

# **2010 HIGH SCHOOL WRESTLING FORECAST**

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

Written By:  
Brian F. Brakeman

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## PREFACE

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

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

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

**\*John Jaksetic and his website [www.Jakeswrestling.com](http://www.Jakeswrestling.com)--For a trifling number of dollars you get some unmatched look at the data**

**\*<http://ohiowrestlingsite.com> is a high quality site whose work I admire**

**\*[www.ohiowrestling.net](http://www.ohiowrestling.net) is another fine site that provides statewide information**

**\*<http://northwest-district-wrestling.blogspot.com> provides a totally comprehensive picture of Northwestern Wrestling—amazing amount of work provided by sender**

**\*[WWW.ovaecwrestling.com](http://WWW.ovaecwrestling.com) has fine coverage of the OVAC teams**

**and many others that are very worthwhile.**

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 25, 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.

Brian Brakeman  
23225 Hardwick Road  
Shaker Hts., OH 44122

E-mail: [cherylbrake@aol.com](mailto:cherylbrake@aol.com)

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

<http://www.baumspage.com>

<http://www.brecksvillewrestling.com>

<http://www.ohiowrestler.com>

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

### Robert's Rules For Reading Wrestling Reports

Bob Bere 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.

**TEAM OF THE DECADE**

Since 1969 I have been naming the wrestling team of the decade honoring those that I perceived as being truly special performers. I use a few rules to structure this endeavor so that some type of consistency is attained. There are two principal constraints, the first being that a wrestler can only be chosen at a weight class where he has won a state title. The second determination is that this is based strictly on high school performance, and, quite honestly, it is one that, while good in theory, is never totally honored. One cannot help but factor in what happened in college, try as we might to do so.

- 103# David Taylor - The greatest light weight wrestler in Ohio history was a four-time state champ who won with style and grace. Much has been written about David, but his sheer dominance set him apart from all others. The only wrestler in history to win four Ironman titles he has become a role model for many young wrestlers.
- 112# Harry Lester Another four-time state champion who made it look easy. He was not a dominant pinner, but he controlled bouts so thoroughly that his opponents seemed never to have even the smallest chance of winning. This was the closest call – Kyle Ott as an absolutely terrific wrestler.
- 119# James Clark He will likely be a three-time champion losing only in his freshman year’s state finals overtime bout that he had basically dominated. A relentless stacker of his opponent he was the only opponent that consistently challenged David Taylor, and, in fact, handed one of his two high school losses.
- 125# Logan Stieber The senior member of the “Monroeville Four,” he recently set a new state record for consecutive victories. Absent some unimaginable catastrophe, he will be a four-time state champion without ever really being challenged. One of the best high school wrestlers since the inauguration of this sport almost 90 years ago.
- 130# Ryan Lang One of the best big match wrestlers I’ve ever seen. He never seemed to worry about an occasional loss during the season as he worked to improve himself, but at four state meets he was invincible. He had some rugged finalist opponents, but he always was dominate.
- 135# J. Jagers A four-time state champ who always went for the fall. He had the best cradle since Joe Heskett and was totally fearless in its application. He had a thirst for back points, and a killer instinct that never left him.
- 140# Lance Palmer A four-time state champion who was absolutely devastating in the top position. No one could totally sap the will of an opponent like Palmer – who was able to control the very best with his devastating rides.

- 145# Dustin Schlatter Perhaps, the most polished high school wrestler of the past decade. He was a “college” wrestler as a high school sophomore. I particularly liked, that even as a four-time state champ, he would move up three weight classes to challenge a quality opponent.
- 152# C. P. Schlatter I think the strongest wrestler we have seen in the middle weights. He came closest to having a perfect four year record of anyone in Ohio - and that was wrestling the most rugged of schedules. His only loss came in a bout he dominated for most of the contest.
- 160# Steve Luke A wrestler who was a runner-up as a 112 pound freshman and then a sturdy three-time champion. He left nothing to chance as he methodically crushed each opponent. He was always the wrestler who never made a mistake, and, in fact, never seemed aware that one could be made.
- 171# Chris Phillips He is the most accomplished big man I have ever seen. Ohio has developed some of the finest upper weight wrestlers ever produced in the country, but, at least as high schoolers, none could match up with this performer. An absolutely amazing wrestler for whom everything works.
- 189# Hetag Piley A totally dominating upper weight wrestler who performed mat magic with ridiculous ease. He won two state titles and never seemed in the slightest danger either time. His somewhat unusual technique made him even more effective at this level.
- 215# Matt Koz/  
Orlando Scales Two brilliant wrestlers with totally opposite styles that somehow I could not differentiate. Koz was the ultimate “grinder” whose three state titles included heralded wins over Delguyd and Barrentine. Scales, with two state titles, was one of the best “throwers” of the decade. A wonderful pinner he was a dominant big man.
- 285# Dustin Fox In an era of many good heavyweights Fox was the most consistent. No one was better at gaining every last bit of efficiency out of his body and in managing bouts. If it was close, he always won.

#### THE SECOND WAVE

103#	Aaron Hart/Ty Mitch	145#	Mike Miller/Tony Jameson
112#	Kyle Ott/Mark Moos	152#	Jesse Dong/Ryan Bertin
119#	Ben Jordan	160#	Colt Sponseller/Chris Hahn
125#	Cameron Doggeitt/Mark Jayne	171#	Dustin Kilgore/Brian Roddy
130#	Kevin Hardy/Joe Pflug	189#	J. D. Bergman/Cody Magrum
135#	Sean Nemec	215#	Jared Villers
140#	Zach Toal/Collin Palmer	285#	Cameron Wade/Tony Johnson

**WRESTLER OF THE DECADE: DAVID TAYLOR**  
**MOST ENTERTAINING WRESTLER: TONY JAMESON**

**BRAKEMAN REPORT AUDIT**

(How first choices fared)

	<u>2007</u>	<u>2008</u>	<u>2009</u>
Won Title	27	27	28
Finished Second	9	7	6
Third	2	5	4
Fourth 3	1	0	
Lower than Fourth	<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>4</u>
Total	42	42	42

**BRAKEMAN REPORT AUDIT**

(Won State Title)

	<u>2007</u>	<u>2008</u>	<u>2009</u>
Ranked First	27	27	28
Ranked Second	8	7	3
Ranked Third	4	2	6
Ranked Fourth	1	2	2
Ranked Lower Than 4 <sup>th</sup>	<u>2</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>3</u> *
	42	42	42

\*Shepard ranked 8<sup>th</sup>, Running 5<sup>th</sup>, and Baker, unranked.

**CHAMPIONSHIP ROUNDS STATE VICTORIES % ANALYSIS**

(Only Inter-District Bouts)

<u>2007</u>		<u>2008</u>		<u>2009</u>	
1	Perry 61.5%	1	Mentor/Harding 59.3%	1	Perry 60.7%
2	Maple Hts. 54.1%	2	Perry 57.7%	2	Firestone 54.3%
3	Firestone 53.2%	3	Ontario/Fostoria 55.1%	3	Goshen 54.2%
4	Ontario/Fostoria 52.8%	4	Firestone 53.9%	4	Fairmont 53.5%
5	Fairmont 50.0%	5	Fairmont 52.9%	5	Maple Hts. 52.6%
6	Heath 49.1%	6	Heath 52.7%	6	Owens 51.5%
7	Goshen 47.5%	7	Goshen 50.0%	7	Fairfield 50.0%
8	Fairfield 46.5%	8	Owens 46.9%	8	Mentor 48.0%
9	Owens 46.3%	9	Maple Hts. 46.9%	9	Heath 45.4%
10	Steubenville 45.9%	10	Steubenville 40.0%	10	Fostoria 44.8%
11	Mentor/Harding 45.8%	11	Darby 39.8%	11	Steubenville 41.7%
12	Darby 43.9%	12	Fairfield 38.4%	12	Darby 38.6%

**2009 STATE VICTORIES % BY DISTRICT ANALYSIS**  
(Only Inter-District Bouts)

	<u>Perry</u>	<u>Mentor</u>	<u>Darby</u>	<u>Fairfield</u>
Championship Rounds	60.7%	48.0%	38.6%	50.0%
Consolation Rounds	<u>60.5%</u>	<u>57.6%</u>	<u>39.6%</u>	<u>41.5%</u>
Total	60.6%	52.8%	39.1%	46.1%

  

	<u>Firestone</u>	<u>Fostoria</u>	<u>Heath</u>	<u>Goshen</u>
Championship Rounds	54.3%	44.8%	45.4%	54.2%
Consolation Rounds	<u>48.3%</u>	<u>56.2%</u>	<u>48.4%</u>	<u>46.1%</u>
Total	51.7%	50.7%	46.8%	50.5%

  

	<u>Maple Hts.</u>	<u>Owens</u>	<u>Steubenville</u>	<u>Fairmont</u>
Championship Rounds	52.6%	51.5%	41.7%	53.5%
Consolation Rounds	<u>68.8%</u>	<u>40.7%</u>	<u>40.0%</u>	<u>48.3%</u>
Total	60.0%	46.5%	40.9%	51.1%

**2009 STATE CHAMPIONSHIP ROUND ANALYSIS**  
(Inter-District Bouts Only)

	<u>First Round</u>			<u>2nd/3rd/4th Round</u>			<u>Overall</u>		
	W&L Record	%	Rank	W&L Record	%	Rank	W&L Record	%	Rank
1 Perry	37-19	66.1%	1	31-25	55.4%	4	68-44	60.7%	1
2 Firestone	32-24	57.1%	3	31-29	51.7%	6	63-53	54.3%	2
3 Goshen	26-30	46.4%	7	32-19	62.7%	2	58-49	54.2%	3
4 Fairmont	26-30	46.4%	7	27-16	62.8%	1	53-46	53.5%	4
5 Maple Hts.	36-20	64.3%	2	24-34	41.4%	9	60-54	52.6%	5
6 Owens	24-32	42.9%	11	28-17	62.2%	3	52-49	51.5%	6
7 Fairfield	27-29	48.2%	5	22-20	52.4%	5	49-49	50.0%	7
8 Mentor	27-29	48.2%	5	20-22	47.6%	7	47-51	48.0%	8
9 Heath	28-28	50.0%	4	16-25	39.0%	11	44-53	45.4%	9
10 Fostoria	26-30	46.4%	7	17-23	42.5%	8	43-53	44.8%	10
11 Steubenville	26-30	46.4%	7	14-26	35.0%	12	40-56	41.7%	11
12 Darby	21-35	37.5%	12	13-19	40.6%	10	34-54	38.6%	12

**TOTAL STATE VICTORIES % BY DISTRICT ANALYSIS**

(Championship and Consolation Rounds)

<u>2007</u>		<b>2008</b>		2009				
1	Perry	59.0%	1	Perry	56.9%	1	Perry	60.6%
2	Firestone	55.8%	2	Firestone	55.0%	2	Maple Hts.	60.0%
3	Maple Hts.	51.3%	3	Heath	54.0%	3	Mentor	52.8%
4	Mentor/Harding	51.2%	4	Mentor/Harding	53.4%	4	Firestone	51.7%
5	Heath	50.5%	5	Goshen	52.4%	5	Fairmont	51.1%
6	Ontario/Fostoria	50.0%	6	Fairmont	57.3%	6	Fostoria	50.7%
7	Fairmont	49.2%	7	Ontario/Fostoria	50.8%	7	Goshen	50.5%
8	Owens	48.9%	8	Maple Hts.	49.5%	8	Heath	46.8%
9	Goshen	47.5%	9	Darby	46.3%	9	Owens	46.5%
10	Steubenville	46.1%	10	Owens	44.6%	10	Fairfield	46.1%
11	Fairfield	45.1%	11	Fairfield	42.4%	11	Steubenville	40.9%
12	Darby	44.0%	12	Steubenville	41.3%	12	Darby	39.1%

## Division I

### 103 #

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

#### Top Contenders

2	Heil (St. Edward)	15	Jones (Wadsworth)
3	Garcia (Clay)	16	Edwards (Olentangy Orange)
4	Selmon (Princeton)	17	Reese (Garfield Hts.)
5	Murdock (Scioto)	18	Asadorian (Olmsted Falls)
6	Marsico (Pickerington North)	19	Branham (Miamisburg)
7	Noble (Lebanon)	20	Suer (Elder)
8	Montgomery (Madison)	21	Evans (Mansfield Sr.)
9	Thompson (Solon)	22	Clemmons (Lakota West)
10	Millin (Massillon Perry)	23	Fehr (Barberton)
11	Krumheuer (Midpark)	24	Baas (Oakhills)
12	Fausnight (Hoover)	25	Perry (Howland)
13	Walsh (Moeller)	26	Nichols (Toledo St. Johns)
14	McCurdy (Hayes)		

There is a pleasing mixture of styles, experience, and credentials at this weight class, which should make for an exciting and fearsome competition. There are candidates from each of the four districts with title chances and the final state bracket should be competitive from the very first round. Still, I believe there are four wrestlers who stand a small step or two ahead of the rest of the field.

DiCamillo, a sophomore, was 7<sup>th</sup> last year despite being one of the smaller 103-pounders at the meet. He is great on his feet and continually pressures with a motor that runs non-stop for six minutes. He won at both the Ironman and Brecksville - - never having a close bout at the latter meet. Garcia, a senior in a field generally of freshman and sophomores, is solid and strong. He won at Solon and the GMVWA pinning Taylor in the semi-finals. He was 5<sup>th</sup> last year including a 10-1 win over Selmon. However, DiCamillo handled him in the "district finals". Selmon will be one of the biggest 103's at Columbus. He was 6<sup>th</sup> last year defeating DiCamillo (2-1) along the way, but losing, as mentioned to Garcia. He was 2<sup>nd</sup> at the SWOCA (at 103#) and at the GMVWA (at 112#). I suspect that it's a tough cut to 103# and you have to wonder whether that will impact him during the three weeks of tournament action. Heil is the sensational freshman. A state junior high champ last year he has been outstanding finishing 2<sup>nd</sup> at the Ironman and 1<sup>st</sup> at Medina. He lost to DiCamillo in the former in overtime in what might have been the best bout in the finals. He has the most upside of this quartet matching physicality with technique - - but he is still very young. When thinking over the state competition remember the last seven titles at this weight class have gone to a

Northeast District wrestler. This year I think DiCamillo's well-rounded style will fend off Garcia's strength, Heil's talent, and Selmon's athleticism.

By far the strongest and deepest district is at Mentor. DiCamillo, however, should dominate at this venue with nobody within a half-dozen points of him. It could well work out that the other three qualifiers are all freshman with Thompson, Millin, and Montgomery all in the top echelon here and Fausnight another such possibility. Montgomery was a state junior high runner-up while both Thompson and Millin were 5<sup>th</sup>. All have had exceptional freshman seasons. Montgomery was 2<sup>nd</sup> at Hudson and North Coast while at 112# while Thompson was 2<sup>nd</sup> to Garcia at Solon. Millin was 8<sup>th</sup> at Medina losing close bouts to Murdock (by one point) and Marsico (by two). Krumheuer had a super district weekend last year beating Barber and upsetting Ralston to qualify for States. He'll need to duplicate that feat to qualify this year. Fausnight is 19-2 as I write this including 4<sup>th</sup> at North Canton where he defeated Jones. The senior, Reese, and Perry are good enough to qualify at most districts, but may not have enough firepower here.

The freshman, Heil, and the senior, Garcia, are light years ahead of the rest of the field at Ashland. The battle will be for the last two spots. Jones and Asadorian might be slight favorites, but I expect some surprises with bracketing playing a role. Jones was a semi-finalist at Brecksville and ended up fourth and lost only to Heil at the Ohio Duals. Other possibilities here include Gorman runner-up Evans, the Barberton sophomore Fehr, and Nichols.

The district at Darby should provide a number of solid contenders for low and middle places. Murdock was a state alternate at this weight class last year losing his go-to-state bout by two to Fiorucci. This year he was 3<sup>rd</sup> at Medina defeating Marsico in overtime and losing only to Heil. Marsico was a state qualifier last year but had a tough draw - - losing to eventual runner-up Hauser in the first round and to Garcia, 1-0, in the second round of consolations. McCurdy is a strong candidate for the third spot with Edwards and Herrera (Westerville North) other options. It is likely that a Southwest District wrestler or two may factor in as well.

Selmon should be at the top of the podium at Fairfield, but there are challengers. Noble defeated him, 2-0, at the SWOCA and was 2<sup>nd</sup> at Fairfield. He was a district 6<sup>th</sup> last year missing state qualification with a 7-6 overtime loss in his go-to-state bout. After that duo the field is wide open. Walsh, 3<sup>rd</sup> at the SWOCA might be next best with folks like Branham, Suer, and Clemmons close by. It will be a real opportunity for someone having a hot weekend to have his ticket punched for Columbus.

**112 #**

**PROJECTED CHAMPION: KORY MINES (MAPLE HTS.)**

Top Contenders

2	Dillon (Boardman)	15	Terry (Butler)
3	Myers (Moeller)	16	Bright/Moore (St. Edward)
4	Collica (Solon)	17	Campbell (Harrison)
5	Ague (Fitch)	18	Luria (Mason)
6	Gray (Wadsworth)	19	Vinas (Twinsburg)
7	Strope (Lancaster)	20	McDougle (Gahanna Lincoln)
8	Birr (Mayfield)	21	Fox (Western Brown)
9	Abdel-Salem (Lakewood)	22	Timchenko (Olentangy Orange)
10	Boyd (Marion Franklin)	23	Daniels (Elder)
11	Newhouse (Massillon Perry)	24	Screptock (Clay)
12	Griffith (Medina)	25	Yurkovich (North Royalton)
13	Young (Mentor)	26	Morelock (Bowling Green)
14	McClay (Massillon)	27	Puska (Edgewood)

This could be either one of the most dynamic and exciting weight classes in Division I or one of a somewhat devoid of interest. Let's assume the first case and think about some of the outstanding participants. The "old men" of this weight class are defending state champion Kory Mines and 5<sup>th</sup> place finisher Shawn Ague. Mines, already a three-time state placer, has had a sensational career with over 140 victories, but has yet to reach 112 pounds. He has gotten much thicker and it will be a tough cut, and I wonder how he'll do at this weight class. Still, even at 119# and 125# he has lost, but once and will be a tremendously strong 112-pounder. Ague was 5<sup>th</sup> last year after moving up to 112# but has not wrestled a demanding schedule this year. Dillon, only a sophomore, was the "mystery guest" during last year's tournament process. He missed much of the year due to injury, but his credentials were great. He was a junior high state champ over Myers (more on him in a moment) and it turned out he was as good as advertised. He was a district runner-up to Mines and finished 3<sup>rd</sup> at States. His big win this year was at Kenston where he beat Mines for the 119-pound title. I have not yet seen him at 112# but he will probably be the biggest one in the bracket. I wonder how that cut will impact him. If Pasquale can't make 119# for Boardman you may see Dillon there.

That's a great trio, but there are two outstanding freshmen as well. Myers was the junior high state champ last year defeating Collica in overtime. He was amazing at the Ironman winning six bouts to finish 4<sup>th</sup>. He hasn't to my knowledge lost since and was dominating at the SWOCA. He will, I suspect, be one of the smaller 112's in the state bracket. Collica won at North Coast and Solon and has had a terrific freshman season. Like Myers, a great youth wrestler, he has made a seamless transition to high school competition.

The real issue is the geographic disparity. Mines, Dillon, Ague, and Collica all exit the same district and the last three wrestle at the same sectional. Clearly, this could cause

unbalanced bracket issues that could impact one of this top quartet. Not only that but state qualifier Birr, 2<sup>nd</sup> at Brecksville, state alternate Young, Newhouse, Vinas and Yurkovich are all at Mentor. Birr had a terrific district at this weight class last year. He lost narrowly to Squire and then won five other bouts to finish 3<sup>rd</sup> - - including a win over Ague. For his efforts he drew state champ Sako in the first round and didn't place. He defeated Ague at a time when he was just up from 103# and I'm not sure what will happen now. Young has been good for several years, but has not been lucky. He was good enough to go at this weight class last year, but faced a loaded district - - and this year will be even more difficult. Rumor has it he may try to wrestle at 103#, but he was a big 112-pounder last year. Newhouse lost to Mines by one-point at last year's district, but failed to qualify. He missed some of this year, but will be a dangerous foe at tourney time. He just recently won the Top Gun. And don't forget about the precocious McClay. Another solid freshman he was 3<sup>rd</sup> at last year junior high states, and won this year at the WIT.

As to the state tournament, Myers may have to wade through three of the Mentor qualifiers to win it all. That's a lot to ask of a freshman especially since some of these boys will be older and stronger. He'll want to get Mines and Dillon early when they're still worrying about the weight. In the end I still think it will be those two (Mines and Dillon) in the finals. It will be low scoring with Dillon great on his feet and Mines good all-around battling, perhaps, into overtime.

Every district is strong at this weight class, but not to the extent we saw at Mentor. While there is no returning state qualifiers there are three wrestlers who were a bout from Columbus. Gray was in that murderous 103# class at the Massillon Perry District last year where the four qualifiers were the top four placers at states. He was 5<sup>th</sup> losing three-point bouts to Dillon and Labry. He went 2-2 at the Ironman, but won at Brecksville - - including victories over Birr and Vinas. He also was dominant at the Ohio Duals defeating Young and Moore. Griffith was 6<sup>th</sup> at that same district losing to eventual state runner-up Hauser in his go-to-state bout. This year he won at Medina beating Moore and Division III state champ Goebel (breaking his 60+ bout winning streak) in the process. Abdel-Salem was also one bout from States last year at 119# losing to the excellent Caston, 11-9. He has won this year at Avon Lake, Riverside, and Southview and I may be underestimating him here. He has been a major surprise. He is difficult to beat. Moore, the St. Edward sophomore, is quickly getting better. He was 2<sup>nd</sup> at the Medina and looked to get the fourth qualifying spot. However, he has lost twice to Gray and to Griffith. As of late, however, Bright has moved into the varsity spot and he brings an athleticism that is hard to contain. I think he has good chances against Griffith and Abdel-Salem and, maybe, even Gray. The rest of this district does not look strong, but a bracket issue could get Screenshot (Clay) or Morelock (Bowling Green) in.

State qualifiers Strobe and Boyd lead a Darby contingent that has some solid firepower. Strobe is a returning district champ who went 1-2 at Columbus last year. This year he won at Marion Harding and was 2<sup>nd</sup> at Liberty to Division III state runner-up Dronzek. Boyd went 1-2 at States - - beating Birr and losing two other bouts in overtime. He

wrestles a rather uneventful schedule, but is very dangerous. I really like the freshmen McDougale and Timchenko, both of whom placed at the junior high states last year. McDougale won at Kenston while Timchenko placed at Brecksville. I expect they'll be challenged by some of the Southwest District boys.

The one district where there is unquestioned domination is at Fairfield. As mentioned the freshman Stephen Myers is exceptional and should get a great state pairing off a district title. He could well win it all this year with, perhaps, a dash of good fortune. State qualifiers Terry, Luria and Fox are solid performers who have low-to-middle placement potential. They went a combined 1-6 at the state meet, but could better that if they can qualify this year. However I think the lanky Campbell will knock out one of them having defeated Fox and Luria during the course of the season, and Daniels or Puska might also be in the mix.

### 119 #

#### **PROJECTED CHAMPION: JEROME ROBINSON (ST. IGNATIUS)**

##### Top Contenders

2	Squire (Wadsworth)	16	Barber (St. Edwards)
3	Pasquale (Boardman)	17	Forrider (Marysville)
4	Caston (Sandusky)	18	Campbell (Anderson)
5	Labry (Twinsburg)	19	Turek (Madison)
6	DiSabato (Davidson)	20	Kish (Clay)
7	Artrip (Mason)	21	Hunter (Pickerington Central)
8	Ralston (Lorain Southview)	22	Yurkovich (North Royalton)
9	Regan (Miamisburg)	23	Thoman (Springboro)
10	Victor (Mentor)	24	Gilbert (Lebanon)
11	Byrd (LaSalle)	25	Shiekh (Holland Springfield)
12	Kunzi (Watkins Memorial)	26	Leedy (Start)
13	Adelman (Hoover)	27	Fay (Harrison)
14	Baran (Brecksville)	28	Haslam (Westland)
15	MacVeigh (Moeller)		

This could be a weight with some surprise, last-minute entrants moving in from 112#. The last eight champs at this weight class have come from the Northeast District and that streak should continue this year. As it now stands it looks to be a two-man battle. State champion Robinson is clearly a 112-pounder, but, for whatever reason he will go at this weight class. I mean he made the scratch weight of 112# at the pre-season Super 32. Whatever. He is certainly talented enough to give up a little size and still win it all. Quick and strong he was 4<sup>th</sup> at the Ironman beating Squire and Mitch, but also losing a pair of one-point squeakers. He has been out of action for nearly a month with injuries, but for such an experienced wrestler it should not be a problem. His bouts with Sako last year were epic confrontations and his wins were testament to his mental toughness.

I think the sophomore Squire could probably be at 112#, but he helps his team much more at this weight class. He was 3<sup>rd</sup> last year losing a tight one-point bout to Sako and then, critically, finished 3<sup>rd</sup>. That means he and Robinson will be seeded apart (assuming both win their district). This year Squire failed to place at that dynamite Ironman weight class losing 1-0 to Mark Grey and 6-3 to Robinson. He wasn't able to wrestle the second day at Brecksville (skin), but was sharp at the state duals. His 13-1 win over state qualifier Victor showed him in top form.

What we have is two wrestlers - - who are probably 112's in many scenarios - -going for the 119# title. Since Robinson will not be giving up a lot of size I think he'll get past Squire's great defense a couple of time to win his second state title.

The two best districts are again in the northern part of the state. At Mentor, wrestlers will face some very strong competition. Former state placer Pasquale has apparently made this weight class and will be an enormous 119-pounder. He placed three years ago at 103#, but has not qualified since. Last year he lost two district Saturday afternoon bouts - - one to eventual state runner-up Bolger (7-6) and to eventual state placer Hannan (4-2). He won at Kenston and was 3<sup>rd</sup> at the Top Gun in his first time at this weight class. Labry was a solid 4<sup>th</sup> at 103# last year losing by one point to both Mines and Dillon. This year he was 1<sup>st</sup> at Solon, but only 5<sup>th</sup> at Brecksville again losing a pair of one-point bouts. He was sharp at the Ohio Duals defeating both Artrip and Barber. State qualifier Victor also returns and was 2<sup>nd</sup> (to Labry) at Solon and 2<sup>nd</sup> at North Coast (to Turek in overtime). That is a tough quartet. Adelman, Turek, and Matt Yurkovich were all one bout from Columbus last year and you have to figure at least one of them will make it this time. Another great competition with some state-placement type boys left at home.

Squire faces a slightly less formidable task at Ashland. State qualifier Caston was a quick "two-and-out" at Columbus last year, but he is much improved now. His recent 6-1 win over Ralston was impressive, as was his win at Medina where he beat Artrip and Barber. Ralston was 3<sup>rd</sup> two years ago, but seemed to be cutting a lot of weight last year and could not qualify. His most impressive win was the title bout at Southview where he handed Dronzek his only loss of the year and winning at Fairfield over Byrd in overtime. Ralston still may be in danger with Baran, Barber, and Kish all with enough talent to qualify. Barber was 5<sup>th</sup> at Medina losing to both Caston and Campbell by three points. Baran missed part of the season and is just rounding into shape while Kish has been a steady placer. The latter boy was a district 6<sup>th</sup> last year after winning a sectional title.

There are three standouts at Darby. DiSabato was a district champ last year, but lost to Squire in the state quarterfinals and falling to 8<sup>th</sup>. I thought he looked good at Brecksville finishing 7<sup>th</sup> - and losing close bouts to Squire and Labry. Kunzi, also a state qualifier, was 3<sup>rd</sup> at Medina - losing in the quarterfinals to Barber, but coming back strong to take 3<sup>rd</sup>. The freshman Forrider is a future star. He was a junior high state

champ last year and has McCombs as a workout partner. Both Hunter and Haslam have done well at the district level while Gilbert may have an outside shot here.

The top quartet at Fairfield has substantial experience, and no one of them has established dominance. Regan was the district champ last year beating Artrip in the finals in overtime while Byrd finished 3<sup>rd</sup>. However, at States Artrip placed 5<sup>th</sup> and Byrd 7<sup>th</sup> with Regan failing to place. Artrip was 2<sup>nd</sup> at the SWOCA and Medina while Regan and Byrd both placed at the GMVWA. I think Artrip has taken a slight lead over the other. Thoman, a state alternate last year, and Campbell are certainly state material with Fay another step back. I think this group is, at best, low to middle placers. The wild card here is the rugged MacVeigh. He was 3<sup>rd</sup> at the SWOCA at 125# and 3<sup>rd</sup> at the CIT at 119#. He could vault past several of this group on a hot weekend.

### 125 #

#### **PROJECTED CHAMPION: GUS SAKO (ST. EDWARD)**

##### Top Contenders

2	Lawrence (Westlake)	15	Boehm (Watkins Memorial)
3	McCombs (Marysville)	16	Sarnecki (Loveland)
4	Hannan (Massillon Perry)	17	Alger (Westerville North)
5	Corrill (Moeller)	18	Bauer (Western Brown)
6	McNulty (Mayfield)	19	Denlinger (Fairmont)
7	McSorley (Trenton Edgewood)	20	McClatcher/Sweeney (Mentor)
8	Inchaurregui (Lorain Southview)	21	Hammer (Medina)
9	Marzec (Toledo St. Francis)	22	Gonzalez (Mason)
10	Cochrane (Troy)	23	Abdel-Salem (Lakewood)
11	Long (St. Ignatius)	24	Allen (Thomas Worthington)
12	MacVeigh (Mueller)	25	Brunner (North Olmsted)
13	Claxton (Brush)	26	Bable (Firestone)
14	Weiskittel (Oak Hills)	27	Conine (Waite)

We've read about the three Musketeers, listened to the three tenors, and laughed at the three amigos but at this weight we have, I believe the three seniors - -all of whom are seedable wrestlers.

There will be some terrific bouts at this weight class as we enter the last couple rounds and the pairings will be very interesting. Lawrence, a three-time state placer, has been a runner-up the last two years. As a sophomore he lost a one-point bout at 119# and last season lost a 3-2 final to two-time champ Sammy White. He has been at 130# all year, but I'm sure he'll end up here with Clark at 130# his only real chance to win it all will be at this weight. This year he has been pretty much unchallenged at 130# and I have him at 143-11 for his high school career. The key for him is winning the district title but that won't be easy because.....

Sako was the 103# champ as a sophomore, but lost in the finals last year to Robinson in an overtime thriller at 112#. Now up two weight classes he still looks like he'd be

happy to up two more. He started the year at 130# in place of the injured Clark - - but was at this class when he won at Medina - - beating Division II state runner-up Stone 1-0, in the finals. I think he is still getting comfortable with the weight class, but he'll get the top state seed at this class which could be critical, if he can beat Lawrence. That will put him away from both Lawrence and McCombs at the state meet.

McCombs was 3<sup>rd</sup> at this weight class losing to Lawrence in the semi-finals by two points. He is a conservative, mistake-free wrestler good in all phases of the sport. He won handily at Brecksville in what turned out to be a rather non-descript weight class, but, like Lawrence, does not wrestle the tough schedule faced by Sako. It sure looks like he'll have to beat both the Cleveland boys to take the title, but that is not an outlandish possibility.

The wildcard here is the two-time placer Jake Corrill. He was 3<sup>rd</sup> at 119# losing only to Clark. He too is seedable, but there is an aura of mystery that surrounds him. He has not yet wrestled this season and his injury may be such that he will not compete this year. If healthy he is a threat to the top boys.

This is the way I wrote it up. Sadly, I know Lawrence is out for the season with two broken bones in his foot and Corrill is back wrestling. The pairing will have Sako on one side and McCombs and Corrill on the other. That should work to Sako's advantage, more importantly; he continues to look better as the season progresses.

There will substantive pairing and qualification issues at Ashland. Sako and Lawrence have already been discussed but there is much more at this district. Inchaurregui is a two-time state qualifier and who was 7<sup>th</sup> two years ago and missed placement by a point last year. He won at Fairfield and Southview so far and looks re-invigorated at this weight class. Marzec was the district runner-up to Clark last year and placed 7<sup>th</sup> at Columbus. He does not wrestle an overly tough schedule, but did win at Tiffin and was third at the CIT. Also here are Kenston runner-up Brunner, the sophomore star Hammer along with the excellent Bable and the other Abdel-Salem. The Toledo sectional also furnishes two strong district-experienced wrestlers in Conine (Waite) and Postich (Bowling Green). It is a loaded field with a sectional imbalance. Sako and Inchaurregui exit the same sectional along with Brunner and Abdel-Salem. Assuming those four get out, the district pairings should be reasonably good with Marzec, however, having to wade through at least a couple of the Lorain Southview Sectional boys. At any rate the four that qualify out of this district will truly have earned their state qualification. I do expect several of this group to move back to 130#.

State placers Hannan and McNulty head the Mentor District field. Hannan was 5<sup>th</sup> last year at Columbus losing only to Corrill in both the championship and consolation bracket - - and each time by one point. He was 4<sup>th</sup> at Medina losing to Sako in the semi-finals, 8-3. He is, I believe, a wrestler who gets better as the year progresses. I can never figure out McNulty, sometimes he is great and, at others, just very good. He was a freshman sensation two years ago finishing 5<sup>th</sup> at 112#. Last year he missed some time, but came back to win at sectional and then grab the last state qualification

spot at districts, beating Pasquale who had defeated him earlier. At States, he immediately defeated district champ McSorley and made it to the semi-finals before getting 5<sup>th</sup> place. He has superior talent and could well pull the major upset. State alternate Long is really a 119-pounder, but with Robinson as an obstacle he'll be at this weight class. He was a very good 4<sup>th</sup> at Brecksville (at 119#), but will battle people like McClatcher/ Sweeney and Clayton for that state qualification.

