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**2000**

## **HIGH SCHOOL WRESTLING**

### **FORECAST**

**(29th Annual Edition)**

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### **DIVISION I**

The very awkward and controversial five district structure of last year has been replaced by a more conventional four district setup. As is discussed later in this report, that has not eliminated criticism since the district allocation of State qualifiers has an uneven quality that many find distressing. It is certainly a defensible allocation, but the area that would seem to most benefit by this year's process is also the one that over the past few years has been least strong. One can hope for the day when the mechanical aspects of the State tourney are so little discussed that they are essentially invisible.

The past two years have been a special time for Ohio wrestling fans as we were treated to a marvelous group of competitors. However, in 2000 parity has been the operative word as most weight classes have five or six potential winners; not one or two superstars. Last year 9 of my 14 choices won State titles while two others lost in the finals. Over the last three years just over 70 percent of my choices have been champions, but this is likely to be a difficult target with close competitive weight classes being the norm this year.

**103#**

Projected Champion: Ryan Lang (St. Edward)

#### Top Contenders

|    |                           |    |                                     |
|----|---------------------------|----|-------------------------------------|
| 2  | Paglia (Strongsville)     | 14 | Andaverde (Toledo Central Catholic) |
| 3  | Cundall (Maple Hts.)      | 15 | S. Weaver (Waite)                   |
| 4  | Buzek (Green)             | 16 | Depoy (Greenville)                  |
| 5  | Vickers (Massillon Perry) | 17 | Potridge (Fremont Ross)             |
| 6  | Loebker (Anderson)        | 18 | Luce (Sidney)                       |
| 7  | Zychowicz (Perrysburg)    | 19 | Camburn (Stow)                      |
| 8  | Ondecko (Upper Arlington) | 20 | Downing (Darby)                     |
| 9  | Bivins (Cleveland Hts.)   | 21 | Watson (Fairmont)                   |
| 10 | Candy (Moeller)           | 22 | Lakia (Riverside)                   |

|    |                      |    |                            |
|----|----------------------|----|----------------------------|
| 11 | Gilsdorf (Maumee)    | 23 | Ocasio (Fairfield)         |
| 12 | Wade (Berea)         | 24 | Mantini (Willoughby South) |
| 13 | Paz (Eastlake North) | 25 | Osterbrock (St. Xavier)    |

I've gotten very spoiled during the past five years at this weight class as we've had a succession of relatively straightforward choices emerge each year. In the more distant past, this had been one of the most difficult weight classes to forecast, because it's composition is heavily weighted toward younger wrestlers without much varsity history. However, recently we've been treated to easily recognizable standouts like Smith, McBurney, Lenhard and Ott, but the new millennium provides no such surety. There is no clear-cut choice this year -- or even two or three wrestlers that have separated themselves from the rest of the field. In fact, there are legitimate contenders at each of the four district sites creating what should be a very hard fought competition from the very first round.

My choice is Ryan Lang, the outstanding freshman from St. Edward. He is undefeated against Ohio competition (his only two losses were at the Beast of the East in Delaware), and won both the Ironman and Medina against very good competition. He holds decisions over Cundall, Paz and Buzek, and finished ahead of Paglia at the Ironman. His strong youth experience make him much more of a veteran than the average freshman, and he'll need all that poise to withstand the many threats he'll face.

Those challenges will begin at the district level at Mentor. Cundall is a tough, cagey senior who will get better as the weight allowance gets larger. It's a tough cut, but it's his only varsity option on a loaded Maple Hts. squad. If he can make it deep into a tournament (especially beyond that dangerous first day), he'll be tough for the young freshmen and sophomores to handle. Bivins, another senior, and Paz will also be in the hunt for a State berth. Bivins won at Solon, while Paz has had an up-and-down season. He was fourth at the Ironman, losing close bouts to Lang (14-10) and Paglia (3-2), and was second at Brecksville losing again to Paglia (3-0). However, he was fourth at North Canton losing handily to Division III choice Scott and getting slaughtered by Bugara 12-0. He could be the one to pull a big upset.

Paglia heads a very tough Perry District. He took the title at Brecksville and could easily have been a finalist at the Ironman. Buzek is a solid journeyman, while Wade was a major surprise at the Top Gun with a runner-up finish. The big mystery is Vickers. He, like Cundall and Bivins, is a senior who last year finished sixth at this weight while winning three State bouts. However, it's been a very tough cut to 103 pounds and he has had few appearances; losing twice at the Ironman and once at the Top Gun. He is just one more element of uncertainty in a very uncertain weight class.

I don't believe that the Fairfield qualifiers will be able to compete successfully against the best from the northern part of the state. Candy won the highly regarded SWOCA over Loebker with a late escape and takedown in the third period to force overtime, and then yet another takedown. However, Loebker has looked better as of late, while Candy was only fourth at the CIT. DePoy might actually turn out to be the best of this group, but I think low places are the best any of the qualifiers can hope for at the State level.

I think basically the same conclusion also holds for the Darby qualifiers, although four of them have past State experience. Actually my top choice is Zychowicz who didn't qualify last year, but won at Perrysburg (over State qualifier Gilsdorf), and was second at Wadsworth and Hudson. State qualifier Ondecko is also dangerous and could severely challenge any of my top half-dozen choices. State qualifiers Andaverde and Weaver may be a half-step behind the aforementioned trio, but remember five qualify out of this district. Potridge (down from 112 pounds), Downing, Buhacevich (Grove City) and Brown (Scioto) are other possibilities.

## 112#

Projected Champion: Kyle Ott (Wayne)

Top Contenders

|    |                          |    |                              |
|----|--------------------------|----|------------------------------|
| 2  | Moos (St. Edward)        | 14 | Rose (Perrysburg)            |
| 3  | Leugers (Fairfield)      | 15 | Passafiume (Strongsville)    |
| 4  | Pollock (Mentor)         | 16 | Simmons (Westerville North)  |
| 5  | Costello (Maple Hts.)    | 17 | Willen (Lakota West)         |
| 6  | Dew (Stow)               | 18 | Eiklor (Mansfield Madison)   |
| 7  | Theodore (Boardman)      | 19 | Shafer (Massillon Perry)     |
| 8  | J. Weaver (Waite)        | 20 | Bradley (Sylvania Southview) |
| 9  | Jaynes (West Carrollton) | 21 | Puckett (Beavercreek)        |
| 10 | Jackson (Cleveland Hts.) | 22 | Gease (Darby)                |
| 11 | Phillips (Howland)       | 23 | Scholl (Oak Hills)           |
| 12 | Luther (Glen Este)       | 24 | Sikora (Glen Oak)            |
| 13 | Enright (Westland)       | 25 | McCoy (Elder)                |

Sometime in late 2009, someone very like me will look back over the preceding century and begin choosing the top 20 Ohio school wrestlers of the 21st Century. Rather than the 60 or so years I had to contemplate, he (or possibly she) will have a full 100 years of potential candidates. My guess is that perhaps two athletes competing this March will factor into that analysis and be judged as the first great stars of the century. One of these will be Kyle Ott, the outstanding junior lightweight from Huber Hts. Wayne, who has already won one State title and seems destined to capture three. Ott has lost only one high school bout despite facing excellent competition (e.g., a two time Reno champ), and is easily the dominant figure at this weight class. To me, Ott always seems about a weight class or two bigger than his opponent with a corresponding advantage in strength and speed. He doesn't just win his bouts, but dominates, even against outstanding opponents. His only high school loss was to DeAngelo Penn in the State quarterfinals his freshman year -- a loss he avenged in the third place bout that year. It may well end up being the only blemish on his high school record.

Incidentally, Ott's victory last year set off a cascade of Southwest District champs. In all, that district took five individual titles in Division I -- the most in history -- and had, in addition, three runner-up finishes. Often viewed as a relatively weak area up until the '80s, it has now become a very productive area both in terms of teams and individuals.

The Mentor District will send a formidable trio to Columbus at this weight class. Moos was fourth last year, losing in the semifinals to Ott 4-1 in a bout that wasn't that close. His only losses have been to out-of-state competition and he has finalist potential (as long as he is away from Ott). Pollock won at Brecksville defeating both Dew and Costello, and looked very aggressive in the process. In fact, I was impressed with several of the Mentor wrestlers at that event, as they looked well-conditioned and focused. State qualifiers Costello and Jackson also return at this class and they are both excellent. All four members of this quartet have solid State placement chances, but only three will qualify. Last year, Costello (essentially a Jayvee back-up) made the lineup because of injury issues and proceeded to go wild. He was a district finalist and won two State bouts, failing to place by three points. He has lost to Pollack 4-3, Moos 9-7 and Ott 12-4. Jackson, the Solon champ, lost early at Brecksville to Dew (8-7) and fell to seventh place. He may be most vulnerable here. The good thing is that they should all be sectional champs making for good pairings.

While Ott dominates at Fairfield, there is some solid strength behind him. State qualifier Leugers has been very strong this year winning the Kenston and SWOCA and was, at last check, undefeated. He won two State bouts last year, and should do better this time. Jaynes qualified for State action as a district finalist last year at this weight class and the sophomore is even better this season. However, he will have trouble matching up with Ott (who doesn't?) and Leugers. State qualifier Luther and Willen have the best shots at the last two places.

It will be a very close competition for the three State berths at Perry. Former State qualifiers Dew, Phillips and Theodore are all tough, but a healthy Passafiume could be a surprise qualifier. Dew is a great wrestler to watch, working every second to score points regardless of risk. A lot of his bouts are of the 13-12 variety (see his semifinal score at Brecksville) and he is just plain fun to watch. Phillips was one win from placement in Division II last year, while Theodore missed a return trip to Columbus last year, losing 6-4 to Costello and 8-7 to Penn. They all have low placement possibilities.

The Darby District may not be as strong as the other three. State qualifier Weaver returns as the Perrysburg champ and GMVWA runner-up. Rose was a district champ last year, but lost both his State bouts, one to Leugers 5-0. Weaver handled him at Perrysburg and he was also second at Hudson. A sophomore to watch is Enright, who looked exceptional with a third place finish at Medina and some big wins in Columbus. By March he could be the best this district has to offer. Eiklor is also good, but just had his knee "scoped" a week ago. It'll be race to see if he'll be ready.

## 119#

Projected Champion: Mason Lenhard (St. Edward)

### Top Contenders

|    |                                  |    |                            |
|----|----------------------------------|----|----------------------------|
| 2  | Jo. Pflug (Maple Hts.)           | 15 | Hill (Moeller)             |
| 3  | DiSalvo (Carroll)                | 16 | Pietropinto (Mayfield)     |
| 4  | Stevens (Mansfield Madison)      | 17 | N. Laskia (Riverside)      |
| 5  | Eibel (Massillon Perry)          | 18 | Lemaster (Upper Arlington) |
| 6  | Wolery (Lakota West)             | 19 | Wilkins (Fairfield)        |
| 7  | Hewitt (Medina)                  | 20 | Graham (Marion Franklin)   |
| 8  | Januszewski (Strongsville)       | 21 | Bellman (Wapakoneta)       |
| 9  | Baysinger (Amelia)               | 22 | Reynolds (Clay)            |
| 10 | Thompson (Kenmore)               | 23 | Garcia (Colerain)          |
| 11 | Glavan (Mentor)                  | 24 | Mitchell (Start)           |
| 12 | Hansen (Pickerington)            | 25 | Gillen (Harrison)          |
| 13 | Pniewski (Cloverleaf)            | 26 | Mason (Oak Hills)          |
| 14 | Josefowicz (Holland Springfield) | 27 | Daisy (Howland)            |

As regular readers of this document know, I am even more a fan of baseball than wrestling and, as you might expect, have done extensive analysis on all facets of the grand old game. One of my favorite pitchers is the now almost-forgotten star Kid Nichols who won 361 games in the 1890s and early 1900s. He didn't have Nolan Ryan's fast ball or Steve Carlton's slider or Christy Mathewson's fade away or even the pinpoint control of a Greg Maddux. Instead, he had the most important trait of all -- he knew how to win. They made dramatic changes in the pitching rules after the 1892 season -- essentially creating the game we see today -- but while it virtually destroyed the careers of many of the pitchers of that time, Nichols was not noticeably impacted. He continued to win 30 games each year, just as he had done prior to the changes. Mason Lenhard has that same trait -- he knows how to win. Sure, he'll lose a couple of times during the regular season and look like he could have lost several others -- but when the "chips are down" Mason knows how to win. He already has won two State titles and remains a favorite to win his third, although it will not be easy.

This year Lenhard handily won the Ironman and was second at the Beast of the East to one of the nation's top-ranked 125s, Jack Spates. He was also second at the very, very tough 119 pound class at Medina, losing in the finals to the fabulous freshman, C. P. Schlatter. It was a fascinating bout with a wonderful first period of action with both boys having great takedown chances. Lenhard lost it in the second period when he couldn't get out, and was tilted for three points. I've wondered what would have happened if Lenhard had chosen neutral to start that period.

There are two State runners-up who will provide a stiff challenge for Lenhard. One is Joey Pflug who has moved up two weight classes and who is nonetheless a very big 119 pounds. Pflug had a sensational freshman year winning 36 straight bouts before losing in the finals to Ott 10-4. What I liked about his effort was that he wrestled to win, not to keep the score close. This year he is again undefeated with a title at Brecksville. DiSalvo lost a 5-4 State final at 112 pounds to Lenhard last year, and has been very solid all year, including placement at Reno and MIT. The key will be the Mentor District title. That winner will be away from both DiSalvo and the Mentor District loser. Incidentally, it will be absolutely ridiculous if Pflug and Lenhard meet in the semifinals at Mentor. It's about time we did the appropriate seeding for extravagantly credentialed duos like those two.

Glavan would seem to have the best shot for the third State berth at Mentor, but there are a host of other possibilities such as those listed in the rankings, and Mendez (Lorain Southview) and Leimkuehler. Watch out for the freshman Pietropinto; if not this year, then next.

Perry has six excellent candidates for three spots. Eibel is a two-time State qualifier who should be ready to place. State qualifier Hewitt has been injured much of the year, but he is very good when healthy. He has tremendous quickness and strength and is not afraid to be aggressive. He lost a barn burner to Lenhard in the MIT semifinals, 10-8. Thompson lost in the consolation semifinals to Hewitt last year, but finished ahead of him at the MIT. Januszewski has also missed much of the year after winning two State matches at 103 pounds last year. He and Thompson could both go if Hewitt is not 100 percent. Pniewski and Daisy are a step below this top quartet, but still of State calibre.

State qualifier Stevens heads up the Darby District coming off a third place finish at the Top Gun, including a 10-3 win over Eibel. He lost a tough double overtime State bout last year which, had it gone the other way, would have given him good placement chances. State qualifier Hansen split two bouts with Thompson, but struggles against the top boys. Lenhard beat him 23-8, for example.

The Southwest District, after DiSalvo, is not strong at this weight class. Wolery and Baysinger seem next best, and the former, in particular, might grab a low place. State qualifier Garcia and Hill both have strong upset potential, while Wolf (Northmont) and Christy (Piqua) could be State qualifiers. Look for DiSalvo not to have much trouble with this group.

## 125#

Projected Champion: Mark Jayne (St. Edward)

### Top Contenders

|    |                             |    |                                |
|----|-----------------------------|----|--------------------------------|
| 2  | Smith (St. Xavier)          | 14 | Maxwell (Butler)               |
| 3  | Moore (Westland)            | 15 | Stahler (Wapakoneta)           |
| 4  | Heldman (Marietta)          | 16 | Herrera (Mayfield)             |
| 5  | Ja. Pflug (Maple Hts.)      | 17 | Baraga (Nordononia)            |
| 6  | Kaney (Wayne)               | 18 | Yurchisen (Garfield Hts.)      |
| 7  | Penn (Solon)                | 19 | Rohr (Massillon)               |
| 8  | Sites (Coffman)             | 20 | Fukuzawa (Holland Springfield) |
| 9  | Williams (Lorain Southview) | 21 | Lansley (Wadsworth)            |
| 10 | Earich (Defiance)           | 22 | Evangelista (Strongsville)     |
| 11 | Norris (LaSalle)            | 23 | Adams (Toledo St. John)        |
| 12 | Teis (Hoover)               | 24 | Fitch (East Liverpool)         |
| 13 | Reiman (Hayes)              | 25 | Anderson (Valley Forge)        |

No strictly Division I team has had more than two, three-time State champions, but St. Edward has the opportunity to push their total up to four with Lenhard and Jayne. That would tie them with Richmond Hts. who had four, three-time champs (actually one of them won four titles), and would have the added cachet of being accomplished in just 11 years.

Jayne will be a tremendously strong favorite at this class, even though there is a solid set of contestants poised to contend for the title. Rated by some publications as the best in the nation at this weight class, he possesses both superior physical attributes and outstanding technique and experience. He has wrestled a demanding schedule that should put him in top condition to defend his title. Jayne, headed for Illinois, is the type of wrestler who is fun to watch. He wrestles strictly to win and looks to create opportunities to score. A very physical performer, he is at his best with opponents who want to wrestle. He exemplifies what is best in high school wrestling -- the will to open up and truly attack even the strongest opponents, rather than to employ a defensive strategy aimed at capitalizing on opponents mistakes.

The Mentor District looks to be very strong. Right behind Jayne are two other State placers, Jason Pflug and DeAngelo Penn. Pflug was fourth at 119 pounds as a sophomore after wrestling a great State tournament. However, he missed the last portion of 1999 with a broken hand and was forced to the sideline once again for much of this year. I'm guessing 125 pounds might be a tough cut, but Pflug will certainly be fresh for tourney time. However, he will have to stay aggressive to get a high place. Penn was sixth last year and started this season at 119 pounds. However, he has been at 125 pounds for close to a month now, and I've chosen to rank him here. He, too, is very good when he maintains a positive and aggressive mental focus. Should Penn return to 119 pounds where he has certified, the third qualifying spot would be wide open. State qualifier Williams and several other very good contenders are shown in the rankings. A long shot here would be Pope (Shaker Hts.) who showed flashes of real brilliance at last year's district. Should he sustain that ability, he could sneak into a qualifying spot.

The Perry District is uncharacteristically weak at this weight class. Maybe I'm overlooking something (or someone) here, but I don't see many State wins from whichever trio qualifies for Columbus.

Smith and Heldman make the Fairfield District very strong. Smith, a State qualifier last year, has had a breakout season, winning at Medina, SWOCA and the CIT. Not only that, he has made it look effortless winning his three finals by a combined 32-5 score. Last year he lost to Jayne in the quarterfinal 17-4. Heldman comes from a part of the state where wrestling is not heavily emphasized, but he is the "real deal." Last year he cruised into the semifinals before getting pinned by Jayne in 1:20. He could not halt the downward slide and finished sixth. He could do better this year. This duo is backed up by State qualifier Kaney and a well experienced supporting cast. The last two State spots will be very fiercely contested at this district.

Moore was fifth last year and should be the best at Darby. I was very impressed with him at Medina as he finished fourth, losing to Linich and Moody in close matches. He is very good on the mat, but Linich, in particular, took him down three times to win that bout. Sites is probably second best here, with State qualifier Earich also very strong. The last two spots, as at Fairfield, will be up for grabs.

### 130#

Projected Champion: Matt McIntire (Lakota West)

Top Contenders 2 Spires (Lancaster) 14 Kovach (Massillon Perry) 3 West (Fairborn) 15 Harris (Holland Springfield) 4 Spatola (Elder) 16 Tran (Sylvania Northview) 5 Tepley (Garfield Hts.) 17 Kist (Hamilton) 6 Jordan (East Liverpool) 18 Schleucher (Celina) 7 Mann (St. Edward) 19 Danes (Eastlake North) 8 B. Zinkan (Moeller) 20 McGee (Cuyahoga Falls) 9 Harpster (Wapakoneta) 21 Tarnai (Valley Forge) 10 Gonzalez (Start) 22 Ware (Westlake) 11 Salyers/Stehlin (Fairfield) 23 Schinke (Greenville) 12 Wimmers (Marysville) 24 Kupniewski/Spencer (Maple Hts.) 13 Ali (Cleveland Hts.) 25 Trepal (Willoughby South)

This is a competition that features a wide variety of body types and wrestling styles. Certainly, there is no one outstanding contender and I could envision any of a half-dozen competitors standing on the top step of the award stand at the Value City Arena. There are solid contenders at every district site, but four of my top eight will exit at Fairfield. As mentioned earlier, the Southwest District enjoyed a banner year in 1999, and seems strong at almost every weight class again this year. That perception may arise in part because of the number of returning State qualifiers. I have a theory that districts that return a high proportion of State qualifiers generally do well in State competition. Let's take a look at how that ratio looks this year.

| Division                     | Qualifiers | % of Returning 1999 State Qualifiers |
|------------------------------|------------|--------------------------------------|
| I Northeast District         | 6          | 48.8%                                |
| I Central/Northwest District | 5          | 44.0%                                |
| I Southwest District         | 5          | 57.1%                                |

49.1%

II Northeast District 5 44.3% II Central/Northwest District 4 46.4% II Eastern District 3 35.7% II Southwest District 4 53.6% 45.5%

III Northeast District 4 55.4% III Northwest District 5 45.7% III Central/Eastern District 4 44.6% III Southwest District 3 50.0% 48.7%

So, in Division I, the Southwest District does return the highest proportion of qualifiers, which is a clear marker as to why that area seems strong again this year. I guess you could also make the argument that a very weak district might return a high proportion of qualifiers since many underclassmen might qualify. However, with eight finalists and five champions, the Southwest District clearly was not a weak sister last year.

At least in my mind, if everyone had to wrestle aggressively for six minutes each bout at this weight class, Matt McIntire would be an easy winner. Only a sophomore, he is a superior performer who is anxious to wrestle six hard offensively-oriented minutes. Last year he was a State semifinalist before losing three State bouts and finishing sixth. This year he won at both the SWOCA and the Brecksville in close matches against some of his toughest opponents at this weight class. Unfortunately for him, several of them are very defensive wrestlers who seek a down-tempo match that will keep it close. Let's look at the top contenders.

Spatola was fourth at 119 pounds last year, and has lost only to McIntire and Barnett this year. He is very tall and tends to wrestle low scoring bouts. At the SWOCA, McIntire scored takedowns in the second and third period to eke out a 4-3 win. He was quoted as saying, "he's a defensive wrestler and waits for opponent to make a mistake." A good summation about a wrestler who will make you work extraordinarily hard to beat him.

Spires has twice placed at the State level and he, too, is extraordinarily tough to score upon. Last year he lost to eventual State champ Dies (3-2) and won five bouts by scores of 3-2, 5-1 OT, OT TBK, 5-3 OT, and 3-2. He'll slow McIntire down and force him into mistakes if he possibly can.

West, on the other hand, can be more aggressive, although his victory over McIntire last year was 3-1 whereas McIntire's victory was 5-4. He was a finalist at Medina losing a slow-placed bout to Barnett in overtime. He has loads of ability and is already a two-time State placer despite being only a junior.

At Fairfield we have West, Spatola, McIntire and the excellent Zinkan in what should be a battle royal. This is an exceptional district confrontation, whose final rounds could well foreshadow what will happen in Columbus the next weekend. Spires is just too experienced and too solid for the field at Darby. He should emerge as district champion and may be the only qualifier from this district to place.

At Mentor, Tepley and Mann would seem to be strongest. Tepley, too, has strong defensive skills and took McIntire into overtime in the Brecksville final 1-1, 3-1 OT. I was surprised he failed to get out of the district last year, but he should make it to Columbus this year. Mann won the Mentor District title last year, but won only one State bout. McIntire beat him by a point, and he then lost a tense overtime struggle. This year he looked great at the Ironman, but lost to West and Galchick at Medina and did not place. He's good on his feet, but he is facing a squadron of defensive stalwarts.

135#

Projected Champion: Jason Bake (Massillon Jackson)

Top Contenders 2 J. Yetzer (Mansfield Madison) 14 Elliott (Mayfield) 3 Lampe (Glen Este) 15 Campbell (Pickerington) 4 Ruth (Winton Woods) 16 Sommer (West Carrollton) 5 Neely (Thomas Worthington) 17 Fogliano (Maple Hts.) 6 Jakuszewski (Green) 18 Sandquist (Fitch) 7 Lybarger (Mt. Vernon) 19 Reuter (Fairfield) 8 Adams (St. Ignatius) 20 Morris (Rogers) 9 DiGiovanni (Solon) 21 Verlinger (Nordonia) 10 Dysart

(Coffman) 22 Ringle (Westerville North) 11 Webb (Beavercreek) 23 Baria (Moeller) 12 Riley (Wadsworth) 24 Kennedy (Westlake) 13 Stamper (Miamisburg) 25 Vondruska (St. Edward)

In the 12 years that the 135 pound weight class has been in existence, my top choice has won eight times and my second choice the other four. That suggests either uncanny good fortune or a consistent series of strong performers at this weight class. The latter component is the most probable alternative, and in 2000 we are seeing yet another in that long line emerge. Jason Bake finished 39-5 as a sophomore 125 pounds last year losing both the district final and State final to David Dies in overtime. The State final was forced into overtime on a penalty point against Bake. Tremendously strong and with a great work ethic, Bake has had little trouble moving up two weight classes; and his exceptional desire to win make him the most formidable contestant at this weight class.

Probably the big news at this weight class was Josh Yetzer's decision to certify at 135 pounds and challenge Bake. Strategically, it was a great call; and if Yetzer can wrestle well at this class, he will be a very worthy opponent for Bake. Last year Yetzer was one match from placing at this weight class. He heads a very tough Darby District. Neely was the Medina champ and also won at Franklin Hts. defeating Fogliano. He was a strong third at the Midwest Classic and this junior will challenge Yetzer for that district title. Lyburger and Dysart are also excellent and have solid placement potential. Dysart is an integral element of a strong set of Coffman middleweights, all of whom could qualify out of that five-man district. Whoever draws this group in the first round will have a tough series of bouts.

