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2002

HIGH SCHOOL WRESTLING

FORECAST

(31st Annual Edition)

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DIVISION I

One of the issues that impact this report is the uncertainty as to what teams will compete at the Toledo Central District and the Perry District. That's because the Central District has been divided into three sectionals. Two of the sectionals will send qualifiers to Toledo Central, while the third, at Westland, will send its top four finishers to Perry. The problem is that sectional assignments will not be made until after this report is completed. After discussions with several Columbus coaches I've been lead to believe that most of the seeded teams will opt for sectionals that lead to the Toledo Central District. So, somewhat arbitrarily, I will assume most of the wrestlers – except for Westland and the city teams will head to Toledo Central, while those others will go to Perry. Undoubtedly, I will be in error on some of these where I look at individual districts, but it will not really impact the overall ratings.

103 #

Projected Champion: DAVID FEDERICO (WILLOUGHBY SOUTH)

Top Contenders

2	Metcalf (Anthony Wayne)	14	Shackle (North Canton)
3	Mathis (Princeton)	15	Bugara (Garfield Hts.)
4	Iovine (Pickerington)	16	Lambert (Mason)
5	Goode (Moeller)	17	Wanner (Olentangy)
6	Brown (Solon)	18	Wiley (Carroll)
7	Dearwester (Harrison)	19	Priestas (Reynoldsburg)
8	Light (St. Edward)	20	Hunt (Cleveland JFK)
9	Wiley (Massillon Perry)	21	Gasser (Wadsworth)
10	Doggett (Tecumseh)	22	Rogers (Uniontown Lake)
11	T. Anthony (Glen Oak)	23	Kist (Hamilton)
12	Mitcheff (Lorain Southview)	24	Borchert (Cloverleaf)
13	Hiltner (Toledo St. John)	25	Metting (Perrysburg)

This is a particularly down year in Division I with substantially less overall talent than I can ever remember. While there are some excellent wrestlers – Moos, McIntire, Pflug and Pliev – and some deep weight classes – 215# is an outstanding example – there are a number of weak weight classes and many without significant depth. I thought that might be due to strong senior placement last year, but the numbers for the three classes does not vary that much (52 senior placers in Division I versus 48 in Division II, and 46 in Division III). Whatever the reason the normally deep bracket sheets we see in Division I are not, in general, present this year.

However, there is good depth at 103# including three state placers, some solid juniors, and two junior high state titlists. My choice is the excellent junior Dave Federico who finished fourth last year. Federico, a former junior high state champ, finished 42-5 with both of his state losses to Nino Paglia. This year he won handily at Brecksville and the Midwest Classic – with wins over Iovine, Brown, and Dearwester. He is an exceptional defensive wrestler who attacks only in high percentage situations. I'd like to see him a little more aggressive, but not having trailed this year he has not been called upon to rally from a deficit.

Many of the challenges that Federico will face emanate from the Wilmington District. In particular, the trio of Mathis, Goode, and Dearwester will test all of their opponents. State qualifier Mathis got “bombed” twice last year at Columbus, but has rebounded with a vengeance. He had four falls at the SWOCA, including a final round decking of Goode, and then beat Dearwester to win at St. Xavier. His only loss was at 112#. Goode came out of nowhere last year as a freshman after he went 10-10 in the regular season. He swept to both a sectional and district title and then won three bouts at States to finish 6th. His only loss this year was to the aforementioned Mathis, and he won handily at the CIT. Dearwester is the kind of wrestler you love to watch – an attacking whirlwind coming at his opponents from all angles. He was 3rd at Brecksville and 2nd at St. Xavier. There is excellent depth at this district and besides those already rated, watch for Kostoff (Butler), Puckett (Sidney) and Clausing (Miamisburg).

Federico will also face stiff challenges from the Toledo Central District. Iovine was 5th last year (with two wins over Goode), and this year was 2nd at Medina and 3rd at the Midwest Classic. Federico beat him badly at the Midwest, but it may not be so easy the next time. Metcalf was in a strange situation last year at Perrysburg. Both he and Zychowicz certified at 103# and, somehow, there was unhappiness that Metcalf was forced to move to 112#. That is likely the reason why Metcalf now wrestles for Anthony Wayne. At any rate Zychowicz did not get out of the Mentor District at 103#, while Metcalf qualified at 112#. He won two bouts at Columbus, but now returns to 103# for his senior year. His only loss so far was to Compton in the Wadsworth final. Wanner, Hiltner, and Priestas make up a strong trio fighting for the last two berths.

I don't see a lot at Perry – although, of course, some of the Columbus 103's could be here rather than at Toledo Central. Wiley and Anthony could battle for a low place, but will need a very hot weekend to do better than that. Shackle, only a freshman, was a junior high state champion two years ago, but lost to Mitcheff in that tournament last year. He was 1st at North Canton earlier this year, and with improvement will be a major factor

in the future. The last qualifying berth is up for grabs with Gasser, Rogers, Borchert, and maybe Weinman (Brunswick) in the hunt.

It is an interesting mix of contenders at Mentor. Federeico has already beaten Brown, 3-0, at the Midwest Classic, but Brown is very strong and solid. He had a bad weekend at the Powerade, but should be a major factor here. Light was 3rd at Medina and 1st at Mayfield, and this freshman is a strong pinner. Not only is he good, but the fact that he is blind has, I've noticed, taken his opponents out of their normal game plan. I would not, however, suggest that somehow compensates for his loss of sight. The freshman Mitcheff and the sophomore Bugara will battle for the last spot. Hunt, a great free-styler, wrestled at Beachwood as a freshman last year. Now wrestling for JFK, he could be the first city wrestler in some time to reach Columbus.

112

Projected Champion: RYAN RIGGS (MASSILLON PERRY)

Top Contender

2	Zychowicz (Perrysburg)	14	Gruneisen (Scioto)
3	Luce (Sidney)	15	DeJesus (Admiral King)
4	Wornoff (Garfield Hts.)	16	Manoogian (Green)
5	Madsen (St. Edward)	17	Ginter (Stongsville)
6	Watson (Fairmont)	18	Kleinman (Solon)
7	Horne (Pickerington)	19	Perry (Westland)
8	Cika (Brunswick)	20	Neal (Lakota West)
9	McKee (Miamisburg)	21	Dreschel (Sandusky)
10	Mossor (Groveport)	22	Thomas (Mayfield)
11	Pedro (North Royalton)	23	Garisek (Madison)
12	McCreary (Marion Harding)	24	Hauff (Hayes)
13	Shields (Northmont)	25	Ko. Pierson (Lakota East)
		26	Russell (Libbey)

The 112 pound weight is generally loaded with state finalists, state placers, and state qualifiers. Usually underclassmen win at 103#, and, in a natural progression move up a weight class. In addition, many of the 112's stay at the weight while some exceptional freshmen jump in, too. It didn't happen this year. The two finalists at 103# last year (LaFollette and Gilsdorf) are indeed at 112#, but both of their schools are Division II this year. The third place finisher (Paglia) jumped to 125# while the other three placers all stayed at 103#. Not only that, but every 112# placer moved to a different weight class. Yes, there are the great freshmen 112's – Schlatter, Opfer, and Lipp-- but none wrestled in Division I. So we have, I'm guessing, the extraordinary situation of no returning state placers and just a handful of returning state qualifiers. It is a weight class, without question, just waiting to be won.

Frankly, I can't write a persuasive paragraph for anyone winning at this weight. Riggs has not had the kind of year that I anticipated. He was 4th at the very tough Ironman and 3rd at Medina after getting bombed by the freshman Horne. However, he did come back at Mayfield and the State Duals – winning both – including a win over Horne. My view is that he is struggling with the weight. That means the first couple rounds are perilous for him, and that is an issue that he'll have to surmount. It shouldn't be too much of a problem at the sectional or district level, but will be a real danger at the three-day state meet. Besides, I expect the entire Perry team to move it up a notch as we head toward tournament time. Actually, I picked Riggs because Robin Rayfield doesn't have a son at this weight class.

I've been assured that Pickerington will be at the Toledo Central District so the Perry District should not be terrifically difficult. The one real obstacle is Cika who was 3rd at Brecksville and went 11-10 with Wornoff before losing in overtime. The other two qualifiers are likely to be marginal performers at the state level.

At one point I thought Wornoff might be my choice at this class. After all he defeated state champion LaFollette four times last year (but not this year) and lost an overtime tiebreaker to state finalist Gilsdorf in the quarter-finals. He opened the year with a title at Edison, but Zychowicz pinned him at Hudson, LaFollette defeated him twice, and I've changed my mind. In fact, Medina champ Madsen may well be the best at the Mentor District. Again, the two that qualify after this top duo will be suspect at the state level. Pedro and DeJesus might be slight favorites for the last two spots, but both Kleinman and Ginter have been very good lately. A wild card here might be the aggressive Armstrong (JFK).

Zychowicz, too, has been at the top of my many lists. After a disappointing district result last year he opened the season with big wins at Hudson and Wadsworth, pinning state champ Monsman and Wornoff in the finals. At Perrysburg, however, he was 2nd to Kissinger, and I moved Riggs ahead of him. That may end up being a mistake because clearly he has the talent to win at this weight class. Horne will be his big challenge at the Toledo Central District. A state junior high runner-up last year (losing only to Schlatter) he beat Riggs, 14-3, at Medina and finished second to Madsen overall. He has the ability to beat anyone at this class. State qualifier Mossor will also be a factor along with a number of good Central District wrestlers – McCreary, Gruneisen, Hauff, and Belcher (Mt. Vernon). Factor in Dreschel, Russell, McCarthy (Toledo St. John) and Schuller (Toledo Central Catholic) and there'll be some very competitive bouts.

The two big guns at Wilmington are state qualifiers Watson and Luce. They both won titles at the giant GMVWA (with Luce winning at 119#), and have been excellent all year. Last year Watson and Luce were a combined 1-4 at the state meet --that is unlikely to happen this year. McKee is probably third best here, with SWOCA champ Neal, Pierson, and Shields also potential qualifiers.

119

Projected Champion: MARK MOOS (ST. EDWARD)

Top Contenders

- | | | | |
|----|-----------------------------|----|------------------------------|
| 2 | Johnstone (Massillon Perry) | 15 | Gilkerson (Waite) |
| 3 | Passafiume (Strongsville) | 16 | Smith (Wilmington) |
| 4 | Mills (Olentangy) | 17 | Ward (St. Ignatius) |
| 5 | Moody (Darby) | 18 | Candy (Moeller) |
| 6 | Alban (Fairmont) | 19 | McCulloch (Anthony Wayne) |
| 7 | Reiman (Hayes) | 20 | Braun (Colerain) |
| 8 | Felton (Elyria) | 21 | Schultz (Elder) |
| 9 | Davis (Westland) | 22 | Turner (Lakeside) |
| 10 | Dutton (Pickerington) | 23 | Hahn (Fairfield) |
| 11 | Bugara (Garfield Hts.) | 24 | Fluker (Lorain Southview) |
| 12 | Stellato (Boardman) | 25 | Goodman (Lakota West) |
| 13 | Oberdove (North Royalton) | 26 | Joseph (Holland Springfield) |
| 14 | Subler (Troy) | 27 | Mankin (Chillicothe) |
| | | 28 | Hlebak/Pierson (Lakota East) |

In last year's report I singled out Moos as the best junior lightweight in the country, and that was aptly demonstrated by his perfect record against very tough competition. He won several of the toughest tournaments in the country (Beast of the East, Ironman, Powerade, and Mayfield) and cruised through the state tourney process with only one tough bout (12-8 win over the redoubtable Phillips). He was one of only two undefeated

Division I wrestlers (Magistrelli was the other) as he placed for the third time (4th – 2nd – 1st). Moos, an early Michigan signee, has not looked as sharp this year. He's had several close bouts and lost at the Ironman to Staylor, a Virginia wrestler he had defeated four previous times. It was a bout in which he was taken down four times. However, at Medina he beat both Johnstone and Doggett by big scores and then handled two-time Division II State runner-up Zupancic rather easily. Then came surprising overtime losses to Rizzo and Zupancic, and you wonder whether there are hidden issues. However, I expect a return to form and the fact that this is a very weak weight class should allow Moos to cruise to his second state title.

However, these losses destroy the aura of invincibility that Moos had built up over the past couple of years. Now wrestlers, who two months ago believed that they had no chance against him, suddenly have stirrings of hope. The Mentor District, as far as it's possible to tell, may be the deepest one. Passafiume was 3rd at Brecksville and was undefeated at the State Duals, but was 5th at Mayfield. He lost there to Moos, 20-5, and to Johnstone for the second time – both losses by a single point. State qualifier Felton is very tough. At Columbus last year he lost to eventual champ LaFollette in overtime and then to Federico. Bugara has had some solid successes this year, while Oberdove, Ward, and Fluker could get the fourth berth.

Johnstone is the best at Massillon Perry. He was 3rd at Medina and Mayfield, losing only to Moos both times – and failed to place at the Ironman, losing both to state runner-up Zupancic, and, you guessed it, Moos. It's uncertain who'll show up at the rest of that district, but as presently constituted the only real challengers would have to come from the Columbus area – people like Davis and, maybe, King or Reiman. Stellato and Turner are other possibilities with the former winning two district bouts at this weight last year.

Since much of the Columbus area is likely to move to the Toledo Central District, they'll be a dominant force there. Moody, Reiman, Dutton and Mills are all better than anyone coming out of the Northwest District. I've listed Gilkerson, McCulloch, and Joseph from that area, but if all the Columbus boys are, indeed, here that trio will struggle to qualify. Also watch for Perry (Coffman) who'll be a factor somewhere.

There are a large number of wrestlers at Wilmington, all of whom are of about the same quality. Unfortunately, I don't believe that quality, for the most part, is at a state placement level. Remarkably they keep defeating one another so that it's difficult to place them in any coherent order. I think Alban and Subler may be marginally the best, but I've listed a number of others who could be factors at the district level. One wild card is Hlebak, who had a non-descript season last year, but then won the district title at 112#. Maybe he will do it again.

125

Projected Champion: T. J. ENRIGHT (WESTLAND)

Top Contenders

2	Paglia (Strongsville)	16	Jaynes (West Carrollton)
3	Agozzino (St. Edward)	17	Compton (Madison)
4	Pniewski (Cloverleaf)	18	Wright (North Canton)
5	Meissner (Massillon Jackson)	19	Spencely (Fairfield)
6	Sizemore (Lakota East)	20	Clemens (Carroll)
7	Brown (Scioto)	21	Gill (Loveland)
8	McCoy (Elder)	22	McKinney (Davidson)
9	King (Olentangy)	23	Bowman (Bowsher)
10	Waldroup (Lakota West)	24	Feiler (Parma)
11	Jones (Mentor)	25	Cobb (Wadsworth)
12	Forgy (Coffman)	26	Patnode (Anthony Wayne)
13	Mathews (Garfield Hts.)	27	Franko (North Royalton)
14	Murray (Fitch)	28	Brulport (Sidney)

Sixteen times in the last nineteen years a Northeast District wrestler has won this weight class (only Key, Allen, and Wineberg were the exceptions), but I'm anticipating that it will not happen this year. As I see it there are four primary contenders (three from the Northeast District), but my top choice is T. J. Enright.

Enright, still only a junior, was 3rd at 112# two years ago losing only to three-time champ Kyle Ott. Then last year he was 2nd losing a close 3-1 bout to Lang. This year there are no returning State champs at this class and I anticipate him progressing one more step to the top of the awards platform. However, it won't be easy. Enright seems to wrestle more close, low scoring bouts than in the past, leaving him vulnerable to random factors. As a sophomore he never scored more than five points in any of his four State bouts. As a freshman he scored at least six points in every bout. He looked impressive at Medina, defeating Spencer and Vaughn decisively and winning 4-3 over Agozzino in the finale.

Enright will lead the field at Perry. Next best, but still a step behind, is state qualifier Pniewski. He upset Agozzino in the first round last year, but then lost two close high-scoring battles. This year he's been an impressive winner at Ashland and Brecksville. Right behind him is the powerful Meissner. He was a strong 3rd at the Ironman, losing only in double overtime to Agozzino, and also 3rd at Wadsworth, losing to Jaggers. He has state finalist potential on a hot weekend. Murray, Compton, Cobb, and Wright are all competent performers in this very deep district, and that's assuming that only Enright comes up from Columbus.

The battle at Mentor should be between Paglia and Agozzino. Both were 3rd last year, but perhaps, arrived there from different directions. Paglia went into the state meet as the undefeated, heavy favorite. After two easy wins he walked into a LaFollette cradle, and, stunningly, was pinned. He then won two more crushes to finish 3rd. Meaning no disrespect to LaFollette, but in my mind Paglia was easily the best 103-pounder in the state except for a 92 second period on a cold Friday evening. Agozzino already had 11 losses entering the state meet and quickly fell again in the first round. Then he ran off five consecutive consolation wins to finish 3rd. He was the only first-round loser to place that high in Division I, and one of only two in the entire tourney (Underation was the other).

Both boys have struggled at times this year. Paglia with the three weight class jump, and, in fact, keeping it to just that level, and Agozzino with a very tough schedule. In their only head-to-head meeting Paglia won by a point. Jones and the sophomore, Mathews, are probably next best here, but they're well behind the top duo.

These two districts should capture most of the places. The Toledo Central District should be dominated by the invaders from Columbus, given that state qualifiers Brown and Forgy, along with King, McKinney, and Stoltz all head in that direction. Forgy missed most of the year, while Brown is coming off a shaky state performance. At any rate I've only been able to identify Patnode and Bowman (a former junior high state champ) as possible contenders from the Toledo area, but I'm certain I'm missing someone.

It's the same old story at Wilmington – a large, closely bunched field with few real standouts. I've rated Sizemore and McCoy as the best of that bunch, but that's pretty much "by guess and by golly." State qualifier Jaynes missed most of last year and he could be a major surprise at this weight. Another possibility is Spencely, who dropped two weight classes and then won at Fairfield.

130

Projected Champion: RYAN LANG (ST. EDWARD)

Top Contenders

2	Cunningham (Groveport)	16	Ramirez (Waite)
3	Lakia (Riverside)	17	Mierau (Medina)
4	Flake (Lakota West)	18	Wilson (Centerville)
5	B. White (Strongsville)	19	Watkins (Coffman)
6	Lancianese (Massillon Jackson)	20	Mohnacky (N. Royalton)
7	Effner (Garfield Hts.)	21	Whittaker (Nordonio)
8	Gioella (Solon)	22	Cook (Loveland)
9	Bigler (Davidson)	23	Spence (Elder)
10	Kunkel (Colerain)	24	Newbury (Darby)
11	Perry (Westland)	25	Cook (Willoughby South)
12	J. Kallai (Wadsworth)	26	Kramer (Springfield North)
13	Bottomlee (Elyria)	27	Wickboldt (Gahanna Lincoln)
14	Butler (Uniontown Lake)	28	Vaughn (Normandy)
15	Hreben (Perrysburg)	29	Prvonozac (Howland)

Ryan Lang and C. P. Schlatter are the only wrestlers this year looking to capture a third state title – and both, coincidentally, are only juniors. One major difference is that Schlatter has lost only once in 2½ years (in overtime), while Lang has 15 losses in that time span. However, and this is what is important, they have the exact same 8-0 record at state meets. Lang has an opportunity to become St. Ed's first four-time champ should he win this year and next, and could become their 5th three-time champ this year. Lang won at 103# two years ago and then made a three weight class jump to 125# and won again last year. He was only the second Division I wrestler since the state tournament's inception in 1938 to move up three weight classes and repeat as champion (the other was Alan Fried). This year Lang has lost six times, including in-state defeats by Thompson and Gulosh. Of the 42 state champs in 2001 Lang had the most losses (seven) and he may go back-to-back with that distinction this year. From my perspective Lang looks like a small 130-pounder – perhaps a 125-pounder in disguise. That inordinately impacts him because of his scrambling style where strength and power are critical. Both Thompson and Gulosh caught him in scrambles and scored heavily. Two major positives for Lang are his sensational track record during the last six weeks of the season where he seems to peak at exactly the right time, and the lack of much quality competition at this weight. Most two-time champs heading for a third title are very strong favorites, but that is not the case with Lang. He will need to be in peak form at tourney time to win again.

Lang's toughest competition should come from the excellent sophomore Cunningham. He was 5th last year at 119#, and has dominated this year. He won at Darby, Franklin Hts., and Tiffin, with only Wilson giving him any kind of battle. He'll likely be at Toledo Central, and should have a relatively restful week there. I don't see anyone within a half dozen points of him. Besides those I've listed, other possible qualifiers are Kulich (Reynoldsburg), Strine (Mansfield Madison) and Rahrig (Toledo St. Francis).

Lang, on the other hand, will have a much more difficult district. In my mind there are five top-notch candidates for four state tickets, and there are several solid dark horses, as well. State qualifier Lakia is very good, and, for example, lost to Cunningham by a single point last year. He was dominant at Riverside and Kenston this year, and should be away from Lang at Columbus. That gives him state finalist potential. State qualifier White beat Flake in overtime, and finished 2nd at Brecksville. He also was 3rd at Mayfield, losing only to Gulosh. The sophomore, Effner, and the vastly improved Gioella are state quality performers. Gioella won at the Midwest Classic and Solon, while Effner placed 4th at Brecksville and Hudson, and 3rd at the Dies. In their individual battle Effner won in overtime. Bottomlee, Cook, Vaughn, and Mohnacky are in a tough district and are long shots to qualify. They would probably make it at several of the other locations.

State qualifier Flake is clearly the best at Wilmington. He has the ability, I believe, to wrestle with anyone in this field and be successful. State runner-up Vondruska nipped him by two points in first round action last year. He was an easy winner at the SWOCA this year, and was 3rd at Brecksville after losing in overtime to White. After him it's a wide open district field with no one else having a very high probability of state placement.

It's all very confusing at Perry. Lancianese is marginally the best, finishing 2nd at Wadsworth. But to illustrate the tightness of the field, he beat both Prvnozoc and Mottnacky, at the very bottom of my grid, by one point each. It's a wide open field with those listed and Lomas (Cloverleaf) and Spellacy (Brunswick) all having roughly equal chances of qualifying.

135

Projected Champion: CHRIS VONDRUSKA (ST. EDWARD)

Top Contenders

2	Luke (Massillon Perry)	14	Tabor (Madison)
3	Mason-Straus (Sycamore)	15	Brewer (Colerain)
4	Wolf (Northmont)	16	Stevenson (Reynoldsburg)
5	Wolery (Lakota West)	17	Miller (Wadsworth)
6	Allen (Strongsville)	18	Schinke (Greenville)
7	Guerra (Waite)	19	Bork (Toledo Central Catholic)
8	Uhas (Davidson)	20	Milling (Carroll)
9	Cheh(Solon)	21	Frost (Gahanna Lincoln)
10	Pietropinto(Mayfield)	22	Milkovich (Maple Hts.)
11	Anderson (Pickerington)	23	Haynes (Westland)
12	Frederickson (Anthony Wayne)	24	Szakai (Fairmont)
13	Verlinger (Nordonina)	25	Paplacyzk (Thomas Worthington)

Chris Vondruska has to be the Rodney Dangerfield of Ohio wrestling --he just doesn't get the respect or recognition he deserves. A surprising 6th as a sophomore (with 19 losses), he wrestled extremely well at the end of last year winning the tough Mentor District and three tough state bouts (including upset wins over Tepley and Spatola) to finish second only to Pflug. This year he has been 1st at Mayfield and 2nd at the Ironman, Beast of the East, and Medina, losing twice to the incomparable Schlatter. He has had some huge wins over Martin and Luke (twice) in an excellent senior season. He always seems to be the underdog, but he knows how to win. They describe him as being all elbows and knees and sharp edges, and extremely difficult to wrestle. Whatever it is, he must be considered the favorite at this weight class.

Vondruska is a step above everybody else at Mentor, but it isn't a giant step. Pietropinto toyed with going at 130#, but eventually chose to stay at this weight. He's been a solid placer at every tourney and does not beat himself. He lost to Vondruska, 5-2, at Mayfield. Allen was only 7th at Brecksville, but has come on strong lately and passed Pietropinto on the strength of a 5-0 win at Mayfield. The unheralded Cheh was champion at the WRC and has very quietly had an excellent year. That should be the four qualifiers and since they emerge from different sectionals the pairings should be good.

The sophomore Luke had a fabulous year in 2001. Wrestling at 112#, he was a state finalist losing to Moos in that final round. This year he is up four weight classes, and has struggled a bit with all of the adjustments. He was 4th at the Ironman in an enormously difficult weight class, and then was 3rd at Medina, losing to Vondruska. At Mayfield he beat Allen and crushed Miller before again dropping a decision to Vondruska. He'll be away from Vondruska (assuming their both district champs) at Columbus so their next meeting will be for "all the marbles." Luke is hoping that old adage "third times the charm" is relevant to wrestling. His district is far easier than Vondruska's with only minimal competition facing him.

