price (Mohawk)            | 13 | Mickley (Northridge)         |
| 4  | Shapiro (Beachwood)       | 14 | Orr (Waynedale)              |
| 5  | Dye (Sandusky St. Mary)   | 15 | Wise (Elmwood)               |
| 6  | Brooke (South Range)      | 16 | Arnett (Wayne Trace)         |
| 7  | Hughes (Seneca East)      | 17 | Caldwell (Cardington)        |
| 8  | Kovnesky (Archbold)       | 18 | Miller (Covington)           |
| 9  | Looser (Delphos St. John) | 19 | Washington (Elyria Catholic) |
| 10 | Nolte (St. Clairsville)   | 20 | Shiverdecker (Arcanum)       |
| 11 | Stillman (Lutheran West)  | 21 | Sickafoose (Sandy Valley)    |

Yonker was a junior high state runner-up two years ago and built on that during his freshman season. He was the district runner-up to Beam and then grabbed a low place in Columbus. He was 2<sup>nd</sup> at Brecksville beating Miller and Rutherford, but was curiously passive in the finals. This is not a particularly strong weight class, but he'll need to ramp it up if he is to justify this forecast.

It will be more competitive if Heldebrand, Stanley or Ripke are at this classification, but for the moment let's leave them at 152#. Let's also leave Felipe Martinez at 170# with the thought that his injury issues will make it difficult for him to trim down to 160#. Should he do so, however, this is a weight class ripe for exploitation.

Yonker heads the deepest district. Shapiro would be a key cog in Beachwood's team aspirations. This year he won handily at Beachwood and Liberty and was 2<sup>nd</sup> to the excellent Graziani at Kenston. When on all cylinders he is very good. Brooke and Stillman had solid districts last year which positions them well at this weight class. I particularly like Brooke to do well, and I have yet to see Stillman in the Lutheran West agate. Orr could slip into qualification maze, along with maybe Washington.

I would not be surprised that the front-runners at Owens are wrestlers who have just started to compete at 160#. State qualifier Price was at 182# for much of the year, but has made the strategic move to 160# -- where he was last year. He was 2<sup>nd</sup> at Perrysburg, getting off to a solid start. Dye spent the summer getting better, but will not compete for several more weeks. As a freshman, he won two district bouts and has top-of-the-line potential. It will be interesting to chart their progress as they move forward here. Hughes is right with this duo, missing qualification on an overtime loss to Spieth. He has been at 170# much of the year, winning most recently at Plymouth. Add in Kovnesky, a district semi-finalist last year, and Wise and this could be an interesting competition -- if everybody shows up.

There is not much depth at Fairmont. Conyers is a returning state qualifier who has won at Allen County and was 2<sup>nd</sup> at Marion Harding. Looser and Arnett have both had district success with Shiverdecker also a possibility here. Miller placed at GMVWA and that is enough to get him included here along with Sunderhaus.

The Heath district is likely to send some virtual unknowns to Columbus at this weight class. Last year the 152# district bracket contained only four underclassmen (one of whom has been reclassified) so that the normal one weight class move up did not occur. That provides exceptional opportunity. Nolte has won at Barnesville and Nelsonville and hopes that the state tournament will be moved to Columbusville. He has begun to utilize his natural talent and should lead the way here. The other top contender is state alternate Ziegler who most recently was 2<sup>nd</sup> at Coshocton. He could be a placer. That leaves Mickley and Caldwell as, perhaps, next best with Sickafoose as little more than a guess.

### **170 #**

#### **PROJECTED CHAMPION: ZEB BEAM (WAYNE DALE)**

##### Top Contenders

|    |                         |    |                            |
|----|-------------------------|----|----------------------------|
| 2  | Mays (Nelsonville-York) | 12 | White (Orrville)           |
| 3  | Zang (Hartley)          | 13 | Lockhart (Woodmore)        |
| 4  | Rufenacht (Archbold)    | 14 | Linton (Rootstown)         |
| 5  | Montgomery (Crestview)  | 15 | Tipton (Amanda Clearcreek) |
| 6  | Elliott (Tuslaw)        | 16 | Robinson (Greeneview)      |
| 7  | Rayner (Caldwell)       | 17 | Peters (Northmor)          |
| 8  | Colman (Arcadia)        | 18 | Hunkley (Western Reserve)  |
| 9  | Matchett (Versailles)   | 19 | Horn (Plymouth)            |
| 10 | Sonnenberg (Van Buren)  | 20 | McAdoo (Allen East)        |
| 11 | Smith (Coshocton)       | 21 | Wrasman (Delphos St. John) |