Bake will also emerge from a very competitive district. Jakuszewski lost his district semifinal in overtime, and then lost to eventual State runner-up Dimitris in his go-to-State bout. Very tall, he presents a different profile to most opponents and is difficult to wrestle. He lost to Bake in the Wadsworth finals and to Yetzer in the Top Gun finale. Adams is a bit of a fooler, but he won the Solon at a very difficult weight class and also won at the CIT. Riley and Sandquist may be left out, but it won't be without a battle. Riley lost in overtime to Jakuszewski, while Sandquist's only real drubbing came via a technical fall courtesy of Bake.

Lampe and Ruth are the class of a tough Fairfield District field and they are difficult to separate. Ruth beat Lampe at the Sycamore on tie breaker, while Lampe won the SWOCA by a single point. Both are physically dominating, and both have past State experience. Last year Ruth pinned Neely in a consolation bout, but came up just short of placement. The second tier of competitors at this weight class are also very good. State qualifier Stamper, Webb and Sommer should be the favorites for the last three sports, but I think Reuter may capture one of them. Besides those listed, I also like Zamora (Princeton) and Klein (St. Xavier).

The usually strong Mentor District has some real opportunity at this weight class. DiGiovanni was an exceptional freshman last year and barely missed State qualification at 125 pounds. His two go-to-State matches were both close, losing to Bake 8-7 and then to the senior Mike Simon. Everyone expected him to be a world-beater from day one this year, but it hasn't happened yet. He was third at Solon, losing to Adams and barely beating Ryan Hurley. He defeated Neely 5-4 in their dual, but then lost to Vondruska. He should be the best at Mentor by district time. I've listed a number of others, but watch out for Vondruska. He was only sixth at Medina and didn't place at the Ironman, but he has wrestled a brutal schedule. The upset of DiGiovanni could be a harbinger of more good things to follow.

**140#**

Projected Champion: Jake percival (Amherst)

Top Contenders 2 Dimitris (Brecksville) 14 Clouse (Massillon Perry) 3 J. Zinkan (Moeller) 15 Wiley (Beavercreek) 4 Kremer (Green) 16 Melssen (Toledo Central Catholic) 5 Eger (Coffman) 17 Terbay (Carroll) 6 C. McIntire (Lakota West) 18 Garro (Uniontown Lake) 7 Dunstan (St. Edward) 19 Ghrist (East Liverpool) 8 Spivey (Thomas Worthington) 20 Huddle (Marion Harding) 9 Palmer (Findlay) 21 Doggett (Tecumseh) 10

Maddox (Start) 22 Lock (St. Ignatius) 11 Burke (Wayne) 23 Bailey (Westerville North) 12 Ashby (Mentor) 24 Helmer (Piqua) 13 DeMarco (Hudson) 25 Bowersock (Wapakoneta)

Last year there were three wrestlers who were hoping to avoid the Gene Gibbons syndrome (three State runner-up trophies), Vincent Gay, Anthony Carrizales and Dean Taylor. As it turned out, all three won well-deserved State titles bypassing the fate of both Gene Gibbons (1945/46/47) and Norm Codner (1953/54/55). This year Jake Percival, a truly outstanding wrestler, looks to move up one step on the podium and win his first State crown. Percival was third as a freshmen at 103 pounds losing 4-2 to eventual State champ McBurney, then second to Jayne at 112 pounds on a quick fall, and then second at 130 pounds last year in a titanic struggle with Jeff Ratliff, 24-15. It is likely that both of his final losses will have been to three-time State champions. Last year he was 36-0 entering that final bout, and he has only three defeats in three years. More telling has been the size of victories, almost all by fall or technical fall. He has literally had no close bouts the last two years, totally dominating every opponent except Ratliff. As an addendum, Lucas Sedgmer did get a unique record last year by finishing in third place for three consecutive years at 152 pounds in Division III. The Cadiz star lost all three years to the eventual State runner-up.

Dimitris, too, is a returning State runner-up, but his State final couldn't have been any more different than Percival's. As you may recall, Ratliff came out totally "pumped" to face Percival and led 15-5 after one period. It was, perhaps, one of the most frantic first periods in State final history. After that Percival outscored him 10-9, but it was too little too late. Dimitris, on the other hand, wrestled a strategic match against Branham, who had pinned him at last year's Ironman. Ahead 2-1 late in the third period, he was in the process of capturing a takedown when he was inexplicably warned with four seconds remaining. It was certainly the worst call of 1999 and defies rational understanding. Dimitris then lost in overtime.

As I mentioned, Percival has had another sensational year winning everything in sight by large scores, but not so Dimitris. He was fifth at the Ironman, losing to Bake by a point, and Kemble and looked sluggish and slow. He moved to 152 pounds at the Brecksville winning that title for the fourth time (only the second in history to do so), but had to go overtime to beat Powell. Then back at 140 pounds he had all falls at St. Xavier and seems to be back on track.

The Mentor District hosts both these contenders, and again let's hope they meet in the finals, along with State qualifier Dunstan. That's a terrific trio and all have solid State placement opportunities. Dunstan was second at Medina, but didn't place at the Ironman losing to Pennsylvania sensation Esposito (who Percival pinned) and Kemble. DeMarco and the excellent Ashby need to pull a big upset to qualify.

State qualifiers Zinkan and McIntire head a strong field at Fairfield. Zinkan was a State semifinalist last year at 130 pounds before losing to Percival 9-3 and ending up fourth. A flashy high-scoring wrestler, he won at the SWOCA and CIT and was undefeated at the National Duals. McIntire, a two-time State qualifier, won a 3-1 decision over Dunstan in first-round State action, but then was overwhelmed by Braham and Skoch. He has been at 145 pounds much of this season with runner-up finishes at the SWOCA and Brecksville. Both times he was just plain overpowered in the finals. Burke, Wiley and former State qualifier Doggett make this a very deep weight at this district, especially when you add in the impressive young sophomore Terbay. A semifinalist at Medina, he ended up losing close bouts to Dunstan, Yetzer and Kremer.

State qualifier Spivey and Eger head a tough Columbus contingent at the Darby District, but State qualifier Maddox, Palmer and Melssen are all good out of Toledo. Eger down from 145 pounds is very strong while Spivey, who looks like a 135 pound, is quick. He was at 119 pounds last year. I was impressed with Maddox at the Brecksville Tourney, where he was fourth. The surprise, however, has been Palmer, who has put together some big wins. Last year as a 145 pounder, he lost his only two district bouts. However, this year he upset Maddox 11-9 at St. John and is currently undefeated. Melssen was a State alternate last year and was third at the CIT behind Zinkan and Durkin.

State placer Kremer heads the Perry field; and he is one of those wrestlers who always seems to grab a top spot no matter how tough the tournament. He was sixth at Columbus last year, but only lost to Zinkan by an 8-7 score. He seems to be a particularly dangerous consolation round wrestler. Clouse or State qualifier Garro are probably next best, but they will have a tough time winning at States. Garro certified at 135 pounds, but strategically may feel this is a better weight class. Clouse lost to Dimitris 11-4 at the Ironman and to Kremer 16-4 at Medina, so he has some ground to make up by district time. However, Massillon Perry wrestlers tend to peak late in the year and you discount them there at your own risk.

#### 145#

Projected Champion: Dave Bolyard (Akron Springfield)

Top Contenders 2 Z. Kallai (Wadsworth) 14 Sharkey (Miamisburg) 3 N. Yetzer (Mansfield Madison) 15 Geib (Wapakoneta) 4 Lyons (Moeller) 16 Young (Piqua) 5 Wahoff (Fairfield) 17 Poling (Rogers) 6 Hernan (Madison) 18 Jackson (Holland Springfield) 7 Maher (Pickerington) 19 Tomaszewski (Tiffin Columbian) 8 Leabu (St. Edward) 20 Chatterelli (Massillon) 9 E. Mahone (Bedford) 21 Kathman (Elder) 10 McDaniel (Wayne) 22 Ishizuka (Coffman) 11 McKinney (Davidson) 23 Holztrager (Normandy) 12 Fisher (Ashland) 24 Moore (Harrison) 13 Wilson (Solon) 25 Akili (Buchtel)

It seems pretty clear-cut that the strongest, classiest field in Division I will be at 145 pounds. It is a very experienced assemblage with 10 wrestlers having outstanding credentials. In addition, it is a diverse field with lots of different styles and ways of winning, which should make for excellent competition. It is also the weight class with my longest consecutive string of forecasting success. I've hit it right for eight consecutive years, but rarely has this weight class been this deep and this talented. My choice to end up as the eventual winner is the powerful and aggressive Dave Bolyard. It would not be a stretch to say that he has been the most impressive wrestler I have seen so far this year. He tore through the Brecksville Tourney defeating two-time State qualifier Chris McIntire 16-1 in the final round. The blond-haired bomber seemed unbeatable as he combined speed and strength with an aggressive mind-set. In every bout he looked like somebody on a search and destroy mission, and he was not afraid to take a well-calculated chance. Bolyard was second as a sophomore and fourth last year, losing to eventual champ Branham and Skoch.

As good as Bolyard is, this weight is full of splendid match ups and great competition, and an upset would not be an enormous surprise. Battling Bolyard at Massillon Perry is the excellent Zak Kallai. He had a great junior year, then ended on kind of a down note. He lost a 5-5 tie breaker in overtime in the district finals, and then two heartbreakingly close decisions in his first two State bouts, 5-4 to Ruth and 6-4 in OT to Federico. This year, up three weight classes, he was third at North Canton, defeating Josh Yetzer, and first at Wadsworth with big wins over Hernan and Fisher. Then at the Top Gun he won against a great field defeating State runner-up Nate Yetzer in the finals 14-6. He and Bolyard will be a dominating duo at the Massillon Perry District with the third spot up for grabs. A long-shot possibility is the small Ambrose (Green), who while very good, has moved up because of Kremer and Jakuszewski.

Don't count out Nate Yetzer, either. He was the State runner-up at 140 pounds last year and has been battling the flu bug most of January. Still he crushed everyone at 152 pounds at the Gorman and finished ahead of Hernan, Fisher and Canoles at the Top Gun. He also blasted Leabu to win the Medina, which also included wins over Ishizuka and Eger. He and his brother have had four outstanding high school years, and have provided a lot of impetus for wrestling in the Mansfield area. It will seem strange without them next year.

That Darby District will not be easy, even for Yetzer. State qualifier Maher is back and, while it's taken some time to get him rolling, should be very tough by late February. A star player on Pickerington's State semifinal team, he has had a slow start (see Division II at 215 pounds), but is an outstanding athlete. State qualifiers Fisher and Jackson are also here, and I like the former as a potential low placer. He was fourth at the Top Gun and won the Gorman when Yetzer elected to compete at 152 pounds.

It's a closely packed group at Mentor. Hernan was a district finalist last year, but drew the tough Effner in the first round at States and could not handle his mat wrestling. This year he won the Ironman over Leabu (5-3), was second at Wadsworth to Kallai (7-2) and third at the Top Gun (pinning Fisher in the consolation finals). Leabu was second at both the Ironman and Medina, but has good skills. Only a junior, he'll be outstanding when he realizes how good he really is. The explosive Mahone is down from 152 pounds and this could be the wild card in this competition. He has the power to take anybody to their back, and with all his older brothers, you know he must be tough. He was still in early season shape when I saw him, but when he goes six hard minutes, it will be a real battle. Wilson has been overlooked all year, but this Solon senior is very steady. He majored Ishizuka at the Ohio Duals and lost to Leabu by just two points. If any of the top three at this district falter, he will be right there. Westfall (Garfield Hts.) is a long shot.

Lyons is a sharp, aggressive wrestler who scores lots of points, but give up some, too. He is stylistically similar to Bolyard, and a bout between the two of them might end up with both in double figures. A district champion last year, he was exceptional this year, winning the SWOCA 16-7 over McIntire and crushing Wickert 17-1 to take the CIT. Wahoff has been sixth the last two years and has the ability to challenge the go-for-broke wrestlers. Lyons beat him 9-5 at the SWOCA and Bolyard won 9-8 last year at the State meet. He's the type of competitor who could upset Bolyard by getting an early lead and the capitalizing on overaggressive mistakes. McDaniel could be a big help to Wayne's team chances if he can somehow fight his way through this maze of superstars.

152#

Projected Champion: Ryan Bertin (St. Edward)

Top Contenders 2 Blanks (Moeller) 15 Simon (St. Xavier) 3 Kapustka (Centerville) 16 Gillette (Wapakoneta) 4 C. Zallai (Wadsworth) 17 McElroy (Lebanon) 5 Strouth (Coffman) 18 Franke (Clay) 6 Ruberg (Harrison) 19 Powell (Glen Oak) 7 McNally (North Royalton) 20 Hawald (Solon) 8 Bauer (Ashland) 21 Neely (Princeton) 9 Gray (Fitch) 22 Kuhner (Pickerington) 10 Patzakis (Madison) 23 Osting (Piqua) 11 Stevens (Thomas Worthington) 24 Carmony (Wooster) 12 Willis (Lakota East) 25 Martin (Beavercreek) 13 Marzec (Toledo St. Francis) 26 Burton (Hayes) 14 Werstler (North Canton) 27 Iliff (Fremont Ross)

Have you ever noticed that there are two different kinds of scoring systems in sports? In most athletic endeavors you earn victories according to an agreed upon set of rules as in baseball, ice hockey, or golf. However, there are some sports where you are judged like figure skating, gymnastics, or diving. In those contests there is more or less a regular progression of winners, with participants "paying their dues" until it's their turn to win. Well, if wrestling was judged we'd certainly say it's Ryan Bertin's turn to win. Already a three-time qualifier, he looked to be the best at 135 pounds his sophomore year, but he lost a tough semifinal bout to the senior Iacoboni, who he had twice previously defeated. Then last year he was absolutely outstanding, but ended up with three-time champ Ty Morgan at 145 pounds. Morgan was just too strong defeating Bertin, first in overtime at the Ohio Duals and then more easily in the State finals. This year Bertin has been absolutely brilliant. This Michigan recruit was the MVP at both the Ironman and the Beast of the East, two of the country's most prestigious high school tourneys. He should easily be the champion this year, but the wrestling gods can sometimes be a cruel and fickle lot. Nonetheless, he'll enter the competition as one of the strongest favorites in Division I (along with Ott).

While Bertin looks to be close to a sure thing at the top of this list everything else is wild and confused. There has been a lot of back and forth with form failing to hold at many tournaments. You might anticipate a lot of so called inconsistencies in the ratings mainly because there has been a lot of inconsistencies in the results.

I've placed Blanks second, but he'll have to be in top form to hold that ranking. He won the SWOCA on a fall, but was behind to Willis at that time. He also won a much narrower than anticipated decision over Marzec to claim the CIT title. A State qualifier as a sophomore last year, he won two bouts but failed to place. Bertin beat

him 12-4 and Enright won a 12-11 thriller for placement status. There are plenty of challenges for Blanks at Fairfield. Two-time State qualifier and defending district champ Kapustka returns and he is very good. He easily won the giant GMVWA and has four solid years of varsity experience to count on. State qualifier Ruberg has been at 160 pounds much of the year and he is also a very dangerous opponent. When he is "on," he'll go with anywhere here with the exception of Bertin. However, he has had patches of inconsistency. This is a deep group with Willis, Simon, McElroy, Osting and Neely all with good credentials. The battle for district placement will start early here.

Bertin should have little trouble at Mentor. The real mystery is Patzakis who transferred over from Richmond Hts. For a variety of reasons, he has not wrestled much, so it's difficult to tell how well he'll do this year. Still, past efforts are encouraging. Last year he took a 29-1 record into his district semifinals before inexplicably losing two decisions by a total of three points. With Hernan as a workout partner, he should be primed for State qualification. State qualifier Bernard and Hawald will battle for the last qualifying berth.

The excellent Chris Kallai was the only wrestler with that last name not to reach the State Tournament out of the Perry District last year. He lost his critical consolation round match up to eventual runner-up Dimitris, and ended up as a spectator at Columbus. This year all three Kallais should qualify making Grandma Kallai a very happy lady. Chris was third at North Canton, first at Wadsworth, second at the Top Gun (to an out-of-state wrestler) and has excellent State placement potential. The sophomore Gray, State qualifier Werstler, and the rapidly improving McNally all factor into the mix. In addition, Powell, who just missed beating Dimitris at Brecksville, also placed at the Top Gun and he just keeps getting better. Carmony is Wooster's best wrestler and he has beaten Bauer.

The Darby District is also very good. Strouth beat Hernan and Ruberg last year, and has had an excellent year except for his misadventures at Medina. State qualifier Gillette is on the right half of the ratings grid and that may be too low. He beat Strouth at Medina, but I've had trouble getting an accurate fix on him. Bauer is another wrestler that may well be better than I've ranked him. He's had some big wins this year, and seems to be rounding into top form at just the right time. You'd think there would be plenty of margin for error with five qualifiers, but that just isn't true at this district.

## 160#

Projected Champion: Mike Smith (Lorain Southview)

Top Contenders 2 Padgett (Fairfield) 15 Nehrenz (Akron Springfield) 3 Magistrelli (Maple Hts.) 16 Apfelstadt (Scioto) 4 M. Kallai (Wadsworth) 17 Heard (Princeton) 5 Schweda (St. Edward) 18 Avsec (Geneva) 6 Miller (Marietta) 19 Cox (Butler) 7 Knudsen (Westland) 20 Van Fossen (New Philadelphia) 8 Stevens (Carroll) 21 Rush (Piqua) 9 Warnock (Maumee) 22 Elliott (Thomas Worthington) 10 Stephens (Brookhaven) 23 Robertson (Westlake) 11 Bartlett (Wapakoneta) 24 DiDonato (Uniontown Lake) 12 Pacetti (North Royalton) 25 Rogacki (Holland Springfield) 13 Salahuddin (Brush) 26 Jamerson (Canton McKinley) 14 Humphrey (Fairborn)

Every weight class, like snowflakes, seems to have its own structure and form. No two are exactly alike, but some are far more confusing and undefined than others. A good example of such a weight class is the competition at 160 pounds. Here there are between five and ten potential champions, but each brings to the competition questions that do not have easy answers. Certainly, it is clear that none of this group has taken charge of this weight class, and we may well find the eventual winner was unable to win a district title. In summation, there are a lot of opportunities lurking at this weight class, and it will be the opportunistic competitor who will best take advantage of such a situation.

My eventual choice after a lot of relatively fruitless analysis is the excellent Southview senior, Mike Smith. This is a very talented individual who is just plain entertaining to watch. Last year he walked through the Mentor District beating Schweda 9-3 in the finals. Everyone was contemplating a Lange/Smith State finals

match up, but it didn't happen. Davie Mahone caught and pinned him in 35 seconds in the opening round, and still in shock Smith lost a few hours later 6-5 and was out of the tournament. Unbelievable!

This year Smith has been excellent winning at Southview and the Midwest Classic and defeating Magistrelli 3-2 at the Ohio Duals. However, at that same event Bartlett held him to a 1-0 victory, while Stevens pushed him at 13-10. It was a great day for Smith defeating three tough opponents, but us forecasters would have liked to see a little bigger margin for error against the latter two competitors. Magistrelli was fifth last year and he and Smith will be apart at Columbus. Magistrelli seems often to wrestle to the level of his opponent, and that can cause early round problems at big tournaments. This year Magistrelli has won at Brecksville and Franklin Hts., and it is certainly possible that he'll reverse that outcome the next time he meets Smith. Schweda is also at Mentor and we're talking a terrific trio. Schweda won at Medina pinning Knudsen after having lost to him at the Ironman. As mentioned, he was second to Smith at last year's district and followed that same path at Columbus losing twice 8-7 and 10-7 on the first night. Incidentally, his excellent back up Schillens lost 3-2 to Magistrelli at the Ohio Duals.

Padgett was fourth last year at the Value Center Arena including an overtime win over Magistrelli. This year he won at Fairfield and the SWOCA, but was upset by Savelli at the Kenston final. He beat State qualifier Stevens 10-3 last year, and that will be one of his two principal district threats this year. The other will be State qualifier Seth Miller who was a finalist at this year's Top Gun and was the district champ at Darby last year. That, like Mentor, is a terrific trio, but in this case there's even more. Humphrey, Rush, Heard and Cox all could win at Columbus, if they can get there, while Ostholthoff (Moeller), Flint (Lebanon) and Fouts (Xenia) are also possibilities.

The free-wheeling Knudsen, a State qualifier last year, heads the Darby District. I like high scoring bouts, so he is one to watch. His third place bout at Medina was typical as he defeated Stevens 17-12. That style can win some matches that seem out of reach, but it can backfire as well. On a hot weekend Knudsen could be a finalist. Warnock just missed qualification in that very tough 160 pound class at Galion, but should make it easily this year. He has won at Perrysburg, Tiffin and St. Johns while had to default in the finals at Rogers. He, clearly, is tournament tested. Bartlett is a tenacious wrestler who is tough to beat. He lost to Smith 1-0 and to Stevens 2-1 this year making him a formidable opponent. Also, pay attention to Stephens who has won two tourneys this year and has upset potential.

Matt Kallai might have been the Division I freshman of the year in 1999. Wrestling at 145 pounds, he dominated the Perry District, pinning in the finals, and then won four State bouts to finish third. His only loss was to three-time State champ Ty Morgan. This year he has been learning his way, up two weight classes, finishing second at Wadsworth and third at the Top Gun. He lost nine bouts last year, but only one of 13 once sectionals began. Pacetti and Nehrenz seem a good, long step behind Kallai, but ahead of everyone else for those last two spots.

## 171#

Projected Champion: Joe Phillips (Maple Hts.)

Top Contenders 2 DeAnna (Westlake) 15 Saylor (Fairfield) 3 Clift (Brunswick) 16 Alexander (Howland) 4 Clemens (Carroll) 17 Bidlack (Defiance) 5 Pliev (Princeton) 18 Klimkowicz (Madison) 6 D. Mahone (Bedford) 19 Whitted (Findlay) 7 Hallahan (St. Edward) 20 Snyder (Massillon Perry) 8 Doerflein (Harrison) 21 Rotonda (Reynoldsburg) 9 Abrams (Lebanon) 22 Russell (Beavercreek) 10 Francis (Maumee) 23 Robertson (Normandy) 11 Camargo (Berea) 24 Fairman (Mayfield) 12 Lukens (Moeller) 25 Awls (Rogers) 13 Klaus (Wadsworth) 26 Lovell (Akron Springfield) 14 Lucas (Davidson) 27 Wilson (Westland)

This is another weight class where there are far more questions than answers, but it is also one with a strong slate of contenders. It also brings into focus the apportionment of qualifiers issue that has been heavily

discussed. If I've done the math correctly, there are 191 Division I schools with 16 places available at each weight class. The subsequent division creates an average of 11.9 schools per each qualification spot. Now, breaking that out by district creates the following table:

|                   | Teams | Qualifiers | Teams/Qualifier |
|-------------------|-------|------------|-----------------|
| Northeast         | 77    | 6          | 12.8            |
| Central/Northwest | 58    | 5          | 11.6            |
| Southwest         | 56    | 5          | 11.3            |

There seems to be at least some disparity there although the corresponding answer would speak to the difficulties associated with the currently used district model. Still, we all like real equity in the artificial world of sports since it's often difficult to find in real life, and an answer ought to be developed that closes this proportionality gap. How big an impact does it have? Let's look at the third place finishers from last year and their State tournament record.

| Districts | Championship Round | Consolation Round | Total Record | % Placing |
|-----------|--------------------|-------------------|--------------|-----------|
| Northeast | 17-28              | 24-30             | 41-59        | 32.1%     |
| North     | 5-14               | 8-13              | 13-27        | 7.1%      |
| South     | 12-14              | 16-17             | 28-31        | 57.1%     |
| Central   | 6-14               | 8-16              | 14-30        | 14.3%     |
| Northwest | 0-14               | 3-14              | 3-18         | 0.0%      |
| Southwest | 8-14               | 12-15             | 20-29        | 28.6%     |
| Overall   | 31-70              | 47-75             | 88-145       | 21.4%     |

The Mentor District is loaded at this weight class. Phillips was both a district and State runner-up to the superb Ryan Lange last year, which included a 5-4 win over Clemens in the State semifinals. This year he won easily at Franklin Hts., but fell behind Doerflein at the Brecksville semifinals and lost a 3-2 squeaker. Quick and strong, his one flaw may be a tendency to fall behind early. If so, this weight class is filled with too many excellent wrestlers for that to be a workable strategy. For example, he barely nipped Lovell 4-3 in the first round at Brecksville, and a consistent pattern like that is just tempting fate.

I came very close to choosing Tony DeAnna as champion, and for three very good reasons. First, a State title would make the DeAnna family the first to have a grandfather/father/son set of State champs. Lina winning in 1953 for West Tech, Mike winning three times (1974-76) and Tony taking the title this year. Second, I've had very good luck in the past choosing the DeAnnas, and I'm partial to such trending. And third, and most importantly, DeAnna is very good. He is a two-time State qualifier who missed placement last year by a single point, and who has already won three tourneys this year, including the powerful Brecksville. At that meet he finished ahead of Phillips, Clift and Doerflein.

Also at Mentor is David Mahone, who transferred to Bedford this year. He has outstanding physical skills, but has had a succession of nagging injuries this year. He was sixth and 160 pounds last year losing twice to Clemens. An important issue for Mahone is staying off his back. He was pinned three times at the State meet, and was caught once again at Medina. Hallahan is currently the odd man out in this three-man district, but he is good. However, Phillips and Clemens both handled him at the Ohio Duals and he'll have little margin for error at Mentor. Underclassmen Klimkowicz and Fairman are a year away here, while the rest of the field is even further behind.