The powerhouse district is at Wilmington. Three of the very best 135's are there and if a Vondruska-Luke state title bout doesn't take place, it'll be because of the Cincinnati wrestlers. Wolf was an impressive 5th at last year's state meet, and he is even better now. Undefeated, he won at the GMVWA and had little trouble until the last round.

Wolery is a smooth, slick wrestler who qualified at 125# last year. He lost to Lang, 7-2, in the quarter-finals and then after a consolation victory, lost a heartbreaking criteria decision when Zinkan rode him out. He missed the Brecksville tourney, but was 2nd at the SWOCA losing in overtime to state placer Seta. Mason-Straus may be the best of this trio. A district champ last year where he beat Wolery (in overtime, of course) he did not wrestle to his potential at Columbus. This year he looks even better with an outstanding combination of swiftness and power. He was dominant at Brecksville, and his first three minutes are outstanding. Brewer is my choice for the last spot, but pairings will be critical, since all four of my top choices emerge from just two sectionals.

There is some depth at ToledoCentral, but none of the strength that we see at the top of the other districts. Guerra has had an excellent season with wins at Waite and Perrysburg, and a solid 4th at Medina--where he gave Luke a very good match. State qualifier Anderson has not been overly impressive at 140#, but should be far better here. Uhas and Frederickson are both good, while a host of others are just a step behind.

140

Projected Champion: MATT MCINTIRE (LAKOTA WEST)

Top Contenders

2	Baria (Moeller)	14	Cornwell (Fairfield)
3	Pierce (St. Edward)	15	Davis (Pickerington)
4	Foster (Massillon Perry)	16	Malone (North Olmsted)
5	Busick (Lebanon)	17	Hynd (Geneva)
6	Walters (Massillon Perry)	18	Dahling (Northmont)
7	Miller (Uniontown Lake)	19	Marzec (Toledo St. Francis)
8	Riley (Wadsworth)	20	Tennant (Milford)
9	C. Huddle (Marion Harding)	21	Anderson (Lorain Southview)
10	McGee (Cuyahoga Falls)	22	Shock (Carroll)
11	Clark (Solon)	23	Buchanan (Parma)
12	Wilson (Westerville North)	24	Anthony (Glen Oak)
13	Krieg (Ashland)	25	Matson (Riverside)
		26	Harper (North Canton)

In the movie "Gladiator" Maximus comes to Rome to fight in the 180 days of games sponsored by Commodus. He and his comrades take the Carthaginian side in a re-creation, as the wiggid emcee says, of the battle of Zama. In fact, there really was such a battle in 202 B.C. in which Scipio Africanus defeated Hannibal and ended the Second Punic War. He won because he was both analytical and innovative, and had an indomitable will to win. The Romans had been defeated earlier when their strategy of a powerful center of massed men with spears and swords had been disrupted by Hannibal's charging war elephants. Instead of a solid front Scipio left open lanes between clumps of soldiers so that the charging elephants (there were 80 to 100) ran through the open spaces, and were not a factor in the battle. Once they were out of the picture the Roman's dominated.

What makes Matt McIntire one of the best wrestlers in Ohio is that same indomitable will to win. Last year he lost his District finals to the excellent Ryan West, and the following day spent hours watching the tape looking for new ideas to combat West. Apparently he found them since he dominated their state finals bout winning by a comfortable 6-2 score. McIntire, already signed by Indiana, will be a great collegiate wrestler. Strong, compact, and tremendously determined and disciplined, he already wrestles a collegiate style. He is one of the six potential four-time state placers (along with Moos, Kallai, Pflug, Linsker, and Gordon) including a runner-up finish two years ago. He is undefeated this year with impressive wins at Brecksville and the SWOCA. There were hopes that he and Pflug would be at the same weight class at Brecksville for a dream match-up, but Pflug is now clearly the bigger boy.

Two-time state place-winner Baria has clearly chosen the opponent he knows rather than one who is unknown. He has had the rather unenviable task of challenging either Pflug or McIntire – not your most palatable alternatives. He has moved down to 140# and will again go against McIntire. Last year, at districts, McIntire won an overtime thriller, and then defeated Baria somewhat more soundly, 7-4, in the state semi-finals. Coming from the same district they'll likely be apart at States, but there is enough competition at this weight to keep that final round from being inevitable. Baria is just plain excellent at keeping himself in almost every bout, and that toughness makes him hard to beat. State qualifier Busick is third best at this district and has good state placement potential. The last berth will be up for grabs with a number of good wrestlers likely to be left at home.

I'm not sure that I can ever recall a weight class as weak as this one in the history of Mentor District wrestling. I mean there's the excellent Pierce, the very good Clark and there's? McGee and Busick both beat Pierce at the state meet last year, and I'd bet the mortgage it won't happen this year. Pierce was a very solid 2nd at the Ironman, and then dominated the field at Medina. He was perfect at the State Duals, but finished 2nd to Garner, 11-10, at Mayfield, after having defeated him 13-10 in the dual meet. He should win this district, although Clark will be a very stubborn foe. At States he could well have to beat Busick, Baria, and McIntire to win the title. Clark won the title at both Solon and the Powerade – beating Pennsylvania wrestlers both times. He lost to McGee, however, at the WRC. After this duo there doesn't seem to be much. I've listed a few possibilities, but the door is wide open for those last two spots. Malone might be a slight favorite, but Anderson, Buchanan, and Matson (who I held as an infant) are all possibilities.

There is an unusual situation at Perry. Foster, 3rd in Division III for Dalton as a freshman two years ago, continues to be plagued by shoulder problems. After that great freshman year he transferred to Massillon Perry and was the favorite at 119# last year. Despite problems most of the year he made it to the districts before he finally could no longer continue. This year it's been more problems such that his ability to perform is in serious jeopardy. Showing remarkable depth, Massillon Perry has another state qualifier certified at that weight class by the name of Mike Walters. A state quarter-finalist last year at 130#, Walters has been competing at 152#. Obviously he is better suited at this weight class, but may wrestle at either depending on Foster's condition. I've rated them both here and will also rank Walters at 152#. This is an excellent district. McGee and Riley are both returning state qualifiers, but Miller finished ahead of both of them at Wadsworth. All three have sparkled this year with McGee, for example, winning the WRC over the very tough Clark. McGee, incidentally, has qualified for state action in three different sports. Hynd may be left out here, but he, too, is very good while Anthony and Harper will need a great weekend to get out. There is no question that we'll see a very fine field at this district.

State qualifiers Krieg and Huddle lead a competitive group at Toledo Central. Huddle took the title at Marion Harding, but is ranked only third in his area by the coaches. Krieg was 3rd at the Mentor District last year – his only loss in double overtime when he was turned for back points by the boy who chose top. It's not an ending you often see. Krieg won at Ashland, but was 3rd at Smithville, and did not place at Wadsworth. He needs to pick it up for tourney time. Wilson has had an excellent season including a big win over Krieg at Wadsworth. After that it's pretty much potluck with Marzec my favorite for the fourth ticket to Columbus.

145#

Projected Champion: JOE PFLUG (MAPLE HTS.)

Top Contenders

- | | | | |
|---|--------------------------|----|----------------------------|
| 2 | Kovach (Massillon Perry) | 15 | Bierl (Olentangy) |
| 3 | Sharkey (Miamisburg) | 16 | Wymer (Sylvania Southview) |
| 4 | Carnabucci (Brecksville) | 17 | Dean (Lakota West) |
| 5 | Horner (Uniontown Lake) | 18 | Middendorf (Tecumseh) |

6	Penn (Solon)	19	Avsec (Geneva)
7	Carraher (St. Xavier)	20	Hedden (Westerville South)
8	B. Felton (Elyria)	21	Mager (Ashland)
9	Melton (Wadsworth)	22	Hafer (Butler)
10	Wolff (St. Edward)	23	Uhrig (Scioto)
11	Sizemore (Beavercreek)	24	Tischer (St. Ignatius)
12	Gourash (Darby)	25	Brazelton (Cuyahoga Falls)
13	Berlingeri (Lorain Southview)	26	Borchers (Carroll)
14	Cowan (East Liverpool)	27	Shuller (Toledo Central Catholic)
		28	Sebourn(Wayne)

There is no question in my mind that Joey Pflug is the most gifted senior wrestler in the state. Tremendous speed, great athleticism, and uncanny balance have made him a force to be reckoned with since his first varsity bout as a freshman. I have him at 131-4 right now, with all of his losses to wrestlers who have or will win at least three state titles (Ott, Lenhard, Schlatter). And he has done this moving up at least two weight classes every year. State runner-up his first two years, he won last year at 130# when he began to remain offensive-minded no matter who the opposition was. This year he has been devastating and there is no one here who can challenge him. Maple Hts. has produced some great wrestlers (43 state titles) in its storied history, but Pflug's only peer from that past is Tommy Milkovich. Together they are the best that Maple Hts. has ever produced.

Speaking of Maple Hts. reminds me of an incident on New Year's Eve. I was with a group at Severance Hall for their "Bring in the New Year Festivities" which included a Dean Martin wannabe grabbing some poor schmucks from the audience, putting fright wigs on them, and then teaching them some hokey dance steps. All of this so they could "back him up" while he sang "Day-O" and made fun of them – especially the poor guy in the center. Imagine some nightclub singer teaching one of Ohio's greatest wrestlers – Tommy Milkovich – how to move.

The Mentor District could have as many as three placers at Columbus. Carnabucci won at St. Xavier and Solon and was 3rd at Brecksville, losing only to Pflug on a technical fall. He is very aggressive, and wrestles all out to win. The strong and athletic Penn could also place. Carnabucci "decked" him at Solon, but Penn came back to win the WRC title. If either of these two stumbles there is plenty of backup at this district. Felton and Berlingeri have district experience and they placed 2nd and 3rd behind Westhoven at Southview. Berlingeri won at Waite and Riverside and has had a great year. Wolff is now the full-time starter at St. Ed's, and he could be swept ahead by St. Edward's momentum at the district level.

State placer Kovach has been out of action since his runner-up finish at Medina as Massillon Perry seems to have had a running battle with injuries all year. Horner qualified at 152# last year, and I anticipate that he'll be very strong at this weight. Like we saw at Mentor, the back-ups here are also very good. Melton beat Wolff at Mayfield, while Cowan, Avsec, and Brazelton have all been consistent tournament placers. Whatever four qualify from this district will be strong.

As we have seen at so many weight classes this year the Wilmington District is very difficult to unravel. Sharkey, champ at the GMVWA, may be the best here with Carraher and Sizemore close behind. State qualifier Middendorf was only 5th at the GMVWA and he will need to be in top form to qualify at this weight class. District semi-finalist Hafer had two chances to get to Columbus last year, but West and Busick were a tough duo to handle. He could get that one additional win at this year's district.

152

Projected Champion: TIM SCARL (ST. EDWARDS)

Top Contenders

- | | | | |
|----|-----------------------------|----|--------------------------|
| 2 | Kuhner (Pickerington) | 15 | Kane (Wooster) |
| 3 | DiGiovanni (Solon) | 16 | King (Loveland) |
| 4 | Gadson (Fairfield) | 17 | Dobies (Garfield Hts.) |
| 5 | Emmons (Hamilton) | 18 | Grieg (Riverside) |
| 6 | A. Huddle (Marion Harding) | 19 | White (Madison) |
| 7 | Hogan (Avon Lake) | 20 | Gallagher (St. Xavier) |
| 8 | Holztrager (Normandy) | 21 | Thomas (Elder) |
| 9 | Gasparro (Strongsville) | 22 | Vega (Darby) |
| 10 | Rhodes (Sylvania Southview) | 23 | McCunney (Westland) |
| 11 | Walters (Massillon Perry) | 24 | Sanchez (Carroll) |
| 12 | Herchick (Hudson) | 25 | Weston (Marion Franklin) |
| 13 | Mowry (Ashland) | 26 | Zeiler (Clay) |
| 14 | Michel (Wayne) | 27 | Chine (Fitch) |
| | | 28 | DiMasso (Grove City) |

There is always substantial discussion as to the strongest districts feeding into the state tournament. Now that they are all the same size it is instructive to look at last year's results

Championship Rounds All Bouts

<u>District</u>	<u>Win - Loss</u>	<u>PCT</u>	<u>Win - Loss</u>	<u>PCT</u>
1.	Elyria Catholic (III)	80-39	.672	124-66 .653
2.	Firestone (II)	69-43	.616	117-74 .613
3.	Massillon Perry (I)		60-47	.561 105-85 .553
4.	Mentor (I)	56-53	.513	105-92 .533
5.	Fairfield (I)	51-48	.515	89-85 .511
6.	Galion (II)	50-55	.476	91-91 .500
7.	Waite (III)	46-54	.460	95-97 .495
8.	Marion (III)		45-54	.454 91-103 .469
9.	Buckeye Local (II)		41-53	.436 87-100 .465
10.	Wilmington (II)	43-52	.453	67-97 .409
11.	Darby (I)	35-54	.393	66-103 .393
12.	Xenia (III)	30-54	.357	64-108 .372

Note this only includes bouts against other districts and does not include results between boys from the same district. Clearly, there were substantial differences in results, and it will be interesting to see the changes that occur this year. One guess is that the Wilmington District that features the powerhouse Graham squad will move up in the rankings

Despite the above efforts to delay the inevitable it's time, finally, to review the competition at 152#. Unfortunately there is absolutely no metrics that will help determine the eventual winner. The competition is wide-open with any of a half-dozen possible winners. The transitive property (if A defeats B and B defeats C, then A will beat C) seems to have been totally misplaced at this class. For example, Slattery beat Scarl by five points and then Kuhner defeated Slattery. Clearly Kuhner should have defeated Scarl. Scarl won 8-3 at the State Duals. While frustrating to the prognos-ticator, it should make it most interesting for the fans. One hint

might be that Northeast District wrestlers have won the last four titles at this weight class and seven of the last nine.

There are five outstanding talents at Mentor. Scarl, a transfer from Gilmour, is a two-time state qualifier with a stubborn, tenacious style. He wins a lot of close matches, but puts himself in jeopardy because so many are that close. I like to see him aggressive as he was against Kuhner when he defeated him 8-3 in the State Duals. I don't believe he has lost to a Division I wrestler this year, while winning at Mayfield and finishing 3rd at both the Ironman and Medina. DiGiovanni, state runner-up two years ago, has the ability to beat anyone in the field. He had a terribly tough draw in Columbus last year losing, on a late takedown, to the eventual champ, Wahoff, in the first round. His only in-state loss this year has been to Kuhner at the Midwest Classic. Hogan has remained in the shadows despite compiling a fine record. He has won titles at Southview, Avon Lake, and Buckeye, including an 11-6 win over Holztrager. State qualifier Gasparro had had an up and down season. He failed to place at the Ironman and was 5th at Brecksville, including a 13-3 hammering by Holztrager. He then goes undefeated at the State Duals, including a 7-6 win over Kuhner. Go figure. He could be anything from a non-qualifier to a state finalist. Holztrager has also gone about his work in a quiet manner with high finishes in every tournament wrestled. Add in the young Dobies and Grieg and this is quite a district.

I've rated Kuhner at second best basically dismissing his loss to Gasparro as an aberration. After all he won at Medina, Pickerington, and the Midwest Classic, and it looks like he just had a bad day at the State Duals. His wins over DiGiovanni, Slattery, and McGuire cover all three divisions. State qualifier Rhodes has been "dynamite" all year until the CIT where the truly exceptional Galvan pinned him, and he ended up 4th. Add in state qualifier Adam Huddle who is apparently back from early retirement and you have an excellent trio at the top of the Toledo Central District. The fourth qualifying spot is wide open and besides those ranked make note of King (Bowsher), Wagner (Celina) and Wagner (Freemont Ross).

The top duo at Wilmington have wrestled many times, and it's not a pleasant experience for either of them. Gadson and Emmons are two physical wrestlers with speed and power. State qualifier Gadson has won at the SWOCA and Fairfield (over Emmons), and was 2nd to Linsker at Kenston – where he squandered a large early lead. Emmons has been a high placer each year and both should contend for spots on the podium at the state meet. After that it'll depend on who has a hot district weekend. Besides those listed, Haws (Butler), Engelman (Hughes) and Combs (Centerville) are possibilities here.

State qualifier Walters will head the Perry District unless, of course, Foster cannot wrestle at 140#. Depending on who is here from Columbus this will either be a weak district or a very weak district. People will want to draw into these qualifiers.

160#

Projected Champion: TRISTAN MURRAY (TECUMSEH)

Top Contenders

2	Konyesni (St. Edward)	14	Craiglow (Lancaster)
3	Lawson (Fairfield)	15	Williams (Wayne)
4	Gadd (Hamilton)	16	Malinowski (St. Xavier)
5	Johnson (Waite)	17	Ferguson (Pickerington)
6	Morris (Rogers)	18	Ryan (Strongsville)
7	Gray (Fitch)	19	Carney (Westland)
8	Horne (Wilmington)	20	Adkins (Moeller)
9	Grogan (North Canton)	21	Kovach (Eastlake North)
10	Berns (Uniontown Lake)	22	Hough-Snee (Mentor)
11	Srock (Wadsworth)	23	Johansson (Scioto)

12 Simmons (Westerville North)

13 Shamakian (Mayfield)

24 Imhoff (Ashland)

25 Morrison (Riverside)

26 Green (East Liverpool)

It is never easy when there are two, three, or four excellent wrestlers looking for a state title. However, it's infinitely more difficult when no one in a weight class has the look or credentials you would normally find in a potential state champion. Last year the 103# class in Division III was clearly the weakest of the 42 weight classes. This year, at least as presently constituted, that distinction falls on this weight class. There are only four state qualifiers returning from last year and they had a combined 7-8 mark at Columbus. There were only three weight classes in Division I that I hadn't decided on my top choice by New Year's Day. Finally I got 112# and 152# in my mind, but this weight has proved to be the most intractable of all.

Murray is a phenomenon. He is, as I understand it, an outstanding football player with tremendous athleticism. In wrestling he adds to that an uncanny skill at winning the close bouts. Last year he had eight losses coming into the state meet and a fourth place district finish. Magistrelli pinned him in 38 seconds to open the state tournament. Then Murray won 3-2, 2-1 OT, and 4-3, and after getting pinned by Ruberg, another 4-3 decision to finish 5th. He won four bouts by a total of four points. Then this year he took the title at GMVWA winning both his semi-final and final bout in overtime. The question is can this continue? He faces very tough district competition. Lawson is undefeated this year with titles at Kenston, Fairfield, and the SWOCA. A part-time varsity wrestler last year, he has been sensational to this point. Gadd qualified at 171# last year, but has dropped after the first of the year. He gave Lawson a terrific battle at Fairfield and this top trio should all qualify. State qualifier Horne would appear to be the fourth choice, but there is little margin for error.

Konyesni is an exceptional wrestler who somehow has managed to snatch defeat from the jaws of victory far too many times. A state qualifier at 145# last year, he went 1-2 losing 8-7 to Kuhner and 2-1 to Ashby. He lost two bouts by two points. This year he was a very impressive 3rd at the Ironman, but gave up a four point move in the last 15 seconds or he would have been a finalist. Pretty much the same scenario at Medina where Bergman's last-second takedown put Konyesni in the loser's bracket – and, again, an impressive 3rd place. Note that Konyesni has not lost or come particularly close to losing, to anyone in Division I. His district is not strong. I've put Shamakian and Ryan in the next two spots, but that is certainly not etched in stone. Besides those rated, Gronzalski (Maple Hts.), Cornell (Bedford), and Eklics (Amherst) have upset potential. A missing factor is Wilson (Solon) who has been out all year. Should he return he will play a role at this class.

Johnson and Morris were both very impressive last year at Mentor. Morris, in particular, had a hard luck story, as he lost an oddly refereed semi-final and then lost to Rhodes – who he had pinned the week before. This year Johnson beat the undefeated Morris at Perrysburg and then won again at Waite, 18-3 over Gilkey in the finals. Konyesni, however, defeated him by six at Medina. State qualifier Simmons and Craiglow are both strong, but I've been slightly disappointed in the former's results to this point. With a bevy of possibilities right behind them they'll need to be in top form.

Gray looked good at Medina. He defeated Eklics, Kovach, Knapp, and Shamakian en route to a 3rd place finish. He had 39 wins last year, but fell short of state qualification. Grogan, a transfer from Walsh, won at North Canton and was 2nd at the Top Gun. He should qualify. State qualifier Berns returns, and along with Srock this is the foursome I see going to Columbus. However, that could change somewhat depending on the imports from the Columbus area.

171

Projected Champion: MATT KALLAI (WADSWORTH)

Top Contenders

2	Cesear (Amherst)	15	Asp (Westlake)
3	Fairman (Mayfield)	16	Legg (Fremont Ross)
4	Gogolin (Reynoldsburg)	17	Saunders (Grove City)
5	Parker/Saylor (Fairfield)	18	Frei (Nardonia)
6	Rausch (Marysville)	19	Kellogg (Gahanna Lincoln)
7	White (West Carrollton)	20	Poore (Stebbins)
8	Swift/Staron (St. Edward)	21	Koppenhoffer (Madison)
9	Walker (Sandusky)	22	Smith (Loveland)
10	Plogsted (Coffman)	23	Friend (Piqua)
11	Hoerig (Tiffin Columbian)	24	Thomas/Duenke (Findlay)
12	Richardson (Cuyahoga Falls)	25	Kaney (Wayne)
13	Fisher (Lancaster)	26	Sacksteder (Harrison)
14	Sumner (Butler)	27	Vance (Berea)
		28	Edwards (Hudson)

Wrestling more than almost any other sport demands heavy dues from those who choose to participate. Even for the most talented and athletic there is a long apprenticeship that can weary the body and fatigue the mind. Matt Kallai, as outstanding a talent as he is, has had to pay those dues just like everyone else. It started his freshman year when he finished a brilliant 3rd at Columbus losing only to 3-time champ Ty Morgan 15-4. At that point most people were suggesting two or three state titles, but the wrestling dues can exact a heavy price. As a sophomore Kallai was 6th, and last year he lost to the eventual state champ Pliev, 4-1 in the second round – the only wrestler Pliev did not pin. He again finished 3rd – defeating Fairman in the consolation final. Well, the dues have been paid, the accounts settled in full, and now it's Kallai's last and best chance for a state title. However, there are formidable obstacles still to surmount, mostly in the form of a pair of returning state placers.

Both of these placers emerge from the Mentor District. Cesear was 6th last year, which included a win over the then defending state champion, Nick Lukens. One of his losses was to Fairman in the consolation semi-finals. This year he beat Fairman at Brecksville on a last second takedown, and has dominated most of his other foes in compiling an undefeated season. Fairman has wrestled a much tougher schedule. He was 2nd to Dennis at the Ironman, 2nd to Treadway at the Midwest Classic, and 2nd to Cesear at Brecksville. He was undefeated at the State Duals, won the WRC and then lost to Kallai 3-0 at Mayfield. Fairman was 4th last year at Columbus, also losing to Kallai there. These two are easily the best at Mentor, and let's hope they do not meet until the finals. As to who is better – it's really too close to call. You could call them 2 and 2A, but Cesear got the nod because he won their last skirmish. Swift (or possibly Staron) is third best with possible state placement chances. Fairman handled him at Mayfield so there is a gap between the top duo and him. After that it could be anybody for that fourth spot, with those listed plus D'Amico (Euclid) and Deliberato (Brush) as nominal favorites. D'Amico, however, may choose to stay at 160#.

Kallai, in all likelihood, has the easiest district. I'm assuming that Fisher and perhaps one of his colleagues will come out of the Westland sectional, but it's still pretty empty after Kallai. I'm guaranteeing that at least two people not mentioned in this report qualify for Columbus out of this district.

On the other hand I'm guessing it's going to be very crowded out of the Toledo Central District. It'll be difficult to rate all of them, especially since many have never met any of the others, some have been injured, and a couple just recently dropped from 189#. State qualifier Gogolin may be the best here, but he does not wrestle a real rugged schedule. Rausch, Kellogg, and Saunders are all a few points behind him in the Columbus area, but not an insurmountable amount. State qualifier Plogsted, in a surprise move, dropped from 189# (where he went to state last year) down to 171#. When that happens your knee-jerk reaction is to assume that the guy will be a "real monster" at that weight. Sometimes "yes" and sometimes "no." In this case, it's still up in the air. At Columbus last year Plogsted was pinned twice in a little over three minutes total. So a move to 171# is probably a positive. However, his first tourney win at this new weight ended with a 10-9 win over

Poore. Walker, who is battling injuries, and Hoerig are probably the two best in the Northwest. I've rated Walker quite high assuming he will be healthy. Anything less than 100%, though, and he'll struggle to maintain that rank. Hoerig lost to Cesear by only two points in the districts last year, and won at Tiffin this year with a 2nd at Perrysburg. He has the potential to move up that grid. Also watch for the sophomore Legg, who is still growing and will be in the top echelon by next year.