There is apparently a mountain of discussion and speculation about Felipe Martinez that dwarfs the outcome of this weight class or anywhere he might be competing. From my perspective I feel very lucky that I have had the opportunity to watch him wrestle. I will never forget the gator roll that pinned VanCuren in the dual, the first period fall to win his first state title while facing immense pressure, defeating the excellent Armstrong for the umpteenth time to take his second championship, and the teeth gritting overtime win over Prezzia. Here was a wrestler who wanted to put people on their back and to do so with style and panache. We see far too few of them and we should treasure those who look to do so. I am hoping he competes only if healthy and fit, and so, at least at this point in time, he will remain unranked until that determination is made.

Meanwhile, the clear cut choice under the circumstances described above is the senior Zeb Beam. He was 4th last year--losing to Martinez in the semi-finals--and ending with

55 victories. He has been invincible this year and should be fresh at tournament time based on the schedule he has wrestled. I saw him last at districts where he crushed the field beating Yonker by ten in the finals.

Beam should have little trouble duplicating that district title again this year. State alternate Elliot has been active and successful for Tuslaw, but I don't believe he can go with Beam. I watched his go-to-state bout and he had some chances, but this year he'll be able to cash in on them. Linton, the fast improving sophomore is probably the next best and he will be a load the next two years. His older brother beat out White for state qualification last year and the tables could be turned this time. White was a close 2<sup>nd</sup> at Smithville (to Smith). Finley, the Hillsdale champ, also had possibilities most recently going 3-2 with the excellent Mancuso.

As currently configured (see the first paragraph) state qualifier Montgomery and state alternate Rufenacht appear to lead the Owens District at this weight class. Montgomery went 1-2 at the state level losing a close state placement bout. Rufenacht has missed the entire season, but he should fit very comfortably in this slot. There are some very good performers, perhaps, a half step (or maybe not) behind this duo. Colman and Lockhart have a large number of top placements with Hunkley and Horn also prospering at some of the smaller venues. The younger Sonnenberg is now competing and based on his outstanding youth record he cannot be overlooked. There will be one or possibly two openings for state qualification.

There is an intriguing cast of characters at Heath. Zang was a state alternate in D-2 last year and has high placement potential. He was 2<sup>nd</sup> at CIT in a strong field. Mays, a state qualifier last year, has missed substantial time with injuries, but was 2<sup>nd</sup> at Liberty and Nelsonville. At the Ohio Duals he beat, among others, Elliot by seven. State qualifier Rayner had an absolutely horrible draw in Columbus getting Toal and O'Neill back-to-back. He won big this year at Barnesville. Smith won recently at Coshocton and Smithville and seems to be on a steep upward arc, while Peters and Tipton have both had substantial district success in the past. The latter boy had to default his go-to-state bout last year.

Whoa! There is not much readily evident here at Fairmont. I like Robinson who has had past district and tournament success. Matchett was 4<sup>th</sup> at the GMVWA and could be a finalist at this district. Wrasman has been a steady placer in the Lima area. McAdoo who won at Allen County is yet another possibility with Jones or Oulette waiting in the wings. This is a group you might want your district to draw into in the first round.