They say luck evens out and if that's true Justin Clift should be in very good shape the next two months. Last year, he missed substantial time with injuries, but peaked at tournament time finishing second at the Perry District. After a first-round fall at Columbus, he met two-time State runner-up (and my choice) Vincent Gay in the second round. Down 8-2, he caught Gay in the third period and, in reality, probably pinned him. I had an excellent view and I thought that it was one more of my picks to the consolation round. However, it was not called and Gay escaped with an 8-7 win (he also was in line for some good fortune) and his eventual State title.

This year at Brecksville, Clift lost 7-6 to DeAnna in the 30-second overtime, and then lost 6-6 to Phillips on the other end of that tie breaker. Clearly, he is right at the top level at this weight class and just a tiny little impetus could put on the top step of the podium. Camargo and Klaus have both had excellent seasons with the former winning the Top Gun in a major surprise. Both Alexander and Snyder may be just as good, with the latter pining Mahone at Medina. An excellent district weight class.

There is not much to discuss at Darby. This is parity at its finest, but none of the five qualifiers are likely to capture even a low place. Besides those listed, I have also noted good work by Beechum (Marion Harding), Zohn (Toledo St. John), Spangler (Grove City) and Lenix (Toledo Central Catholic).

However, at Fairfield it's a different story. The solid Clemens is a steady winner. He was fifth at Columbus last year, and continues to place well at every tournament entered. Unfortunately he hasn't been winning any of them, primarily due to the depth and quality of the Division II contenders at this weight class. Pliev is the most intriguing contender. I mentioned him last year as a Russian émigré who had spent only a few months in the U.S., and knew only free style. Well, he was a State qualifier at 145 pounds as a freshman and won a first-round State bout. Now it's a year later and he's starting to really get acclimated to high school wrestling, and that spells danger for the rest of the field. Up three weight classes, he won the SWOCA defeating two-time State qualifier Abrams in an overtime finals. He had less trouble at St. Xavier defeating Brecksville finalist Doerflein 10-6 in the finals. Both the boys will be back to challenge he and Clemens at the district level in what should be a great wrestling spectacle. Add in Lukens who won the SWOCA at 189 pounds as a substitute and these five qualifiers will provide formidable first-round State competition.

#### 189#

Projected Champion: Alexander Lammers (Wayne)

Top Contenders 2 Chilcote (Groveport Madison) 15 Griffiths (Davidson) 3 Rings (Marysville) 16 Doxsey (Fairfield) 4 Cronin (Moeller) 17 Mahaffey (Dover) 5 Delguyd (Mayfield) 18 Hiller (Greenville) 6 Camino (Solon) 19 Helm (Elyria) 7 Hasenohrl (Maple Hts.) 20 Bialowas (St. Edward) 8 Jones (Lakota East) 21 Powell (Defiance) 9 Jontony (Strongsville) 22 Seitz (Milford) 10 Donley (Clay) 23 Weiler (Ashland) 11 Cherry (Sandusky) 24 Proctor (Shaker Hts.) 12 Smithey (Wapakoneta) 25 Drier (Howland) 13 Lozano (Midpark) 26 Farrell (Oak Hills) 14 Poe (Cloverleaf) 27 Braun (New Philadelphia)

Now that Brent Miller has definitely committed to 215 pounds, Lammers stands alone atop the 189 pound class. The defending State champion would have had as his only real obstacle would have been a vengeance-minded Miller cutting to 189 pounds. Last year they split two matches, but Lammers won the critical State semifinal battle 3-2 and cruised to the title. He had primarily falls at both the district and State level last year, and it will be more of the same this season. His only loss was a 9-7 OT battle at Reno, but no one in Ohio is within a half-dozen points of him.

Probably the strongest district will be the one held at Darby. Rings was a Division II State runner-up at this weight class losing to Pentorn in the finals. The big surprise was his shocking win over Bauer in a 7-4 semifinal upset. This year he has continued to do well having lost only to State qualifier Chilcote at Tiffin. Chilcote won a State bout last year, but was walloped 14-1 by Miller. Also back is State qualifier Cherry, along with Donley, Griffiths and Weiler. Cherry did not look sharp early in the season, but has been winning consistently as of late. The mystery man here is Zach Smithey. He wrestled up a weight at 215 pounds last year, unable to beat out Miller. Nonetheless, he was a State qualifier, although he ended the season with 14 losses. As far as I can tell, he has not wrestled this year, but is certified at 189 pounds. It will be interesting to see how he will do if he does compete.

Nobody is close to Lammers at Fairfield, but Cronin and State qualifier Jones are both good. Cronin missed some of the early action, but won the CIT and was undefeated at the National Duals. Jones was a district runner-

up last year and beat Delguyd's nephew in the first round 7-6. He was third at Brecksville, losing only a close one-point bout to Hasenohrl.

There is also a small mystery at Perry. Lozano, who defeated both Shrewsberry and Camino handily at Solon, has not competed in some time. If he is healthy and ready to go, he has top five potential. Otherwise, Jontony, the Brecksville runner-up, is best here. He lost by a point to Hasenohrl in the final. The rest of the district is solid but unspectacular, and not likely to cause Lammers too many sleepless nights. Braun, a transfer from Indian Valley, is an interesting possibility, as is Mahaffey who placed well at the Top Gun.

The sophomore Delguyd won at DeSales, Wadworth and Hudson and was a 1-0 loser to Shrewsberry at the WRC. He has great upside potential over the next two and a half years. A State placement this year would be a great foundational element for his resume. Camino has been very steady with some big wins, including a defeat of Hasenohrl in the dual. Lammers pinned him, however. Hasenohrl is a very small 189 pounds, but knows how to win. He was champion at Brecksville, but lost to Chilcote 8-5 in the Franklin Hts. finals. Lammer beat him 16-7 in the dual meet. Both Helm and Bialowas have the ability to make the top three at Mentor and qualify.

## 215#

Projected Champion: Brent Miller (Wapakoneta)

Top Contenders 2 Bond (Wayne) 14 Weickert (Tiffin Columbian) 3 Freday(Hoover) 15 Krakora (Midpark) 4 Miocic (Eastlake North) 16 Lipovsky (Barberton) 5 Findley (Moeller) 17 Foltz (Greenville) 6 Becker (Dover) 18 Legg (Fremont Ross) 7 Hamm (Olentangy) 19 Wegley (Tecumseh) 8 Bendau (Mayfield) 20 Slaven (Lebanon) 9 Mills (Mentor) 21 Caponi (Uniontown Lake) 10 Spreng (Mt. Vernon) 22 Karst (Westerville North) 11 Epps (Glen Este) 23 Ritzenthaler (Kilbourne) 12 Katafiasz (Sylvania Northview) 24 Barentine (West Carrollton) 13 Koz (St. Edward) 25 Butler (Shaker Hts.)

With Miller apparently committed to 215 pounds, this creates a four-way struggle for the top spot with Miller and Bonds a half-step ahead of Miocic and Freday. The top pair have already met three times this year with Bonds winning at Reno in a 30-second fall, a move which apparently injured Miller. However, at both the Ohio Duals and the Top Gun, Miller capitalized on superior athleticism to win. Bond appears to be the bigger of the two boys, but Miller has incredible quickness and determination. Last year he split a pair of bouts with Lammers at 189 pounds, his loss coming in the State semifinals by a 3-2 margin. He ended up third after winning a close tie breaker over Freday in the consolation semifinals. Bond was fifth last year, coming on very strong in the last half of the season. He defeated Miocic 3-1 in overtime in the State placement bout. He also finished ahead of him at the Top Gun.

Miocic is a splendid looking athlete -- tall and rangy -- with a lot of upside potential. He was the champion at the Ironman and Brecksville, but lost 7-6 to Division II State champ Pentorn at North Canton and to Bonds at the Top Gun. Freday was, like Bond, fifth last year in the State meet with two very hard fought losses. He defeated Pentorn in overtime in the North Canton finals, but was fifth at the Top Gun.

While this is a strong quartet, there are some wild cards as well at each of the district sites who have upset potential. People like Mills, Hamm and Findley will be discussed below, but they could well be significant factors in the resolution of this weight class.

An interesting point is that all four of this quartet should be district champs. This would set up pairings that would be ideal, all four scheduled to meet in the semifinal round. Since only Miller finished in the top three last year, no seeding issues would come into play, so the match ups would be generated strictly by random chance.

Miller will face little serious opposition at Darby. State qualifier Katafiasz returns, but Miller defeated him 19-4 last year. Spreng is also solid, but neither he nor Weickert threaten Miller. Spreng has been solid in the

Columbus area, while Weickert won at Tiffin and Sperrysburg and was third at Kilbourne. An unexpected challenger could be Hamm who certified at 215 pounds. Last year he finished third in the district, and then won two State heavyweight bouts beating both Seng and Christopfel. After that it was difficult, but sixth place was a wonderful achievement. I think the drop to 215 pounds is smart since there are so many large, very accomplished heavyweights this year. I have no idea how Hamm will do at this class and this rating is pure conjecture.

Bond is the only returning State qualifier at Fairfield, but he will face some good competition. Findley missed Columbus by one point last year, and has won the SWOCA and CIT this year. Epps has four losses to Findley the past couple years, but it's getting very close. Last year Findley pinned him at the district, but it was only 5-4 at the SWOCA. Fultz and the pinning machine Wegley are next best, but there will be no shortage of other contenders. Still it would seem Bond should win here, but I'm guessing he'll have a least one close match. Also, watch out for the freshman Barrentine who has had some great results for a 9th grader.

Freday was a district runner-up last year losing a close bout to DeVitis, who he then defeated handily in the State bout for fifth place. This year at 215 pounds, Freday has had a busy schedule. At North Canton he pinned Krakora and then beat Division II State champ Pentorn in overtime to take the title. However, at the Top Gun he placed fifth in a star-studded field. Becker was fourth at the Top Gun and he and Freday are the big guns at the Perry District. Last year in Division II at 189 pounds Becker was a district runner-up, and won a State bout before losing to eventual champ Pentorn. The third spot is totally wide open.

Miocic has tremendous future potential. He reminds me a little bit of a young Rich Frimel -- when he was still skinny and going for the heavyweight title. Miocic won a very ordinary Mentor District last year and won his first-round match up at Columbus. However, he was then pinned by excellent Matt Salsberry, who was to die tragically just a few months later in an automobile accident. He then won a consolation bout before losing to Bond in overtime in his State placement bout. He pinned Becker for third at the Top Gun, losing to either Bond or Miller in the semifinals. With the right draw, he could be a finalist. Mills is currently injured, but I'm assuming he'll be back for sectionals. He was first at the Midwest Classic, and lost to Miocic in overtime at Brecksville ending up a strong third. Bendau is a great freshman who looks deceptively easy to beat. However, one mistake and it's all over as witnessed by a third place at Wadsworth, first place at Hudson, a runner-up trophy at the WRC. Right with him is another freshman, the stocky Koz who was second at both the Ironman (6-2 to Miocic) and the Medina. When is the last time you can remember two freshmen ranked at this weight class, let alone three. It would be fascinating to have a round-robin between the three of them.

## **HVY.**

Projected Champion: Alex Stepanovich (Berea)

Top Contenders 2 Piccirillo (Mayfield) 14 Shannon (Midpark) 3 Howell (Garfield Hts.) 15 Stone (Cuyahoga Falls) 4 Christopfel (Elder) 16 Seng (Findlay) 5 Padilla (Wayne) 17 Reveal (Groveport Madison) 6 Ramsey (Fairfield) 18 Ardo (Stow) 7 Olds (Coffman) 19 Redman (East Liverpool) 8 Hyams (Sycamore) 20 Gintz (Dover) 9 Irving (Mansfield) 21 Bossie (Maple Hts.) 10 Kennedy (Cincinnati Northwest) 22 Noth (LaSalle) 11 Burtscher (Toledo Central Catholic) 23 Mercurio (Toledo St. Francis) 12 Tatman (Solon) 24 Bevington (Mt. Vernon) 13 Leckrone (Fairmont) 25 Rogers (Logan)

Stepwise multiple regression is a powerful (but sometimes overused) statistical tool that attempts to explain variation in the dependent variable by fluctuations in a series of independent variables. An example might be examining a pitcher's ERA as the dependent variable and using number of strikeouts, hits allowed, base on balls, etc., as the independent variables. One can then generate an equation (or model) that allows an analyst to enter the independent variables and generate a forecast of likely ERA. In the real world no model can explain all the variation in the dependent variable; there is always some random variation that is unexplainable. In stepwise regression the key is to eliminate those variables that add little to explaining the dependent variable or that measure the same effect as another variable -- multicollinearity. If we were able to construct such a model for

each weight class, there is no doubt in my mind that the model that would be least successful would be at the heavyweight classification. There are just too many random, unexplainable variables at that weight class. That is also why the "best" wrestler at heavyweight wins less often than at other weight classes.

A case in point is last year's State finals. Stepanovich (having overcome the challenges of Davie, Piccirillo, Thomas and Miller) was a huge favorite over Bowers who had won neither a sectional nor district title, and who needed a last minute five points to defeat Thomas who had dominated their bout to that point. Nobody thought it would last long, and they were right. Bowers pinned Stepanovich in 62 seconds. So while Stepanovich and the top group would seem to have a lock on the title, you just never know.

Stepanovich ended up 38-2, his only other loss in a 30-second overtime with Piccirillo, 2-1. This year he has been awesome with size, strength and tremendous quickness. He was ranked third in the nation for high school offensive linemen and that athleticism is a huge part of his arsenal. He hasn't had a close bout so far, and he should dominate the Perry District. Behind him will be six wrestlers looking at two qualifying opportunities. Shannon has come up "big" this year, while Stone has also been outstanding. State qualifier Ardo needs to push it the next six weeks, or he may be left behind this year. I like both Redman and Gintz, and both have good chances to be a qualifier. Adamczyk (Strongsville) also cannot be overlooked in this contest.

Piccirillo was a 215 pounds wrestler early last year, but he is now right at the limit. As discussed, he defeated Stepanovich last year, but lost twice to current CSU heavyweight Russ Davie (6-5 OT, 7-3) to finish fourth at Columbus. This year he is 18-0 with 15 pins including wins at DeSales, Hudson, Wadsworth and the WRC. I don't think he has quite the quickness of a Stepanovich, but he seems every bit as strong. With him at Mentor is the redoubtable Howell, who is also undefeated and won the Brecksville with four falls and a decision over the excellent Division II heavyweight Chris Hart. He, too, is right at the heavyweight limit and I'm not at all sure how he and Piccirillo will match up. Tatman and Bossie will then battle for the last spot at Mentor.

Olds look like by far the best heavyweight at Darby. A 250 pound boy with great mobility, his only loss was to Division III pick Blake Lingruen. He has won titles at Perrysburg, Coffman, and Upper Arlington. He was a non-factor last year, falling to place at sectional, but that has changed. State qualifier Irving is undefeated winning the Gorman, the Marion Harding and the Coke Classic. He has good placement potential, but will need to be more active to beat the really good big men. Burtscher is also at or near the heavyweight limit and should qualify for Columbus. Seng went to Columbus last year having wrestled a total of 12 bouts including sectional and district action. He won two bouts and was blanked by Piccirillo 5-0 in his State placement bout. I may again be underestimating him. Not rated, but a possible factor, is Cesare Gray (Marion Harding) who lost to Irving by a single point at Marion Harding.

There will be great action at Fairfield. State qualifier Christopfel won at the SWOCA and he is also the defending district champion. A huge heavyweight, he must face the challenge of the equally large Padilla, who has made a quantum jump this past season. Two-time State qualifier Ramsey may end ahead of both of them despite a third place finish at the SWOCA and a surprisingly large 6-1 loss to Valvoda at Kenston. Hyams and Kennedy both have the size and speed to do very well and are top ten material, giving Fairfield half of my top ten choices. All of them are over 260 pounds. Leckrone, Noth, Rogers and Rosing (St. Xavier) all have upset potential and almost certainly one of them will elbow out one of my top five, if only because of the mechanics of the pairings process.

## **Teams**

1. St. Edward -- While Walsh may be the team of the decade, there is no question in my mind that Greg Urbas is the coach of the decade. When legendary coach Howard Ferguson died and a no-name coach was promoted from within, everybody figured the great St. Ed's program would rapidly decline. Now 10 years later, the program is as strong as ever under a leader who deflects credit to others while outworking everyone. They

should open the new century as they closed the last one, by winning yet another State title. The senior core of Bertin, Jayne and Lenhard is brilliant, but there is lots of back-up firepower. Lang, Moos, Mann, Dunstan, Leabu, Schweda and Hallahan all have placement opportunities.

2. Wayne -- Lammers, Ott and Bond should score 75 points and that alone is close to a runner-up finish. Add in possible points from the mammoth Padilla, Kaney, Burke and McDaniel and they'll just edge out Maple Hts. for second place.

3. Maple Hts. -- Potentially, they could score almost as heavily as St. Edward, and at least 20 points more than Wayne. Still, they have the most uncertainties of the top three teams. However, if everything goes right, Phillips, Magistrelli and Pflug win and Cundall, Costello and Hasenohrl place, they could have St. Ed's looking over their shoulder.

4. Moeller -- An excellent dual meet team, they also have six to eight possible State scorers. The heart of the team is the four middleweights (the two Zinkans, Lyons and Blanks), but the upper weight trio of Lukens, Cronin and Findley could also help. If Candy and Hill pitch in we're talking a possible runner-up finish.

5. Mansfield Madison -- They don't have the depth of the top quartet of teams, but they have some great individual firepower. The core elements are the two Yetzers, both of whom could be finalists. Stevens has been great lately and could place, and if Eiklor can compete, that's a few more points. The questions is who else can help?

6. Fairfield -- Always an excellent team, they have lots of opportunities to score and that five-man district qualifier is a big plus for them. The quartet of Leugers, Ramsey, Padgett and Wahoff is excellent, while Reuter, Doxsey, Wilkens and Salyer can help. If they have a perfect weekend, they're in the top three.

7. Wadsworth -- The three wrestlers named Kallai in the middle of their line up should be worth about 50 points. All three (Zak, Chris and Matt) have strong placement potential. If Zak can wrestle at States like he does at the Top Gun, he can win it all. Klaus is good, but he is at a murderous district weight class, while Lansley or Riley might help at the lower weights.

8. Lakota West -- A team that could surprise many onlookers this year. Matt McIntyre is excellent while brother Chris, now at the right weight class, can score. Willen and Wolery are possibilities at the low weight classes, but they need the freshman Flake to step up.

9. Carroll -- DiSalvo is excellent at 119 pounds, but will probably have to defeat both Pflug and Lenhard to win a State title. Stevens and Clemens both have placement potential, while the sophomore Terbay looked good at Medina. They'll have to hit on all cylinders to stay in the top ten.

10. Mayfield -- The last three weight classes are where they shine with Piccirillo, Delguyd and the freshman Bendau. They have an excellent dual meet team, but many of the lower weights look like district fifth and sixth placers, just not quite strong enough to qualify. The freshman Pietropinto and Herrera are possible exceptions and can help build team momentum at Mentor.

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**2000**

## **HIGH SCHOOL WRESTLING**

### **FORECAST**

**(29th Annual Edition)**

**Written By:  
Brian Brakeman**

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### **DIVISION II**

**103#**

Projected Champion: Kyle Stofer (Olmsted Falls)

#### Top Contenders

- |                              |                              |
|------------------------------|------------------------------|
| 2 Kendjorsky (Buckeye Local) | 14 Hurley (Kenston)          |
| 3 Zupancic (Walsh Jesuit)    | 15 Maple (Edison)            |
| 4 T. Klofta (Indian Lake)    | 16 Wilson (Claymont)         |
| 5 Lochotzki (Oak Harbor)     | 17 Bugara (Trinity)          |
| 6 Meinking (Purcell)         | 18 Phillips (Vermillion)     |
| 7 Smith (Bellevue)           | 19 Martin (Watkins Memorial) |
| 8 Inghram (Lake Catholic)    | 20 French (Minerva)          |
| 9 White (John Glenn)         | 21 Durham (Loveland)         |
| 10 Randazzo (Padua)          | 22 Young (West Holmes)       |
| 11 Brown (Columbus DeSales)  | 23 Turchetta (Twinsburg)     |
| 12 Smith (Wilmington)        | 24 Browning (Bellbrook)      |
| 13 Franklin (Franklin)       | 25 Alford (Whitehall)        |
|                              | 26 Bice (Tri-Valley)         |

Last year I totally missed David King from Youngstown Liberty, never mentioning him once in my report. His coach sent me a nice note detailing his credentials and predicted he would go far. Was he ever right! King won the exceptionally tough Firestone District and then handily won three State bouts before falling in the State finals to the tough Wooten in a close bout. He would have been the first State champion in exactly 15 years (unbelievably, Eric Burnett) that failed to gain a mention in this report. Well, this year I have the same nagging feeling that I may well have missed someone again. While I've compiled a representative list of top contenders,

no one looks anywhere near a lock for the State crown. I'll be keeping a sharp eye out for the brilliant unknown again this year.

Until I find him, my choice for 103 pounds will be the outstanding junior from Olmsted Falls, Kyle Stofer. Last year after entering the Firestone District with a 31-2 record, he had a shaky weekend and barely qualified with his fifth place finish. However, that guaranteed him a bad pairing, which he got when eventual State champ Wooten drilled him 19-7 in the first round. He then won four of his next five bouts to finish fifth again. This year he is undefeated with wins at Galion and Wadsworth.

There will be a lot of real close bouts at Firestone since most of the top contenders are relatively evenly matched. Zupancic did not place at the Ironman, but was sixth at the Beast of the East and swept through the Ohio Duals defeating Brown and whomping Klofta 10-3. Go figure! Randazzo has been a consistent placer this year, while Hurley and Bugara have had alternating good and poor results. Someone to watch is Inghram who was first at Kenston (over Hurley 12-1) and second at the CIT. Also in the mix is the freshman Turchetta, who placed at Solon, Kenston and the WRC.

Kendjorsky won the Midwest Classic and pinned Schmidt to first catch my eye this year. He missed State qualification by a single point last year and should be best at Buckeye Local. I originally had Fetty (Athens) as second best, but he has not competed recently and did not show up on the certification sheets. Possibly he is injured. White is good, while Bice is a relatively small 103-pounder, but he has had great success this year and may qualify. After Kendjorsky, this looks to be a pretty ordinary district.

I was very impressed with Lochotzki at Medina and think he may be best at Galion. Again this is not a star-studded field with a lot of obvious qualification choices. With Pizzurro at 112 pounds, Brown has the opportunity to give DeSales an extra State qualifier in their bid for a State title. I think he can be a point scorer at both the district and State level.

I'm somewhat puzzled regarding the Wilmington District. Klofta was district runner-up last year losing only to the eventual State champion on technical fall. He followed that up by reaching the State semifinals before losing to King and wound up fourth. He opened the season at 112 pounds and was second at Graham defaulting to Wooten in the finals. At 103 pounds he won impressively at Indian Lake, but lost by the big score at the Ohio Duals to Zupancic. I still think he has finalist potential. State qualifier Meinking is back and he beat Pizzurro last year in a consolation round. He was third at the SWOCA, but only fifth at the CIT finishing behind Division II rivals Inghram and Randazzo. State qualifier Jed Smith also returns at this weight class along with the fast improving Franklin.

## 112#

Projected Champion: Dan Rooney (Walsh Jesuit)

### Top Contenders

|                                |                                  |
|--------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| 2 West (Clyde)                 | 14 Damanti (Springfield Shawnee) |
| 3 Laughlin (Canton South)      | 15 DiPietro (Watkins Memorial)   |
| 4 King (Liberty)               | 16 Velez (Kings)                 |
| 5 Hostetter (Salem)            | 17 Russell (Van Wert)            |
| 6 Adkins (Shelby)              | 18 Henry (Claymont)              |
| 7 Protz (West Geauga)          | 19 Boyes (Buckeye)               |
| 8 Constantino (Lake Catholic)  | 20 Spurlock (Bellevue)           |
| 9 Pizzurro (Columbus DeSales)  | 21 Severt (John Glenn)           |
| 10 Giambone (Aurora)           | 22 Miller (Carrollton)           |
| 11 Rossiter (Harrison Central) | 23 Bolton (Bellbrook)            |
| 12 Weeks (Watterson)           | 24 T. Harrison (Chaminade)       |
| 13 Kasler (Circleville)        | 25 Lamplot (Loveland)            |

Even with the defection of Josh Wooten to 119 pounds, this is truly an exceptional field at 112 pounds featuring a State champion (Rooney), a State runner-up (King), and four State placers (Laughlin, Hostetter, Protz and West). It is likely to be a competition won on small elements of preparation, or tiny shards of luck because the contenders are so well matched. It might well be similar to the Ottoman siege of the proud city of Constantinople in 1453. Sultan Mehmet had spent seven difficult weeks trying to take the city with a much superior force. Then during an assault, 50 Turks, separated from their comrades, made a chance discovery of a hidden postern gate accidentally left ajar. Once inside, they opened the inner gate and the Turks swarmed through the breach. Emperor Constantine tried to stem the tide, but his force was badly outnumbered. Then the last Emperor of Byzantium flung off his imperial insignia and plunged into the fray sword in hand, never to be seen again. Thus fell the greatest city in eastern Christendom.

After a long struggle, Wooten has apparently decided he cannot compete effectively at 112 pounds. His move to 119 pounds is surprising and it changes the dynamics of this weight class in many both given and unknown ways. West was fifth his sophomore year at 103 pounds, defeating Laughlin but losing badly to Rooney. Then last year at 112 pounds, after I had chosen Josh Quick, he defeated Quick in the league, sectional and district finals. At Columbus, he lost a State quarterfinal upset to Nate Gulosh in overtime and watched as Quick took the title after all. West didn't even place as he lost in overtime again to Hostetter. This year he has won at Clyde (dramatically with an overtime fall over Pressler), Southview and Edison, but more dramatically pinned Wooten and tech falled Pizzurro at the Ohio Duals. This is his last chance to win it all.

