

## DIVISION I

103#

PROJECTED CHAMPION: SHAUN SMITH (MASSILLON PERRY)

### TOP CONTENDERS

- |                                |                                     |
|--------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| 2. Wilcox (Oak Hills)          | 13. Roy (Fairfield)                 |
| 3. Kulczycki (St. Edward)      | 14. Griffey (Sylvania Southview)    |
| 4. Stickel (Gahanna Lincoln)   | 15. Zielinski (Cincinnati Moeller)  |
| 5. Ratliff (Marion Harding)    | 16. Caruso (Brecksville)            |
| 6. Barrett (Toledo Libbey)     | 17. Ramirez (Kettering Fairmont)    |
| 7. E. Vennon (Pickerington)    | 18. Slaby (Maple Hts.)              |
| 8. Nettle (Massillon Jackson)  | 19. Bloomfield (Tiffin Columbian)   |
| 9. Saley (Akron Springfield)   | 20. Tracy (Cloverleaf)              |
| 10. Chavez (Groveport Madison) | 21. Iori (Cincinnati Elder)         |
| 11. Skoch (Madison)            | 22. Seifullah (Shaw)                |
| 12. Peretti (Boardman)         | 23. Collins (Cincinnati St. Xavier) |

While many pundits have -- correctly I believe -- argued that wrestling in Ohio in 1996 does not reach its usual standard of quality, that would certainly be difficult to prove if one only examined this first weight class. It is very unusual that three of last year's place winners and three other State qualifiers all return at 103#. In addition, there are the usual excellent freshmen making for a very exciting and competitive weight class. The top quintet, in particular, are exceptional and should provide some of the best match-ups in the entire State tourney process.

Leading the way is senior Shaun Smith, who came so very close to winning it all last year. Both he and defending State champ Tomazz Wilson entered the finals completely undefeated and their confrontation could not have disappointed even one spectator. In a match with surges by both boys, Smith had Wilson on his back several times, but could not apply the clincher and lost in the last 20 seconds 14-12. One of the 10 best State finals we have ever telecast. This year Smith has shuttled between 103# and 112#, with far more success at the lower weight class. He won the Ironman at 103# and the Medina at 112#, but was 2nd to McCampbell at Alliance. A strong favorite at the beginning, his advantage now would be much smaller.

Wilcox, too, was completely undefeated until the State semi-finals when Smith crushed him 10-1. He eventually ended up 5th with a win over Kulczycki. As he did last season, he has totally devastated his southwestern competition, while winning at the SWOCA, GMVWA and St. Xavier. While all three are strong tourneys, Wilcox won in the three finals 16-1, 18-3 and :07. I am sure he would be better served wrestling tougher competition, but there isn't that much around in the entire state.

Kulczycki, also a sophomore, is not as physical as the first two, but is a marvelous technician. Smith has defeated him three times in the last year, but the last two margins, 3-1 and 7-5, no longer suggest domination. Kulczycki was 6th last year, while this season he was 5th at Reno, 2nd at the Ironman and 1st at Medina.

Stickel, tall and very slender, has finally grown into the weight class in his senior year. No longer the 94 pound terror, he will be a major challenge to the top three. Kulczycki beat this State qualifier on a very late third period takedown, 3-1, to hand him his only defeat this season. At Wright State last year, Kulczycki won a 3-2 squeaker in the first round and his subsequent loss to Smith eliminated Stickel.

One important point. All four come from different districts, so the pairings should be great since each, except Stickel, should dominate his district. At Hilliard, Stickel must get by the precocious freshman Ratliff and the powerful Barrett.

There is good depth at Perry, but none of this group should severely challenge Smith. His long-time rival, Nettle, is probably next best here -- he was 2nd to Adkins at Wadsworth. The freshman Saley and the fast-improving Peretti should battle for the third and last spot, with the experienced Tracy also in the hunt. Sikora (Glen Oak) and Pavkov (Barberton) have slim chances to qualify.