**182 #**

**PROJECTED CHAMPION: B. J. TOAL (TROY CHRISTIAN)**

Top Contenders

|    |                                |    |                             |
|----|--------------------------------|----|-----------------------------|
| 2  | Stock (Garrettsville Garfield) | 14 | Sutherland (Wellington)     |
| 3  | Sheehy (Genoa)                 | 15 | Olson (Covington)           |
| 4  | Bresciani (Coshocton)          | 16 | Peters (Stritch)            |
| 5  | Gremling (Lima Cent. Cath.)    | 17 | Minnard (Amanda Clearcreek) |
| 6  | Spieth (Liberty Center)        | 18 | Rollison (River Valley)     |
| 7  | Groff (Sandy Valley)           | 19 | Hilty (Smithville)          |
| 8  | Farrow (Garaway)               | 20 | Ellis (Pymatuning Valley)   |
| 9  | Heidinger (Columbia Station)   | 21 | Metcalfe (Gibsonburg)       |
| 10 | Oberdick (Martins Ferry)       | 22 | Calvert (Kirtland)          |
| 11 | McGuire (Fredericktown)        | 23 | Stansberry (Carey)          |
| 12 | Ankney (Ayersville)            | 24 | Eberly (Hillsdale)          |
| 13 | Schlater (Tri-County North)    |    |                             |

B.J. Toal certainly has to be considered the favorite at this weight class based on his last two years of wrestling. A district champ last season, he made the finals at 171# losing to four-time champion Chris Phillips. This year he was a semi-finalist at the Ironman losing to Huston Evans but coming back to defeat Mocco of Blair for 3<sup>rd</sup>. He had little trouble winning at the GMVWA and even less at Edison and Plymouth.

The only speck on the horizon might be the Garrettsville Garfield strongboy, the powerful Kevin Stock. He was a state semi-finalist last year (falls over Montgomery and Brescini) before losing an 8-7 battle with Toal. At Brecksville he lost twice to Division I stalwarts Leidecker (in overtime) and Lay (by fall). It would seem that Toal has widened the gap between them.

Toal should have few problems at Fairmont. Gremling is a returning state qualifier with wins at Allen County and Lima CC. He isn't likely to threaten Toal, but he has good placement potential. Schlater placed 6<sup>th</sup> at the District level last year and won at Tipp City and should improve that a few notches this time. Olson was 5<sup>th</sup> at the GMVWA, but lost to Schlater, 3-2, at last year's district.

Stock also confronts a weak district at Garfield. Heidinger, a district participant, is currently 19-1 winning at Black River (pin over Sutherland) and Columbia and finishing 3<sup>rd</sup> at Beachwood. Sutherland missed state qualification by one bout (he finished 6<sup>th</sup>) and was 6<sup>th</sup> at Medina. There are lots of candidates for the fourth spot. Hilty was 3<sup>rd</sup> at Smithville, while Ellis was 4<sup>th</sup> at Perry and 5<sup>th</sup> at Kenston. Factor in Calvert (1<sup>st</sup> at Willoughby South) and Eberly (2<sup>nd</sup> at Hillsdale) and it should be exciting.

It's a loaded district at Heath featuring the return of four district placers at this weight class and the addition of two other wrestlers with state experience. Bresciani is sometimes difficult to figure, but, in the main he is very good. He was 5<sup>th</sup> last year – the big loss the fall to Stock. This year he won at Coshocton (MVP) and was 2<sup>nd</sup> at Smithville. Two years ago Groff and Oberdick battled all season with both qualifying for state and Oberdick placing 6<sup>th</sup>. Oberdick was hurt last year, but Groff again qualified, but again failed to place. They are at it again this year with Groff winning at Barnesville. Farrow was the district runner-up to Bresciani and then lost to him again in his state placement bout. He was 3<sup>rd</sup> at Aurora. McGuire qualified up at 189# last year but has moved down and was 2<sup>nd</sup> at the Wazie. Add in district placer Minnard and the excellent Rollison and its clear we have a logjam at his district. With 195# far easier I wouldn't be surprised to see some movement in that direction.

As always we'll see a very representative quartet coming out of Owens. Sheehy was a state alternate last year after losing a one-point semi-final bout. Recently he was 5<sup>th</sup> at Medina beating Sutherland after losing to the Michigan state champion in the quarter-finals. Spieth qualified at 171# last year and may return to that weight class. Still this is a far less crowded weight class. Ankney was one bout from Columbus and has piled up the wins with titles at Montpelier and Lincolnview. Peters is my top choice for the fourth spot with Stansberry and Metcalfe other possibilities.