I don't know what to say about Rooney. He won the State title in 1998 at 103 pounds with virtually no close bouts. Then last year, unbelievably, he couldn't make 103 pounds and he couldn't make the varsity squad at 112 pounds. I'll give him credit because some kids would have found a way to transfer. He has come back strong and wrestled reasonably well. He and Wooten have traded falls as Rooney worked to regain that winning rhythm. The edge that might make a difference is that he has appeared to regain his focus and intensity.

It's also got to be a tough cut for Laughlin who was third last year and is already a three-time State qualifier. Still, he has competed with all these people in the past and beaten most of them. His win over Wooten is impressive, but he has always had trouble with Rooney. Last year he dominated Gulosh in the district finals only to see him go on to become a finalist because the draw was ever so slightly better the other way. If the little things go his way this year, he could win.

I won't forget about King who could sail right back to the finals this year. I mean he didn't really have a close bout on his way to the State finals and Wooten's 10-7 win might have been different had King gotten the controversial back exposure. His problem is a weak schedule, but it sure didn't bother him last year.

State placer Hostetter is the wild card here. Undervalued by everybody (myself included), he was sixth last year. This year he won at Medina beating Pizzurro in the finals. He has a tough defensive style along with a long body build that makes it tough to score against him. He always seems to pull off one big upset.

We have Laughlin, Rooney, King and Hostetter at Firestone, and that doesn't leave a lot of qualification room. Especially with State qualifier Protz, the excellent sophomore Constantino and Giambrone still to be accounted for. This will be an absolutely brutal district at this weight class. West should dominate at Galion. The tough Adkins, undefeated this year, is down from two years at 119 pounds and is the biggest threat.

The Columbus duo of Pizzurro and Weeks are both solid, but Russell could sneak in for qualification. Wooten would have dominated at Wilmington. It would have been all falls and tech falls with everybody else just hoping to get the other three qualification spots. Now that district will have an extra qualification spot, but that's unlikely to make any difference at Columbus. With Williams at 119 pounds, the Buckeye Local District will struggle at the State level. Kasler is solid, but the wrestler to watch is Rossiter. He could give the big reputation guys a real battle.

Projected Champion: C. P. Schlatter (Columbus DeSales)

Top Contenders

|                              |                                |
|------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| 2 Blankenship (Bucyrus)      | 15 DeLeon (Maysville)          |
| 3 Finn (Perkins)             | 16 Cronkleton (Benjamin Logan) |
| 4 Wooten/Evans (Graham)      | 17 McClintock (Galion)         |
| 5 Bowersock (Beaver Local)   | 18 Radkowsky (Kenston)         |
| 6 Williams (Claymont)        | 19 Toussant (Louisville)       |
| 7 Shearer (Clyde)            | 20 Rowland (Bellevue)          |
| 8 Clemens (Paulding)         | 21 Wheatley (Cambridge)        |
| 9 Messier (Coventry)         | 22 Carl (Springfield Shawnee)  |
| 10 Scianna (Hoban)           | 23 Weight (Fairview Park)      |
| 11 Wilson (Carrollton)       | 24 Egnor (Dayton Northridge)   |
| 12 C. Harrison (Chaminade)   | 25 Kremer (Franklin)           |
| 13 Minter (North Ridgeville) | 26 Collier (Minerva)           |
| 14 Kostko (Bryan)            | 27 Kastens (Twinsburg)         |

The last four State champions at this weight class have come from the Northeast District, but it's a real long shot for that streak to reach five. This is because an exceptional freshman has burst onto the scene creating shock waves in his wake. C. P. Schlatter has had a fantastic youth record, but it was still a surprise to those outside of Columbus that he would have such an immediate impact. Despite winning titles at DeSales and the Midwest Classic, Schlatter was unseeded at the giant MIT. He defeated Division I State qualifier Cody Stevens in the second round, hammered State third placer Rocky Laughlin 16-3 in the quarterfinals, out pointed State runner-up Mark DiSalvo 9-4 in the semifinals and then defeated two-time State champ Mason Lenhard 4-0 in the finals. It was an awesome performance and thrust Schlatter center stage at 119 pounds, a position he is likely to retain during the next four years. At least for now he doesn't utilize the conservative style I see with so many DeSales wrestlers, but is aggressive no matter who the competition may be. He looks to be at the beginning of a brilliant high school career.

The addition of Wooten to this weight class (if he beats out Evans) will turn the spotlight on Schlatter to an even greater extent. But he didn't seem very shaky wrestling a two-time champion in Lenhard, though this is not likely to unnerve him. For whatever reason, and you can come to your own conclusions, this weight class is not as strong as I originally anticipated. Laughlin and West moved down to 112 pounds, while several of the 125s stayed put. The big change was Wooten's move up to compete at this weight class.

The toughest district is at Galion where my top three choices will compete and five of my top eight. Schlatter should still win quite easily, but the battle will be for places two and three, which will be in the opposite half bracket from him. Blankenship has been outstanding this year and should get one of those two spots. Already a three-time State qualifier, he placed in 1998. Finn had to wrestle up a weight last in deference to State champion Quick, but he made the most of it. He won the district title and won four consolation bouts to finish fifth. This year he has bobbed between 119 pounds and 125 pounds, finishing second to Laughlin at North Canton and first at 125 pounds at Toledo St. Johns. Clemens is already a three-time State qualifier, but is "on the bubble" now that Galion only takes four to Columbus. He is 0-5 in his State tourney appearances and, believe me, I'll be rooting for him to win at least one bout down there this year. I don't believe anybody has qualified four times without winning a single bout. Shearer and Kostko are both good, as is State qualifier McClintock. This is a dynamite district competition.

Williams is a multi-time State qualifier who finished a surprising fourth last year getting some big wins in the process. He defeated Blankenship 3-2 in the quarterfinals, but it'll be tough to duplicate that feat against this year's improved model. He missed the first half of the year, but has been back a week now. He had a rough baptism losing big to Schlatter in the Ohio Duals. Bowersock has been very good after qualifying last year at 103 pounds. He had definite placement potential. State qualifier Wilson battled Hostetter to a standstill in the first round at Columbus last year only to lose 5-4. I think he'll win more than one there this year.

Evans is overshadowed by Wooten, but he may represent Graham at this weight class anyway. Only a freshman, he lost to State runner-up DiSalvo 2-1 in the first round at Medina, and then won six consolation bouts before losing to him again in the consolation finals. History repeated at the Top Gun where he lost early to State placer Eibel and then won four consolation bouts before losing to him again 2-1.

Wooten clearly struggled with weight trying to say at 112 pounds. He won at Graham, but didn't make weight at Medina. both Rooney and West pinned him at the Ohio Duals while Laughlin upset him 13-9 at the Top Gun. Don't count him out. He is a quality performer and at 119 pounds he feels good and performs even better.

The Firestone district is not particularly strong. Messier beat State qualifier Scianna at Wadsworth and he looks to be marginally the best at this district. A dark-horse here is Minter. He is a substitute for the injured Thompson and he has been sensational. He won at Avon Lake, Rogers and Berea and is currently 18-0 with virtually all falls. He has wrestled very few of the top contenders here, but did defeat Radkowsky the first week of the season. He will go into tournament action as kind of a mystery man.

## 125#

Projected Champion: Nate Gulosh (Walsh Jesuit)

### Top Contenders

|                              |                                 |
|------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| 2 Linich (University School) | 14 Garman (Bellevue)            |
| 3 Moody (Buckeye)            | 15 Hindel (Tri-Valley)          |
| 4 Stevenson (Perkins)        | 16 Thompson (Teays Valley)      |
| 5 Long (Paulding)            | 17 Thomas (Circleville)         |
| 6 Markley (Graham)           | 18 Redmond (Columbus DeSales)   |
| 7 Clapp (Fairless)           | 19 Patterson (Claymont)         |
| 8 Jolliff (Preble Shawnee)   | 20 Carter (Springfield Shawnee) |
| 9 Huelsman (Tipp City)       | 21 Wiles (Perry)                |
| 10 Kelch (Hillsboro)         | 22 Bourquin (Canton South)      |
| 11 Gomoll (Bay)              | 23 Reisinger (Washington C.H.)  |
| 12 Williams (Taylor)         | 24 Komives (London)             |
| 13 Ging (Kenston)            | 25 Deppe (Lima Bath)            |
|                              | 26 Snapp (Urbana)               |

This would seem to resolve itself into a three-way battle with all the top contenders (Gulosh, Linich and Moody) exiting from the Firestone District. It will also be a contrast in styles as each boy has a different niche. Gulosh is tall with excellent mat skills that allow him to turn people from the top position. He was second at 112 pounds last year after beating out State champion Rooney in the wrestle offs. Moody is a rough and tumble competitor who qualified at 119 pounds last year, including a first period fall district fall over eventual State champ Levi Spellman. He was third at Medina and first at the Top Gun where he won MVP honors with a win over State champion Drew Opfer. Linich is a short wrestler with excellent takedown skills and an exceptional mat presence. He was fourth at 125 pounds last year and second at the MIT this year, losing only to Jayne. That was an interesting bout. Linich opened up the first period by taking down the two-time State champ and then letting him go. Almost immediately afterward, he tried a lateral drop which backfired into a five-point move for Jayne and the rest was window dressing. When asked why he would try such a high risk move, he said he felt such a gamble was his best chance of defeating Jayne. He was not wrestling to keep the score close as some have done, he was wrestling to win. Clearly the winner of this district will enjoy a substantial advantage, as the other two contenders will have to face each other in the opposite half bracket first.

The top trio takes up much of the qualification room at Firestone, but there are two spots that will be hotly contested. The underrated Clapp should be well positioned as a likely sectional champion, while Gomoll, Ging, Wiles and Bourquin are other possibilities. I originally thought Gross from Olmsted Falls might play a significant role at this class, but it looks like he may opt to go at 130 pounds. Two other thoughts are Mulhall (Lake Catholic) and Costa (West Branch).

It should also be a real battle at Xenia as State qualifiers Markley, Jolliff and Huelsman leading a talented district. This trio, however, has won only one State bout in total, but they have all had very tough draws. Markley won at Graham and placed well at both the tough Medina and Top Gun tournaments. He could well place in the top four at Columbus. Williams and Carter (who has been coming back from injury) might be next best, but Snapp has been very good as well. Add in Hedric (Franklin), Wilson (Turpin) and Williamson (Kings) and that top group must be prepared to wrestle well from the very first round.

I'm not quite sure how to evaluate the district at Galion. Now that Stevenson will compete at 125 pounds, he should be very difficult to beat. He won at Tiffin at 130 pounds, but was shaky at North Canton at this class, although both losses were to outstanding competitors Stanek and Hewitt. Three-time State qualifier Long will also play a role, while Garman, Thompson and Redmond are potential qualifiers. Again, Redmond can potentially score for DeSales at the State level, if he can get there. The well is just about dry at Buckeye Local. It's difficult to identify even one contender there who has lower placement potential. Kelch and Hindel both come from parts of the State where wrestling information is at a premium, so one can never be sure of their past record. I think the feisty Patterson could be a surprise here, while Dreher (River View), Patton (Buckeye Local), Rose (Harrison Central), Barath (St. Clairsville) and Jared Hoppel (Beaver Local) also have qualification chances. Seeing the Hoppel name representing Beaver Local certainly turns one's thoughts to the past. During the 1950s the five Hoppell brothers (Herman, Darryl, Jim, David and Carl) were the centerpieces of great wrestling in the Ohio Valley.

### 130#

Projected Champion: Jason Barnett (Columbus DeSales)

#### Top Contenders

|                              |                                |
|------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| 2 Hilliard (Minerva)         | 15 Thomas (Circleville)        |
| 3 Hiles (Licking Valley)     | 16 Deering (Perkins)           |
| 4 J. Klofta (Indian Lake)    | 17 C. Henn (Bexley)            |
| 5 Heiser (Fostoria)          | 18 Doseck (St. Marys Memorial) |
| 6 Schultz (North Ridgeville) | 19 Cornwell (Athens)           |
| 7 Hensley (Lemon Monroe)     | 20 Couch (Tipp City)           |
| 8 Galchick (Salem)           | 21 Munyan (New Lexington)      |
| 9 Cartee (Bucyrus)           | 22 Wunderle (Ravenna)          |
| 10 Gross (Olmsted Falls)     | 23 Knull (Graham)              |
| 11 Ewig (Dayton Christian)   | 24 Ashton (Perry)              |
| 12 Shaw (Washington C.H.)    | 25 B. Roff (Kenston)           |
| 13 Squire (Buckeye)          | 26 Stansberry (Field)          |
| 14 Roller (Alliance)         | 27 Davis (Loveland)            |

State runner-up Barnett is a clear-cut choice at this weight class despite the fact there are some excellent challengers waiting in the wings. He was fifth as a freshman and second last year losing to two-time champ Leng in the finals. Very short, he combines power and speed in vigorous quantities to demoralize most opposition. What I would like to see modified somewhat is his philosophy. Against good opponents he gets very conservative, playing the out-of-bounds line, incessantly blocking with his head and taking "false" shots to deflect potential stalling calls. He is so good that really isn't necessary. Surprisingly, his coach, Mark Marinelli, was a very aggressive competitor, but much of his team seems rather conservative. This year Barnett has already won at DeSales, the Midwest Classic, Medina and the CIT defeating such stalwarts as Drew Opfer, Spires, West and Zinkan. Looks like he's ready to move up one more step on the podium.

The Galion District is very solid at this weight class. Barnett, of course, is the main man, but he does wrestle a lot of close bouts where the vagaries of fortune can come into play. The junior Hiles is also a big time performer who could be a State finalist, especially since he'll be away from Barnett. He was second at Medina at 135 pounds, and his only loss at 130 pounds was to the excellent Spires. Last year Hiles won two bouts at Columbus and missed placement by a single point. State qualifier Heiser was also one bout from placement last year, and he has continued to perform well this season. He won the big Marion Harding Christmas Tourney, and is the

introductory member of a fine trio of Fostoria middleweights which continued with Distel and Frisch. Two folks to watch are Cartee and Deering. The former gets little publicity, but big results. He won at Bucyrus, was third at the Gorman and second at the Coke Classic. Deering, only a sophomore, has put up some excellent numbers for Perkins while at 135 pounds and should be even tougher at 130 pounds. Henn is also dangerous. Last year he lost his go-to-State bout in overtime, but is currently only third best in Columbus behind Barnett and Hiles.

Top Gun champion Hilliard is particularly dangerous. He beat Knull, Harpster, and Galchick on his way to the title and showed the form that made him a State semifinalist last year. That was in stark contrast to what I saw at Medina where he lost to Squire and Galchick and failed to place. Go figure! Anyway, the Firestone District is very crowded. Schultz, Galchick and Gross are my next three and they all have past district experience. Schultz is currently undefeated with three tourney titles, while both Galchick and Gross have been steady placers at big tourneys and champions at small ones. Roller is a bit of a mystery since he's missed a couple of tourneys, while Squire has upset capability. I've also listed Wunderle, Ashton, Roff and Stansberry, but Wunderle is the one to watch. He may end up being far better than I have him shown here. I keep having this nagging feeling that he'll have a breakout tournament, and, maybe, it'll happen at districts. Possible surprises are Manges (Aurora), Randazzo (Padua) and D'Agostino (NDCL).

Klofta leads a solid Wilmington contingent. A State qualifier last year, he drew eventual champ Daugherty in the first round and quickly ended up in the consolation bracket. He hammered two opponents, but then lost to the two-time placer Ray in his placement bout. He has been impressive this year, defeating State qualifiers to win at Graham and Indian Lake. State qualifier Hensley is also back and he won a bout at Columbus last year. He won handily at Edgewood, but lost to Klofta 8-5 at Indian Lake. Ewig was a sectional champ and district semifinalist at 135 pounds last year. He wrestles many high-scoring bouts which, of course, gains value with me. He started the year at 135 pounds and was a close second to Worley, 9-7, at Graham. He was also fourth at that weight at the GMVWA, but made what I believe is a brilliant strategic decision by moving away from the rowdy 135-pound field. I've listed several others, but the freshman Knull bears close watching. Also look for Fowler (Springfield Northwestern), Murphy (Wilmington), Bertels (Franklin) and Menchen (McNicholas).

Shaw stands out at Buckeye Local, but there apparently is now some question about his availability. If he wrestles, he is the only one here with even low placement possibilities. Otherwise, this group will have difficulty winning a bout at the State Meet.

### 135#

Projected Champion: Chris dunfee (Ravenna Southeast)

#### Top Contenders

|                                |                                |
|--------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| 2 Romano (Walsh Jesuit)        | 14 Rudy (North Ridgeville)     |
| 3 Allen (Springfield Shawnee)  | 15 Ashworth (Bellbrook)        |
| 4 Worley (Loveland)            | 16 Meyers (St. Marys Memorial) |
| 5 Hussein (Orange)             | 17 Lensman (Graham)            |
| 6 Jenkins (Carrollton)         | 18 Goad (Hebron Lakewood)      |
| 7 Distel (Fostoria)            | 19 Poling (New Lexington)      |
| 8 Haueter (Chardon)            | 20 Dennison (Fairfield Union)  |
| 9 Davids (Port Clinton)        | 21 Weinheimer (Clyde)          |
| 10 Jones (Twinsburg)           | 22 Harmon (Clermont NE)        |
| 11 Swaldo (Indian Valley)      | 23 Jolly (Roger Bacon)         |
| 12 Fogliano (Columbus DeSales) | 24 Lawton (Avon Lake)          |
| 13 Westover (Beaver Local)     | 25 C. D. Roff (Kenston)        |
|                                | 26 M. Henn (Bexley)            |

On the surface it might seem pretty logical that most returning State runners-up come back to win a State title the next year. After all, they obviously have exceptional ability and they now have the experience of battling final round pressure. However, that's not the way it worked out last year. Of the 19 returning State runners-up,

only eight captured State titles in 1999 -- a 42 percent success ratio. Thinking this might be an aberration, I checked out the previous year and came up with a 37 percent ratio. Even worse for State runner-up Dunfee, this weight, of all 42, is where I have my longest streak of non-winners -- five years.

Nevertheless, while Chris Dunfee must remain very vigilant, I still think he'll buck these odds and win at 135 pounds. Last year he lost 12-8 in the district finals to Daugherty after defeating some very tough competition in the two previous rounds. He had an excellent State meet shutting his first three opponents by a combined 21-0 score. He then lost another high scoring (14-7) final to Daugherty. This year he pinned in the finals at the Ironman and remains undefeated at this point. His one tough bout so far was another high scoring encounter with a Walsh wrestler, as he defeated Bobby Romano 10-9 at the Ironman.

I think there's a good chance that we could see a repeat of the Firestone District final at the State finals. I've seen Romano described as a warrior and this junior has gotten very, very good. Last year he lost his first round district bout and then won four consolation bouts to finish third. He was fifth at the State meet losing in the 30-second overtime period in the quarterfinals. This year he was third at the Ironman, after losing that tough semifinal bout to Dunfee, and looked great at the Ohio Duals. Hussein is also a returning State qualifier as is Haueter who made it last year in Division I. That's a solid quartet, but Jones, Rudy and Lawton are all good enough to qualify, too. A dark horse could be Wyllie (West Geauga) who has wrestled a very strong schedule. He has wrestled just good enough to lose, but an extra point a match makes him a threat here.

The folks at Wilmington also have a strong one-two punch. State qualifier Allen lost to Dunfee 8-0 in the first-round at Columbus and then won two consolation bouts. Ahead in his State placement bout, he got thrown by Swisher and pinned. This year he's been plagued by illness and nagging injuries, and is just now rounding into form. Even less than 100 percent, he gave Neely and Barnett close bouts. Worley is also very good and experienced. A State qualifier at Big Walnut and Olentangy, he has solid placement chances. He has won several important tournaments (including Graham) and will probably meet Allen in the district finals. This is a good district with those listed, and Correll (Taylor) and Ramsey (Benjamin Logan) all having good credentials.

State qualifiers Jenkins and Swaldo head the field at Buckeye Local. I like Jenkins and think he has reasonable placement chances. He won a State bout last year, and was eliminated in an overtime thriller. Swaldo qualified at 112 pounds and is up four weight classes. Westover is certified at 135 pounds after starting the year two weight classes above that. I think this will provide him with a good opportunity to advance to Columbus. I've also listed Poling and Dennison, and they have had good 1999-2000 seasons. However, it's a closely bunched field with Sansone (St. Clairsville), Sharrett (Circleville), Furbee (Cambridge) and Sefsick (Harrison Central) also having chances.

It's an interesting field at Galion, but I'm unsure whether the four lucky qualifiers will have much impact at Columbus. State qualifiers Distel and Davids both return, but neither won a State bout last year. Distel defeated Davids 3-1 at the Coke Classic and won easily at Hopewell-Loudon. Davids came back to win at Clyde dominating Weinheimer in the final. Fogliano has made a big push in the last month. This transfer from Big Walnut took Adams into overtime at the CIT and wrestled well at the Ohio Duals. However, he did not place at Medina losing to Lensman and he is not a sure-shot qualifier. Besides those listed, keep an eye out for Russell (Big Walnut), Moore (Milbury Lake) and Thurston (Teays Valley).

#### 140#

Projected Champion: Mike Kemble (Ravenna Southeast)

#### Top Contenders

|                               |                         |
|-------------------------------|-------------------------|
| 2 Ray (Hamilton Ross)         | 15 Black (Van Wert)     |
| 3 Durkin (Padua)              | 16 Shriner (Sheridan)   |
| 4 Jones (Springfield Shawnee) | 17 Glorioso (Lexington) |
| 5 Stough (Copley)             | 18 Rea (Salem)          |

|                            |                               |
|----------------------------|-------------------------------|
| 6 Frisch (Fostoria)        | 19 Shannon (Washington C.H.)  |
| 7 Wood (Preble Shawnee)    | 20 Wisecarver (Maysville)     |
| 8 Kearney (Triway)         | 21 Gleba (Fairview Park)      |
| 9 Busnick (Canton South)   | 22 Zadzi (Bexley)             |
| 10 Paniccia (Watterson)    | 23 Kender (Bellbrook)         |
| 11 Mills (Philo)           | 24 Razzano (Columbus DeSales) |
| 12 Woodruff (Walsh Jesuit) | 25 Errett (Graham)            |
| 13 Hitchens (Tipp City)    | 26 Keyser (Carrollton)        |
| 14 Carter (Franklin)       | 27 Hixon (Maimi Trace)        |

One of the curious things about this year's State meet is the parallel tracks we see in the middle weights in Division II and Division III. In both cases, the 140 pound class is loaded with outstanding contenders, while 145 pounds and 152 pounds are quite weak. In both cases, I anticipate some migration from 140 pounds to the higher weight classes. So the roster you see listed above may change significantly by tournament time.

I can't ever remember a year when so many top contenders are coming back after missing the entire previous season. Anthony, Lingruen, Shirkey, Rooney and Kemble are a few of the names that come immediately to mind. Mike Kemble, perhaps, has had to come back the farthest. After finishing third in the State his sophomore year, he began to suffer from numbness in his hand. A bulging disc in his lower neck that he was born with was pressing on his spinal cord, and too many jolts could lead to a severing of the spinal cord and a lifetime of paralysis. Thus the most intense wrestler on the Southeast team sat out his entire junior year. Finally, at the Cleveland Clinic, a complex operation was performed which, after months of difficult rehab, has brought Mike Kemble back to wrestling, and made him a challenger at this difficult weight class.

Kemble has had a great year. He was third at the Ironman, splitting two bouts with sensational Pennsylvania sophomore, Zach Esposito, and has won everything else. He can put people on their back at any time and, after a year's layoff, he's hungry. Firestone is loaded at this weight class. Durkin doesn't get near the recognition he deserves. While he barely qualified last year at this weight class (he was fifth by a point), he was a State semifinalist before ending up fifth. Still the Plain Dealer didn't recognize him as a "returning wrestler to watch." Nonetheless, he was second at Medina (to Percival), second at the CIT (to Zinkan) and first at Avon Lake. Stough is awesome to watch. Last year, as a sophomore, he was a district finalist losing 17-14 to Hathy. That is stereotypical of his slam-bang style, which gave him two State wins. We've seen very little of him this year, and I have no idea as to why. He did wrestle at Wadsworth, but lost 17-12 OT in the first round and then had to default in the consolations. I've seen no results since then, but if healthy, he is a real handful. The sophomore Busnick was a State qualifier last year and he continued to place on a regular basis. The very tall, very slender Kearney is difficult to wrestle and he takes full advantage of his opponent's awkwardness. He was a district semifinalist last year, but lost three on Saturday, including a 4-3 bout to Busnick to go to Columbus. He avenged that at the Top Gun turning the tables 12-4. That's a great quintet, but Woodruff is easily capable of beating out a couple of this group. Like Kearney, he was a point loser in the fifth place bout last year. Add in Rea, Gleba, Yerkic (Chardon) and Daher (NDCL) and that will be quite a bracket sheet. One note to ponder: Kearney, Busnick, Rea and Kemble are at the same sectional, so an inappropriate pairing could basically eliminate one automatically.

If Kemble should falter, Aaron Ray could well take the title. He has been fourth and third the last two years, and many think it might be his time to win. Last year he drew the very tough Long in the first round and was upset. His five consolation wins (including one over Long) have him in third place, but certainly made one wonder what might have been. As always, he's undefeated in his own area, just like last year. State qualifier Jones was injured the second week of the season and it's unclear whether he'll be back. If so, watch out. Described by his coach as "street cat mean with all the tools," he will be a major factor if he can compete. Those two are excellent, but the Wilmington District has several others nearly as good. State qualifiers Wood and Hitchens are back, along with the excellent Carter. Add in Kender and Ernett and this district is nearly as crowded as the one at Firestone. Factor in Cooper (Indian Lake), Hipp (Kentor Ridge) and Goebel (Springboro) and it's just about equivalent.