Kulczycki dominates an uncharacteristically weak Mentor District. Often five or six of the competitors here make my top 10 list, but this time only Kulczycki reaches that stature. I've listed some potential qualifiers, but I'm probably going to be embarrassed when folks who made none of my endless lists earn tickets to Dayton. The incredibly tall Fuqua (Amherst) or Smith (Mentor) might be the ones to do that.

Wilcox will have it all his own way at Centerville. State qualifier Zielinski has so far hit some real snags this year, and could have problems qualifying. The race for the last three spots is wide open, but eventual State placement is not in the cards for the lucky trio.

Most of the District competition will be at Hilliard. Now that he is at 103#, Barrett has begun to dominate opponents again as his convincing win at Waite amply demonstrates. Stickel, however, is likely to outslick him. The real future superstar here is the freshman Ratliff. I'm convinced we're witnessing the beginning of what will be a great career when we watch this youngster compete. He beat State placer Frederick to win at Galion (112#), lost to State runner-up Smith in two overtimes at the Gorman (112#), was 1st at Sylvania Southview over Barrett (103#), and crushed the field at Marion

Harding with all falls (103#) and defeated my Division III choice Opfer to win at Alliance (103#). He's exceptionally good, and this 9th grader is particularly dangerous since he has nothing to lose in tourney action. I'm sure it's been a tough cut for Vennon to make 103#, but it could provide Pickerington with some vital team points and Eric with a

possible low place. Other possibilities besides those mentioned are Wensinger (Fremont Ross), Spitzer (Grove City) and Owens (Mansfield Madison).

112#

PROJECTED CHAMPION: JOE DiMICHELE (GARFIELD HTS.)

#### TOP CONTENDERS

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|--------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| 2. McCampbell (Franklin Hts.)  | 15. Comstock (Sylvania Southview) |
| 3. Eckles (East Liverpool)     | 16. Key (Vandalia Butler)         |
| 4. Hill (Cincinnati Princeton) | 17. Gray (Dayton Wayne)           |
| 5. Sharpley (Shaker Hts.)      | 18. Walls/Roggeman (Sandusky)     |
| 6. Billow (Nordononia)         | 19. Hosty (Westerville North)     |
| 7. B. Byers (Hudson)           | 20. Percifull (West Carrollton)   |
| 8. Merrell (Mansfield)         | 21. Bauman (Bowsher)              |
| 9. George (Westlake)           | 22. Wright (Tri-Valley)           |
| 10. Barringer (Howland)        | 23. Alicea (Lorain Southview)     |
| 11. Bogen (Lebanon)            | 24. Abella (Northland)            |
| 12. T. Vennon (Pickerington)   | 25. Mayer (Cuyahoga Falls)        |
| 13. El-Hayer (Boardman)        | 26. McCreary (Wadsworth)          |
| 14. Jackson (Hamilton)         | 27. Oehringer (Harrison)          |

I've really struggled trying to find exactly the right choice for the weight class, but somehow I can't make it quite all fit together. A major reason for that is that the pairings will be absolutely vital, and no one can foresee how that will eventually work itself out. Pairings are very often important, but never more so when there is a great diversity of styles. The 112# class is a solid group of top contenders, but none are real standouts and all win in very different ways. One important ingredient will be winning a District title. Last year 37 of the 42 (88%) State champs were also District winners, emphasizing the high correlation between the two tourneys.

The powerhouse district is at Mentor. DiMichele, 2nd as a sophomore and 3rd last year, is a smart, canny wrestler who thrives on one-point victories. He holds victories over Eckles and Hill, but is not the dominating wrestler who wins a lot of easy bouts. He will have to be extremely focused and gain good pairings to win. Right behind him at Mentor is Kore Sharpley, who lost an overtime bout to then State runner-up Brent Thompson in this go-to-State bout last year. At one time, Sharpley was at the top of my list, but his lack of State experience may be issue. He is a super athlete, who somehow struggles in his rare close bouts, and that could be a real flaw at 112#. Nevertheless, he still has a great chance at a State title. State qualifier Billow is also excellent with a wide array of moves, many of which lead to back points against the unwary. Only a sophomore, his time may not yet be here, but he could very easily upset any of my top quintet. Byers is also excellent and lost his go-to-State bout by one point last year. He and Billow are old rivals and they serve as a nice counterpoint to the top duo. This top Mentor quartet, all