McComas stands alone at Darby, and as I said, I expect an influx of Dayton area boys to compete for the last three spots. Boehm is a two-time qualifier who was 6<sup>th</sup> two years ago, but went "two-and-out" last year at 112#. He has missed some time this year, but he will be a strong and experienced competitor come tournament time. Alger was 2<sup>nd</sup> at Fairfield to Inchaurregui and 5<sup>th</sup> at Medina losing a one-point decision to Hannan in the quarterfinals. The other possibility is Allen who will have to fight off the southern invaders.

Corrill is the big unknown. Now that he has returned he vaults to the top of the list at this district- -but just barely. McSorley defeated him for the district title last year and went to States with a 34-1 record. Apparently he did not match up well with McNulty- -losing to him in the first round and the consolation semi-finals- -and ended up 6<sup>th</sup>. He hammered Caston and beat Marzec in between the McNulty problems. This year he won at Edgewood and the SWOCA and looks, I assume, to draw away from McNulty at States. Weiskittel won the GMVWA, but was only 5<sup>th</sup> at the SWOCA losing by fall to McSorley and later by decision to Gonzalez. Joe Sarnecki has twice been a state alternate, but will have to be in top form to better that this year. State qualifier Bauer may be "on the bubble" here after his great district run of last year. There is substantial parity here and a hot weekend could work its magic again this year. Gonzalez won two district bouts last year and was 4<sup>th</sup> at the SWOCA, but he'll be a longshot. I particularly like Cochrane who missed qualification by one bout last year, but expect to see him at Darby. He won easily at Troy and lost to McSorley, 3-0, at Edgewood. Watch for him. That leaves the freshman Denlinger. He was a junior high state champ last year and was 2<sup>nd</sup> at Fairmont. He has had some mixed results, but he is very good and could be the surprise qualifier at some district.

**130 #**

**PROJECTED CHAMPION: JAMIE CLARK (ST. EDWARD)**

Top Contenders

2	Hoyt (St. Ignatius)	14	Miller (Lakota East)
3	Shivener (Springboro)	15	Jones (Wadsworth)
4	Walker (Northmont)	16	Stevens (Mentor)
5	Hammer (Moeller)	17	Whitt (Grove City)
6	Manley (Holland Springfield)	18	Lehrter (Harrison)
7	Bucca (Brecksville)	19	Taylor (Cuyahoga Falls)
8	Amenta (Clay)	20	Arrendale (Massillon Perry)
9	Carlone (Mayfield)	21	Irwin (Anthony Wayne)
10	Brunner (Avon Lake)	22	Taylor (Kilbourne)
11	Bulzan (Chardon)	23	Zupko (Boardman)
12	Hardtke (Elder)	24	Feller (Hoover)
13	Yurkovich (North Royalton)	25	Gorsek (Mason)

During the past several years Ohio has produced an amazingly high number of exceptional lightweight wrestlers. In my view three wrestlers stand apart--David Taylor, Logan Stieber and Jamie Clark. Clark has not yet received the accolades showered on the others, but his level of performance has been incredibly high. Absent shaky and questionable officiating he would now be seeking his fourth state title at his fourth weight class. His epic battles with David Taylor are legend including David's only loss after his freshman year, and he has become a truly dominating force the past two seasons. His quickness and technique are unmatched, but it is his iron will that truly makes him great. This year he suffered an injury right before the Ironman and has missed all but the first week of the season. If healthy, he is the surest winner in Division I.

Clearly with Clark competing at this class there has been an exodus to 125# and 135#. Many of the senior stars for who a state title is the only unreached goal have moved, leaving all four districts looking somewhat short-handed. It is an opportunity, especially for an underclassman or a senior with limited state championship aspirations to reach state qualification or even state placement.

The two best districts look to be at Ashland and Mentor. At the first named Clark will face a varied field. Manley has been a four-year star at Holland Springfield much of it at 103#. He had a great sophomore year finishing 4<sup>th</sup> and including a win over Corrill. Last year, apparently injured, he lost in the first-round of districts and could no longer compete. More comfortable at this higher weight class and injury-free he should again compete for state placement honors. Also strong at this weight class in Toledo is the sophomore Amenta--a transfer from Waite. He was 4<sup>th</sup> at the GMVWA and 3<sup>rd</sup> at Solon - - losing early and then winning five consolation bouts. Last year he had a tough

district draw losing to Inchaurregui and Young (in overtime). Brunner was a state alternate at this weight class last year losing a close bout to Hoyt. He has won at Avon Lake and was 2<sup>nd</sup> in a close bout at Lorain Southview with Lawrence. A possibility here is state quarterfinalist Tony Bucca who has missed the entire year due to illness. While his return is apparently problematical he would be, if healthy, a real contender for state placement. Two other possibilities are the senior Irwin and the sophomore Taylor. The latter boy was a state alternate last year and could well give the Toledo boys ranked ahead of him here real problems. He was 3<sup>rd</sup> at Hudson and 2<sup>nd</sup> at the Dies.

There are a lot of contenders at Mentor and the sorting out process should be interesting. Hoyt, after a miraculous quarterfinal win qualified out of Mentor at this weight class last year and won three state bouts to finish 6<sup>th</sup>. He failed to place at the Ironman losing in the championship bracket to Sako, 6-4. At Brecksville he was far more impressive winning seven consolation bouts to finish 3<sup>rd</sup> after a first-round upset loss to the precocious freshman, Marshall. Carlone also qualified for Columbus but quickly lost twice to Southwest District competitors. He failed to place at Brecksville - - losing early to Stieber and defaulting out shortly thereafter. After this duo the picture is very hazy. Stevens was 3<sup>rd</sup> at Solon at 135# losing only to state runner-up Skonieczny while getting 2<sup>nd</sup> at North Coast. Yurkovich was only one win and two points away from a state berth last year, but did not win a bout at Brecksville. Bulzan was 5<sup>th</sup> at Solon, but won at Kenston including a big win over Zupko. Arrendale is an up-and-coming sophomore with a real opportunity to qualify. Finally, pay attention to Lazu (Rhodes) who has a lot of physical talent. He won two district bouts last year and lost to eventual state qualifier VanCuren, 21-19. He is dangerous.

The district at Darby as it is presently constituted is very weak. None of the Columbus boys have had sustained big time success this year. One exception might be Whitt who won at Bradley and West Jefferson and won two district bouts last year. Taylor is another possibility with Ouzts or Stemen possibilities. I'm guessing that at least two of the Dayton area competitors qualify at this weight class.

There is some good strength in the Southwest District. Shivener is already a two-time state qualifier and placed last year after missing much of the regular season. I've watched him since he was a junior high state runner-up to Zach Dailey a few years ago. Walker was a district champ and state semi-finalist last year before losing to two-time champ Sammy White and drifting down to 6<sup>th</sup>. This year, however, he was only 7<sup>th</sup> at GMVWA after an absolutely insane draw. Walker was given the #1 see but heralded freshman Bo Jordan was not seeded at all and drew Walker in the rattail round. After many consolation wins he lost to Amenta, 13-10. A third state qualifier is the aptly named Hammer who won the SWOCA. Right behind this top trio are another group of Hardtke, state alternate Miller, Lehrter, and Gorsek.

**135 #**

**PROJECTED CHAMPION: SHAWN FAYETTE (MIAMISBURG)**

Top Contenders

2	Davis (Lakota West)	13	Miller (Bowling Green)
3	Dailey (Massillon Perry)	14	Clutter (Westland)
4	Calarco (North Royalton)	15	Grame (Berea)
5	Gordon (Wadsworth)	16	Shaughnessy (Mayfield)
6	Martin (St. Edward)	17	Ramsey (Lakewood)
7	Riegle (Springboro)	18	Lioi (Glen Oak)
8	Meuer (Medina)	19	Kocol (West Carrollton)
9	McMahon (Cuyahoga Falls)	20	Howes (Pickerington North)
10	Sams (Fairfield)	21	Ferline (Willoughby South)
11	Egnor (Elyria)	22	Glynn (Beavercreek)
12	Mescher (Mason)	23	Myers (Jerome)
		24	Marshall Copley

It's a two-man battle at this weight class and we are likely to see a rematch of the state title bout last year. There may be some bumps in the road and obstacles in the path to the finals, but "Fayette versus Davis: The Sequel" is probably in our future--and this is one time where a sequel might turn out to be the better show.

I see Fayette as the classic "big game" performer. He was 2<sup>nd</sup> as a sophomore using a conservative game plan and a strong defense to win his first three bouts. Then last year he opened it up (well, a little bit) and was never in real trouble on his way to the title. This year he was a quarterfinal loser at the Ironman in a bout where I thought he was the better wrestler and failed to place. He won at North Canton and then in that "three champions" bracket at the GMVWA he lost to Armstrong on a very late takedown, both of these at 140#. I guess there is a possibility that he will stay at 140#, but I doubt it. He made scratch weight the second week of the season, and the top contender is someone he knows and has twice decisively beaten. Why would you move up unless it was absolutely necessary?

Davis has gotten a lot better. I was really impressed at Brecksville with his performance as he marched through the championship bracket. Only a junior he is a two-time state qualifier and was 2<sup>nd</sup> last year - - Fayette beating him 9-4 in the final. I don't believe there is five points between them now, but Fayette may still be the stronger of the two.

Fayette has been a district champ at both Darby and Fairfield the last two years, and I suspect he may be back at Darby in 2010. If so, the competition will not be over-stressing. Clutter was a district semi-finalist last year, but an overtime loss at that time cost him state qualification as he fell to 6<sup>th</sup>. I also like Howes and Green, if he competes at this weight class with, maybe, Luft or Myers a possibility. This looks like a chance for Fayette to prepare for the rigors of the following week.

Davis could have a few more problems at Fairfield. Riegle was 8<sup>th</sup> at 130# last year in his second state competition losing in the quarterfinals to Fayette, 6-4. The state champions closest bout of the competition. Somehow, Springboro results seem rarely to reach Cleveland or the internet, but it appears that he will be at this weight class. Sams was a district semi-finalist last year, but lost to Fayette, 14-1, and fell to 6<sup>th</sup> after losing his consolation bout by two. He has won at Fairfield and was 2<sup>nd</sup> at Kenston - losing by the disturbingly large score of 9-1. The last spot should feature efforts by Kocol, Mescher, and Glynn with I'm sure at least one major surprise.

The deepest district is at Ashland where at least seven strong candidates will compete - although, I would be surprised if any of them had a state finalist label attached to their name in March. The one exception might be Loudon Gordon—and yes, he was named after the hero of Visionquest by a mother who apparently possesses pre-cognition. Gordon can be very, very good or very ordinary. He was 4<sup>th</sup> at his sectional, but then won his district including triumphs over state placers Parra and Mattingly. He finished 7<sup>th</sup> in Columbus with three wins including two by fall. He was 1<sup>st</sup> at North Canton and 2<sup>nd</sup> at Brecksville, beating Calarco, but failed to place at the Ironman though he did defeat Martin by a point. He was 3-0 at the Ohio Duals pinning Martin this time. State qualifier Meuer and Martin might be next best. Meuer lost to Fayette in the first round of States, then split his next two bouts to miss placement. He was 7<sup>th</sup> at Medina losing to Mirman in overtime and to the sophomore Martin. McMahon won impressively at Hudson and was 23-0 when I last checked, but there are a host of other challengers. Miller was just one win from qualification last year while Ramsey also just missed out losing by three to McLaughlin. However, Egnor has been on a roll lately - finishing 4<sup>th</sup> at Brecksville and could well qualify. Add in Marshall and Mazzurco and, if nothing else it is a very crowded district. One last note is the possible inclusion of state qualifier and Brecksville runner-up Charlie Packard at this weight class. I've discussed him at 140#, but he could possibly end up here.

If somebody is going to break up the Fayette/Davis monopoly they will probably come out of the Mentor District. After winning the state junior high title two years ago, Zach Dailey made a seamless transition to varsity competition. He took the district title at Perry and won his first two state bouts before being shutout by Fayette, 4-0. He ended up 4<sup>th</sup>, but in this case the missed seeding situation is pretty much irrelevant as he'll have to beat both Fayette and Davis to win the title. He was 1<sup>st</sup> at Medina this year beating the stubborn Mirman in the finals, but did not compete at the Ironman. Next best is likely Calarco. He was a surprise 5<sup>th</sup> place finisher two years ago in Columbus, but missed most of last year due to injury. He has returned as a senior finishing 3<sup>rd</sup> at Brecksville, losing narrowly to Gordon, but defeating Shaughnessy and Egnor. Shaughnessy, a state alternate last year, and district placer Lioi are potential qualifiers, but former state qualifier Grame has had hot weekends in the past. Ferline is a possibility with Ashton, if they compete at this weight class.

**140 #**

**PROJECTED CHAMPION: ROBERT SHEPHERD (MASON)**

Top Contenders

2	Languis (Scioto)	14	Presley (Harrison)
3	Foster (Massillon Perry)	15	Ashton (Mentor)
4	Ball (Wadsworth)	16	Johnson (Twinsburg)
5	Packard (Brecksville)	17	Orth (Clay)
6	Sage (Fairmont)	18	Thomas (Liberty)
7	Marrone (Parma)	19	Garrison (Copley)
8	Dempsey (Westlake)	20	Wilder (Princeton)
9	DeLande (Davidson)	21	Ridgeley (Lebanon)
10	VanCuren (St. Edward)	22	Chrzanowski (Strongsville)
11	Myers (Butler)	23	Ramey (Teays Valley)
12	Marsico (Pickerington North)	24	Maneese (Ashland)
13	Ruffing (Elder)	25	Globke (Middleton)
		26	Oswald (Uniontown Lake)

For a good portion of the time that I have followed wrestling the Southwest District was seen as one of the weakest wrestling areas in the state. If you were a state qualifier you kind of hoped that you would draw someone from that area as a first-round match-up. That has changed drastically in the last 10-15 years with exceptional wrestlers and powerhouse teams invading all three school classifications. Yes, Graham has set a standard, but so too, have Moeller, Troy Christian, and others. Last year four of the Division I state champions were from the Southwest, and when Orlando Scales won at 215# he was the 200<sup>th</sup> state champion (counting all classifications) from that district. Second most, now that they have passed the Central District.

One of the most interesting weight classes will be at 140#. The clear front-runner has to be Robert Shepherd, last year's state champion at 135#. Shepherd caught me by surprise last year finishing 2<sup>nd</sup> at the SWOCA and failing to place at Medina while losing to Mattingly. While he had pulled an enormous upset as a freshman 112-pounder (Genetin) and placed 6<sup>th</sup>, he had failed to reach Columbus the next year. At States last year it was a different story. He was in top-form with a big semi-final win, 9-3, over Mattingly (who had taken out Salupo) and relatively easy wins in his other three rounds. This year he won at the SWOCA defeating Division III placer Bruewer in the finals, 7-5. He did not compete at Medina. I sense some inconsistency in his results that should give his rivals hope, while trying to out-condition him.

I see two contenders who could potentially dethrone Shepherd. Languis is a defending district champion and two-time state placer who finished 8<sup>th</sup> last year despite an unlucky draw. He matched up with a returning 3<sup>rd</sup> place finisher in the first round and then after two consolation wins had to wrestle Salupo. His only loss this year was to Shepherd in Scioto Invitational finals by a 6-5 score. Foster, also a former state placer was 5<sup>th</sup> at the

Ironman after a tough semi-final loss to Miller. Then at Medina he again met Miller in the semi-finals and lost in overtime and fell back to 3<sup>rd</sup>. He will get very physical with Shepherd and try to wear him down.

Shepherd will exit a competitive district at Fairfield. Sage was a strong 4<sup>th</sup> at 125# last year, but began this season at 152# and has been gradually working his way down. I think this is where he'll end up. He won at Fairmont at 152#. Also back is state qualifier Ruffing who was only 6<sup>th</sup> at the SWOCA and could be in danger of non-qualification. Both Presley and Wilder finished ahead of him, but he did beat the latter boy early in the tournament. Presley also won at Fairfield and was 5<sup>th</sup> at Medina and may well have moved up to the third spot at this district. Globke and Pummill are other possibilities.

The Darby District will be very good with Languis getting the top spot. State qualifier Myers returns after going 1-2 at the state level last year. He was a low placer at the GMVWA and won at Fairmont. DeLande was also a state qualifier as a ninth-grader and won a bout before being eliminated. He was a strong 5<sup>th</sup> at Brecksville after losing in the rattle and battling back through those interminable consolation rounds. Ball just nipped him 3-2 in the consolation semi-finals. Also very competitive is Marsico who was 4<sup>th</sup> at Medina losing to Miller and Foster in overtime. That is a strong quartet, but Thomas, Ridgely and Ramey all have upset potential.

Generally, the Mentor District is loaded with top contenders, but that is not the case at this weight class. Foster has already been discussed and he should not have any trouble until at least the semi-finals. Marrone is probably next best. He won at Hudson defeating Dempsey and Horovitz and also took the title at Aurora. Johnson has had some injury issues at Twinsburg. But he was a district semi-finalist last year, but was eliminated from state qualification on that always forbidding Saturday afternoon. He'll need to get healthy quickly to better that performance. Ashton has been at both 140# and 135#, but considering the competition situation I would expect to see him here. That leaves possibilities like Oswald and Graziani with reasonable hopes, though I expect at least one dark-horse candidate to qualify.

There should be a nice solid group of 140's representing Ashland with all of them having placement potential. All four are returning state qualifiers with one of them (Packard) possibly moving to 135#. I think that Ball is probably best after moving down to 140#. He qualified at 145# last year and went 1-2--losing one bout in overtime and the other by a 1-0 score. Very physical, he wrestles a lot of low-scoring bouts that generates constant jeopardy. He was 3<sup>rd</sup> at Brecksville losing to Tessari by only three and beating DeLande and Orrill in close bouts. He beat both Ashton and VanCuren at the Ohio Duals. VanCuren qualified as a freshman, but didn't win in Columbus. This year he was 2<sup>nd</sup> to Miller at Medina and lost to Ball at the Ohio Duals. Dempsey caught Shepherd in the first round at Columbus and lost 7-3 and then immediately lost again. He was 2<sup>nd</sup> at Hudson, but won at Southview and should do much better this year. Packard was 5<sup>th</sup> last year and is potentially the strongest performer here. He has had injury issues, but was 2<sup>nd</sup> at Brecksville, but still has to decide what the optimal weight

class will be for him. Orth is a solid fifth choice at this weight who could move up with Garrison, Maneese, and Chrzanowski also in the picture.

### 145#

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

##### Top Contenders

2	Salupo (St. Edward)	14	Wray (Springfield)
3	Valliant (Sandusky)	15	Bass (Marysville)
4	Giffin (Harrison)	16	Zvosec (Amherst)
5	Roddy (Brecksville)	17	Orr (Solon)
6	McIntire (Lakota West)	18	Maddy (Fairfield)
7	Range (Brush)	19	Gyorfi (Lorain Southview)
8	Luft (Teays Valley)	20	Robertson (Maple Hts)
9	Benson (Nordonia)	21	Stephens (Brunswick)
10	Baker (Twinsburg)	22	Meyer (Elder)
11	Menker (Centerville)	23	Snyder (Liberty)
12	Locsei (Willoughby South)	24	Kohler (Clay)
13	Freed (Springboro)	25	Tomayko (Copley)
		26	Teis (Hoover)

Tchaikowsky is one of my two favorite composers and his versatility and power may never be surpassed. He was an extraordinary genius who overcame an entire portfolio of personal issues to write breathtakingly beautiful music--and yet he was not a lucky man. At age 50, while still at the height of his powers, he hurriedly went backstage during a rehearsal and mistakenly grabbed a glass of unfiltered water, and died of cholera within a week. A 15-second mistake cost him his life and us, doubtlessly, the further output of a genius. Wrestlers know all about split-second mistakes and while they are not life-threatening they can destroy a bout, a tournament, or a season. Anthony Salupo understands that kind of misfortune.

Last year Salupo appeared to be the top 135-pounder in Division I. He had wrestled brilliantly through a difficult schedule, and had to be acknowledged as the favorite as the state tournament began. In the second round against three-time state placer Scott Mattingly, while holding a comfortable lead, he was reversed and turned in the last 30 seconds and lost 6-5. It was a bout he dominated for 5 ½ minutes, but that one moment of carelessness probably cost him the title (meaning no disrespect to Robert Shepherd who wrestled exceptionally well the entire weekend and deserved the title). Salupo then won four consolation bouts (including one over Mattingly) to take 3<sup>rd</sup>. This year he was 3<sup>rd</sup> at the Ironman losing only to Squire in the semi-finals. It was a bout where Salupo took the vast majority of shots while Squire scored the majority of points. He was excellent at Medina, beating three state qualifiers (and two placers) culminating in an impressive 9-3 win over Grandominico.

His arch-rival, and only real challenger at this weight class, is former state champion Brad Squire. Squire won a title as a freshman, but was 2<sup>nd</sup> his sophomore year losing to Horner at 130#. Last year was marred by illness and injury, but Squire was still a state semi-finalist before his infirmities eventually caught up with him. He was second (by a point) to one of the fabulous Alton twins at the Ironman and won easily at Brecksville—showing more offense than I had seen recently. Squire is a defensive genius, and, now, add a more aggressive offense and he will be difficult to beat. I think Squire, the consummate defensive wrestler will neutralize Salupo's takedown skills. Salupo will take the shots, but will be unable to finish them. Squire will convert a Salupo shot into a takedown - - and that will be it.

By far the best district is at Ashland. Not only are Salupo and Squire competing there, but so is two-time state placer Valliant. He was 5<sup>th</sup> last year drawing two-time state runner-up Rigel in the first round and then motoring back through the consolations. Also present is last year's district champ Kyle Roddy who transferred from University School to Brecksville. We first saw him in his new colors at Brecksville where he finished a solid 5<sup>th</sup>. That is a solid quartet, but as they say in the infomercials there is much, much more. I really like the powerful Benson who lost a two-point decision in his go-to-state bout last year. He was 4<sup>th</sup> at North Canton losing to Range in overtime. Tomayko, Gyorfi, and Kohler all won at least two district bouts and have built on that this year. Stephens was a runner-up at Hudson, but the one to watch for is Zvosec. After a slow start he beat Locsei and pinned Kohler and may be one of those wrestlers that pulls off the big upset.

I'm not seeing as much at Mentor. The Twinsburg coaches have been working all season to slowly bring state alternate Michael Baker back to this weight class. Should they succeed he should qualify this time around. Range, Orr, and Locsei are all nice solid performers with state qualification ability. Range was 3<sup>rd</sup> at North Canton losing a one-point decision to Grandominico. Locsei was 1<sup>st</sup> at Kenston and 3<sup>rd</sup> at Solon. The freshman Robertson is still a young boy, but he won at Hudson and was 2<sup>nd</sup> (to Locsei) at Kenston. He comes off a junior high state runner-up finish last year.

The powerful district is at Fairfield. Giffin is a returning state qualifier who went 1-2 at Columbus last season. He won the SWOCA pinning both Meyer and K. McIntyre before beating Craig McIntire, 6-1, in the finals. It was an impressive performance. However, he was 2<sup>nd</sup> at Fairfield, beating Gyorfi, but then losing to the onrushing Menker 14-9, in the finals. Menker, who had been 5<sup>th</sup> at both North Canton and the GMVWA, is suddenly looking a lot stronger than anticipated. When you see the name McIntire linked with Lakota you now immediately that we're talking about a fine wrestler. This one was 2<sup>nd</sup> at the GMVWA and should qualify. Wray and Maddy were both one win from Columbus last year and have a good chance of upgrading that finish. Meyer is, perhaps, a longshot here, but all the Elder wrestlers this year seem to have a confident attitude.

I've moved state qualifier Freed over to Darby expecting his team to, perhaps, move in that direction. He had a terrible draw at last year's States getting state champion

Horner in the first round and two-time placer Valliant immediately afterward with predictable results. Luft also qualified, but lost to state champ Squire in the first round. He was a semi-finalist at Brecksville, but, again lost to Squire and drifted down to 6<sup>th</sup> place. State alternate Bass should also do well. He lost to Freed in his go-to-state bout, but I believe he has the talent to turn that around. Add in Snyder and Mickley and this will be a solid district competition.

### 152 #

#### **PROJECTED CHAMPION: DAVID HABAT (ST. IGNATIUS)**

##### Top Contenders

2	Harger (Moeller)	14	Travagliante (Normandy)
3	Comar (Twinsburg)	15	Bui (Pickerington North)
4	Gordon (Scioto)	16	Fitzpatrick (Oak Hills)
5	McGrain (Olmsted Falls)	17	Greenwade (Toledo St. John)
6	Wenger (Wadsworth)	18	Bradberry (Lakota West)
7	Davis/Abounader (St. Edward)	19	Graham (Teays Valley)
8	Mathews (Centerville)	20	Freitag (Coffman)
9	Bryant (Piqua)	21	Francis (Princeton)
10	Hammer (Medina)	22	DeJaco (St. Charles)
11	Conners (Elder)	23	Ewing (Miamisburg)
12	Stuckart (Westlake)	24	Spencer (Butler)
13	Smith (Bedford)	25	Swan (Strongsville)

At the beginning of the season I felt confident that David Habat would be pretty much a one-man show at 152#. He has been a sterling performer whose only fault was that he kept competing in the most difficult weight classes. As a freshman, coming off two junior high state titles, he was at 135# competing against Tony Jamieson (who he defeated at districts), Richie Spicel, and Maurice Clopton--who tallied six state championships between them. He finished was able to get 3rd. As a sophomore he was at 140# again in the toughest weight class, finishing behind state champions Spicel and Lang. He finally won his first well-deserved state title last year at 145# defeating Harger and Rigel at the end.

Well, he isn't competing in the toughest weight class this year, but other issues have arisen. At the Ironman he was sidelined by a viral skin disease that seemed incredibly persistent. Finally, competing at Brecksville, and with a dream television match-up with Harrison Hightower looming, he looked way off form. He struggled through Round 2 and then lost in overtime to Wenger in the quarterfinals. The consolation rounds were shaky with a narrow win and then another overtime loss to Gresham--and an eventual 5<sup>th</sup> place finish. You have to believe this is a transitory issue, an aberration that will be quickly corrected. That, at any rate, is what I believe.

The principal challenger will be three-time state placer Pierce Harger. Like Habat, until his breakthrough win last year, he has been on the cusp of stardom. His state losses have all been to outstanding performers where a little good fortune might have made a real difference. Last year he was a semi-final loser to Habat in a 9-6 bout that featured strong wrestling by both contestants. He, by the way, defeated his other four opponents with little trouble. This year he was a semi-finalist at the Ironman losing to Wukie who had a sharp weekend (at least until his injury) and ended up 5<sup>th</sup>. He tore up the SWOCA pinning Mason (the OW at the GMVWA) and easily handling Nealan. The pairings could be very helpful. He'll be seeded away from Habat (should both win their district) but with Comar.

Habat emerges from a district with a short supply of 152's, but does contain two of the very best--Habat and Comar. The latter wrestler has been 4<sup>th</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> the last two years and is a tremendous athlete. At 140# in 2009, he was a state quarterfinalist before losing to four-time champion, Collin Palmer, 8-5. He then won four consolation bouts including a 4-2 decision over Squire. This year, fighting injuries, he won his first two bouts at Brecksville, but then had to default on the second day. At the state duals he went 3-0, but had a scare from freshman star, Abounader. If healthy he will be a handful for anyone here. There is a large fall-off after this duo with Smith and state alternate Travagliante next in line. The latter boy won at Avon Lake but was majored by Smith at the Kalin Tournament. There is a curious lack of other contenders at this district that leaves people like Clemmons (Massillon Perry) and Green (Mentor) with qualification chances.

There is a much deeper group at Ashland, but I'm not sure any of this group has finalist potential. McGrain is the only returning state qualifier and he has had a great season with his only loss to Witt in the Medina final. Wenger has moved up five weight classes with startling success. He was 2<sup>nd</sup> at both North Canton and Brecksville losing by fall to Hightower on each occasion. He beat Habat in overtime at Brecksville. I'm not sure who will wrestle for St. Edward. Davis started the year and did wonderfully well at Medina finishing 3<sup>rd</sup> and losing only to Witt in a close bout. However, at the Ohio Duals state junior high champ Abounader took over and defeated state qualifier Freed and lost to Comar, 8-7. I saw Stuckart at Hudson and he won the title as he did at Beachwood and Lorain Southview. A transfer from North Olmsted where he won two district bouts last year, he looks like a great addition for Westlake. I also like Hammer and Greenwade--both of whom could go at 145# --but may elect to wrestle here.

Gordon stands out at Darby. He won at Scioto and forms a great "one-two" punch with Languis. The rest of the district, not knowing what is coming over from Dayton, does not look overpowering. Bui was a semi-finalist at Medina losing to McGrain in overtime and to Beckley by a point to finish 5<sup>th</sup>. Graham, Freitag, and DeJaco all have performed at high levels and could be expected to fight it out for the last two spots.

There is a lot going on at Fairfield so I anticipate some movement toward Darby. Harger, of course, is the primary focus, but there are a number of solid wrestlers with legitimate state placement hopes. Conners was a semi-finalist at Brecksville before

falling to 6<sup>th</sup> and was 2<sup>nd</sup> at the SWOCA. He wrestles a strong workmanlike bout every time out. Mathews looked very good winning at Fairfield and was 3<sup>rd</sup> at North Canton losing only to Wenger. Bryant was 4<sup>th</sup> at North Canton and is a returning state qualifier where he went 1-2. Bradberry, Ewing, Spencer, and Francis have all done well this year, but Fitzpatrick with a 3<sup>rd</sup> at the SWOCA probably comes right after my top foursome. There will be very good competition from the first round at this weight class.

### 160#

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

##### Top Contenders

2	Marsh (Marysville)	15	Purkheiser (Lakota West)
3	Perry (Mentor)	16	Murden (Fairfield)
4	Mason (Princeton)	17	Blaine (Kilbourne)
5	Bissell (Twinsburg)	18	Lubinski (Anthony Wayne)
6	Brandenburg (Wadsworth)	19	Horvath (Toledo St. John)
7	Linden (Brecksville)	20	Hughes (Grove City)
8	Rivera (Harrison)	21	Petrim (Massillon Perry)
9	Walker (Springboro)	22	Walden (Mason)
10	Tesny (Cuyahoga Falls)	23	Bowens (Darby)
11	Leidecker (Teays Valley)	24	Rheude (Turpin)
12	Pangrace (Strongsville)	25	Morris (Perrysburg)
13	Churchill (Elyria)	26	Mackessey (St. Charles)
14	Erb (Uniontown Lake)	27	Morris (Perrysburg)

\* Note: Coleman is #3 if he competes here

There seems to be a larger than normal number of wrestlers who have had exceptional high school careers, but, somehow, have just failed to win a state title. The poster boy for this crowd is Nick Sulzer who has twice been 2<sup>nd</sup> and once 3<sup>rd</sup> the past three years at weights ranging from 112# to 152#. Last year he defeated my choice (and his former teammate) Andrew Gasber in the semi-finals, but then fell to the athletic Demas, who he had earlier defeated, in the finals 4-3. This year he won his first Ironman title - - including a hard fought win over Demas and then "smoked" the opposition at Medina - - ending all five of his bouts in less than six minutes. He will not have a cakewalk to the title, but I do believe it's his time to win.

There is one exceptional challenger, Marsh, who was just marvelous at Brecksville. Everyone knows he is a special talent - - as witnessed by two state placements - - but his combination of strength and technique was really on display. Two things need to happen for him to succeed - - he needs to stay injury-free, which has been an issue and he needs to choose a weight class and concentrate on wrestling. My guess is that he'll be here (rather than 171#) because he matches up better with Sulzer than with Demas.

There is a big drop-off after Sulzer and Marsh, but otherwise the district completion will be fiercely fought with many competitors at about the same level. At Ashland, for example, there are a half-dozen capable wrestlers vying for the three qualifying spots behind Sulzer. State qualifier Brandenburg had 15 losses last year, but he was a clutch performer at the district level - - finishing 4<sup>th</sup> and reaching Columbus. However, he drew Sulzer in the first round and lost quickly by fall, and failed to place. He was a strong 3<sup>rd</sup> at Brecksville losing only to Marsh (by six) in the semi-finals. Not the luckiest when it comes to bracket draws, he matched up with state champion Ryan in the first round at the Ironman and failed to place. Churchill is also a returning state qualifier who I keep thinking might move down a weight class. He has had a few early setbacks, but has a track record of finishing strong. I think the trio of Linden, Tesny, and Pangrace has moved to, at a minimum, parity with Brandenburg and Churchill. Linden placed at the Beast of the East and Brecksville at 171#, but will likely compete at this weight class. Once comfortable with the weight he could easily be a top-four placer. His 3<sup>rd</sup> at Brecksville was impressive--winning by technical fall over Baker and handling Gaydosh. Tesny was impressive at Hudson pinning McNamara in the finals. Pangrace has been totally under the radar, but his recent win over Churchill hints at his potential. There is also a trio of contenders from the Toledo area. Morris had an interesting district last year. After losing in the opening round, he gained a forfeit and a default before being eliminated. Horvath and Lubinski have both had good past success and could be factors at this district.

The Darby District also has more depth than usual. Marsh stands alone, but several others have state placement potential. Leidecker was a state junior high champ two years ago and then won 43 bouts as a freshman last year. He was one of only three freshmen who qualified for Columbus in Division I at weight classes above 130# (Walker and Tavanello were the other two). He started the year at 171#, but moved down recently and should play a large role at this class. Most recently he was 1<sup>st</sup> at Bradley. Behind this duo is a quartet of contenders who are difficult to separate. Blaine has had success at both 160# and 171# while Mackessey won at Marion Harding and was 2<sup>nd</sup> to Demas at Olentangy. Hughes has had past district success while Bowens did well at Medina (6<sup>th</sup>).