### 195 #

#### **PROJECTED CHAMPION: DALTON ISHMAEL (NORTH BALTIMORE)**

##### Top Contenders

|    |                           |    |                                |
|----|---------------------------|----|--------------------------------|
| 2  | Linton (Rootstown)        | 12 | Goodrich (Riverdale)           |
| 3  | Jackson (VASJ)            | 13 | Nino (Genoa)                   |
| 4  | Kwiat (Calvert)           | 14 | Hilty (Smithville)             |
| 5  | Beck (Northmor)           | 15 | Dismuke (Johnstown Monroe)     |
| 6  | Campbell (Dixie)          | 16 | McConnahea (Delphos Jefferson) |
| 7  | Dies (Manchester)         | 17 | Stoffel (Caldwell)             |
| 8  | McClenathan (Cardington)  | 18 | Windau (Columbus Grove)        |
| 9  | Weber (Loudonville)       | 19 | Kirkman (Sandy Valley)         |
| 10 | Heiing (Delphos St. John) | 20 | Bell (Hartley)                 |
| 11 | Barrett (Chanel)          | 21 | Marshall (Tinora)              |
|    |                           | 22 | Daniels (Covington)            |

This is a bit of a head-scratcher. There is no one here who has ever placed in the top four at state--and for many it's a bit of an awkward weight class. Let's look at the top three contenders.

Ishmael is a second generation of a family that thrives on quick falls – say two minutes or less. He had five of them at the district and state level last year. He finished 5<sup>th</sup> -- ironically winning his last bout 1-0 -- and the big junior has used that foundation to build on. He has won at Gibsonburg (first period fall) Arcadia (overtime fall), and Woodmore (first period fall). It's like wrestling a stick of dynamite with a very short fuse.

Linton was 8<sup>th</sup> last year at 171# -- emerging 4<sup>th</sup> from a very tough district and getting for his labors Phillips in the first round. He has been at 220#, but had made the cut to a more user-friendly 195#. He won at 220# at Aurora but we're in uncharted waters when it comes to this weight class.

Jackson is the wild card here. Freakishly athletic, he qualified at 215# (they had state placer Wellington at 189#) despite giving up lots of size. He went 1-2 at Columbus losing his state placement bout 8-6. This year he won at Willoughby South and was 4<sup>th</sup> at the CIT.

Linton and Jackson will emerge from the same district which also features Weber who won two district bouts at 215# as a freshman--losing his go-to-state bout to state qualifier Wadkins, 3-2. This year he won at West Jefferson and the Wazie both times by fall. Still Dies is probably third best – winning two district bouts last year – and placed 3<sup>rd</sup> at the Gorman winning 2-0 over Weber. That leaves Barrett and Hilty as long-shots. Kwait will be Ishmael's biggest challenge at Owens. He was a district semi-finalist at Fairmont last year losing to Toal and ending up as the state alternate. He was runner up to Thompson at Tiffin in his signature tournament and follows some distinguished brothers. As I proof this I note that he wrestled at 182# at the CIT. I think the odds of being a state champion are far more favorable here. The rest of this district is a quantum step behind this top duo. Goodrich, Nino, and maybe, Marshall head this second tier with two state tickets still available.

As I mentioned the well of 195 pounders at Heath may well be replenished by some 182's (McGuire, Oberdick??) moving up. As it now stands, state placer Beck heads this group after finishing 8<sup>th</sup> last year – one of those losses a fall by Ishmael. Coole and Dismuke both had some district success last year, but I think McClenathan may have moved past them. Kirkman has an outside shot here with Stoffel and Bell right with him.

There are some unanswered questions at Fairmont. Campbell is a returning state qualifier--“two and out”—and who posted a nice win at Edgewood and has podium chances. Three wrestlers from the Lima CC sectional could all qualify. Heiing – a district qualifier last year – won at Allen County, Lincolnview and Marion Harding and has taken a step upward. McConnahea, who Heiing “teched”, has won at Plymouth and Montpelier with a 2<sup>nd</sup> place at Allen County. Windau was 2<sup>nd</sup> at Arcadia, but took Ishmael into overtime. He is ranked third in the Lima area. Daniels or maybe Domsitz are long-shot possibilities here.