Mills, Shriner and Shannon have all been on the periphery of State qualification and this could be their year. Last year Mills finished at 33-4, but it was the last loss (8-5) that cost him a trip to Columbus. Shannon was also close to going, while Shriner has come on strong this year. Shriner was first at Meadowbrook and Sheridan and lost 1-0 to Mills in the dual. This crew will have trouble with the Firestone and Wilmington qualifiers, but they will not necessarily be overmatched.

An interesting story that will progress at tournament time is the sojourn of Nick Frisch. He was a State qualifier for three years at Hopewell-Loudon, finishing fifth as a sophomore and second last year. Now wrestling for Fostoria, he has won at Hopewell-Loudon, Marion Harding and the Coke Classic, and seems primed for another State title run. Paniccia had some incredibly poor district luck last year, losing 9-8 in the semifinal and then in overtime in the consolation semifinals. He has won this year at Oak Harbor, Watterson and Bishop Ready. The remaining two qualifiers should come from those rated above.

## 145#

Projected Champion: Jason Fink (Aurora)

### Top Contenders

|                           |                             |
|---------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 2 Blackburn (Clyde)       | 14 Komar (West Geauga)      |
| 3 Canoles (Canton South)  | 15 Dunahey (Elida)          |
| 4 Hada (Harvey)           | 16 Tennant (Bexley)         |
| 5 Baker (West Holmes)     | 17 Ross (Shelby)            |
| 6 Mackesy (Indian Lake)   | 18 Henery (New Lexington)   |
| 7 Blair (Valley View)     | 19 Kinser (Hamilton Twp.)   |
| 8 Brenner (Canfield)      | 20 Vargo (Buckeye Local)    |
| 9 Wickert (St. Charles)   | 21 Hogan (Avon Lake)        |
| 10 Naser (Taylor)         | 22 DeMarco (Graham)         |
| 11 Davia (Union Local)    | 23 Smith (Urbana)           |
| 12 Smalley (Salem)        | 24 Wood (Jackson)           |
| 13 Phillips (Bethel Tate) | 25 Grimaldi (Olmsted Falls) |
|                           | 26 Horne (Wilmington)       |

Absent some refugees from the 140 pound class, this (along with 152 pounds) will be the weakest weight class in Division II. That's surprising since the middle weights were specifically designed to match the peak of the normal curve in terms of weight distribution. One would anticipate that with the largest number of boys available, these weight classes would always be strong. That is not the case this year, as there are only seven participants from last year's State tournament, and only two placers. It's always difficult to gauge the impact of long-term injuries on high school wrestlers. In some cases, missing much of the season means that they'll have trouble making weight and that they'll be rusty and out-of-shape when sectional tournaments begin. On the other hand, it is a very long season for such a grueling sport, and an extended vacation can mean a contender enters sectionals fresher and less nicked up than his competitors. My experience has been that the latter scenario is more common than the former, but, in the long run, it really depends on the individual. If it is possible for him to retain his mental sharpness and desire with some semblance of physical fitness, it may be advantageous to miss a month or six weeks of action.

Those possibilities are likely to be tested (with a sample size of one) when Jason Fink returns to action. Going into State action last year, I thought Fink was the best 140-pound wrestler, but he ended up third. He had dominated Turle in the district final and won his first two State bouts with relative ease. Then a close one-point loss to Coleman ruined his chances, and Coleman nipped Turle for the title. Fink finished third, crushing Smith 7-0 who had gone 2-1 with Coleman the previous week. The grandson of Mike Milkovich, he has been injured all year and made only token mat appearances. Still he looks like the best again this year and, maybe, his luck will be good this year.

The Firestone District is the finest at this weight class. State qualifiers Canoles and Hada are both solid. Canoles has been a consistent placer at tough tourneys losing only to the elite at this weight class. Hada had absolutely

rotten luck at the district last year and did not make a return trip to States. He bested the excellent Wahoff at Kenston, and I think he has State finalist potential. On a hot weekend he could beat anyone here. Brenner and Smalley come from the Youngstown-Warren area and post consistently good results. I've also listed Komar, Grimaldi and Hogan, but Judy (NDCL), Vance (Orrville) and the freshman Turchin (Norton) should not be overlooked.

I picked Blackburn to win last year and he came very close to doing so with a third place finish. I was impressed with his dominating State wins over Romano, Hathy and Hickman, but he just hit the excellent Burns on the wrong day and lost a close semifinal. This year he won at Clyde and Lorain Southview, but lost to Henery in the Ohio Duals. The rest of this district is a cut below Blackburn and will have trouble contending for places. Wickert is a returning State qualifier, but may not have the horsepower to go with the top boys.

Henery is a bit of a mystery, but defeating Blackburn bespeaks substantial talent. I think he could qualify, but it will probably be behind returning State qualifier Baker and Davia. Baker has good placement potential. He was third at Brecksville losing only to the marauding Bolyard and defeating Ashby and Gleba. Vargo, Wood and Goodfellow (Sheridan) have outside shots here.

The Wilmington District has a number of possible placers, but no one that comes close to projecting as a finalist. State qualifier Mackesy returns after a strong follow-up season. He has won at both Graham and Indian Lake with decisiveness. State qualifier Blair spent much of the year at 160 pounds, but certified at this far weaker weight class. However, we may also see him at 152 pounds. In any case, he'll be a factor to be reckoned with no matter where he ends up. I've also listed Naser, State qualifier Phillips, DeMarco, Smith and Horne -- all of whom could qualify. However, there is even more depth here with Glass (Kenton Ridge), Herdtner (Loveland) and Richardson (Dunbar).

## 152#

Projected Champion: Russell Spicer (New Lexington)

### Top Contenders

|                             |                                   |
|-----------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| 2 Heiland (Shelby)          | 14 Ule (Norton)                   |
| 3 Wise (Ravenna)            | 15 Wygle (Utica)                  |
| 4 Thompson (Perry)          | 16 Sage (Kings)                   |
| 5 Fisher (Bellevue) †       | 17 Gates (Vincent Warren)         |
| 6 Jenkins (Indians Lake)    | 18 McClelland (Franklin)          |
| 7 Cupp (Hamilton Twp.)      | 19 Ayers (Canal Fulton Northwest) |
| 8 Hoy (Olmsted Falls)       | 20 Gagne (Padua)                  |
| 9 Beard (Urbana)            | 21 Dixon (Purcell)                |
| 10 Fankhauser (Avon Lake)   | 22 Zugg (Hillsboro)               |
| 11 P. Bergman (Oak Harbor)  | 23 Willman (Kenton Ridge)         |
| 12 Heston (Fairfield Union) | 24 Brown (Columbus DeSales)       |
| 13 Felts (New Richmond)     | 25 Mullet (NDCL)                  |
|                             | 26 Vanni (Medina Highland)        |

† If he is able to compete (injury issues).

What can you say about a weight class where the top choice comes from a school that has never even had a finalist, where the second and third choices didn't get out of sectionals last year, where the fourth and fifth choices have missed virtually the entire season due to injury, and where there are only four boys with any State experience. Well, one thing you can say is that the competition is completely wide open.

Spicer was a State qualifier last year and won two bouts there. He is a brilliant football player, running for something like 1,800 yards this year, and that athleticism translates well to wrestling. He was third at Brecksville, losing only to dominating Bertin and also sported a far better haircut than was seen last year. He emerges from a very nondescript district, and should have little trouble repeating as district champion. That should help him with the State pairings.

Wise didn't get out of his sectional last year, but it's altogether different in 2000. He has already won at Solon, Kenston and the WRC and really has not been challenged. I came very close to picking him to win it all but, then again, my record with Ravenna wrestlers suggests that would not be doing him any favors. Thompson has not appeared in the Perry lineup as I write this, but he will apparently certify at 152 pound. He was a real surprise to me last year finishing third at the district level, and winning one bout at Columbus. If he is near last year's form he will do very well at this weight class.

Heiland, likewise, didn't make it out of his sectional last year. Starting the year at 160 pounds he tore through all opposition winning by fall a high proportion of the time. Moving down to 152 pound that streak continued until he met the powerful Nate Yetzer at the Gorman finals. Still he currently stands at 18-1 and looks like a possible finalist. State qualifier Fisher, if healthy, might well be the choice at this weight class. Vastly experienced he would be difficult to beat at this weight class. However, it sounds like it'll be a long-shot if he can compete this year. Two dark-horse candidates are Cupp and Bergman. They may be far better than my ratings indicate as they have shown rapid improvement as the season has progressed.

State qualifier Jenkins heads a relatively weak Wilmington District. He won a State bout last year and took first at Indian Lake, but lost badly to Henry at Graham. Beard, Felts and Sage come from schools that do not wrestle demanding schedules so it's difficult to judge how well they'll do at district time.

### 160#

Projected Champion: Elliott Peters (Claymont)

#### Top Contenders

|                                    |                                  |
|------------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| 2 Nixon (Hoban)                    | 14 Davis (Alter)                 |
| 3 Jones (Olmsted Falls)            | 15 Incorvaia (Medina Highland)   |
| 4 Birden (Steubenville)            | 16 Toukonen (Jefferson)          |
| 5 Tieche (Perkins)                 | 17 Neelon (Benedictine)          |
| 6 Garver (Graham)                  | 18 Day (West Holmes)             |
| 7 Gray (Fairless)                  | 19 Ja. Villers (Canal Fulton NW) |
| 8 Ryder (Springfield Northwestern) | 20 Knapp (Morgan)                |
| 9 Savelli (Lake Catholic)          | 21 Copelin (Purcell)             |
| 10 Reamer (Taylor)                 | 22 Sydebotham (Hamilton Twp.)    |
| 11 Schmitz (Watterson)             | 23 M. Smith (Miami Trace)        |
| 12 Fritz (Salem)                   | 24 Lowe (Buckeye Valley)         |
| 13 J. D. Bergman (Oak Hills)       | 25 Cooper (Indian Creek)         |
|                                    | 26 Rist (Rossford)               |

For most high school teams having an individual reach the State finals is a relatively rare occurrence. Even teams that contend every year often go a long time between finalists. For example, perennial state power Claymont has had a total of seven finalists in its wrestling history, while Olentangy has had six, and always strong Olmsted Falls ten. Most schools have had three or fewer State finalists. On the other hand, St. Edward has had 90 in the last 25 years.

Here is a chart of all current Division II schools who have had at least 20 finalists.

| School           | Number of Finalists | Champs | Sucess Ratio |
|------------------|---------------------|--------|--------------|
| Walsh Jesuit     | 41                  | 31     | 75.6%        |
| St. Paris Graham | 20                  | 15     | 75.0%        |
| Coventry         | 35                  | 24     | 68.6%        |
| Columbus DeSales | 41                  | 28     | 68.3%        |
| Highland         | 30                  | 14     | 46.7%        |
|                  | 167                 | 112    | 67.1%        |

Clearly, the top schools not only get a lot of wrestlers into the finals, they also win about two-thirds of those contests. Some of the toughest wrestlers in Division II each year come from the Eastern District Tournament. Last year, for example, there were 10 placers out of this district; most in places second through fourth. What has been unusual is we haven't had a State champion from that district since 1995 (extra credit for those identifying Joe Cominsky). It's one of those statistical anomalies that may well come to an end in 2000, perhaps at this weight class.

There has been a Peters on the Claymont every single year since 1979. They all share two traits, their first names ends with a pair of "tees" and they are rugged, hard-nosed battlers. Looking through their media book, the seven brothers have won, through 1999, precisely 600 varsity contests. That leaves one year left for Elliott and a varsity career for Clintt and we're talking, perhaps, 700 wins from one set of brothers. Meanwhile, this appears to be the year when Elliott has an excellent chance of joining brother Matt as family State champions.

Peters won the prestigious Top Gun by default when ahead 7-2 and was also champ at Barnesville. His only loss was in the Medina finals when Schweda won a narrow decision. This will make Peters a four-time qualifier and he has already placed twice. Some of his toughest competition will come right at his Buckeye Local District in the form of Ethan Birden. A two-time State qualifier, Birden finished fourth last year at 152 pounds, losing two close bouts in the process. His strength and athleticism will severely test Peters. Day just missed State qualification at this weight class last year and has wrestled a rugged, successful schedule. The freshman Knapp is already good and could go to State as early as this year -- next year for sure. Smith has a boatload of falls for Miami Trace, while Whited (McLain), Milhoan (Buckeye Local) and Fuller (South Point) all have district experience.

Peters will face a bevy of challengers from the Northeast District. I saw Nixon last year at Firestone and he lost badly in the first round after going in 27-3, and never got a second chance. This year he has been sensational. He won the Ironman against a very tough field, and then won effortlessly at Hoban. He again won at Wadsworth defeating a field which included M. Kallai, Miller and Pacetti. It's been a sensational run. Kenny Jones is also very good. He has spent most of the year at 171 pounds, winning at Wadsworth. Last year he was upset in the first round of districts (just like Nixon) and never got a second chance. Gray was a State alternate at 152 pounds last year, losing 8-6 for fifth place. This year he won at Toledo Rogers, but stumbled badly at Northwest. I'm guessing that an anomaly. Savelli was third at the CIT and beat the excellent Radgett to win at Kenston. He should be a big factor at this weight class. And watch out for John Paul Fritz. Last year he knocked Jones out of district action, and this week was fifth at the Top Gun. Toukonen, Neelon and Incorvaia all could qualify on a "hot" weekend, while the freshman Villers has had some moments of glory already in his varsity career, such as the first place trophy at North Canton. Also don't overlook Milano (Rocky River), Keho (Padua), Hartman (West Geauga) and Tomsik (Fariview Park).

As a freshman last year, Tieche qualified out of the Galion District at 145 pounds and then won two bouts at States before falling 8-7 in the placement round. Peters beat him 4-2 in the first round in a close bout. This year Tieche got off to a late start because of Perkins' State championship run in football. That was followed by an injury (basketball?) and finally there was the issue of 152 pounds or 160 pounds. Kind of as a sidelight, he also won at Mapleton. Now with everything decided, he looks to be easily best at Galion. This is not a strong district and I have trouble finding well qualified names to put in the ranking grid. I had no such trouble at Wilmington. Garver, Ryder and Reamer all have State credentials and strong 1999-2000 seasons. I like Garver the best because of the demanding schedule he has wrestled and the generally successful way in which it has been managed. Ryder won at 160 pounds at Graham and Franklin, and was third at Troy. Davis and Copelin will challenge the top trio while Everhart (Indian Lake), Linkhofer (Bellefontaine) and Saylor (Urbana) will hope for some upsets.

**171#**

Projected Champion: P. J. Jones (Walsh Jesuit)

#### Top Contenders

|                             |                             |
|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 2 Villers (Canal Fulton NW) | 14 Dymond (Clyde)           |
| 3 Scholes (Lake Catholic)   | 15 Owens (Perkins)          |
| 4 Canty (Columbus DeSales)  | 16 Sowers (Cambridge)       |
| 5 Weimer (Springboro)       | 17 Jo. Bergman (Oak Harbor) |
| 6 Harmon (Norton)           | 18 Van Ausdal (Eaton)       |
| 7 Meggyesy (Triway)         | 19 Watts (Franklin)         |
| 8 Crompton (Teays Valley)   | 20 Apperson (Morgan)        |
| 9 Smith (Chardon)           | 21 Kreps (Marlington)       |
| 10 Davis (Union Local)      | 22 Schaal (Buckeye Local)   |
| 11 Parrish (Buckeye Valley) | 23 Weaver (Loveland)        |
| 12 Mautz (Philo)            | 24 Shonk (Sheridan)         |
| 13 Hackett (Hamilton Twp.)  | 25 Kinzy (Claymont)         |

Without question the toughest weight class this year and, perhaps, for the last five years will be here at 171 pounds. It is a field that provides great depth, individual stars and tremendous "up top" firepower. The first six boys would all be champions in any normal year, and it's a sad thought that several (because of the vagaries of the draw) might not even place. Ironically, 189 pounds is one of the weaker weight classes and, maybe, someone here will move up; although 18 pounds is a large differential. Four of the top six emerge from the same district (Firestone), but fate has been at least microscopically kind in that each exits a different sectional. Last year that quartet finished second, third, fourth and fifth in the State at this weight class. I'll spend little time on the district evaluations here, but instead concentrate on the top six contenders. Incidentally, the ordering has changed at least 20 times before today, and if I were to write this tomorrow it would probably be different again.

Jones has been excellent since his freshman year. Last year he was the district champ (defeating Schules and crushing Villers) and then beat Harmon in the State semifinals before losing to Hieber and finishing second. This year after a great football season, he won the Ironman by defeating Villers in the 30-second tie breakers 5-4. He then won the Powerade and Beast of the East before coming home to nip Canty 3-2 at the Ohio Duals. However, a phone call just before I started this section indicated that Jones would have to have his knee scoped again. How this will impact his conditioning and mobility makes him a question mark and adds just one more variable into an already complex situation.

Villers was district runner-up to Jones last year and was third in the State, losing 9-8 to Hieber in the semifinals and beating Schules and Weimer. This year came the loss during the first week to Jones, but then titles at North Canton and Canal Fulton Northwest. I think Jones may be a hair better than Villers, but that microscopic advantage dissolves if Jones isn't 100 percent. Scholes is only a junior and wrestled part of this year at 189 pounds. With the logjam at this weight, I thought he might stay there, but that is apparently not the case. He was third at last year's district losing to Jones, but beating Harmon. This year he won at Kenston and the CIT defeating Canty 6-4 in overtime to take the title. He probably has the most upside of this top six; and the longer the season, the more he improves against the others.

Canty was the only one of this group at 160 pounds last year. He came into the State Meet with six losses and as the district runner-up. He left with four wins (three relatively easy) and a State title. This year there was substantial conjecture that he would eventually certify at 160 pounds. Didn't happen! He won at Medina and DeSales, but has the two aforementioned narrow losses to Jones and Scholes. He sure didn't look like a "small" 171-pound wrestler to me, and he knows how to win close bouts. He could win it all again.

Weimer is an interesting study. He came to last year's State Meet with a 34-2 record and a district title. He ripped Dymond in the first round 16-0, and then matched up with Villers. For the first five minutes it was all Weimer as he ran up a 6-2 score. It was an impressive performance. And then he gave it all away allowing a reversal and a three-point near fall. It was so surprising that it took a minute to digest what had happened. Then their paths diverged. Villers gave Hieber a sensational battle in the semifinals and finished third while Weimer,

in shell-shock I'm guessing, immediately lost his first consolation bout. This year Weimer is undefeated winning at Franklin, Graham and Sycamore.

Harmon is the pinner in the group. He was fifth at last year's district and then duplicated that feat at the State level. This year he cruised to victory at both Norton and Solon, and has little trouble winning. However, during the past two years he has never beaten any others of my top sextet. He should get plenty of chances in the next seven weeks.

## 189#

Projected Champion: J. R. Shrewsberry (Ravenna)

### Top Contenders

|    |                             |    |                        |
|----|-----------------------------|----|------------------------|
| 2  | Kirst (Lexington)           | 15 | Thomas (John Glenn)    |
| 3  | McGovern (Columbus DeSales) | 16 | Burkhart (Watterson)   |
| 4  | Grove (Claymont)            | 17 | Manges (West Holmes)   |
| 5  | Moran (Kenston)             | 18 | Keough (Clermont NE)   |
| 6  | Reed (New Lexington)        | 19 | Klepacz (Tipp City)    |
| 7  | Blomquist (Olmsted Falls)   | 20 | Schatz (Perry)         |
| 8  | Smith (Teays Valley)        | 21 | Barber (Hamilton Twp.) |
| 9  | Rodriguez (Orange)          | 22 | Snare (Oak Harbor)     |
| 10 | Palermo (Hoban)             | 23 | Camargo (Benedictine)  |
| 11 | Lowery (Walsh Jesuit)       | 24 | Steen (Springboro)     |
| 12 | McAvinew (Canal Fulton NW)  | 25 | Mattmuller (Aurora)    |
| 13 | Moyer (Eaton)               | 26 | Jimmar (Purcell)       |
| 14 | Rice (Graham)               | 27 | Conner (Clyde)         |

This year's report was written in a much more linear manner than in past years. Division I was written first, followed by Division III and finally Division II; and I pretty much wrote them in weight class order. The one exception is this one where I have struggled -- big-time. Kim "Fifty Fingers" has already typed the rest and is now known as Kim "Three Fingers," but still I waver. If you've read those new, wildly popular Harry Potter books (which are great), you know that he goes to a school for wizards. And that's what I need now some magic elixir which, when taken, will reveal the name of the winner. Unfortunately, what we have here is a large assemblage of very good journeyman wrestlers. They are all at about the same quality level so that, unlike many weight classes, there isn't that much difference between #1 and #20. What is even worse is that seven of those listed will participate in the same sectional, which means three won't even see district action. It has to be one of the most unlucky and unbalanced distributions I've ever seen.

Heading my list is Shrewsberry, who looked wretched at Solon, but great everywhere else. He is at the infamous Kenston Sectional (along with Moran, Rodriguez, Palermo, Lowery, Camargo and Mattmuller), and a lack of focus there will quickly doom his chances. This year he won at Kenston (over Moran) and at the WRC (defeating Delguyd). One thing that separates him from many of the rest is his strength on the mat. Moran and Palermo are returning State qualifiers, while Camargo and Mattmuller have had substantial tournament success this year. Lowery has wrestled that brutal Walsh schedule, and will be battle hardened for this particular fray. Rodriguez is a pinner who has not wrestled a real tough schedule. That means he will be relatively fresh, but perhaps, not battle hardened.

That sectional feeds into Firestone where we'll do it all over again, losing the three non-placers at Kenston and adding Blomquist, Schatz and State qualifier McAvinew. The five that qualify out of this district may be close to exhaustion by the time they get to Columbus.

There is also substantial depth at Galion and also some very big question marks. Kirst, kind of a run-of-the-mill competitor the last two years, has suddenly blossomed into a big-time performer. Whether it's maturity, hard work, better control of his asthma, or a combination of the three, it's been "lights out" for his opponents. He is 18-1 with several tourney titles including the Gorman, but it was his loss that was enlightening. Wrestling State

runner-up Ben Rings, he was ahead 13-11 when disqualified for his fifth stalling warning (don't you hate that!). If he can go with Rings, he can compete with anybody here. He has as good a chance of winning as anybody else. Also at Galion is State qualifier McGovern who was impressive at Columbus last year. Injured the entire season, he would be a big boost for DeSales' team chance if he can perform effectively. Smith, another State qualifier, has moved up three weight classes from 152 pounds. He was third at Medina and looks blazingly fast compared to his opponents, until Reed slowed him down with size and strength. One to watch here is Snare who seems to be heating up, and looks ready to make a run at a State place.

Medina champ and State qualifier Grove looks very good at this weight class. He won a State bout at 171 pounds last year, but there's no sense going back there this year. He defeated Reed at Medina and was a strong second at the Top Gun losing only to the almost invincible Lammers. Reed will challenge Grove again at this district, while Thomas and Manges battle for the last State berth. There is not much depth beyond this quartet.

State qualifiers Moyers and Klepacz return at Wilmington and I may have undervalued them in my rankings. The two districts in the north seem much tougher, but that may, in the long run, be illusory. Keough was second at the SWOCA and he is the one to watch in terms of upset potential. If Graham gains team momentum, one of the beneficiaries could be Rice who can, at times, be very good. Also keep an eye peeled for Engle (Loveland), Snowden (Franklin) and Parker (Valley View).

## 215#

Projected Champion: Damar Pentorn (Perkins)

### Top Contenders

|                               |                                  |
|-------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| 2 Raber (Marlington)          | 15 Brown (Beaver Local)          |
| 3 Hummel (West Holmes)        | 16 Edgington/Sanchez (Bellevue)  |
| 4 Jones (Steubenville)        | 17 Marx (Bethel Tate)            |
| 5 Groll (Napoleon)            | 18 Gantz (Avon Lake)             |
| 6 Eck (Ravenna)               | 19 Boitnott (Claymont)           |
| 7 Karnehm (Dayton Christian)  | 20 Campea (Padua)                |
| 8 Sosa (Clyde)                | 21 Moseley (Buckeye Valley)      |
| 9 Grothjan (Springboro)       | 22 Kowalewski (North Ridgeville) |
| 10 Yates (Norton)             | 23 Bartunek (Coshocton)          |
| 11 Bankard (Wilmington)       | 24 Stephens (Willard)            |
| 12 Griffin (Coventry)         | 25 Stephens (Tipp City)          |
| 13 Lackmeyer (Purcell)        | 26 Whippo (Canfield)             |
| 14 Potridge/Levy (Oak Harbor) | 27 Bond (Buckeye)                |

Last year the Northwest District crowned seven individual State champs; the most in history for that area. It was also the first time since 1986 that the Northeast District hadn't been the pacesetter in that category.

Unfortunately, six of those seven were seniors; but the one returning champ (Damar Pentorn) had the most dominating run through the tourney. He was never challenged in his four bouts, winning the final 11-0. He returns at 215 pound facing a disparate field of entrants. However, he is a heavy favorite to repeat despite the fact that his season started slowly.

Pentorn was a key element in Perkins' state championship football team. I've noticed in past years that such a euphoric time often makes it difficult for wrestlers to move from football and concentrate immediately on grappling. Pentorn was second at North Canton, winning a tight semifinal from Miodic and losing to Friday in an overtime final. Since then he has won tournaments at both 215 pounds and Heavyweight, and appears to be regaining his timing. Make no mistake, a healthy and motivated Pentorn will be a heavy, heavy favorite to win a second State title. He has both the talent and ability to overwhelm the great majority of this field. Ironically, perhaps the second best 215 pounder might be Brandon Schnittker from Perkins, the All-State linebacker who is not competing this year.