There is also excellent depth at Fairfield where at least eight potential state qualifiers will be in a Darwinian battle to reach Columbus. Mason qualified last year, but ran into Demas (or, maybe, it was the other way around) and quickly lost. He bounced back to win a consolation bout, but an overtime loss in the next round cost him state placement. This year he was 4<sup>th</sup> at the SWOCA, but bounced back to beat state champion Ryan to win the GMVWA and pick up the Outstanding Wrestler Award as well. Walker, only a sophomore, qualified out of the Darby District losing only to Marsh, 3-0. He went 0-2 at States after a close first-round loss. We have seen only intermittent flashes of him this year. But he is a real talent. Rivera was 1<sup>st</sup> at Fairfield and 3<sup>rd</sup> at the SWOCA (at 171#) and was a state alternate last year. Purkheiser suffered that same fate last year losing his go-to-state bout to Mason, 5-4. He was 5<sup>th</sup> at the SWOCA again losing to Mason. Murden also missed state qualification by one win and was 2<sup>nd</sup> to Rivera at Fairfield and

to Canale at Kenston. Add in Walden and Rheude and, maybe, Knabe (though I have rated him at 171#) and it will be quite a tournament.

All is confusion at Mentor as I am finding few candidates. State placer Bissell heads the list, but we have seen very little of him this season. Last year he was a state quarter-finalist losing to Demas, but bounced back to beat Perry and Sneary to get 7<sup>th</sup>. He started at Brecksville, but had to default. Since then, we have seen nothing. Perry was also a state qualifier and he has been very active and successful racking up over 30 wins. Erb and Petrime battled for 7<sup>th</sup> at Medina and seem next best at this district. Erb won two district bouts at 171# last year and also got that win over Petrime at Medina.

### 171#

#### **PROJECTED CHAMPION: JOSH DEMAS (WESTERVILLE NORTH)**

##### Top Contenders

2	Alexander (Findlay)	14	Suvak (St. Edward)
3	Coleman (Mayfield)	15	Dever (Westlake)
4	Korb (Elder)	16	Henry (Maple Hts.)
5	Wheeler (Copley)	17	Basinski (Amherst)
6	Bailey (Groveport Madison)	18	Knabe (Loveland)
7	Quinn (Oak Hills)	19	Mees (North Ridgeville)
8	Baker (Twinsburg)	20	Kutsko (Solon)
9	Randolph (Wadsworth)	21	Schoen (Toledo St. John)
10	Canale (Willoughby South)	22	Forro (Mentor)
11	Ferguson (Pickerington North)	23	Carman (Centerville)
12	Estes (Trenton Edgewood)	24	Dowdley (Glenville)
13	Ramsey (Springboro)	25	Archer (Liberty)

It initially looked like it was going to be a real dogfight at this weight class with a half-dozen or more good contenders led by the likes of Alexander, Coleman, Korb, and Wheeler. Then state champion Josh Demas opted to compete at this class and suddenly my expectations were dramatically different.

Demas has touched all the bases in his incredible career. As a freshman he was a Division III state runner-up for Marion Pleasant. Then, as a sophomore he was 3<sup>rd</sup> at 145# - - after being upset by Valliant - - which may have forestalled a state final against Tony Jameson. Last year he was 46-1 at 152# losing only to Sulzer at Medina, but defeating him in the state finals. He was 3<sup>rd</sup> at the Ironman - - losing again to Sulzer - - but then moved up to 171#. He is a fabulous athlete with more than the full complement of speed, strength, and balance. At Medina he overwhelmed state placer Alexander, 15-7, after Alexander was 2<sup>nd</sup> at the Ironman. He is fun to watch, scores a ton of points, and will be awfully difficult to defeat. Northeast District wrestlers have won the last eight

state titles at this weight class (since the great Hetag Pliev), but will be longshots to extend that streak.

Demas exits a very good Derby District. Both Ferguson and Bailey were state qualifiers last year, but neither of them did so at this weight class. Ferguson competed at 160# and after a district 3<sup>rd</sup> met Korb (who he may well see again) in the first round losing 3-2. He was eliminated when he lost later that evening. He was injured and failed to place at Solon and was 4<sup>th</sup> at Medina losing twice to state runner-up Utley. Bailey qualified at 189#, but, like Ferguson, he lost twice. He won over a good field at Marion Harding that included Recknagel and Zang. I suspect the struggle for the fourth berth will be a wide-open affair with the southwest boys in the forefront.

It looks like a two-man struggle at Fairfield. Korb draws the top spot with solid efforts all year long. He is not flashy or extraordinarily athletic, but he wrestles with penetrating intelligence and an apparent commitment to mistake-free bouts. Last year he was 7<sup>th</sup> at Columbus losing by four to Coleman in the consolations. He was 1<sup>st</sup> at the SWOCA nipping Quinn, 4-3, in the semi-finals. He also won at Brecksville defeating Basinski, Leidecker, Baker, and Coleman (in overtime) in order. At the state duals he shocked Marsh 4-3, and beat Randolph in overtime. He'll try to slow down Demas and make it a one or two move bout - - hoping that in his impatience to score Demas will make some mistakes. Well, it's a plan. Quinn was 3<sup>rd</sup> at the SWOCA and 4<sup>th</sup> at the GMVWA - - losing a 2-1 bout to Christman. He was a state qualifier at 171# last year, but drew Heflin in the first round and was quickly eliminated. I like some of the other SWOCA placers as well with Pressley, Estes, and Knabe all very good. Estes and Knabe both won two district bouts at 171# last year as freshmen, and you know they have to be getting even better. Franz was a district quarter-finalist last year really looked good at the Ohio Duals. He had three falls including one over Suvak.

Coleman, still only a junior, is already a two-time state placer, finishing 5<sup>th</sup> as a freshman and 4<sup>th</sup> last year. Both of his losses were one-point affairs, and had he won that consolation final he could well have guaranteed a state draw away from Demas. He was 2<sup>nd</sup> at Brecksville defeating Randolph and Linden, but losing in overtime to Korb (who he defeated last year). I saw him as the more aggressive wrestler not quite able to finish his shots. The next time they meet will be in the rubber match with each having one win to date. That is assuming that Coleman decides to compete here rather than moving to 160# as is rumored. Baker was 6<sup>th</sup> at this weight class reaching the semi-finals from a fourth place district finish and then bumping into Heflin. He was 2<sup>nd</sup> at Solon and 4<sup>th</sup> at Brecksville, but has had a couple of overwhelming losses. Canale was a district semi-finalist last year and should qualify this time around. He has had a succession of nice wins this year including a title at Kenton. The last spot is wide open with Henry, Kutsko, and Forro the three challengers that first come to mind.

The deepest district is at Ashland. Alexander was 2<sup>nd</sup> at the Ironman with a great run to the finals and 2<sup>nd</sup> at Medina where Demas got off to a great early start and won by a major decision. He was 7<sup>th</sup> last year losing in the quarterfinals on a controversial disqualification to Cory Hayes. His career trajectory has had eerie similarities to that of

his older brother who won two years ago. The big difference may be that Matt did not have Josh Demas in his bracket (although Isley, Lamberg, and Tumlin were there). Wheeler is one of the wrestlers who can easily fall off the radar. He was a state alternate with a district 5<sup>th</sup> last year while Copley was in Division II. This year they wrestle a low profile schedule so you have to do something extraordinary to get noticed. Winning four tournaments helps, but beating Cody Lamberg seals the deal. Randolph lost his opening district bout to eventual state runner-up Cory Hayes, 1-0, and failed to qualify. This year he was 5<sup>th</sup> at Brecksville losing by a point to Coleman and by two to Baker. He took Korb into overtime at the state duals and would be a welcome qualifier in Wadsworth's quest for a team title. Dever has won at Hudson and Beachwood and was 2<sup>nd</sup> at North Coast and Lorain Southview - - where Wheeler beat him 5-1. I think Basinski might be next best but Suvak, Mees, and Schoen are all possibilities. Suvak's 5<sup>th</sup> at Medina looks good but Basinski placed at Brecksville in a strong weight class.

### 189 #

#### **PROJECTED CHAMPION: CALEB BUSSON (WADSWORTH)**

##### Top Contenders

2	Brubaker (Start)	15	Brown (Gahanna Lincoln)
3	Miller (Centerville)	16	Wiley (North Canton)
4	Porter (Mason)	17	Lewis (Middleton)
5	Robertson (Maple Hts)	18	Dixon (Fairfield)
6	DeLande (Davidson)	19	Kelly (North Olmsted)
7	Justus (Pickerington North)	20	Ford (Brookhaven)
8	Stepp (Princeton)	21	Gott (Elyria)
9	Trautwein (Fremont Ross)	22	Schoen (Toledo St. John)
10	Wilson (Uniontown Lake)	23	Feemster (Canton McKinley)
11	Powell (Lakota East)	24	Williams (Rhodes)
12	Hyland (Elder)	25	Rambo (Mansfield)
13	Franz (Springboro)	26	Garred/Palmisano Willoughby South
14	Tayse (Massillon Perry)	27	Russell (Columbus West)

It seemed likely that state runner-up Cory Hayes would be at this weight class giving himself one last opportunity for a state title. He had, perhaps, the most tumultuous state tournament of anyone last year--the controversial win by disqualification over Alexander in the quarter-finals, the sensational 13-10 win over heavily favored Cody Lamberg that same day, and, then, the almost bizarre final round loss to Heflin. However, a football injury has apparently wrecked his senior season, sadly, following in the footsteps of brother, Cody, who suffered the same fate.

As it is presently constituted this is the weakest weight class in Division I. Wrestlers from other school classifications won at Brecksville, Medina, North Canton, the GMVWA, and the Ironman. It is a golden opportunity for someone to step up and win it

all. Maybe, a small 215-pounder or a big 171-pounder will move here or a current 189-pounder will catch fire. At any rate those who select, in advance, the eventual state champ should get double credit.

Missing the first half of a season isn't always a negative. Many times the wrestler is far fresher, less nicked up and anxious to finally get started. The mad rush to ramp up the number of bouts that wrestlers get and to take full advantage of every one of the 20 scheduling points does not always create fan interest or fan attention.

At any rate Caleb Busson missed the first portion of the schedule and just returned for the Ohio Duals. He was a state quarter-finalist last year and placed at what was a far more formidable weight class. He is, I believe, a critical element in Wadsworth's drive to unseat St. Edward. Here they have a strong wrestler at a weak weight class - - that should be a formula for a lot of team points. He exits one of the better districts. Last year Brubaker came to districts with a perfect 35-0 record and had solid wins to get to the semi-finals. An overtime loss to Alexander and one to Bryan left him 4<sup>th</sup>. That was good enough for state qualification, but set up a bad draw and he was gone Thursday night. I think he is much better than that. A strong district performance will put him away from Busson and in perfect position to score heavily at States. I recognize that he could wrestle at 171#, but I'm guessing (and its only that) he will see more opportunity at this weight class. With Alexander and, particularly Demas at 171# his chances of winning are not great. Here, he has a solid chance of being a finalist and can take heart that Busson's only state placement was 8<sup>th</sup>. Trautwein was a state junior high champ a few years ago and I think he is ready to take that final step to stardom this year. He was a state alternate last year missing qualification by two points. This year he was 1<sup>st</sup> at Oak Harbor and Tiffin, but neither he nor Brubaker wrestle a rigorous schedule. The last qualification berth is wide open. Schoen has won at Avon Lake and Scioto while the undervalued Kelly was 2<sup>nd</sup> at Kenston and Solon. Gott has been a steady placer while Rambo has outside possibilities.

With Cory Hayes absent at Mentor, the favorites' mantle falls to the burly Fred Robertson--brother of state champ Erique. He was a state qualifier last year, but lost to eventual champ Tumlin in the quarterfinals and state runner-up Isley in the consolations and failed to place. He won at Kenston and Hudson this year. I think the other three qualifiers are likely to come from Stark County. Wilson was 3<sup>rd</sup> at North Canton and 4<sup>th</sup> at Medina. He was one bout from Columbus last year. Wiley was 4<sup>th</sup> at North Canton while Feemster was 6<sup>th</sup> at North Canton and 1<sup>st</sup> at Manchester. The wrestler to watch, though, is two-time state junior high champ Jo Jo Tayse. Only a freshman he was 3<sup>rd</sup> at the Top Gun and is on the steep part of the learning curve. Garred or Rader are other challengers.

Two boys stand out at Darby--state qualifier DeLande and highly ranked Justus. DeLande had a district 3<sup>rd</sup> last year, losing only Dilley, but lost to Alexander, 7-6, in his state placement bout. Like Busson he has missed a large chunk of the schedule, but, in his case, we have not yet seen him in action. Justus was one win from States last year but lost to DeLande in overtime. He was 1<sup>st</sup> at Solon and 3<sup>rd</sup> at Medina losing to Porter

in that ultimate overtime but beating Wilson for 3<sup>rd</sup>. Brown the champ at Fairmont and 3<sup>rd</sup> at Kenston is a likely third qualifier, but the fourth spot is wide-open. Look for Ford (Brookhaven) or, maybe, Russell as possibilities.

We've haven't seen a lot of the top contenders at this weight class yet. Busson and DeLande have had long absences and the same is true at Fairfield. State placer Nick Miller is, on paper, the best 189-pounder here if he can get to 189 pounds. Last year he was a state quarterfinalist and lost to Lanigan in overtime and falling to 6<sup>th</sup>. Should he make the weight he and Rose make a great 1`-2 punch. Porter, also a state qualifier, lost to Miller in the battle for district 3<sup>rd</sup> and subsequently got a difficult state draw. This year he was 1<sup>st</sup> at the SWOCA and 2<sup>nd</sup> at Medina to Schaefer. Stepp also went two and out at States, but is the third strong performer at this district. He was 2<sup>nd</sup> at the SWOCA and 3<sup>rd</sup> at the GMVWA. Powell and Hyland have been trading consolation titles at the SWOCA and Brecksville and will be factors here. Dixon, 4<sup>th</sup> at Kenston and 2<sup>nd</sup> at Fairfield, is also very good. Two other contenders are Franz who may be at Darby where his qualification chances are very good and the powerful Lewis – 1<sup>st</sup> over Dixon at Fairfield.

### 215 #

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

##### Top Contenders

2	Weeks (Marysville)	15	Gray (Mansfield)
3	Rose (Centerville)	16	Brusadin (Coffman)
4	Wise (Massillon Perry)	17	Ralston (Hamilton)
5	Gordon (Fairfield)	18	Williams- Revel (Maple Hts)
6	Lamancusa (Pickerington North)	19	Willis (Admiral King)
7	Ackerman (Clay)	20	Jackson (Springboro)
8	Willett (Brecksville)	21	Casey (Liberty)
9	Samijlenko (Normandy)	22	Thompson (Mansfield Madison)
10	P. Nusekabel (Elder)	23	Walz (St. Edward)
11	Chabat (Anderson)	24	Compton (Whitmer)
12	Curtis (Brunswick)	25	Marrone (Parma)
13	Porter (Willoughby South)	26	Russell (Riverside)
14	Keller (Lakota East)		

Nick Tavanello was one of the finest big men I have seen in youth wrestling. A state junior high heavyweight he stepped right into the Wadsworth line-up as a 215-pounder freshman and was brilliant. A District champion he made the state semi-finals before losing, but then came "on strong" to take 3<sup>rd</sup>. Excellent on his feet and with a good six-minute motor I anticipate an even better ending in 2010. Still, he was 3<sup>rd</sup> at the Ironman losing at the end to Wenger after a great comeback and 2<sup>nd</sup> at Brecksville after being ground down by Henderson. Those were two bouts I thought he should have won. He

was the champion at North Canton defeating Poyser and he still has not lost to a Division I foe.

There are a number of possible threats to Tavanello, but two seem most dangerous. One of those is the Marysville senior Nate Weeks who has already twice placed at the state level. A state semi-finalist last year he was the only opponent that two-time champ Orlando Scales failed to pin. He wound up meeting Tavanello in the consolation finals and getting pinned with one second left in the bout. This year he was 5<sup>th</sup> at the power-packed weight class at Brecksville. That included losses to eventual champ Henderson and Division III state runner-up Hayes, but wins over Division III state champ Running and Erb. On a hot weekend he could win it all.

Last year, as a sophomore Rose was 5<sup>th</sup> at this weight class--losing only to Tavanello by two points (8-6) and to Weeks in overtime. He won at Olentangy, but, fighting injuries, was 6<sup>th</sup> at the GMVWA. There he lost to Riley Shaw, in the semi-finals and defaulted down to 6<sup>th</sup>. He was 2<sup>nd</sup> at Fairfield losing a 22-11 barnburner to state champ Running. If healthy, he could be an important factor.

Two returning state qualifiers join Tavanello at Ashland. Ackerman was a surprise qualifier ripping through four rounds of consolation to grab a district 3<sup>rd</sup> place. He went 1-2 in Columbus losing initially to eventual state runner-up Allen. He was 1<sup>st</sup> at the GMVWA and 2<sup>nd</sup> at Solon losing by three to Lamancusa. Willett was also something of a surprise qualifier and like Ackerman got 3<sup>rd</sup> with four consolation wins. He fell to Weeks and Gordon in his first two rounds at Columbus. There are a surprising number of other possibilities at Ashland. Curtis was 1<sup>st</sup> at Scioto and 2<sup>nd</sup> at Hudson while Walz placed at Medina. However, the two to watch are Gray and Willis both of whom won two district bouts at this weight class last year. Add in Compton and the excellent Thompson and it is a very crowded district field.

Weeks heads a Darby District that will, I'm sure be augmented by some of the strong Dayton area competitors. Lamancusa is clearly next best with his win over Ackerman, a strong indicator of his ability. He was also 5<sup>th</sup> at Medina falling into the consolations after one of those long overtime losses. I kept expecting to see state alternate Cullen at this weight, but he will apparently stay at heavyweight. That provides a real opportunity for Brusadin to gain some headway with Casey or Odierno as other Central District possibilities.

We've talked about Rose as the leader of this district, but that will only happen if he is injury-free. Two wrestlers who could win a title at this district are Gordon and Pat Nusekabel. The first named was a district semi-finalist last year who after losing to Scales captured 4<sup>th</sup> and qualifying for Columbus. He lost early to Nelisse, but defeated Willett for his only state win. He was 1<sup>st</sup> at Kenston and 3<sup>rd</sup> at Fairfield losing to Rose (again) in the semi-finals. Nusekabel had a couple of district wins before losing in overtime to Porter. He was 1<sup>st</sup> at the SWOCA, but failed to place at Brecksville in what was a brutal weight class. He lost a one-pointer to Willett and by three to state champ Running. He got Weeks and Tavanello back-to-back at the Ohio Duals and lost by fall

to both. Chabat was 3<sup>rd</sup> at the SWOCA and is a dark-horse candidate. Last year Gordon beat him in overtime. Keller and Ralston were solid placers at the SWOCA while Andriot gets a low place at the big tourneys. Jackson beat Walz at the Ohio Duals but was pinned by the rampaging Weeks. I've rated Skinner at 285#, but he could be a factor here.

The junior Anthony Wise seems to have vaulted to the head of the class at Mentor. He was 6<sup>th</sup> at the Ironman and 1<sup>st</sup> at Medina and, apparently, was 3<sup>rd</sup> at the Top Gun. He has shown major improvement and some great wrestling with a fortunate draw could see him wrestling on Saturday night. Last year he missed state qualification by a point - that won't happen this time around. State qualifier Samijlenko is also solid and consistent. He won at Normandy and North Coast and was 2<sup>nd</sup> at Avon Lake. He was 0-2 at Columbus, but that can happen when you draw Scales in the first round. I expected state qualifier Shabazz Ismael to be the third qualifier, but he has apparently run out of age eligibility. However his replacement Williams-Revels, only a freshman, might still carry the Maples Hts. colors to Columbus. He was 3<sup>rd</sup> at the junior high states last year. Porter, 3<sup>rd</sup> at Solon and 2<sup>nd</sup> at Kenston, is probably third best here with Ismael's absence while Marrone and Russell are long-shot possibilities.

## 285

### **PROJECTED CHAMPION: BEN BUZZELLI (WADSWORTH)**

#### Top Contenders

2	Gladstone (Findlay)	16	Skinner (Fairborn)
3	Kuhar (St. Edward)	17	Snoderly (Clay)
4	Marerro (Reynoldsburg)	18	Jackson (Hamilton)
5	Vaughan (Brecksville)	19	Rich (Riverside)
6	Kravec (Garfield Hts)	20	Hiss (Copley)
7	Karageorge (Thomas Worthington)	21	Kellems (Harrison)
8	Lucas (Xenia)	22	Bures (North Royalton)
9	Bucknell (Twinsburg)	23	Crutcher (Glenville)
10	Rajcsak (Stow)	24	Winn (Olentangy Orange)
11	Norton (Princeton)	25	Hoff (Solon)
12	Mayes (Massillon Perry)	26	Byrd (Start)
13	Nusekabel (Elder)	27	Blevins (Lakota West)
14	Boggs (Medina)	28	Boiman (Colerain)
15	Cullen (Mt. Vernon)		

It almost never happens that the last bout of the year decides a tem title, but that could well be the case this year. It is entirely possible (though unlikely) that Wadsworth and St. Edward could become entangled in such a close team competition that the heavyweight bout could be the decider. The most likely participant would be Wadsworth's mammoth heavyweight, Ben Buzzelli. He could become a four-time state

qualifier at this weight class, and I don't remember any Division I heavyweight wrestler every accomplishing that feat. Buzzelli, 6'5" and right at 285 pounds, has twice finished 4<sup>th</sup> and has progressed one step further in the championship each year. Last year he was a district titlist beating eventual state champion Johnson in the finals. This year he was 2<sup>nd</sup> at the Ironman and North Canton and won at Brecksville in overtime. Most opponents now try to slow down the bout, stay well away on their feet, and hope for good things to happen at the end. It worked twice already this year.

Johnson, by the way, was the first Northeast District Champion at this weight class in seven years, as other parts of the state (particularly the southwest) have dominated. Interestingly many forecasters give Wadsworth a reasonable chance of sweeping the last three weight classes. When is the last time that ever happened? Answer at the end.

This is a very busy weight class with lots of possible contenders. It looks like one of those years when we are going to be constantly surprised by the results. It also means that the officiating will be crucial with all the 2-1 bouts you're likely to be seeing. If you are a heavyweight you better be very concerned with the identity of both the other men on the mat with you.

The competition at Ashland will be fierce. We've already discussed Buzzelli, but he is just one of many here. The tall, rangy Gladstone returns for a third shot at Columbus. Last year he finished 3<sup>rd</sup> at his district, but drew eventual champ Johnson in the first round and lost by fall. He then won a consolation bout before falling in overtime in his placement bout. This year he was an Ironman semi-finalist before losing to the nation's top-rated heavyweight and defaulting to 6<sup>th</sup>. He was 3<sup>rd</sup> at Medina losing in overtime to Carpenter who Kuhar nipped for the title. He could be a finalist. Kuhar, the 2009 version lost by fall to Gladstone at districts, but this new, improved version is much better. He placed at the Ironman and was 1<sup>st</sup> at Medina. He pinned Bucknell at the Ohio Duals and lost 3-2 to Buzzelli. He is getting better--and very quickly. Vaughan, behind state champion Johnson the last two years, is huge. He beat Kuhar at the Ironman, but did not place. He was 2<sup>nd</sup> at Brecksville losing in that ultimate overtime to Buzzelli. There's not much you can do to him so he is difficult to score on. Boggs is a mystery. He won one sectional bout last year and failed to place at Medina. Suddenly he's in the finals at the Top Gun giving Karageorge all he can handle. I have no idea what he does from here. Snoderly, 3<sup>rd</sup> at Solon and 4<sup>th</sup> at the GMVWA is the best out of Toledo and, maybe, Byrd can somehow find himself in contention. Hiss won at Southview and Normandy, but that top quintet will be difficult to dent.

There are lots of folks at Mentor as well. State qualifiers Bucknell and Kravec return with good credentials - - Kravec a champ at Kenston and Bucknell winning at Solon. Last year they met in a go-to-state bout with Kravec prevailing 5-0. He went 1-2 in Columbus. Mayes, only a sophomore, is on the upswing. He was a junior high state runner-up two years ago and won a district bout as a freshman before losing to Buzzelli. This year he was 4<sup>th</sup> at the Top Gun, but had horrendous luck losing one-point bouts to state qualifiers Carpenter and Quallich. Also strong is Rajcsak who was 1<sup>st</sup> at North

Coast and Aurora and 2<sup>nd</sup> at Hudson. He had two district wins last year. There is a solid foursome just behind this quartet one of whom will likely qualify. That includes the sophomore Huff, the active Rich who has already placed in three tourneys, Bures, and the athletic Crutcher. One last thought, keep an eye on Reeves (Massillon) who could pull that one big upset.

The two southern districts are not as deep. However, there are some good top-level boys at Darby. Karageorge won the Top Gun and at Harding and is a returning state qualifier. Marerro won at Olentangy (well, kind of) and was 3<sup>rd</sup> at Brecksville. He beat Bucknell twice and is very impressive. Skinner, if here and Cullen should capture the last two spots with Winn a possible deal breaker.

Norton was 1<sup>st</sup> at the SWOCA and 3<sup>rd</sup> at the GMVWA - - coming back from an early loss to Lucas to win six bouts. Lucas won the tournament beating Cullen, 3-2. He also had two district wins last year and along with Norton forms the top of the heavyweight pyramid at this district. Nusekabel, only a sophomore was 2<sup>nd</sup> at the SWOCA and 7<sup>th</sup> at Brecksville. He isn't that far behind the top two boys. After that its open season on that fourth spot with Jackson and Kellems top contenders and Boiman another possibility.

As to the question as to whether any team has ever had individuals that swept the last three weight classes. It has happened only once as Roush, Howard and Bennett won at 155#, 165#, and Hvy (the last three weight classes) for Western Reserve Academy in 1945. The great Gene Gibbons nearly broke up this streak, but lost to Roush at 155#.

## TEAMS

The ongoing battle between St. Edward and Wadsworth will peak the first weekend in March. It is a competition that has invigorated the sport, and created enormous interest. The convergence of two events reminds me of the 1977 competition – The Jeff Cole Tournament. First, it is the last time a public high school, Nordonia, has won the big school Division I team title. Since then St. Edward has won 25 times, Walsh Jesuit 5 times, and St. Ignatius and VASJ once. Second, that year was the last time the team tournament margin of victory was razor thin as Nordonia won by 2.5 points. This year we may see a replication of both those occurrences.

### St. Edward versus Wadsworth

In my mind both teams have five potential finalists. St. Edward has Heil, Sako, Clark Salupo, and Sulzer, while Wadsworth counters with Busson, Tavanello, Buzzelli and the Squires. Here St. Edward has a clear advantage – three of their group have multiple state finalist appearances while Salupo was 3<sup>rd</sup> and Heil is at 103# after winning a junior high state title. Wadsworth, on the other hand has only Brad Squires with state finalist experience and Busson has only placed 8<sup>th</sup>.

Just as critical, perhaps even more, is the ancillary points each team can score with their other wrestlers. At the low weights St. Edward has four possibilities in Bright, Barber, Martin, and VanCuren. None of this group has won a state bout and only VanCuren has ever qualified. The other three have state potential, but two of them have difficult district qualification paths. The equivalent back-ups for Wadsworth at the lower weight classes are Jones, Gray, Gordon and Ball. Two of this group have qualified and have at least one win at the state level, while Gray has wrestled at an exceptionally high level all year. Wadsworth has an advantage here.

At the upper weight classes St. Edward has four potential point makers – Suvak, Walz, Kuhar, and the Abounader/Davis combination. None of this group has state experience, but Kuhar has shown great improvement and junior high champ Abounader is dangerous. Wadsworth counters with the trio of Wenger, Randolph, and Brandenburg with only the latter boy having state experience, but with Wenger having a great year. Again, Wadsworth has an advantage.

In the past St. Edward has often outperformed expectations at the state level, while Wadsworth has not yet gained that reputation. However, this year the pressure will be on the underdog, St. Edward, where all but their top tier wrestlers are young sophomores, whereas Wadsworth has a squad heavily tilted toward experienced upper classmen. Let's call this even.

The district competition at Ashland – where both St. Edward and Wadsworth compete – may well help Wadsworth. Three critical St. Edward back-ups have tough qualification paths. Kuhar has Vaughan, Gladstone, and Buzzelli at his weight class, while Van Curen has Dempsey, Ball, and Packard, and Walz must battle a whole squadron of

215's. So the first battle will be at Ashland with Wadsworth in a plus position even before the war at the Schott kicks off.

1. Wadsworth Not many teams get a chance to be remembered forever. This is one of those times. They last won the state team title in 1942 and that is even a longer span than the last time my beloved Indians were world champions. Maybe we will see both occur this year.
2. St. Edward Thirteen consecutive team titles is an Ohio record for all sports and an accomplishment that staggers the imagination. The fourteenth is in sight, but it will require a super effort to achieve.
3. St. Ignatius Certainly not a great dual meet team, they still have three wrestlers that I anticipate will be state champions – DiCamillo, Robinson, and Habat. That's 75 points right there and if you add points from Hoyt, who already has state placement credentials, we're nearing to 90 points. That was once enough to win a state title.
4. Marysville The trio of McCombs, Marsh, and Weeks is very strong and should generate lots of points. McCombs, in particular, could be a state champ and Marsh and Weeks both have finalist potential. Bass and Green are probably long shots to help, but I really like the freshman, Forrider.
5. Moeller With the return of Corrill this team could definitely reach the third spot. Their lightweights are excellent with Walsh, Myers, MacVeigh, Corrill, and Hammer all with point making potential. However, after that, only the brilliant Harger should be able to score. Myers is a terrific freshman at a difficult weight class – though he still has finalist potential. Corrill has had a wonderful career and one has to be pleased that he can end it on the wrestling mat, while Harger deserves to be a finalist in this his last appearance.
6. Massillon Perry As always, they have an excellent squad with plenty of upside potential. The heart of the team is the brilliant Dailey and the sturdy Foster, but they should get help from both directions. Hannan, Newhouse and, maybe, Millin are up-and-coming lightweights, while Mayes and Wise have really shown improvement.

7. Mayfield A team that will have to perform at peak efficiency to reach this ranking. The key elements for success are McNulty and Coleman. With Lawrence out, McNulty has a real opportunity to score, but he has been “up and down” and Coleman has to be placed at the optimal weight class. Carlone has to come on strong as he did at year’s end a season ago, while Birr, somehow, has to qualify out of that brutal 112# district. The absence of Cory Hayes probably costs them 20 points.
8. Mason Shepherd looks ready to defend his title and that is 25 points. Porter is at the weakest weight class in Division I so he is obligated to score while Luria and Artrip have to qualify and, at the least, capture a low place. Maybe, Gonzalez can help.
9. Brecksville Like Mayfield they’ll have to be in top form to reach this level. The trio of Vaughn, Packard, and Linden has to reach, at the least, mid-level on the podium, while a second grouping of Baran, Roddy, and Willett have to score.
10. Maple Hts. Mines is a defending state champ, but in a very difficult weight class. He’ll have to be sharp to win two titles. Robertson has never placed, but he can beat anybody in that 189# class. The question is whether he can string four good bouts in a row. The precocious freshman Robertson and, possibly, Henry can be helpers.

## Division II

### 103#

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

#### Top Contenders

2	Stainbrook (Streetsboro)	15	Walker (Napoleon)
3	Fiorucci (Olentangy)	16	Davisson (New Lexington)
4	Rix (Akron St. Vincent)	17	Gutierrez (DeSales)
5	Gunter (Coventry)	18	Bible (Bath)
6	Hill (Greenville)	19	Jackson (Athens)
7	Miller (Carrollton)	20	Kopp (Tiffin)
8	Simpson (Clermont NE)	21	Williams (East Liverpool)
9	Lang (Norwalk)	22	Loxterman (Perry)
10	Perry (Howland)	23	Logan (Perkins)
11	Nemec (Crestwood)	24	Leppla (Cambridge)
12	Price (Licking)	25	Becker (Padua)
13	Schoeppner (Canton South)	26	Maple (Jefferson)
14	Smith (Minerva)	27	Heavilin (Harrison Central)
		28	Fee (Lake Catholic)

The 103# weight class is generally one where we see fabulously talented freshmen – junior high state champs and placers – immediately contend for state titles. This year, for example, in the other two school classifications we have top contenders like Dean Heil, Nathan Tomasello, and others as freshmen stars. That is not the case, at least it so appears, in Division II. The top three contenders are all sophomores in a field that is far less strong than in the recent past. None of this trio is a dominant performer so expect a possible upset or two along the way.

Ryan Taylor, no relation to David by the way, is a former junior high state champion who backed up Nick Brascetta, ranked #1 nationally, at this weight class last year. He was 5<sup>th</sup> at the Ironman after throwing away a win in the quarter finals, 3<sup>rd</sup> at the GMVWA, losing to Nick Garcia in the semi-finals, and 2<sup>nd</sup> to a Pennsylvania wrestler in the Top Gun. He has gotten much better on his feet, but has to keep from getting turned by the more powerful boys. He, clearly, wrestles the most difficult schedule of the top contenders.

Stainbrook was a state semi-finalist last year before catching Brascetta at that time with predictable results, and eventually finished 6<sup>th</sup> after losing close bouts to Langdon and McComas. I worry about his strength of schedule. He has been unlucky in that his three tournament victories (Aurora, Hudson and Kenston) have barely challenged him. Hopefully, January will provide the competition he needs, and that appears to have been the case at the Top Gun where he was 4<sup>th</sup>, losing twice to Tomasello.