The Wilmington District is not as strong as I once thought, with Lawson, Gadd, and Murray all moving down to 160# -- where a state title is a much higher probability prospect. That opens the door for some less well-known wrestlers to reach Columbus. Parker (and Saylor) may be the best of those who remain, with White, Sumner, and Smith possibly next best. State qualifier Kaney was struggling earlier in the year, and now hasn't wrestled for a few weeks -- he may be injured. Despite the substantial depletion of this weight class by the mass migration to 160#, I still think as many as two from this district could grab a low place.

189

Projected Champion: HETAG PLIEV (LAKOTA EAST)

Top Contenders

2	Terbay (Carroll)	15	Beckett (Fitch)
3	Carman (Geneva)	16	Dominick (Euclid)
4	Andy (Ashland)	17	Chambers (Elder)
5	Rankin (Franklin Hts.)	18	Carmony (Wooster)
6	Horton (Pickerington)	19	Radva (Normandy)
7	Rouse/Saylor (Fairfield)	20	Rose (Uniontown Lake)
8	Cramer (Reynoldsburg)	21	Nichols/Childs (Mentor)
9	Bridewell (Miamisburg)	22	Quinn/Adkins (St. Edward)
10	Kmetz (Brunswick)	23	Waller (Amherst)
11	Regan (Mayfield)	24	Galbraith (Anthony Wayne)
12	Trusnik (Nordonia)	25	May (Cincinnati Northwestern)
13	Lukens (Moeller)	26	Stachowitz (Garfield Hts.)
14	Wasinger (Harrison)	27	Steigerwald (St. Xavier)

The "prevailing wisdom" is that Pliev --rated the best high school wrestler in the country at this weight class --is unbeatable. Certainly, based on recent history, that is not an unreasonable assumption. He had a brilliant junior year culminating in falls in both the semi-finals and finals to take the state title at 171#. Then over the summer he won the Junior Nationals in an outstanding display of strength and technique. This year the Russian émigré has been flawless, including dominating titles at the SWOCA and Brecksville. His marvelous throws are awe inspiring, and they make wrestling fun once again to watch. He has to be given the role as the strong favorite. One issue he'll need to watch is "throwing" somebody who is unprepared and losing on a disqualification.

In what is otherwise a weak weight class there is one possibility that could upset the "prevailing wisdom." Nick Terbay is the one wrestler who might give Pliev a problem. He is, after all, a two-time state placer with lots of free style experience to defend Pliev's throws. In addition, he'll be away from Pliev at Columbus as they exit the same district and, that, too, will give Terbay a rehearsal bout before the state meet. He is super on top with some good takedowns. We look at Terbay as a relatively small 189-pounder and he does seem dwarfed by some of the boys cutting a lot of weight. Still Terbay certified four pounds heavier than Pliev.

There is a huge gap between Pliev and Terbay and everybody else. It's my view that for all others the battle will be won if they capture the third place medal. That certainly will be true at the Wilmington District -- which even without Pliev and Terbay is one of the best in Division I. With only two spots open some excellent

wrestlers will not get out. Rouse and Bridewell both have placement potential, but they need to watch for Ryan Lukens who is having a great second half. Wasinger and Chambers are also good, but they'll need good bracket positions to qualify. All of the others listed have outside chances of going, including Clingner (Beaver Creek).

State qualifier Carman heads a representative field at Perry. He, and possibly Kmetz, are the only ones with placement potential, although bigger surprises have happened. Two unknowns here are Coleman (Kenmore) and George (Massillon Perry). Coleman, a district qualifier, wrestles a difficult-to-evaluate schedule. He may well deserve a rating on the grid at this weight class. George, a district qualifier last year, has missed the entire season up to this point. Should he return he could play a significant role at this district.

While state qualifier Andy may be marginally best at Toledo Central, there are some very good 189's out of the Columbus area. Rankin, state qualifier Horton, and the recently returned Cramer are all first-rate and have good placement possibilities. If several of them end up at Perry, then watch for Galbraith, Fox (Tiffin Columbian) and, maybe, Thomas (Findlay) if he's at this weight, to pick up the slack. A key element in placing will be to get in the two quarter-brackets at state that do not include Pliev and Terbay. Otherwise, there will be that long, torturous path through the consolation rounds.

There is very little at the Mentor District. I've searched looking for that one super star I've overlooked, but have, so far, come up empty. Regan looks like perhaps the top candidate here, but it is clearly a wide-open event. My guess is, and I hate to say it, that the qualifiers here will be first round fodder.

215

Projected Champion: MATT KOZ (ST. EDWARD)

Top Contenders

2	Delguyd (Mayfield)	15	Espinosa (Massillon Perry)
3	Barrentine (Carroll)	16	McGeorge (Massillon Jackson)
4	Beechum (Marrion Harding)	17	Huber (Elder)
5	Adams (Scioto)	18	Warren (St. Charles)
6	Stansbury (East Liverpool)	19	Friend (Uniontown Lake)
7	Williams (Lakota East)	20	Lenix (Toledo Central Catholic)
8	Smith (Cleveland Hts.)	21	Cutting (Anderson)
9	Georg (Glen Este)	22	Johnson (Sandusky)
10	Ankney (Sidney)	23	Kangas (Lakeside)
11	Nigem (Toledo St. Francis)	24	Kubiak (St. Ignatius)
12	Kershaw (Madison)	25	Noga (Willoughby South)
13	Crane (Perrysburg)	26	Drew (Lakota West)
14	Myers (Mansfield Madison)	27	Kusmirek (Brecksville)

This is the best and deepest weight class in Division I, and should be one of the most entertaining, as well. It showcases wrestlers from all around the State and features a whole spectrum of styles and body types. There is also enormous firepower embodied in the top group – far more than at any other class. Let's look at thumbnail sketches of the top contenders.

Matt Koz, the brilliant St. Ed's junior is the defending state champ at this weight. Already a two-time state qualifier he ripped through district and state action with his closest bout a 14-8 romp until the finals where Barrentine took him into double overtime before succumbing. Koz finished at 45-1, and has been just about that good this year. He has won at the Ironman, Beast of the East, and Medina, and is one of the top 215's in

the country. His biggest in-state win was a 7-3 decision over Barrentine at Medina. His only loss, an overtime struggle with Delguyd at Mayfield, the first battle in what could be a three battle war.

Delguyd, a senior, was 2nd at 189# last year losing 2-0 to Clemens in the finals after finishing 4th the previous year. With a classic physique Delguyd, a tremendous athlete, looks like he could do whatever he wanted to on the mat. In the past he has at times seemed very defensive using his strength and experience to stymie any offensive actions without initiating any of his own. That has not been as much of an issue this year as he remains undefeated with four tourney titles and wins over Barrentine, Williams and, of course, Koz.

Barrentine, also a junior, was 2nd to Koz last year in that dramatic overtime bout. He has lost to both Koz and Delguyd this year as he has moved between 215# and Heavyweight. He has a history of a strong second half of the season, and cannot be discounted at this weight.

Beechum, a senior, moved from 189# to 215# at the end of last season and suddenly became a scoring machine. He was in double figures in every district bout, and then won four of five state bouts, including three that didn't go the distance. His only loss was a 14-8 battle with Koz. He is undefeated this year, but has not wrestled nearly the demanding schedule of the top trio.

State qualifiers Williams and Adams along with Stansbury are all very good. Adams was a bout from state placement last year, and beat Beechum in a wild district final, 15-12. He was the champion at Kenston, but has not wrestled a demanding schedule. Williams went "two and out" at the state meet but has wrestled well this year. It probably doesn't hurt to have Pliev as a workout partner. He was 3rd at both Brecksville and the SWOCA, and has lost close bouts this year to Delguyd (3-2), Keough (8-7 OT), and Koz (7-4). His jinx has been Stansbury who has beaten him three times, including twice by fall. Stansbury was 3rd at North Canton and the OVAC and missed state qualification last year when he lost the coin flip in the 30 second sudden death.

Despite Delguyd's win at Mayfield, I still think Koz will win the state title. Not to discount Delguyd's win, but it was before a huge, home crowd throng that had to have him sky high. These two are so close that it wouldn't surprise me if all three went into overtime. Note that the only takedown in the bout was on Koz's move, and not initiated by Delguyd. It should be most interesting, and with the star-studded field they cannot overlook all the other great wrestlers at this weight class.

Delguyd and Koz will dominate at Mentor, but Smith could be a finalist if these two are randomly paired in the same half-bracket. (That's why we need district seeding Mr. Batanian, sir.) He was a state qualifier at heavyweight last year, and I'm not sure he wouldn't be better off there this year. The fourth berth is wide open.

Barrentine and Williams are in the top spots at Wilmington, but state qualifier Ankney and Georg are not far behind. All four qualifiers will be very good in this district. If the pairings are awkward watch for Huber to get that fourth spot.

Beechum and Adams (if he's there) are the best at Toledo Central. Myers is the big unknown, having finished ahead of Stansbury and Williams at North Canton. Nigem, Crane, Lenix, and Johnson give the northwest excellent depth, while Warren could get a spot if healthy.

There is a lot more uncertainty at Perry with a much more tightly grouped slate of competitors. Except for Stansbury, this group will be long-shots for placement at Columbus.

HVY.

Projected Champion: DERRICK BENDAU (MAYFIELD)

Top Contenders

2	Hines (Butler)	15	Wyper (Perrysburg)
3	Vallos (Boardman)	16	Boone (St. Edward)
4	Johnson (Lakota East)	17	Allen (Loveland)
5	Adebesin (Shaker Hts.)	18	Burdge (Massillon Jackson)
6	Taylor (Harrison)	19	Rathman (LaSalle)
7	Arnold (Chardon)	20	Beeby (Tiffin Columbian)
8	Williams (Pickerington)	21	Eyink (Celina)
9	Cook (North Canton)	22	Smith (Darby)
10	Hicks (Centerville)	23	Saultz (Scioto)
11	Silcott (Olentangy)	24	Drollinger (Beavercreek)
12	Relliford (Glenville)	25	Starkey (Barberton)
13	Cousins (Chillicothe)	26	Wilson (Avon Lake)
14	Knight (Hamilton)	27	Britton (Geneva)

I think Derrick Bendau is clearly the best heavy weight in the state, but that is no guarantee of a title at this class. In two of the last three years the best heavy weight (at least in my opinion) has somehow not won the championship. That is what makes this weight so fascinating and infuriating at the same time. Bendau has been wrestling almost his entire life and will be totally prepared for Columbus. In addition he has had great workout partners like Piccirillo and Delguyd that should keep him sharp. Bendau has won titles at the Ironman, Midwest Classic, Brecksville, WRC, and Mayfield tournaments – three of them with falls in the final. He is a step above the rest of the state.

Bendau emerges from a strong district. Adebesin is a tall, strong heavyweight who missed state qualification by one bout last year. He won at Solon and was 3rd at Brecksville, losing to Johnson, but defeating Taylor. State qualifier Arnold also returns, and will hope for a better state pairing this year. He caught eventual state champ Ardo in the first round and Hines in the next. Relliford, pretty much an unknown, shocked everyone with first period falls in the first two rounds at Mentor, but then reality, in the forms of Bendau and Arnold, set in and he fell a bout short of qualification. This is a gigantic crew with all of them within 15 pounds of the weight limit. Should one of them falter, Boone, Wilson, Fitzpatrick (Elyria), Rowe (St. Ignatius), or Massa (Garfield Hts.) are other possibilities.

The powerful Hines could be Bendau's biggest obstacle, although last year's result would not suggest it. Then, in the bout that guarantees placement, Bendau pinned him in eleven seconds. Won't happen again. Hines won the GMVWA in impressive fashion, and is currently undefeated. Right behind him are the powerful duo of Johnson and Taylor – the former a Cadet National champ and the latter a returning state qualifier. Johnson won the SWOCA and was 2nd at Brecksville, while Taylor won at St. Xavier and was 4th at Brecksville. Bendau beat them back-to-back at Brecksville in a combined 151 seconds. The mobile Hicks was runner-up to Hines at the GMVWA, while Knight, Allen, and Rathman all have the ability to qualify. Drollinger has returned from a near fatal accident last summer to place in every tourney entered and might sneak into the Columbus picture.

Another strong contender is the mammoth Vallos. He, too, was a state qualifier and he has been sensational in the eastern part of the state winning at the Top Gun and Brooke. He should dominate the Perry District, which he nearly won last year against Ardo. In fact, he gave Ardo his closest match throughout sectional, district, and state action. I like Cook and Cousins, and, maybe Burdge for the last three spots, but Starkey, Britton, or Reikowski (Canton McKinley) will also have an opportunity. Except for Vallos, state placement will be unlikely for whomever qualifies.

The Toledo-Central District would seem to be the weakest of the four. The powerful Williams has outstanding potential, but he lost to Boone in the State Duals, which I have written off as something of an anomaly. He and Silcott, perhaps, have the best chance of state placement, but the competition here will be very close. There is

not much difference between most of the competitors. The big unknown is whether Division III state placer Mason will wrestle for Holland Springfield. A state semi-finalist for Genoa last year he would be a factor if, in fact, he does compete. Also, watch for very light Nail (Davidson) Haddad (St. Charles), and Pritchett (Grove City).

TEAMS

1. **St. Edward** -- This is not one of the greatest of St. Edward's teams, but it may outscore many of them because of the weak competition in Division I this year. Lang and Moos have not had the kind of flawless year we anticipated, but they are still favorites at their respective weight classes. Vondruska, Koz, and Scarl should all be finalists while Pierce, Agozzino, and, maybe, Madsen are placers. The enigmatic Konyesni could finish anywhere while Light, Swift, and Wolff may qualify for Columbus. If everything goes perfectly they could challenge the Division I points record, but, to me, there are still too many question marks for that.
2. **Massillon Perry** – This is a very fine team that needs to get healthy. Foster, Kovach, and George need to be ready by sectionals, and Riggs has got to be able to perform at peak levels at 112#. There is plenty of firepower when you add Johnstone, Luke, and Walters to those already mentioned. A little help from Wiley and Espinosa would be appreciated as this team could reach somewhere near the 100 point level.
3. **Mayfield** - Almost all of their scoring will be generated by their superb upper weights. Bendau, Delguyd, and Fairman could all be finalists – and, in fact, could all be winners. If Massillon Perry falters or people like Shamakian, Petropinto or Regan can help this team could quite easily snag the runner-up trophy.
4. **Lakota East** – This is another team with great firepower in the upper weight classes. Pliev could score close to 30 points by himself, and both William and Johnson could place. State qualifiers Sizemore and Hlebak are at the lighter end of the scale, but their ability to score at the state level is suspect.
5. **Lakota West** - The trio of Flake, Wolery, and defending state champion McIntire make for a fiercesome combination between 130# and 140#. I'm expecting a bushel basket of points from them. If the little guys like Neal, Goodman, or Waldroup can spring a few upsets or Dean and Drew can help from the other side, they could move up a notch or two.
6. **Strongsville** - This is a team with lots of potential scoring, but also lots of questions. Foremost, is Paglia's ability to stay healthy and score at 125#, and Gasparro's need to peak at tournament time. White, Allen, Passafiume, and Ryan can score at the state level, while Ginter could be a surprise at the weak 112# weight class.
7. **Pickerington** - This is a fine dual meet team that may not have the state firepower to reach the top ten. Still Iovine, Kuhner, and Horton should be placers and the sensational freshman Horne should do well at 112#. The big questions are whether Williams can score at heavyweight, how Anderson will do at 135#, and whether people like Ferguson, Davis, and Earnheart can be helpers.
8. **Carroll** – The two main cogs are Terbay and Barrentine, but the former has Pliev and the latter the murderous competition at 215#. The real question is where is additional state scoring going to come from. They hope the answer will be Shock, Borchers, Wiley, and Sanchez.
9. **Solon** - The state tournament process was a disappointing one for Solon last year, but it looks like they will bounce back this year. DiGiovanni could be a finalist while the excellent middleweights like Clark, Cheh, Gioella and Penn can score at the state level. The big bonus would be Brown placing high at 103#.

10. **Fairfield** – In his 37th season coach Ron Masanek has fashioned, perhaps another top ten team. The upper weights of Gadson, Lawson, Parker, Saylor, and Rouse should score at Columbus and people like Hahn, Spencely, and Cornwell can help. It will need to be a team effort to get here.
11. **Wadsworth** - Matt Kallai is the linchpin of this team, but they'll need additional scoring from the middleweights like Melton, Riley, Miller, and Josh Kallai. Srock could also be a helper and move this team well into the top ten.
12. **Moeller** -- Rating the team at this level may be a stretch. We know Baria and Goode can score, but additional help is difficult to find. Somehow, Lukens and Candy don't seem to be the total answer.

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FORECAST

(31st Annual Edition)

Written By:
Brian Brakeman

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Division II

103#

Projected Champion: RYAN SMITH (OLMSTED FALLS)

Top Contenders

- | | | | |
|----|--------------------------------|----|-----------------------------|
| 2 | Compton (Willard) | 14 | Manthey (Orrville) |
| 3 | Laughlin (Canton South) | 15 | Kempf (Carrollton) |
| 4 | Bowers (Miami Trace) | 16 | Kibler (Highland) |
| 5 | LaScala (Padua) | 17 | Bartley (Ravenna Southeast) |
| 6 | A. Pizzurro (Columbus DeSales) | 18 | Blevins (Franklin) |
| 7 | Protz (West Geauga) | 19 | Smith (Whitehall) |
| 8 | McCahan (Akron St. Vincent) | 20 | Kidwell (Defiance) |
| 9 | Albaugh (Minerva) | 21 | Artmann (Hillsboro) |
| 10 | Jackson (Claymont) | 22 | Miller (Utica) |
| 11 | Lindquist (Graham) | 23 | Simpson (Kenston) |

12 Kline (Oak Harbor)
13 Niswonger (Chaminade)

24 Huffman (Watkins Memorial)
25 Shearer (Hamilton Ross)

One of the special hazards of forecasting is attempting to choose between two roughly equivalent wrestlers with wildly diverging styles who have met a number of times. You keep thinking that with only two choices, and lots of past experience, the right analytics should make the selection obvious. But it doesn't work that way. No one can know who, in each instance, will be able to impose their style on the opponent. It's exactly the situation we have at this weight class. Smith and Compton look to be a level above the rest of a very competitive field, but which one will take home the title?

Let's look at the facts. Nearly three years ago Smith slowed down Compton to become the first ever junior high state champion (and then became the first two-time champ a year later). He has a slightly down tempo, methodical style that minimizes error. Last year he went 35-3 at this weight class finishing a strong 3rd at the state meet. He was the only wrestler to give eventual champ Deubel a battle losing 8-6 in the semi-finals. This year he is undefeated at 103#, including a Medina title where he handily defeated Light and Iovine back-to-back. Compton, far flashier and more athletic, has been devastating at 103# with smashing wins at Wadsworth and the Gorman. Last year Compton defeated Smith in overtime to win the district title, but then lost the next week at Columbus, 8-2, and finished 5th. Again this year they exit the same district so they'll be apart in Columbus. My feeling is that Smith will somehow neutralize Compton's speed and power with superior defense and then score just enough to win a relatively low scoring battle. The key will be his ability to impose his will on Compton. It will be fascinating to see how this plays out.

It is a solid field at Galion, but with Smith and Compton both there, everyone else will be competing for just two spots. The big unknown is LaScala. He has certified at 103# and will be a potential state place winner if he can hold that weight and still wrestle at close-to-peak efficiency. The trio of Kline, Kibler, and Kidwell (sounds like a law firm) would then be the co-favorites for the last state spot. Should LaScala not be here then their chances double, and, perhaps, a Schaefer (Perkins) or Thurn (Clyde) can sneak into the top quartet.

It's an excellent and closely bunched field at Firestone. State qualifier Laughlin lost an opening round overtime decision to Pizzurro last year at Columbus, and then reeled off four wins to finish 4th. This year he has wrestled an aggressive schedule that included a 4th at the Top Gun and a 2nd at North Canton. Protz has shown rapid improvement and was 1st at Kenston and 2nd at the Top Gun (though he did not wrestle Laughlin). One who did wrestle him -- and beat him -- is Albaugh who may end up a finalist at this district. McCahan was 3rd in Division III last year at this weight class, but he'll have a real battle just getting out of this district. Bartley, Simpson, Manthey, and Porter (Springfield) are all capable of earning a bracket spot in Columbus.

Pizzurro and Jackson are the two standouts at Watkins and, if paired correctly, will probably end up as the finalists. Pizzurro was 2nd at Brecksville, and I thought he looked very good there. I believe he has definite placement potential. After this duo there is a drop-off with Smith and Kempf probably next best.

There are three state qualifiers at Springfield with Bowers, Lindquist and Niswonger all having that experience last year. Bowers could upset the applecart when it comes to a potential Smith vs. Compton final. Last year he entered the state tournament as the district champ having beaten Pizzurro 9-3, with a record of 45-1. He beat the experienced Kahn in overtime in the initial round and then gave Smith all he could handle before narrowly losing 3-2. Laughlin knocked him off later in the placement round. His big negative is the lack of a big-time schedule which sharpens people like Smith and Laughlin. Still, he is a real talent. Lindquist has got to be getting even better with the workout partners available at Graham, while Niswonger moves up from Division III. After that it's pretty much indeterminate.

112#

Projected Champion: DUSTIN SCHLATTER (GRAHAM)

Top Contenders

2	LaFollette (Springfield)	14	Penny (Milton Union)
3	Gilsdorf (Maumee)	15	Jones (Orange)
4	Schmidt (Perkins)	16	Bartz (Dover)
5	Franklin (Franklin)	17	Cradlebaugh (Teays Valley)
6	Reichman (Claymont)	18	Ysguirre (Clyde)
7	Kissinger (Buckeye)	19	Connelly (Lake Catholic)
8	Sandy (Walsh)	20	Cain (Meadowbrook)
9	Browning (Bellbrook)	21	Scurry (London)
10	Rabung (North Ridgeville)	22	Smith (Bellevue)
11	French (Minerva)	23	Finkbine (Urbana)
12	Naso (Canal Fulton NW)	24	Yaros (Coventry)
13	Hoover (Beaver Local)	25	Handy (Alliance)
		26	Dailey (Miami Trace)

I cannot remember a year when more brilliant freshmen have burst upon the scene. Doggett, Lipp, Scaletta, Marshall, Horne, and yet another Opfer have all been high impact performers in their first year of varsity wrestling – and there are a large number nearly as good as those mentioned. Yet, Dustin Schlatter towers well above even this elite group. He is quite possibly the finest freshman in Ohio history with technique, strength and intelligence that belies his youth. He faces a star-studded field at this weight class that includes a returning Division I state champ (LaFollette), two runners-up (Gilsdorf and Franklin) and a bevy of returning qualifiers. Nonetheless, he will be a huge favorite to win here. During the first week of the season he won the prestigious Ironman title defeating the #4 nationally ranked Robbie Preston, 9-2. The only real issue will be remaining injury-free and able to compete at the 100% level.

LaFollette pretty much stunned everyone at the state meet. He came in as a district 4th place finisher in Division I and then proceeded to win four straight bouts and the state crown. In the process he defeated Paglia and Gilsdorf, both undefeated at that juncture, in what has to be two of the bigger, consecutive upsets in state tourney history. He may well wish that Akron Springfield had remained in Division I since he would be a mild favorite to win again. Instead he'll probably enter the state meet as a district champ and, certainly, as an even bigger underdog than he was last year. Fate certainly springs rare surprises on us all. However, if someone is to catch Schlatter, and that's a very low probability event, it will probably be LaFollette. The rest of the Firestone District is pretty pedestrian with Naso, French, and state qualifier Sandy, next in line. Jones has quietly fashioned a very good year and he could be a factor as well as Connelly, the recent CIT champ. Other possibilities are Yaros, Handy, Horne (Aurora) and Carter (Conneaut).

Schlatter is well ahead of the pack at Springfield. He beat state runner-up Franklin in a dual meet, 17-2, which gives the approximate distance between him and the next best. Franklin will be away from Schlatter at the state meet and that will surely be cause for joy. Browning, a two-time state qualifier, has been injured, but will be ready by tournament time. It should be an interesting battle between he and Franklin. Penny is an excellent young wrestler who was 3rd in the junior high state meet two years ago, losing only to Steve Luke. Dailey, Finkbine, and maybe, Webb (Circleville) or Jett (Little Miami) are next best.