I initially thought that the Firestone District would have three 215 pounders who might challenge Pentorn. Raber is certainly one since he is a returning State qualifier at this class, and lost two close bouts to Miodic, while finishing fourth at North Canton. Eck may be another after winning at the WRC. However, my third and probably best choice was Morrison (Aurora) who was undefeated this year at both 215 pounds and heavyweight. Unfortunately, he will not be competing. That leaves one additional slot at 215 pounds and Yates, Griffin and Gantz have the best shots at capturing them. Griffin, in particular, was impressive at Wadsworth in man handling Bendall before losing 13-8 to Morrison. Campea was third at the CIT, first at Kilbourne and Avon Lake, but failed to place at Brecksville. He could be a dark-horse here.

Hummel was a finalist at Brecksville after a great junior season last year, when he was a district runner-up and won a State bout. Interestingly his two losses at Columbus were by a total of three points. He could be a finalist. State qualifier Jones is also at Buckeye Local and they are quite a one-two punch. The third spot will be a three-way battle between Boitnott, Brown and Bartunek. In this battle of the "Bees," give slight edge to Brown, but it will be very close with the draw being, perhaps, the deciding factor.

Pentorn has little to fear at Galion. Groll won big at Galion beating excellent Spreng 10-2 and was second at Perrysburg to Weickert in overtime. Still, it's difficult to see him staying close to Pentorn. Sosa has plenty of experience, while Edgington or Sanchez should represent Bellevue well.

Karnehm leads the way at Wilmington. He pinned in the finals at the GMVWA and beat State qualifier Flora to win at Graham. Grothjan won two district bouts at heavyweight last year, but has moved down to 215 pounds. He was third at Sycamore and Graham, but won at Franklin. Karnehm pounded him at Graham 10-0. Bankard just missed qualifying at this weight last year, while Lachmeyer and Marx are also good. It should be a close competition at this site with Karnehm, at this point, having a definite edge in pursuit of the top spot.

#### Hvy.

Projected Champion: Jacob Welch (Eaton)

#### Top Contenders

|                                |                                    |
|--------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| 2 Steiner (Orrville)           | 14 Beuschlein (Indian Lake)        |
| 3 Miller (Chaminade)           | 15 Benner (Van Wert)               |
| 4 Thompson (Walsh Jesuit)      | 16 Angelica (Steubenville)         |
| 5 Hart (West Holmes)           | 17 Kave (Urbana)                   |
| 6 Bryant (Olmsted Falls)       | 18 Kiko (Marlington)               |
| 7 Prescott (Beaver Local)      | 19 Carothers (Harrison Central)    |
| 8 Stewart (Brookhaven)         | 20 Wheeler (Alter)                 |
| 9 Valvoda (Kenston)            | 21 James (John Glenn)              |
| 10 Thorbahn (Oak Harbor)       | 22 Giannaris (Springfield Shawnee) |
| 11 Gilstrap (Columbus DeSales) | 23 Johnson (Hamilton Twp.)         |
| 12 Cottrell (Claymont)         | 24 Dillard (Benedictine)           |
| 13 Balogh (Clyde)              | 25 Ryan (Lemon Monroe)             |

Starting in 1976 when the bifurcation between Division II and Division III took place, there had been only one Division II heavyweight who had repeated as champion in the next 15 years -- the mammoth Tim Moxley. Then, during the decade of the '90s, we had four two-time champs; the great Luke Fickell, John Kelly, Tim Anderson and Jeremy Tate (although one title was in Division III).

This year there is no dominant figure in the heavyweight classification. In fact, parity is clearly the order of the day. It's likely the vagaries of pairings, refereeing and good fortune will be principal elements in the resolution of this weight class. One factor that may be more than normally important will be conditioning. Without a crop of dominant heavyweights, we can anticipate a lot of six-minute (or longer) bouts. That will favor those heavyweights with the stamina to perform well deep into the third period. While there may be no dominant heavyweights this year, it is still a very good crop of relatively evenly matched competitors. The top ten this

year would compare very favorably to what we have seen most years. What I like is that every district has two or three high quality performers.

The winner will probably be one of the top three, but the question is which one. I've fiddled around with names, putting them all possible permutations and ended going with Welch. However, Steiner's name keeps ringing bells with me, and this choice is made very hesitantly.

Welch will exit from a powerful district. Last year he entered the State meet a perfect 28-0 and scored two quick first period falls over Thorbahn and Steiner. Then two-time champ Anderson pinned him in the semifinals, and Welch slipped all the way down to sixth. This year he is again undefeated, but has not wrestled a very demanding schedule. Miller is something of the unknown quantity. A division I State qualifier last year for Dayton Carroll after a third place district finish, he beat the excellent Howell in the first round before being pinned by Stepanovich and Seng. This year he won the CIT defeating Burtscher 3-1 in the finals. Both of these boys will weigh in at more than 270 pounds. Also back is State qualifier Beuschlein, but he's at a lower plateau than these top two boys. I would say this qualification is not assured as Kave, Wheeler, Giannaris and Ryan are all potential threats.

Steiner is another enormous heavyweight with excellent mobility. He was district runner-up last year and won two State bouts. He defeated Thompson twice in the sequence, but lost to Welch. This year he was second to Piccirillo at Wadsworth and won powerfully at Wayne. The equally big Thompson may be the best athlete of the top quartet. An All-State football player, he comes into the room to stay in shape and win any close duals Walsh might have. A State qualifier this year, he beat both Beuschlein and Gilstrap at the Ohio Duals. The whole Firestone District is rugged. Jamal Bryant is also exceptional and could easily be a finalist. He missed State qualification by a takedown last year. Valvoda was second at the WRC (to Piccirillo) and Avon Lake and beat the well-regarded Ramsey to win at Kenston. He and Thompson exit the same sectional so they'll be apart at the district level.

There are also some fine heavyweights at Buckeye Local. State qualifier Prescott returns and won at Lorain Southview. Steiner and Thorbahn, however, both beat him at States last year. Hart is an interesting story. A State qualifier at 189 pounds as a sophomore, he sat out virtually all of last year with injuries. Now at heavyweight, he was third at Brecksville, second at the Coke Classic and second at the Top Gun, losing only to high quality people like Stepanovich, Irving and Howell. He'll be outweighed by 40 pounds by the big boys. He is far quicker than most. Cottrell has just missed State qualification at least twice and it should be his turn this year, but Carothers, Angelica and James will not make it easy.

There are five or six heavyweights that are very close at Galion. Stewart, who has never hit my radar screen until this year, looks like, maybe, the best of the lot. He was pinning people like crazy at Medina, catching both Thorbahn and Link. State qualifier Thorbahn is next best, but Gilstrap, Balogh and Benner are all good. In reality all four spots are up for grabs at this district and the sorting process will be tough.

## **Teams**

1. Walsh Jesuit -- They surprised most people by winning the title last year, and it will probably shock some that they're rated first in 2000. After all Columbus DeSales was the early favorite especially when both Hurleys ended up at Akron St. Vincent rather than Walsh. However, Walsh still has the core group of State champion Rooney, State runners-up Jones and Gulosh and State qualifiers Romano and Thompson. Add in the freshman Zupancic along with Woodruff and Lowery and that should be well over 100 points.

2. Columbus DeSales -- Their top end strength is impressive with State champion Canty, State runner-up Barnett and the fabulous freshman C. P. Schlatter. However, the back up help needed to win the title still hasn't

shown up. They need a healthy McGovern and points from people like Pizzurro, Brown, Fogliano, Redmond and Gilstrap. If three of this latter group can score at the State level, they can still win.

3. Perkins -- After a great third-place finish last year, they have struggled up through mid-season. Schnittker not wrestling hurt big time, and they've had trouble getting people at the right weight classes. Pentorn is the main man, but Tieche and Finn should also score heavily. The key will be if Stevenson and Deering can come through or that Owens suddenly gets hot.

4. Clyde -- They need to score heavily early with West and Shearer and late with Dymond, Conner, Sosa and Balogh, and hope that Blackburn is a State champion in the middle. Even with all that, third place is about as good as it can get.

5. Ravenna Southeast -- Two State champions can score 50 plus points, but there is very little back up. That makes for a very small margin of error so that if things go badly they're quickly off the charts.

6. Graham -- This is a very solid team, but without Wooten at 112 pounds, there is no one here with the look of a State finalist. That means grinding out points in the consolation round with Evans, Markley, Garver and the rest. With the fabulous underclassmen they'll be really tough next year.

7. Olmsted Falls -- Stoffer, Jones and Bryant are a tough trio that needs to produce big points at the State level. Add in Blomquist, Gross, Hoy, Grimaldi and, maybe, Funk and you could easily see a top five outcome.

8. Canton South -- This is pretty much a three-man team with State placer Laughlin and State qualifiers Canoles and Busnick. The last mentioned needs to pick it up, while a Bourquin or Larsen needs to play a bigger role.

9. Claymont -- Not one of their best teams, but some strong individuals provide some upside hopes. State placers Peters and Williams return as does State qualifier Grove. They should be able to qualify a few more out of that district like Henry, Patterson, Boitnott, or Cottrell. If this quartet can help, there is still a lot of upside here.

10. Oak Harbor -- This may be a bit of a stretch, but Oak Harbor might be just good enough to make the top ten. They'll need big-time help from the bookends Thorbahn and Lochotzki, and for the three Bergman's to score as well. If Snare, Potridge, or Branum can help out that's bonus points.

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**2000**

## **HIGH SCHOOL WRESTLING**

### **FORECAST**

**(29th Annual Edition)**

**Written By:  
Brian Brakeman**

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### **DIVISION III**

**103#**

Projected Champion: Tyler Scott (Loudonville)

#### Top Contenders

|                               |                            |
|-------------------------------|----------------------------|
| 2 Aring (Eastwood)            | 14 Wyse (Grandview Hts.)   |
| 3 Derr (Stritch)              | 15 Slachta (Swanton)       |
| 4 Smilek (CVCA)               | 16 Monsman (Chanel)        |
| 5 Schmidt (Sandusky St. Mary) | 17 Hamilton (Clear Fork)   |
| 6 Kuykendall (Madeira)        | 18 Rhodes (Brookville)     |
| 7 McIntyre (River Valley)     | 19 Chapa (Liberty Center)  |
| 8 Martin (West Jefferson)     | 20 Craemer (Smithville)    |
| 9 Tillman (Beachwood)         | 21 Hixson (North Union)    |
| 10 Eckhardt (Carlisle)        | 22 Gallagher (Barnesville) |
| 11 Buckingham (Mohawk)        | 23 Baker (New Albany)      |
| 12 Jones (Martins Ferry)      | 24 Keyes (Berkshire)       |
| 13 Henry (Versailles)         | 25 Conte (Oakwood)         |

One of the surprise teams that surfaced last year in Division III was a powerhouse Loudonville squad. They won the tough Northeast District title at Elyria Catholic qualifying six wrestlers for Columbus. They maintained that momentum at the State meet with a solid sixth place finish. Four of those qualifiers return (the four district finalists) and they have added an outstanding transfer. Loudonville has never had an individual State titlist, losing four times in the final round over the years. However, Tyler Scott must be rated the narrow favorite to take the crown at this weight class. Last year he lost to eventual State champ Dan Lloyd 11-8 and 10-6 in the sectional and district finals, and then suffered a heartbreaking overtime State semifinal loss to Matt Finneran 4-

2. A 17-15 overtime loss in the next round dropped him to fifth. This year he remains undefeated, including an impressive 17-5 win in the North Canton final. He is a good combination of experience and ability.

Much of his fiercest competition will come from the Fostoria District. Three outstanding competitors should exit that district, any of whom could unseat Scott. Aring was the district runner-up last year and won his opening bout at Columbus. However, eventual champ Lloyd defeated him in the quarterfinals and a tough overtime consolation loss eliminated him. He is now a senior, which means he normally has a substantial age advantage in most matches and has substantial experience as well. He beat returning Division I State qualifier Weaver to win at Northwood, and did the same to Division II State qualifier Gilsdorf at St. John. Derr is also a returning State qualifier reaching the State semifinals on two close decisions before losing three bouts (the last to Scott) and finishing sixth. He has won this year at Hopewell-Loudon and the CIT, while finishing sixth at Brecksville. I thought he might have gotten to a bit of a slow start this year, but he has come on strong recently. Schmidt started for a good part of last year for Sandusky St. Mary, until Finneran eventually claimed the job after a series of very close wrestle offs. Finneran then went on to be State runner-up, narrowly missing a fall in the finals when well behind. Schmidt beat some State qualifiers last year, and has done very well this season, too. He won at Gibsonburg and St. Mary's and was a finalist at the Midwest Classic. At the Top Gun he placed fifth, pinning Paz in the final round. He is the only one of this trio without previous district or State experience and that could be a negative. The last two spots are wide open with Chapa, Slachta, Hamilton and, particularly, Buckingham all in the hunt. Also, watch out for Kill (Delphos St. John), Herner (Monroeville) and Becky D'Ambrosia (Ayresville) who is just coming off knee surgery. She could become the first female district qualifier.

Scott will face tough competition from Smilek at Elyria Catholic. Smilek was second at the Ironman defeating the very tough Paglia in the semifinals. He won at Hudson a week later and was a strong third at Medina. He has wrestled a very tough schedule and will be a factor deep into the State tourney. State qualifier Tillman also returns at this weight, and this canny senior pinned Smilek in the first period to kick off their dual meet. I look for Monsman to have the best shot at the fourth slot. Schmidt barely beat him 4-3 at the Ohio Duals.

Kuykendall was undefeated until the district semifinals at Xenia before losing to LaCure 4-3. He still qualified for State action, but lost to Scott and Meiring (in overtime) and was eliminated. He has already won at Madeira and very impressively at the powerful GMVWA this year. However, Schmidt handled him 9-2 at the Ohio Duals. He'll be challenged by Eckhardt, who was a district qualifier at 112 pounds last year, and the excellent Henry. The latter boy was a sectional champ who just missed State competition last year. He was an impressive champion at Graham this year. Besides those listed, Sells (Milton Union) and Gambill (Miami East) are other possibilities.

McIntyre and Martin lead at Marion. Both have State placement potential with McIntyre, in particular, looking very strong this year. He lost to Stoffer the first weekend of the year at the Coke Classic, and had clear sailing until losing twice at Clyde including by four points to Buckingham. I'm looking at that as a bit of an aberration. Jones has been tough in the Valley winning at Barnesville and Bellaire St. John, but was pinned by Schmidt at the Ohio Duals. Wyse is my front runner for the fourth spot, but there are a number of other worthy contenders.

## 112

Projected Champion: Gregg Pressler (Margaretta)

### Top Contenders

|                                   |                          |
|-----------------------------------|--------------------------|
| 2 Bedford (Woodmore)              | 15 Charvat (CVCA)        |
| 3 Foster (Dalton)                 | 16 Burroughs (Madeira)   |
| 4 Meiring (Evergreen)             | 17 Webb (Ayresville)     |
| 5 J. Tierney (Martins Ferry)      | 18 LaCure (Greeneview)   |
| 6 M. Finneran (Sandusky St. Mary) | 19 Francis (Barnesville) |
| 7 Scarl (Gilmour)                 | 20 Welling (Avon)        |

|                               |                                |
|-------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| 8 Winnen (ASV)                | 21 Prendes (Wellsville)        |
| 9 Fernandez (Elyria Catholic) | 22 Ward (Streetsboro)          |
| 10 Bacon (Stritch)            | 23 Glass (Pleasant)            |
| 11 Cavalier (Newbury)         | 24 Simon (Edison)              |
| 12 Vaughn (Johnstown-Monroe)  | 25 Johnson (Mechanicsburg)     |
| 13 Magoteaux (Versailles)     | 26 Saal (Aquinas)              |
| 14 Swihart (Sandy Valley)     | 27 Gieske (West Liberty Salem) |

We've had a succession of marvelous champions at this particular weight class the past several years. Think about it. Three-time champ Scott Burnett, four-time champ Jared Opfer (twice) and potential four-time champ Harry Lester last year. That, in part, has been one of the reasons I've successfully forecasted the eventual champion seven consecutive years. Even the high placers in past years have had terrific credentials, with names like Boyd, Allega and Carrizales. There is no one of such stature in this year's field, although I currently count 11 returning State qualifiers competing here. What this suggests is a close, hard-fought series of bouts with pairings likely to be a very important ingredient in determining the final order of finish. The other crucial element will be the impact three sensational freshmen (Foster, Scarl and Winnen) have at this weight class.

Often the favorite at 112 pounds is the returning 103 pound champion (almost always an underclassman). That would make Dan Lloyd my choice, but he apparently will not compete this year leaving something of a vacuum. Unfortunately, there are so many imponderables, it is difficult to develop a reasonable rating list, so bear with me on this one.

My choice is the powerful, but injury-riddled Pressler who is returning at 112 pounds for his senior year. He has missed a good portion of this year, but won at Marion Harding and took the exceptional Doug West into overtime at Clyde. A former State placer, he will win only if he stays injury free and can consistently wrestle six-minute bouts. Given that and some good luck, he could win at 112 pounds.

That Fostoria District is positively brutal. Last year Meiring was fourth at Fostoria, but third at the State meet. He has had some great wins this year beating, for example, Finneran in overtime. Matt Finneran has also expanded on last year's somewhat unexpected success. Replacing Schmidt at 103 pounds in midyear he captured a sectional and district title, and made it to the State finals where, trailing badly, he came very, very close to pinning Lloyd for the title. This year he won at St. Marys, and was fifth at the Top Gun. It'll be interesting to see if he has some more surprises up his sleeve. Bedford had a great summer wrestling season and has had some huge wins this year. He defeated two-time State qualifier Webb, 16-6, at the A Classic and majored Bacon 11-3 at Hopewell-Loudon. He has no losses and this is the guy who can pull the big upset. And, if he has a hot weekend this field is so closely bunched he could win it all. Bacon, the CIT champ, and Webb are both excellent with Webb defeating Pressler last year at this district level. Factor in Simon, DeCooman (Van Buren) and Ford (Delta) in this is a very deep, very strong district.

If Pressler falters John Tierney could be right there to pick up the hardware and the champions bracket sheet. He was fourth last year, losing at the State meet to Scott and Meiring. This year he has walked through a relatively easy schedule and won his match with Matt Finneran 5-4 at the Ohio Duals. Tucked in between Jones and his brother, he has some great workout partners. State qualifiers Swihart, Vaughn and Prendes are also here and each is a full step below Tierney. However, I particularly like Vaughn who has placement potential at this very crowded weight class. Prendes may be vulnerable here with Francis and Glass possible upset makers. Jessi Shirley has a 11-4 for Northmor and has district qualification possibilities, as well.

The Elyria Catholic District is even more muddled than what we saw at Fostoria. The excellent freshman Winnen was a finalist at 119 pounds at Solon, and gave Division I State placer DeAngelo Penn a good battle. Since then he has been injured so it's difficult to know exactly what he'll do at this weight class. Based on what I saw, he is very good. The powerful Fernandez missed State qualification by a single point at 112 pounds last year -- losing to Hudock (Columbia Station) who apparently is not competing. This year he won at Columbia Station (at 119 pounds) and was second at Vermillion. The freshman Scarl has also been terrific winning at

Wadsworth and clearly performing well above anticipated freshman levels. Charvat has also done well in CVCA's big-time schedule and will be battle hardened for this district fray. A major mystery is the freshman John Foster. An extremely accomplished youth wrestler he left the Massillon Perry program where he was 18-0 in junior high and returned to Dalton which just inaugurated wrestling three years ago. Absent strong workout partners and wrestling a very easy schedule, he is currently 12-0. Whether his substantial skill will erode at Dalton is undecided, and it's anybody's guess how he'll do at tournament, though my view is very well. That still leaves State qualifier Chevalier, Welling, Saal, Ward, Benucci (Wickliffe), Hicks (Chanel) and the excellent freshman Eicher (Tuslaw). An amazingly crowded weight class which might encourage some movement to the far easier 119 pound class.

State qualifiers Magoteaux, Burroughs and LaCure should easily qualify out of Xenia. They seem well ahead of the other competitors, and barring a major upset should return en masse to Columbus. However, they will struggle at that level based on the very high quality present at the other districts.

### 119#

Projected Champion: Harry Lester (CVCA)

#### Top Contenders

|                                      |                                       |
|--------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| 2 Jesse (Hopewell-Loudon)            | 14 Corrigan (Grand Valley)            |
| 3 D. Tierney (Martins Ferry)         | 15 McCartney (Tusky Valley)           |
| 4 Amstutz (Liberty Center)           | 16 Bodey (West Liberty Salem)         |
| 5 S. J. Finneran (Sandusky St. Mary) | 17 Weiland (Woodmore)                 |
| 6 Morris (Carlisle)                  | 18 Ogg (Mohawk)                       |
| 7 Ralph (Chanel)                     | 19 Good (Fisher Catholic)             |
| 8 Gibson (Belpre)                    | 20 Brown (Cleveland Central Catholic) |
| 9 Kleman (Bluffton)                  | 21 Bailey (Dixie)                     |
| 10 Daniels (Jonathan Alder)          | 22 Follick (Reading)                  |
| 11 Zimmerman (Hillsdale)             | 23 Peltz (Beachwood)                  |
| 12 Anderson (Barnesville)            | 24 Schuck (Brookville)                |
| 13 Wenger (Northmor)                 | 25 Neilson (Sherwood Fairwood)        |

There are probably as many different definitions and perceptions of genius as there are individual human beings. Still, most people instinctively can identify genius when they see it in action. One of my favorite composers is Felix Mendelssohn who was most definitely a genius. For example, in the 1830s Bach's majestic St. Matthew's Passion had basically not been performed for nearly 100 years. As unbelievable as that seems today, it resulted when fashions had changed in the mid-1700s and by 1800 the work had been nearly forgotten. Mendelssohn recognized its greatness and made preparations for a huge revival in London. The night of the premiere came and as Mendelssohn went out to conduct this most difficult work, he was horrified to discover that the orchestra librarian had mistakenly placed another score on the stand. No problem. Mendelssohn conducted the entire work from memory so well that the press (unaware of the mix up) showered him with accolades. Most interestingly, while on the podium conducting, Mendelssohn (here's the genius part) turned the pages of the wrong score at exactly the appropriate time so as not to concern the orchestra, which might otherwise have wondered what was happening to their conductor.

I think Harry Lester might have a touch of genius, as well. Anyone who has seen him wrestle knows that he is something special with a combination of talents that is close to unique. Only a junior, he has already won two State titles and compiled an 88-1 high school record. He twice defeated two-time Division I State champ Mason Lenhard last year, and utterly demolished the field in both his State title victories. Last summer he won the World Cadet title, the only American to win the gold medal. This year he has missed the entire season as I write this because of a broken leg suffered as an active and effective defensive back in football. There are some outstanding competitors at this weight class (especially Doug Jesse), but a healthy Lester will be an overwhelming favorite. Even worse he'll be fresh having missed seven weeks of the season. While Lester may be a huge favorite, I suspect his final round match-up with Doug Jesse will be far closer than what he has

experienced the last two years. Jesse carried an undefeated record into the 103 pound State final his freshman, but lost to Allega. He did not place his sophomore year, but was third last year losing only 1-0 to Drew Opfer in the semifinals. This year he is again undefeated and will be Lester's last test as he tries for a third title. The good news here is that they will be seeded a part.

There are probably two other potential placers at Fostoria with both Amstutz and Finneran having excellent credentials. Both are multi-State qualifiers with exceptional experience. Finneran, for example, won 46 bouts last year and 49 the year before. However, he has never won at the State level. Incidentally, he wrestled Lester in the first round at States when they were both freshmen. After this trio, the race for the last two spots is wide open with Kleman, Weiland and Ogg probably forming a second triad. Ogg certified at 112 pounds, but I'm guessing he stays here and it would not me surprise if a couple of the current 112s think about moving up a weight class.

Tierney was a district champ last year, but got Jesse in the first round (Jesse had finished fourth after qualifying the week before) and ended up "two and out." That won't happen this year as he has stayed at the same weight class and enjoyed even greater success. He handled Finneran 7-3 at the Ohio Duals and was second seeded to Division II Bowersock at the OVAC. There is a substantial drop off at Marion with State qualifier Gibson at the next level. After that, it's a wide open race with lots and lots of contenders. I've mentioned more than a few, but add Schweinfurth (River Valley) to that list.

Lester will have very little trouble at Elyria Catholic. With the huge gap in quality and numbers between 112 pounds and 119 pounds, I've got to think a few boys are considering moving up a weight class. As it currently stands, I like Ralph second best with Zimmerman at about that same level. Beyond those three, it's wide open.

Morris is the heavy hitter at Xenia, and I don't see anyone really challenging him at the district level. He cruised to the district title last year at this weight class, but had a very tough first round draw with eventual fourth place winner Stanek, followed up with the excellent Amstutz. He was 30-1 going into the State meet, but never really showed what he could do. This year you have to expect him to vie for a place.