Fiorucci is something of an unknown. Olentangy was a Division I school last year and has a strong base of returning wrestlers. Fiorucci, for example, won 37 bouts last year while copping a District 3<sup>rd</sup> and a State 8<sup>th</sup>. He was 2<sup>nd</sup> at North Canton in a not so strong field and 5<sup>th</sup> at Medina in a strong bracket. He lost to Tomasello by a point in the semi-finals and to Marsico later. All three of this group emerges from different districts so the pairing should be good.

None of the districts are very strong or deep, but Firestone is easily the best. There are two excellent state placement contenders immediately behind Stainbrook. Gunter was one point away from state qualification last year, losing 2-1 in his go-to-state bout. He was champion at the Dies and Manchester, and 3<sup>rd</sup> at the North Coast. He can turn people from the top. Rix surprised me at Brecksville – He is very good. Only a freshman, he is a very good rider and can score from that position too. He was a semi-finalist at Brecksville, finishing 5<sup>th</sup> and was 3<sup>rd</sup> at the CIT, losing only to DiCamillo. Perry is back for his second district at this weight class after qualifying in Division I last year. He was 2<sup>nd</sup> at Hudson, beating Nemec in the semi-finals. Maple, Schoeppner, and Fee are three of the contenders for that fourth state spot, but it would be somehow satisfying if Paige Nemec can qualify. She was 2<sup>nd</sup> at Aurora and Kenston to Stainbrook and 3<sup>rd</sup> at Hudson. With 100 plus wins she is the best female Ohio high school wrestler in history, and is good enough to qualify at this district.

Fiorucci should have very few problems at Claymont. It is not a strong field and I suspect a couple of the qualifiers are very likely to have names not seen in this report. Price and Gutierrez have both done well with the latter boy finishing 4<sup>th</sup> at the CIT and winning three bouts at Brecksville. Heavilin, a senior, has not wrestled to this point, but he could contend at this district. Smith had been having a great year with a big win at WIT and a 2<sup>nd</sup> at Coshocton, but failed to place at the Top Gun after getting beat by Taylor. Miller, Williams, and Leppla also have a chance here.

Taylor also has few problems (actually none) to confront at Goshen. I think Hill – 5<sup>th</sup> at the GMVWA – is probably next best with Simpson and Davisson next in line. The latter pair met for 5<sup>th</sup> place at last year's district after just failing to qualify with Simpson winning. Jackson, champion at Bellbrook, is another possibility with Ott also having opportunities. This group, except for Taylor, will not be cause for many sleepless nights.

I am really struggling to find viable candidates at Harding. Lang strikes me as best after winning at Norwalk and finishing 2<sup>nd</sup> at Edison. Walker and Bible have both had successes, but none here have had any district success. I've also ranked Logan and Kopp, but there are lots of opportunities here. Maybe, Gonzalez (Defiance) can pull an upset or two.

**112#**

**PROJECTED CHAMPION: ANTHONY BERTUBIN (CAMBRIDGE)**

Top Contenders

2	Miller (Defiance)	14	McKeever/Cassady (Graham)
3	Langdon (Claymont)	15	Scherer (River View)
4	Cash (Aurora)	16	Dingess (Athens)
5	Tassone (University)	17	Pontius (Wauseon)
6	Wilson (DeSales)	18	Coates (Lake Catholic)
7	McComas (Beaver Local)	19	Kopp (Tiffin)
8	Mason (Padua)	20	Conley (Sheridan)
9	Morris (Canton South)	21	Mazik (Indian Creek)
10	Campbell (Lexington)	22	Conley (Sheridan)
11	Maurice (Bellefontaine)	23	McHugh (Olentangy)
12	Graham (West Branch)	24	Struble (Bryan)
13	November (West Geauga)	25	Cron (Celina)

Every year there are scattered throughout the 42 competitions at Columbus, one or two where nothing seems to come into focus (critics would push that estimate dramatically higher). It's a struggle, in particular, to visualize exactly who could end up on the top step of the awards podium. So it is at this weight class where I'm having trouble ranking the likely participants.

The district featuring the most wrestlers with good credentials is at Claymont. There are three contestants who have gained state placement there, along with a very promising freshman. Bertubin ripped through a tough district last year at 103#, which included an experienced state placer and he wrestled three conservative bouts to reach the finals – and finish 2<sup>nd</sup>. This year he won at Barnesville and was only 3<sup>rd</sup> at the OVAC. The more charismatic Langdon lost to Bertubin by three in district action and then his first bout at State – perhaps freshman jitters. He then won five consolation bouts to finish 3<sup>rd</sup>. This year he was 4<sup>th</sup> at Medina, losing to Moore and state champion Goebel (in overtime) by identical 3-2 scores. He is a wrestler impatient to score and, if he wins his close bouts, will be a finalist. McComas was a state semi-finalist last year before losing to Bertubin by two points and then falling to 6<sup>th</sup>. McComas has been at 119# much of the year, including his 6<sup>th</sup> place finish at Brecksville. He lost to Langdon, 4-3, in district play, so this trio is not separated by much. Wilson, the freshman, was 3<sup>rd</sup> behind Myers and Collica at the Junior High States and he is very good. He lost in the quarterfinals at Brecksville to the eventual champ Gray and lost another one pointer to finish 7<sup>th</sup>. With just a little more experience he'll be winning those close bouts. He was 3<sup>rd</sup> at the CIT again losing a close semi-final bout. State alternate Scherer will have to pull an upset to qualify, while McHugh and Mazik would need more help than that.

There are six state caliber wrestlers at Firestone, but I'm not sure any of them are finalist potential. The one who has improved the most is Cash. He won two district

bouts last year, but finished lower than most of the others here. This year he won at Aurora (over November) and then was 3<sup>rd</sup> at Hudson and Brecksville, but only 5<sup>th</sup> at the Top Gun. He has split two bouts with Langdon and defeated McComas. Morris won the Outstanding Wrestler award at Coshocton and was runner-up at the Dies. He, too, has demonstrated great improvement. Graham lost his go-to-state bout apparently on an injury disqualification last year and ended up as a state alternate. He was 2<sup>nd</sup> at Riverside, but lost to Mason at the Duals. I don't know what to expect from him. State qualifier November drew Bertubin in the first round and lost 1-0 and then failed to place. He was pinned in the finals at Aurora and Kenston. He'll have to be better to qualify again. State qualifier Tassone has been injured virtually all season, but I'm told he'll be ready by tournament time. He has a state win under his belt. Coates was 2<sup>nd</sup> at Coffman, but only 6<sup>th</sup> at the CIT. He is in danger at this district.

A top candidate for the title will exit out of Harding. B.J. Miller is already a three-time state qualifier who has been 8<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> the last two years. He seemed a little tentative last year, but he has a wealth of experience. This is his third year at 112# and his last chance, so I think he'll be at his very best. Defiance has only had one state champion – Dave Harrow, back in 1971 and, maybe, it will be their turn in 2010. Mason is also a returning state qualifier who only got to wrestle on Thursday after an opening overtime loss. He has had an erratic year. He was a third seed and did not place at Brecksville, but then beat Graham at the Ohio Duals, but lost to McComas. He was a strong 2<sup>nd</sup> at the CIT, beating Wilson, but then getting decked by the freshman Myers. Campbell looks like a qualifier – winning at the Gorman and pinning McDougle to win at Elgin. Lexington has an excellent team and Campbell is a solid lead-in to their high-powered middleweights. That leaves Kopp, Pontius and, maybe, Pauff (Elida) as candidates for four openings.

The district at Goshen looks very weak unless Ward eventually moves. Absent that, state qualifier Maurice leads the way. He was a solid 3<sup>rd</sup> at this district last year and went 1-2 at States. McKeever was 7<sup>th</sup> at the GMVWA and has wrestled a terribly difficult schedule that should help him here. I had heard that the freshman Cassady might be the varsity wrestler by year's end, but I have not yet seen any evidence of that. Dingess was the state alternate at this weight class last year and should be able to move up that one extra step on the podium to qualify. Conley had a couple district wins last year and most recently won at Sheridan. I really expect a couple of the marginal 119's to move down.

**119#**

**PROJECTED CHAMPION: TY MITCH (AURORA)**

Top Contenders

2	Brascetta (Graham)	14	Kazimer (Kenston)
3	Ward (Goshen)	15	Harting (Kenton Ridge)
4	Burkhart (Carrollton)	16	Lee (Oakwood)
5	Nelson (Carroll)	17	Stiffler (Clyde)
6	Hutchins (Canal Winchester)	18	Fox (Cambridge)
7	Hackworth (Oak Harbor)	19	Bement (NDCL)
8	DaFonseca (Padua)	20	Parsons (Licking Valley)
9	Webb (Miami Trace)	21	Thompson (London)
10	Foster (East Liverpool)	22	Descenna (Howland)
11	Edwards (Greenville)	23	Beane (Claymont)
12	Kunzler (Highland)	24	Willis (Port Clinton)
13	Beemer (Wapakoneta)	25	White (Big Walnut)
		26	Formick (Streetsboro)

It is always exciting when two great state champions end up at the same weight class. It is particularly true at 119# where both state champions have extraordinary credentials. It will surely be a battle of titans when they take to the mat on Saturday evening.

Ty Mitch is a two-time state champion, winning over good friend Johnni DiJulius two years ago in overtime, and defeating, somewhat more easily, Brandon Gambucci last year. A junior national champion, he is sensational on his feet, racking up takedowns with incredible speed, power, and technique. Aurora has a great tradition, but this is the best wrestler that has ever walked their halls. This year he dominated at Hudson and Brecksville, but was a controversial 5<sup>th</sup> at the Ironman. Competing in the strongest weight class, he met up with Brascetta in the quarter-finals and snapped his 49 bout winning streak with a 7-3 decision. It was Brascetta's first loss since Mitch defeated him in the state semi-finals two years ago. Then wrestling two-time champ Hunter Stieber he appeared to have won an exciting semi-final in the last 30 seconds. Even Stieber thought he had lost, but one person who didn't was the referee who concluded that the four points he had apparently signaled never occurred. Somewhat distraught, Mitch lost a close consolation bout to state champion Robinson before beating national prep champion Mark Grey for 5<sup>th</sup>. To beat Mitch you have to negate his huge arsenal of takedowns in addition to his being brutally tough on top.

The only possible candidate is Brascetta – up two weight classes. He is very good and I like his heart. After that loss to Mitch at the Ironman he won four tough consolation bouts, including victories over Grey and Robinson. It was a new experience for him to have to battle back. He breezed to the state title last year with his closest bout a 13-4 decision in the finals. That battling back did not end the Sunday after the Ironman.

Brascetta moved it up to a whole new level when he defeated Mitch at the Ohio Duals, 4-3, and again at the Top Gun, 4-2, ratcheting up the stakes at this weight class.

I'm still picking Mitch. I believe him to be a big match wrestler unafraid at the moment of highest tension. Brascetta is super good (heck, he was ranked No. 1 in the nation last year), but Mitch will ratchet up the pressure a few more notches. They've split their high school bout at two wins apiece. The fifth bout will be the "decider" not only in their personal battle, but for a state title.

There is no question that Brascetta faces far more district competition. There are currently five other state qualifiers there with state placer Ward next best. He was district runner-up to Isaac Jordan last year, but lost an overtime first round bout to three-time placer Westfall. He won two consolation bouts before losing to A. Miller and B. Miller. This year he was 3<sup>rd</sup> at the SWOCA and Brecksville, losing only to Mitch on a fall. As a freshman last year he won his first 43 bouts – he may end it with a streak longer than that. Edwards was 8<sup>th</sup> last year at 103#, losing to Burkhart in his last bout. He was 7<sup>th</sup> at the GMVWA in a very strong weight class. Webb, Harting and Lee were all state qualifiers last year, but lost all six of their state bouts. The luck of the draw was not to be for them. Of the trio I like Webb the best. He was 6<sup>th</sup> at the GMVWA, and has been a solid placer at other events. Nelson, who was 4<sup>th</sup> at the GMVWA, has passed some of this group. Incidentally, Mark Hall from Ryle High School in Kentucky, where the rules differ, won the SWOCA at this weight class and was 2<sup>nd</sup> at the GMVWA. He lost 14-4 to Brascetta, but won nine straight bouts to that point. He is a seventh grader.

Three names stand out at Claymont. Burkhart is a two-time state qualifier who was 6<sup>th</sup> two years ago at 103#. He was 5<sup>th</sup> at North Canton, but has missed some time. Hutchins was 3<sup>rd</sup> at last year's districts, giving the champion Warner his only close bout. He pulled a major first round upset pinning Miller, but then lost to the one-two punch of Jordan and Ward. He has been at 125# much of this year, but will wrestle at this weight class. He was 3<sup>rd</sup> at Elgin at the higher weight, losing only to state runner-up Gambucci. Foster was a state alternate last year, losing a 7-6 heart breaker in his go-to-state bout. This year he is 21-1, winning at St. Clairsville. The last berth could go to any number of possibilities, including Thompson, White, and Parsons, all of whom had two district wins last year. A long shot might be Beane who placed at Medina, and defeated Edwards in the Ohio Duals.

There will be some solid action at Harding. DaFonseca was a state qualifier two years ago as an 119 pound freshman, but was thwarted for a second tip by a 1-0 loss to Meeks. He started slowly this year winning only once at the Ironman and losing to Hackworth, and did not participate at Brecksville. However, he had two falls and a 10-1 decision over Edwards at the Ohio Duals and was a strong 4<sup>th</sup> at the CIT. Kunzler is also a returning state qualifier. He is a real scrapper. He had 20 losses last year, but managed to battle through sectionals and districts to qualify. His reward – Brascetta in the first round. Hackworth may have passed both these two. He was 1<sup>st</sup> at Oak Harbor and Perrysburg, and 7<sup>th</sup> at Medina. Beemer, who was one bout from qualification, is probably next best with Willis and Stiffler as possibilities.

Unless I'm missing something, there seems to be no competition for Mitch at Firestone. Always a great district, I'm finding no real contenders for state action. I think Kazimir might fit the second spot here, but then we have names like Bement, Descenna, and Formick. As Geoffrey Rush says in "Shakespeare in Love" – "It's a mystery."

### 125#

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

##### Top Contenders

2	Stone (Oak Harbor)	14	Goolsby (Hillsboro)
3	Gambucci (Lexington)	15	Perez (London)
4	Kegley (Graham)	16	Hupp (West Branch)
5	Romanchik (Padua)	17	Greenlee (Circleville)
6	Smith (Kenston)	18	Caserta (Olentangy)
7	Neff (Miami Trace)	19	Thurn (Clyde)
8	Miller (Beaver Local)	20	Tarulli (Orange)
9	Reed (Canfield)	21	Wohrle (Bradley)
10	Wiltshire (Buckeye Local)	22	West (Vermillion)
11	Holy (Lake Catholic)	23	Jester (Mansfield Madison)
12	Von Neumann (Carroll)	24	Kress (Louisville)
13	Mercer (East Liverpool)	25	McCarthy (Defiance)
		26	Llewelyn (Steubenville)

One of the most critical tasks for a wrestling coach is determining the optimal weight class for his wrestlers, particularly those with high-level aspirations. Clearly, the most important element is the physical aspect – putting a wrestler where he is comfortable with the weight and can achieve maximum performance. Also important is matching the wrestler's goals with what is possible in each weight class, and finally, the strategic analysis which plots the activities of other strong performers and looks for that perfect niche that matches objectives with reality. Those elements suggest that 125# may be a crowded weight class – containing a returning state champion, three past state runners-up, and assorted other talents.

My choice is the defending state champion Johnni DiJulius. Now a junior, he was 2<sup>nd</sup> two years ago in an overtime loss to Mitch at 103#, and then overcame early season injuries to win at 119# last year. It closed out a 32-1 season where his only loss was in the district semi-finals. This year he was impressive at the Ironman, losing only to Logan Stieber, 6-2, and defeating Jesse Delgado, the California star, for 3<sup>rd</sup> place. He has become much better at controlling a bout, but cannot fall into the trap of "wrestling not to lose." With his talent, few can withstand his powerful offensive capabilities.

Stone was a surprising 2<sup>nd</sup> last year pinning in the first two rounds and then upsetting Inghram (the only wrestler to beat DiJulius), 9-7. I expected a shoot out in the finals, but both boys wrestled very carefully (too much?) with DiJulius winning 1-0. It turned out to

be a great year for Stone, with a 39-3 record. He won four bouts at the Ironman, but lost two very close bouts and failed to place. He was 2<sup>nd</sup> at Medina losing to former state champion Gus Sako – again by a 1-0 score. He, too, needs to turn up the offense.

Gambucci has a decision to make. He was 2<sup>nd</sup> at 112# last year, losing to Mitch in a bout where he was taken down five times in the first period. After that his skill as a mat wrestler came into play, but it was much too late. Prior to that he wrestled exceptionally well, winning a district title and beating three-time state placer, Westfall in the quarter finals. This year he won at the Gorman and was 2<sup>nd</sup> at North Canton after defeating the West Virginia state finalist in the semi-final and losing a one-point bout to the Michigan state champ. He has a decision to make as to his best weight class. As I see it he already has been a state runner-up so the only meaningful objective is to win it all. He has done everything else. At 119# he would have to beat both Mitch and Brascetta to take the title, both of whom are takedown experts – a style that troubles him. At 125# he faces wrestlers who fit his strengths much better. A key would be to win that Harding district. That would then put him in the opposite half-bracket away from DiJulius and Stone and, perhaps, Neff as well.

Neff is always a puzzler. Two years ago he moved down two weight classes to 112# and was brilliant, finishing 2<sup>nd</sup> to the unbeatable David Taylor. However, last year things did not go as well at 119# with Neff losing twice at Goshen and failing to make it to Columbus. This year he is now at 125# and this is where I think he'll compete. He was 3<sup>rd</sup> at the GMVWA, beating Osborne of Ryle, Kentucky by fall after losing to him in the quarter finals. He knows his way around the mat and you don't want to fall behind him early in a bout.

The Firestone district would seem to have a ready made four qualifiers. State qualifier Smith is a wild man, scoring points in huge quantities, but giving up some too. I love that style. He needs to be in great condition to beat the best, and he is very athletic. He upset Gambucci at Elgin, 11-9, in a bout at his tempo. He was 3<sup>rd</sup> at Kenston to the excellent Pasquale, 9-7, and won easily at Solon. He went 1-2 at States last year, losing to Stone in the first round. Reed was 3<sup>rd</sup> at Medina, losing only to Stone while Holy upset McNulty at Brecksville and was a strong 5<sup>th</sup>. There is a huge gap to the next batch of contenders so you have hope the pairing will work out. People like Tarulli and Hupp might be next.

Gambucci and Stone face a huge threat at Harding. Romanchik has been a whirlwind sweeping everyone aside. He won four bouts at the Ironman and only loss to DiJulius, 4-2. He was 3<sup>rd</sup> at Brecksville and beat Corrill in overtime to win the CIT. He beat Miller at the Ohio Duals to avenge an earlier defeat and will challenge everyone here. He was 4<sup>th</sup> in the state two years ago at 103# and could match that this year. Again a huge drop off after this trio, with West, Thurn and Jester possibilities

It looks like Kegley may have gone by Neff after winning by fall at the Top Gun. Kegley ended up 3<sup>rd</sup> there while Neff was 5<sup>th</sup>. Kegley was 2<sup>nd</sup> at the GMVWA and went undefeated at the Ohio Duals. He was 7<sup>th</sup> at 119# last year losing two close bouts by a

total of three points. Von Neuman might be a step below this duo. He was 2<sup>nd</sup> at Franklin to the powerful McSurley and was 6<sup>th</sup> at GMVWA losing to Kegley in the semi-finals, 15-7, and to Neff later, 5-1. He was 5<sup>th</sup> in a strong CIT field. Former state qualifier Greenlee and Creamer are possibilities, but Bellbrook winner Goolsby would be my choice for that fourth state ticket.

Arizona Miller is already a three time state qualifier who placed (6<sup>th</sup>) last year for the first time. He was a semi-finalist at the Brecksville, losing to McCombs in the semi-finals. Wiltshire and Mercer were both state qualifiers last year in solid weight classes, but came home without a state win. I saw Wiltshire at the North Coast and he is a tough, hard-to-beat competitor. I think they'll take home two or three of the qualifying spots with Columbus boys – Perez, Caserta, and Wohrle (a great name from the past) vying for the last ones. Llewelyn is another solid possibility.

**130#**

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

Top Contenders

- |    |                           |    |                                |
|----|---------------------------|----|--------------------------------|
| 2  | Skonieczny (Walsh)        | 15 | Fusco (Hartley)                |
| 3  | Fickel (Padua)            | 16 | Fox (Field)                    |
| 4  | K. Warner (Claymont)      | 17 | Kooser (Oakwood)               |
| 5  | Hile (Lexington)          | 18 | Van Dyne (Cambridge)           |
| 6  | Mellinger (West Branch)   | 19 | Hylton (Southeast)             |
| 7  | E. Warner (Greenville)    | 20 | Felgenbauer (New Philadelphia) |
| 8  | Shepard (Sparta Highland) | 21 | Zeman (Avon)                   |
| 9  | J. Rininger (Highland)    | 22 | Davidson (Bethel Tate)         |
| 10 | Brown (Tallmadge)         | 23 | Santos/Colvin (London)         |
| 11 | Campbell (Perkins)        | 24 | A. Bergman (Oak Harbor)        |
| 12 | Brower (Bellbrook)        | 25 | Thomas (Morgan)                |
| 13 | Benedict (Canfield)       | 26 | Mahoney (Rocky River)          |
| 14 | Beemer (Wapakoneta)       | 27 | Day (Valley View)              |

As the “State Tournament Victories By District” showed, Division II had the smallest variability by district. Overall there was only a 4.9 percentage point difference between the top scoring district, Firestone (51.7%) and the lowest performing district, Heath (46.8%). That is deceptive in the sense that the Goshen district divided itself into two unequal parts as the chart below shows:

	Championship		Consolation		Overall	
	Rounds		Rounds			
Graham	41-6	87.2%	8-1	88.9%	49-7	87.5%
All Other Goshen Qualifiers	17-43	28.3%	33-47	41.3%	50-90	35.7%

This highlights the incredible Graham performance and graphically demonstrates the enormous imbalance at that district and, later, throughout the state. It would be surprising should Graham be able to duplicate such a performance this year, but the continuing influx of superior freshman provides them with just such an opportunity.

The crown jewel of their freshman class this year is highly touted Bo Jordan. A two-time junior high state champion where he totally dominated, he now moves to the rugged 130# classification. I have not seen him this year since he missed the Ironman due to injury, but I do remember him from youth wrestling. At the GMVWA his closest bout was 19-4 in the finals, and he defeated state qualifier Brower 17-2 in the semis. Things got a little closer at the Ohio Duals when he beat Mellinger by five and then at the Top Gun after a series of crushing victories he lost one of those 1-1 let's go into overtime bouts to Skonieczny. Despite this I still make him the favorite.

It seems almost incredible that someone who was a state finalist last year, and defeated three highly ranked wrestlers in winning the Ironman last month would not be the overwhelming favorite at this weight class. Nate Skonieczny is a marvelous competitor and obviously gave Jordan all he could handle and, maybe, a little more. He lost to two-time champ Neibert by only two points in last year's final and has proven a resourceful competitor in close, low scoring bouts. Still, just a sophomore, theirs is a rivalry that could continue for two more years.

It is no sure thing that Jordan and Skonieczny will meet in the finals. First, there are some wrestlers lurking in the bracket sheet with upset potential and, secondly, the pairing gods could be obstinate. The key element in both cases is Brent Fickel. He was 3<sup>rd</sup> last year at 125# and should both he and Skonieczny win their districts they will be paired in opposite half brackets. That means Jordan has a 50% chance of hitting Skonieczny in the semi-finals. Fickel cannot be overlooked. He placed at the Ironman and was 2<sup>nd</sup> at Brecksville, losing only to the redoubtable Logan Stieber. He told me he has already surpassed his father's exploits when he was in the 5<sup>th</sup> grade. He and Skonieczny are old rivals with Fickel losing a state junior high title to him.

A dark horse candidate here is Kyle Warner. He was 5<sup>th</sup> last year at 112#, but has been a terror at this weight class. He crushed the field at Barnesville and had a solid win at Medina. He wrestled Jordan two years ago for the junior high state title, losing by a not insurmountable 4-0 score. This time at the Top Gun he was gone in 55 seconds. He has been a little shaky the last few weeks, losing to Evan Warner and having a few close bouts.

Skonieczny heads the field at Firestone. State qualifier Mellinger was a quarter-finalist last year before losing to Martinez, and was able to get 6<sup>th</sup>. As his score with Jordan showed, he is a stubborn competitor, but nobody had a Sunday quite like his when he met Jordan, Fickel, and Warner in the same afternoon. He won at Riverside, but will really have to hustle to beat last year's placement. Brown was a district finalist at 119# last year, but lost twice on Thursday at States. He wrestles a rather low profile schedule, but has shown an ability to wrestle well at year's end. State qualifier Fox is

also at this weight class and he was a surprise (at least to me) state qualifier last year. Now, only a sophomore, he'll be doubly challenged at this difficult weight class. Benedict won two Division I district bouts last year and placed at Medina last month. He will be a threat to everyone but Skonieczny. Hylton and Elliott are on the periphery, but will need some upsets to get any closer.

Jordan should pretty much have things his own way at Goshen. Brower and Warner are both returning state qualifiers who between them went 1-4 in Columbus – Brower defeating the aforementioned Fox. I think they are both clutch wrestlers – They both won their go-to-states bout on a fall – who maximize their potential. I noted that Warner, the Greenville wrestler named Evan, defeated Claymont's Kyle Warner in an upset at the Ohio Duals. Still Brower was 5<sup>th</sup> at the GMVWA and Warner 8<sup>th</sup>. Kooser is the best bet for that fourth spot (he's defeated Warner), while Davidson and Day are other possibilities.

There are three wrestlers at Claymont who were state quarter-finalists last year along with at least five other worthy wrestlers. We've talked about Kyle Warner, but Van Dyne was able to capture 7<sup>th</sup> place while Shepard – in Division II – lost two in a row. Both are back, but Van Dyne was 2<sup>nd</sup> to Warner at Barnesville losing 14-1, but has only lost once since then. Fusco was a Division III state quarter-finalist two years ago, but did not get out last time. He was most recently 4<sup>th</sup> at the CIT. Right behind this quartet is another foursome led by state alternate Felgenbauer. He was champion at the WIT. I also like Thomas and whomever London puts on the mat, be it Santos or Colvin.

While the other three districts are all very good the Harding is really loaded. I am hard pressed to imagine that none of this group will not survey the surrounding weight classes and note the more congenial circumstances at 135#. I am rating state qualifier Cook at that weight class, but also just guessing that he might move and I expect some others might do the same. We've already discussed the brilliant sophomore Fickel, but Hile is also very good. He was 5<sup>th</sup> last year, losing twice to Garringer, the second loss in overtime. He wrestled Fickel in the district final, but lost, 5-3, in overtime. Both boys are underclassmen so the rivalry could extend past the state tournament. Hile was undefeated this year until the Elgin final when Kunzi nipped him, 5-4. State qualifier Campbell is only a sophomore, but very talented. However, he has been in a slump, failing to place at Brecksville – winning three times – and getting 5<sup>th</sup> at Elgin. He'll have to move it up a notch. Jake Rinnger was a state quarter-finalist two years ago, but missed out last year. He was 4<sup>th</sup> at North Canton and 5<sup>th</sup> at the Dies. Beemer also qualified two years ago, but had a bad Saturday afternoon and ended up 5<sup>th</sup> at the district. Someone to watch is state alternate Zane Zeman, who has had a lot of big wins this year. Also watch for Mahoney and A. Bergman, where the "A" could well stand for another.

**135#**

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

Top Contenders

2	Henline (Coventry)	15	Hobley (Steubenville)
3	Mirman (Highland)	16	Faust (Lexington)
4	Kazimer (Kenston)	17	Z. Bergman (Oak Harbor)
5	Miller (Greenville)	18	Quisenberry (Kenton Ridge)
6	Cook (Toledo Central Catholic)	19	Westfall (Morgan)
7	Horovitz (Crestview)	20	Zedaker (Bryan)
8	Storts (Springfield Shawnee)	21	Katich (Louisville)
9	N. Skonieczny (Walsh)	22	Davis (Circleville)
10	Willis (Carroll)	23	King (Lake Catholic)
11	Meeks (Bath)	24	Jones (Ross)
12	Maggard (Eaton)	25	Nelson (Southeast)
13	Wolfe (Licking Hts.)	26	Rigney (Alder)
14	Hoopes (West Branch)		

I was amused last weekend listening to a couple of guys discussing all the advantages the Graham wrestlers have, especially the Jordans. In that latter case they talked about inheriting natural coordination and strength and how it was leveraged with the coaching and the opportunities. Now I well remember Jim (the older of the boys) coming on he scene from the weakest area of the state without a lot of fanfare. Yes, Jim was coordinated, but so are a lot of kids to that extent. What set him apart was a steely determination to win and the enormous self discipline to make it happen. The last time the all time great John Smith lost a collegiate bout was the final one of his sophomore year. The winner (and national champ) was Jim Jordan. I suspect that this next generation has inherited some of that fearsome will, and that has become the key element when wrestling at the highest level.

This is not a strong weight class and I suspect, as I said earlier, some movement in this direction. As it is presently constituted I think Jordan is at least a half step ahead of his nearest competitors. I say that not knowing as I write this whether Miller, his equal, will drop from 140#. He was 3<sup>rd</sup> last year at 112#, so we're seeing a four weight class jump, losing in the semi-finals to Mitch who dominated on his feet. Jordan won his other four bouts with ease (six points or more) finishing with a 44-4 record. He was 4<sup>th</sup> at the Ironman, losing an 8-7 quarter-final bout as he competed at 140#. Now at this class his only other blemish was a 1-0 loss to Zach Dailey in the finals at the Top Gun.

The Goshen district will provide four qualifiers with placement potential. Four of the current group, in addition to Jordan, have previous state experience, and I see them as tightly grouped in ability. Storts defeated Miller last year at 135# in district action and went on to place 8<sup>th</sup> in Columbus. Miller, who lost both state bouts, reversed that decision at this year's GMVWA and went on to be a finalist while Storts dropped to 5<sup>th</sup>. Maggard, up two weight classes, won at Xenia, but apparently did not compete at the

GMVWA. He probably has a decision to make about the identity of his best weight class. Willis qualified at this weight class and went 1-2 in Columbus, missing placement in a 5-4 loss to Maiwurm. He started the year at 140#, winning at Franklin. At the CIT he was 4<sup>th</sup>, losing to Hammer and Cook. Two others to watch are state alternate Davis and freshman Jones. He won at Fairfield and cannot be under-estimated. Quesinberry, injured at the GMVWA, can be very good. He was a semi-finalist before defaulting and dropping down to 6<sup>th</sup>.

Two possible Jordan challengers will emerge from Harding. Mirman has had yet another excellent year. He was 2<sup>nd</sup> in overtime at North Canton to Loudon Gordon, 2<sup>nd</sup> at Medina to Dailey, and 2<sup>nd</sup> at the Dies to Henline. It's a trend that he would not mind continuing for the remainder of the year. However, he has, for whatever reasons, not been at his best at tournament time. Cook, as we all know, could well end up at 130#, though this is, at the moment, a far weaker weight class. At 130# at Brecksville he lost by technical fall to Fickel and to Hoyt, while failing to place. Back at 135# he defeated Willis for 3<sup>rd</sup> place at the CIT in a solid weight class. Last year he was a state semi-finalist before losing to DiJulius and falling to 6<sup>th</sup>. There are four other contenders at this district. Meeks, only a sophomore, was 3<sup>rd</sup> at the GMVWA and 1<sup>st</sup> at Allen County, after missing state qualification by one victory – losing to Cook in his go-to-state bout. Faust, also a sophomore, had two district wins last year, won at the Gorman, and was 2<sup>nd</sup> to Kazimer at Elgin. Z. Bergman and Zedaker are also strong.

The weakest district is at Claymont. Wolfe has had a fine year winning, for example, at Upper Arlington and Licking County. Holey was a state qualifier last year in a dramatic manner, winning his go-to-state bout 11-10. This year he has won at Claymont and Steubenville. After that it is “by guess and by golly” with Westfall, Rigney and, maybe, Colvin. I expected to see state qualifier Tyler Berger at this weight class, but he is apparently not competing this year.

There will be plenty of action at Firestone. Henline has twice placed 5<sup>th</sup> and has finalist possibilities. He beat Mirman at the Dies after majoring Dankle in the semis, and has also won at North Coast. He has a pleasing aggressive style. Horovitz lost to Henline for 3<sup>rd</sup> place at last year's district and quickly lost twice in Columbus. Like Henline he started the year at 140# and has since dropped. He was 3<sup>rd</sup> at Aurora and Hudson (losing to Marrone both times), but was 1<sup>st</sup> at Kenston. He has good placement potential. Kazimer qualified at 125# and placed 8<sup>th</sup>, losing to Neibert in the quarterfinals. He was 7<sup>th</sup> at Kenston to Skonieczny, 3-2, (far closer than the 16-5 loss to the same opponent at districts), and won at Kenston beating Sams, 9-0. Hoopes (a state alternate last year), and Katich are possibilities as is Brecksville placer King. There are still two major unknowns at this class. State junior high champ Lawler (he beat Dailey that year) has been injured and his reappearance, if at all, is unknown to me. Nick Skonieczny, a state junior champ two years ago, had an injury-laden freshman year. Now back at this weight, he showed real signs of a re-awakening, finishing 5<sup>th</sup> at the Top Gun. If he starts hitting on all cylinders, I've ranked him way too low.