The more I examine this weight class the more I realize how many superior wrestlers are competing here. For example, Division I state runner-up Leif Gilsdorf is rated only third best at this weight class, and he would be a state championship "lockin" many years. As mentioned, his only defeat last year was in the state finals, but he has bounced back to craft another excellent (although not undefeated) season. There is plenty of idle discussion that Gilsdorf may yet opt to go at 119# because of his problems with the weight, but I'm thinking the three pound allowance might be just right. He certainly could be a finalist again, but he will not be favored this time. Right behind him is placer Schmidt who has taken on new life now that he has dropped to 112#. Even before that he was champion at 119# at Tiffin and DeSales, and then 3rd at 112# at North Canton. Kissinger really has

done well this year, including a win at Perrysburg where he defeated Zychowitz (who beat Gilsdorf). That leaves state qualifier Rabung on the “thin edge,” though with all four of the top boys coming from two sectionals the pairings should be good. If not, Ysguirre might well get to Columbus.

State placer Reichman stands out at Watkins. He has put together a solid season, and his runner-up finish at the Top Gun suggests he’s peaking at just the right time. Hoover, just down from 119#, was 2nd at the OVAC, giving the top-seeded Lucas Huffman all he could handle in the finals. After that the competition is wide-open, and I expect at least one unfamiliar name escaping that district.

119#

Projected Champion: RICKY DEUBEL (KENSTON)

Top Contenders

2	Zupancic (Walsh Jesuit)	15	LaCure (Greeneview)
3	Doggett (Graham)	16	Conger (McClain)
4	Vaughn (Watkins Memorial)	17	Murton (West Geauga)
5	Perez (Vermillion)	18	Woods (Hamilton Twp.)
6	Buzek (Akron St. Vincent)	19	Selover (Wapakoneta)
7	Sponseller (West Holmes)	20	Kremer (Franklin)
8	Lochotzki (Oak Harbor)	21	Miller (New Philadelphia)
9	Morgan (Columbus DeSales)	22	Lashaway (Eastwood)
10	Klofta (Indian Lake)	23	Riley (Milton Union)
11	Kemble (Ravenna Southeast)	24	Bourquin (Canton South)
12	Meinking (Purcell)	25	Lee (Hamilton Ross)
13	Kahn (Orange)	26	Sheehan (Holy Name)
14	Smith (Bellevue)	27	Spitalieri (Hoban)

If you thought 112# was loaded just take a look at this weight class. It has to be the finest, deepest weight class of the 42 we’ll see in 2002, and one of the finest in the decade. As currently constituted (and LaFollette and Turchetta have already left) it features two returning state champs, a two-time state runner-up, four other state placers, and a total of 18 state qualifiers – and that’s not counting the sensational freshman Doggett who just might win it all. I’ve got to believe that some of these folks (like state placer Turchetta has already done) will move to the far more congenial 125# class. That’s a weight where I’m struggling to pinpoint a possible champion, whereas here I have an embarrassment of riches.

My choice is the defending state champ Ricky Deubel. After all, it’s difficult to pick against a wrestler who has begun his high school career with 60 consecutive victories and that 103# title last year. Not only that, but he spent the summer getting bigger, stronger, and better. But, still, I have reservations. Deubel does not wrestle a terrifically vigorous schedule like a Zupancic or a Doggett. He did win at Kenston, North Canton, and the WRC, but he has not yet faced any of my top dozen choices at this weight class. I think he’ll win it, but my guess is he’ll suffer a loss at the sectional or district level. Two-time state runner-up Zupancic always seems to wrestle the most difficult possible schedule. When you look at his record your immediate reaction is that he’ll never make the state finals – but he does. His big victory was at Mayfield where he upset Division I state champ Mark Moos on a tiebreaker. He knows how to keep the score close, and then find a way to win. Besides these two, defending Division III state champion Adam Buzek is also at Firestone. A recent impressive winner at the CIT, Buzek also won at Wadsworth. He has the unusual distinction of wrestling in Division I as a sophomore, Division III as a junior, and Division II in his senior year. Also at Firestone are state qualifier Kahn, Kemble (who defeated LaFollette earlier this year), Bourquin, and the fine freshman Murton. It’s a fabulous competition, but the pairings may be difficult since Deubel, Zupancic, and Kahn all compete at the Kenston Sectional.

It doesn't get any easier at Springfield. Doggett is a two-time state junior high champ who might be labeled the best freshman in the state if it were not for his teammate, Schlatter. He was 3rd at the Ironman (losing only to Moos) and 2nd at Medina (again, losing only to Moos), and won everything else. He defeated Deubel, 4-3, two years ago at the junior high state tourney, but that is probably not relevant. Also at this district are state placer Klofta, three-time state qualifiers LaCure and Meinking, and state qualifiers Kremer, Lee, Riley, and Conger. That's six boys with previous state experience grasping for three (maybe four) state berths. If no one moves up this will be an extremely hard-fought battle. I guess I'd favor Meinking, Klofta, and LaCure, but luck will probably play a significant role in this process, particularly since four of the seven are at the same sectional. Possibly gaining an advantage from that is Conger who will dominate his sectional, and who has had yet another splendid year

State placers Perez and Lochotzki head a strong field at Galion. Perez, in particular, will be a real factor at the state level. Last year he was a district 4th, and was beaten 16-1 by eventual champ Velez in the first round. He then won four bouts, including wins over Klofta, Sponseller, and Turchetta to finish 5th. This year he has been a scoring machine. Lochotzki has had injury issues the past two seasons, but when healthy he is outstanding. He was hurt against Doggett in the Medina semi-finals and has just returned. State qualifiers Selover and Lashaway are also here, but face significant peril. Smith defeated Selover twice at Brecksville, while Sheehan has been a force all year.

I was surprised when Vaughn moved down to 119#. I saw him as a potential finalist at 125#, but it will not be easy here. I recognize that moving Thress from 140# to 125# helped the team, but it's yet to be shown how it will impact Vaughn. He'll be very good at either weight class. Sponseller looked absolutely great at Brecksville winning at 119# over a fine field, including a likely West Virginia state champion. I'm not sure that he even lost this year, and he, too, has been a fine youth wrestler. State qualifier Woods and Miller are here, but Morgan is likely to eliminate one of them. A transfer this year from Tri-Valley he is right on the periphery of being very, very good. On a hot weekend he could place.

125#

Projected Champion: THEO DOTSON (HAMILTON TWP.)

Top Contenders

2 Turchetta (Twinsburg)	15 Ke. Holler (Buckeye)
3 Faist (Kenston)	16 Thress (Watkins Memorial)
4 Russell (Van Wert)	17 Huss (Fairless)
5 Stoffer (Olmsted Falls)	18 Bey/Schlater (Graham)
6 Pucillo (Walsh)	19 Bement (North Ridgeville)
7 Midlam (Chaminade)	20 Pencil (Springfield NW)
8 Hoffman (Clyde)	21 Barboza (Maumee)
9 Brown (Columbus DeSales)	22 Hunt (Maysville)
10 Budd (Orrville)	23 Powell (Preble Shawnee)
11 Kozusek (Valley View)	24 Mihely (Jefferson)
12 Johnston (Indian Creek)	25 Ziegler (New Philadelphia)
13 Maston (Canfield)	26 Resh (Crestwood)
14 Dreger (Alliance)	27 I. Webb (Circleville)
	28 England (Aurora)

While there are powerhouse weight classes at 112#, 119#, and 130#, there is a sharp drop-off in overall quality at this class. There are no invincible super-stars who have driven potential competition to other weights, but instead, what I see here is possible opportunity for 119's or 130's who want to avoid the crowd at those classes.

As currently constituted we should see very sharp competition from the very first round, but not nearly at the level at most of the nearby weight classes.

Dotson, a transfer from Columbus DeSales was 5th last year with wins over Stoffer, Maston, and Lochotzki. This year he has gone undefeated, but Vaughn gave him a terrific bout before losing 13-12 OT. Dotson has been good in close matches like that, and he'll need to be to take the title at this weight class. I anticipate that many of the bouts at the states will not be decided until the last few seconds testifying to the homogeneity at this weight class.

Dotson emerges from a district he should be able to dominate. He is a defending district champion, and I foresee but two serious challengers. One of them, Brown, he has defeated by a 9-3 count in an earlier triangular that also featured the Vaughn bout. Brown was 2nd at Brecksville including a big 7-6 win over Paglia in the semi-finals. The other is OVAC champion Johnston who has put together a very fine year, including a title at Riverside where he beat the Division III stalwart, Caruso. Thress is down from 140# and slots in nicely at this weight. Watkins Memorial has five excellent wrestlers all about the same weight and it has caused some jockeying for position. Hunt, Ziegler, or Apperson (Morgan) will also be contenders here.

The deepest district is at Firestone where nine potential qualifiers will battle for just four state berths. It is from this direction that some of Dotson's fiercest challengers will appear. Turchetta was 6th last year at 112# and has spent most of the year at 119#. He beat Papparone to win at Solon and Bugara to triumph at Hudson. He did not wrestle at Kenston or the WRC, but will now be at this weight. He could easily be a finalist. Another possible finalist is state qualifier Faist. He won two state bouts at this weight in Columbus last year, but both were in consolation rounds and he did not place. He was 2nd at both North Canton and Kenston, but won the WRC. His only losses are to state champion Jaggers (by one point) and Caruso (who he later defeated). The big mystery is last year's junior high state runner-up Mike Pucillo. An exceptional wrestler, this freshman missed the entire season until wrestling at the Mayfield Big 8. In an exceptionally difficult weight class he finished 3rd – losing only to Jaggers – and defeating Brown, 17-6, and Division I third placer Agozzino, 8-3. Is he for real? You hate to base conclusions on a sample consisting of one weekend but he surely looks to be a major factor not only at Firestone, but at Columbus, too. State qualifier Budd has also been excellent winning at Smithville and Chippewa and finishing 2nd at Wadsworth (to Jaggers). State qualifier Maston is also back, while less well-known competitors lurk in the background. I'm thinking about Mihely, one bout from state last year, Huss, district semi-finalist last year, Dies champion Resh, and England. Any of this group could pull some major surprises at Firestone. Also don't forget about Dreger who missed probable state qualification by one point last year.

There are some mysteries at Galion. Russell was 4th two years ago, but did not place last year. Midlam beat him at the GMVWA by a point, but he has again wrestled well this year. It will be interesting to see if he can duplicate or better his sophomore result. Stoffer, also a state qualifier last year, has missed virtually the entire year. I had rather anticipated that this would be a big year for him, but now that is certainly open to question. Hoffman, on the other hand, has been very good all year except for one glitch. He was first at Edison and second at Clyde, losing to Dotson, 8-7. He, however, was an unaccountable 5th at Southview. Holler has been part and parcel of Buckeye's fine lightweights. He won at Perrysburg and Buckeye and was a semi-finalist at Medina. This quartet would seem to be easily the best, but that is not to say an upset could not happen.

Midlam and Kozusek have pretty much had things their own way in the southwest. Midlam, a state qualifier, is undefeated and Kozusek appears not to have lost as well. Bey or Schlater will wrestle for St. Paris Graham and they could prove tougher than their record indicates because of the difficult schedule they wrestle. Schlater, for example, moved up to 130# and majored Pizzurro.

130#

Projected Champion: TONY CONSTANTINO (LAKE CATHOLIC)

Top Contenders

2	Thompson (Akron Kenmore)	14	C. Pizzurro (Columbus DeSales)
3	Evans (Graham)	15	Ondecker (Canal Fulton NW)
4	Vince (Upper Sandusky)	16	Reyna (Port Clinton)
5	Gulosh (Walsh)	17	Robinson (Bellbrook)
6	Martin (Watkins Memorial)	18	Mizer (Carrollton)
7	Gross (Padua)	19	Kanta (Hamilton Ross)
8	Williams (Olmsted Falls)	20	Wallace (Minerva)
9	Holmes (Benedictine)	21	Slonaker (Tippecanoe)
10	Wilson (Akron Springfield)	22	Zealer (Teays Valley)
11	Harrison (Chaminade)	23	Quevedo (Van Wert)
12	Taylor (Indian Lake)	24	Ranallo (Twinsburg)
13	J. Hoppel (Beaver Local)	25	Hurley (Kenston)
		26	Kissinger (Buckeye)

This should be an exceptionally entertaining and competitive weight, perhaps one of the best in the tourney. It features a number of wrestlers with excellent credentials, most of whom wrestle with an all-out desire to win. We don't have too many of those "wrestle not to lose" defensive stalwarts whose prowess on not giving up points is only matched by their own inability to score. With Constantino, Evans, Thompson, and especially Vince, we have state placers who enjoy the art of the attack. Add in Martin, Gross, Gulosh, and Pizzurro and it's one of the best bracket sheets at this weight class in a long time. Two-time state runner-up Mike Hurley, who wrestled at this weight class in Reno and at Wadsworth, has apparently chosen to compete at 140#. His inclusion at this class would have made for an even more riotous donnybrook. Let's take a look at the top contenders.

Constantino was 2nd at 119# losing to three-time champ Kyle Ott in the finals. This year he won big at Dublin, ripped Harrison and Gross to win at the CIT, and was undefeated at the State Duals including a 12-4 win over Gulosh. At Medina he lost to Evans in overtime in the semi-finals, defeated Williams and then was nipped by two-time state champ Ryan Lang, 3-2, in the battle for 3rd. While the Evans bout went into overtime I thought Evans for the most part dominated, and it was Constantino's guile that tied it at 7-7 in regulation -- a good demonstration of his ability to retain a measure of control even in a difficult situation.

Thompson will exit the same district as Constantino, so Evans would probably have to beat them both to win. At Medina Thompson was brilliant. He beat Lang in the semi-finals and then nipped Evans 8-7 in the finals. He is an all-out attacker with great speed and ferocious strength. He was 5th in Division I last year, and is undefeated this season. Most recently he defeated Williams, 19-11 to win the Dies.

Evans is another superb Graham wrestler. He was 4th at this weight last year after losing a 16-13 semi-final "barnburner" to Vince. I thought he looked sluggish at the Ironman losing to Gulosh and Smilek, but he was excellent at Medina defeating both Martin and Constantino in overtime before losing to Thompson. If he wrestles every bout like he did against Constantino he'll take the title.

Vince is another attacker. If he wrestles Thompson they'll need two scorers and a super computer to tally the score. He was state runner-up at this weight class last year defeating Evans, but losing to C.P. Schlatter. Mierau upset him the first week of the season, but since then he's been exceptional. He may not be as battle-hardened as some of the others with his somewhat softer schedule, but then I would have said that last year

Gulosh is an excellent third choice at the tough Firestone District. He has defeated Evans, split with Lang and, generally, been difficult to defeat. He has good placement potential. Wilson certified at 125#, but I'm guessing he'll be here because this district is not nearly as deep at 130# as it is at 125#. Of course, the top three are all superb. After him, Ondecker, Wallace, Ranallo, and Hurley will look for some way to make the top quartet.

Evans should dominate at Springfield. Taylor and Harrison are returning state qualifiers, but I just don't see them within a half dozen points of Evans. Robinson, Kanta, and Slonaker are three who'll compete for the last state spot.

It should be an interesting battle at Galion. Vince would have to be afforded the favorite role, but Gross is very solid and could easily pull an upset. Williams went 19-11 with Thompson at the Dies and he'll try to outscore Vince. Both boys are former state qualifiers. Holmes is very much under-rated and deserves the fourth spot (or maybe, more) here. He's been at 135# much of the year, and will be very strong at this weight. A district semi-finalist last year, he'll sneak up on a few people. Reyna is also good, but is fighting the injury bug. Quevedo certified at 119#, but I'm thinking he may have second thoughts considering the depth of talent there. With Russell at 125#, he'll only have two very difficult choices.

Martin has really come into his own this year and definitely has high placement potential. He's been at three different weight classes this year, but this seems to be his prime place. He lost to Evans in overtime at Medina, but still finished 5th (Lang also beat him), but has won just about everything else. A state qualifier at this weight class last year, he had a very tough draw and went 1-2. Like Evans at Springfield he should dominate in his district.

135#

Projected Champion: C. P. SCHLATTER (GRAHAM)

Top Contenders

2	Gomoll (Bay)	14	Williams (Claymont)
3	Montgomery (Alliance)	15	Napalo (Walsh)
4	Turchetta (Twinsburg)	16	Ky. Holler (Buckeye)
5	McSorley (Edgewood)	17	Wirick (Springfield NW)
6	P. Razzano (Columbus DeSales)	18	DiPietro (Watkins Memorial)
7	Roush (Van Wert)	19	Hazlett (Kenston)
8	Barath (St. Clairsville)	20	Klingensmith (Licking Valley)
9	Spurlock (Bellevue)	21	Sanchez (Wapakoneta)
10	Blackburn (Clyde)	22	Longsworth (Franklin)
11	Varner (Beaver Local)	23	Slaughterbeck (Oak Harbor)
12	Nelson (Akron St. Vincent)	24	Gibson (Harvey)
13	Henry (Ravenna Southeast)	25	Cost (University School)
		26	Hitt (Hamilton Ross)

Jean-Baptiste Lully was the "Composer to the King" during the reign of Louis XIV in 17th century France. Almost forgotten today his operas were enormously popular in Paris, although the Church condemned them. He died of gangrene brought about by the incessant pounding of a heavy walking stick on his foot as he beat time while conducting. He refused amputation which might have saved him and instead called for a priest. The priest spotted the manuscript for Lully's latest (and best) opera, and refused absolution unless it was burned. Lully hesitated and then did as the priest had asked – but he did so with an easy heart. He had, as was his practice, made a second copy stored in his desk.

That kind of anticipation and thoroughness is a trait of many excellent wrestlers. A particularly good example is the Graham super-star, C. P. Schlatter. This is a wrestler who performs with machine-like precision and thoroughness. He has an uncanny way of anticipating an opponent's every move and countering it almost before it happens. Already a two-time state champ, his only high school loss was an out-of-state overtime loss in a bout he led 4-1 at one point. Probably the best junior middleweight in the country, his very presence has created a trough in the weight distributions at 135# with corresponding peaks at 130# and 140#. He reminds me

in many ways of one of the finest middleweights in Ohio – two-time state champion and national champion Jimmy Heffernan. He exhibits the same cool professionalism no matter what the circumstances and consequently performs much better under pressure than his opponent.

Schlatter dominates at Springfield, just as he does in Ohio, and will in the country one day. His mere presence seems to have created a vacuum which will allow two journeymen wrestlers to qualify for Columbus. In fact, the only other “left column” wrestler from this area is McSorley. He has put together an undefeated season that, in reality, includes the only tie bout of the year. In the finals at a major tournament McSorley, wrestling the Kentucky state champ, trailed 8-6 near the end of the bout. A stalling call against his opponent (his fourth) should have given him two points, but somehow the referee and the scoring table only awarded one. The error was not found until 30 minutes later so that McSorley tied the bout, but lost the tournament. Even though McSorley has good placement potential, such an eventuality is not likely to occur in his bout with Schlatter.

State semi-finalist and 4th place finisher Gomoll heads a very representative group of 135’s at Galion. This is his second year of outstanding accomplishment and he could well be a finalist – if he draws away from Schlatter. Roush and Blackburn both have state experience, but appear to be a step behind Gomoll. Roush was 2nd at the GMVWA losing only 9-7 to the excellent Wolf. Spurlock moved ahead of Blackburn with a 6-2 win at Clyde and has picked it up since losing to Hastings at Avon Lake. Holler, Sanchez, and Slaughterbeck are other possibilities, with Cornell (Port Clinton) and Wagner (Eastwood) also in the mix. Weight (Fairview) had a great freshman season but has not done much the past two years. He could be a “sleeper” in this his senior season.

Montgomery has had a great year at Alliance and I’ve moved him ahead of Turchetta, although I think both will place. Montgomery has certified at 130#, but I think he’ll end up here where he has finalist potential. Turchetta was a surprise placer last year, but will not “sneak” upon the field this year. He was 3rd at Solon, 2nd at Hudson (where he beat Gomoll) and the WRC, and 1st at Kenston. Nelson, who may be at 130#, just won the CIT title while Henry, Napalo, and Hazlett have put together strong seasons. The little publicized Gibson could turn up big, especially coming in with a sectional title and a good bracket position. A top contender here would have been Inghram (Lake Catholic) who unfortunately, fractured a leg and is apparently out for the year. Cost and Manges (Aurora) are two other possibilities.

It is not real clear at Watkins. Razzano has really improved and, I believe, might now be best here. Barath is now the only undefeated wrestler in the Valley after winning the OVAC and going to 19-0. Division I state qualifier Varner is now at this district and should be an important component in its outcome. He was 4th at the OVAC. State qualifier DiPietro has been doing the Watkins Memorial shuffle, but will probably end up here. He could qualify but he’ll have to beat the recently trimmed down Williams who is a much bigger boy. Klingensmith is also a possibility here.

140#

Projected Champion: MIKE HURLEY (AKRON ST. VINCENT)

Top Contenders

2	Garner (Walsh)	14	Krawczyk (Buckeye)
3	Knull (Graham)	15	Fee (Defiance)
4	Lovell (Columbus DeSales)	16	Ferris (Jackson)
5	Randazzo (Padua)	17	Hunter (Kenston)
6	Butzer (Canal Fulton NW)	18	Barrett (Claymont)
7	Jarrett (Bellevue)	19	Steil (Tri-Valley)
8	Couch (Tippecanoe)	20	Ray (Hamilton Ross)
9	Walker (Utica)	21	Tripp (University School)

10	SanFilippo (Lake Catholic)	22	Summers (Hamilton Twp.)
11	Kerr (West Holmes)	23	Westbrook (Vincent Warren)
12	Sparenga (Benedictine)	24	Henneman (Maumee)
13	Munyan (New Lexington)	25	Dickey (Ashtabula Edgewood)

We have here yet another fine weight class with four returning state placers and a number of other top-flight competitors. The top trio are just millimeters apart with Hurley (coming from Division III) having defeated Garner by one point and Knull in overtime. One of the compelling stories will be Mike Hurley's last shot at that very elusive state title. Two years ago he swept through the district at 130# and then had three crushing wins at the state level. In the finals against Linsker (who he had defeated in the districts) Hurley had a comfortable lead deep into the 3rd period when he got caught in a spladle and pinned. Last year he again dominated district action pinning Smilek in 37 seconds in the final. Three state wins (two in under a minute) propelled him into the finals against the selfsame Smilek. Again Hurley had a sizable lead, but Smilek, in dramatic fashion had a huge third period and won 9-7.

Hurley has looked totally rejuvenated since he came back from 130#. He is just crushing everybody and the 6-0 whitewash win over Baria to grab the CIT was very impressive. If he can stay healthy, and have a great 3rd period in the finals, he should take the title this year. This is the third consecutive year I've chosen Hurley, and this time both he and I will be in the winner's circle on this one.

Hurley's biggest threat might come from his own district. Garner was 3rd last year, and he is just a very rugged competitor. He has split two bouts with the excellent Pierce (10-13 and 11-10), and wrestled both Hurley and Knull on a basically even basis, losing to Hurley in overtime (though that was before Hurley's recent surge) and splitting two bouts with Knull. The sophomore Butzer has really gotten better and has excellent placement chances. He was 3rd at Medina, losing only to Pierce, 14-11. State qualifier SanFilippo is also here and that forms an excellent quartet of state caliber wrestlers. I am concerned with the pairings since Butzer and Hurley exit the same sectional so that an unlucky pairing could eliminate one of this foursome.

Knull, like so many of the Graham stars, will dominate at Springfield. He should be less "nicked up" at states than the other top competitors because of his easier path to Columbus. However, there are a phalanx of good wrestlers competing for the last three spots. I like state qualifier Couch to gain one of these positions, but the state qualifiers Ferris and Munyan will battle with the up-and-coming Ray, Goebel, Westbrook (Vincent Warren) and Rumpke (Preble Shawnee).

I think it's probably a two-man battle at Watkins with Lovell and state qualifier Walker facing off for top honors. Lovell is finally healthy and it shows in his results. He was 3rd at Brecksville and won at DeSales. He beat Knull in overtime in their last dual, but lacks state experience. Garner beat him 3-2 at Mayfield so he's "right there" with my top trio. Barrett is down from 145# and should do well here, while Steil has had some great results recently. That means Kerr will have to battle to gain a return trip to Columbus, while Summers may be seeing his odds of state qualification lengthen.