rated in the top seven of the state, all emerge from the Garfield Hts. Sectional; meaning that there is absolutely no margin for error, even during the first week of the tournament process. The excellent George and Alicea are both potential qualifiers as well, and will take advantage of even the smallest slip by the top foursome. George, in particular, lost to Billow 8-6 in the consolation semi-finals at Mentor, indicating how close he was to Wright State last year. Currently he is 15-2.

Eckles should dominate at Perry. A fourth place finisher at Wright State at 103#, he split a pair of bouts with DiMichele. This year he won at the OV AC, but withdrew at Medina in what would have been an interesting test. He defeated Hill in overtime last year, but it's difficult to gauge his level of improvement this year. State qualifiers Barringer and Wright also return, but could struggle with El-Hayek and McCreary.

I was very impressed with McCampbell at 119# at Medina, and he will clearly be a devastating 112 pounder. His big win at Alliance gave ample evidence of that - especially coming against State runner-up Smith. I would rate he and DiMichele as co-favorites with either one coming out on top -- if they can get by all those clamoring right below them. Last year McCampbell was 1-2 at Wright State, losing to three-time place winner Boerner and two-time place winner Henderly. There won't be many losses this year. Merrell is another returning State qualifier and, perhaps, the most consistent pinner in the weight class. He has spent a lot of time at 119# with reasonable success -- 5th at Alliance, 1st at Marion Harding, and 1st at the Gorman. I'm anxious to see more of him at 112#. State qualifier Vennon has remote placement chances, while Walls / Roggeman, Comstock, Hosty and Abella are in the qualification hunt. Also look for Icenhour (Hilliard), Barboza (Maumee), Freeman (Marion Harding) and Rice (Toledo St. John).

Hill is another possible champ. He lost close bouts to Eckles and DiMichele at Wright State last year, but he has clearly made great improvement. He won the SWOCA with a 38 second fall and the St. Xavier with a 10-7 victory at 119# over an Illinois State place winner. He is currently undefeated and seems primed for one last run at a title. He is the leader of a Cincinnati Princeton program that, in recent years, has developed a "boat load" of fine wrestlers. From a distance, at least, they look like the best dual meet team in the Southwest with a great number of possible State qualifiers. The rest of the 112s at Centerville will struggle beyond the first round at Wright State.

119#

PROJECTED CHAMPION: BRENT THOMPSON (WALSH JESUIT)

#### TOP CONTENDERS

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|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 2. Je. Moore (Westland)     | 5. M. Nash (Uniontown Lake) |
| 3. Brady (Cincinnati Elder) | 6. Lentz (Mentor)           |
| 4. Homon (Dublin Scioto)    | 7. Linberg (Fairfield)      |

- |                                    |                              |
|------------------------------------|------------------------------|
| 8. S. Nash (Canton McKinley)       | 17. Szymal (Dublin Coffman)  |
| 9. Kich (Strongsville)             | 18. Boyd (Ashland)           |
| 10. Iacaboni (Nardonía)            | 19. Ptacek (Medina)          |
| 11. Campbell (Tecumseh)            | 20. Sommer (West Carrollton) |
| 12. Shawk (North Canton)           | 21. Branham (Grove City)     |
| 13. Grant (Sandusky)               | 22. Poland (Greenville)      |
| 14. Mitchell (Holland Springfield) | 23. Bragga (Athens)          |
| 15. Highsmith (Toledo Start)       | 24. Kovatch (Westlake)       |
| 16. Alvarado (Lorain Southview)    | 25. Paisz (Wadsworth)        |