**140#**

**PROJECTED CHAMPION: FELIPE MARTINEZ (GRAHAM)**

Top Contenders

2	Armstrong (Kenton Ridge)	15	Strayer (Hebron Lakewood)
3	Miller (Oak Harbor)	16	Novak (Walsh)
4	Kardasz (Lexington)	17	Hupp (Marietta)
5	Heffner (Bath)	18	Isaacs (Valley View)
6	Higgins (Bradley)	19	Bickel (Woodridge)
7	Rininger (Highland)	20	Bray (Wilmington)
8	Monebrake (Eaton)	21	Justice (Bellevue)
9	Garbrandt (New Philadelphia)	22	Yant (Olentangy)
10	Stitzlein (West Holmes)	23	Bryan (Lake Catholic)
11	Loxterman (Perry)	24	Lutes (Minerva)
12	Staudacher (Indian Creek)	25	Mauk (Wapakoneta)
13	Scheidel (Holy Name)	26	Smith (Benjamin Logan)
14	Korosec (Aurora)	27	Volkman (Wauseon)

There are a number of excellent wrestlers at this weight class, but it is the possibility that three superstars will clash here that creates the real excitement. Let's set the stage.

I am assuming that defending state champ Felipe Martinez will compete at this weight class. Perhaps the most heralded youth wrestler since David Taylor, he won three junior high state titles and a boatload of national age group titles. He did not disappoint. At 130# he was 2<sup>nd</sup> at the Ironman and won everything else including a state title – during which he had three falls including a 74 second one in the finals. He clearly is one of the most exciting and charismatic wrestlers we have seen in some time. Fantastically gifted, he wins with a flair that attracts attention.

A wrestler that knows him well is former state champ Tucker Armstrong. A sophomore transfer to Graham two years ago, he immediately went out and won a state title at 125#. Then last year (after winning the pre-season Super 32) he was unable to make the Graham team with state champions Neibert, Martinez and Taylor ahead of him – losing the wrestle off to the then freshman Martinez. Stories circulated that he was in Colorado or California, but clearly he was no longer at Graham and, in fact, was this fall ranked nationally in California. He suddenly reappeared at his original high school, Kenton Ridge, and was 2<sup>nd</sup> at the power-packed GMVWA. A last second takedown gave him a 3-2 win over Division I state champ Shawn Fayette, and then he lost to Martinez (again), 3-2, in the finals. Then at the Top Gun it wasn't as close with Martinez winning, 7-3.

Miller, now a junior, was 3<sup>rd</sup> last year after an upset loss to the excellent Henline in the quarterfinals. Another of the Miller clan from Oak Harbor, he comes from a great tradition, but will have to beat both Martinez and Armstrong to win. He had an

outstanding December this year. He crushed the field at Oak Harbor and was 2<sup>nd</sup> at the Ironman, beating Foster and going toe-to-toe with the #1 nationally ranked Chris Villalonga before losing in overtime. He won at Medina, nipping Foster again and then majoring VanCuren in the finals. All this written on the assumption he will stay at 140#- if not, this all gets transferred to an epic struggle with another Graham wrestler Isaac Jordan.

The way I look at it is this. The bout in December between Martinez and Armstrong was a “show me” bout with both boys desperately wanting to prove a point. In January Martinez wanted to show it was no fluke, but I believe by this time Armstrong was thinking ahead. The only one that counts now is the fifth – well, not quite. The sectional meeting means little, but at districts if Martinez wins he’s away from Miller and Armstrong is not. The only one, however, that really means anything now is the last one. It is difficult to beat an excellent wrestler many times in a season. The great one can do it and that is why I’ve chosen Martinez.

Lest we forget, there are three state champions at this weight class. Three years ago Cody Garbrandt was one of the hottest freshmen in the state. He beat Westfall, Gilchrist, and Neibert in succession to win the 112# state title. The following year he fashioned one of the most sensational comebacks to stun Gilchrist in the semi-finals. He seemed charmed until Neibert beat him for the 119# title. Last year it seemed to fall apart. He was injured, came back late in the year, and had little success. This year he has moved from Claymont to New Philadelphia and has had some un-Cody like results – possibly related to the injury. He did win the WIT, but it is a mystery as to what the circumstances will be at state tourney time.

Garbrandt is at the Claymont (sort of ironic) district, which features many wrestlers of about equal ability. Strayer and Staudacher are returning state qualifiers who went a combined 1-4 in Columbus. Strayer was 2<sup>nd</sup> in this district, losing probably the most exciting district final in the state, 15-14. Stitzlein, a state alternate, and Lutes have both had strong seasons after solid district showing last year. The wild card is Andrew Higgins who, if memory serves, was at 112# for Center Crossing last year. He has been very good at this weight class, including a 4<sup>th</sup> at GMVWA, and going 10-8 in a loss to Fayette. He may end up at 135#--or less.

Clearly, Martinez and Armstrong tower over the rest of the field at Goshen. That leaves two spots for all the other competitors to battle for. Hupp was a state qualifier two years ago, but has missed all of this season. State alternate Monebrake was 3<sup>rd</sup> at Xenia and 8<sup>th</sup> at GMVWA. I’ve got Smith, Isaacs, and Bray as other possibilities, but the door is open.

The Harding district is easily the best, especially if Miller stays at 140#. He could well be a finalist at either weight class. Kardasz has had a sensational season. He has the Gorman title, won handsomely at Elgin, and was 2<sup>nd</sup> at North Canton to state champion Fayette. He was a state qualifier last year, but got a first round date with David Taylor and was done by Thursday evening. Heffner was 4<sup>th</sup> last year in his second attempt at

Columbus. I think he was just inches from being a finalist. He lost to eventual runner-up Cintron 15-10 in overtime in a bout he nearly won. He failed to place at the GMVWA, losing to Higgins, 10-6. Rininger, if on his game, should qualify, but has missed a good portion of the season. Justice, Volkman, and Mauk are other possibilities.

The Firestone district looks very weak. Novak was 6<sup>th</sup> at the Ironman after a very slow start. He was a state qualifier last year at 112#. Scheidel, a St. Edward transfer, won the CIT, while Korosec placed at the Top Gun. Loxterman was a district semi-finalist and state alternate last year, losing his go-to-state bout to Henline, 6-5. He can probably go at 135#, but may choose at this district to stay at 140#. Bryan and Bickel are other wrestlers who could get through.

### 145#

#### **PROJECTED CHAMPION: MATT STEPHENS (GRAHAM)**

##### Top Contenders

2	Ice (Beaver Local)	16	Montoney (Woodridge)
3	Grandominico (Olentangy)	17	Edwards (Greenville)
4	Fondale (New Lexington)	18	Klosz (Holy Name)
5	Rosch (Canal Winchester)	19	Schaffer (Roger Bacon)
6	McCormick (Kenmore)	20	Porter (Crestwood)
7	Massillo (Van Wert)	21	Poyser (Louisville)
8	Beauch (Toledo Central Catholic)	22	Ammons (Sparta Highland)
9	Jacobs (West Holmes)	23	Harble (Licking Valley)
10	Conrad (Ross)	24	Land (Valley View)
11	Schindel (Hoban)	25	Strawser (West Branch)
12	Fee (Lake Catholic)	26	Thayer (Buckeye)
13	Cramer (Oak Harbor)	27	Trejo (Wauseon)
14	Fralely (Miami Trace)	28	Davis (Philo)
15	Burrows (Lexington)	29	Schlieper (Cambridge)

This could well be the deepest and most interesting weight class in Division II. As I write this I count 14 wrestlers with previous state experience, though there may be some attrition as some seek a more congenial landing place. Still, with the state champions at 140# and Hightower at 152# there are no easy bracket sheets available. I think it is possible that one wrestler could prove to be a step above everyone else, but I think it is more likely that we will see high quality, competitive bouts from the very first round. As I see it there are six possible winners although dark house candidates abound.

My top choice and the one wrestler who may be able to separate himself from the rest of the field is Matt Stephens, now a junior. A junior high state champion he was an immediate starter for Graham at 140#. After winning a district title he lost in overtime in the first round at Columbus, but roared back to finish 4<sup>th</sup>. Last year he was a dominant

figure at States, winning three one-sided bouts before losing to Hightower in the finals. This year he crushed the field at the GMVWA and was 4<sup>th</sup> at the Ironman, losing only to Andrew Alton (by fall) and Salupo (7-5). Then he battered the Top Gun field beating Fraley by fall in the finals. Should he be hitting on all cylinders he would be the one competitor who could pull away from this field.

As I see it three potential threats to Stephens lurk at Claymont. Grandominico was 7<sup>th</sup> at States in Division I after losing a tough quarterfinal bout. This year he won at Olentangy and was 2<sup>nd</sup> at Medina, beating Jacobs by three and Fondale by one point, 7-6. Salupo handled him in the finals. Ice is exceptionally dangerous and a dynamic pinner. His only loss this year was a shocking fall by a sensational Georgia freshman – after Ice had dominated the bout to that point. He was a state semi-finalist last year, losing to Hightower in the semi-finals and finishing 3<sup>rd</sup>. He will be in the opposite half bracket as the Goshen champ (assuming he wins this most difficult district) and that is somewhat likely. Stephens beat him 4-2 two years ago at States. Rosch has been injured part of this year, but has excellent credentials. He is a two-time state qualifier who upset Witt in the first round last year. After being pinned by Hightower he beat Fee, among others, to finish 5<sup>th</sup>. That is a very tough trio. Jacob, also a returning state qualifier, should have the best shot at the fourth slot, and he is a tournament-tested wrestler. He was 6<sup>th</sup> at the very tough Medina weight class, losing close bouts to Valliant and Cramer. Ammons, Harble, Schlieper, and Davis have good credentials, but look to be squeezed out.

Stephens has a very tough competitor in his own district. Fondale was 3<sup>rd</sup> at Medina, losing the one pointer to Grandominico and beating two-time Division I state place winner Valliant and Cramer by falls. He was 3<sup>rd</sup> at this weight class last year, losing in the first round and then winning five consolation bouts. Conrad and Edwards are two other returning state qualifiers at this district, but may not match up well with the top duo. Edwards got a tough draw and lost badly in both bouts, while Conrad had the opposite experience, losing 9-8 and 10-8. Edwards was 6<sup>th</sup> at the GMVWA, losing a close bout to Massillo. Conrad was 2<sup>nd</sup> at Fairfield while testing the waters at 140#. He might have an easier time qualifying at this class. One other wrestler not to overlook is Fraley. He won a couple of district bouts at this weight class, but has done even better this year. He was 7<sup>th</sup> at the GMVWA, losing very close bouts to Massillo and Menker (in overtime). He was a runner-up at the Top Gun, losing to Stephens by fall in the finals. It was probably, however, not the toughest weight class there, but the finish was still impressive. Schaffer was a state qualifier two years ago, but failed to win a return trip last year. He failed to place at the CIT and is probably a long shot to earn a second qualification. Land and Numbers look like they'll have to have the weekend of their life to qualify.

The big name at Firestone is Garland McCormick. He was a state qualifier three years ago in Division II, but then, when his school was reclassified, wrestled in the big school division. He also qualified as a sophomore, but fell short last year. Now back in Division II he has one last chance to place. He has fallen one win short in his previous two tries. This year he was 2<sup>nd</sup> at Solon, but since then has missed a major portion of

the season. If healthy, he is a dynamo. Schindel was 8<sup>th</sup> last year, winning two state bouts. He got there off a district where he won his last two bouts in overtime. He was 2<sup>nd</sup> at Hudson and 6<sup>th</sup> at the Dies. He wins the close bouts which makes him dangerous. Fee and Montoney are both returning state qualifiers. Fee went 1-2 last year, losing to two of the best, Stephens and Rosch. He started late this year after football, but is now rounding into shape. He was 4<sup>th</sup> at the CIT, losing one-point bouts to Kiefer and Klosz. Montoney was a Division III state quarter-finalist last year, finishing 8<sup>th</sup>. He was just recently 7<sup>th</sup> at the Dies. Poyser and Strawser are other threats, but the real long shot possibility is Porter.

Harding might not have finalist threats, but they will qualify four solid performers. Beach, Massillo and Cramer have all wrestled at the state level and should do so again. Beach was 3<sup>rd</sup> at this district, but went 0-2, losing to Fee in the consolations. He won at the CIT beating Kiefer and Klosz, but was 4<sup>th</sup> at Brecksville, losing to Kiefer. Cramer has made the transition from the very low weight classes to here. He was 1<sup>st</sup> at Oak Harbor and 5<sup>th</sup> at Medina beating Jacobs, but losing to Salupo and Fondale. Massillo was a district runner-up at this weight class, but failed to win a bout in Columbus. He was 3<sup>rd</sup> at the GMVWA losing (badly) only to Stephens. Burrows and Klosz are both very good. The former won at the Gorman, but failed to place at North Canton. Most recently he won at Elgin. Klosz, only a sophomore, was great last year, but lost to Witt in the districts and did not get out. He was 3<sup>rd</sup> at the CIT and he will be a force this time around in district action. Thayer and Trejo will also be factors here.

## 152#

### **PROJECTED CHAMPION: HARRISON HIGHTOWER (UNIVERSITY SCHOOL)**

#### Top Contenders

2	Gresham (Goshen)	15	Hetterscheidt (Olentangy)
3	Witt (Oak Harbor)	16	Costa (Edison)
4	Worley (Big Walnut)	17	Lockhart (Coventry)
5	Dues (Celina)	18	Bloniak (Highland)
6	Carpenter (Ravenna)	19	Henderson (Benedictine)
7	Wohlgamuth (Benjamin Logan)	20	Budka (Vermillion)
8	Ramjattan (Greenville)	21	Boyce (Minerva)
9	Ganoe (Aurora)	22	Schlarb (New Philadelphia)
10	Beckley (Claymont)	23	Kutzli (Wauseon)
11	Watkins (Tipp City)	24	Cox (Norwood)
12	Martin (Toledo Central Catholic)	25	Mannier (Graham)
13	McGinnis (Bath)	26	Fleming (Port Clinton)
14	Bellomy (Canal Winchester)	27	Roehrig (Defiance)

One of the unsung superstars of Ohio wrestling is the outstanding middleweight, Harrison Hightower. A tall, rangy, and very athletic competitor he is one of those pleasing wrestlers who likes to score points in great bunches, and seeks to win by fall if at all possible. He occasionally takes chances that a superior, grind-it-out wrestler can

utilize to score against him, but that happens far less frequently today. He won as a sophomore at 130#, upsetting the favored and undefeated Sean Collins. Then last year, after a district loss, he sped through the 140# state bracket, beating Stephens (again) for his second title. Interestingly, he has twice won at Brecksville, both times by fall, including one over last year's Division I state runner-up Tommy Sasfy. Sometime in the future when we write about excellent wrestlers in the middleweights during the early part of the 21<sup>st</sup> century his name will receive high praise.

I think Hightower may have chased some good wrestlers down to 145#. However, on reflection, some of this group may decide that 152# is far more attractive than it first seemed. It would not surprise to see an influx of wrestlers back to this weight class.

Hightower has a relatively easy district. It would not surprise if Carpenter and Ganoë have considered 145#, but I expect to see them here. Carpenter was a state alternate last year after losing 1-0 in overtime in his go-to-state bout. He was 4<sup>th</sup> at the Top Gun, losing early, but working his way back to the consolation finals. Ganoë won two district bouts last year and has had a busy schedule this year. He was 3<sup>rd</sup> at Aurora and Hudson and 7<sup>th</sup> at Brecksville. He beat Beckley and Mannier at the Ohio Duals, but failed to place at the Top Gun. Henderson, Lockhart, and Mataresse are other solid performers, at least one of whom will qualify.

Two wrestlers stand out at Goshen – and neither is from Graham. Gresham is really impressive and could win one of these state titles soon. He was 1<sup>st</sup> at the SWOCA and 4<sup>th</sup> at Brecksville, losing to Hightower, 10-5, and to Walters in overtime. He defeated state champion Habat at that meet along with Walters, who he beat in overtime. Ramjattan was a total surprise. I had him nowhere on any list last year, and I'm baffled as to how I totally missed him. He was a district runner-up, losing only to state champion Stephens, and then won two state bouts to reach the semi-finals. He ended up 6<sup>th</sup>, but it was an incredible performance. He was 7<sup>th</sup> at the GMVWA, but crushed all three of his Ohio Duals opponents including Beckley. Watkins and Wohlgamuth were both one bout from States last year – and both ended up as state alternates. Watkins lost a tough district bout to Ramjattan and then had to go against Fondale in his go-to-state bout. Wohlgamuth lost that same type bout to Edwards, 6-5, to just miss qualification. This year Wohlgamuth won at Franklin while he was 3<sup>rd</sup> at Troy Christian and 1<sup>st</sup> at Troy. Cox had three district wins and don't forget about Mannier. He will not want to be left behind.

Witt is now a junior and he has begun to put it in high gear. He was 6<sup>th</sup> at the Top Gun at 160#, losing twice to Harger, and 1<sup>st</sup> at Medina and Oak Harbor. A district champ and state qualifier last year, he lost to Rosch in the first round and failed to place. He could be a finalist this time around. There is not a lot of firepower at this district. I think Martin, Dues, and McGinnis might be next in line here, but that is well behind Witt. Martin was 5<sup>th</sup> at the CIT and 8<sup>th</sup> at Brecksville, losing to Ganoë at that juncture. Dues was the state alternate from this district after piling up a 50-3 record last year. They do not wrestle an ambitious schedule, but he did win at Toledo St. John. McGinnis could go at 145#, but trying to think along with him he might find this a more congenial

location. He was 1<sup>st</sup> at Allen County beating state placer Rayl, and 5<sup>th</sup> at the GMVWA. Bloniak might be best positioned to battle this top quartet with Budka, Kutzli, and Fleming other possibilities. Watch out for Perrysburg champ Roehrig who has come down from 160#

There are a lot of possibilities at Claymont, but it is difficult to untangle them all. Beckley is the only returning state qualifier (he was the district champ), but he went 1-2 at States losing in a first round upset. He won at Barnesville and was a solid 4<sup>th</sup> at Medina. However, at the Ohio Duals he was beaten by Ganoe and crushed by Ramjattan. I think Worley might be second best here with Hetterscheidt also in the running. Worley was a state alternate last year. Costa is undefeated at this point, while Bellomy and Boyce have had some big wins. Add in Whyte and Schlarb and anything could happen. None of which will much impact the top group at State.

### 160#

#### **PROJECTED CHAMPION: BRAD WUKIE (UNIVERSITY SCHOOL)**

##### Top Contenders

2	Ryan (Graham)	15	McNamara (Aurora)
3	Christman (Indian Lake)	16	Silver (London)
4	Nealan (New Richmond)	17	Ryba (Crestwood)
5	Lamancusa (West Branch)	18	Hosom (Hebron Lakewood)
6	Hildenbrand (Franklin)	19	Garner (Finneytown)
7	Kluk (Highland)	20	Gilday (Kenston)
8	Hoffman (Eastwood)	21	Smith (Clyde)
9	Eddy (Harrison Central)	22	Brown (Wapakoneta)
10	Williams (Wyoming)	23	Monhollen (Morgan)
11	Kullman (Minerva)	24	Shalosky (Dover)
12	Eicher (Canal Fulton NW)	25	Minch (Celina)
13	Riker (New Philadelphia)	26	Otero (Circleville)
14	Nadeja (Hubbard)	27	Riggs (Bradley)

This weight class and the next one would both seem to be a competition dominated by two wrestlers, but in each case there appears to be complications. Ryan, the defending state champion, always seems best at the end of the year. A two-time state junior high champion, he twice defeated excellent fields to win those titles. Last season, as a sophomore, he had nine losses going into sectionals. However, he really didn't have a close bout during the tournaments until the finals when he beat the favored Walters, 5-2. This year he was 4<sup>th</sup> at the Ironman, losing only to Division I superstars Sulzer and Demas, although by horrifyingly large margins. At the GMVWA he finished 2<sup>nd</sup>, losing to Division I state qualifier Mason, 5-4, a rather unexpected result.

Wukie has had a great career. He was an overtime loser in the state finals as a freshman at 119# in 2007. Injuries gutted his sophomore year, but he was still a state semi-finalist. Last year at 152# he drew his nemesis McGookey in the state semi-finals

and dropped a 6-3 decision and then had to default his third place bout – so he will not be a seedable wrestler this year. At the Ironman he beat the Oklahoma state champ Skate and Pierce Harger, but was again injured and defaulted to Sulzer in the finals. The continuing thread of injuries and defaults is a worrisome concern when evaluating his state possibilities. His solid, mistake-free style would be a tough match-up for Ryan, but whether he'll be healthy at tournament time and can maintain that health is a pertinent question.

Here is what I've seen and heard. Wukie will be healthy by tournament time. Ryan can be brilliant, but not always. Ryan does not look in good shape. Wukie is a consistently strong performer, but is unlucky with health and pairings (same half as McGookey last year and same half as Skonieczny the year before). Luck never flows exclusively in one direction. I picked Walters to win last year, but Ryan was brilliant and took the title. Can he do it again?

Wukie exits a district that he should control rather easily. Lamancusa, however, could be a bit of an issue. He was a state qualifier last year at 160#, but failed to win a bout in Columbus. He was 1<sup>st</sup> at the Dies over a strong field and 1<sup>st</sup> at Riverside. Eicher is another returning state qualifier who has wrestled half the year at 171#. He was there last week, but was only 6<sup>th</sup> at Dies which, perhaps, will help him decide which way to go. Nadeja was a surprise state qualifier last year capturing 3<sup>rd</sup> at his district, including a win over Lamancusa. He lost to Linden in the quarterfinals at the Dies and, worse, was also injured which could impact his chances. McNamara is a bit of a fooler. He never, at least to me, seems to do much, but he has a lot of victories. He was a state alternate last year, missing state qualification by a single point. This year he won at Aurora and was 2<sup>nd</sup> at Hudson and Brecksville and 5<sup>th</sup> at the Top Gun. This quintet is good, but Ryba, Gilday, and Keener are not so far behind that they couldn't make it to Columbus.

It is an interesting grouping at Harding. Humphrey has won at the Gorman and Elgin, and was a solid 3<sup>rd</sup> at North Canton. He was a district semi-finalist at 171# last year before dropping three straight bouts. He beat Kluk, 1-0, for 3<sup>rd</sup> at N. Canton, but this freshman is very good. He was a state junior high champ last year (beating Richie Robertson) and he is very good. He was 3<sup>rd</sup> at Medina, losing only to Nick Sulzer in the semi-finals and winning at North Coast. Hoffman is one of the last remaining wrestlers from the great Eastwood teams. He was 3<sup>rd</sup> at the GMVWA losing only to the tourney's OW, Charles Mason in the semi-finals. Smith, Brown, and Minch have the best hopes of securing that fourth state ticket. A missing component here is three-time state qualifier and twice state placer Riley Kilroy. An outstanding performer, he hung them up a year early to pursue other interests.

As it was at 152#, the Claymont District looks to be a helter-skelter affair. Three wrestlers appear to me to stand out among the crowd of potential qualifiers. Riker was 2<sup>nd</sup> at both the WIT and Medina losing to Hall and Sulzer in those finals. Kullman was a big 171 pounder, but now appears ready to compete at this weight class. He won at Coshocton and appears ready to step up to the state level. Eddy looks to be the class

of the “river” wrestlers with a 21-3 record. I think Hosom, Silver, and Monhollen are a second solid trio, with Shalosky and Blake (Cambridge) wild card possibilities.

The Goshen District is loaded. Ryan is the state champion, but he will need to move up a level to retain the district title (let alone the state one). Christman was the district runner-up last year winning by huge scores until Ryan majored him in the finals. He got off to a bad start in Columbus, though, and finished 1-2. This year he has been at 171# virtually the entire season, but has certified at this weight class. He was 3<sup>rd</sup> at the GMVWA at 171#, losing by one point to Evans and has won everywhere else. I thought he would stay at 171#, but he may sense weakness and figure his title chances are better, with Wukie hurt and Ryan looking sluggish. I’m guessing he won’t decide until February. Nealan is also very good. He was 2<sup>nd</sup> at the SWOCA to Harger and, has otherwise, been undefeated. He was 6<sup>th</sup> last year, losing to Kilroy, but winning three consolation bouts. Hildenbrand and Williams are both state qualifiers with strong credentials. Williams is very good but a weak schedule allows for little growth. Hildenbrand was a state quarter-finalist last year and finished 8<sup>th</sup>. He won at Franklin among other tournaments. That’s five solid wrestlers with only four state slots. Factor in Garner and Otero and it will take a strong will to qualify.

## #171

### **PROJECTED CHAMPION: CODY LAMBERG (KENMORE)**

#### Top Contenders

2	Evans (Graham)	15	Nentwick (Beaver Local)
3	McCall (Wauseon)	16	Almandinger (Van Wert)
4	Mallarnee (Oak Harbor)	17	Eshelman (Milton Union)
5	Gryniuk (Washington CH)	18	Lestock (Lake Catholic)
6	Trautman (Perkins)	19	Baughman (Norton)
7	Magalski (Walsh)	20	Kaiser (Harrison Central)
8	Gaydosh (Padua)	21	Cole-Young (Kenton Ridge)
9	Johnson (Dover)	22	Peterson (Revere)
10	Silvus (Springfield Shawnee)	23	Miller (Chaminade)
11	Tricker (Howland)	24	Ashburn (Streetsboro)
12	Zang (Hartley)	25	Miller (Carrollton)
13	Recknagel (Rossford)	26	Davidson (Ross)
14	Hazlett (London)	27	Lawrence (Southeast)
		28	Murray (NDCL)

I kind of view this weight class as a two man battle, although, Christman would have every right should he elect to compete here to see it as, at least, a three-way struggle. What could impact this weight class is the pairings that may provide one of the Goshen competitors with a real advantage.

Lamberg certainly has paid his dues and seems ready to finally cash in on his enormous talent. A junior high state champion, he had a great freshman year, winning

36 times at 171# and finishing as a state alternate. As a sophomore, with Kenmore now a Division I school, he won the district title at 189# and, then made it to the state semi-finals. At that point he lost a one-point decision to the eventual champ and finished 4<sup>th</sup>. Last year he was at 189# for about a month and then, surprisingly, dropped to 171# - a weight class that he seemed uncomfortable with. He lost an 8-7 barnburner to the eventual champ Heflin in the district finals, but again was a state semi-finalist. This time he lost 13-10 to Cory Hayes in a major upset and again finished 4<sup>th</sup> – a result of substantial import for this year. This year, back in Division II at 171#, he has to be the favorite to win it all. He won smashingly at Solon and handily at North Canton and now seems comfortable at this weight class. Still, he seems susceptible to the big upset. Most recently it was at the Dies when he dropped an 8-6 decision to relatively unheralded Wheeler.

Evans, a two-time state junior high champion, is another of the prodigies that Graham continually delivers. Last year he lost 8 bouts during the regular season at 152#, but was battle-hardened by tournament time. He won his first eleven bouts on his way to a state runner-up finish that was not entirely unexpected. What I noticed after the state final loss to McGookey was his anger and disappointment after the defeat. A state runner-up finish at that time, a brilliant achievement, still could not be enjoyed – at least not then. This year, up two weight classes, he was 4<sup>th</sup> at the Ironman losing twice to Utley by identical 3-2 scores and 1<sup>st</sup> at the GMVWA, nipping Christman by a point, he seems to be improving by “leaps and bounds” and Lamberg had better beware. If Evans wins it will not be an upset.

If Christman eventually chooses to wrestle at this weight he is obviously right with Evans. A one-point loss is not insurmountable, but Graham wrestlers seem to do better in subsequent meeting with the same opponent. Since he and Evans would exit the same district the pairing could really benefit one of them. Lambert’s fourth place finish makes him an unseedable wrestler so Evans (or Christman) could be in the same half of the draw as Lamberg. Given Lamberg’s track record in state semi-final bouts (0-2), that could provide a boost for both Goshen boys.

My choice is still Lamberg. Evans is closing in on him, but I think Lamberg will hold him off. There is a two in three chance they’ll meet in the finals that would also, in my view, help him.

Lamberg should have absolutely no issues at Firestone. State placer Brian Borac is not competing and only Magalski, two years ago, has previous state experience. Magalski was 4<sup>th</sup> at the Top Gun and his recent win over Gaydosh cements his spot as second best at this district. Tricker was one win from States last year, but was 3<sup>rd</sup> at Hudson losing to Baughman. Peterson was 4<sup>th</sup> at the Dies while Rouse wrestled well at last year’s district meet. Two other possibilities are Lestock and Ashburn, down from 189# and with previous district experience. It will be a great parity driven battle at Firestone – for 2<sup>nd</sup> place. Murray, who pinned Korb at the CIT, also has chances here.

There is a powerful quartet of competitors at Harding. All have state experience and two of them have placed. McCall was 8<sup>th</sup> last year at this weight class after a district runner-up spot – where he defeated Gaydosh. He was 1<sup>st</sup> at Perrysburg and 3<sup>rd</sup> at Waite. Mallarnee placed at 160# last year that included a win over Eshelman. He was 2<sup>nd</sup> at Perrysburg to McCall, but won at Oak Harbor and was 6<sup>th</sup> at Medina. Trautman beat Gaydosh for a district 3<sup>rd</sup> last year and went 1-2 at the state level after an opening loss to eventual champ Garbrandt. He recently won at Elgin, but failed to place at Brecksville. Gaydosh was also 1-2 in Columbus and has wrestled an ambitious schedule this year. He was 6<sup>th</sup> at Brecksville, but won the CIT over a good field. Recknagel and Almandinger are two back-ups with upset chances.

Depending on Christman's status there will be either two or three state opportunities at Fairmont, and there are good wrestlers here to capitalize on it. Silvus was a state qualifier at this weight class winning four consolation bouts to capture a district 3<sup>rd</sup> place. He scored 13 points in his two state bouts, but still lost them both. He was 5<sup>th</sup> at the GMVWA, losing to Christman and Gryniuk. Eshelman qualified at 160#, but failed to win and was soundly beaten by Mallarnee. He failed to place at the GMVWA. I think Gryniuk has passed both of them and ranks right behind Evans (and Christman) at this weight class. He was 2<sup>nd</sup> at the GMVWA and won most recently at Valley View. He was unlucky at last year's district, losing only to Christman and Nealan and finishing as the state alternate. I think Cole-Young has to fit here someplace with Davidson and Miller also possibilities.

I think the qualifiers from Claymont might struggle at this weight class. Zang and Johnson are both returning state qualifiers, but have not been factors at major tournaments – Zang failed to place, for example, at the CIT. Nentwick has been a solid performer for Beaver Local, but lost to both Gaydosh and Mallarnee at the Ohio Duals. Hazlett has had some success with Miller and Kaiser also in the picture. It will be a tough to get out of this district, and even tougher after you do so.

**189#**

**PROJECTED CHAMPION: MAX THOMUSSEIT (GRAHAM)**

Top Contenders

2	McIntosh (Miami Trace)	15	Burrell (DeSales)
3	Baker (Padua)	16	Ortolani (Clyde)
4	Day (Valley View)	17	Young (Athens)
5	Viancourt (Holy Name)	18	Blankenship (Alder)
6	Mallarnee (Harrison Central)	19	Melchiorre (Walsh)
7	Cardone (Toledo Central Catholic)	20	Hirschy (Van Wert)
8	Henderson (Beaver Local)	21	Maglecic (Norwood)
9	Monroe (Crestwood)	22	Kelton (River View)
10	S. Shaw (Washington CH)	23	Brown (Ellet)
11	Cross (Coventry)	24	Carius (London)
12	Maxworthy (Buckeye)	25	Davlin (Perkins)
13	Robinson (New Lexington)	26	Canolli (Kenmore)
14	Pennington (Southeast)		

There are a great many superb wrestlers in Division II, but I think the surest winner is Max Thomusseit. The defending state champion is even better this year and, unless there is some kind of startling weight changes, does not face a difficult slate of challengers. A tremendously powerful wrestler, he is already in physique and style a college wrestler. He was 46-2 at this weight class last year, losing in the Ironman finals to a Blair Academy wrestler and to Mills (who he defeated twice, including the state title bout). This year his only loss was again to a Blair wrestler in the finals at the Ironman, and absent that, has not had a close bout. He has had an amazing career, likely ending up with four state placements, and two state titles. He is not one of the Graham "glamour performers," but he is one of their best. A University of Pittsburgh recruit, following his brother, it will be interesting to watch the trajectory of his college career.

Thomusseit sits atop a full slate of excellent district wrestlers, all of whom are battling for the last three state spots. Four of the best escape from the same sectional so there is little margin for error. McIntosh, a junior, is a two-time state qualifier, who has gone 1-2 in both his state attempts, not able as of yet to get past that second consolation round. This year he was 2<sup>nd</sup> to Thomusseit at the GMVWA (losing 15-6) and the Top Gun (losing 25-10). Other than that he has been a consistent winner who this time should stand high on the podium. I don't want to get anymore confused than normal, but apparently the Shaw brothers have switched weight classes. That means it will be Spencer Shaw at 189#. He was a state qualifier at 215# last year losing both bouts on Thursday. This year he was 5<sup>th</sup> at the GMVWA in that tough weight class and winning at Circleville and Valley View. Young won two bouts at this district last year, but then lost a 9-8 bout to Riley Shaw and fell just short of qualification. Robinson has moved up from 171#. He was 6<sup>th</sup> at Medina that featured a strong group of wrestlers. That is four wrestlers from that one sectional, but there are other strong contenders. Day lost to McIntosh (5-1) in the district quarterfinals, but fought back to take 3<sup>rd</sup> with a win over

Riley Shaw. His state experience was brief losing to Viancourt in consolations. He defeated Elam (why was he at this weight class) to win at Valley View and Maglecic to win at Bellbrook. Maglecic won two district bouts last year, took the title at Troy Christian, and went 5-3 with Day at Bellbrook

There are some question marks at Harding. Foremost is the status of state qualifier Cardone. Behind Henderson and Pickerel last year, he went up two weight classes and finished 6<sup>th</sup> at 285#. With Pickerel graduated and Henderson at 215# the plan seemed to be to get him at 189#. At this point he does not seem to be wrestling anywhere, but I will rank him here. It was an amazing run as he beat Neal in overtime to qualify. Then in Columbus he was involved in three overtime bouts as he "gutted out" some big wins. The rest of the district contenders have more conventional backgrounds. Viancourt beat Baker by a point in their go-to-state bout and went 1-2 in Columbus. He was at 215# early in the year winning, for example, at Avon Lake and Lorain Southview. At 189# he was 2<sup>nd</sup> at the CIT, this time losing to Baker. Baker also won at Brecksville and was undefeated at the Ohio Duals. He has made a quantum jump upward. Maxworthy won the Dies, admittedly at a less than super strong weight class, but has solid qualification potential. Davlin was a semi-finalist at Brecksville, while Ortolani and Hirschy are both solid journeymen.