**220 #**

**PROJECTED CHAMPION: CURTIS MILLER (DELPHOS JEFFERSON)**

**Top Contenders**

|    |                             |    |                                  |
|----|-----------------------------|----|----------------------------------|
| 2  | Baker (Elmwood)             | 13 | Sanchez (Arcadia)                |
| 3  | Smith (Chanel)              | 14 | Zelasko (Garrettsville Garfield) |
| 4  | Bellamy (Sandusky St. Mary) | 15 | Firestone(Arcanum)               |
| 5  | Coon (Nelsonville-York)     | 16 | Bloor (Wellsville)               |
| 6  | Hefflinger (Liberty Center) | 17 | Genders (Amanda Clearcreek)      |
| 7  | Badertscher (Hillsdale)     | 18 | Parker (Dixie)                   |
| 8  | Schenkel (Caldwell)         | 19 | Kuchta (Elyria Catholic)         |
| 9  | Karhoff (Ottawa Glandorf)   | 20 | Carey (Loudonville)              |
| 10 | Boyd (Blanchester)          | 21 | Haunhorst (Delphos St. John)     |
| 11 | Blevins (North Union)       | 22 | Sas (Black River)                |
| 12 | Tesler (Cuyahoga Hts.)      | 23 | Post (Coldwater)                 |
|    |                             | 24 | Findley (North Baltimore)        |

There are a lot of sacrifices that are made to create a champion wrestler – sacrifices made by parents, family, coaches and the wrestler himself. They begin, in a way, even before birth – women who give birth to boys have shorter life expectancies because the boy's testosterone can compromise their immune system – and last even to the time when they have to type this report.

Injuries play a big part in wrestling and that may have impacted the weight class in 2011 and may well do so again this year. Kennedy Smith was a critical component in Chanel's run to the state title last year. He came, by modern standards, rather late to wrestling but a strong work ethic, exceptional coaching and athletic talent put him in the state finals last year. His points put Chanel over the top, but he suffered a devastating knee injury which, even now, has caused him to miss the first six weeks of the schedule. Whether he can regain last season's form by tournament time remains a question. He wrestled a few rounds at the CIT, but to default down to 6<sup>th</sup> place and did not wrestle in Chanel's next dual.

Curtis Miller was a district runner-up – losing to two-time champ Hayes, 4-2, in that final but was unable to compete in Columbus. He has fashioned another sterling season and has to be considered the favorite to win it all this year. The only negative is a schedule that rarely tests him or puts his conditioning on display. However, his high ratio of pins should reduce mat time and potential injury.

Miller faces no substantive issues at Fairmont. The only other district placer, Karhoff, has been moved to Owens so there is little experience here. Boyd, who did have two district wins, took titles at Madeira and Reading and is probably the best in the Southwest. Firestone, the winner at Tipp City is also a contender and has put together a solid year including a 3<sup>rd</sup> at Troy. Post, 2<sup>nd</sup> at Troy, and Haunhorst are two other

possibilities from the Lima area, while Parker and Nelson could be factors from the Southwest.

One plus for Smith is that the Garfield district is not nearly as strong as usual. The top possibility is Badertscher who was a district semi-finalist last year before falling to 6<sup>th</sup>. He opened the year at 285# where he won at Hillsdale and has since dropped finishing 3<sup>rd</sup> at Black River at 220#. Tesler has district experience and was 2<sup>nd</sup> at Beachwood, but has been out of the lineup recently. Zelasko, always competitive, was injured at Brecksville, but could qualify if healthy. Bloor was a superior youth wrestler and junior high state placer who could qualify in this his freshman year. One to watch is Kuchta who won at Vermilion, Columbia and the Kinley. While Sas, yet another drop from 285#, was second at Black River. Don't overlook Carey of Loundonville who was 2<sup>nd</sup> at Gorman losing to Bellamy by a single point.