Somehow my perspective of Thompson is always that of a valiant underdog whose tenacity and heart somehow bring him out on top almost miraculously a high percentage of the time. He always seems a little smaller than his opponent; not as strong and maybe a little overmatched. And yet he was 2nd as a sophomore and 3rd last year with an overall 8-2 State record that shows losses only to State champs Wilson and Doerrer. So it's only natural that I have looked all around the State to identify the 119# champion and keep coming back to Thompson. He was 1st at both Medina and Alliance, 5th at Reno and 3rd at the Ironman, but is undefeated against Ohio wrestlers. The key to victory will be tremendous focus since Thompson can be manhandled by some of the big 119s, and sometimes looks a little shaky in the early rounds.

This is not a strong weight class, and none of the four districts could be classified as deep. In every district there are a couple of top contenders followed by a whole host of journeyman performers -- some of whom, because of a good draw, a hot weekend and favorable breaks will qualify. For example, at Mentor there are a number of possibilities. I think Kich and Lentz are next best to Thompson. Though Kich has certified at 112#, I see him avoiding the crowd there and staying right where he's been successful. He beat both Sharpley and Lentz at Brecksville. Somehow, Lentz has never quite "maxed out," but he has excellent ability. Iacaboni -- if he's at this weight -would be a high percentage qualification choice, while Alvarado and Kovatch are another level down. I've become very confused watching the peregrination of the Iacaboni boys from weight to weight, drifting from 119# to 140#. One thing that I do know is that they are both excellent and a handful at any weight class. Hronek (St. Edward), Lange (Nardonía), if Iacaboni is elsewhere, and Cruz (North Ridgeville) are other possibilities.

The Perry District could have an all Nash final if State qualifiers Shawn and Matt wrestle at their highest levels. Both have good credentials with Matt, in particular, having a fine 1995-1996 season. He was 2nd at Alliance and 3rd at Wadsworth in tough fields. Shawn has had an excellent January and could grab the third and last spot. His recent 15-4 win over State qualifier Coe was one of his season's highlights.

I envision the 119s at Centerville as still in a kind of Brownian motion. Banging into each other at random intervals and then drifting. Former State qualifier Brady has been by far the most consistent performer finishing, 1st at the SWOCA and CIT and 2nd at GMVWA. Last year he won but one District bout, but has bounced back this year in high

style. After him Linberg, Campbell, Sommer, Poland and Dizon (Dayton Wayne) look next best.

Two of Thompson's toughest competitors should come from the Hilliard District. Moore, in particular, could be a real force at this weight class -- assuming that he fits comfortably into it. He has been at 125# much of the year with a strong 2nd at the GMVWA, a 14-0 win over Grant to win the Panther Classic, and a 5-2 win over the outstanding McClanahan to win at Franklin Hts. He was at 125# last year and had a very poor District, but has turned that situation completely around. Homon is another late bloomer who has really made strides in 1995-1996. He was 3rd at Alliance losing only to Thompson in a bout closer than its 16-9 final score. After this duo there is a large drop-off with a dozen candidates for the last three berths -- equally divided between the Columbus and Toledo sectionals.

125#

PROJECTED CHAMPION: MATT KINSER (WEST CARROLLTON)

#### TOP CONTENDERS

- |                                     |                                     |
|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| 2. Metzger (Massillon Perry)        | 13. J. Byers (Eastlake North)       |
| 3. Bullard (North Olmsted)          | 14. Mcintire (Fairfield)            |
| 4. Balog (Medina)                   | 15. Kuba (Marion Harding)           |
| 5. Wahoff (Fairfield)               | 16. Engleman (Boardman)             |
| 6. Ritchie (Cleveland Hts.)         | 17. Cika (Strongsville)             |
| 7. Wandersnider (Harrison)          | 18. Tammerine (Perrysburg)          |
| 8. Bukky (Worthington Kilbourne)    | 19. Pegram (Princeton)              |
| 9. Smith (Lorain Southview)         | 20. Skinner (Akron Springfield)     |
| 10. Forsyth/Rawlings (Walsh Jesuit) | 21. Bentley (Groveport Madison)     |
| 11. Brennan (Cincinnati Elder)      | 22. Byrne (St. Edward)              |
| 12. Robertson (Mt. Vernon)          | 23. Zimmerman (Holland Springfield) |