## 125#

Projected Champion: Drew Opfer (Sandusky St. Mary)

### Top Contenders

|                                  |                                  |
|----------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| 2 Parsons (Loudonville)          | 14 Howley (Girard)               |
| 3 Justi (Edison)                 | 15 Bierman (Carlisle)            |
| 4 Stanek (Chanel)                | 16 C. Smith (Hillsdale)          |
| 5 Fedeli (Lima Central Catholic) | 17 D. Roth (Martins Ferry)       |
| 6 Lopez (Genoa)                  | 18 Richardson (Swanton)          |
| 7 Fox (Blanchester)              | 19 Sammons (CVCA)                |
| 8 Frye (Ontario)                 | 20 Deetz (Garaway)               |
| 9 Spencer (Northmor)             | 21 McKinney (Batavia)            |
| 10 Hundley (Dixie)               | 22 K. Anderson (Fisher Catholic) |
| 11 Estel (Amanda Clearcreek)     | 23 Kovach (Kirtland)             |
| 12 Grime (Archbold)              | 24 Jones (Bridgeport)            |
| 13 Opichka (Madiera)             | 25 J. Schultz (Brookville)       |

As we all know, wrestling seems to be a sport that attracts an inordinate number of marvelous brother combinations. This has certainly been true in Ohio where brother combinations have prospered from almost the first State meet with the Russos and Milkoviches (first generation) and continues to this day. As an observation, it generally seems to me that the oldest brother tends to be the most conservative, while the level of aggressiveness tends to increase as younger brothers reach the varsity level. Using an extreme example, the first couple of Mason brothers (in the late '60s) State champion Bobby and Pat were conservative grapplers who

rarely pinned or even scored a lot. By the eighth brother, State champion Jimmy, we saw a super-aggressive competitor with an 80 percent pin record. Much the same appears to be the case with the Opfer family.

Four-time State champion Jared Opfer was a tremendous pinner, but he took few chances in big matches. He wrestled a solid program that was error-free and that minimized risk. Brother Drew is clearly much readier to gamble. His matches are far more exciting and he generates a lot of high-scoring contests. It seems to work as Drew defeated a very strong field to win the 119 pound title last year as a sophomore, and will be solid favorite to take the title at this weight class this year. However, he will not duplicate his 60-0 record of last year, having lost three high scoring bouts (two at 130 pounds) this year. There are still two more Opfers to come, and I think the next one talks even more than Drew.

As mentioned earlier in this report, only two wrestlers have finished second three times in a high school career, with it happening the last time over 45 years ago. Parsons, only a junior, has had a brilliant career so far winning 89 bouts and finishing second both times, once to Lester and once to Drew Opfer. Like Lester, he has not yet competed this year, but still should dominate the Elyria Catholic District. Stanek will be his only challenger and Jimmy has had a tremendous junior season. He has won titles at Solon, North Canton and Wadsworth and ripped through the Ohio Duals, although not facing Opfer. Still, Parsons defeated Stanek last year 18-7 and you have to wonder if he has made up that much ground. After this duo the well is pretty much dry with a great opportunity for two State spots for "hot" district weekend wrestlers. Besides those listed, check out Cimino (ASV), Branham (Clearview) and Johnson (Mapleton).

Opfer faces strong district competition from a quartet of excellent wrestlers. Justi was third at the Fostoria District losing to Borjas in the semifinals, and was third at the State level again losing to Borjas in the semifinals. This year he won at Bellevue, but was second at Edison (to Tepley), second at the Top Gun (to Moody) and third at Brecksville (losing to Yurchisen). Fedeli is also a returning State qualifier who lost a 4-1 quarterfinal State battle to Parsons and was quickly eliminated in the consolation round. He beat Grime at the A Classic and was third at the CIT. Lopez was a district semifinalist at 119 pounds last year, but lost three close bouts on Saturday and didn't make the trip to Columbus. He was the runner-up at 125 pounds at Brecksville finishing ahead of Justi, though they did not meet. Frye won the big Gorman tourney this year and is 12-2 against good competition. Below these five potential qualifiers are Grime, Richardson, Durst (Lakota), Prince (Fostoria St. Wendelin) and Emery (Crestview).

There is not a lot of placement potential at Marion. Spencer might be first in a battle of near equals, but Frye pinned him in the Gorman finals. Estel is also solid, but the competition will be wide open. An intriguing possibility is Kiernan Anderson, the brother of three-time champ Keaton. Only a freshman, he'll still get a lot of scrutiny should he qualify for the State meet. There'll be a real battle for the three spots at Xenia. Fox was a Division II State qualifier last year and has been at 140 pounds early in the season. He'll be rugged competition at this weight class. State qualifiers Hundley and Opichka also return. Hundley won a State bout last year and was eliminated in an overtime thriller. There will be a strong challenge from Bierman for a State spot with McKinney, Schultz and Rhoades (Versailles) also in the hunt.

### 130#

Projected Champion: Mike Hurley (ASV)

#### Top Contenders

|                                |                                  |
|--------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| 2 Borjas (Genoa)               | 14 Cook (Mohawk)                 |
| 3 Linsker (Beachwood)          | 15 Gerber (Garaway)              |
| 4 N. McDowell (Jonathan Alder) | 16 Schreiner (Sandusky St. Mary) |
| 5 V. Davis (Loudonville)       | 17 Borders (River Valley)        |
| 6 A. Schultz (Brookville)      | 18 Jo. Jefferis (Barnesville)    |
| 7 O'Grady (Shadyside)          | 19 Malott (Magaretta)            |
| 8 Maurice (West Liberty Salem) | 20 Kelch (Batavia)               |
| 9 Avery (Milton Union)         | 21 Young (Archbold)              |

|                            |                             |
|----------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 10 Lieux (Elyria Catholic) | 22 Leffman (Spencerville)   |
| 11 Foote (Cuyahoga Hts.)   | 23 Harmeyer (Reading)       |
| 12 Weyer (Bluffton)        | 24 Parfitt (West Jefferson) |
| 13 Olney (Mapleton)        | 25 Merle (Madeira)          |

I said in last year's report that 1995-1999 era will be remembered as the golden age of Division III wrestling and the State meet just reinforced that belief. It was an outstanding run of great wrestlers and exceptional depth that will not soon be duplicated. My increased exposure to Division III wrestling also translated into superior forecasting results. I had 11 of the 14 winners last year, and have been near the 80 percent success level the past three years. I have had seven straight winners at his weight class, and in the '90s was nine out of ten with the late, great Jason Hartman (my #2 pick), upsetting my choice Steve Feckanin for his second State title. It was the closest I came to having a perfect decade in the 1990s. Getting it right this year will be a real challenge. There are three topflight competitors mixed in with a solid supporting cast with substantial upset potential.

The safe, conservative, non-controversial choice at this class is State runner-up Nick Borjas. Last year he was a sectional, district and State second placer only because he had to wrestle four-time State champion Jared Opfer in each final. In the other three bouts at the district he won by a combined score of 54-19 and at the States by a 69-23 margin. He has had health problems much of this year and has missed much of the season. Wrestling at Brecksville in duress, he looked nothing like the Borjas of last year. Still, he'll likely to be in good form by mid-February and, if so, he will be very tough to beat.

However, I'm rejecting the safe route and selecting the outstanding sophomore, Mike Hurley. A towering talent, he was 32-7 for Walsh last year going into district action at 125 pounds, an excellent record in light of Walsh's brutal schedule. Hurley won three of his first four bouts and needed one more win to qualify. Instead, he lost on an overtime tie-breaker and 2-1 and ended up as a State alternate. This year he was sensational at Solon pinning in 16 seconds in the final, and then won handily at Wadsworth majoring Jordan 10-2 in the finals. His only loss was in overtime to State champion Drew Opfer at the Midwest Classic. He has a powerful offensive arsenal, but he also is great defensively and I just don't see Borjas able to play the takedown game against him.

Linsker, another sophomore, was sixth at 119 pounds last year, losing to McDowell in the last round. I don't think that will happen this year as Linsker has shown monster improvement. He is undefeated with wins at Richmond Hts. and Kenston. He has had a history of quick falls which should help keep him fresh during the grueling tournament process.

One advantage Borjas has is that he exits from a relatively easy district. Nobody there should be within 10 points of him, and so he should come to Columbus relatively fresh. That is not true for Hurley and Linsker at Elyria Catholic. State qualifier Vince Davis returns and he is very good. He was the district runner-up at this weight class and won two State matches last year. This year he was first at Mapleton and the Gorman and was runner-up at North Canton to Heldman. Lieux, Foote and Olney are also strong, but will need to be sharp and have a good draw to reach the State tourney. Olney was a district semifinalist before losing twice while Foote was the 125 pound district champion. At most weight classes, those would be credentials enough to virtually guarantee qualification. Lieux won three district matches at 145 pounds last year, and may move up a weight or two from this certification level looking for a more congenial environment. Also here are Fiorina (Warren JFK), Rhodeback (Jackson Milton) and Bower (West Salem Northwestern). If Smilek, who has certified at 130 pounds chooses to compete here it will become a real donnybrook with some good people left at home.

McDowell should dominate at Marion although I think O'Grady is very good. McDowell was fifth last year losing twice to Stanek. O'Grady has won at Shadyside and Bellaire St. John this year and seems best along the river. Borders, just down from 135 pounds could also be a factor along with Gerber, Jefferis and Parfitt.

State qualifiers Schultz and Maurice lead a very representative field at Xenia. I believe this would be Schultz's fourth trip to States, the first three (and this is quite an accomplishment) were as district champion. However,

despite winning four bouts he has never placed there. Maurice can score points very quickly and will be dangerous opponent. Avery has the inside track for the last berth.

135#

Projected Champion: Jason Kresser (Sandusky St. Mary)

Top Contenders

|                                |                               |
|--------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| 2 Smilek (CVCA)                | 15 Mayhugh (Martins Ferry)    |
| 3 Peyton (Rootstown)           | 16 Stacklin (Seneca East)     |
| 4 S. McDowell (Jonathan Alder) | 17 Park (Crestview)           |
| 5 Perry (Brookville)           | 18 Pajestka (Cuyahoga Hts.)   |
| 6 Jackson (Loudonville)        | 19 Rawlins (Fisher Catholic)  |
| 7 Smith (Cardington)           | 20 M. Dotson (Ayersville)     |
| 8 Gleckler (Evergreen)         | 21 B. Dotson (Liberty Center) |
| 9 Kirtley (Streetsboro)        | 22 Esinger (Hannibal River)   |
| 10 R. Hurley (ASV)             | 23 Ruch (Genoa)               |
| 11 Engel (Reading)             | 24 Brauneck (Kirtland)        |
| 12 Warner (Granville)          | 25 Preisler (Beachwood)       |
| 13 Orlosky (Chanel)            | 26 Wesley (Liberty Union)     |
| 14 Lee (Oakwood)               | 27 McLain (Sidney Lehman)     |

The easiest weight classes to forecast are those headed by a superstar (like an Ott or a Lester) with a proven track record of success. It gets progressively more difficult as you add legitimate contenders, and when there are three or more competitors it can be very complicated. However, the worst, most confusing situation is when it is very difficult to visualize anyone in the field winning a State title. That is pretty much the dilemma I face at this weight class where no one has that "look" of a title holder. That's why I have decided to take a chance and select someone who has not wrestled the entire season. Jason Kresser transferred from Sandusky High School to St. Mary's, but will not become eligible until the end of January. Last year as a junior, he was a Division I State qualifier, winning two bouts at Columbus before being eliminated by two-time champ Kevin Maehl. He prospered by having excellent workout partners at Sandusky (Walls, Prophet, et. al) and it can't be hurting him that he works out with Opfer and Finneran every day. Admittedly, it's risky choosing someone based principally on last year's efforts, but in this case there may be merit in that approach.

Uncharacteristically, the Fostoria District is not strong. The one exception (besides Kresser) is State qualifier Adam Gleckler who made it down last year as a 145-pounder. It was "two and out" for him last year, but I think he has positioned himself perfectly for possible State placement in 2000. State qualifier Stacklin is, perhaps, next best, but the rest of this field will probably have difficulty at the Schott.

Smilek could well end up at 130 pounds, but I think this weight class may be better choice. It is not an overly crowded field, and Smilek has participated at this weight most of the year, and done very well. He was second at Hudson, third at Medina and the Ironman, and fourth at the Top Gun. The upside is he has State finalist potential at 135 pounds with perhaps less risk than at 130 pounds, but he is also will emerge from the most competitive district (as he also would at 130).

Joining Smilek at Elyria Catholic will be Peyton, Jackson, Kirtley and R. Hurley. Peyton was third at Columbus two years ago and won one bout there last year before being eliminated on a disqualification. He won this year at Cardinal, but has not wrestled nearly as demanding a schedule as Smilek, who defeated him in the dual meet. Jackson is a transfer from Tuslaw and he has fit in beautifully at Loudonville following Parsons and Davis. He was a big winner at Mapleton and third at North Canton. Kirtley has missed all of this year with eligibility issues, but he was a State qualifier at 125 pounds last year. Only a junior, he will be fresh at tourney time. Possibly left home will be Ryan Hurley, but he is coming superstar. He was dominant at the Junior High State championship and has had an excellent season as a freshman. He's already in my top ten at this weight, but he will have to beat one of the four from this district rated above. This is not at all a far-fetched possibility. That

leaves State qualifier Pajestka with real difficulties in returning to Columbus, while Orlosky and Preisler both deserve a better fate.

Like his brother, McDowell was fifth last year after losing in the semifinals to Jared Opfer. He has already won at North Union and Brookhaven, but will face tough competition from Tom Smith at the district. Smith, too, is a returning State qualifier who wrestles a much tougher schedule than McDowell. Interestingly, he is the only wrestler on the Cardington "team," but has scored points for his school at places like Medina and the Top Gun. There is a drop off in quality after this top duo with Warner, Mayhugh and Rawlins the top contenders for the last two spots. I particularly like the progress Mayhugh has made, and he is someone to watch.

Perry has excellent State placement chances coming out of Xenia. He won the GMVWA pinning four of his five opponents. That is typical as he has a very high fall ratio. Last year he had a quick first period fall at States, but could go no farther. He'll do far better this year. State qualifier Engel is also back, but has not had the kind of results this year, at least so far, that I expected. He still, however, has placement potential. The last slot should go to another State qualifier, Eric Lee, making this district's qualifiers a very experienced lot, although they had a 1-6 State record last year. McLain, Rutledge (Madeira) and Nichols (Indian Hills) are long-shot possibilities.

#### 140#

Projected Champion: Jason Miller (Beachwood)

#### Top Contenders

|                                      |                                     |
|--------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| 2 Schaefer (Chanel)                  | 14 Pallotta (Brooklyn)              |
| 3 S. M. Finneran (Sandusky St. Mary) | 15 Minner (Pleasant)                |
| 4 Ware (Martins Ferry)               | 16 Overmyer (West Jefferson)        |
| 5 Smith (Girard)                     | 17 Harris (Brookville)              |
| 6 Kelly (Reading)                    | 18 Kern (Liberty Center)            |
| 7 Weible (Tinora)                    | 19 Fields (Summit Country Day)      |
| 8 McGough (ASV)                      | 20 Wukelich (Shenendoah)            |
| 9 Guillen (Woodmore)                 | 21 Adam Gore (Madison Plains)       |
| 10 Short (Carlisle)                  | 22 Vance (Patrick Henry)            |
| 11 Szymanowski (Fremont St. Joseph)  | 23 Kopyar (Bellaire St. John)       |
| 12 Meyer (Cuyahoga Hts.)             | 24 Knight (West Salem Northwestern) |
| 13 Roush (Mohawk)                    | 25 Huck (Waterford)                 |

As it is presently constituted, this is one of the strongest and deepest weight classes in Division III. In fact, I would not be surprised to see some flow to the much weaker 145 pound class where high State placement would seem much easier. While there are at least a half-dozen very legitimate contenders for the top spot -- two stand out as, perhaps, a shade ahead of the rest. Both of these returning State placers will exit the Elyria Catholic District, so they should be apart in Columbus. Jason Miller has had a brilliant high school career. Already a two-time State qualifier, he entered the State tournament last year with a perfect 34-0 record, primed for a huge semifinal match up with the excellent Tristan Boyd. As it turned out, a tough 10-6 quarterfinal loss to Smialowski derailed that appointment and Miller ended up sixth. This year he is again undefeated and unchallenged. That may be an issue since Miller has just not wrestled the kind of schedule needed to toughen him for the rigors to come. Still, his ability is so great that he should be able to overcome that problem.

He'll have to be good if he's going to beat Schaefer, who has wrestled a much more difficult schedule. Schaefer, only a junior, was third at 135 pounds last year losing only to Nick Frisch 4-3 in the semifinals. This year he has won titles at Solon, Wadsworth and Doylestown; and was second at North Canton to the powerful Bolyard. He has beaten Finneran 3-1 in the Ohio Duals. An interesting, although possibly irrelevant, comparison. Schaefer beat Turner 3-2 in the district finals last year, while Miller pinned Turner while leading 8-0 this year.

Also present at Elyria Catholic will be State qualifiers Smith and McGough. The former won two bouts at Columbus last year and missed placement by a single point. He wrestles an almost invisible schedule to me, but what results I have suggest strong placement probability. McGough was second at Solon and third at Wadsworth, losing in the first round and then winning seven consolation bouts. That's a strong quartet with Meyers, Knight and Pallotta needing a break somewhere along the line to qualify.

Sean M. Finneran is a two-time State placer who has made a quantum jump forward in 2000. Last year he qualified at 140 pounds, and had to be the smallest contestant at that weight class. This year he'll have a choice at 140 pounds or 145 pounds, but I think this is the better fit. He won the Midwest Classic over the excellent Spivey and crushed Meyers at the Panther, but his biggest win was at the Top Gun. His only loss was to Schaefer at the Ohio Duals 3-1. He also beat Ware at that meet by a point. Weible leads off a string of excellent Tinora middleweights and is probably next best here. State qualifiers Roush and Guillen should get return tickets to Columbus, but there will be some solid low placement competition at this district. Besides those rated, I've also noted Bonnell (Toledo Christian), Madden (Swanton) and Caryer (Hicksville).

Ware was sixth last year and should become a four-time State qualifier this year. His only loss has been to Finneran, but Meyers also gave him a real battle at the Ohio Duals. He would have to be at the very top of his game to be a finalist this year, but certainly stranger things have happened. He should have no trouble at the district level because I just don't see a lot of high quality in either the Eastern or Central Districts. Other possibilities here besides those rated are Vogel (Grandview Hts.), Goins (Crooksville), Ross (New Albany) and Belfarge (Worthington Christian).

Kelly heads a Xenia District that returns three State qualifiers. He was only one of two Division III finalists at the SWOCA (losing to Zinkan) and won handily at Madeira. Short and Fields both have State experience, while Harris has been a solid performer at Brookville. He was third at the GMVWA losing only to Helmer. Daugherty (Williamsburg) could be a long-shot here.

#### 145#

Projected Champion: Scott Roth (Martins Ferry)

#### Top Contenders

|                              |                                      |
|------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| 2 Gordon (Mapleton)          | 15 Buckner (Waterloo)                |
| 3 Walker (Tinora)            | 16 Roppel (Chanel)                   |
| 4 Turner (CVCA)              | 17 Coates (Milton Union)             |
| 5 Scarl (Gilmour)            | 18 Johnson (Indian Hills)            |
| 6 Quillen (Edison)           | 19 Manning (VASJ)                    |
| 7 Brewer (Lakota)            | 20 Malave (Lutheran West)            |
| 8 Kiss (Rootstown)           | 21 Parr (Shadyside)                  |
| 9 Dauski (Sandy Valley)      | 22 Link (Sandusky St. Mary)          |
| 10 Byrd (Oakwood)            | 23 Flathers (Swanton)                |
| 11 Hill (Liberty Center)     | 24 Schaffer (Fenwick)                |
| 12 Am. Gore (Madison Plains) | 25 Higgins (Jonathan Alder)          |
| 13 Rizzo (Cuyahoga Hts.)     | 26 Bautenheimer (Landmark Christian) |
| 14 Fisher (Liberty Union)    | 27 Linebaugh (Clinton Massic)        |

There are a lot of uncertainties at this weight class. Roth could end up at 152 pounds with Ware here, in which case I see Gordon winning the title. Turner is certified at 140 pounds and may well end up there, although he's been at 145 pounds the last few weeks. Roberts (Westfall) could move down to his certified weight at 145 pounds, but I think he is better placed at 152 pounds. All of these unknowns (and others, too) make this and the next weight class difficult to unravel. At the moment, the top three contenders come from widely separated parts of the state. Interestingly enough, they were in the same quarter-bracket at last year's State Tourney and, in fact, were on adjacent lines. The results there just reemphasize how close these wrestlers are in overall ability. Roth defeated Walker 9-7 in overtime and Gordon 6-4, while Walker beat Gordon for fifth place 5-3. Roth

ended up third, losing only to the incomparable Forward. It was the only blemish on an otherwise perfect season as he finished at 35-1.

Roth will become a four-time State qualifier this year and should be undefeated at State Tourney time. His biggest win was a narrow 3-2 win over 152 pound pick Matt Klinger. He emerges from a crowded, but not overly strong district. Still, Dauski, Gore and Fisher are all former State qualifiers with experience and talent. Dauski had a 12-second fall last year for his only win, while Fisher, unluckily, drew Forward in the first round. Gore, who previously competed for Ready, qualified as a 9th grader, but has not, so far, cashed in on the ability he showed at that time. If someone is to break up the qualifying quartet, it would seem Parr and Higgins would have the best chance.

Walker heads a Fostoria District that lacks substantial depth. Walker is very good, while State qualifier Quillen and Brewer seem solid. Hill might be next, but Link, Flathers and Brown could be right here. Of course, if Finneran wrestles here he would be second best in the district having lost to Walker 7-5 in the dual. Other possibilities are Steinmetz (Huron), Utrup (Columbus Grove), Parkins (Cory Rawson), Mack (Ayersville) and Sims (Alan East).

The Elyria Catholic District is again the deepest. The sophomore Gordon is a real prodigy and almost surely will win a State crown in his high school career. Last year he was sixth at 140 pounds and has followed that up with wins at Mapleton (OW), Bucyrus and Black River. Turner, up from 140 pounds, won at the prestigious Medina Tourney and was fifth at the Ironman. Scarl has also wrestled a big-time schedule with excellent success placing, for example, at the Top Gun and Wadsworth. Kiss was a district semifinalist last year, but then lost overtime matches to Schaefer and Heller to heartbreakingly be left home. Buckner, Rizzo, Malave and Manning are all very good, and Roppel has been very impressive with his toughness and intensity. Also available are Roman (West Salem Northwestern) and Sims (Wickliffe), who shouldn't be overlooked.

The three qualifiers out of Xenia are likely to struggle at Columbus. It's difficult to see any of this trio getting beyond the first round. Byrd, Coates and Johnson are my top choices, but they are not likely to have a substantial impact on the final results at Columbus.

## 152#

Projected Champion: Matt Klinger (Cuyahoga hts.)

### Top Contenders

|                                   |                               |
|-----------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| 2 Roberts (Westfall)              | 14 Walker (Northmor)          |
| 3 De. Koch (Bellaire St. John)    | 15 Ehrsam (Evergreen)         |
| 4 Pycraft (Keystone)              | 16 Carnifax (ASV)             |
| 5 Henry (Versailles)              | 17 Glasser (Shadyside)        |
| 6 Jacobs (Lakota)                 | 18 DiDonna (Streetsboro)      |
| 7 K. Hamman (Columbia Station)    | 19 Wilson (Milton Union)      |
| 8 Pedroza (Tinora)                | 20 Hoover (Shenendoah)        |
| 9 Clemens (Lima Central Catholic) | 21 Beckley (Mohawk)           |
| 10 Adams (Chanel)                 | 22 Thornton (Dixie)           |
| 11 Curry (Oakwood)                | 23 McGuire (River Valley)     |
| 12 Schober (Avon)                 | 24 Westhoven (Liberty Center) |
| 13 Batdorf (Covington)            | 25 King (Elmwood)             |

The weight classes from 145 pounds through 189 pounds are uncharacteristically weak in Division III. One of the principal reasons is the very strong senior orientation that dominated the upper weights last year. For example, in 1999 the six weight classes from 140 pounds to 189 pounds (which would be expected to feed into this year's classes from 145 pounds to 189 pounds) had all senior finalists (12 of 12), and the top four spots included 22 seniors (22 of 24). There were only three underclass State qualifiers at 152 pounds and 160 pounds,

and only five at 171 pounds and 189 pounds. I think you can anticipate many more underclassmen qualifying and placing at these weights this year, with a normal level of quality returning in 2001.

My top choice is Matt Klinger, who was fourth last year at Columbus and has built on that to fashion a very successful 1999-2000 season. He was runner-up to the incomparable Bertin at Medina and won handily at Aurora and St. Mary's. His only other loss was to Roth. I expected Klinger's major competition at the Elyria Catholic District to come from Hartz (Grand Valley) who he defeated 4-3 in the district finals, and who was a point from State placement last year. However, Hartz is apparently not competing this year. Nonetheless, that still leaves State placer Pycraft and State qualifier Adams as substantive challengers. Wrestling in Division II last year, Pycraft grabbed the last State qualifying spot at Firestone only to catch eventual State champion Turnbaugh in the first round. He rebounded from that with three consolation wins, the last two by 10-9 and 8-7 to grab sixth place. Good on the mat, Pycraft is excellent in flurry situations. Hamman, Schober and DiDonna are other possibilities here.

Roberts is very good. I saw him finish second at Medina last year and was impressed, and he ended up as district runner-up and winning two State bouts. He is an excellent mat wrestler who given the lead gives it up only with great persuasion. Right behind him at Marion is returning State qualifier Derek Koch. He wrestled three one-point matches at Columbus last year (losing to State runner-up Stoll and Smith and defeating Finneran). He was second to Roth at Bellaire St. John, but won solidly at Barnesville. Klinger will probably have to defeat both to take home his State title.

State qualifier Henry towers over the field at Xenia. He won this year at Graham majoring Division II State qualifier Jenkins in the final round. State qualifier Batdorf also returns, but I think he's "on the bubble" this year. Currey and Wilson are both excellent, and Thornton is also tough. Also watch for Booher (Summit Country Day), Shimp (Mariemont), Wolf (Reading) and Bannasutti (Troy Christian) who has moved down from 189 pounds where he was a district qualifier last year.