Bellamy and Baker should dominate at Owens and both have high placement potential. Baker was the district champ at 215# (pinning Bellamy), and then was a semi-finalist at state winning two very close bouts. Hayes took him out in the semis and he dropped to 6<sup>th</sup>. Bellamy followed up with a 3-2 record at Columbus including a one point win over Coons to take 7<sup>th</sup>. Baker began the year at 285#, but dropped at Medina where he was a semi-finalist and finished a solid 3<sup>rd</sup>—losing only to an out of state wrestler. Bellamy has been collecting tournament titles winning at Elgin (ahead of Coons), the Gorman and Toledo St. John. District semi-finalist, Karhoff, also returns at this weight class while Sanchez is a good looking sophomore. The third best here is probably Hefflinger, a 3-2 district loser to Bellamy last year, but he has not competed recently. Add in Keathley and Findley and it's a competitive district – for the last two berths.

The powerful Coons heads the field at Heath. A district runner-up last year he went 1-2 losing to Meadows and Bellamy. This year he was 2<sup>nd</sup> at Nelsonville and 3<sup>rd</sup> at Elgin and Brecksville. Schenkel was the state alternate after making semi-finals and has missed some time this year. Blevins, who won two district bouts, is also back with Genders and, maybe, Aponik possibilities. There is still some restructuring to come at this district.

**285#**

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

Top Contenders

|    |                                     |    |                                   |
|----|-------------------------------------|----|-----------------------------------|
| 2  | Majoy (Huron)                       | 13 | Ernest (St. Clairsville)          |
| 3  | Srock (Chippewa)                    | 14 | Dressler (Garrettsville Garfield) |
| 4  | Gillen (Liberty Center)             | 15 | Newsome (Tusky Valley)            |
| 5  | Kelbly (Smithville)                 | 16 | Workman (Western Reserve)         |
| 6  | Damschroeder (Carey)                | 17 | Tyson (Elmwood)                   |
| 7  | Rodgers (Wellington)                | 18 | Kiribas (CHCA)                    |
| 8  | Zuberer (Kirtland)                  | 19 | Kissell (Margaretta)              |
| 9  | Garren (Ready)                      | 20 | Newton (National Trail)           |
| 10 | Wessell/Ketcham (Delphos Jefferson) | 21 | Verhovec (Northridge)             |
| 11 | McFarland (Chesapeake)              | 22 | Bray (Reading)                    |
| 12 | Koronich (Bluffton)                 |    |                                   |

As faithful readers know I am, in some distant way, related to Mimmo Lytle – my mother was a Lytle, and as he continues to win, that relationship has, as I see it, become an ever closer one; such that I'm beginning to think of him as a grandson.

Lytle is on course to become a rare four-time placer at heavyweight (Dean Taylor the last D-3 heavyweight to do so?) and the first back to back champ since Cameron Wade. Last year four falls at the district level and three falls and a final round shut out (6-0) at Columbus pretty much demonstrated his talent. He will be pretty much an overwhelming favorite to do much the same this year. He was 3<sup>rd</sup> at the Ironman, losing in the semis to Kuhar in one of those convoluted overtimes that doesn't so much determine the better wrestler as to (almost randomly) get the bout over.

He emerges from a very good district. Majoy was a state semi-finalist losing to Endicott and finishing 3<sup>rd</sup>. He, too, was a semi-finalist at the Ironman losing to the #1 ranked Black and falling to 6<sup>th</sup>. Gillen and Damschroeder were both state qualifiers with Gillen getting the only win with a first round consolation 4-3 victory over Damschroeder. These are clearly the four best with Tyson, Kissel and Workman as back-ups in case of injury.

There are some good heavyweights at Garfield, but none who can match up with Lytle or Majoy. Srock was 6<sup>th</sup> last year with one of his wins over Damschroeder (1-0) and one of his losses to Majoy (3-0). Rodgers was also a qualifier but didn't get past Thursday night. He was 6<sup>th</sup> at Medina and won easily at Black River. Zuberer was a state alternate last year while Badertscher was a district 6<sup>th</sup> at 220# and may possibly return to that weight class. The one to watch is Kelbly who was 2<sup>nd</sup> at Smithville and wrestles even good people close. He has qualification chances. Dressler could be a big help for Garrettsville's team chances if he can qualify here.

While there is a wealth of talent at the two northern sectionals I'm struggling to find names at Fairmont. Three of the top contenders will come from the Lima CC sectional where Wessell and Ketcham – both from Delphos Jefferson – will wrestle off with a state berth the likely reward for the winner. Ketcham was a district 6<sup>th</sup> last year, but Wessell won at Allen County and Ketcham was 3<sup>rd</sup>. Koronich might be the second from that county to qualify. Bray won at Madeira (over Kiribas) with both having district experience. Newton with 43 wins last year and many more in 2012 is another possibility.