It's been a big year for upper weight wrestlers named Jake Henderson. This version, representing Beaver Local, was 7<sup>th</sup> at Brecksville, but is top ranked in the Eastern District. He was a state qualifier last year, losing to Thomusseit in the first round. Mallarnee, like Cardone, is a bit of a mystery. A state placer last year I have not seen his name yet in the Harrison Central scores. He would likely be a candidate for a much higher finish this year. Burrell was a runner-up to Baker at Brecksville, but was only 6<sup>th</sup> at the CIT. He won two district bouts last year before Henderson upended him, 10-9. Kelton, Blankenship and Carius are other possibilities here.

Monroe is the dominant player at Firestone. He is a big, powerful wrestler who could beat anybody (well, probably not Thomusseit), but also makes some mistakes. He was 1<sup>st</sup> at Aurora and 2<sup>nd</sup> at Hudson losing a one-point decision to the excellent Robertson. He, however, was 5<sup>th</sup> at Kenston, falling to Kelly in the semi-finals, 5-4. Cross was a state alternate at 215# last year, but has moved down. He was 2<sup>nd</sup> at North Coast (to a Pennsylvanian), but was only 5<sup>th</sup> at Dies after getting pinned in an early round. Pennington has been a consistent placer – 3<sup>rd</sup> at the Dies – while Melchiorre got 7<sup>th</sup> at the Top Gun. Add in Canolli – 2<sup>nd</sup> at North Canton and the WIT – and it becomes a crowded field. Korosec and Brown are other considerations.

## 215#

### **PROJECTED CHAMPION: JAKE HENDERSON (TOLEDO CENTRAL CATHOLIC)**

#### Top Contenders

2	Wenger (Fairless)	14	Pyciak (Buckeye Local)
3	Poyser (Louisville)	15	Stone (Akron St. Vincent)
4	Erb (Wapakoneta)	16	Graham (Tipp City)
5	Shaw (Washington CH)	17	Stewart (Kenmore)
6	Bloom (Napoleon)	18	Wilson (West Branch)
7	Elam (Batavia)	19	Strickland (Clyde)
8	Rice (River View)	20	Page (Bay)
9	Meyer (Graham)	21	Stinemetz (Olentangy)
10	Jackson (Hartley)	22	Wilson (Minerva)
11	Brown (Big Walnut)	23	Meissner (Salem)
12	Carrow (Buckeye)	24	Thompson (Mansfield Madison)
13	Gravely (Gallia)	25	Ward (Benedictine)
		26	Islamovsky (Eaton)

The previous four weight classes all seem to be dominated by one or two wrestlers (three at the most), but these last two (215# and 285#) present a wide range of potential champions. That is not to say, however, that they are similarly constructed. It's my belief that this weight class is far stronger with a number of superior performers while (as will shortly be discussed), the 285# class has reached parity at a somewhat lower level. At virtually every powerful tourney a Division II 215 pounder has reached the finals and been a strong element in the final resolution of that weight class. This, in spite of the fact that last year's 3<sup>rd</sup> place medalist at this weight class, Logan White has decided not to compete this year. We will see excellent, high level competition at this weight class in Columbus.

Four of the top contenders will exit from the northern districts. At Firestone, Beau Wenger has moved up from 189# without missing a beat. He was 3<sup>rd</sup> at Columbus last year, losing only to state champion Thomusseit and defeating both Henderson and Poyser. This year he was runner-up at the Ironman, including a last second win over Tavanello in the semi-finals. His only real negative is a relatively weak schedule that (except for the Ironman) is unlikely to overly challenge him. Poyser, 4<sup>th</sup> last year at 189#, is the other major force at Firestone. He was 4<sup>th</sup> at States, losing by six points to Wenger in the consolation finals. All three of his state victories were by wide margins, but both Thomusseit and Wenger over powered him. He was 2<sup>nd</sup> at North Canton, losing only to Tavanello in the finals.

Two other top contenders qualify at Harding. Jake Henderson, the one from Toledo Central Catholic, has thankfully moved to 215# thereby reducing the confusion one might have with his Beaver Local namesake. He was very impressive at Brecksville. He shut out Division I contender Nate Weeks in the quarterfinals, defeated Erb in the semis, and then capped it off with a win over Tavanello to make take the title. He

should have gotten some votes for the outstanding wrestler award. He was dominant winning the CIT, and this time scoring more points. Terrifically strong and great defensively he will wrestle a lot of close bouts – always a danger. He was 5<sup>th</sup> at 189# last year losing to Wenger along the way. He'll do better than that this year. Henderson has some real challengers at Harding with former state placer Logan Erb in the forefront. Erb, coming off a third place finish at the junior high states had a brilliant freshman year at 215#. He lost in overtime in the state semi-finals and finished an excellent 4<sup>th</sup>. Last year he entered the districts with a perfect 39-0 mark and pinned in the first two rounds. He lost to eventual state champ Houska in the semi-finals and then had to face eventual state runner-up Pickerel in his go-to-state bout after Pickerel fell into the losers bracket after a controversial disqualification loss in the quarterfinals. Erb dropped a 3-2 decision and failed to reach Columbus. This year Erb pinned everyone at Fairmont, but lost narrowly to Henderson at Brecksville and fell to 6<sup>th</sup>. This is my top quartet, but there is much, much more.

Well, maybe there isn't much more at Firestone. Wenger and Poyser are, but there is a huge gulf until we get to the next set of participants. Stone and Stewart are, perhaps, somewhere in that second tier. Stone was 3<sup>rd</sup> at the CIT while Stewart was 4<sup>th</sup> at the WIT. Wilson was 5<sup>th</sup> at the Dies and lost only to Meyer at the Ohio Duals. Meissner, like Wilson, won a district bout last year and won at Girard. Maybe, a Ward or Carson can do something, but there is real opportunity at this weight class. Maybe a couple of the lighter heavy weights may drop.

While Henderson and Erb stand out at Harding, Bloom is a very strong third choice. He won, most recently, at Perrysburg as he did at Sylvania Southview. He was 2<sup>nd</sup> at Medina with wins over Stinemetz and Roberts. Carrow has been regularly placing with a 4<sup>th</sup> at the Dies his most recent effort, matching the 4<sup>th</sup> he gained at Medina. Strickland and Page are both experience district wrestlers, while Thompson won at Tiffin. I've been looking for Myers (Kenton), but he is apparently not competing. Schling was one bout from States at 285# last year, but will apparently wrestle at 215# this year. I think that reduces his qualification chances so I'm guessing he may return to 285#.

Brown and Rice are both returning state qualifiers at Claymont and, in fact, wrestled for 3<sup>rd</sup> place at this district – won by Brown, 9-3. Of the two, Rice has been more active – wrestling part of the year at 285# before moving down. He was an excellent 4<sup>th</sup> at the Top Gun in his most recent venture Jackson may have passed both this group. He was 1<sup>st</sup> at Tiffin and Liberty and 2<sup>nd</sup> at the CIT to Henderson. Pyciak was 2<sup>nd</sup> at North Coast and is probably best in the Eastern District. Add in Grave, Wilson, 3<sup>rd</sup> at the WIT, and Stinemetz, and this should be a solid, competitive district.

There are some uncertainties at Goshen. State qualifier Elam, who has been rock solid at this weight, may be contemplating downward movement to 189#. At any rate, I will rank him here. He was a district 3<sup>rd</sup> last year and went 1-2 at States. This year he was impressively 2<sup>nd</sup> at SWOCA – beating Brussman and Keller, but losing to Nusekabel by a point, but was 2<sup>nd</sup> at 189# to Day at Valley View. Riley Shaw is a future star. As a 9<sup>th</sup> grader he qualified at 189#, including wins of 22-14, 9-8, and 18-7, but struck out in

Columbus. This year he was 2<sup>nd</sup> at the GMVWA, losing by a point to the excellent Ackerman, while pinning state placer Rose. Meyer placed two years ago at 135#, but couldn't squeeze into the lineup. Now a 171 pounder, who wrestles at this weight class, he looks a bit buttery, but he hasn't forgotten how to wrestle. He was 7<sup>th</sup> at the Top Gun and 3<sup>rd</sup> at GMVWA. State alternate Gravely comes from a locale where wrestling results are carefully guarded, but he has proven to be really good. Add in Focht, Graham, and Islamovsky and this is a strong district.

## 285#

### **PROJECTED CHAMPION: SCHRAMM (LONDON)**

#### Top Contenders

2	Carpenter (Sheridan)	15	Lugo (Akron St. Vincent)
3	Jones (Harvey)	16	Pressley (Canal Winchester)
4	Demick (Chillicothe)	17	Lauer (Fenwick)
5	Eckroth (Harrison Central)	18	King (Kenton)
6	Rutherford (Norton)	19	Day (Valley View)
7	Malone (Carrollton)	20	Settles (Hamilton Twp.)
8	Quallich (Buckeye)	21	Gambone (West Branch)
9	Lee (New Lexington)	22	Bass (Akron North)
10	Sanford (Conneaut)	23	Sandwisch (Oak Harbor)
11	Wagoner (Shelby)	24	Buckler (Eaton)
12	Pavlik (Ravenna)	25	Welker (Celine)
13	Schling (Eastwood)	26	Zappitelli (Lake Catholic)
14	Horlacher (Oakwood)	27	Intorre (Beaver Local)
		28	Pickerel (Toledo Central Catholic)

The first of these reports, far shorter and less detailed, was written in 1972 and rather rapidly evolved into the document you see today. Because I was fortunate enough at that time to have access to far more data and commentary than almost anyone else in Ohio, its objective was to provide as much information and analysis as possible. It has spawned over time a number of similar reports – some serious, some humorous – as far away as Georgia, that utilize the same format. I am flattered by them all. This year another such report has come to my attention, lovingly researched by a former Division II heavyweight wrestler entitled the Keckan Report. The result of substantial exploration and analysis it ranks the hospitality rooms for tournaments across the state.

Last year I wrote that the Division II heavyweights were, in total, perhaps, the weakest representatives of that weight class in a very long time. Whether accurate or not, one undeniable fact was that parity, at least of a sort, was attained as nine bouts required overtime and another five were decided by a single point. Interestingly, there were only two falls recorded in the championship bracket – far fewer than we normally see at this weight class. This year there will be as many as eight returning state qualifiers, and four with placement medals from last year. It will be a bracket with stronger experience,

better credentials, and finer talent. Still, only one of the major tournaments, as of this writing, has been won by a Division II heavyweight.

Despite these apparent upgrades, the forecaster faces the same troublesome scenario as last year in that any of at least a dozen wrestlers could win. State runner-up Jones would seem an obvious choice, but there are some troublesome questions. All three of his wins were in overtime (has anybody ever done that before?), and you wonder whether that kind of good fortune can continue. In addition, he wrestles a relatively weak schedule that would not seem to prepare him for the rigors that lie ahead. However, it didn't stop him last year.

Jones exits the Firestone District and there are a bevy of contenders. The mammoth Rutherford looks to be on the verge of stardom, but will it happen quickly enough. He was 1<sup>st</sup> at Hudson and 2<sup>nd</sup> at the Dies. He was a sectional champion last year, pinning eventual state qualifier Bass, but then was unable to participate at the districts. Sanford was a state placer at 215# last year, but will apparently wrestle at this class. Pavlik was 3<sup>rd</sup> at the Top Gun while Lugo was 2<sup>nd</sup> at the CIT. Add in state qualifier Bass and that is six viable candidates for qualification. Also in the hunt will be Gambone who was undefeated at the Ohio Duals and Nawalaniec – 3<sup>rd</sup> at Riverside and a defending sectional champ. My view is that Jones and Rutherford make it out, with Sanford (if at this weight) a possible third. That leaves Gambone, Lugo, and Pavlik for the last berth.

It is a much smaller grouping at Harding. I think state qualifier Quallich and Wagoner lead the field. Quallich was a state qualifier and finished 8<sup>th</sup> last year. He was 6<sup>th</sup> at Medina, but hit a rough spot at the Dies and did not place. Getting Vaughan early did not help. Wagoner, on the other hand, has had a sensational year winning almost everywhere except at the Gorman where he was 2<sup>nd</sup>. I have Pickerel and Schling next best with King and Sandwisch slightly behind them. This crew will need to step it up at Columbus to earn placement.

The strongest district is at Goshen. I count four state qualifiers and several other quality heavyweights looking to advance, including a couple of the favorites. Demick was a state semi-finalist last year before losing in overtime to Jones and dropping to 4<sup>th</sup>. He was 1<sup>st</sup> at Circleville over Schramm. Carpenter struggled last year as to whether to compete at 215# or 285#, and chose the latter. It seemed a good choice when he reached the state quarterfinals, but a loss in overtime and a following 2-1 defeat in consolations kept him from placement. He is currently 19-1 and a recent winner at Sheridan. Lee also qualified, but lost in the first round to Jones in, you guessed it, overtime and then dropped another overtime decision to Eckroth. He was 5<sup>th</sup> at Medina, beating Quallich, but losing to Endicott and Gladstone. Lauer was a Division III qualifier last year, and went 1-2 at the state level. He was 5<sup>th</sup> at the GMVWA. Day was the state alternate, losing to Lee, and has been 4<sup>th</sup> at Bellbrook and Valley View and 2<sup>nd</sup> at Franklin. The wrestler to watch is Horlacher who has beaten Demick and Day in recent times. We also need to remember Buckler and Williams as possibilities.

There are three powerhouse wrestlers at Claymont. Schramm is a transfer from Central Crossing, who thrived at London. His big win was the title at North Canton where he upset two-time Division I placer Ben Buzzelli. Malone has never made it to the state level and it's difficult to know why. He looks like a world-beater. He was 5<sup>th</sup> at the Top Gun, losing to the eventual champ Karageorge, 1-0. Eckroth was 7<sup>th</sup> last year winning his three bouts 3-2 OTU, 2-1 and 3-1 OT. He'll score more this year and he is the best from along the river. Pressley and Settles are reasonable candidates for the fourth state spot, but Intorre is also a candidate. It will be a wide-open competition.

No one here has more than a 15% chance of winning. There will be lots of 2-1 scores, many overtimes, and good breaks and bad in the bracketing. That means what seems like peripheral items will grow in importance – little nagging injuries, minor sicknesses, and so forth. The big issue will be the refereeing. The officiating, especially with heavyweights, is anything but standard. Any of these issues can have a dramatic impact on the resolution of this weight class.

## TEAMS

1. Graham                   What can you say about a team that had seven champions, one second, three thirds and a seventh? The number of champions broke a 58-year record set by Cleveland West in 1951. The 282 points broke by over 60 points the record they held for Division II scoring and shattered the all-time mark of 229 set by St. Edward in 2007. There is no question that they will win their tenth consecutive title (and their 12<sup>th</sup> overall), but the question remains what do they do for an encore. Well, they should have up to nine finalists with good chances in all those weight classes, and somebody mentioned 300 points. Unlikely, but who can tell.
2. Oak Harbor               The trio of Stone, Miller, and Witt should put big points on the board. They need Mallarnee to be in top form and Hackworth, Cramer, and one of the Bergmans to chip in just to be safe.
3. Walsh Jesuit             With Graham scoring so heavily there are nearly as many points for everybody else. You get a title from DiJulius, finalist points from Nate Skonieczny, a little something from revitalized twin bother Nick and you're just about in third place.
4. Padua                    I see Fickel and Romanchik scoring heavily, with Baker and Gaydosh helping out against the big boys. Now DaFonseca and Mason have to pitch in or they could be out of the top five.
5. Lexington               They have a dynamic set of middleweights beginning with Gambucci and following through Hile, Faust, Kardasz, and Burrows. Humphrey and Campbell are also a possibility, but I just wonder if most of this group is state quarterfinals and gone.
6. University School       They need the fabulous Hightower to remain fabulous. Wukie to be healthy and lucky, and Tassone to score. Like all of these teams, the margin of error is small.
7. Olentangy               Can a Division I squad move down a classification and find true happiness? We'll soon know if a squad led by Grandominico and Fiorucci can do so. However, this duo will need helpers and I'm not sure where they will come from.

8. Toledo Central Catholic  
Henderson is terrific and Cook, Beauch, Martin, and Pickerel should be helpers. A key element will be finding Cardone at 189# (or 285#)
9. Beaver Local  
The big four of McComas, Miller, Ice and Henderson have to capture places – low to middle, with Ice toward the top of the podium. Nentwick could be a helper.
10. Claymont  
Langdon, Warner, and Beckley are potential state scorers and the first two, in particular, could push them up the scoreboard.

## Division III

### 103 #

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

#### Top Contenders

2	B. Spangler (Keystone)	14	Guerra (Sandusky St. Mary)
3	Assad (Chanel)	15	Bartrug (River)
4	Michel (Milan Edison)	16	Hiltibran (Mechanicsburg)
5	Steiner (Waynesville)	17	Lang (Northwood)
6	Lee (Elmwood)	18	McWilliams (Garaway)
7	Regoli (Bloom Carroll)	19	Buxton (Dixie)
8	Ferguson (Manchester)	20	Feucht (West Jefferson)
9	Fahrer (Evergreen)	21	Chuha (Cuyahoga Hts.)
10	Fields (Pleasant)	22	Lehmiller (Sandy Valley)
11	Reyes (Delta)	23	Johnston (Bluffton)
12	Carter (Northridge)	24	Callarik (St. Clairsville)
13	Flury (Lutheran West)	25	Seagraves (Miami East)

In most years the chore at this weight class would be very easy. Brian Spangler had a great freshman year winning a district title and finishing 4<sup>th</sup> in Columbus while collecting four state victories. This year he was the champion at Avon Lake and 2<sup>nd</sup> at Brecksville, losing only to DiCamillo. Those credentials may not be enough. The freshman Tomasello has been amazingly good. He was 4<sup>th</sup> at the Ironman, twice losing to the Blair wrestler, but winning five bouts. He was 2<sup>nd</sup> at Medina, losing to Heil (for the second time), 3-0, and 3<sup>rd</sup> at the Top Gun. A junior high state runner-up two years ago at 78 lbs., he has taken time to grow into this weight class. He is very good and it will be interesting to watch his progress these next four years.

I believe there is a large, but not insurmountable step between this duo and the rest of a broad group of contenders – some of whom will exit the best district at Maple Hts. While Tomasello and Spangler both compete at this district that is by no means the full story. The freshman, Assad, is also very good. He was 3<sup>rd</sup> at Solon and Brecksville and a semi-finalist at the CIT before being injured. His only losses have been to people like DiCamillo and Garcia. Ferguson was one bout from state last year and recently won at Woodmore while finishing a strong 3<sup>rd</sup> at the Dies. Flury and Chuha are also strong, with the latter boy beating Feucht 8-0 at the Ohio Duals. The big issue here is geography. Five of my top six ranked wrestlers at this district emerge from the Sectional at Brooklyn. That means one won't even qualify for District and with the often weird seeding one finds at the Sectional level bracket mischief could occur. Hopefully, that will work itself out because the District pairings would then be optimal.

There is excellent depth at Owens, but I'm not sure anyone there can compete at the top level. I like state alternate Michel the best after a strong season at both 112# and

now 103#. Last year's state champ Goebel knocked him out of the championship bracket at district and Elchert beat him in the go-to-state bout. He placed at Brecksville and won at Edison. I've bunched Fahrer, Reyes and Lang together and see them about equal. Lang was 2<sup>nd</sup> at Woodmore (to Ferguson) and Reyes finished in the same spot at Perrysburg and was 5<sup>th</sup> at the GMVWA. Lee was a District qualifier at 112# last year, moving up with Goebel at 103#. This year they've switched places and both have thrived. Lee placed 7<sup>th</sup> at Medina and will be a major factor at Owens. I'm not sure what to do about Guerra. He has wrestled kind of a strange schedule up to this point, but has done so with real success.

The group competing at Heath is kind of an amorphous collection of wrestlers from throughout that District with nothing firmly determined so far. Five of this group were District qualifiers at this weight class last year, but none qualified for Columbus. McWilliams and Regoli were one bout from States, but both lost convincingly. This year Bartrug and Fields have scored, in my mind, the biggest wins. Bartrug's 10-1 win over Lehmillier to win at Shadyside was impressive, as was his win at the Ford. Fields was the champ at Elgin, pinning the excellent McCurdy in the finals.

State quarter-finalist Steiner should dominate at Fairmont. He lost to Dronzek at that point and then dropped an overtime thriller in his placement bout. Most recently, and in his first meet at 103#, he totally dominated at Madeira. Carter, one bout from States last year, and Hiltibran look to be next best, with Buxton also in the mix. The latter boy beat Feucht by four in the Ohio Duals and won at Coldwater. Johnston, Seagrave, and Smith (Cory Rawson) are other possibilities.

### 112 #

#### **PROJECTED CHAMPION: ALEX DRONZEK (BEACHWOOD)**

##### Top Contenders

2	Goebel (Elmwood)	14	Harrison (Reading)
3	W. Spangler (Keystone)	15	Harter (Waynedale)
4	Border (Caldwell)	16	McManus (Cuyahoga Hts.)
5	Hancock (Troy Christian)	17	Hall (Ready)
6	Arthur (Greeneview)	18	Guerra (Sandusky St. Mary)
7	Spreng (Loudonville)	19	VonBehren (Dixie)
8	Pizzuto (Jackson-Milton)	20	Tanner (Smithville)
9	Ratay (CVCA)	21	Crosier (Barnesville)
10	Hennegan (Purcell)	22	Hughes (West Jefferson)
11	Grier (Norwayne)	23	Timmons (Lakota)
12	Mansfield (Ayersville)	24	Martinez (Liberty Center)
13	Carroll (Northmor)	25	Brodman (Calvert)
		26	Yockey (St. Clairsville)

There is a strong possibility that we will see a not so instant replay of last year's puzzling 103# final at this weight class. Goebel and Dronzek dominated the 103 pounders with each powering through a field that could not match up with them. The undefeated Goebel went into the final on a 46-bout winning streak, but, at least to me, was still the underdog. Dronzek, an 8<sup>th</sup> place finisher in 2008, had allowed only one point in his first three bouts and seemed the physically stronger of the two. Nevertheless, a second period takedown and a good ride had given Gobel a 3-2 lead heading into the final period. Then, inexplicably, Dronzek chose neutral and after two fruitless and scoreless minutes finished as the runner-up. You have to seriously question that decision given that no one had ridden Dronzek for two minutes all year, and an escape puts the bout back to even, giving Dronzek, at minimum, equal chances for winning. Even without the escape, the officiating mindset almost assuredly would bring stalling and penalty point(s) into play. It is difficult not to believe that match management cost Dronzek a state title. My expectation is that for this year Dronzek reverses last year's outcome and wins his first state title.

The Maple Hts. District is again loaded. There are eight wrestlers here who could qualify out of any other district, but instead four will be putting away their singlets after district competition. There are five boys here with previous state experience and two others who were state alternates last year. Incidentally, four of the five who have made it to Columbus placed there. Dronzek, of course, leads the way and will exit the easiest. Sectional. Spangler was a state alternate in Division II last year and has been even better this year. He was 2<sup>nd</sup> at Avon Lake, 4<sup>th</sup> at Brecksville, and 1<sup>st</sup> at Cuyahoga Hts. He beat Vinas, Timchenko, and Daniels at Brecksville. Pizzuto was 6<sup>th</sup> last year, losing in the quarterfinals to Goebel and then dropping two one point bouts to finish 6<sup>th</sup>. He was 4<sup>th</sup> at Solon (losing to Collica and Young in overtime), but was injured in the Brecksville quarterfinals. Ratay was 7<sup>th</sup> at last season's state meet beating Elchert for that placement. He was also 7<sup>th</sup> this year at Medina and 6<sup>th</sup> at the Top Gun. He wrestles a big-time schedule and will be battle hardened by tourney time. Spreng placed two years ago, but had a Saturday issue at last year's district, placing only 4<sup>th</sup>. That got him a bad draw in Columbus and he went 1-2. He won this year at West Jefferson and was 4<sup>th</sup> at the Gorman, losing in the semi-finals to the eventual champ. Grier went 1-2 at Columbus last year losing to Pizzuto in his placement bout. He was 2<sup>nd</sup> at the WIT earlier in the year. State alternate Harter was 4<sup>th</sup> at Elgin and 1<sup>st</sup> at Cardington, while McManus, down from a district appearance at 119# last year, has just begun to compete. That comes to eight top-flight competitors, and you wonder if one or two might think about 119#.

There is no such depth at Owens, but, of course, there is state champion Goebel. He was a perfect 47-0 last year most of them one-sided contests. This year his 60+ winning streak was snapped at Medina by Griffith with Goebel ending up 3<sup>rd</sup>. He showed real mental toughness at that tournament. The sophomore Cade Mansfield also returns at his same weight class. He went 0-2 in Columbus, losing in the first round to two-time state runner-up Pierce. He has continued to impress this year triumphing at Stryker and winning a boatload of dual meets. Harrington, a third place finisher last year, has apparently decided not to wrestle this year, which provides an

unexpected qualifying spot. Perhaps, Timmons, Martinez, or the other Guerra can nail down these two spots, but it will be a wide-open competition.

There are several strong performers at Heath this year. Border was a state semi-finalist losing to Goebel in the semi-finals, 7-4, and finishing 4<sup>th</sup>. He was 2<sup>nd</sup> at Barnesville, dropping an overtime decision to Division II state runner-up Bertubin. He has top of the podium type potential. State qualifier Carroll also returns and was 2<sup>nd</sup> at the Gorman to Campbell. He should make it to Columbus once again. State alternate Wojcicki returns at the same weight class and it's this senior's last chance to qualify. He won at Granville and placed elsewhere. That clearly leaves at least one state ticket unpunched, with ready champ Hall, Hughes, Crosier, and Yockey hoping to do so.

The other great district is at Fairmont. With potentially five returning state qualifiers at this meet the competition should be fierce. Two wrestlers, in particular, lead the way. Two time state placer Jordan Hancock is moving back to this class from 119# where he placed 7<sup>th</sup> last year. He is a solid, well-coached wrestler who will not be overpowered at this lower weight class. He went 3-2 at 119# at Brecksville and was 2<sup>nd</sup> at Troy Christian, both at 119#. Arthur was a district runner-up last year, but went "two and out" at the state level. This year he won at Elyria Catholic and at the giant GMVWA – the first from his school ever to do so. He beat state qualifier Terry and state placer Selmon in the last two rounds. I see returning state qualifiers Hennegan and Harrison a step below the top twosome. However Hennegan was 4<sup>th</sup> at the CIT and 1<sup>st</sup> at Edgewood. Harrison went 1-2 at the state meet after losing to Goebel in the first round. He was, most recently, a runaway champ at Madeira and Reading. State placer Elchert, I believe, is eligible to wrestle at this weight class, but it appears that he may stay at 119# where he has been most of the year. That is where I will rate him. Backup strength will be provided by Brodman and VonBehren.

### 119 #

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

##### Top Contenders

- |    |                               |    |                          |
|----|-------------------------------|----|--------------------------|
| 2  | Heminger (Northmor)           | 14 | Kern (Liberty Center)    |
| 3  | Wiseman (Jackson Milton)      | 15 | Nolte (St. Clairsville)  |
| 4  | Branham (West Jefferson)      | 16 | Glosser (Otsego)         |
| 5  | Tschantz (Chanel)             | 17 | Culler (Clear Fork)      |
| 6  | Thompson (Brookfield)         | 18 | Fortune (West Salem NW)  |
| 7  | McLaughlin (Nelsonville York) | 19 | Quinn (Shadyside)        |
| 8  | Nelson (Tuslaw)               | 20 | Kleman (Columbus Grove)  |
| 9  | Elchert (Arcadia)             | 21 | Lovejoy (Allen East)     |
| 10 | Reed (Waterford)              | 22 | Dilts (Fredericksburg)   |
| 11 | Haas (McComb)                 | 23 | Nedved (Clinton Massie)  |
| 12 | Weirauch (Archbold)           | 24 | Davis (Bellaire)         |
| 13 | Henderson (Mariemont)         | 25 | Richter (Monroe Central) |
|    |                               | 26 | Moore (Ayersville)       |

Despite rumors to the contrary, I am going to assume that Hunter Stieber participates in the state meet at 119#, while brother Logan stays at 125#. I am satisfied that they could win at other weight classes and may still yet decide to do so, but at least to this point this combination very likely maximizes the team scoring.

There never has been (and very likely will not be again) a quartet of wrestlers as dominant as the "Monroeville Four." They currently are 36-0 in state competition and, absent egregious misfortune, should all win four state titles. Hunter will again, I believe, be the leadoff man, and he has already had a brilliant high school career – his only two losses in Ironman finals. Only Heminger has even a small chance against him – they'll again be seeded apart – but Stieber pinned him in 102 seconds last year.

Don't get me wrong, Heminger is great. In an alternate universe where Monroeville is in Indiana, Heminger would already have two state titles. As a freshman he gave Tessari an enormous scare tying their final round bout at 9-9 before losing by three. Last year he won his first three bouts by a combined score of 46-9 before succumbing to Stieber. He heads a very strong Heath district. The demonstrative Branham won at West Jefferson and was 3<sup>rd</sup> at Mt. Vernon while at 125# and is coming off a year where he captured a district 3<sup>rd</sup> and reached the state quarter finals. McLaughlin had a fabulous freshman year, winning 42 times and finishing 5<sup>th</sup> in Columbus. He has moved up two weight classes, but continues to win with regularity. He lost twice to Heminger this year, the last time at Elgin, 16-6. Also here is Tyler Reed who was 3<sup>rd</sup> two years ago at 103#. Last year at 112# he was a district runner-up to Pierce, but failed to win a bout in Columbus. He has been at 125# much of this year. State qualifier Josh Davis will be yet another competitor at this weight class, but he will have to have a big weekend to qualify again. But that is just what he did last year. Also here are Richter, who lost his go-to-stat bout in overtime, and Dilts, who was also one win from qualification. Quinn a surprise performer this year is also very good. State alternate Nolte was at 125# last year, but has been exceptional, winning at St. Clairsville and Barnesville. This is a great group and we might expect some movement to 125# by a couple of these competitors.

The district at Owens features more than just Stieber. Kern and Glosser are both former state qualifiers, while Weirauch was a state alternate last year. Weirauch and Glosser were both one bout from state qualification last year, but Mansfield beat Glosser in overtime and Haas eliminated Weirauch. In the bout for 5<sup>th</sup> place Weirauch won easily. Kern went 2-2 at Medina, including a win over Shiekh. One to watch here is Culler, who was 2<sup>nd</sup> at both Tiffin and the Gorman. Other possibilities are Moore, one bout from state last year, and Hilty.

I think two Northwest District wrestlers will lead the way at Fairmont. Elchert apparently could wrestle at 112#, but I see him as more successful and comfortable at this weight. He is a two time state qualifier at 103#, and placed 8<sup>th</sup> last year. He has won at least three tournaments all at 119#. Haas is also strong after coming off a state quarterfinal appearance last year. He lost his placement bout 9-8 to Booker, who has not yet appeared in the Purcell lineup. Haas has been active and successful this year and

could well place. State qualifier Henderson is probably the best of the southwestern contingent after a 1-2 record at states last year. He had all falls wrestling at Deer Park, but wrestles a very low profile schedule. Both Nedved and Kleman were one bout from Columbus last year, with Lovejoy and Breisch (Covington) also strong district performers. Lovejoy won at the Allen County Tournament, while Nedved won twice at Brecksville.

The Maple Hts. District is, for the third consecutive weight class, very strong. Wiseman was a state quarter finalist last year and finished 7<sup>th</sup>. He was 2<sup>nd</sup> at Solon (at 125#) and 2<sup>nd</sup> at Brecksville where he and Mitch had a “roughhouse” final. Thompson was 7<sup>th</sup> two years ago, but last year, after winning his sectional and reaching the district semi-finals, had one of those disastrous Saturday afternoons – losing twice and falling to 5<sup>th</sup>. This year he was 3<sup>rd</sup> at Elyria Catholic (at 125#) and a strong 6<sup>th</sup> at the Top Gun. Tschantz is a former state qualifier who seems to have found a home at 119#. He was runner-up to state champion Robinson at the CIT, 3<sup>rd</sup> at Solon, and just missed placement at Brecksville, losing by one point. He has wrestled the most rigorous schedule and should truly be ready by tournament time. Nelson, only a freshman, lost an overtime battle to Forrider in the state junior finals last year. He is a sensational prospect who has been solid since the first week of the season. At the Crestview Duals he lost by only 12-7 to Dillon and has beaten just about every else. I like Fortune and would not be surprised to see Tanner or McManus at this weight class with the young Decatur, perhaps, crafting an upset.