There are a lot of unknown quantities at 125# and the final resolution of this weight will depend in large measure as to how these questions are answered. My view is that this weight, much like 112#, has a large number of potential winners and that generally portends very competitive bouts beginning in the very first round. There are some interesting candidates for the title at all four districts.

My top choice is State runner-up Matt Kinser. Last year he was a District 4th losing to Pierce (13-4) and Janson (7-6). He roared back at Wright State upsetting Pierce in the semi-finals on overtime criteria before getting blitzed by Plouse in the finals. In July, he required reconstructive knee surgery which sidelined him until last week. He got off to a blazing start, but the question still remains as to his knee at the very top levels of competition.

Metzger seems so often to have been the victim of bad luck. Last year after a District title he was upset in the quarter-finals in overtime by eventual State runner-up Dubendorfer, and then lost a heartbreaker to two-time placer Henderly and did not place. Then at Medina this year, he led 17-6 over Schuster with 29 seconds to go when he was penalized for an illegal move and forced to lose by disqualification when his opponent could not continue. However, his luck may have turned around with his smashing win at Alliance where he dominated a solid field. It would be no great feat of imagination to see him win it.

Bullard was my initial choice at this class. Last year he entered the Mentor district with a 31-2 record and a sectional title. It was probably the toughest weight class at Mentor with Bullard feeling the full brunt of it, losing to Middlebrook and then to eventual State runner-up Favaro in his go-to-State bout. This year he has blitzed everybody except for one nagging exception -- an 8-4 loss to Ritchie in the Brecksville finals. I think a lack of good workout partners could be hurting him.

Balog, too, has had that one totally unexpected loss. He was 3rd last year at 119# -- losing only to the undefeated State champ Brad Wright -- and has been excellent this year winning at Ashland and Medina. His one loss was to McClanahan, not necessarily a huge shocker, except for the 13-3 final score. Still, he has to be at the very top levels at this weight.

Wahoff, now a sophomore, had a great freshman year culminating in State qualification. He had a tough draw including a 7-3 loss to Metzger. Ritchie has been almost perfect this year, including the aforementioned win over Bullard. He has come out oof nowhere to fashion a 20-1 season, but he failed to qualify out of a rather ordinary sectional last year. His only loss was in the finals of the Midwest Classic to an out-of-state champion. Frankly, I'm confused, although he clearly is an excellent wrestler. Except for Bullard, he has not faced superior opposition, so he really will go into the tourneys as kind of the X factor.

The Mentor District has an excellent top quintet with good back-up strength as well. Bullard and Ritchie are at the top, but Byers, Forsyth and, particularly, Smith are State caliber. Smith should have qualified last year, but lost a 10-9 decision to Carnes and then after working his way to the Consolation semi-finals got caught in the first 15 seconds and pinned. This year he won at Brecksville and Waite, and was a strong 3rd at the Midwest Classic. Forsyth was at 103# much of last year before injuries and weight problems forced him out of competition. He was a finalist at Medina and the Ironman. This year -- wrestling a brutally tough schedule -- he is a rather ordinary 12-8, but he knows how to win. He could be a sleeper if he is injury free. Other candidates besides that trio are the veteran Byrne, Cika and Palmisano (Mayfield).

Metzger and Balog tower over the Perry District opposition. That third spot is wide open. Engleman, Skinner, Kallai (Wadsworth) and Kane (Wooster) are possibilities. I've been

looking for Logan (Uniontown Lake) at this class, but have not seen him here in some time.