There is also very little at Heath. The highest returning district placer, Harper, was 5<sup>th</sup> last year, but I am not sure that Harvest Prep is fielding a team or that Harper is competing. McFarland was one bout from state and finished 6<sup>th</sup> at districts. He was 2<sup>nd</sup> at Nelsonville losing to D-2 Kuhlwein. Ernest was 3<sup>rd</sup> at that tournament and also placed at Barnesville and St. Clairsville. He also had a district victory last year which speaks for his consistency. Newsome, the champ at Dover and Barnesville, is also a contender. However, don't forget about Verhover and Garren, 2<sup>nd</sup> at the CIT. It promises to be a very unpredictable district.

## TEAMS

1. Waynedale—Since 2000 the 36 team champions in the three divisions have scored at least 99 points in every case but one (Sandusky St. Mary in 2006). That many points may not be necessary in this rather fragmented competition in Division III. On a perfect weekend Waynedale might get to that magic number, but my guess is they won't need that many to win. They truly are a "band of brothers" with the Stanley and Nelson boys critical to the final outcome. Both Nelsons need to be in the top three while at least one Stanley has to place. The linchpin of this team is Beam and he should rack up finalist points. If all goes well it won't be close, but since when do things go as planned—however, the firepower is here to overcome a few glitches.
2. Beachwood—The two sophomores, Gross and Harris, have to contribute 35 to 40 points while Blumenthal and Shapiro need to take care of business in the middle weights. Winning the whole tournament is not out of the question, but neither is falling out of the Top Five.
3. Troy Christian—This team only has four scorers, but two of them could be finalists, and the other two high placers which might generate 80 points. If that happens, Waynedale will need to be almost perfect. On the other hand, there is no margin for error. Still with Marshall and Toal leading the way errors tends to occur infrequently and Hancock and Ganger might be able to erase a minor slip. If Waynedale falters and this team gathers momentum they could win the team title.
4. Mechanicsburg—Another team that depends on a quartet of scorers—Erwin, Reese, Hiltibran, and Black—but with substantially less certainty. The key is for Black to be healthy and productive and Hiltibran to wrestle the tournament of his life.
5. Nelsonville-York—This a team that has shown tremendous potential in the past, but saw it all evaporate on the floor of the Value City Arena. This is their last chance for a couple of years to make Top Five. They have, perhaps, the most potential scorers and emerge from a relatively easy district. Moody, McLaughlin, Mays and Coon could be big scorers and this is for several of them their last chance to do so. Hook needs to regain his state form and the little Mays needs to be a helper. If all goes well they could move up a few places even without the dynamic Leitwein who is out for the year.
6. Keystone—The Spangler twins are not anxious to be upstaged by the Nelsons and they should score big points at 126# and 132#. Add in some help from Stiner at 120# and they could reach this outcome, but they'll have to be perfect.

7. Elmwood—Lee and Baker could be the point people for a team that might have as many as four or five scoring options. Both of them have placed while Emmitt and Ferguson are former state qualifiers. They need help from Wise and/or Baer, and are trying to figure out how to get Tyson to Columbus.
8. Archbold—This is a great dual meet that needs to get their middle weights at the optimal weight classes. Cowell is very good and Ripke and Rufenacht seem poised to help. They need points from Eggers, Price and Kovnesky and, maybe, a surprise qualifier.
9. Garrettsville Garfield—Yonker and Stock should generate at least 40 points which will be enough to make the Top Ten. If Dressler or Zelasko could be a factor it would be an enormous boost.
10. Delta—Kern and Fahrer have been on a hot streak lately and that is good news, indeed, for this team. Add in a newly healthy Mattin along with the little guys Keller and Dailey and they could move up a few places here.
11. Liberty City—One could see Gillen, Spieth, and, especially, Niner getting medium to low podium places with each scoring in double digits. The key is having a fit and healthy Hefflinger challenge the top 220's. Absent that they quickly fall out of this placement.