There is utter chaos at this weight class at Fostoria. There has been all kinds of give and take within this class with only Jacobs steering a steady course. At the Northwest Duals he was the only one to escape without a loss, and he now stands 18-0. Pedroza and A Classic champ Clemens are also very good, with Ehram and Beckley not far behind. Somewhat unusually, there are no returning State qualifiers at this weight class at Fostoria.

## 160#

Projected Champion: C. B. Dollaway (Northmor)

### Top Contenders

|                                |                                    |
|--------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| 2 Ju. Jefferis (Barnesville)   | 14 Cloran (Madeira)                |
| 3 Da. Koch (Bellaire St. John) | 15 T. Brown (Eastwood)             |
| 4 May (Mohawk)                 | 16 Knapp (West Salem Northwestern) |
| 5 Blair (Reading)              | 17 Dillon (Tri-County North)       |
| 6 Haney (Sandy Valley)         | 18 J. Derr (Stritch)               |
| 7 Hoogenboom (Chanel)          | 19 Steinmeyer (Columbia Station)   |
| 8 Walters (Milton Union)       | 20 Gates (Belpre)                  |
| 9 J. Ohl (Ontario)             | 21 Weiss (Beachwood)               |
| 10 Kabbage (Black River)       | 22 Hughes (Grandview Hts.)         |
| 11 Lewis (Woodmore)            | 23 Magro (Indian Hills)            |
| 12 Hampshire (Woodridge)       | 24 Garmier (CVCA)                  |
| 13 Davis (Tinora)              | 25 Manfredonia (Independence)      |
|                                | 26 Emery (Crestview)               |

It's apparently a banner year for wrestlers who go only by their initials. I've chosen two as forecasted champions and at least another five have made this report. We have C. P. Schlatter, C. B. Dollaway, P. J. Jones, C. J. Davids, B. J. Blair, D. J. Engel, D. J. Grewell and even B. Jenkins. Perhaps, like leg tattoos, there is yet another trend that I appear not to have noticed.

Two things you should know about this weight class. First, it has a relatively weak field with only one returning placer (and that was a sixth), and second my top three all exit the same district. Surprisingly, that district is at Marion and the last time, both finalists were from that location was in \_\_\_\_\_. Let's take a look at that top trio.

Dollaway was an outstanding youth wrestler who was a district runner-up as a freshman last year and gained that coveted State experience. This year he has won at Bucyrus on a major decision in the final and the Gorman on a fall. There is still a lot of upside potential left in Dollaway, and that should be a scary thought for future opponents.

Koch was also a State qualifier at 145 pounds last year and had a win at Columbus in addition to losing a pair of heartbreakers (8-7 and 8-6 OT). He has struggled slightly this year, losing to Haney at Bellaire St. John and to Division II choice Peters by four at Barnesville. Still, I think he will peak at the district and State meet as he and his brother build momentum. Jefferis was a State quarterfinalist at Columbus last year and ended up sixth. He did not compete at Barnesville, but won at St. Clairsville and Sheridan. Right behind this trio is State qualifier Haney who had the aforementioned title at Barnesville. All four of these folks could place.

May is that only returning placer that I mentioned early on. He has spent part of the year at 171 pounds, but won the "A" classic at this weight. With relatively weak district competition, he should go into the State meet as a district champ. The rest of the field at Fostoria has no experience beyond the district level, and usually with little success at that venue. Unlikely as it may seem for such a generally powerful area, you would have to think that only May has placement chances.

The usually strong Elyria Catholic District is even weaker. No one here has previous State experience and only Hoogenboom has been successful wrestling a tough schedule. He was second at Solon, fourth at North Canton, and fifth at Wadsworth against solid competition. An excellent football player, he has good athletic ability. Everyone else rated here is based pretty much on surmise and conjecture. I've ranked Kabbage, Hampshire, Knapp, Steinmeyer, Manfredonia, Weiss and Garmier basically because there were 25 lines to fill. This is a great opportunity for a relatively unknown, say like Sorace (Cuyahoga Hts.) to get to Columbus.

State qualifier Blair leads a Xenia District that has some puzzling features. He was second at the SWOCA losing a 30-second sudden death to Padgett, and first at Madeira. Very good on his feet, he could have finalist potential based on the level of competition he faces. As a likely district champ, he should get good pairings. Walters has had a successful year as he moves down from Division II, while Cloran and Dillon seem to be the best bets for the last State slot.

## 171#

Projected Champion: Ray Anthony (Columbia Station)

### Top Contenders

|                               |                                     |
|-------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| 2 Morrison (Ready)            | 15 Koepnick (Oakwood)               |
| 3 Smolik (CVCA)               | 16 Youngquist (Licking Hts.)        |
| 4 Everhart (Mohawk)           | 17 Moore (Wayne Trace)              |
| 5 Poland (Crestview)          | 18 Juliani (Independence)           |
| 6 Powell (Barnesville)        | 19 Penrod (Archbold)                |
| 7 Van Dyke (Edison)           | 20 Chappell (Streetsboro)           |
| 8 Lenard (Fremont St. Joseph) | 21 Goggins (Hartley)                |
| 9 Eberhardt (Tuslaw)          | 22 Brink (Liberty Center)           |
| 10 Statzer (Tri-Valley North) | 23 Bishop (Woodridge)               |
| 11 Owens (Covington)          | 24 McConnell (Summit Country Day)   |
| 12 Terry (Chanel)             | 25 Lewis (Sandy Valley)             |
| 13 Stoecker (Bloom Carroll)   | 26 Seals (Carlisle)                 |
| 14 Borowicz (Elmwood)         | 27 Reinhart (Fostoria St. Wendelin) |

One of the major problems in the 16th, 17th and 18th centuries was the determination of longitude by ship captains. There was an enormous amount of seagoing commerce and exploration at that time, but the so called longitude problem was a tremendous difficulty. While the exact latitude was relatively easy to calculate, sailors were literally lost at sea once out of sight of land. Thousands died and fortunes were lost because of longitude errors and huge prizes were offered for the solution.

There were two principle ideas to resolve this question; those who hoped to build accurate clocks and those who devised astronomical tables. The final winner was a humble London clock maker, John Harrison, who labored over 40 years to build the perfect chronometer, which solved the problem. His persistence and tenacity was a marvel to King George III, who cut through political chicanery to make sure he was awarded the prize money.

That's the same type of perseverance (well, not 40 years) that Ray Anthony has had to have. He missed all last year with an injury that required surgery, but he has come all the way back this year. He was second at both Columbia Station and Buckeye to Division I star Tony DeAnna, losing close decisions in both instances, and was third at Southview. This is not a strong weight class by any means and a fully recovered Anthony needs to win some close decisions to claim the championship trophy.

Smolik will be one of his principle threats. One of the very few returning State qualifiers at this weight class he has changed schools in the intervening year and now represents CVCA. Again, their big time schedule has "stretched" him as he was second at Hudson, third at the Top Gun, fourth at the Ironman and fifth at Medina. It strikes me he'll either finish first for sixth based on the above, and he is likely to be closer to the first mentioned possibility. One good thing -- he should be away from Anthony at Columbus. The rest of the Elyria Catholic District is a respectful step behind this top duo.

Morrison is also a returning State qualifier and defeated Smolik in the first consolation round. With the possible exception of Powell, he should dominate at Marion. This year Morrison won at the Ready Classic and was fourth at the very strong 171 pound class at the CIT, finishing behind Scholes, Canty and Clemens. Powell won at Shadyside and St. Clairsville and was one bout from State qualification last year. The last two qualifiers are likely to be first round cannon fodder.

It should be a closely packed field at Fostoria. Everhart has had a solid year at both 171 pounds and 189 pounds. Most recently he pinned Penrod to win the "A" Classic and he is probably the best of a relative even assemblage. Poland was the champ at the Gorman and is 21-1, while Van Dyke won at Edison and Bellevue. A wrestler to watch is Lenhart who may have shown the most improvement at this weight class. Borowicz is my choice for the fifth qualifying spot.

Statzer and State qualifiers Owens head a representative Xenia District. Both boys wrestle schedules that I rarely glimpse, so that one or two events have to be the criteria that I use. Owens had nine losses going into last year's district meet, but grabbed the third and last qualifying spot. However, May beat him by 10 and Duncan pinned in 27 seconds.

## 189#

Projected Champion: John Asbury (Milton Union)

### Top Contenders

|                                 |                               |
|---------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| 2 Grewell (Newcomerstown)       | 14 Rospert (Norwalk St. Paul) |
| 3 Yancik (Brookville)           | 15 Springer (Licking Hts.)    |
| 4 Clark (McComb)                | 16 Newsome (Dixie)            |
| 5 Kekelis (Cuyahoga Hts.)       | 17 Slaughterbeck (Blufton)    |
| 6 Riedy (Sandusky St. Mary)     | 18 Shultzman (Waynedale)      |
| 7 Cardoza (Madeira)             | 19 Boucher (Huron)            |
| 8 Way (West Salem Northwestern) | 20 Ucker (CVCA)               |
| 9 Sanna (Granville)             | 21 Wells (Shenendoah)         |

|                                 |                               |
|---------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| 10 Cordes (Liberty Center)      | 22 Hutchinson (Bloom Carroll) |
| 11 Tetzal (Doylestown Chippewa) | 23 Poweski (Warren JFK)       |
| 12 Day (Sandy Valley)           | 24 Spore (Wyoming)            |
| 13 Swindell (Kirtland)          | 25 Wolfe (Stritch)            |
|                                 | 26 Finfrock (Covington)       |

Of all 42 weight classes, this appears to be the weakest. There are no returning place winners and very few returning State qualifiers. It provides a glorious opportunity for wrestlers who have been in the background (while Sintobin, Tracy, Rowlands, Bruney and others have dominated tournament action) to gain now a real measure of glory. Every district has one or two potential contenders who could win a State title on a hot weekend. The question remains who is that one individual, and I'm not too sure that this particular summary will go a long way in providing a definitive answer.

This is one of those "by guess and by golly" weight classes and my guess is the junior from Milton Union High School, John Asbury. He is a transfer from Tipp City where he was a Division II State qualifier. He drew eventual champ Pentorn in the first round and eventually ended up winning one consolation round bout. This year he defeated Cardoza to win the GMVWA and followed that up with a victory at Indian Lake. Most of his results also show one-sided victories which indicates substantial domination at a weight class that seems relatively uniform.

A major challenge for Asbury will be at his own district where returning State qualifier Shawn Yancik will challenge. Campaigning much of the year at 215 pounds, Yancik was third at GMVWA at that weight class. I think he'll compete at 189 pounds, even though his district may be a little more difficult at that weight, because he can be a major factor at Columbus. That isn't likely to be true at 215 pounds. Cardoza lost by five points to Asbury at the GMVWA and won handily at Madiera, he should be the third qualifier. Newsome would seem to be the biggest challenge. This is a relatively strong trio for this not-so-strong weight class in Columbus.

Grewell won two bouts at Columbus last year and missed State placement by a single point. He does not wrestle an overwhelming schedule, but did win the Hornet Classic (and probably some other things as well). He is very strong and will punish mistakes. He was the Marion District runner-up last year and should move up a notch in 2000. Sanna would seem to be next strongest with Day and Springer slightly further behind. Only Sanna of this latter trio can win at the State level, but placement for him will be iffy.

The Fostoria District is very weak. Clark lost an overtime bout for the last State berth in 1999, but has been outstanding this year, winning at the "A" Classic and Arcadia by fall. If it's a close team competition, Riedy could be a key factor at this weight class. He has certified at 171 pounds, but will probably compete here. He should be a relatively sure State qualifier, and has State placement chances if he can avoid being overpowered. Cordes and Slaughterbeck might be next best, but I think this is likely to be a situation where one, or, perhaps, two unknowns suddenly appear and reach qualification status. Other possibilities besides those listed might be Biller (Mohawk), Layman (Spencerville), Frankart (Fostoria St. Wendelin), or Stein (Elmwood).

State qualifier Kekelis has to be a slight favorite to win his first district crown, but it will probably be very close. He has been solid this year winning at St. Mary's and Aurora and placing fifth at Medina. Way won at Hopewell-Loudon and Black River and lost to Kekelis 1-0 in overtime last year. Tetzal may be better than I have him, losing narrowly to Manges in the Wayne final and winning at Chippewa and Norwayne. He didn't make it out of sectional last year, but he has a solid shot at Columbus this year.

#### 215#

Projected Champion: Chris Box (Liberty Center)

#### Top Contenders

2 Bindel (Lima Central Catholic) 14 Davis (Grandview Hts.)

|                                  |  |
|----------------------------------|--|
| 3 Held (West Salem Northwestern) | 15 Childers (Carlisle)                 |
| 4 St. Colterman (Elmwood)        | 16 McStoots (Sherwood Fairview)        |
| 5 Conrad (Gibsonburg)            | 17 Wallace (Oakwood)                   |
| 6 Szymczak (Genoa)               | 18 Schrock (Northridge)                |
| 7 Linden (Black River)           | 19 Davis (Granville)                   |
| 8 Weingart (Streetsboro)         | 20 Davis (Dixie)                       |
| 9 Ebie (Waynedale)               | 21 Jordan (Marion Elgin)               |
| 10 Flora (Miami East)            | 22 Grubbs (Cleveland Central Catholic) |
| 11 Hershberger (Garaway)         | 23 Pattison (Madeira)                  |
| 12 Meisner (Mohawk)              | 24 Borthwick (Elyria Catholic)         |
| 13 Abbott (Sandy Valley)         | 25 Johnston (West Jefferson)           |

While I have characterized the last five weight classes as relatively weak, that description is not accurate when examining the 215 pound class. Both the Northeast and Northwest Districts have a quartet of excellent contenders, while the other sites have several possibilities as well. There are nine returning State qualifiers and the competition will be rugged from the very first round. District action will be very important at Elyria Catholic and Fostoria. With so many good boys at each class, just qualifying will be a struggle; but higher placers should grab an added bonus with far easier first-round State bouts. Last year the Fostoria qualifiers met those from Elyria Catholic in the first round. Let's hope that we do not see a repeat of that in 2000.

My choice is the powerful senior Chris Box, who has finished third the last two years. As a sophomore, Box competed at heavyweight getting pinned by Ike Clepper in an early round and then pinning him for third place. Then last year at 215 pounds, he whizzed through a difficult district with four falls, none of which took as much as three minutes. At Columbus, he again lost early on a fall to John Rodhe and then came back to finish third beating Rodhe along the way. My feeling is that Box could again be vulnerable early in the tournament. He is cutting a lot of weight (it's the only to get both he and Lingruen into the lineup), and so in early rounds he is nervous, cold and just returning from making a tough cut. He gets by those first couple rounds and it could be real tough keeping him from his first State title.

The Fostoria District is totally loaded, ironic when you consider the paucity of talent at 189 pounds. If there were perfect justice in this world -- and somehow I suspect there is not, this district should get about seven qualifiers at this weight class. Box of course, is numero uno here, but it's not by much. Bindel is a terrific athlete who, at certain times, is just plain excellent. The problem is he has some very erratic results. He was a district third last year, losing only to two-time State champion Sintobin, and then finished fifth at Columbus. This year he gave Box a terrific battle at the "A" Classic losing 8-7 and was second at the CIT. On a hot weekend he'll win it. Cotterman also was a district third last year, losing to Box. However, at States he was pinned by Rowlands and couldn't bounce back. This year he won the Northwest Duals and lost in overtime to Held in the Hopewell-Loudon finals. Conrad was fourth at the district, losing to Box and Colterman, but was outstanding at the Schott. He beat district champ Mirsalis in the first round and almost upset two-time State runner-up McCoy in the quarterfinals. He came through in the consolations to finish sixth, including a pin over Held. This year he won at Gibsonburg, but was third at the "A" Classic behind Box and Bindel. Szymczak was a State qualifier two years ago as a sophomore, but did not wrestle last year. Back as a senior, he won at Oak Harbor and lost in overtime to Katafiasz in the Northwood final.

That's my top five at Fostoria, all with solid placement chances, but there is more. State qualifier Meisner is also back but has struggled somewhat against the powerhouses in this area. Still if he can get to Columbus, he would have low placement opportunities. The junior McStoots has won at Wayne Trace and, impressively, at Toledo St. John's. He may have to wait until next year to compete in Columbus.

It's virtually as crowded at Elyria Catholic, though at a slightly lower level. State qualifier Held has been excellent, but Linden pushed him to the max in their 8-7 barn burner at Black River. It was an interesting result since Held won his State berth last year with a nine-point win over Linden in the consolation semifinals. State qualifier Weingart has had an interesting summer. A razor sharp shingle flipped through the air and nearly severed his right hand. With a severed artery, he was in danger of bleeding to death, but some good Samaritans

rushed him to the Clinic. After Weingart was stabilized, he underwent four hours of microsurgery to reattach his hand. Initially the chances of retaining the use of his hand and fingers seemed small. Intensive therapy and incredible mental toughness have won at least part of the battle. Although his right hand is only about 25 percent as strong as his left, he opened the season on the Streetsboro varsity. He won the Aurora tournament by fall and was second at Hudson. His State qualification chances are excellent, but his return to the sport is miraculous. Last year John Rodhe placed fifth at the State level for Waynedale, but decided not to compete this year. No problem! His replacement, Steve Ebie, won at Medina and has been impressive all year. That an exciting quartet, but there is more. Borthwick has excellent upset chances while the explosive Grubbs is exceedingly dangerous. He, clearly, has big-time upset potential. Other possibilities are Zaranec (Chanel), Dawson (Girard) and Britton (Richmond Hts.).

If Yancik stays at 189 pounds, State qualifier Flora should dominate at Xenia. He has been a finalist at Graham and Troy and should have little trouble here. However, there is one major exception. Two-time Division II State qualifier Brandon Faubion (Batavia?) has apparently transferred from Bethel-Tate to Batavia. However, I've seen no signs that he is currently competing. Should he reappear, he would be in my top ten list and a very worthy challenger for Flora. In addition, to those rate my lists include Sampson (Brookville), Marr (Waynesville), Williams (Milton-Union) and Mosbacher (Batavia).

Hershberger did not wrestle last year, but the lay-off has apparently not harmed him. He lost only to Weingart at Aurora and Ebie at Waynedale in an encore season. The rest of this district does not look overly strong and there could be some real surprises. However, this crew will have trouble matching up with the boys from Elyria Catholic and Fostoria.

#### **Hvy.**

Projected Champion: Blake Lingruen (Liberty Center)

#### Top Contenders

|                               |                                      |
|-------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| 2 Turner (Kirtland)           | 15 Alegree (Jonathan Alder)          |
| 3 Shirkey (Archbold)          | 16 Kline (Garrettsville Garfield)    |
| 4 Lane (Milton Union)         | 17 Hawkins (Fostoria St. Wendelin)   |
| 5 Lucas (Barnesville)         | 18 Carte (Monroeville)               |
| 6 Herman (Loudonville)        | 19 Stookey (Sandusky St. Mary)       |
| 7 Wilhelm (Elyria Catholic)   | 20 Smith (Wickliffe)                 |
| 8 Hefflefinger (Hicksville)   | 21 Wright (Garaway)                  |
| 9 Stuff (Northmor)            | 22 Wellert (West Salem Northwestern) |
| 10 Link (Versailles)          | 23 Brindley (Bellaire St. John)      |
| 11 Farber (Sandy Valley)      | 24 Abdulghani (Summit Country Day)   |
| 12 Sa. Cotterman (Elmwood)    | 25 Arbogast (Hopewell-Loudon)        |
| 13 Binkley (Brookhaven)       | 26 Brewer (Carlisle)                 |
| 14 Klotz (Fremont St. Joseph) | 27 Magnuson (Granville)              |

For the past four years, Dean Taylor has been a fixture in State finals at heavyweight, while winning two titles and finishing second the other two appearances. This year his absence (while duly noted) will not prevent the Northwest District participants from being favorites to take the crown. Last year the Northwest captured 10 of the 14 individual titles and the top two spots in the team race. The 10 individual titles were an all-time Division III record; no district had ever had that many champs since the inception of Division III in 1976. In fact the Northwest District has captured 29 individual titles in the past four years compared to 17 for its nearest competitor, the Northeast District. Incidentally, I've had a run of seven straight successes at this weight class; the longest streak I've ever had in picking heavyweights.

My choice to take the title is the outstanding senior Blake Lingruen, who missed all of last season due to injuries. Lingruen was a State qualifier at 215 pounds as a sophomore, but lost his only bout that year. After the long absence, he has returned a powerful 260 pound senior coming off a football season that saw him reach first team All-State honors and accept a scholarship to Wake Forest. He has wrestled a rugged schedule finishing

third at Hudson (losing to Piccirillo) and second at Medina (losing to Stepanovich). Ironically, his only other loss was to Shirkey who also missed all last year after a successful sophomore season.

The Fostoria District is again one you'll want to draw away from. Lingruen and Shirkey are a powerful one-two punch, but there is a lot more. The real difficulty is that the rest keep beating each other in kind of random disorder. It's a kind of Brownian motion with heavyweights colliding with almost random results. State qualifier Hefflefinger is probably next best, but after that it's all pretty hazy. I've listed Kotz (who I think could do much better than I've rated), Cotterman, Carte, Stookey, Hawkins and Arbogast. Also, Weidinger (Seneca East), Boes (Carey) and Sullivan (Coney Rawson) deserve to be recognized. A wrestler to watch is the freshman Stookey (who may well be the lightest of this group), who may out-quick some of the biggest boys here.

Turner continues to improve. He was the Elyria Catholic district runner-up last year as a sophomore and won one State bout. His district loss was to Herman, but I think he may reverse that result this year, even though Herman outweighs him by 40 pounds. Both boys should have good State placement chances. All-State football player Wilhelm was enjoying a sensational season of success (say that fast three times) when he was injured. Hopefully, he can return because he may well be the best in the district this year. There are a lot of question marks after the top trio. Besides those listed, note Whitmeyer (Waynedale), Garling (Cardinal) and Veverka (Streetsboro).

Actually, the only returning State placer is Lucas who finished sixth last year after capturing the fourth and last district qualifying berth. He finished third at Barnesville and second at St. Clairsville before cashing in a victory at Shadyside. State alternate Farber also has struggled somewhat this year, and will need to be sharper come tourney time. Two wrestlers who appear to be showing the most improvement are Stuff and Brindley. Stuff, coming off knee surgery, was second at the Gorman despite still rounding into shape, while Brindley has defeated Farber and battled Lucas to a 2-0 loss.

I've rated Lane first at Xenia based on his big win at the GMVWA and a strong second at Indian Lake. An experienced big man, he has the tools to prosper at the Xenia District. State qualifier Link failed to place at Graham and Medina, but is still dangerous. Binkley placed at the GMVWA and is probably third best. However, people like Abdulghani, Brewer, Prater (Tri County North) and Parthmore (West Liberty Salem) are possibilities.

## **Teams**

1. Sandusky St. Mary -- This is always a team to be reckoned with in Division III, and this is one of their better squads. State champion Drew Opfer returns along with three Finnerans, all of whom have excellent placement chances. Add in the little Schmidt at 103 pounds and Riedy at the weak 189 pound class and that's close to 100 points. The wild card is the transfer Kresser who, if he wins at 135 pounds, closes out the competition.

2. Cuyahoga Valley Christian Academy -- This is a team that looks to be building a potential Division III dynasty. The incomparable Lester is the heart of the team, but the Smilek brothers just keep getting better, and both could be finalists. Add in Turner and Smolik and you have the possibility of lots of State points. Other possible helpers are Charvat, Sammons and Ucker. Their tough schedule should help them at tournament time, but they need to get Smilek and Turner at the right weight. If Sandusky St. Mary falters, this squad could win the team title.

3. Martins Ferry -- This team has four outstanding wrestlers as the foundation of their State hopes. Roth has the look of a champion, while Ware, J. Tierney and D. Tierney all have top four abilities. They need help from Jones, D. Roth and Mayhugh and that could be forthcoming. Early in the season I thought they would be a huge challenge for St. Mary and, while that threat may have receded slightly, they still have the firepower to win it all.

4. Loudonville -- They took a huge step forward last year, and now it's time to build on that, both as individuals and as a team. Scott and Parsons should be finalists while V. Davis, Jackson and Herman need to place. If you can get five people scoring in that range, you can move up a spot or two.
5. Liberty Center -- The upper weight classes in Division III are usually a good place to score team points and with Box and Lingruen, the Liberty Center team has the best one-two punch in the State. Amstutz also can score at Columbus and there are plenty of other possibilities in Dotson, Kern, Hill, Westhoven, Brink, Cordes and Chapa. The latter group, though, may be just good enough to get to State -- not to score there. If I'm wrong, they'll move up fast.
6. Chanel -- This is a team that always surprises at year's end, and they could do so again. Stanek and Schaeffer have finalist potential, while Hoogenboom, Adams, Ralph and Monsman can, maybe, score at the State level. Terry and Orlosky are both good, but they may not be quite good enough. They're still a year away, but watch out in 2001!
7. Beachwood -- Miller and Linsker are returning State qualifiers with plenty of points scoring punch, while the senior Tillman can do well at 103 pounds. They need help from people like Preisler and Peltz, but those are long-shot possibilities.
8. Milton Union -- If Asbury can score at the level I believe possible and Lane and Avery can place this team will do very well. They need help from Walters, Wilson, Coats and Williams.
9. Akron St. Vincent -- This is a very young, very talented team. Mike and Ryan Hurley are a great one-two punch at 130 pounds and 135 pounds, and they are still only a sophomore and freshman. State qualifier McGough and Carnifax are other possibilities, as is Cimino. They need to get Winnen back in the line up at the correct weight class (is it 112 pounds or 119 pounds).
10. Cuyahoga Hts. -- A team that needs just a little extra to score at the State level. Klinger is excellent at 152 pounds, but they need to get the other middle weights through that tough district. Kekelis could be an enormous plus if he can place high at 189 pounds, and somehow they need to fit Sorace in where he can help.