The Galion District is again crowded with potential state qualifiers. I was very surprised that Randazzo grabbed a state place last year, but he is showing that it is no fluke this year. He was 2nd at Brecksville to the mighty McIntire and 3rd at the CIT losing only to Baria and defeating SanFilippo. In addition, he was an easy champ at Avon Lake. There is a real logjam behind him with state qualifier Jarrett battling excellent wrestlers like Krawczyk, Jarrett, and Sparenga for a Columbus trip and two (maybe, three) days out of school.

145#

Projected Champion: RYAN HURLEY (AKRON ST. VINCENT)

Top Contenders

2	Markley (Graham)	14	Tuttle (Copley)
3	Shriner (Sheridan)	15	Aubihl (New Philadelphia)
4	Adkins (North Olmsted)	16	Diefenthaler/Bolanis (Oak Harbor)
5	Ging (Kenston)	17	Harmon (Clermont NE)
6	Christensen (Greenon)	18	Walton (Chaminade)
7	Westhoven (Holy Name)	19	Hilliard (Minerva)
8	Shaw (Beaver Local)	20	Schlegel (River View)
9	Becka (Padua)	21	Buchman (Port Clinton)
10	Cooper (Trenton Edgewood)	22	Dolce (Lake Catholic)
11	Hammond (Hamilton Twp.)	23	Glancy (Vincent Warren)
12	Sutcliffe (Ravenna Southeast)	24	Agler (Van Wert)
13	Davis (Columbus DeSales)	25	Bowman (Buckeye Local)
		26	Beall (Springboror)

While this is a competitive weight class, the two top contenders would seem to be one level above everyone else. Hurley was a state runner-up two years ago at 135# and then dominated at 140# last year – his closest state bout a 16-6 win. He tech falled an injured Linsker not only to win an individual title, but those bonus points winning the team title for Akron St. Vincent as well. This was all in Division III where he finished with a 41-1 record and was labeled as “unrideable” by his coach. Markley was 4th at 125# as a sophomore and then reached the finals at 140# last season before losing a match to the unheralded Squire. In my view Hurley is the more explosive and athletic of the duo and must be accorded the favorite’s role. Yes, I know that Markley defeated him 8-5 the first week of the season, but Hurley was just back from starting on his play-off football team. He was not yet in wrestling shape, but he will be by tournament time.

This is a weight class where good wrestlers will have every chance to qualify. None of the districts are so tough that an exceptional state candidate will walk away empty-handed. For example, at Firestone Hurley will be the only participant with previous state experience. Ging, who I’ve rated second best at this location, lost his go-to-state bout last year by two points to state placer Slattery. This year he was 3rd at North Canton and was 1st at Kenston handily defeating Cornwell. However, Penn beat him, but only 2-1, at the WRC. Sutcliffe beat Tuttle at the Dies, and both are also top contenders for a state spot. Hilliard has been a consistent placer, while Dolce is just down from successful work at 160#. This is a solid group headed by the charismatic Hurley, and should do well at Columbus.

Markley has had an extremely busy year. He was a strong 2nd at the Ironman and won at Graham and Medina. If Graham wins early at the state meet that momentum could sweep him by Hurley. Shriner comes from an out-of-the-way part of the state, but he is genuinely first rate. He was 3rd at Medina losing only to Markley and beating Adkins, Diefenthaler, Dotson, and Hardy. He has the ability to be Sheridan’s first ever state champ, but not at this weight class this year. State qualifier Christensen has crafted a great year and certainly has placement aspirations. One issue is the likelihood of a 3rd or 4th place district finish and the subsequent probability of a difficult bracket position. That leaves state qualifier Cooper, on the edge of qualification with Walton at 22-3 and Harmon right behind him. Add in Glancy, Phelps (Hamilton Ross), Jones (Roger Bacon) and Flinders (Little Miami) and this is the deepest district.

The competition at Galion will not be nearly as strong. State qualifiers Adkins and Westhoven return looking to better their 1-4 combined record at Columbus last year. Becka may be about to catch them after 2nd place finishes at Brecksville, the CIT, and Avon Lake (where he lost to Ging). Becka has faced both Pflug and Hurley this year so he should be very familiar with rugged competition. Diefenthaler might be fourth best, but that’s only if he can beat Bolanis in the wrestle off. After that it’s totally wide open.

I don't see much at Watkins. State qualifier Shaw returns, but he was 3rd at the OVAC and did not place at Medina. Davis is very good, but is probably wrestling two weight classes higher than would be ideal. A "sleeper" here might be Aubihl who won at Smithville and Vermillion and has previous district experience.

152#

Projected Champion: LUIS GALVAN (BENEDICTINE)

Top Contenders

2	Busnick (Canton South)	15	Edwards (Big Walnut)
3	Slattery (Lake Catholic)	16	Garvey (Roger Bacon)
4	Deering (Perkins)	17	Elam (Franklin)
5	Maxworthy (Buckeye)	18	Berquist (Twinsburg)
6	Beers (Akron St. Vincent)	19	Dean (Clermont NE)
7	Erwin (Graham)	20	Pack (Hamilton Twp.)
8	Wilhelm (Taylor)	21	Brenner (Canfield)
9	Smith (Copley)	22	Ramirez (Eastwood)
10	Goans (West Holmes)	23	Creech (Eaton)
11	Lowther (Walsh)	24	Young (Shelby)
12	Burns (Columbus DeSales)	25	Henry (Benjamin Logan)
13	Marsh (Claymont)	26	Stuhlberg (University School)
14	Gibbs (Fairview)	27	Casebere (Bellbrook)

After missing his sophomore year because of a serious injury Louis Galvan exploded onto the scene last January with a remarkable display of speed and power at the CIT. By sectionals I had him rated second best at 152# and fully capable of severely challenging defending state champ (and eventual National High School runner-up) Keith Cupp. The sectionals and districts were a shower of falls and crushes with an 8-0 shutout his closest bout at either venue. Then, after a 22-6 opening round win at Columbus, he lost 10-7 to Wickert – the same opponent he had defeated 14-5 at the CIT. The dream match-up never occurred, but Galvan stomped through four consolation rounds to finish 3rd. This year it's more of the same with one crushing win following another. He has been champ at Riverside and Brecksville (pins in both finals) and is currently undefeated and unchallenged. While state runner-up Busnick, state runner-up Maxworthy, Slattery, Beers, Deering, and Wilhelm are excellent competitors, Galvan's biggest challenge may be to remain healthy and focused. I provide all this certainty about Galvan despite knowing two things – his injury issues are real as witnessed by his final round forfeit at the CIT, and this is the best of the 42 weight classes with the exception of 119# (and it's close). The matchups will be great.

There are two exceptional competitions besides Galvan at Galion. Maxworthy, after six regular season losses, was perfect at both the sectional and district level, and then won three major decisions at Columbus before losing to two-time champ Cupp in the 152-pound final. I can't ever remember rating a returning state runner-up at the same weight as low as I've rated Maxworthy suggesting, perhaps, a major mistake. This year Maxworthy has won at Buckeye and Perrysburg, while finishing 2nd to Busnick at the Top Gun. Deering was 5th last year at 145# (including a win over Slattery) and I anticipated his return to that weight. Instead he has stayed here and done well, losing only to his nemesis, Busnick, at North Canton. Rather oddly, Galvan, Maxworthy, and Deering were all district champs last year, and all placed at the state level. State qualifier Gibbs is the top choice for last spot, but he had an erratic season. The freshman Ramirez, Hoehn (Wapakoneta), and Young are other possibilities as is the Bolanis – Diefenthaler loser in the Oak Harbor wrestle-off.

The Firestone District is also exceptional. Busnick is a fabulous talent who just couldn't beat Woodruff, losing in both the district and state finals. This year he has "run the table" and will give a healthy Galvan a tremendous battle. Slattery has wrestled one of the toughest schedules of any of the competitors with a 1st at the

CIT and a 2nd at Medina. He was 6th at the state level, but could easily be a finalist this year. Beers was 3rd in Division III last year, and most of that was based on a very strong last third of the season. His best tournament this year was a 2nd at Wadsworth losing on a quick fall to Busnick in the finals. He was 3rd at the CIT losing only to Slattery in the semi-finals. Right behind this top trio is the excellent state qualifier Smith who won two state bouts last year, and three tournaments this year including the Dies. This is an outstanding quartet, but there's more. Lowther, Berquist, and Brenner are all state caliber wrestlers who would normally anticipate relatively easy state qualification. Stuhlberg, who may not be as good on his feet on the mat as he is on the speaker's dais, is also a possibility along with Davis (Kenston).

These two districts should collect most of the placement medals. At Springfield we have a very large and closely bunched field, but the qualifiers will face tough sledding at Columbus. I've singled out three contenders who are particularly strong – state qualifier Wilhelm, the exceptional freshman Erwin, and last year's hard luck non-qualifier, Garvey. Erwin was a junior high state runner-up at 120# last year (to Opfer) and is probably wrestling two or three weight classes above the optimum. Still, Schlatter, Knull, and Markley are a tough trio to overcome, but he seems to have moved state qualifier Rush out of the line-up. He was a very impressive 5th at Medina losing only to my Division I pick, Scarl, twice. Garvey lost consecutive 7-6 bouts on a Saturday in late February and did not get to Columbus. The rest of the major players at this district are shown on the introductory grid.

In contrast to the other districts the field at Watkins is not particularly strong. I do like Goans who was 2nd at Brecksville and 3rd at the Top Gun behind Busnick and Maxworthy. Burns, Marsh, and Edwards are probably next, but you can expect an upset or two in this weight class.

160#

Projected Champion: CHRIS HAHN (MINERVA)

Top Contenders

2	P. Bergman (Oak Harbor)	15	Dixon (West Holmes)
3	Tieche (Perkins)	16	Cuva (Tallmadge)
4	Turchin (Norton)	17	Prokapis (Edison Local)
5	Bertolino (Buckeye Local)	18	Fyffe (Bellbrook)
6	Hoke (Graham)	19	Avery (Claymont)
7	Savel (Ashtabula Edgewood)	20	Tamaska (Taylor)
8	Miller (Wapakoneta)	21	J. Carpenter (Maumee)
9	Wilson (Maysville)	22	Stolly (Benjamin Logan)
10	Knapp (Columbus DeSales)	23	Hastings (Kenston)
11	Zugg (Hillsboro)	24	McMullen (Ravenna)
12	Caponi (Akron St. Vincent)	25	Stoller (Van Wert)
13	Mullenger (Roger Bacon)	26	Fuller (New Richmond)
14	Rowland (Bellevue)	27	Marhoffer (Walsh)

My rankings at this weight class have probably moved about more than at any other weight class. There has been a lot of "give and take" with one unanticipated result following another. My guess is that this trend will continue through state and district action so that all of us will be, at least in part, surprised to see who is on the awards stand on Saturday night.

Certainly one of the wrestlers who is moved up on my ledger is the precocious sophomore Chris Hahn. Last year, as only a 9th grader, he took a strong 3rd at the Firestone District (losing only to Galvan) and then made it to the state semi-finals before losing to two-time champ Cupp. Another loss to Galvan and he ended up 6th. This year he has improved on that auspicious start. He defeated Hoke, Maxworthy, and Bergman to win at

Medina, beat Wilson to win at Coshocton, and took Grogan and Miller to win the Top Gun. The top quintet are very closely bunched, but I believe that Hahn will do what it takes to win those close bouts.

He faces difficult competition at the district level. Turchin seems to be in a bit of a slump after winning the opening week at Solon. A state placer last year, I'm not willing to write him off even though he has lost several times. He still has finalist potential. Savel wrestles in the part of the state where not much news on wrestling reaches the outer world. Still we know that he was a district semi-finalist at this weight last year and then lost two tough decisions 12-10 and 3-2 and was eliminated. He has been at 171# early in the year where he dominated at Riverside. Caponi, now a sophomore, had a bit of a slow start, but his title at the CIT shows he's back in high gear. Right behind him are Cuva, Hastings, and McMullen, any of whom could slip into the state picture. Marhoffer, a sectional champ last year, is one who has dropped in my ranking and, somehow, just cannot seem to hit his stride.

Should Hahn falter two long-time rivals from the northwest are well prepared to step in. Tieche was a district champ at this weight last year (beating Bergman in the finals) and then, cruised to the state semi-finals with two easy wins. A narrow one point loss to eventual champ Savelli, sent him spinning into the losers' bracket where he pinned Turchin before losing 10-9 to Jenkins. He had not been severely challenged this year until Bergman nipped him in overtime at the SBC Duals. Bergman was 2nd at 171# at Oak Harbor. Assuming transitivity, which is almost always wrong, then Tieche and Bergman are about even, and Hahn defeated Bergman by seven points. Still, I have this nagging feeling that Tieche is ready to pull that one big upset. Brecksville runner-up Miller is third best here but, I believe, well behind the top duo. The last spot is wide open.

Hoke seems clearly best at Springfield though Zugg is capable of the big upset. Both were state qualifiers last year, and both won at least once in that competition. This year Hoke won at Graham, and was 4th at both the Ironman and Medina – where Hahn beat him by four. He has split two bouts with Knapp, winning the latter one. Mullenger, 3rd at the CIT, should finish at about that same level at this district. After that there is chaos with Fyffe, the excellent freshman, Tamaska, and Stolly probably next in line. Fuller, Bussell (Little Miami), and McLaughlin (Meigs) are other possibilities.

I'm not sure how to rate the competitors at Watkins. My "gut feeling" is that Knapp might come out on top, but Bertolino and Wilson seem to "carry the statistical day." All three were state qualifiers last year, but strangely enough, all at different weight classes and none were able to place. Bertolino has been sensational along the river and has won a number of tournaments, including the giant OVAC extravaganza. His only loss was to Tieche early in the season, 7-5. Wilson was 2nd at Tiffin losing to another Perkins wrestler – Deering, who had moved up a weight class. Knapp has had a rigorous schedule, which included a 5th at Mayfield. His big win was over Bergman at the State Duals and that has certainly made me ponder these rankings. He has split two bouts with Hoke. Dixon, Prokapis, and Avery are all good, but so are Apperson (Morgan), Klein (River View) and Lattimer (Granville).

#171

Projected Champion: JOE DENNIS (GRAHAM)

Top Contenders

2	Hackett (Hamilton Twp.)	14	D. Karcher (Upper Sandusky)
3	Lowery (Walsh)	15	Christian (Tallmadge)
4	D. Razzano (Columbus DeSales)	16	Howard (Finneytown)
5	Pryor/Glover (Akron St. Vincent)	17	P. Sulzer (West Geauga)
6	J. Bergman (Oak Harbor)	18	Racin (Crestwood)
7	Watts (Franklin)	19	SirLouis (Highland)
8	Schutte (Maumee)	20	Boscarino (Bellbrook)

9	Jacobs (Bellevue)	21	Seeley (Buckeye)
10	Whitlatch (Dover)	22	Eppens (Purcell)
11	Jo. Williams (Beaver Local)	23	Otto (Buckeye Local)
12	Grove (Claymont)	24	Osborne (Coventry)
13	Borland (Alter)	25	Sanders (Kenston)

Sprinkled throughout this report are words of admiration for the outstanding freshmen wrestlers who have debuted this year. At this weight class, however, it is one of last year's freshmen who should make the largest impact. Joe Dennis had an outstanding freshman year, capped off by a district title and a 4th place finish at Columbus. Despite the fact that both Hackett and Lowrey who finished ahead of him last year return at this class, my belief is that Dennis has leap-frogged them both and will capture the title. However, their placement last year will likely order the draw such that Dennis will have to defeat both to claim the championship. In my mind he is perfectly capable of that effort, having defeated Lowrey at the State Duals and matching up well with Hackett, who did defeat him 4-3 last year. Dennis has become much more aggressive this year, and has scored in double figures in almost every contest. A state junior high runner-up two years ago, he'll better that result by one place at the senior high level.

Dennis is light years ahead of anyone else at the Springfield District. He walloped state qualifier Watts, for example, by a 17-2 margin, and I don't see anyone else here coming much closer. Watt and Borland, the CIT champ, might be next best, but there is a real logjam at this weight class. Any of about half dozen wrestlers could gain one of those last three spots. Other than those listed, think about Jewell (Miami Trace), Shonk (Sheridan) and Rossman (Little Miami).

Some of the toughest competition Dennis will face comes from the Watkins District. Hackett was 3rd at this weight class losing only to Lowery, 3-2, in the quarter-finals. He is undefeated this year with several tourney titles including the Top Gun. His closest match was a two overtime struggle he won against Razzano in their dual meet. Obviously, Razzano, also here, will be an enormous factor at this weight class. He has split two bouts with Dennis with whom he wrestled for nearly a decade at the Stallion Wrestling Club. He may have a psychological advantage with that particular match-up. Razzano was 3rd at Brecksville (losing big to Cesear). Whitlatch, Williams, and Grove are also very good, however there are likely but two state berths to go around. State qualifier Otto is a long-shot to make a second trip to Columbus, but then that was true last year.

As he was last year, Lowery is the big question mark. He is an excellent talent who has had a continuing skein of injuries. He was hurt at the Ironman and returned to action at the State Duals where Dennis crushed him. But Lowery knows his way around a wrestling mat and we can assume he'll be in good shape by tourney time. Last year, he had only six bouts before sectionals. This time he should have many more. State placer Glover and state qualifier Pryor have been squeezed into the same weight class by the arrival of Villers and Skonieczny. Both are fine wrestlers, but it looks like Pryor will represent Akron St. Vincent and he should qualify. The last two spots, and even Pryor's to some extent, are "up for grabs." Racin, Christian, and Osborne all have district experience and would make reasonable state representatives. Sulzer was 2nd at both North Canton and Kenston at 189#, but has certified at this weight. He could easily make it to Columbus.

It is not a particular strong field at Galion. Bergman – and I believe there are five on the team which beats the Hoppels of Beaver Local by one – is a former state qualifier who like Lowery, has had some injury problems. He is probably the best at this district, but Jacobs, Schutte, and Karcher cannot be far behind. Most of the contenders have not met so there could be some re-shuffling of positions as the district progresses. SirLouis and Seeley are possibilities from long-time rivals while Brewer (St. Marys Memorial) and Rogers (Clyde) are yet another step back.

189#

Projected Champion: JARED VILLERS (AKRON ST. VINCENT)

Top Contenders

2	J. D. Bergman (Oak Harbor)	15	Ja. Williams (Beaver Local)
3	Marshall (Graham)	16	T. Carpenter (Maumee)
4	Sydebotham (Hamilton Twp.)	17	Tantari (Conneaut)
5	Brown (Columbus DeSales)	18	Sergent (Vermillion)
6	Hays (St. Marys Memorial)	19	Schmidt (Bellevue)
7	Bennett (Fostoria)	20	Marczika (Watkins Memorial)
8	Glancy (Trenton Edgewood)	21	Dennis (Field)
9	McFarland (River View)	22	Banfield (Sheridan)
10	Snowden (Franklin)	23	Mast (Defiance)
11	Saniuk (Copley)	24	Parsons (McClain)
12	Carver (Olmsted Falls)	25	Narinsky (Kenston)
13	Holcomb (Goshen)	26	Bailey (Walsh)
14	Salupo (Padua)	27	Newhart (West Branch)

The following chart provides the percentage of state placement in 2001 for each district finish.

Percentage Who Placed At The State Level				
District Place	Div. I	Div. II	Div. III	Total
1 st	50.00%	33.33%	50.00%	50.00%
2 nd	35.7%	32.1%	32.1%	33.3%
3 rd	28.6%	23.2%	26.8%	26.7%
4 th	12.5%	12.5%	17.9%	14.3%

Clearly superior performance at the district level translates into an enormously greater chance of state placement – helped no little bit by the favorable bracketing a champ earns.

Defending state champion Jared Villers should be aided by that relationship since he exits the weakest of the four districts. A transfer from Canal Fulton Northwest, he won at 171# last year winning his last three bouts by a total of five points. Now at Akron St. Vincent, he has posted solid results including a title at Wadsworth and a strong 3rd at the Ironman. The question remains whether the powerful Bergman and the rapidly improving Marshall can defeat him

I thought long and hard about putting Bergman in the top spot, and I'm still not sure that I shouldn't have done so. True, this former state qualifier did not have a great year in 2001, but he has made up for it during the last six weeks. His major work of art was the title at Medina where he beat the mighty Terbay in the final round. He has just been crushing opponents, and, like I said, I'm not so sure he should not be the front-runner here. State qualifier Hays and Bennett will compete with Bergman at Galion, but I don't think they'll have much of a

chance. The two of them are almost dead-even – their last bout went to Hays, 9-8. As we so often see, there is no clear choice for the fourth spot with those listed, plus Helms (Napoleon) and Jarrett (North Ridgeville) the leading contenders.

Villers, the Division II state champ at 171# for Canal Fulton Northwest last year, now competes for Akron St. Vincent. The move up one weight class has had some impact on him, but he still has put together an excellent year. He was 3rd at the Ironman defeating Marshall, but losing badly to Terbay. He won big at Wadsworth, but was 2nd at the CIT – again getting mauled by Terbay 18-3. By comparative scores he has no chance against Bergman. He has lost twice to Terbay by huge scores, while Bergman defeated Terbay at Medina. The difference has been Terbay's ability to turn Villers at will. My view is that Villers will be able to take Bergman down and avoid being turned by him. Hmm! The rest of the Firestone District is much weaker. Saniuk has overcome a poor gene packet on the paternal side to become an excellent 189-pounder – and he is only a sophomore. Two dark horse candidates beyond those mentioned are the powerful Solon champ Carter (Orange) and Griffin (Canal Fulton Northwest) – Villers former work-out partner.

Marshall is the last of the four sensational freshmen at Graham. Can anyone ever remember a squad with four ninth graders that ranked so high and were so outstanding as this quartet? Two of them were two-time state junior high champs (Doggett and Marshall), while Schlatter was champion in his only appearance and Erwin was runner-up to Opfer. At any rate Marshall should win the Springfield District and he may well have made up the two point deficit to Villers from the season's first week. The sophomore Glancy has defeated both state qualifier Snowden and Holcomb and looks to be second best. The latter two boys, along with Schmidt and Osborne (Valley View), will also be in the struggle for a trip to Columbus. Three boys, Banfield, Parsons, and Beverly (Washington CH) move over from the Watkins District, but may not yet be ready for what they'll find at Springfield.

State qualifier Sydebotham and Brown should both be in the battle for a low to middle place at Columbus. Sydebotham, who won their individual battle, won at the Top Gun and Watterson and lost in overtime to Barte at Hamilton. Brown was very impressive at Brecksville finishing 2nd to state champion Pliev and 1st at Mayfield. He has lost twice to Marshall and once to Sydebotham. State qualifier McFarland also returns with Williams, Marczika, and Snyder (St. Clairsville) also in the picture.

215#

Projected Champion: MARCUS ADELMAN (ALLIANCE)

Top Contenders

2	Keough (Clermont NE)	15	Gavlak (Holy Name)
3	Hoppel (Beaver Local)	16	Ellis (Vermillion)
4	Sabo (Eastwood)	17	Sanders (Ravenna)
5	Skonieczny (Akron St. Vincent)	18	DelaCruz (Lexington)
6	Thomas (Norton)	19	Creech (Eaton)
7	Levy (Oak Harbor)	20	Kuhn (New Philadelphia)
8	Jimmar (Purcell)	21	Camargo (North Ridgeville)
9	Epperson (Bellefontaine)	22	Dieter (Dover)
10	Sears (Little Miami)	23	Sulzer (West Geauga)
11	Dolce (Lake Catholic)	24	Sommer (Triway)
12	Shamblin (Graham)	25	Atkinson (Kings)
13	McAlister (Columbus DeSales)	26	Wheeler (Lima Bath)
14	Jones (Hamilton Twp.)	27	Cripe (Trenton Edgewood)
		28	Thoburn (Highland)

This is a weight class with a lot of loose ends that makes forecasting very difficult. It will be a very competitive weight, but it lacks the superb fireworks we are likely to see in Division I. Part of the problem is that for the most part, none of the top contenders have met. They come from generally lesser-known programs from the far corners of the state and have widely varying degrees of experience. One other item – they haven't always been lucky when it comes to bracketing or close bouts. Let's take a minute to unravel this dilemma.

It would appear that this will again be a two man contest – though not to the extent we saw last year with Moran and Rodriguez. On one side we have the powerful Adelman who was 3rd last year at 189#. While I don't see a lot of the scores from Alliance, I have not seen any that show Adelman being challenged. He won the Top Gun with ease, but has not wrestled in many other major tournaments. Keough was one of the favorites last year at 189#, but lost a 9-8 quarter-final thriller and then one in overtime in the consolations and did not place. An outstanding free-style wrestler he is on the edge of being exceptional. He has won at the SWOCA and, like Adelman, is currently undefeated. The hope would be that bracket gods place them in opposite half-brackets because their bout should be one of the highlights in Division II.