### 125 #

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

##### Top Contenders

2	Lee (Elmwood)	15	A. Merschman (Delphos St. John)
3	Coulter (Cardington)	16	Walden (Chanel)
4	Moody (Nelsonville York)	17	Laney (Hicksville)
5	Ankrom (Bloom Carroll)	18	Lump (Paint Valley)
6	Jacober (Beachwood)	19	Mancuso (Milan Edison)
7	Reichle (West Jefferson)	20	Lawrence (Garrettsville)
8	Liechty (Fairview Park)	21	Beltz (East Knox)
9	Glenn (Otsego)	22	Stuckey (Archbold)
10	Kapper (Manchester)	23	Neer (Northmor)
11	Ciocca (Blanchester)	24	Herman (Waterloo)
12	Dobben/Roff (CVCA)	25	Stacey (Liberty Center)
13	Frederickson (Dixie)	26	Perdue (Reading)
14	Parker (Mohawk)	27	Klausing (Ottawa Glandorf)

There is always a tinge of sadness when I watch one of the truly greats compete for the last time at the state tournament. It doesn't happen every year because my standard for truly great is frighteningly high and met by very few. However, this will be successive years with David Taylor graduating last year and now Logan in a few

months. Their careers have had a similar trajectory with David, perhaps, more charismatic and Logan incredibly consistent. I televised Logan's only loss – the first week of his varsity career – and I still remember Jeff Jordan, sounding worried about Taylor's match-up with a freshman. It was difficult to believe that Taylor was ever worried about an opponent, but Stieber was the one to be concerned about. Since then he is undefeated, barring disaster a four-time champ, and the holder of the Ohio record for consecutive wins – recently he just won his 150<sup>th</sup> in a row. Doing a few calculations shows that if you had a 99% probability of winning against every opponent, the probability of winning 150 in a row is just a shade over 22%. In fact, you would have to have a probability of over 99.5% to have even a 50% chance of compiling such a streak. Still, Stieber, who was 3<sup>rd</sup> in the Senior Nationals, has always been special and I'll miss him and his grandfather (who is always smiling) in the coming years.

Performers like Stieber have a knack for clearing out weight classes, and yes, this will not be a strong field at 125#. That's particularly true at Owens where Lee stands out at second best. He was a district runner-up to Hunter Stieber last year, but had a tough draw losing to high state placers Harbert and Barlow and ending up 1-2. He was a quarter-finalist at Medina and ended up 6<sup>th</sup> losing a couple of close bouts at the end. He has strong placement possibilities. State qualifier Glenn has moved up one weight class after a district 3<sup>rd</sup> last year, followed by a 0-2 performance at Columbus. State alternate Laney should get to qualify this year after his heartbreaking 10-8 overtime loss in his go-to-state bout. That leaves the sophomore Mancuso (2<sup>nd</sup> at Edison), Stuckey and Stacey as possibilities.

A district that packs some punch is at Heath. I count three returning state qualifiers, along with some excellent new talent. Coulter qualified at this weight class last year, but lost a hard fought battle to eventual state third place finisher Vargo in the first round and couldn't come back. He was, most recently 7<sup>th</sup> at the Top Gun and should be toward the top of the podium on Saturday night. Moody had a district 4<sup>th</sup> and caught Hancock in the first round. But he bounced back with wins over Glenn and Branham (who had pinned him the previous week) to get a state place. Ankrom is also a returning state placer making for a formidable trio atop this district. The one to watch is Reichle. He had weight issues last year, but he has settled in very nicely at this weight class. He looked good at the Ohio Duals, pinning Frederickson and decisioning Widder. Lump and Beltz were both one win from State qualification and have been at least as good this year. Add in Neer and the freshman, Kinnemond (Shadyside), and you have a real competition.

The Fairmont District has a lot of wrestlers who have been on the verge of state qualification, but haven't quite made it. Two exceptions are Ciocca and Parker who have crossed that state threshold. Ciocca was a first round district loser by fall to Klausing last year, but came all the way back to the go-to-state bout. There, wrestling Klausing once more, he won 15-0 and ended 4<sup>th</sup>. Unfortunately he drew Heminger and Lee back-to-back at Columbus. He was 4<sup>th</sup> at Edgewood, losing by a point to Frederickson. Parker qualified two years ago out of Owens, but is in that sectional that got switched to Fairmont. He was 2<sup>nd</sup> this year at Tiffin, losing to Division I state placer

Marzec, 3-2. Fredericksburg, Klausing and Perdue were all one bout from qualification last year. Fredericksburg might be the most advanced of this trio. Aaron Merschman was 1<sup>st</sup> at Marion Harding and 3<sup>rd</sup> at the Allen East this year and may also be a higher probability state qualifier. Ciocca beat him at last year's district, 2-1. However, the dark horse candidate here is Cole Smith who won handily at Elyria Catholic.

As currently constituted, this is probably the second weakest weight class at Maple Hts. The best here is probably the little Jacober who has also been at 130#. He has been 2<sup>nd</sup> at Beachwood and Hudson and 3<sup>rd</sup> at Southview, while giving up at least two weight classes. For whatever reason he loses no weight, and thus must wrestle substantially bigger boys than he is. Nonetheless, he is a great technician and remains very successful despite the strength disadvantage. He looks smaller than Dronzek – their 112-pounder. He was a state alternate last year and should qualify this time. Kapper won at Woodmore and was 3<sup>rd</sup> at Manchester. Like Jacober he was one win from qualification last year, losing to Spreng, 3-1. The freshman, Dobben, has been really getting better and it came together at the Top Gun where was 6<sup>th</sup>, losing 7-5 to former state runner-up Cody Neff. That leaves Liechty, Walden, Lawrence, and maybe Herman to battle for state berths.

### 130 #

#### **PROJECTED CHAMPION: MIKE KOVACH (CHANEL)**

##### Top Contenders

2	Lopez (Patrick Henry)	15	Kelly (Reading)
3	Burns (Milan Edison)	16	Goldberg (Miami East)
4	Marshall (Troy Christian)	17	Lawrence (Garrettsville)
5	Powers (CVCA)	18	Rozman (Ready)
6	Wheeler (Utica)	19	Bockmore (Wellington)
7	Matacic (Jackson Milton)	20	Corns (Amanda Clearcreek)
8	Panno (Blanchester)	21	McGrail (New London)
9	Brown (Manchester)	22	Bouman (Norwayne)
10	Sanders (Badin)	23	Emmitt (Elmwood)
11	Traver (Genoa)	24	Montgomery (McComb)
12	Callarik (St. Clairsville)	25	Lulfs (Evergreen)
13	B. Merschman (Delphos St. John)	26	Fisher (Carlisle)
14	Widder (Waynedale)	27	Wilson (Zane Trace)
		28	Clemens (Wayne Trace)

I have ranked the Stiebers at 119# and 125#, but clearly they would be heavy favorites should they compete at this weight class. If not, it should be a relatively close competition, but three names stand out.

Mike Kovach has had a very fine career at Chanel, but has never been a state finalist. He is already a three-time state qualifier and a two-time placer, who has twice now lost in the state semi-finals. This is his last chance – and absent the Stiebers – is a very

good one. He was 2<sup>nd</sup> at Solon, losing to state champion DiJulius, and a semi-finalist at Brecksville before losing to Logan Stieber. He did not compete at the CIT, being sidelined with injury issues. He is a classic grind it out wrestler, very good against those of similar athleticism. These injury issues are likely to impact his performance. He could well miss competition until sectional and you wonder whether that will impair his performance. If healthy he is a narrow favorite.

Lopez, also a senior, was the state runner-up at 125# last year behind Logan Stieber. A two-time placer, he is much more athletic than Kovach, but also knows how to win the close bouts. Last year, for example, he beat Shepard, 3-0, and Vargo, 2-1. He does not wrestle the challenging schedule that Kovach enjoys, but that has not become a major issue. His high school has not crowned a state champ since 1981, but this might be the year where they double their output.

One of the fiercest challengers to this duo will be the sophomore, Kyle Burns. He had a fine freshman year, finishing 3<sup>rd</sup> at the Owens District, which included a hard fought overtime loss to Lopez, 3-1. He won three times at States to finish 6<sup>th</sup>. He certainly could beat either of my top two choices. Since he and Lopez both exit the Owens District they should be in opposite halves at Columbus. The rest of the district is far less imposing. State qualifier Traver could grab the third spot with folks like Emmitt, Lulfs, and Delaney (Delta) other possibilities. Another possibility is McGrail, who has been at 135# most of the year, but has already made 130#. This will be a much easier district for him. He was one bout from States last year. None of this latter grouping would seem to be in line for more than a low place.

Kovach faces a much deeper district at Maple Hts. Powers, formerly known as the little Powers when his elder brother competed, missed the first month of the season with injury problems. I believe he could make 125#, but it looks like it might be better for both the team and him to be here. He really improved the second half of his sophomore year, getting third after an early loss to Spreng at districts, and then doing almost precisely the same thing to gain the 4<sup>th</sup> place medal in Columbus. Maticic was 7<sup>th</sup> last year at 125#, losing early, but coming back to get three wins. Burns beat him 4-2 in that process. This year he was 4<sup>th</sup> at Solon losing by four points to Kovach, and 7<sup>th</sup> at Brecksville. State alternate Brown is also very good. His only district losses were a one pointer to Kiefer and a two-pointer to Sommers in the go-to-state bout. This year he won at Manchester, Woodmore and the Dies, beating the excellent Taylor in the finals. I see Lawrence, Widder, and Bockmore as the three contenders most likely to fashion an upset.

Wheeler stands out at Heath. I'm guessing he could go at 125#, but this is a much easier weight class and that should provide an excellent state pairing. He was a Division II state qualifier last year, but drew Skonieczny in the first round. After a consolation he had to default to Kazimer costing himself a shot at placement. Callarik is also a returning state qualifier who this year was 2<sup>nd</sup> at St. Clairsville and 3<sup>rd</sup> at Barnesville. A name missing from the Caldwell results is that of state qualifier Clint Boyd. A 4<sup>th</sup> place district finisher at this district last year, he has been rumored to be at

weight classes ranging from 130# to 145#. If here, he would be a high probability qualifier. The remainder of this district is truly “up for grabs” with Wilson, Rozman, Corns, and Davis as possibilities. It would not surprise me to see some unfamiliar names in the state bracket sheet representing this district.

I have twelve names listed as possible qualifiers at this weight class coming from the Fairmont District. All of them had a least two district wins last year (except the freshman) and you have to wonder if some will opt for the easier 135# class. Yet when all is said and done, I think the best wrestler here is the freshman. Marshall was the junior high state runner-up to Abounader last year and he has not missed a beat at the varsity level. He was 3<sup>rd</sup> at Troy Christian, losing only to McCombs, and 5<sup>th</sup> at Brecksville. In that tournament he made the semi-finals by defeating Division I state placer Ryan Hoyt, Division II state qualifier Cam Campbell, and Georgia state champ Kevin Ulmer. Fickel beat him and he fell to 5<sup>th</sup> beating Kovach in overtime. This kid is good. Two-time state qualifiers Panno and Goldberg cannot be overlooked, with the former placing 8<sup>th</sup> last year. Both boys have put up good numbers this year. Three-time state qualifier and former state placer, Brian Merschman, is also here and he is looking for bookends state placement. He was 2<sup>nd</sup> at Allen County and Tiffin, losing a pair of high scoring bouts. State qualifier Sanders is down a weight class this year after qualifying at 135# last year. He opened with a 2-1 loss to eventual state runner-up Kuzma and then dropped an 8-7 consolation bout to Tanner. He won at Reading and Deer Park, but was 7<sup>th</sup> at SWOCA. I believe Kelly\_ belongs with this top group based on a 5<sup>th</sup> at the SWOCA (ahead of Sanders) and a 3<sup>rd</sup> at Reading (behind Sanders). Fisher and Wilson were both one bout from states last year, while Clemens followed up two district wins with some strong performances. Montgomery, Shelton (Clinton Massie), and Benedict (Greeneview) also had two district triumphs, but will have a long path to qualification here.

**135 #**

**PROJECTED CHAMPION: JOHNNY CARPENTER (MADEIRA)**

Top Contenders

2	Dankle (Cuyahoga Hts.)	15	Border (Caldwell)
3	Gualtieri (West Jefferson)	16	Guilford (Badin)
4	Vargo (CVCA)	17	Gessler (Bridgeport)
5	Clark (Monroeville)	18	Crapo (Seneca East)
6	Barlow (Heath)	19	Petersheim (Waynedale)
7	Cowell (Archbold)	20	Johnson (Reading)
8	Collier (Chanel)	21	Hernandez (Elmwood)
9	Oney (South Central)	22	Wilson (Dixie)
10	Z. Hook (Nelsonville York)	23	Packard (Belpre)
11	Nelson (Tuslaw)	24	Taylor (Elyria Catholic)
12	Tomaino (Jackson Milton)	25	Widmer (Gibsonburg)
13	Cartwright (Mohawk)	26	Friede (Union Local)
14	Ott (Paint Valley)	27	Borton (Clinton Massie)

With Tessari at 140# and one of the Stiebers potentially lurking at 130# (though I have not rated them there) the 135# weight class has become a popular destination. There are strong wrestlers from every portion of the state and it appears that there will not be two seedable wrestlers at the weight class. This is one of those weight classes where no individual has more than about a 30% chance of winning, and where at least half dozen wrestlers have a measurable chance of making the top step of the podium.

I think Carpenter is probably best here, having placed 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> the last two years. I happened to be standing right next to the mat as he wrestled and his speed and physicality were impressive. He was upset by Sommers in the quarterfinals and it highlighted potential strategies for use by opponents. He seems to have trouble in down tempo, low scoring bouts that negate his speed and athleticism and he can be ridden as Sommers demonstrated. Carpenter was a finalist at the SWOCA, but had to default because of injury to Division I state runner-up Davis. It would have been interesting to see the eventual outcome of such a match-up.

Carpenter comes from what now appears to be the weakest district. That could change in two ways – some of those in the overcrowded 130# class could move here or Joe Bruewer (who I've ranked at 140#) could move to confront long-time rival Carpenter. As it is Cartwright is the only returning state qualifier as he was 4<sup>th</sup> at Owens last year – getting a marvelous break with Clark and Oney having to battle each other for the second consolation berth. Guilford was a semi-finalist at the SWOCA before losing to Davis and ended up 4<sup>th</sup>. After a great season last year he drew into a tough sectional and never got out. He'll do much better this year. Wilson and Johnson are probably next best with Hahn (Lima Central Catholic) a possibility. They'll be in jeopardy if there is much movement up from 130#.

The top trio at Owens is excellent and they will all exit from different sectionals making for better pairings. Clark is looking to create a name change to the “Monroeville Five” and he just might do it. He was a semi-finalist at Brecksville beating Collier along the way and wrestled Davis tough for two minutes before losing 8-2 and getting injured in the process. I was impressed and, if healthy, he’ll win some bouts in Columbus. Cowell, only a freshman last year, was 3<sup>rd</sup> at Owens last year, losing only to Tessari in the semi-finals. He was 1-2 at States getting overpowered by the senior Cardiero in the first round. He started the year at 140#, but will wrestle at 135# at the tournaments. Oney was 6<sup>th</sup> two years ago as a sophomore, which included a win over Gualtieri. Last year he was surprised by Kuzma in the semi-finals losing 3-2. Thrust into the consolation semi-finals against Clark, he again lost, 7-1, and didn’t qualify. This year he has been on a tear – mostly at 140# - losing only to Burns. The fourth spot leaves little room for error by the other candidates. State qualifier Cole could be here, but I suspect he will compete, by district time, back at 140#. That will leave state alternate Crapo, Widmer and, if he competes, Hernandez.

There is a high-powered quartet of wrestlers atop this weight class at Maple Hts. Vargo has the talent to win this weight class on a hot weekend. He is a defending district champ having won at 125#, and then finished 3<sup>rd</sup> at Columbus. His only loss was a semi-final squeaker to Lopez. This year he was 4<sup>th</sup> at Medina and 6<sup>th</sup> at the Top Gun after losing to Dailey. Dankle won the District title at 130# last year when it seemed for a while that Cuyahoga Hts. was imploding. His last three victories were shutouts. He, too, was a state semi-finalist, but lost to Tessari and Carpenter and finished 5<sup>th</sup>. Very quick, he is excellent on his feet and in the top position. He was sensational at the Ohio Duals beating both Barlow and Gualtieri. The latter win was the key element in their one point team victory. Collier, still just a junior, is a two-time state qualifier who has yet to place at States. He was 2<sup>nd</sup> at the CIT and 4<sup>th</sup> at Solon, but failed to place at Brecksville when he was upset by Tomaino. Nelson, the other twin, was also 2<sup>nd</sup> at last year’s junior high state tournament, and was 2<sup>nd</sup> to Hook at West Jefferson. As mentioned, Tomanino holds a win over Collier and placed at Brecksville, while Petersheim was 4<sup>th</sup> at Elgin and had two district wins last year. Taylor could be a long shot threat, but this will be a tough district from which to qualify.

There is probably only one qualifying spot in play at Heath. Gualtieri was 8<sup>th</sup> last year and went 5-3 with Tessari in the quarterfinals, a score which in retrospect had huge meaning in the team competition. In his big tourney test he was 4<sup>th</sup> at the Top Gun with a win over Vargo. He has finalist potential, but so do a half dozen other wrestlers at this weight. Barlow was 4<sup>th</sup> two years ago at 103#, but he is now much bigger. Last year he was 6<sup>th</sup> at 119# after losing in the quarterfinals to Stieber by seven. He was 3<sup>rd</sup> at Elgin and 1<sup>st</sup> at Licking County and should place again this year. Hook was 4<sup>th</sup> in this district last year, which included a loss by fall to Gualtieri. He has won a number of tournaments in his own area this year and is the linchpin of a strong series of wrestlers in the middle weights. That takes care of three state berths and I favor state alternate Ott to capture the fourth. However, Gessler, Border, Friede, and Packard will also battle for that chance to wrestle one last weekend.

**140 #**

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

Top Contenders

2	Bruewer (Deer Park)	15	McLaughlin (Carlisle)
3	Sonnenberg (Van Buren)	16	Martello (Ready)
4	Chatterton (Dixie)	17	D. Hook (Nelsonville York)
5	Orrill (Chanel)	18	Grys (Western Reserve)
6	Campbell (Troy Christian)	19	Musser (Delphos St. John)
7	Maneese (Clear Fork)	20	Mardis (Newcomerstown)
8	Spates (VASJ)	21	Young (Archbold)
9	Cole (Milan Edison)	22	Natale (Sandy Valley)
10	Robinson (Heath)	23	Bierman (Badin)
11	Mallos (Cuyahoga Hts.)	24	Heldenbrand (Hillsdale)
12	Faykus (Bellaire)	25	Gerber (Garaway)
13	Hershey (West Salem NW)	26	Brooke (South Range)
14	Yant (Delta)	27	Driver (Martins Ferry)

On a team that features Chris Phillips, Logan Stieber, and brother Hunter, it is easy to overlook Cam Tessari. That is a big mistake because in the fullness of time we'll look back and realize what a great wrestler he was. He is already a two time state champion – well on his way to winning four – and will wrestle up a weight class in order to maximize his team's point potential. His only career losses have been at the Ironman and, like his teammate Logan Stieber, he has lost only once to an Ohio wrestler – both of them, in fact, to David Taylor. This year he won his first Ironman and, again, cruised to his third title at Brecksville, putting himself in position to becoming only the third wrestler in its long and venerable history to win four (matching Drew Pariano and Craig Dimitris). It would take a monumental upset – one of the greatest in state tournament history to derail him at this point.

Many of the wrestlers I expected to see at 140# have, at least tentatively, moved down one weight class. That includes such stars as Oney, Cowell, Gualtieri and Crapo. I think it is likely that there might be some drift back in this direction as wrestlers and coaches take a long, last look at optimizing their personal results. For that reason this weight class, as it is now constituted, does not look very deep.

Tessari should have very few problems at Owens. State qualifier Cole has had some rough outings during the first six weeks, but that is similar to last year when he took 12 losses into the district and came out with a ticket to Columbus. That included some clutch victories, especially the 10-8 overtime win over Laney. That magic did not last in Columbus where he had less than two minutes of total mat time. Yant came from even further back with 17 losses at district time and losing by a quick fall in the first round, he then won four consolation bouts to reach states. There he went 1-2, losing to Dankle and Carpenter. Maneese has been a big surprise this year. He was 2<sup>nd</sup> at both the

Gorman and Elgin and should be a qualifier at this district. That leaves Young and Grys, both solid performers, looking for an upset.

At the moment I see four viable state contenders at Maple Hts., but then little else. That, of course, could change as wrestlers see an opportunity. Both Orrill and Mallos have past state experience and are experienced competitors. I remember Mallos as a small 103 pounder, losing a first round state bout with both boys in double figures. He was 8<sup>th</sup> the next year at 112#, but is a lot bigger now. Orrill qualified as a freshman two years ago, but missed out last year. He has wrestled a tough schedule, finishing 3<sup>rd</sup> at Solon and the CIT and 4<sup>th</sup> at Brecksville. His consistency should get him a place on the podium. Spates has just recently begun competing and he is a talented athlete. He was a district semi-finalist last year before losing a 13-11 overtime bout to Montoney. It was one of the most exciting contests I saw all year. However, he couldn't come back 90 minutes later and lost to Trusnik, 3-2. He is dangerous. Hershey was a state alternate at 135# last year, losing a one-point bout to Vitallo in his go-to-state bout. He should fit in nicely at this weight class. After this duo all is darkness. Maybe, a Heldenbrand, Bramley (Chippewa) or Brooke can challenge the top boys.

Like the other districts, Fairmont has some top shelf kids with little depth behind them. Bruewer was 3<sup>rd</sup> last year, finally beating his nemesis Carpenter in the consolation finals. It was a critical victory because if he wins his district he'll be seeded away from Tessari. He is very good. At the SWOCA he met the Division I state champ Shepherd in the finals and in a fairly even bout lost 7-5. Sonnenberg, a junior, is a returning state medal winner who was 7<sup>th</sup> last year including wins over Reese and Davis. He is undefeated this year winning at Woodmore and Arcadia, but all of this at 145#. Chatterton was a state qualifier at 145# last year and won two bouts to finish 8<sup>th</sup>. He won at Troy Christian and has been at 145# most of the year. I'm sure he, like Sonnenberg, will explore his options in a few weeks. Campbell was 6<sup>th</sup> two years ago at 112# and moved up two weight classes last year. He beat Panno for the district title and won his first state bout, but lost to Donahue and Panno that left him without a medal. He is up three weight classes this time and has done well. He won at Troy Christian, pinning McLaughlin, and was 6<sup>th</sup> at Brecksville. A semi-finalist there, he lost his last three bouts including one to Orrill. McLaughlin was one win from States last year and is the top candidate for the fourth spot. Musser and Bishop (Blanchester) both had two district wins. Bierman is another possibility.

There are a lot of potential state candidates at Heath, but none that look like more than low placers. Robinson qualified out of the third slot last year and won his first bout over Malkus, who eventually finished 3<sup>rd</sup>. Unfortunately, Robinson lost his next two bouts and failed to place. It did demonstrate, however, his strong upset potential. This year he was 7<sup>th</sup> at Heath, losing to Maneese, but won, up a weight class, at Licking County. Faykus qualified three years ago at 103# and has the distinction of being the first wrestler Logan Stieber wrestled at the state level. He went 1-2 and did beat Mallos. This year he won at Shadyside (and was, I believe, the OW), and also took the title at Union Local. Martello has won two tournaments this year and appears ready to better his district 6<sup>th</sup> performance of last year. Robinson beat him in the go-to-state bout while

Natalie edged him out for 5<sup>th</sup>. Mardis and Gerber come from an area where results are often scarce. The first named, however, won at Manchester and was named the OW. Hook has wrestled a busy schedule and will be a factor, while Driver, Miller (Waterford) and Hall (Cambridge) are possibilities.

### 145 #

#### **PROJECTED CHAMPION: KYLE BURNS (TROY CHRISTIAN)**

##### Top Contenders

2	Noernberg (Cuyahoga Hts.)	15	Dobson (Bellaire)
3	DeHart (Covington)	16	Rose (Martins Ferry)
4	Sommers (CVCA)	17	Pickett (Westfall)
5	Rayl (Blufton)	18	Gierhart (Amanda Clearcreek)
6	Kiefer (Chanel)	19	Brown (Pymatuning Valley)
7	Goebel Edgerton)	20	Baer (Elmwood)
8	Prezzia (St. Clairsville)	21	Alexander (Centerburg)
9	Ferber (South Central)	22	DeLaCerde (McComb)
10	Boehm (Montpelier)	23	Styer (Oberlin)
11	Reese (Mechanicsburg)	24	Hoepf (Seneca East)
12	Giffin (Fairport Harbor)	25	Kline (Brooklyn)
13	Blackwell (West Jefferson)	26	Deatrick (Paulding)
14	Topp (West Salem NW)		

I suspect that this weight class will be one of the most interesting in the Division III competition. Despite the fact that there are two returning state runners-up here, there is enough returning power to make their state ambitions by no means a surety. With Tessari apparently firmly entrenched at 140#, I suspect that some who anticipated eventually competing at that class may instead opt to stay here. Should they win their districts, Burns and Noernberg will be seeded apart, but there is plenty of firepower at both of their districts to change that picture.

Easily, the two strongest districts are at Maple Hts. and Fairmont. Both have three or more superior wrestlers, but with little depth behind that top group. One of the most amazing stories of last year's meet was the performance of Kyle Burns. Wrestling up at least one weight class, he earned a district runner-up spot at Fairmont. The next weekend he duplicated that finish winning three bouts and carrying Troy Christian to the state title. This year he will move down a weight class to try and capture a state title. To be honest I was amazed last year that he kept pace with boys that seemed bigger, stronger, and more athletic, but the bigger should disappear now that he is at 145#. He has missed the first six weeks of the schedule, but should be healthy at tournament time. He is very good on the top, but Howe, for example, was able to get an early advantage that negated his normal game plan. Two-time state qualifier DeHart will be a stern challenger at the same sectional. He was 4<sup>th</sup> last year, losing a low scoring bout (not his style) in the state semi-finals. He was 2<sup>nd</sup> at the GMVWA to Stephens, but has been superior at every other contest. His style is substantially different than Burns and

it will be interesting to see which has to make the bigger adjustment. Rayl, already a three-time state qualifier, broke the ice and placed for the first time, nailing down a 5<sup>th</sup>. He is very active and was a semi-finalist, but lost to Burns' riding ability. He beat Walters in the quarterfinals last year and was 2<sup>nd</sup> to McGinnis at Allen County this year. All of this was at 152#, but he supposedly is headed here. He, like so many others, will soon have to make a decision. State qualifier Reese is at that same sectional and that has the potential to mess up the district bracketing. Reese had a district 3<sup>rd</sup> after an early loss to Hancock was followed by four consolation wins. He went 1-2 in Columbus including a loss to Sonnenberg. This year he won at Xenia. Beyond this quartet it's a bit of a bleak landscape, with DeLaCerde and Conyers other possibilities.

Noernberg will have his hands full at Maple Hts. with several top notch 140's. He had an interesting last two weeks of 2009's wrestling season. He was pinned in the district quarterfinals, but came back to win four consolation bouts to place 3<sup>rd</sup>. That last win was critical – it was by a narrow 3-2 score – because the loser (Trusnik) had to face defending state champ Zac Hancock in the first round. Noernberg, in a much better spot, won three decisions and was face-to-face with Hancock, but in the final round not the first round--a much better outcome. This year he was 2<sup>nd</sup> at the Dies and 1<sup>st</sup> most other places. Kiefer had the opposite situation at 130#. He lost a one-point decision to Sommers for 3<sup>rd</sup> place, and had to face Tessari in the first round, and ended 1-2 at the state meet. He was 3<sup>rd</sup> at Brecksville (defeating Beauch) and 2<sup>nd</sup> at Solon and the CIT (losing to Beauch). He is a fearless competitor who keeps getting better (and bigger). Sommers, who was 3<sup>rd</sup> at that 130# district over Kiefer, was a state semi-finalist, but lost in that round and had to default to 6<sup>th</sup>. He is amazingly good on top. He came very close to beating Salupo at the Ironman, losing 5-4 and again ended up 6<sup>th</sup>. You do not want to let him get an early lead because it will be very difficult to catch up. There are two solid contenders for that fourth state berth. Topp has been a strong performer for the past two years. He was 7<sup>th</sup> at Medina, for example, and knows how to win. Giffin, also a junior, may be the only wrestler on the Fairport Harbor team, but he is a good one. He won two district bouts last year and then lost in overtime to Trusnik in the consolations and I watched him qualify one round later. A long shot here might be Brown.

The Owens District is not overly strong, but does have two returning state qualifiers. Goebel was the district champ last year, with three easy wins and a close battle with Reindel. Two more wins put him in the state semi-finals where he lost by three to Noernberg and dropped to 6<sup>th</sup>. Goebel does not wrestle a big time schedule, but it has not seemingly hurt him in the past. The next two boys are very close in talent. Last year Ferber defeated Boehm 9-7 in overtime in their go-to-state bout. Ferber went on to the Columbus where he went 1-2 and Boehm had to be satisfied with being noted as a state alternate. Both should qualify this year. Ferber has had a busy schedule wrestling as high at 160#. He was 1<sup>st</sup> at Black River, for example, but has drifted down to this class. Boehm was 2<sup>nd</sup> at Arcadia, losing to Sonnenberg 6-5. There is little depth after this trio with Baer and Deatrick possibilities.

One, and only one, name stands out at Heath. Prezzia was a state semi-finalist last year after defeating, in overtime, the prohibitive favorite at his weight class. It was a major upset. Unfortunately, eventual state champ Tyler Powers defeated him 3-2 in the semis and Prezzia wound up 4<sup>th</sup>. This year he was 1<sup>st</sup> at Barnesville and St. Clairsville and has finalist potential. I think Blackwell is probably next best. He lost a close 7-5 bout to Crooks in his go-to-state bout and this year defaulted to 4<sup>th</sup> at West Jefferson. Dobson and Rose are solid Eastern District wrestlers. Both won two district bouts last year, falling short of qualification. This year Dobson won at Shadyside while Rose was 2<sup>nd</sup> at Barnesville, losing to Prezzia, 7-6. Other possibilities might be Gierhart and Alexander, with Pickett, who beat Reese at West Jefferson, moving up.

### 152 #

#### **PROJECTED CHAMPION: JAKE HOWE (BLANCHESTER)**

##### Top Contenders

2	Walters (Chanel)	15	Nickerson (St. Clairsville)
3	Francis (Birard)	16	Mitchell (Purcell)
4	Prather (West Jefferson)	17	Ziegler (Cardinal)
5	Cummins (Cardington)	18	Jimenez (Montpelier)
6	Beam (Waynedale)	19	Fitzpatrick (Mohawk)
7	Keplinger (Troy Christian)	20	Byrne (Fairview Park)
8	Gerken (Keystone)	21	Kenner (Upper Sandusky)
9	Falk (Grandview Hts.)	22	LeForce (Carlisle)
10	Jefferis (Barnesville)	23	Nelson (Newark Catholic)
11	Fullenkamp (Versailles)	24	Rufenacht (Archbold)
12	Kaiser (Martins Ferry)	25	Stretar (Independence)
13	Drake (Triway)	26	Stahl (Wayne Trace)
14	Davis (Zane Trace)	27	Hall (Ayersville)
		28	Lombardi (Milan Edison)

While I have no personal knowledge to impart, I feel sure that defending state champion Jake Howe will eventually compete at this weight class. This despite the fact that all of the results I have accumulated to date show him at 160#. It only makes sense since this is a slightly easier competition compared to a strong field at 160 pounds. Howe finished a great season last year defeating Kyle Burns by 10 points to win the title and finish with a 50-2 record. This year he won handily at Edgewood and will be looking to become a four-time state placer and a two-time champion.

Even with Kyle Burns moving down to 145# the competition that Howe will face seems much stronger than I first thought. My expectation is that Cody Walters stands highest among those seeking to dethrone Howe and will be seeded away from him because of his third place finish at this weight class last year. Walters, only a junior, was 7<sup>th</sup> at this weight class two years ago and 3<sup>rd</sup> last year after being upset in overtime by Rayl. His scoring pattern last year was unusual in that he scored only two points in a bout three times (winning twice), and nine or more the other three bouts. I think he is much more

aggressive when the pressure is off. He was 3<sup>rd</sup> at Brecksville winning two overtime bouts and 1<sup>st</sup> at Solon. Howe averaged 10 points a bout at last year's state meet. He won't get that against Walters, but Cody will have to be aggressive to beat him.

Somewhat strangely there are three very good districts and one where the bracket sheet seems almost empty. That is at Owens and we'll discuss that last because there will be a lot of good names written before we get there.

I was trying to decide which was best, but let's call it a three-way tie and begin with Maple Hts. Walters we've talked about, but there is much more. Francis was a district 3<sup>rd</sup> at this weight class and won three bouts at States to finish 7<sup>th</sup>. In the first round he beat my choice by the lopsided score of 15-2, and after dropping a bout to Merryman, he won twice more including an 11-2 bout with Prather. The results do not come flooding in from Girard, but he did win the Leonard Truck and Trailer Invitational. Gerken was a Division II state qualifier and has done equally well this year. He was 2<sup>nd</sup> at Avon Lake, and 1<sup>st</sup> at Cuyahoga Hts., but won only twice at Brecksville. Beam is the wrestler who seems to really be improving. Last year, as a freshman, he was at 119# with a district win. However, he is growing rapidly, as the Beams tend to, and has moved up six weight classes – and very successfully. He was 3<sup>rd</sup> at Elgin losing to Howe, 7-2, and won the Outstanding Wrestler award at Cardington. He was 2-1 at the Ohio Duals, but Prather dominated him 5-0. Drake qualified two years ago, but didn't make it last year. He again won the WIT, but will face tough competition to qualify. I think Ziegler and Stretar are long shots, but Byrne could be a factor. When you see that name attached to Fairview Park you can expect solid wrestling and top-notch insurance.