Bukky is "top dog" at Hilliard and he has substantial upside potential from that #8 ranking. He can be a scoring machine, and is particularly dangerous against high caliber opposition. He had a real tough luck District last year losing two overtime bouts, including a 21-19 aT heartbreaker to two-time State qualifier Sheets. He should be the District champ guaranteeing him the best chance of an excellent pairing. With the parity here, he could -- under a perfect circumstance -- be a finalist. I've put Robertson at 125# even though he is certified at 119# since this might be a better qualification opportunity. He's good at either weight. It's pretty shaky after that.

Wandersnider may be another undervalued wrestler after his 6th place finish last year at 112#. He easily captured the SWOCA crown and several less prestigious tourneys. Along with Wahoff and Kinser, he provides Centerville with more up-top' strength than any other District. Add in State qualifiers Brennan and McIntire and there exists the potential for a real donnybrook. You have to wonder if the far weaker 130# class at Centerville will evoke some interest from many of the other 125s.

130#

PROJECTED CHAMPION: FRANK FAVARO (WALSH JESUIT)

#### TOP CONTENDERS

- |                                  |                                      |
|----------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| 2. Anderson (Pickerington)       | 14. Fausnight (North Canton)         |
| 3. Felty (Marion Harding)        | 15. Pierce (Midview)                 |
| 4. Ji. Moore (Westland)          | 16. Nixon (Lorain Southview)         |
| 5. Walker (Howland)              | 17. Green (Garfield Hts.)            |
| 6. L. Iacaboni (Nordononia)      | 18. Gilmore (Wadsworth)              |
| 7. Potter (Troy)                 | 19. Corrigan (St. Ignatius)          |
| 8. Toyama (St. Edward)           | 20. Rago (Painesville Riverside)     |
| 9. Broshear (Cincinnati Moeller) | 21. Matt Reckman (Milford)           |
| 10. Newsom (Toledo St. John)     | 22. Saunders (Worthington Kilbourne) |
| 11. Jeansonne (Perrysburg)       | 23. Brooks (Princeton)               |
| 12. Mendenhall (Cincinnati NW)   | 24. Gulley (Massillon Perry)         |
| 13. Ogden (Hilliard)             | 25. Taulbee (Elder)                  |

This is not a very strong weight class, and I suspect it may be dominated by my two top-rated contenders. Favaro, 2nd last year at 119#, has been wrestling extremely well since he dropped down two weight classes after the Ironman. He won at Medina and Alliance and placed in the top five at Reno. He has faced a very rugged schedule and will be battle-hardened by tourney time. His big problem has been losing 16-14 type bouts in the early rounds. I would almost label Anderson as the co-favorite here. The brilliant sophomore has lost but once in the Medina final to Favaro. I thought the 8-5

was somewhat deceptive since Favaro caught him for 5 points early in the bout. Unless Favaro is at peak efficiency, Anderson has a good chance of winning the whole thing.

It's a crowded Mentor District. I believe Iacaboni has moved ahead of everyone but Favaro. As mentioned in the discussion of his twin brother he could be at any of several weights, but this would seem to offer the best prospect of both State qualification and possible placement. Toyama has been both brilliant and ordinary. A State qualifier last year, he was 4th at the Ironman including a win over Green, but then failed to make weight at Medina. Since then he has not seemed in peak form until the Alliance Top gun when at 135# he defeated State qualifiers Chandler and Childress before being TF'ed by Marchette. He's in the top five at 130# if he's wrestling well. State qualifier Green was a big surprise (at least to me) last year with a gutsy district performance. However, he was 5th at the Ironman and 4th at Wadsworth losing decisively to Pierce and Ralph. Certainly a return to Wright State is not guaranteed. The same is true for State qualifier Raga who could, like Toyama, be at the far shallower 135# class. Nixon and Corrigan are two other solid contenders. In summary, Favaro is the standout here followed by at least 10 other contenders if you count Wilkins (John Marshall), Noga (Willoughby South) and Wirtzberger (Madison). Some of these folks are going to flow to 135# where Marchette is a colossus, but where the other qualification spots may be easier to come by. Strictly as an exercise in speculation, one would have to think that Toyama, Raga and Noga might be analyzing a move to 135#.