Adelman's only possible challenger is state qualifier Skonieczny. Badly under-rated by yours truly while at Stow he won a bout at the state level. Now at Akron St. Vincent his junior year has been marred by injuries. He was a semi-finalist at the Ironman but had to default the consolation final bout. We did not see him again until the State Duals where he had two falls at heavyweight. Then at the CIT he lost to Barrentine (in the semi-finals in something less than a masterpiece of seeding) and had to default his consolation final against Huber. Assuming good health, he should place at this class.

The rest of the Firestone field is closely bunched but well behind the top duo. Thomas had had a great year, but Dolce, Sanders, Sommer, and Sulzer are right there with him. It should be a terrific battle to qualify.

Keough faces a very crowded and competitive district none of whom should overly tax him. State qualifiers Jimmar, Epperson, and Sears all return, but their state credentials will clearly not guarantee a return trip out of this district. Shamblin, surrounded by exceptional wrestlers, has gotten much better while Creech up from 171# has been excellent. Add in Atkinson, Cripe, Terry (Chaminade) and Brooksbank (Taylor) and this is a very deep field. Jimmar has had some outstanding results – 2nd at both the SWOCA and the CIT – so his spot looks relatively solid. However, both Sears and Epperson may be in real danger from Shamblin and Creech.

The sophomore, Hoppel, not only qualified for the state meet as a ninth-grader, but won two matches at Columbus and nearly placed. Son of three time champ, Carl, he is one of the four Hoppels on this year's team. A titlist at the OVAC he was 3rd at Medina losing only to the formidable Barrentine. Strong and quick he could with pairing luck be a finalist here. Jones and McAlister are essentially equivalent coming out of the Columbus area and should get through this district as well. The last berth will be a battle between Kuhn, Dieter, Livingston (Claymont), Miller (New Lexington), Riffle (Whitehall), and probably three guys I have overlooked.

State qualifiers Levy and Sabo both return to Galion and both have low to middle placement potential. Levy has wrestled the more difficult schedule, but I think Sabo is still somewhat stronger. They met last year in the district semi-finals with Sabo securing the victory. After that it would take an expert in the now very popular mathematical topic of chaos theory. Needless to say, I'll probably be surprised as most of you when the last two qualifying spots are determined. Ellis was so close last year you'd think he would be a cinch, but he has lost several times to wrestlers I would have ranked below him.

Hvy.

Projected Champion: LUKE SEAL (CLYDE)

Top Contenders

2	Ryan (Lemon-Monroe)	14	Tate (Copley)
3	Bucha (Holy Name)	15	Edgington (Bellevue)
4	Ridenour (Harvey)	16	Knopick (Ravenna Southeast)
5	Goff (Canton South)	17	Smith (Watkins Memorial)
6	Sharp (West Branch)	18	Marino (Hoban)
7	Katris (Franklin)	19	Jordan (Logan Elm)
8	Boggs (Maumee)	20	Fedyk (Triway)
9	Moler (Valley View)	21	McGhee (Jackson)
10	Price (Cambridge)	22	Burdette (Claymont)
11	Wills (Columbus DeSales)	23	Finn (Shelby)
12	Fox (Galion)	24	Bauman (Hamilton Twp.)
13	Anglin (Trenton Edgewood)	25	Grine (Fostoria)

This year I wrote the Division III section first, and then followed that up with the completion of the Division I forecasts. They are, with some exceptions, written in order from smallest to largest. That's because information cascades upward since most wrestlers move up a weight class from one year to the next. I saved Division II for last since it seemed to have some of the most intractable forecasting problems. You'll note that later information is highlighted in Division II than for the earlier write-ups because I continue to collect data from around the state. Thus, at this point I have written 41 essays and am down to the last weight class – and one of the most difficult.

Last year 14 of the 16 state qualifiers in the Heavyweight Class were seniors – as were all the state placers. Since none of the returning 215-pounders moved up, this leaves a substantial experience void at the last weight class. While such a mass exodus at heavyweight is not unprecedented, it is highly unusual. For example, Division I returns 6 qualifiers and Division III has 9 returning at this class. In addition very few of Division II heavyweights currently competing have distinguished themselves in this year's major tournaments. That clearly portends a wide-open competition with any number of championship possibilities.

Any of the top six boys rated could have been put in that first slot. There are just so many unknowns that almost anything could happen. However, in my mind, two wrestlers do stand out very slightly from the crowd. One is Seal who has state experience – he won two bouts there last year – and seems to have an uncanny knack for winning close bouts. My guess is that most of the heavyweights here will anticipate many overtime battles. Therefore, if there is no scoring in the opening period and they win the toss they'll ignore the more usual “defer” call and take down. That way – if they escape – they'll have the choice in the 30-second tiebreaker. Think about Seal last year. He wrestled Bucha twice at the district level and won both times by an escape in the second overtime. The other top contender is Ryan who I expected to place high last year if he could get through that murderous district. He did qualify, but went “two and out” at Columbus, including a one point loss to Seal.

Seal and Bucha should be finalists at Galion after winning a series of close bouts. They met again this year at Southview with Seal winning for the third time. Boggs, a pocket-sized heavyweight, has been very impressive. He has won titles at Perrysburg, Oak Harbor, and Rogers while finishing 2nd at Waite. He'll be giving 30 to 50 pounds at this district, but it apparently hasn't bothered him to this point. Edgington has missed some of the year, but he should be a factor here as well as Fox, Finn, and Grine. Other thoughts are Keterer (Lima Shawnee), the really small Bidlack (Defiance), and Tatakamotonga (Bryan).

Ryan also comes from a most competitive district. Katris was 3rd at Medina and won at Franklin. Moler beat him twice at the district level last year, but Katris whizzed through the consolations only to lose his go-to-state bout by a point. Moler probably won't like this ranking, but I think Katris moved ahead of him. However, Moler and Anglin are the best shots for the other two qualification spots. Jordan and McGhee move over from the Watkins District, but may wish that had not happened.

Goff, Ridenour, and Sharp all have the potential to be finalist. While the numbers suggest that Sharp is third best of the trio, I've had a premonition he might well do better than that. Ridenour has twice beaten Sharp – once at the district level and once for the junior high state title – while Goff beat Sharp this year (but not last year). Anyway these three have the best chance of qualification with those listed slightly behind. Mezzacappa (Lake Catholic) has had to lose a lot of weight to make the limit and is just now rounding into shape. He could be a factor.

The mammoth Price would seem to be the best at Watkins. He was 15-1 going into the OVAC and was the first seed in a field of excellent Division III heavyweights. He ended up in the eighth spot, and now I'm wondering if he is hurt. Wills and the 6'7" Burdette are also here, but this is not a strong district at this weight class.

TEAMS

1. **Graham** – A tremendous team that includes state champion Schlatter, state placers Evans, Knull, Markley, and Dennis, and three other state qualifiers. On top of this embarrassment of riches they also have perhaps the finest quartet of freshmen in Ohio history. Since almost no one graduates they will very probably have the best team in Ohio next year.
2. **Akron St. Vincent** – The defending Division III champs would win the Division II title in 90% of the years with the team they put on the mat. Unfortunately this is one of those 10% years. Villers and both Hurleys should be finalists while state champion Buzek, third place medalist Beers and McCahan, and Skonieczny and Caponi should score. I see this team scoring over 100 points, but that won't be nearly enough.
3. **Walsh** – As always this team looks ready to peak at just about the optimum time. Garner has the look of a finalist while Zupancic, already twice a finalist, must battle at the tough 119# class. Gulosh, Sandy, and Lowther could be scorers, but staying in the top three will require two important positives – good health for Lowery and long-term excellence from Pucillo.
4. **Columbus DeSales** – A wonderfully balanced team that lacks individuals with finalist potential. However they have so many possible placers that they could easily vault into the runner-up spot. The brothers Razzano, Brown and Pizzuro should end with at least, three or four placers. Where I think they can surprise is with Knapp, Lovell, and Morgan – all of whom may do better than I've ranked them. They have not done as expected at the last couple state meets, but this year there are even stronger incentives to excel.
5. **Oak Harbor** – The three Bergmans – at 160# through 189# -- are the hub of this squad, while Levy and Lochotzki have also proven they can score at the state level. Other thoughts are Kline, Diefenthaler, and the fast-improving Rando.
6. **Hamilton Twp.** – Dotson should be a finalist at the relatively weak 125# class, but the real heart of the team are the three upper weight stars – Hackett, Sydebotham, and Jones. They could really move up if Hammond, Woods, or N. Hackett can reach and score at the state level.
7. **Kenston** – State champion Deubel faces devastating competition at 119#, but no one has defeated him yet. He'll score heavily as will Faist, but then people like Ging, Hazlett, Hastings and Sanders also have to contribute. They'll need 100% effort to keep this position.
8. **Lake Cathloic** – The trio of Constantino, Slattery, and SanFilippo are likely the only state scorers on the team, but they should combine for somewhere between 40 and 50 points. Anybody scoring beyond this threesome will be a real bonus.

9. **Clyde** – This is usually a great dual meet team, but that is not true this year. However, Seal, Hoffman, and Blackburn could all score well in Columbus. If Ysquirre or Rogers can help so much the better.
10. **Franklin** – This is a team with four returning state qualifiers all of whom can score at the state meet. Franklin and Watts need to do particularly well while Snowden and Kremer must also chip in. If Longworth can find the optimal weight class, and Blevins can sneak into a qualifying spot they could move up.

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(31st Annual Edition)

Written By:
Brian Brakeman

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DIVISION III

103 #

Projected Champion: LEVI WYANT (TRIAD)

Top Contenders

- | | | | |
|---|------------------------------|----|-------------------------|
| 2 | Schaefer (Monroeville) | 14 | Kemble (Jackson Milton) |
| 3 | Scaletta (Cuyahoga Hts.) | 15 | Mages (Reading) |
| 4 | LeJeune (Fremont St. Joseph) | 16 | Gray (Norwayne) |
| 5 | Tucker (Martins Ferry) | 17 | Bernholt (Versailles) |
| 6 | Keyes (Berkshire) | 18 | Madden (Delta) |
| 7 | Amburgey (New London) | 19 | Byerly (Grandview Hts.) |
| 8 | Riley (Madison Plains) | 20 | Austin (Carlisle) |
| 9 | Porter (Spencerville) | 21 | Nagel (Avon) |

- | | |
|----------------------|------------------------------------|
| 10 Bill (Clearview) | 22 Miller (West Jefferson) |
| 11 Tinnel (Edison) | 23 Schreiner (Sandusky St. Mary) |
| 12 Minner (Pleasant) | 24 Grossi (Sandy Valley) |
| 13 Lee (Elmwood) | 25 Kayatin (Lima Central Catholic) |

This is a much more talented and experienced field than was present last year. It possesses two returning placers, several other returning qualifiers, and some excellent newcomers. There are fine wrestlers at all four districts, which should make for a well-balanced bracket sheet. The last five winners have all exited from the Northeast District, but there are no guarantees in that direction this year. Last year's winner had some narrow escapes on his way to the title, this year's champ will likely have to overcome the same kind of obstacles.

Despite two returning place winners (Schaefer and maybe Clemans), state qualifier LeJeune, and two great freshmen (Scaletta and Tucker), I've chosen a wrestler who didn't get out of his sectional last year. Wyant, after a fabulous regular season, lost a sectional semi-final heartbreaker to the eventual sectional and district champ. He then was disqualified in the consolation semi-finals for an illegal slam. This year he won the "A" Classic, Graham, and was 2nd at Wadsworth, losing only to the exceptional Compton. Impressively, he won a major decision, 10-2, over McCahan who was 3rd at this weight class last year. He should dominate his district and secure a good state pairing. Next best in his area may be Porter, but the freshman Mages is also excellent.

The powerhouse district is at Waite. I'm not sure I shouldn't have picked Schaefer who was the district champ last year and finished 6th in the state. He had a late start to the season (often a positive) and has lost 7-5 to Scaletta. I attributed some of that to rust after a long lay-off. Clemans was 5th last year, splitting two late season bouts with Schaefer. However, rumors are rampant that Clemans may not wrestle for the remainder of the season, and that his very capable replacement, Lee, will take his place. State qualifier LeJeune also returns and his recent resounding win at Clyde signals his high placement potential. He was a bout from state placement last year, going 2-2 at Columbus. The fourth spot belongs, in all likelihood, to Amburgey who was 5th at the district level last year. The excellent freshmen, Tinnel, Madden, and Schreiner are also possibilities. The big issue is that Schaefer, LeJeune, Amburgey, Tinnel and Schreiner all compete in the same sectional. One will not even reach the district level, and the pairings could also be skewed at Waite.

Scaletta was 4th and 2nd the last two years in the Junior High state tourney, losing to Lipp (more on him soon) by one point in last year's final. As mentioned, he holds a decision over Schaefer and was a strong 4th at Brecksville. He has finalist potential. Keyes was injured at last year's sectional and could not compete at the district level. He would appear to be Scaletta's only real challenger at Elyria Catholic. The last two spots are wide open, with Mamaros (Beachwood) and Kertchan (Perry) other contenders beside the four other rated wrestlers at this district – Bill, Kemble, Gray, and Nagel.

The freshman, Tucker, stands out at Coshocton. He won handily at Barnesville the OVAC, and Bellaire St. John and should be the class of this field. Almost all of the rest of the top contenders here are from the Central District. Riley and Minner are both strong and have low place possibilities, though that is not a high probability event. A couple of dark horse contenders for state qualification are Wright (North Union) and Seidler (Monroe Central).

112

Projected Champion: COREY OPFER (SANDUSKY ST. MARY)

Top Contenders

- | | |
|----------------------------|------------------------|
| 2 Huffman (Hannibal River) | 15 Purdue (Genoa) |
| 3 Lipp (Beachwood) | 16 Harris (Brookville) |

4	Monsman (Chanel)	17	Bechtel (Delta)
5	McIntyre (River Valley)	18	Rufenacht (Archbold)
6	Emery (Harrison Central)	19	Wilson (Malvern)
7	Mosher (Mogadore)	20	Lint (Cuyahoga Hts.)
8	Cavalier (Newbury)	21	Troyan (Martins Ferry)
9	Robbe (Batavia)	22	Kill (Delphos St. John)
10	Blonairz (Tinora)	23	Grosswiller (Collins Western Reserve)
11	Ewing (Bloom Carroll)	24	Bey (Versailles)
12	Eckhardt (Carlisle)	25	Eicher (Tuslaw)
13	Morris (Cardinal)	26	Back (Waynesville)
14	Kagey (Newark Catholic)	27	Bowers (Dayton Christian)
		28	Weller (Lakota)

There are eleven returning state qualifiers competing at this weight class – all but one of them having migrated up from 103#. Despite all of that state experience I still see this as a battle between generations -- a couple of seniors – Monsman and McIntyre – versus the two freshman sensations Opfer and Lipp. That would seem to be the storyline, although two excellent OVAC wrestlers, Emery and Huffman, will also be top contenders. I've chosen the winner at this weight class for the last nine years, but making it a full decade of correct choices will be a very difficult task.

In my mind the battle of generations will, in the main, fall to the side of the freshman. Opfer, a state junior high champ, is an exceptional wrestler with far more strength than generally exhibited by one his age. Should he follow in the footsteps of his older brothers, Jared and Drew, at least two records could be broken. An Opfer victory would be the seventh year in a row one of the brothers would be a state champion tying the record of the Dernlan brothers who won titles in seven consecutive years from 1984-1990 (and eight of nine years). It would also begin to put in jeopardy the record eleven state titles won by the DiSabato brothers. That's because after Corey comes Troy, who may be the best one of them all.

However, an Opfer title will not come easily. As mentioned in the first paragraph, this is a field with many returning state placers and qualifiers. Opfer emerges from by far the easiest district. It would be surprising if any of the other three qualifiers – whoever they happen to be – place at Columbus. No one here has previous state experience, and so Opfer should enter the state meet as a district champion – almost always an advantage.

The Elyria Catholic District is loaded. State champion Monsman returns and has fashioned a solid year of accomplishment. He has been 2nd at Solon, Wadsworth, and Mayfield despite battling some nagging injuries. The sensational freshman Lipp has been as good as advertised. The very first week of the season he defeated state champion Monsman to win at Solon, and then won championships at Riverside and Kenston, too. A junior high state titlist he has wrestled some at 119# with equal success, such as a win over Division II state qualifier, Chad Kahn. Don't overlook state qualifiers Mosher and Cavalier. They finished 2nd and 3rd at Richmond Hts. (behind Emery), but looked very tough. Cavalier was 2nd at Waite, while Mosher was a solid 4th at the always strong Dies Tournament. There are solid backups should the pairings or an upset foil one of the top quartet.

It will also be a terrific battle at Coshocton. Defending district 112# champ Lucas Huffman returns with a 25-1 record (his only loss at 119#) and a raft of tournament titles including the giant OVAC championship. State qualifier Emery took the title over Mosher and Cavalier at Richmond Hts., won at Union Local, and was 3rd at the OVAC. Last year Monsman needed an escape in the 30-second period to edge Emery in the state quarter-finals. McIntyre, of course, was 4th in this district last year, but won three state battles (two of them very close) before losing to Monsman in the finals. He has been at 119# a good part of this year. State qualifier Ewing leads some impressive competitors in an effort to grab that fourth state ticket. It'll be a great competition at this weight class in Coshocton.

I'm not sure how good the Xenia boys will be. State qualifier Robbe is undefeated with three tourney titles, and I've ranked him first at this district. Last year Cavalier "bombed" him in the first round 12-2, and he then lost a heartbreaker, 8-6 in overtime, and was eliminated. Eckhardt, a state qualifier, would seem to be next best, but there are plenty of opportunities for change here.

119

Projected Champion: TANNER SHEARER (SANDUSKY ST. MARY)

Top Contenders

2	J. Tierney (Martins Ferry)	14	Taub (Beachwood)
3	Gambill (Miami East)	15	Herner (Monroeville)
4	Paparone (Chanel)	16	Navarra (Sandy Valley)
5	Wicklaine (Madison Plains)	17	Ross (West Salem Northwestern)
6	Hamed (Woodridge)	18	Glasser (Shadyside)
7	Cottone (Madeira)	19	Burrer (Keystone)
8	Rhodes (Versailles)	20	Palombo (St. Thomas Aquinas)
9	Chapa (Liberty Center)	21	Howard (Williamsburg)
10	Wyse (Grandview Hts.)	22	Steinmetz (Hopewell Loudon)
11	Franz (Waynesville)	23	Prendes (Wellsville)
12	Ford (Delta)	24	Buckingham (Mohawk)
13	J. Spencer (Newbury)	25	Resendez (Genoa)

Another weight class with double-digit returning state qualifiers and four returning state placers. Also a weight class with a number of compelling storylines. Gambill, now a junior, has come into the last two state meets with 5 or 6 losses, and then wrestled his way to the finals each time. Both times he lost, including last year's heart wrenching 3-2 double overtime defeat. I can recall only one other wrestler who was second his first two years and didn't win a state title, and that was Mike Parson (2-2-3-3) who was never again a finalist. Tierney is a two-time placer and one of the leaders of the always strong Martins Ferry team. He and his twin brother have dominated competition along the river and placed four times. Neither, however, has ever been a finalist. Cottone was 6th in Division I last year and is sensational with the legs, while Paparone, a Kenston transfer in 2000, is a returning placer and a key member of the heavily favored Chanel squad.

Despite all this my choice is the outstanding sophomore from Sandusky St. Mary, Tanner Shearer. A transfer from Clyde, Shearer has dominated Division III competition and is currently undefeated. He hammered Cottone the first week of the season, and has won at the Panther Invitational and the Boca Raton tourney in Florida. Twice a junior high state place-winner, he seems to have found the perfect niche at St. Mary's. He faces a very strong field with some outstanding competitors, but has the mental and physical strength to prevail.

Shearer emerges from a competitive district. State qualifier Chapa, who is 0-4 in state competition, had a terrible draw at Columbus last year – losing one point bouts to Gambill and defending state champ Tyler Scott. Ford, now down at 119# should thrive at this weight class, while Herner, Steinmetz, and state qualifier Buckingham are also in the picture. Factor in Resendez, Hale (Stryker), Cartee (Bucyrus), and Karnes/Suffel (Edgerton) and it could be a real donnybrook for that last qualifying spot. Overall, 119# is one of the most competitive weight classes and this district will send four wrestlers, all of whom will be tough first-round match-ups.

At Coshocton Tierney will face very strong competition for the top spot. Wickline, who considered going at 112# is very good. Last year he beat McIntyre at both the sectional and district level, but lost to him in the state semi-finals, eventually finishing at strong 3rd. He has again fashioned an exceptional record this year, and has

finalist potential. Two-time state qualifier Wyse has never won a state bout despite out-standing regular season records. He'll rectify that situation this year and has solid placement potential. This trio seems slightly above the rest of the field at Coshocton. Again, as we saw at Waite, there will be a real struggle for the last qualifying spot. In my mind Glasser and Navarra are the top two candidates. Last year Navarra upset Wyse on a tiebreaker, but then quickly lost twice while Wyse won four consolation bouts to reach Columbus. Glasser was a district semi-finalist last year, and has won at Shadyside this year. State qualifier Prendes, Pacifico (Bellaire St. John) and Byers (Johnstown Monroe) are other possibilities. The one to watch is Prendes who just moved down from 130#, and could be very strong once he adjusts to the weight.

As always, Gambill has lost some early season bouts – he was, for example, 4th at Graham, but we have all learned that he is very good in February and March. He has a very handy talent of winning close bouts – last year a one-pointer in the first round and overtime in the second – that deserted him only in the finals against Buzek. Cottone, a transfer from Moeller, is great on top, and if you cannot defend legs he will turn you at will. His bouts are often one-sided – he either wins by a lot or loses that same way. State placer Rhodes and state qualifier Franz make up the top quartet at Xenia and it's a powerful group. Almost never can we say at any weight class in Division III that the Southwest District is the deepest and strongest of the four. However, it's true here. Rhodes was a state semi-finalist last year finishing a strong 4th. Franz lost an overtime bout in the first round and then was quickly pinned by Tierney. Hopefully the district pairings will be good -- the top four come from two sectionals, but should upsets occur Howard, Clum (Spencerville), Mitchell (Dixie) and Spohn (Cincinnati Hills Christian) are long-shot thoughts.

Paparone, 5th last year, has wrestled a tough schedule, and is much improved this year, but this high quality field may make it tough for him to move up any higher on the awards podium. He was 2nd at North Canton and Solon, and 3rd at Wadsworth. Hamed was a back-up at CVCA last year, but has blossomed at Woodridge. He has won the titles at Richmond Hts. and Hillsdale in impressive fashion. Spencer is probably third best here and this trio is a bit ahead of everyone else. Look for Taub, Ross, Palombo and Burrer to battle for the last qualifying spot.

125 #

Projected Champion: JEFF JAGGERS (CHANEL)

Top Contenders

2	Caruso (Beachwood)	15	Davis (Fremont St. Joseph)
3	N. Spencer (Newbury)	16	Durst (Lakota)
4	Burroughs (Madeira)	17	Munroe (Collins Western Reserve)
5	Henry (Versailles)	18	Gliatta (Edison)
6	Maglio (Manchester)	19	Johnson (Girard)
7	Smith (Rootstown)	20	Isaacs (Tri-County North)
8	O'Brien (Gilmour)	21	Bernath (Keystone)
9	Anderson (Barnesville)	22	Borders (River Valley)
10	Moss (Delta)	23	Lill (Sandusky St. Mary)
11	Larew (Beallsville)	24	Frost (Bloom Carroll)
12	Jones (Martins Ferry)	25	Welker (Lincolnview)
13	Rollenhagen (Licking Hts.)	26	Beach (Deer Park)
14	Blonairz (Tinora)	27	Mulholland (Mohawk)

I first saw Jeff Jaggars as a seventh grader at the State Junior High School Tournament as he crushed four opponents on his way to the title. It did not take any special insight to realize that I was seeing a wrestling prodigy. He won again the next year in an even more dominating performance, and was wrestling the Chanel state placers even-up in the summer. Last year he was one of two freshmen to win a state title (Deubel was the

other) defeating the state placer Cavalier in the final. This year he won at Solon, North Canton and Wadsworth crushing nearly every opponent. His most impressive win was an 11-2 victory over the very tough Meissner, a wrestler who was 3rd at the Ironman losing only to Agozzino, 6-5, in two overtimes. Jagers could end up as Ohio's first six time state champion – a feat unlikely to be duplicated any time soon.