It is also a very strong group at Fairmont, even more accomplished than at Maple Hts. Howe, of course, is the jewel in the crown. Fullenkamp qualified last year with a one point win and then lost in overtime to Rayl for 3<sup>rd</sup>. He went 1-2 in Columbus, losing 2-1 to Walters in his placement bout, as he is good at keeping things close. He was 1<sup>st</sup> at Plymouth and a strong 3<sup>rd</sup> at the GMVWA, losing only to Bryant in overtime. Keplinger was a critical element in Troy Christian's team title, scoring unexpectedly at 171# and finishing 7<sup>th</sup>. Now down at a more reasonable weight class, he was 1<sup>st</sup> at Troy Christian and won three bouts at Brecksville, being eliminated in overtime by Walters. That's a nice trio, but Mitchell has been very good, getting a 3<sup>rd</sup> at the CIT and at Tiffin. Add in Fitzpatrick, 1<sup>st</sup> at Marion Harding, LeForce and Stahl and it is a very good district.

There is a lot of power at Heath as well. As you've noticed by now, no firm hierarchy has emerged with bouts and scores lacking cohesion. That is true here as well. Prather was 8<sup>th</sup> last year at this weight class, losing to Howe 8-3, but winning two bouts until Walters slipped by him 2-1. He has been very active winning at West Jefferson and finishing 2<sup>nd</sup> to Hightower at the Top Gun. He won all three bouts at the Ohio Duals and has the talent for a high podium finish. Jefferis and Nickerson both qualified out of this district at 145#. Jefferis won a bout and Nickerson did not, but both have come back even stronger. Jefferis was 2<sup>nd</sup> at Barnesville, losing a 7-6 bout to Division II Beckley and 3<sup>rd</sup> at St. Clairsville. Falk missed a big part of last year, but managed a district 3<sup>rd</sup> and state qualification. He went 1-2 after losing to Burns and failed to place. Most

recently he was a finalist at Elgin, but lost to Howe on a fall. Kaiser has been at 160# all year and is a very strong contender for qualification at this class. It will be interesting to see how he does at the OVAC. Also back is Davis who was a state qualifier at 140# and was (I believe) the first Zane Trace wrestler to win a state bout. Cummins, 2<sup>nd</sup> at the Gorman and 3<sup>rd</sup> at the Top Gun, has raced ahead of some of this crowd with his strong performances. Nelson and Mays will have to have a torrid weekend to have a chance.

There isn't much at Owens – in fact, nobody that has made any real impression. I've rated some of them at the bottom of the list, but there is real opportunity here.

### 160 #

#### **PROJECTED CHAMPION: DENNIS RABER (ORRVILLE)**

##### Top Contenders

2	Rodgers (Mechanicsburg)	15	Siefker (Ottawa Glandorf)
3	Hall (Chippewa)	16	Bender (Loudonville)
4	Gladieux (Stritch)	17	Stover (Calvert)
5	Meadows (CVCA)	18	Sheets (Edgerton)
6	Elling (Liberty Center)	19	Bresciani (Coshocton)
7	Dye (Patrick Henry)	20	Kunk (Coldwater)
8	Trusnik (Chanel)	21	Neimeister (Westfall)
9	Meade (Cuyahoga Hts.)	22	Fortune (West Salem NW)
10	Cochrane (West Jefferson)	23	Howard (Milan Edison)
11	Chapman (Hopewell London)	24	Robinson (Johnstown Monroe)
12	Wilson (Amanda Clearcreek)	25	Kenner (Upper Sandusky)
13	Mann (Tuslaw)	26	Crook (Bellaire)
14	Hotlosz (Martins Ferry)	27	Morin (Harvest Prep)

The specter of Chris Phillips has created incredible movement in not only his weight class, but in the ones directly above and below him. That is no more evident than at this weight class where the supposed lineup of the participants seems to change from day to day. I have incorporated in this report the latest information I have available, but I have no doubts that it will change another dozen times. Whether Raber and Dye actually participate is still to be completely determined, but this is where I have rated them.

My choice is the Division II state runner-up Dennis Raber. He was a few seconds away from a state title at 171# when Garbrandt broke his heart with points that catapulted him to a 4-3 state title win. Most inauspiciously for Raber, Orrville has been re-classified as a Division II school forcing him to make some difficult decisions. He began the year at 189# winning at both North Canton and the WIT over less than noteworthy fields. He was at 171# for the Top Gun and lost badly to Utleigh, but indicated that he was on to 160#. If he makes this weight class and performs with close to normal efficiency he should finish his career as a state champion.

He leads a very strong district at Maple Hts. Seven of my top fifteen contenders will wrestle at this venue, although several of them may opt for the somewhat easier 171# class. Hall was 4<sup>th</sup> last year at 152# and he is a big time scorer. In district action he beat his first three opponents by a combined score of 49-9, showing his ability to score from the top position. He was 2<sup>nd</sup> at Maple Hts., losing to Walters, but then went 4-2 in Columbus, losing only to state champ Howe (his closest win) and Walters again. He won the WIT and the only loss I've recorded (admittedly incomplete) was at the Dies where he finished 3<sup>rd</sup>. Meadows was a state qualifier as a freshman at 152#, but has been at several weight classes this year. With Utley now confirmed at 171#, Meadows will compete here, and his 2<sup>nd</sup> place finish at the Top Gun suggests he will do well. At Medina, as an under-sized 189 pounder he still managed to finish 5<sup>th</sup> so he should be able to deal with most of the older boys at this weight class. There are two other state qualifiers and I favor Trusnik over Mann, though I think it will be close. Both qualified at somewhat lower weight classes and neither was able to gain a state victory. Trusnik wrestles the more demanding schedule and was 4<sup>th</sup> at Brecksville and 3<sup>rd</sup> at the CIT, while Mann has done well at smaller tournaments, but failed to place at the Dies in a very tough weight class. Trusnik has only a tenuous grip on that 4<sup>th</sup> spot, as Meade has been on fire. He pinned Cochrane at the Ohio Duals and beat Mann at the Dies. Bender and Fortune could qualify at all three of the other districts, but they're long shots here. A potential issue is that five of this group – Mann, Hall, Bender, Raber and Fortune – exit the same district meaning one won't even make district qualification. Look for some movement here.

While the other districts are weaker, they all have a couple of potential high state placers. There are three such wrestlers at Owens led by Gladieux. He cruised his way through the district last year with three falls and a 12-5 win, and handled Meadows in the first round at Columbus. An overtime loss dropped him into the consolations and he failed to place. He, again, has been dominating this year, losing only to three-time Division I state placer Pierce Harger. Elling was also a state quarter-finalist, losing to Utley, but then pinning Cochrane in his state placement bout. Dye has been at 171# much of the year, but I'm expecting to see him here. Only a junior, he already is a two-time state qualifier, but has yet to win a bout in that venue. A state junior high champ, I think he is ready to place. Sheets and Howard are possibilities for that fourth spot, but it is equally likely that a relative unknown will be the fourth qualifier.

Two state qualifiers lead the way at Fairmont. Rodgers was a district champ at 171# last year and won four bouts to finish 4<sup>th</sup>. That last consolation loss prevented him from becoming a seedable wrestler that would have bracketed him away from Raber. Ironically, he lost to Dye in the state junior high finals, 1-0, and they could well meet here again. Chapman was 1-2 last year at Columbus, drawing Walters in the very first round. Siefker was a district quarter-finalist last before losing a 24-14 decision to eventual state runner-up Burns (that's the kind of bout you like to televise). He worked his way back to the consolation, but lost to state placer Rayl. Stover had pretty much the same experience and they would seem to be the best bets for the last two state spots. Kunk and Kramer are other options and I favor the first name should an upset occur.

State qualifiers Cochrane and Crooks lead the way at Heath, but I'm not sure how they will match up with Maple Hts. District qualifiers. Cochrane was 4<sup>th</sup> at the Top Gun, losing 2-1 to Meadows a week after being pinned by Meade. Still, he went 1-2 at Columbus last year so you have to figure he'll do better than that this year. Crooks qualified at 140# last year and gave Goebel a real battle in the first round in overtime. His tournament ended later that Thursday night. He is 20-2 as of this writing, winning for example at Barnesville. That triumph was finished with a 1-0 victory over Kaiser, who I saw as a third choice at this district. A state alternate last year, he seemed ideally positioned. However, he may move to the more difficult 152#, replaced by Hotlosz, who is also good. After this trio the door is wide open with Wilson, Neimeister, Bresciani, and Robinson somewhere in the fray.

### 171 #

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

##### Top Contenders

2	Utley (CVCA)	14	Brandt (Versailles)
3	Kwiat (Calvert)	15	Wellington (VASJ)
4	Conrad (Ridgewood)	16	Stone (Arcanum)
5	Remeric (Tuslaw)	17	Glagola (Mogadore)
6	Hunter (Manchester)	18	Siegel (Waynedale)
7	Gross (Norwalk St. Paul)	19	Dodd (Shenandoah)
8	Torgerson (Cuyahoga Hts.)	20	Lovejoy (Allen East)
9	Porter (Chanel)	21	Garber (Newark Catholic)
10	Zeke (Kirtland)	22	Posey (Utica)
11	King (Deer Park)	23	McCarty (Montpelier)
12	Kahl (Shadyside)	24	Hood (Buckeye Central)
13	O'Neill (Clear Fork)	25	Ishmael (North Baltimore)

Chris Phillips has only lost one high school bout – and that was one that featured stalling – and he has two state titles salted away. The last two years he has defeated the wrestler who became the Division I state champion just to emphasize his superiority. As I said last year, Ohio has produced a number of Hall of Fame upper weight wrestlers, but none were ever better in high school than this boy. He is the most advanced upper weight wrestler I have ever seen. He has had elbow issues this year and so has not competed much, but it really makes very little difference. One thing that would help Monroeville is four falls at the state level. He did pin his last two opponents, but was content with technical falls the first two rounds and that cost them (among a myriad of other factors) a team title. I have never seen an upper weight wrestler better than this boy.

There has been a wholesale exodus of wrestlers away from 171#, but I think that migration will soon change directions. Coaches and wrestlers will realize that if your

goal is to qualify for Columbus, or if it is to place, then this is the ideal situation. Right now this weight looks rather weak and undefined. However, as the opportunity that exists here is recognized we'll see names we thought would compete at 160# flowing back in this direction.

One wrestler who has decided to challenge is Alex Utley. He has had a tremendous season. He was 3<sup>rd</sup> at the Ironman and Medina, losing only to Michael Alexander both times. He was a smashing winner at the Top Gun, beating Raber by ten in the finals. I thought, at first, that he would go at 189# and then it seemed reasonable to expect him to return to 160#. He has chosen neither option and will do battle with Phillips. Last year Utley had three falls and a major decision in winning his district. He cruised to the finals where three-time champ Zach Toal – wrestling not only for an individual title, but for the team championship – defeated him. That gave Utley a runner-up trophy to go with the third place medal he won as a freshman. He and Phillips will be seeded apart and I expect that their match-up is one of the safest predictions you can make.

The battle for the last three qualifying spots at Maple Hts. will not bring forth a lot of familiar faces. However, with the logjam at 160# we may see some additions here in February. State qualifier Hunter has not yet competed, but he would be second best. After him it would be a free-for-all. I like Remenaric who was 3<sup>rd</sup> at the Dies, and state alternate Torgerson. Giagola was one bout from state last year losing to Hunter 4-3, while Wellington has had a big year, including a 4<sup>th</sup> at Solon. Porter has transferred from Berkshire to Chanel where he was 6<sup>th</sup> at Solon and 4<sup>th</sup> at the CIT. His brother was a state champ just two years ago, and this boy is quickly getting better. Add in Zele and Siegel and it is a district that has reached parity except for Utley.

Phillips has no rivals at Owens (or any where else for that matter), and I'm seeing a field with very few credentials. State alternates Gross and Puehler have had solid district experiences in the past and can be expected to do so again. I expected Gross to be very good this year, but it hasn't quite happened. He was 2<sup>nd</sup> at the Gorman and may be starting to peak. Puehler was most recently 3<sup>rd</sup> at Delta, but did not place at the GMVWA. O'Neill won the Gorman and was 2<sup>nd</sup> at Tiffin while Ishmael and McCarty are certainly possibilities. This district gets a lot tougher if Dye decides to compete here.

Conrad is the only state qualifier at Heath finishing 4<sup>th</sup> in this district at this weight class. He had inauspicious debut in Columbus losing twice by fall after drawing Rodgers in the first round. State alternate Wiggers also returns at this weight class. He won at Meigs and should have good qualifying chances at this district. I've also ranked Garber, Kahl, and Posey given that each of them has had some successes this year. Dodd and Snider (St. Clairsville) are other thoughts.

I expect to see state qualifier Kwiat at this weight class at Fairmont. He matched up with the much bigger looking Brettrager in the first round and couldn't bounce back. This year he won at Tiffin and Milan Edison and should be the class of the field at this district. Brandt was 6<sup>th</sup> at the GMVWA and 1<sup>st</sup> at Plymouth while King was 2<sup>nd</sup> at

Madeira and Deer Park and 4<sup>th</sup> at the SWOCA. Stone and Lovejoy are also “players” here.

### 189 #

#### **PROJECTED CHAMPION: KURTIS SCHAEFER (WEST SALEM NORTHWESTERN)**

##### Top Contenders

2	Beam (Waynedale)	15	Wasserman (Mechanicsburg)
3	Brettrager (Kirtland)	16	Fultz/Mickle (West Jefferson)
4	Miller (Amanda Clearcreek)	17	Sullenbarger (Arcanum)
5	Drumm (Heath)	18	Oberdick (Martins Ferry)
6	Ulmer (Galion)	19	Saunders (Girard)
7	Acus (Reading)	20	Boyce (Milan Edison)
8	Tantari (Lake)	21	Bremke (Oberlin)
9	Kapelka (Hopewell London)	22	Baker (Elmwood)
10	Yarborough (Trinity)	23	Beatty (Ready)
11	Miller (Delphos Jefferson)	24	Grubb (Tuslaw)
12	Uhlenhake (Coldwater)	25	Graves (Coshocton)
13	Russell (Westfall)	26	Joyce (Trimble)
14	Stockmaster (Buckeye Central)	27	Weber (Loudonville)

At one point this weight class appeared to be the most difficult in all three school classes as a stampede of 171-pounders seemed poised to compete here. Now that Utley will wrestle at 171# and Raber as low as 160# it has been transformed to one that is merely difficult. This movement has also alleviated the logjam that appeared likely at the Maple Hts. District where three state runners-up, a third place finisher, and two other state placers seemed ready to compete. However, it is still by far the strongest district feeding the state tournament.

Schaefer, a junior, was my pick last year, but was trounced in the semi-finals by eventual state champ Running, 17-9 and ended up 3<sup>rd</sup>. He is a real talent who beat the big school boys at Medina allowing only one point in his last three bouts. If he stays focused and aggressive, he will be very tough to beat. Beam was 2<sup>nd</sup> at 171#, winning his first three state bouts on two falls and a 21-10 decision. He tried Phillips in the final, but was caught in the second period and pinned. In any normal year he'd be a strong favorite, but this is not an ordinary time. He was most recently undefeated at the Cardington Duals with five falls and was a big time winner at Elgin. Brettrager is the one who is fun to watch. He goes out to win by fall – isn't that refreshing – and, generally, succeeds because he is willing to take risks. He was the district champ at 171# last year pinning Beam in the semi-finals. It did not work out as hoped as he fell in the same half-bracket as Phillips who pinned him in 86 seconds in the state semi-finals. He ended up 5<sup>th</sup>, but his 13-11 overtime win in the quarter-finals was one of the most exciting bouts of the tourney. I've named is three potential state champions ready to do battle (it would have been five with Utley and Raber), but there is more. The big, strong Yarborough was one bout from States last year, and, has had a solid season placing at

the CIT in his last outing. Two other wrestlers with multiple district wins are Sanders and Bremke, while Weber and Grubb have possibilities. An intriguing thought is Schaefer (Chanel), a 160 pounder forced to go up two classes to make the team who has done well at this class.

Ulmer, a Division II district participant last year, has won at both Harding and the Gorman and seems more aggressive this year. While unlikely to challenge the top trio, he should get a good pairing if he wins this district, and place. He'll face tough competition in state alternate Tantari and Stockmaster, both of whom have put together fine seasons. Tantari won at Sylvania Southview and Woodmere, while Stockmaster was 1<sup>st</sup> at Arcadia and 2<sup>nd</sup>, to Miller at Plymouth. An interesting possibility is Boyce, who took Kwfat into overtime at Edison. This district is one where opportunism could pay off. Baker or maybe Livengood are other possibilities.

There are two very strong candidates for placement coming out of Heath. State qualifier Miller was 1-2 in the Division II competition at this weight class last year. He has spent some of the year at 215#, but could well be district champion at this weight class. Drumm was a state alternate last year losing a 2-1 ultimate overtime battle. He has won several tournaments this year (Licking County/North Union) and was 2<sup>nd</sup> to Beam at Elgin. I don't know what to expect out of West Jefferson. It would seem that both Mickle and Fultz have done well and I'm not sure how they'll line up at sectional time. After that it's folks like Oberdick, Graves, and Russell as wrestlers with possibilities. Beatty, 2<sup>nd</sup> at Hamilton Twp. is also in the hunt. Beatty is a bit of a mystery. At the CIT he lost to Yarborough by only a point, but then was pinned by Schaefer.

There are a number of wrestlers right on the periphery of state qualification returning to Fairmont. One who made it last year was Kirby Acus the fourth place and last state qualifying spot at 171#. He then beat Heath District champ Kucera in the first round in Columbus, but then suffered two successive losses. He's been 1<sup>st</sup> at Reading and Madiera this year and was 5<sup>th</sup> at the SWOCA. Kapelka won two district bouts last year, losing a 9-7 overtime bout to eventual state placer Elling. This year he was 2<sup>nd</sup> at Tiffin after moving down from 215#. Miller also won a couple district bouts last year and has won a whole raft of smaller tournaments this season. Younger brothers are often tougher than older ones (though not in my family) so expect this sophomore to continue to make major improvements. Uhlenhake was a state alternate at 215# losing his go-to-state bout to eventual state runner-up Hayes. He has switched weights with Alig and should be a real load. Wasserman and Sullenberger wrestled for the district 5<sup>th</sup> last year after both lost by fall in their go-to-state bouts. They'll again have to be in top form to better that showing.

**215 #**

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

Top Contenders

2	Running (Clinton Massie)	15	Bowling (Westfall)
3	Salyers (Mechanicsburg)	16	Bellamy (Sandusky St. Mary)
4	Schafraath (Chippewa)	17	Alig (Coldwater)
5	Fabry (West Jefferson)	18	Skleres (Pymatuning Valley)
6	Wright (Northmor)	19	Cusac (Carey)
7	Allerding (Loudonville)	20	White (Mapleton)
8	Garofolo (Columbia Station)	21	Johns (Bucyrus)
9	Young (Seneca East)	22	A. Leach (Union Local)
10	Mullins (Waynedale)	23	Bowling (Freemont St. Joseph)
11	Mullen (Calvert)	24	Grubenhoff (Delphos St. John)
12	Roberts (Wellington)	25	D. Leach (Martins Ferry)
13	Coon (Nelsonville York)	26	Klotz (Lakota)
14	Smith (Chanel)	28	Saddoris (Montpelier)

It appears to be a sharp three-man battle for the state title at this weight class featuring a trio of wrestlers from the Southwest District. All three boys outperformed my expectations last year, and I am hoping to rectify those mistakes this time.

Running, who I suggested might contend for a middle-of-the-podium place last year, was sensational at the state meet. Competing at 189# he had three dominating wins (including a 17-9 decision over my choice), before nipping Bowers in overtime. It was his second state placement and the school's second state champion. He competed this year at Brecksville in what was a superior weight class and finished 7<sup>th</sup>, losing in overtime to the excellent Erb and later losing to Division I star Nate Weeks. I thought he wrestled well and his 17-2 technical fall over Division II state qualifier Spencer Shaw indicated his talent.

Hayes was a total surprise last year. He was so far down on my lists I didn't even rate him. No problem. He was 3<sup>rd</sup> at his district, splitting a pair of overtime battles with Salyers and then winning three high scoring contests at Columbus. Miller overpowered him in the finals, but it did not take away from his outstanding performance. This year he was 4<sup>th</sup> at Brecksville, losing only Division I choice Tavanello and Georgia champ Farr. His win over Weeks was particularly impressive. Some thought his runner-up finish might have been the result of a hot weekend. It would be a mistake to think that.

Salyers, as mentioned, twice went into overtime with Hayes, but the second loss was unfortunate because it provided a tougher state draw ending with an 8<sup>th</sup> place finish. Nonetheless, I think he has the ability to challenge the top duo with perhaps, finalist possibilities.

With a trio like that, it sure looks like the rest of that district will be wrestling for just one state berth. I see four possibilities. Cusac went 2-2 at last year's districts – both times losing by narrow margins. He was 1<sup>st</sup> at Lincolnview and could be a threat. Mullen was a district 6<sup>th</sup> at 189# last year, losing his go-to-state bout to Stacey. Alig has just begun to wrestle, but he has district experience while Grubenhoff – 2<sup>nd</sup> at Marion Harding, is another. Bracket expertise might be needed to position these folks to have a chance. You don't want to get any of that top trio in your go-to-state bout.

There are some solid kids at Maple Hts., but they'll need to be in terrific form to defeat any of that top trio. Schafrath captured a district 3<sup>rd</sup>, but went 1-2 at States and failed to place. That 189# state bracket was interesting because it consisted of 13 seniors and three underclassmen. Interestingly, Running was 1<sup>st</sup> and Schaefer was 3<sup>rd</sup> making for a 67% ratio for the young guys. Schafrath has been very good this year, winning the WIT with total dominance and taking the Dies over the excellent Willett. Allerding has also been first rate, losing in overtime to finish 2<sup>nd</sup> at the Gorman and winning some small tournaments. Garofolo was a state qualifier last year, and I see him as a quintessential grinder. He is not the world's greatest athlete, but it's his arm they raise after most bouts. He was a little out of his depth at the state level last year, but he has placement potential this time around. Mullins and Roberts may end up contending for the last state ticket. In the district this past year they met in a consolation round with Mullins winning 14-7. I think Roberts is getting much better – he lost to Garofolo in overtime at Elyria Catholic, and their bout will be very close. The trio of Smith, Skleres, and White are, maybe, another step back. White has had a terrific year, while Skleres doesn't seem to be improving as fast as I hoped. Smith is an interesting case. He was 5<sup>th</sup> at Solon, 4<sup>th</sup> at the CIT, and even won three bouts at that brutal 215# weight class at Brecksville. He may out perform this ranking.

There are some missing names at Owens. State qualifier Castillo (Ayersville) is apparently not wrestling, nor is D'Angelo (Tinora). That makes a district that was not strong to begin with even weaker. The one exception is returning state qualifier Johnson who continues to pile up the wins. A district semi-finalist last year, he fell to 4<sup>th</sup> which naturally gave him eventual state champ Stuart Miller in the first round and Fabry in the consolation, which pretty much ruined his Thursday. Young has yet to wrestle this year, but is certified at this weight class and should do well – if he appears. I like Bellamy, only a sophomore, who could qualify if everything goes well as well as Johns. That leaves Bowling, Klotz and Saddoris needing some big wins. One possibility, and a strong one, is Moser who still has the option of competing here rather than at heavyweight.

I think state qualifiers Wright and Fabry might be very close this year. Neither got a real good pairing at States and went a combined 1-4. This time it will be different. Fabry just finished placing at the Top Gun, while Wright won at Elgin. I think they're a clear step ahead of everyone else here. Coon, 3<sup>rd</sup> at Elgin, might be next best with Bowling and Akerman also legitimate qualification contenders. Also watch for the two Leach boys – Amos perhaps the stronger of the two for Union Local, and Dalton for Martins Ferry.

**285#**

**PROJECTED CHAMPION: TYLER OBRINGER (SPENCERVILLE)**

*Top Contenders*

2	Dilley (Amanda Clearcreek)	15	Chiurco (Malvern)
3	Dailey (Independence)	16	Majoy (Huron)
4	Kelly (Manchester)	17	McAfee (Liberty Union)
5	Stenger (Clinton Massie)	18	Tschour (Lima Central Catholic)
6	Lytle (Swanton)	19	Croasmun (Rootstown)
7	Endicott (Crestview)	20	St. John (Woodmore)
8	Chizmadia (Keystone)	21	Richards (Norwayne)
9	DeLong (Tri County North)	22	Frankford (Girard)
10	Martin (Mapleton)	23	Richards (Garaway)
11	Flinner (Triway)	24	Silverio (Shadyside)
12	Johnson (Dixie)	25	Chesser (Margaretta)
13	Moser (Tinora)	26	Haslam (River)
14	Setser (Northmor)	27	Jewell (Carlisle)
		28	Elfers (Reading)

Tyler Obringer, the big senior from Spencerville, provides a dilemma for the forecaster. He is clearly very talented, winning 95% of his bouts – almost all of them on quick falls – but struggling in bouts that last more than a period or so. For example, last year his four district bouts and his first two state bouts consumed a total of 4 minutes 13 seconds – an average of about 42 seconds per bout. However, forced to go six minutes in the semi-finals he lost quietly to Morosko, 5-2. This year at Marion Harding it was much the same story – a total of 31 seconds mat time in the quarter and semi-finals, and then a 4-1 loss to a strong finals opponent. So what can we expect? Well, I picked him last year, but I am hoping for better conditioning, one or two additional takedown moves, and an injury-free season.

Obringer should again win that Fairmont District, but it won't be quite the cakewalk it was last year. Stenger is getting better. Last year Obringer pinned him in 64 seconds, but Stenger survived the consolation winnowing, and got a district 4<sup>th</sup>. He didn't win any state bouts, but he got the experience. I saw him this year at Brecksville and he is highly improved. He got pinned by Bures, but came back to beat him for 5<sup>th</sup>, 12-3. During that process he also beat Johnson – a district threat – in overtime. Also back is state alternate DeLong who lost one of those marathon overtimes to Treon in his go-to-state bout, and then watched Treon finish 4<sup>th</sup> the next weekend. Tschuor, who has wrestled Obringer more time than most people brush their teeth in a lifetime, also lurks at this district. Elfers and Jewell are possibilities. I think at least three will place out of this district.

Obringer faces a multitude of threats out of Maple Hts. Dailey was 7<sup>th</sup> last year, but I think he was better than that. He was 2<sup>nd</sup> at North Coast and won at Hawken over a tough Burlanek. A big key will be getting a good draw by winning the district. Maybe

even more dangerous for Obringer is Kelly. Relatively small, he could go 215#. He out hustles and out conditions the bigger boys with staggering results. He has already won three tournaments. He was a state qualifier at 215# last year and won four bouts -- finishing 5<sup>th</sup>. At Plymouth he beat state placer Lytle in what was one of his better wins. He could easily better that here. Chizmadia won two district bouts in Division II last year and is an experienced big man. He won at Avon Lake and Cuyahoga Hts., but wrestled poorly at Brecksville winning only twice. Martin wrestles in a lot of smaller tournaments, most recently at Plymouth, and wins them all. I'm not sure how prepared he is for top grade talent. Last year he was 2-2 at the district level. Flinner won an important overtime battle that resulted in a district 4<sup>th</sup>. Obringer got him very early in the first round, but he lost an ultimate overtime bout in the first round consolation. He was 2<sup>nd</sup> at the WIT and he just kind of sticks around and finesses out a win. That's my top five with Croasmun, Frankford, Rogers, and Richards long shot possibilities.

There are two podium-ready wrestlers at Owens. Lytle, who it turned out after I talked to him, is a long lost cousin. Apparently he came from the athletic side of the family while I did not. In compensation nobody on my side is named Mimmo. At any rate, he beat Endicott twice at the district level to qualify and then won just enough to get 8<sup>th</sup>. He won this year at Elyria Catholic and Toledo St. John, but wasn't at Woodmore to wrestle Kelly. Endicott has been exceptional this year. He won at Elgin, pinning the excellent Marrero and Setser, and looks able to challenge anyone. Still, Lytle did beat him twice last year. The rest of this district is at a slightly lower level. St. John was close to qualification, but lost to Endicott, 2-0. Moser also had a couple of district wins, while Majoy was 3<sup>rd</sup> at Elgin. Chesser is someone who could pull an upset.

The most critical decision at Heath is whether Garren Dilley will participate and, if so, at what weight class. He was 4<sup>th</sup> at 215# last year in Division II and he is the real deal. I am given to understand that he would be allowed to wrestle as low as 189#, which sounds like, maybe, he'll be at 215#. However, the rumor mill keeps coming up with the 285# class. I'll rank him here, but he would be very high at the 215# list as well. There are no returning state qualifiers among the rest of the heavy weights so the door is wide open. Setser and Chiurco look to be about as good as anybody and have the most district experience (they both won twice at that level). Endicott and Majoy both beat Setser, but he still finished 4<sup>th</sup>. McAfee is another possibility while the river schools will probably feature Silverio, and Haslam--watch for Richards out of Garaway who has had some big wins.

## TEAMS

For most wrestlers and coaches a trip to the state tournament revolves primarily around individual excellence and achievement. For a lucky few, however, the team competition becomes the second critical aspect of this event, and some would argue overshadows even the personal side of this tournament.

That is why I found the D-3 team competition so fascinating. In last year's report I predicted that Monroeville could not score more than 115 points, and, therefore, that was the target score for Troy Christian. My view then was that Troy Christian had a high probability of bettering that mark and hence winning a third consecutive team title. As it turned out, Troy Christian took some major hits as Thome, the pick at 135#, Campbell, and Akins won a total of two bouts and scored a total of 4.5 points. Despite some strong efforts by others they finished with 113 points – two points less than the magic number. However, Monroeville failed to take advantage of that slippage. They had scored 115 points in 2008 but, surprisingly, the “Monroeville Four” despite going 16-0 scored four fewer points in 2009. Even with the fifth qualifier Clark getting them a consolation win and an unexpected point, they finished at 112 points. It was the second time in three years that Troy Christian won a state team title by less than three points.

Again the key factor was bonus points. In 2008 the “Monroeville Four” amassed 27 bonus points, but generated four less in 2009 when they were critical to team success. There were seven bouts where Monroeville wrestlers collected back points at least three times (or more) and yet settled for 4 technical falls and 3 major decisions (13-2, 12-1, and 13-0). Somehow the sense of urgency to collect falls (down from 10 in 2008 to 7 in 2009) never appeared. Chris Phillips pinned in both the semi-finals and finals, but did not in the first two rounds while Logan Stieber won consecutive 16-1 bouts in the last two rounds when two falls would have meant at least a team title tie. One other point--I said in my text that it made little difference whether Hunter Stieber competed at 112# or 119#, but I was wrong. He scored four fewer points at the higher weight than in 2008 and recorded only one fall (in the finals) at 119#.

On the other hand it could be argued that Troy Christian was far more vigilant and aggressive in capturing bonus points – with a far less dominating squad. They had 8 major decisions, all of which were by margins of ten points or less and three that were exactly won by eight points. A key contributor was Kyle Keplinger who twice captured major decisions in the consolation round generating the eventual margin for an outright team title.

## TEAMS

1. Monroeville Assuming that the “Monroeville Four” remains intact and healthy, that quartet should generate between 110 and 115 points. However, Clark is much better this year and could add another 10 or so points. It’s difficult to see any other squad gaining more than 100 points so there is some small space for error.
2. CVCA An exceptional team, powered by young wrestlers, that is nowhere near its peak. Tomasello and Utley should be finalists while Sommers, Vargo, Powers and, maybe, Meadows should all place. That’s close to 100 points. Anything more would have to be generated by Ratay, Dobben, and, possibly, Decatur.
3. Chanel A classically constructed team with strong wrestlers at virtually every weight class. However, the only potential finalists are Walters and Kovach. They need Assad, Tschantz, Collier, Orrill, and Kiefer to place and people like Porter and Trusnik to score. It will be close with CVCA, but Monroeville might have too much firepower. Watch out next year since 12 of the starters return.
4. West Jefferson The critical factor for this team is to get their middleweight wrestlers at exactly the optimal weight classes. Gualtieri, Branham and Prather have to score big and Reichle, Cochran and Fabry have to realize their placement potential. Maybe, Blackwell, Mickle or Langermeier can help.
5. Cuyahoga Hts. They cannot have another Saturday meltdown at the very tough Maple Hts. District. Noernberg and Dankle have finalist potential and I think Meade can score well in Columbus if he can qualify out of that brutal 160# district. Mallos and Torgerson can be useful helpers with somebody else becoming a surprise qualifier. Three of my top five teams exit the same sectional and that may be a real issue.

6. Troy Christian

The three-time state champs have proven to be amazingly resourceful at tournament time. Last year it was Kyle Burns making the finals and Keplinger unexpectedly scoring critical points. Should that kind of optimization occur this year they could make 4<sup>th</sup>. They have five potential point scorers, but each has to overcome some issue. Can Hancock and Campbell turn around a slow start the former by moving to 112#? Can Burns and Keplinger duplicate their unexpected performances of last year, and can the freshman Marshall continue his rapid improvement. A lot of positive responses mean a pile of points. It should be celebrated that only two Division III teams won three or more consecutive titles – Sandusky St. Mary won five in a row between 2002 and 2006, and Troy Christian currently has a streak of three consecutive titles.
7. Mechanicsburg

I think Rogers has finalist potential and Salyers should also score heavily. They need Reese, Wasserman and Hiltibran to help out. And they can do what they did last year and pull a rabbit (or is it a Baker) out of the hat for an additional 22 points they could move up.
8. Waynedale

The Beam brothers should score heavily and they have a number of places where help can arrive – Harter, Widder, Petersheim, Siegal and, and Mullins. The question, as it has been in the past, is whether the cavalry will arrive in time.