Anderson is part of an excellent triumvirate at Hillard. Felty was 5th last year in Division II wrestling for Teays Valley, and he has been an enormous acquisition for Marion Harding. He has been the champ at Sylvania Southview, Marion Harding, the "Gorman and Galion, and then was involved in a" strange pushing episode at Alliance. Losing in the semi-finals to Clark, he was given an escape, but when he didn't immediately face-off, Clark pushed him hard enough that he collided with the wall and was injured. Clark was disqualified, but Felty was unable to wrestle Favaro for the title finishing 2nd. From my perspective, he remains undefeated. Jim Moore is the third member of this trio and should place. He nipped the scrappy Pierce to win at Sandusky St. Mary and was also the titlist at the GMVWA. There is also good secondary strength here. State qualifiers Newsom and Jeansonne are always threats, and Ogden is a solid performer. Saunders, pushed out of 125# by Bukky, has upset potential, while Muenzer (Clay), Brunton (Gahanna Lincoln) and Lewis (Reynoldsburg) are possibilities. I've listed Aiello at 135# even though he has certified at 130#, and at Hilliard several of this cast might join him there.

It's a much less powerful group at Centerville. Potter, the State alternate, just missed qualification and heads the field. He dropped a one-point decision to State runner-up Ralph at Troy. Broshear has been a consistent high placer all year, while it is my guess that Mendenhall will eventually opt for 130# over the far more difficult 125#. His rapid improvement has been linked to a summer in Russia wrestling with some of their junior national team. Reckman and Brooks are also solid and this first quintet will probably

provide the four qualifiers. Taulbee, Sroufe (Greenville) and Damrongchai (Beavercreek) are other thoughts.

Walker leads a relatively shallow Perry contingent. A District runner-up and State qualifier last year, he placed 6th at Wright State with wins over Janson, Jeansonne and Evangelista. The veteran Fausnight, Gilmore and the exciting sophomore Gulley are probably next best with a lot of loose ends after that. I like Gulley's aggressive point scoring style at Medina -- where he placed 6th, but unless he can upset one of the top three, he'll be left home this year.

135#

PROJECTED CHAMPION: SONNY MARCHETTE (WALSH JESUIT)

### TOP CONTENDERS

- |                                   |                                    |
|-----------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| 2. Janson (Cincinnati Moeller)    | 14. Ferguson (Lorain Southview)    |
| 3. Aiello (Grover City)           | 15. Murray (Howland)               |
| 4. Roche (Oak Hills)              | 16. Seitz (Tiffin Columbian)       |
| 5. Staten (Hilliard)              | 17. Fallon (Cincinnati St. Xavier) |
| 6. Weinfurtner (Athens)           | 18. Mahone (Bedford)               |
| 7. Childress (Massillon Jackson)  | 19. Hamey (Cloverleaf)             |
| 8. Hughes (Pickerington)          | 20. Beard (Defiance)               |
| 9. Fox (Cincinnati Princeton)     | 21. Jones (West Carrollton)        |
| 10. Mark Reckman (Milford)        | 22. Petznick (Brecksville)         |
| 11. Hartley (Marion Harding)      | 23. Archer (Groveport Madison)     |
| 12. M. Chandler (Massillon Perry) | 24. Columbi (Mayfield)             |
| 13. Mace (Stow)                   |                                    |

At last, a weight class that has a clearly defined and easy to explain composition and structure. It's a two-tiered model that has Sonny Marchette at the upper level and 'everybody else at a far lower one. Marchette is one of the three fabulous juniors that "highlight the Walsh juggernaut. Marchette, 2nd to three-time champ Jayne as a freshman, was a clear favorite last year when a knee injury knocked him out of competition in early February. Back now with a vengeance, he has been the champ at the Ironman, Alliance, Medina and Reno winning the OW at the latter two. He is marvelous to watch -- unless you're the opponent -- racking up takedown and back points in flurries of speed and power. He's a college wrestler right now, and he far outmatches most of his competition. If he maintains his health and his temperament, there is nobody here who can hold him under 20 points.