This is not a particularly strong weight class and Jagers, whose only close bout last year at Columbus was in the finals, may not have even that inconvenience this year. Jagers exits from by far the most powerful district. Six of the top eight wrestlers will compete at Elyria Catholic and only four will make it to Columbus, and there is good depth even behind this top sextet. My guess is that some of them (like Maglio) will migrate to the somewhat easier 130# class. As it currently stands Caruso looks next best at both the district and state level. He has been 2nd at Solon, Riverside, and Kenston, losing very close bouts at the latter two venues. However, Jagers whipped him 14-4 at Solon. Faist, a common opponent, defeated Caruso by two at Kenston, and lost 4-3 to Jagers (his only close bout) at North Canton. Spencer defeated O'Brien to win at Richmond Hts., and was an excellent 3rd at Medina, losing only to Division I pick Enright and beating Borders, Kremer, Holler, and Tierney. State qualifiers Maglio, Smith, and O'Brien are also here with the first named just down from 135#. O'Brien does not look as sharp this year, and that could well be the result of being Gilmour's only tough wrestler this year. Smith beat him at Doylestown as did Spencer at Richmond Hts. However, both bouts were close. This six all have placement talent, but again, only four can qualify. Johnson and Bernath could qualify out of any other district, while Shario (Garrettsville), Morris (West Salem Northwestern) and Snyder (Chippewa) have little chance.

There are three returning state qualifiers at Xenia with Burroughs the best of the bunch. He was one bout from placement last year, and should be on the awards stand Saturday evening this year. He was runner-up at Madeira's first appearance at the SWOCA and has made three previous trips to Columbus. With eight state bouts under his belt he is the most experienced wrestler here. His only mis-step was at GMVWA where he failed to place. Henry was 2nd at that tourney and he and Burroughs should be finalists at this district. State qualifiers Isaacs, Gates, Welker, and Beach are possibilities for the last two spots with Isaacs a favorite for one of them.

Both the districts at Waite and Coshocton looked somewhat overmatched here. State qualifier Anderson leads a somewhat suspect group at Coshocton whose qualifiers could struggle at the state level. At Waite there are no wrestlers with previous state experience. It looks like a journeyman crew with everyone at about the same level. That's not to say one of them might not sneak in to grab a low place, but that will depend a lot on bracket position and the fact that only four qualify out of Elyria Catholic. Upset-makers here are Lill and Munroe. The latter tripped up Anderson at Sheridan.

130

Projected Champion: DAVE TIERNEY (MARTINS FERRY)

Top Contenders

2	Kuykendall (Madeira)	15	Gandert (River Valley)
3	Smilek (CVCA)	16	Meyers (Cuyahoga Hts.)
4	Elwood (New Albany)	17	Steiner (Chippewa)
5	Young (Sandusky St. Mary)	18	Irwin (Delta)
6	Smith(Versailles)	19	Hicks (Chanel)
7	Ollom (Lakota)	20	Lucas (Barnesville)
8	Bodey(West Liberty Salem)	21	Cocherel (Pleasant)
9	Tomor (Elmwood)	22	Spellman (Berlin Western Reserve)
10	Lutz (Triad)	23	Shaver (Waynesville)
11	Cook (Mohawk)	24	Stuckey (Archbald)

- | | | | |
|----|--------------------------|----|--------------------------|
| 12 | Weyer (Bluften) | 25 | Wilhelm (Mechanicsburg) |
| 13 | Blaine (Newark Catholic) | 26 | J. Bugner (St. Wendelin) |
| 14 | Peltz (Beachwood) | 27 | Vasiloff (Avon) |

This is a weight class that hasn't quite snapped into focus yet. It's a little fuzzy and some of the important details are still obscured. With Elwood now apparently competing at 130# it looks like there are a quintet of potential contenders. Unfortunately, they have not met so far this year and, in fact, only Elwood met Tierney and Kuykendall last year. I've made a half dozen lists and the only one of the fivesome who hasn't been first at one time or another is Kuykendall – meaning that might be who to put your money on. Since each district is represented here we'll take a closer look at each of the top contenders in that context.

The only district with two of my top quintet is at Coshocton. Tierney, my choice, is a three-time state qualifier who was 3rd the last two years, losing to the eventual champ (Lester and Blunk) both times. A dominant figure in his locale, he (and his brother) have had great four year careers. A very tough, tenacious wrestler he gives every opponent a strikingly difficult battle. Even the four-time champ Lester beat him by only an 8-4 margin. Elwood, on the other hand, is a much flashier competitor who can score points by the bushel basket. He was 6th last year including an exciting 10-9 win over Neilson to place. This year he is undefeated, but did not compete at Richmond Hts. He lost to Tierney in overtime last year and to Kuykendall in the consolation semi-finals at States. Blaine is the defending district champion at the weight class, but I see him half a step behind my top duo. He'll have to spring at least one upset to place. After that it's wide open with Gandert, Lucas, and Cocherel all capable of wrestling well at Columbus -- if they can get there.

Smilek is up two weight classes for the second consecutive year. He was 3rd at 103# as a freshman, and 6th last year after losing a semi-final bout to Jaggars at 119#. This year he has wrestled at both the Ironman and Medina – both times in terribly difficult weight classes. He was 6th at the Ironman, losing to three state champions, and failed to place at Medina, losing to Constantino and Martin. Since then he triumphed at the Top Gun in impressive fashion. This should make him more than ready for the competition here, and he has finalist possibilities. Remember his brother pulled a huge upset to win a state title last year, and Matt would need nothing of that magnitude to win here. The rest of this district is not as strong, and that's why I anticipate some of the excess 125's moving in this direction. State qualifier Peltz, Meyers, and Smithville MVP Steiner are perhaps in line for qualification. Don't overlook Hicks since Chanel wrestlers have made it a practice to come on strong at year's end and surprise more highly rated competitors.

Young, a transfer from Oak Harbor, has looked very sharp at 130#, and I may be under-rating him here. He is undefeated with wins at the Panther Classic, Northwest Duals, and Boca Raton tournaments. He faces a crowded district, but one that he appears to be several points ahead of anyone else. State qualifier and district champion Cook has had an up-and-down year and could face pressure to qualify once again. Ollom and Tomor have had big years and may have moved ahead of him. Irwin, Stuckey, Bugner, Grigson (Northwood) and Slachta (Swanton) all could be factors here.

Three-time qualifier Kuykendall heads an excellent Xenia District. He has shown steady improvement at Columbus from “two and out” as a freshman to two wins as a sophomore to a 4th place finish last year. Tierney beat him 6-0 in the consolation finals last year, and that's a lot of points to make up on a good wrestler. He was 2nd at the SWOCA, 1st at the GMVWA, and undefeated at the Northwest Duals, so he's ready. State qualifier Bodey beat Ollom earlier in the year and he along with state qualifier Smith could capture a low to middle place. State qualifiers Lutz and Weyer are also at this district, and somebody is going to be disappointed if things stay as they are. Weyer, one of the main cogs in a revitalized Bluften team, could be on the bubble here.

Top Contenders

2	Seta (Reading)	15	B. Gliatta (Edison)
3	Ralph (Chanel)	16	Stoney (Northmor)
4	Wiles (Perry)	17	Stapleton (Carlisle)
5	Bennington (Newcomerstown)	18	Burkholder (Archbold)
6	Pfeiffer (Bucyrus)	19	Olney (Mapleton)
7	Nutbrown (River Valley)	20	Hamilton (Clear Fork)
8	Rhoades (Versailles)	21	Jahnz (Lima Central Catholic)
9	Long (Grandview Hts.)	22	Rammel (Spencerville)
10	Smith (Chippewa)	23	Yearly (Williamsburg)
11	Eicher (Tuslaw)	24	Ferguson (Monroe Central)
12	Lewis (Crestview)	25	Autullo (Fremont St. Joseph)
13	Majer (Richmond Hts.)	26	Smith (Martins Ferry)
14	Coopman (Wauseon)	27	Hunt (Cardinal)

As an eighth grader Blunk did not place in the Junior High State Tournament, but in less than a year he was suddenly a state finalist. Wrestling for CVCA last year he hit my radar screen with a strong performance at Medina where he lost two close bouts to eventual Division I state runner-up T. J. Enright. At the district level he had three technical falls and a 5-1 win over Ralph. He then scored a minimum of 13 points in his first three state wins before getting caught by three-time state champ Drew Opfer and pinned in the first period. It was a most remarkable run, and it didn't hurt that he had Lester and the two Smileks as workout partners. This year he is at Streetsboro, but has maintained that momentum. He has won this year at Aurora, Chippewa, and Hudson; and becomes a solid favorite at this weight class.

Blunk is a scoring machine who likes an up-tempo, aggressive opponent. At Elyria Catholic, only state placer Ralph would seem to have the talent and experience to keep things close. In a high-scoring bout Blunk cannot be defeated in Division III, but in a one move match – who knows? Ralph was 5th last year beating Elwood twice and losing two overtime bouts to Tierney and Kuykendall. The latter was a 30 second tiebreaker with Tierney barely hanging on. Had Ralph escaped, Chanel would very likely have won the team title. Wiles, coming down from Division II, was a district semi-finalist last year, and that momentum has carried into this year. He finished 4th at Wadsworth, and has done well in the countless duals that Perry wrestles. The last spot is certainly wide open. Besides those listed I like Kostel (Cuyahoga Hts.), Hamann (Columbia Station) and McFarland (Brookside). Also watch out for the freshman Bernon (Beachwood) and the far more experienced Windom (Waynedale).

Blunk's chief rival will be the excellent Chris Seta. He was 3rd last year, losing only to Lester--and this year beat the top notch Wolery in overtime to win the SWOCA. Undeclared this year, he'll be away from Blunk at States and, if he can get by Ralph, that should be the match-up for the title. The rest of the district is relatively weak, and Seta may well be the only rival will be the excellent Chris Seta. He was 3rd last year, losing only to Lester – and this year placer out of this area. Other possible qualifiers besides those listed above are J. Knopp (Miami East) – one of the three on the team – and Beach (Dixie).

State qualifier Bennington leads a relatively weak Coshocton District. Something of a surprise qualifier last year (I had him ranked 24th), he won a consolation bout at States and should do much better than that this year. Nutbrown is rated the best in the Columbus area, but he was only 4th at Clyde, although both Blackburn and Spurlock were at that weight. After that it's pretty much a grab-bag weight class, although we may see either Cocherel or Elwood move back here from 130#.

The Waite district is also relatively weak with few wrestlers appearing to have place-winning credentials. Pfeiffer pinned in the Gorman finals, but Lewis took him into overtime in the afternoon round. Coopman, a

transfer from Archbold, has done well in his new environs and should qualify. Dark horse candidates here are Link (Sandusky St. Mary) and Perkins (Gibsonburg)

140

Projected Champion: ADAM LOHMAN (DELTA)

Top Contenders

2	Vogel (Grandview Hts.)	14	Taylor (Loudonville)
3	Young (Archbold)	15	Sammons (CVCA)
4	Walker (Utica)	16	Reynolds (Carlisle)
5	Whelan (Sandusky St. Mary)	17	Gratz (Bluffton)
6	Malott (Margaretta)	18	Zrinyi (Steubenville CC)
7	Irwin (Shadyside)	19	Donelson (Mohawk)
8	Wright (Chanel)	20	Case (Bellaire St. John)
9	McCreary (Newbury)	21	Loreaux (Summit Country Day)
10	Emery (Crestview)	22	Fryman (West Salem Northwestern)
11	R. Bergman (Versailles)	23	Springer (Licking Hts.)
12	Sarosy (Perry)	24	T. Mack (Allen East)
13	Peddicord (Barnesville)	25	Hill (Liberty Center)
		26	Gable (Delphos St. John)

Despite an enormous amount of time and energy spent analyzing and reanalyzing this weight class, I feel no closer to understanding its final resolution than I did six weeks ago. Part of the problem is that the top group has very similar credentials – state qualifiers, either a low state place or nearly one, and this year, titles at smaller tourneys and solid placements at larger ones. Clearly, this is a more difficult problem to untangle than most because they all seem to fall into the same category.

My choice is the fast-improving Delta middleweight, Adam Lohman. A state quarter-finalist last year, he missed placement by one bout. This year he has won at Waite and Perrysburg and was a strong 4th at Brecksville, losing to Randazzo (by a point) and splitting two tough bouts with the excellent Lovell. This should be a competition replete with close bouts and Lohman (or whoever wins) will have to be able to win a lot of them.

Lohman exits a very solid district. Young, like Lohman, was one bout from state placement last year, and that was a bout he was forced to default. He has been at 140# all year (at least by my records), but did certify at 135#. Still, I believe he'll stay at 140#. After all, his odds of winning here are substantially greater than at 135# where Blunk is very dominating. He certainly will be away from Lohman at Columbus and, perhaps, from Vogel, as well. Malott was 5th last year, and has won at Richmond Hts. and Edison this year. The sophomore Joseph Whelan also was a state qualifier, but drew Mike Hurley in the first round, and eventually, went "two and out." That's a formidable quartet, and that means Emery, Donelson or the freshman Hill, will have to spring a major upset to qualify. Also watch for Hofelich (Genoa) and McGaharin (Northwood).

State placer Vogel has had a big junior year. Rated #1 in the Columbus area, he was a semi-finalist at Medina and was impressive. It's easy to overlook Walker who wrestles pretty much a transparent schedule for me, but he is very good. You see his name pop up at some out-of-the-way tourneys, but it always pops up as champion. He lost by just two points to Lohman in the first round at Columbus last year, and must be factored into any state placement analysis. Two years ago Irwin was a state junior high champion and last year was an immediate state qualifier as a freshman. He was the champ at Shadyside and 3rd at St. Clairsville, losing only to an out-of-state star. This is a strong trio, but Peddicord, Zrinyi, and Case makeup a second threesome who will challenge for the last state berth. Also in the mix are Springer, Woodby (Monroe Central), and Youngen (Garaway).

The districts at Elyria Catholic and Xenia are not nearly as strong. Nobody from either district rates in my top seven, and state placement will not be easy. Wright could be an important factor in Chanel's charge toward a team title, while Sarosy or Sammons could have upset potential. Further south, state qualifier Bergman highlights a very weak overall field. Loreaux certified at 135#, but again I think we will find him at this weight class.

145

Projected Champion: MARCUS GORDON (MAPLETON)

Top Contenders

2	Hardy (Grandview Hts.)	16	Hoffman (Cardinal)
3	Dotson (Liberty Ct.)	17	Schlessman(Edison)
4	Jr. Moss (Delta)	18	Muldrow (Summit Country Day)
5	Wilson(Monroe Central)	19	Keiser(Cincinnati Country Day)
6	Samsa(Shadyside))	20	Bogden(Huron)
7	Holztrager (Keystone)	21	Subler(Versailles)
8	Bethel (Toledo Christian)	22	S. Mack(Tinora)
9	Frankart (St. Wendelin)	23	Smith(Sandusky St.Mary)
10	Hasty (Carlisle)	24	Hoover (Shenendoah)
11	Bahmer (Barnesville)	25	B.Mages(Reading)
12	Burton (Chippewa)	26	Ross (New Albany)
13	Showalter (Mechanicsburg)	27	T. Rollenhagen (Licking Hts.)
14	Aquista (Streetsboro)	28	Rutledge (Madeira)
15	Bryant (Clinton Massie)	29	Pool(Smithville)

In a way it's kind of a shame that Akron St. Vincent had one or two extra male students to push them into the Division II category. After all what a great match-up we would have had at 145# with state champions Ryan Hurley and Marcus Gordon squaring off. As it is Gordon will be an overwhelming choice to defend his title at this weight class and cap off a marvelous four year career. Gordon was 6th as a freshman losing a 6-4 bout to Scott Roth in the quarter-finals. Then as a sophomore he had three one-sided wins before Roth defeated him in overtime for the title. Last year we anticipated a two-man battle between the superb Parsons and Gordon for the championship. They split their sectional and district bouts, but Parson was upset by Minner in the quarter-finals and Gordon cruised to the title. Parson then placed in the National High School Championship. This year the stocky Gordon should win handily – only an illegal slam would seem to be a roadblock. Signed with Eastern Michigan, he has already won four tournaments this year, and should end up an undefeated champ.

After Gordon the Elyria Catholic district is relatively weak. Holztrager was a district semi-finalist at this class last year before losing to Parsons and then being nipped by Kirtley in his go-to-the-state bout, 8-6. The next week Kirtley ended up in the state finals with Gordon. This year Holztrager has won several smaller tourneys and was 2nd to the excellent Hogan at Avon Lake. Burton and Aquista are, perhaps, slight favorites for the last two spots, but Hoffman, just down from 152#, could grab one of those spots. Pool is another possibility. Fearon (Kirtland) and Hodina (Wickliffe) are likely to be left behind. Also, watch for Moten (Woodridge) who apparently will compete at 140#.

One of the most improved wrestlers I've seen this year is Pat Hardy. A first round district loser last year, he has had an excellent junior season. He won at Hamilton Twp. and was a strong 3rd at Medina, pinning state placer Dotson and decisioning state qualifiers Adkins and Shriner. Both Samsa and Wilson also have placement potential, and there are some interesting parallels. Both were state junior high champs – at the same weight class in successive years – and both wrestle that tough river style. Wilson, a district finalist last year, won one state bout before losing the next two. Wilson was 1st at Barnesville and 2nd at Richmond Hts. (losing to Gordon

13-7) and Shadyside (losing to Samsa, 3-2). He then won the title at the OVAC while Samsa gained but a low place. Bahmer is my fourth choice after a solid season with placement at every tourney entered. He beat Hardy last year, but lost to Monroe at Barnesville. Other strong possibilities here are Hoover, Rollenhagen, Ross, Bender (Caldwell), and DiGiandomenico (Bellaire St. John). They'll need to be at the top of their game to qualify.

State placer Dotson and Perrysburg champ Moss look to lead the district at Waite, but they face stiff competition. Dotson won titles by falls at Hudson and the "A" Classic, but was 6th at Medina. Moss missed part of the season, but was sharp at Perrysburg, finishing ahead of Mack. State qualifier Bethel also returns after winning a state bout last year and losing another one on tiebreaker. He has a good shot at a low place. My view is that this entire district is very closely matched with Frankart, Schlessman, Bogden, Smith, Mack, and Perkins (Arcadia) about the same level. The close matching should engender stiff competition from the quarter-finals on at Waite.

The Xenia District should pose little threat at Columbus. State qualifier Hasty, Showalter, Bryant and Muldrow are the most likely qualifiers, but all of them will have difficulty at the state level. The one potential exception might be Showalter who may have improved beyond where I rated him. Now with the redoubtable Smith as a workout partner he provides Mechanicsburg with a real "one-two" punch at the middle weights.

152

Projected Champion: MICHAEL LINSKER (BEACHWOOD)

Top Contenders

2 Smith (Mechanicsburg)	16 Foote (Cuyahoga Hts.)
3 McGuire(River Valley)	17 Sutter (Grandview Hts.)
4 Hill(Tuslaw)	18 Burkhardt (Shadyside)
5 Madden (Delta)	19 Dobereiner (Waterford)
6 Roth (Martins Ferry)	20 Baker (Harrison Central)
7 Schultz (Brookville)	21 Jefferis (Barnesville)
8 Merillat (Tinora)	22 Lichty(Ayersville)
9 McNeal (Dixie)	23 C. Thobaden (Clinton-Massie)
10 DeCooman (VanBuren)	24 Park (Crestview)
11 Sarver (Woodmore)	25 Baum (Sandusky St. Mary)
12 Ross (Warren JFK)	26 Goble (Wellington)
13 Knoop (Miami East)	27 Shonkwiler (Westfall)
14 Gracia (Archbold)	28 Adkins (Woodridge)
15 Tacosik (Union Local)	29 Amor(Genoa)

Like Marcus Gordon in the previous weight class, Michael Linsker is looking to become a four-time state place-winner, and, in an odd coincidence, they both have a first, second, and sixth place medal, although in a different order. Linsker was 6th in his freshman year at 119#, and then moved to 130# as a sophomore. A district loss to Mike Hurley that year put him in a difficult bracket position, but he, nonetheless, reached the finals. Trailing badly he caught Hurley late in the third period and pinned him – one of the most stunning turnarounds in my 35 years of telecasting. Last year he and Ryan Hurley were a quantum step above the rest of the field at 140#. Hurley won their district final in overtime, and when they met again in the state finals the team title was also up for grabs. Hurley needed to win a decision to move Akron St. Vincent into a tie with Chanel. Linsker, looking for revenge, was injured in an early flurry, but continued to wrestle. Hurley then won a 19-2 technical fall after which it was found that Linsker had suffered a concussion. The bonus points as it turned out won the state title

for Akron St. Vincent. This year Linsker has again moved up two weight classes (as he has every year ala Joey Pflug). He is a relatively small 152-pounder and that has been complicated by a series of nagging injuries. He has remained undefeated, but it has been close several times. At Kenston he beat Berquist 8-7 in the semi-finals and then came from way behind to nip Gadson 11-8 in the finals. He may well struggle against the big 152's.

One of Linsker's toughest opponents might well come from his own district. Hill, a transfer from Manchester, has shown rapid improvement this year. He won handily at Richmond Hts. and Chippewa, and has good size in this, his second year at this weight. Ross is probably next best, but there is a big gap – maybe, chasm – between the top duo and the rest of this district. Foote, Goble, and Adkins are also in the hunt for one of the last two state berths. Other possibilities are Ross (West Salem Northwestern), Santa (Chanel), Comer (Ledgemont), and the fine freshman Schnittger (Lutheran West).

Smith is also a transfer having moved from Urbana to Mechanicsburg, and he has been sensational. Undefeated, he was one of the few non-Graham wrestlers to win at St. Paris, and has followed that up with a consistent string of victories. Last year he was a Division II district champ, but won only one state bout. He'll win more than that this year. State qualifier Schultz and the excellent McNeal make this one of the toughest districts at this weight class. Schultz won two state bouts last year and missed placement by one win. McNeal, very good on his feet, could also place while Knoop, Dobereiner, Shonkwiler, and Thobaden will fight for the last spot.

McGuire is a big, bulky 152-pounder with solid skills. A state qualifier last year, he looked good at Medina, finishing 4th and losing only to Division I stars, Kuhner and Scarl. His compact body physique makes him tough to wrestle, and he could give the top-rated group lots of trouble. State qualifier Roth is also good and like Linsker is up two weight classes. He won at Bellaire St. John and Barnesville at 160#, and will not come in as a "small" 152-pounder. The rest of this district is, perhaps, a step behind the top twosome. Tacosik was 2nd at Barnesville and 1st at Steubenville, while Burkhardt, Baker, and Jefferis are at about the same level. Sutter, Baldridge (Northmor), and Fisher (Liberty Union) are next best out of Columbus after McGuire, and have an outside chance at qualification.

The Northwest District is really interesting. Madden is another of those excellent Delta middleweights. He was a state qualifier last year, but drew Ryan Hurley in the first round and couldn't recover in time for the consolation round. He was 2nd at Perrysburg, losing only to Division II state runner-up Maxworthy– but did not compete at Brecksville. Merillat had 39 victories as a sophomore at this weight class, but missed out on state qualification. DeCooman too, just missed a trip to Columbus and he has been the linchpin for a vastly improved VanBuren team. He defeated state qualifier Sarver to win the "A" Classic, and both of them will be formidable obstacles at the district level. But there are four more excellent 152's right behind them. Gracia, in particular, has just dropped from 160# and will be a "load" at this class. Also in this second quartet are Amor, Park, and the freshman, Baum. Anyone of them could win a ticket to Columbus. That does not exhaust the depth at this district. Bonnell (Toledo Christian), Resendez (Genoa), Racheter (Lakota), and Glamm (North Baltimore) could all be factors here. It should be great fun at this district.

160

Projected Champion: A. J. AESCHLIMANN (TUSLAW)

Top Contenders

- | | | | |
|---|---------------------------|----|---------------------|
| 2 | Jacobs (Lakota) | 15 | Bedford (Woodmore) |
| 3 | Gilkey (Perry) | 16 | Bond (Ontario) |
| 4 | Cataline (Grandview Hts.) | 17 | Whitt (Reading) |
| 5 | Roppel (Chanel) | 18 | Jenison (Woodridge) |
| 6 | Petrella (Bishop Hartley) | 19 | Blunk (Streetsboro) |

7	Roman (West Salem Northwestern)	20	K. Bergman (Versailles)
8	Dimmerling (Monroe Central)	21	Pattison (Madeira)
9	Dye (Sandusky St. Mary)	22	Hickey (Elyria Catholic)
10	Sefsick (Harrison Central)	23	Weiss (Beachwood)
11	Barker (Barnesville)	24	Carpenter (Amanda Clearcreek)
12	Skates (Delta)	25	Crosley (Blanchester)
13	R. Mack (Tinora)	26	Ross (Seneca East)
14	Jewett (Dixie)	27	Weiss (Clinton Massie)
		28	Nolan (Coshocton)

I like big innings, long touchdown plays, three point baskets, and pins; and I dislike pitchers' battles, field goals, and 2-1 bouts with three stalling calls. Unfortunately defense is easier to teach and execute, and so most sports struggle with an appropriate balance between offense and defense. Certainly wrestling is in the forefront of that struggle – and at the upper levels is losing the fight. Even at the high school level there are far too many who wrestle “not to lose” rather than go all out for victory. One of the reasons I like A. J. Aeschlimann is that he is a scorer and a pinner. He had four falls in winning at both Richmond Hts. and Northwest and had two at last year's state meet where he finished 5th. Now the big junior stands poised to win his first state title in a weight class that is virtually bereft of talent. At least in my mind this is the weakest of the 42 weight classes, and could provide unbelievable opportunity for marginal 152's and small 171's to place.

Jacobs has moved down from the 171-pound class he wrestled at last year, and it's been a rousing success. As I write this he is 31-0 with three tournament victories to his credit. He's been a dominating performer, and at this weight class he has finalist potential. Bond missed state qualification by one bout last year, and one of his advantages is having Ohl as a workout partner. However, this is such a wide open weight class I'm not sure that's enough to keep him ahead of the outstanding freshman Dye. Also lurking are Skates and Mack both with possible state qualification available at this weight class. Ross is also good, while Bedford (Woodmore) and Shlack (Carey) cannot be overlooked. An intriguing possibility is Poupard (Toledo Christian) who was 2nd at the big Rogers tourney.

One of the best districts in this not so strong weight class is at Elyria Catholic. Aeschlimann is, of course, the point person at this location, but Gilkey is very good. Injured right before sectionals he finished the season on a very low note despite an excellent regular season record. He, again, missed much of the early season action, but has now rounded into form. His big win was a 12-11 victory over the excellent Savel in a dual meet. A big test will be his performance at the Mary Kerr tourney. Roppel and Roman are also top-notch performers who both have placement potential. As presently constituted it would not surprise me if all four qualifiers from this district were to place. Roppel could be a critical factor in Chanel's team chances – as, in fact, it turned out that he was last year. Blunk, Hickey, Weiss, and Jenison would all have reasonable chances at qualification at any other district besides this one.

There are a lot of potential state qualifiers at Coshocton, and it will be interesting to see how they sort themselves out. Cataline and Petrella, out of the Central District, look to be strongest, but I am not yet totally convinced. They have not been in the cauldron of activity that may well have toughened up the competitors along the river. I like the free-wheeling Dimmerling, but Barker, Sefsick and Kemp are all at about that same level. Two wrestlers not on the opening grid who, perhaps, should be rated higher are Lewis (Pleasant) and Irwin (Malvern). Missing here is state qualifier Lawson (Malvern), who decided not to compete this year. Only a junior this year, he is the defending district champ at this weight class.

In a flashback to a few years ago the Xenia district is not very strong. State qualifier Whitt returns, but he struggled at Columbus last year wrestling less than three minutes in his two bouts. You'll want to be in the district that draws Xenia for first round action.

Projected Champion: C.B. DOLLAWAY (NORTHMOR)

Top Contenders

2	Ohl (Ontario)	15	Eilerman (Versailles)
3	Cloran (Madeira)	16	McGrain (Elmwood)
4	Knapp (West Salem Northwestern)	17	Arnette (Wellsville)
5	Unger (Perry)	18	Powers (Lakota)
6	Spitznogle (Harrison Central)	19	Yates (Wellington)
7	Terry (Chanel)	20	Schumacher (Monroe Central)
8	Picazo (Grandview Hts.)	21	Weinandy (Bucyrus)
9	Hepe (Bellaire St. John)	22	Day (Clinton Massie)
10	Zavala (Archbold)	23	Hood (Columbia Station)
11	Stephan (Covington)	24	Studer (Mohawk)
12	Bowers (Tinora)	25	Holt (Martins Ferry)
13	Martin (Bluffton)	26	Burrer (Oberlin)
14	Pinks (Allen East)	27	Wright (Tri-County North)
		28	Waldron (Ayersville)

This is a solid weight class with lots of good talent, but the highlight will be another chapter in the struggle between two superior contenders. Dollaway is a three time state qualifier who was 5th as a sophomore and 2nd to two-time champ Smolk last year. Overall I have him at 157-12, and 74-2 the last two seasons – his only loss as a junior to Smolk and an overtime loss to Ohl this year. Ohl, only a junior, is a two-time state qualifier who was 3rd last year – losing twice to Dollaway in the Gorman finals and the state semi-finals. These boys wrestle high intensity bouts that have all been decided by narrow margins. As district champs they'll be on opposite sides of the bracket so their fourth and most critical contest will be for a state title. That's if folks like Terry, Spitznogle, and Cloran are not overlooked on the way to the finals.

My choice, and I've agonized over it, is Dollaway. It would be Northmor's first ever state title and would also provide Mike Skelton with a well-deserved individual titlist. Generally, wrestlers who have met a number of times tend to wrestle low scoring bouts, but their last struggle went 9-7. I do think Dollaway might be ever so slightly better on his feet, but it's a hunch more than anything else for this pick. It should be one of the most compelling six minutes of the final round.

Dollaway has some solid competition at Coshocton. Spitznogle, Picazo, and Hepe all have upset and placement potential. Spitznogle missed state action by one bout last year at 160#. This year he was an impressive winner at Richmond Hts., and has met every dual meet challenge. Picazo, a state qualifier at 152# last year, is rated right behind Dollaway in the Central District. Hepe won at Bellaire St. John and was 2nd at Barnesville. He lost a narrow 5-4 decision to Spitznogle in their dual. Schumacher has oscillated between 152# and 171#, but certified at 160#. He'll be here since Dimmerling is at 160#. He'll be a small but active 171-pounder. Holt has been a mystery this year. After qualifying for state competition at 189# last year, he has moved down to 171# and looked quite ordinary. Besides those listed, Grinch (Shadyside), Perry (Northridge), and Antonik (Bellaire) could factor into the final resolution at this class. Holt has been a mystery

Ohl will not face quite as tough a district field. He is well ahead of Zavala, Bowers, and McGrain – the next three at Waite. Again, it's a crowded field, but all the action will revolve on places two through four. Only Ohl has previous state experience. A person to watch is Zavala who was at 189# last year and won three district bouts to fall just short of state qualification.

There are three potential place winners at Elyria Catholic. Knapp pinned Yates to win at Black River and lost a narrow one-point decision to Cloran at the Northwest Duals. He has substantial district experience. Unger, like Knapp, won two district bouts last year although he did it in Division II. He was 4th at the Midwest Classic and

finished 1st at the Mary Kerr tourney. Terry was a state qualifier two years ago as a sophomore. Last year he made a valiant effort to get to Columbus, but was forced to default out of the district because of injury. It was a piece of terrible luck for Chanel. This year he has just not been as sharp as anticipated. They'll need him to be in top form at the district and state level.

It's also a crowded field at Xenia. State qualifiers Cloran, Martin, Pinks, Stephens, and Eilerman are currently all at 171#, leaving little room for other challengers. With such an array of state-experienced contenders it would not surprise me if Eilerman moved back to 189#. As it currently stands the pairings could be critical for this very closely matched field. Those who make it to Columbus will have earned the trip.

189

Projected Champion: CHAD SOWERS (MOHAWK)

Top Contenders

2	Barker (Crestview)	15	Brennan (Waynesville)
3	Barte (Grandview Hts.)	16	Spangler (Delta)
4	Sater (Perry)	17	Rufenacht (Archbold)
5	Cumming (Madeira)	18	Mielke (Margaretta)
6	Wasiniak (Norwalk St. Paul)	19	Groff (Wellsville)
7	Garber (Woodmore)	20	Blackwell (Beachwood)
8	Austin (Hawken)	21	Urso (Cardinal)
9	Reichard (New Albany)	22	Hepburn (Shadyside)
10	Locklear (Oberlin)	23	Undercoffer (Chippewa)
11	Wiseman (Tinora)	24	Bittner (Cincinnati Hill Christian)
12	N. Thobaden (Clinton Massie)	25	Layman (Spencerville)
13	Lee (Tusky Valley)	26	Poulos (Wickliffe)
14	Smith (Columbus Academy)	27	Goff (Oakwood)
		28	Sigler (Ayresville)

As the chart introducing the 112# weight class in Division I showed, the Elyria Catholic District was by far the most successful of the twelve districts. Part of that was due to their phenomenal success in the last two rounds where they were 19-4.

CHAMPIONSHIP BRACKET*

<u>1st Round</u>	<u>Quarter-Finals</u>		<u>Semi-Finals</u>		<u>Finals</u>
Elyria Catholic	40-16	21-19	14-3	5-1	
Waite	27-29	15-12	3-10	1-3	
Marion	28-28	12-16	4-6	1-4	
Xenia	17-39	8-9	3-5	2-1	

*Does not include bouts between boys from the same districts.

That type of success is unlikely to be duplicated with Akron St. Vincent moving to Division II, and CVCA depleted by injuries and transfers.

That kind of parity is apparent here at 189#. Top contenders come from each of the districts in a weight class that could be classified as a bit above average at best. The top quintet is reasonably good, but there also is some depth here. There could be some real surprise wrestlers capturing low places at this weight.

My top choice is the big junior from Mohawk, Chad Sowers. Last year he romped through the first two rounds at Columbus, but then lost to defending state champ D. J. Grewell in the semi-finals and finished 3rd. This year he has remained at 189# and has lost only to the Kentucky state champ in the GMVWA final. One thing I like about Sowers is his desire to wrestle the best. At the Northwest Duals he jumped up to 215# (despite weighing in at 189#) to wrestle Stookey. Very good on his feet he'll need to be at his best to overcome some stiff competition.

One of his biggest challenges will be at the Waite District. Barker won 55 bouts last year and captured a 5th place medal at Columbus. Like Sowers, he too, lost to Grewell – this time in the quarter-finals. At the district level he lost to the excellent state runner-up Nagel by a narrow 3-2 score. He and Sowers met in last year's sectional final with Barker losing 6-4. He has missed most of the early season, but should be fresh and ready to go by tournament time. Wasiniak will also play a role at this district. He won at Edison and Ready and was runner-up at Bellevue. There is good depth here. Garber, Wiseman, Spangler, and Rufenacht all have good dossiers, and are capable of winning at the state level, if they can get there. The stocky Mielke may be underrated where I've placed him. He took Reichard into overtime before losing and ending up 3rd at Richmond Hts. Garber, in particular, will challenge everyone but Sowers here. He won over Rufenacht at the "A" Classic. One to watch for the future is the freshman Van Sickle (Liberty Center) – the state junior high heavyweight champ last year, who is not quite ready for this level of competition.

Barte is right there with Sowers, Barker and Sater. A state qualifier last year he drew district titlist Cummings in the first round and won a 2-0 squeaker. He then lost to Sowers (and after a consolation win) to Barker, as well. This year he was a semi-finalist at Medina, finishing 4th, and has won several smaller tourneys. The gangly sophomore Reichard has shown great improvement including wins at Richmond Hts. and Grove City. Lee continues to be a force south of Canton, winning several smaller tournaments with Groff as one of his chief rivals. Add in Smith, Hepburn, Shroyer (Hartley), and Joseph (Licking Hts.) and it promises to be a real battle here. As previously mentioned, Dustin Holt (Martins Ferry) was a state qualifier at this class last year, but has campaigned at 171# recently. He may still end up competing here.

Sater should be the dominant figure at the Elyria Catholic District. The champion at the prestigious Midwest Classic, he could well win the title on a hot weekend. I think he's right on the edge of being really good, although his scores at the Mary Kerr were not as good as anticipated. Austin lost in overtime in his go-to-the-state bout at 215# last year, and the winner of that bout (Zaranec) went on to finish as state runner-up. So he was very, very close to being on the awards podium last year. This year he has moved to 189# and has not been quite as dominating as anticipated. However, super scout, Brandon Hale reports that Austin will be prepared for the big push at tourney time. Locklear can upset anyone in this field. Sometimes he gives points away like they are pennies, but he can score in huge bunches, too. Watch out for him. After that it's totally wide open with those listed plus DeWeese (Berkshire), Johnson (Kirtland), Veverka (Black River), Turnbull(CVCA) and Smetts (Waterloo) in the picture. A dark horse here might be Neelon (Chanel).

State qualifier Cummings heads a representative field at Xenia. He lost two close bouts at state last year. He was at 215# early in the year, but will compete at this class. Thobaden lost a 11-9 go-to-state bout last year, and is undefeated this year. Clinton Massie, a school whose schedule and results are totally invisible to me, has developed an excellent set of upper weight wrestlers. Care needs to be taken with all of them.

215

Projected Champion: MATT STOOKEY (SANDUSKY ST. MARY)

Top Contenders

- | | | | |
|---|------------------|----|-------------------------|
| 2 | Nagel (Delta) | 16 | Wend/Roberts (Woodmore) |
| 3 | Zaranec (Chanel) | 17 | Song (Coshocton) |

4	C. Spencer (Newbury)	18	Long (Hicksville)
5	Wilson (Reading)	19	Merricle (Spencerville)
6	Poweski (Warren JFK)	20	Perigo (Madison Plains)
7	Kegelmeyer (Columbus Academy)	21	Gray (Black River)
8	Wellert (West Salem Northwestern)	22	Gray (Hawken)
9	Lahna (Ridgewood)	23	Brewer (Carlisle)
10	Johns (Versailles)	24	Phile (Cardinal)
11	Frische (Margaretta)	25	Stoecker (Bloom Carroll)
12	DeBellis (Sandy Valley)	26	Matteo (Richmond Hts.)
13	Monroe (Waynesville)	27	Wright (Bishop Ready)
14	Andrews (Grandview Hts.)	28	Kraft (Tuslaw)
15	Cox (Collins West Reserve)	29	Schultz (Clearview)

There are a lot of good 215-pounders in the state this year and a number of them are in Division III. Three wrestlers here – Zaranec, Nagel, and Stookey – were all in the top three of their weight class, and each has the ability to win it all this year. I think they are a step above everybody else here, although there is not such a great difference that upsets cannot occur. A key at this weight class will be the district title at Waite since the winner should be away from the other two top contenders at Columbus.

Last year Nagel was 2nd at 189#. He was a district champion and drew into the much easier side of the bracket. Three dominating wins quickly followed at Columbus, and then a titanic (or should I say Grewelling) struggle with defending state champ D. J. Grewell. It ended in overtime with Nagel losing 3-1. Stookey took a different path to his 3rd place finish at 215#. An early district loser he won four consolation bouts to finish 3rd. It put him in the same bracket as Caponi at States, where he lost in the semi-finals and finished 3rd. Zaranec had 11 losses last year, but the last was in the best place to lose (if you have to) – the state finals as Caponi won the state title for himself and Akron St. Vincent 5-0.

Assuming that Nagel and Stookey will meet in the finals at Waite (67% probability) the issue will be how much do you want to show the opposition. I think either boy can beat Zaranec, but it would, of course, be far easier to be in the other half bracket. Should they meet in the state finals I think Stookey will win. He is a little bigger boy than the raw-boned and powerful Nagel, and, I believe, better on his feet. My guess is that he'll exert constant pressure on Nagel wanting his takedown skills and conditioning to work to his advantage. Nagel is great on defense, but Stookey will push hard, and I think win a close, relatively low-scoring bout. Remember, both these boys are juniors and are likely to be back at this weight class next year.

Nagel and Stookey dominate at Waite with an enormous drop-off after them and a whole raft of possible qualifiers. It will be a long shot if the two lucky Columbus ticket holders place there.

Zaranec, having it no easier, must go against state qualifier Spencer at Elyria Catholic, and that won't be easy. Last year Zaranec defeated him twice at the district level, 6-5 and 10-6. Quite frankly, I think Spencer has shown more improvement this year with crushing wins at Richmond Hts. and Clearview, and a solid 5th at Medina (in a tremendous weight class). State qualifier Poweski and Wellert are also very good and this is the most competitive of the four districts.

There is not a lot of potential placers at Coshocton. It will be a huge, diverse field with very competitive matches from the very first round. However, placement at the state for the four qualifiers will not be a high probability event. Kegelmeyer is probably the most consistent of the eight I've ranked, but Lahna is the one to watch for. He missed state qualification in a 11-9 consolation quarter-final loss, and wrestles a lot of high scoring bouts. For example, he recently won at John Glenn with a 17-15 OT decision in the finals over Moore (Newcomerstown).

State qualifier Wilson leads the way at Xenia. However, Johns and Monroe will challenge and should be able to keep it close. Wilson won a state bout last year, but struggled at the SWOCA. He might be vulnerable, although he should still qualify easily. Dark horse candidates besides those listed might be Lambert (Clinton Massie) and Maag (Columbus Grove).

Hvy.

Projected Champion: MATT LAUCK (ELMWOOD)

Top Contenders

2	Wright (Garaway)	15	Davidson (Edison)
3	Mariast (Wellington)	16	Cook (Tusky Valley)
4	Wells (Shenendoah)	17	LouAllen (Deer Park)
5	Carothers (Harrison Central)	18	DeWalt (Collins Western Reserve)
6	Dailide (Chanel)	19	Slaughterbeck (Bluften)
7	Widmer (Genoa)	20	Duvall (Bellaire)
8	Davia (Union Local)	21	Quinn (Richmond Hts.)
9	Debee (St. Thomas Aquinas)	22	Daniels (Madison Plains)
10	Lynch (Pleasant)	23	Abdulghani (Summit Country Day)
11	Binder (Gibsonburg)	24	Leininger (Liberty Center)
12	Parthmore (West Liberty Salem)	25	Ivans (Clinton Massie)
13	Ross (Woodridge)	26	Snelling (Lockland)
14	Klinker (Columbus Grove)	27	Dobrski (Wickliffe)

Little things can make an enormous difference. The intense heat inside a star melds four hydrogen nuclei (four protons) into a single helium nucleus (two protons and two neutrons). Four protons together weigh just 0.7% more than a helium nucleus, the missing fraction is converted into energy via Einstein's $E = MC^2$ and that is what powers the sun and makes life possible. Every second the sun converts 600 million tons of hydrogen into 596 million tons of helium plus energy. If four protons weighed just a little bit less there would be no stars or life in the Universe.

Little things will also make an enormous difference at this weight class. It's a weight class with many contenders, but no clear-cut favorite, and the random fluctuations at heavyweight tend to be greater than at many weight classes. That means stalling calls, bracketing luck, overtime criteria, and plain good fortune will play a major role in determining who will take the title.

My first list in November had Eric Mason as my top pick at this weight class. Apparently Mason is returning from an injury, but will wrestle for Holland Springfield and so the favorite's mantle is truly empty. We have a number of wrestlers with long track records at this weight class, but two of the top contenders have very little by which to measure them here.

Lauck has been at 215# for the past two years, but has made a stunning debut at heavyweight. Quicker than many of the other "heavies" he still has sufficient size to counteract the real large guys at this class. Still he is pretty much an unknown at heavyweight, and he hasn't met a parade of "mammoths" like we find at the Coshocton District. Let's face it, he's an "out of the box" choice.

Even without Mason, the Waite District is very strong. Widmer has had a great year including a big win at Sylvania Southview. State qualifier Binder returns, but Hudson champ DeWalt and Leininger may have surpassed him.

The Coshocton District is a “monster” at this weight class. There are at least eight wrestlers of state quality vying for only four state berths. These are almost without exception very large boys with good athleticism and speed. Four of them are 265 pounds or more. In addition, they keep beating each other in almost a random manner. After getting through this district the four lucky qualifiers may be almost too exhausted to do well in Columbus.

Let’s take a quick look at each of the top boys. Wright lost a chance at state qualification last year when he lost the coin flip in the second overtime and gave up the winning escape to Carothers. He is undefeated this year, and this is his last chance at qualification. Wells did qualify out of this district last year in the last spot, but, and this is typical, he was the top finisher out of this district at Columbus with a 5th place medal. He has lost only once this year and won at the OVAC. Carothers, also a qualifier, was a big winner at Richmond Hts., and he, too, has but one loss. Short and stocky, he is most difficult to score against. Davia has won several tourneys (at John Glenn and Steubenville), but is a little more inconsistent than some of the others. State qualifier Cook is very good, but he may be a little undersized giving up 30 to 40 pounds against the big boys.

Another big unknown is Mariast. He was sensational at Medina, crushing five straight opponents. He didn’t wrestle last year, but you’d never know that. I have him undefeated with virtually all falls, so his stamina may come into question. On the other hand, if you pin everyone stamina is not really an issue. State qualifier Dailide got off to a late start because of the state title football team, but he will be ready at tourney time. Debee and Ross are also excellent and it’s a first-rate quartet. But, remember Carothers pinned Ross at Richmond Hts.

I don’t know much about some of the Southwest contenders. State qualifier Parthmore is very big and is very tough on top. However, both Debee and Carothers handled him at the state level. State qualifier LouAllen also returns looking for a better draw than he got last year. Two big unknowns, Abdulghani, up from 215#, could be difficult because of his speed and quickness, while Ivans is undefeated but wrestles a suspect schedule. I’m not sure how well this group will match up with the other districts in the state.

TEAMS

1. **Chanel** – This team suffered an enormous amount of bad luck last year, and still missed the state title by 1½ points. At the beginning it looked like they would run away with the championship, but now it looks like it could be much closer. The outstanding lightweights of Jagers, Paparone, Ralph, and Monsman have been very good – although Monsman faces tough competition at 112#. What has not happened – at least so far – have been the dominating performance anticipated at the upper weights from Terry, Dailide, Zaranec, and Roppel. A revitalized Terry would be a huge help as would a strong performance from Wright. They should still win, but it may be closer than we first thought.
2. **Sandusky St. Mary** – This is the only team that could possibly challenge Chanel and a lot will have to go right for that to happen. Shearer, Stookey, Opfer and Young could all be finalists with J. Whelan not far behind. They’ll need, in all probability, additional scoring and only the middle weights like Dye, Baum, or Smith have any hope of providing it – and the first two are freshmen. The unexpected loss of Cameron Whelan – undefeated at the time – could be a fatal blow to their hopes. Remember, everyone is back next year
3. **Delta** – This is a squad that has the potential to capture the runner-up trophy on a hot weekend. Nagel and Lohman are the two main cogs, but there is potential scoring all across the weight classes. Their strongest chances are at the middle weights with Moss, Madden, Burkholder, and Skates (in addition to Lohman), but Spangler could help Nagel at the heavier end while Ford could lead a charge on the lighter side with the lighter Moss, Bechtel and, maybe, Irwin. A very fine team.

4. **Grandview Hts.** – This is another beautifully balanced squad with real strength at the top end. There we should see scoring from Barte, Picazo, Cataline, and, maybe, Bartholomew or Sutter. The top scoring might come from Vogel, Hardy, and Long in the middle while Wyse and Byerly could help at the low end. Another team that could win the runner-up trophy if they can hit on all cylinders in Columbus.
5. **Beachwood** – This is a team that gets better every year. State champion Linsker leads the way, but he needs to be very sharp at 152#. The underclassmen, Caruso and Lipp, have to be big scorers while Peltz, Weiss, Blackwell and Taub need to pitch in. Next year another Lipp moves up to the varsity and most of the lighter weights return.
6. **Martins Ferry** – This squad has a nucleus of four excellent wrestlers – the two Tierneys, Roth, and the freshman, Tucker. All of them should score heavily at the state level. Back-up needs to come from Jones, Smith and Troyan. The mystery is state qualifier Holt – where will he wrestle and how well will he perform.
7. **Madeira** – The three lightweights – Cottone, Burroughs, and Kuykendall – have state placement potential, while Cloran and Cummings should do well at 171# and 189#. All five have previous state experience. The quartet of Littlejohn, Rutledge, Davidson, and Pattison would be unexpected, but appreciated helpers.
8. **Perry** – This is a team that has moved down from Division II with great success. There are only five potential scorers here – Wiles, Sarosy, Unger, Gilkey and Sater – but that could be enough to move them up. The key is for Sater to do very well at the relatively weak 189# class – a task he is well equipped to complete.
9. **Newbury** – This is another team with just five potential scorers – including three with the last name of Spencer. Four from this group have placement potential – Cavalier and all three Spencers – but the key man is McCreery. On a hot weekend he could help propel this team into the top five.
10. **Tuslaw** – I see Aeschliman scoring a lot of bonus points and Hill getting into the top four at his weight class. If either Eicher, Lautzenheiser, or Kraft can help they'll cement a top ten finish.