The Mentor District is very weak after Marchette. As discussed in the last essay, I anticipate that the current group will be augmented by some of the excess 130s -willing to trade a pummeling from Marchette for a possible ticket to Wright State.

There is some depth at Centerville. State qualifier Janson was a narrow 7-5 loser to Anderson at the SWOCA final and pinned to win the CIT. He was also a strong 2nd at Medina -- pinning Chandler and Marcin -- after a second round scare by Hughes. Marchette TF'ed him in the final 24-9. State qualifiers Roche and Reckman are also solid qualifying threats with Fox and Fallon not far behind. Add in Jones, Mentzel (Glen Este), Lowe (Kettering Fairmont) and Foltz (Greenville) and you have the deepest of the four districts at this weight. What makes it wide open is the changing fluctuation in fortunes at each tourney. Anticipate some surprises at Centerville when the Saturday night rounds are completed.

State qualifiers Childress and Weinfurtner are the start of a solid Perry District ensemble at this weight class. Childress, a District champion at 130#, has gotten off to a bit of a slow start with a 3rd place finish at Solon, the runner-up slot at Wadsworth, and a 4th place at Alliance. That's why I've moved Weinfurtner one spot ahead of him. He was 4th in Division II at 135# last year and made it to the Medina semis before losing a wild one to Marchette 31-16. Weinfurtner did score some offensive points in the battle. Chandler is probably a step behind this top duo and he'll be threatened for the Uast qualifying spot by Murray, Hamey and Ludwig (East Liverpool).

There are a huge number of potential qualifiers at Hilliard -- so many that it resembles the mob scene from Quo Vadis. The top four are all Central District wrestlers. I believe Aiello will choose to wrestle here rather than at 130# and is marginally the top District contender at this time. Back now in Division I -- after qualifying at this weight in Division III last year -- Aiello has had a very productive year. He has already won at Reynoldsburg and Bishop Ready while rolling up some big scores. Staten may be close to surpassing him. He was impressive in finishing 3rd at Medina, and he won at 140# at Hilliard. Hughes is another up-and-comer and I've already mentioned his 17-12 overtime loss to Janson. Add Hartley to this mix and there will be some fierce confrontations. Three other contenders, albeit more distant ones are Seitz, Beard and Archer, while Kokensparger (Holland Springfield), Wensinger (Fremont Ross) and Camargo (Toledo Central Catholic) wait in the wings. This latter competitor defeated Hughes 13-2 in District action last year. It just demonstrates how fluid the situation is likely to be at this class. Recently returned is yet another Randleman (Sandusky) who may have possibilities. He had 18 victories as a sophomore last year.

140#

PROJECTED CHAMPION: MIKE FEENEY (DUBLIN SCIOTO)

#### TOP CONTENDERS

- |                                 |                             |
|---------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 2. Middlebrook (Bedford)        | 6. Mallah (Toledo Woodward) |
| 3. C. Douglas (Massilion Perry) | 7. Shanklin (Fairfield)     |
| 4. Nakamura (St. Edward)        | 8. Lightfoot (Pickerington) |
| 5. Mees (Sandusky)              | 9. Bilderback (Stow)        |

- |                                |                                   |
|--------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| 10. Davis (Xenia)              | 18. Arthur (Cincinnati Moeller)   |
| 11. Kenney (Fitch)             | 19. Neiman (Groveport Madison)    |
| 12. McCreary (Marion Harding)  | 20. Sellet (Harrison)             |
| 13. Ricciardi (Kent Roosevelt) | 21. Ruth (Elyria)                 |
| 14. O'Neal (Tecumseh)          | 22. Kaufman (Wadsworth)           |
| 15. Samu (Howland)             | 23. Campbell (Kettering Fairmont) |
| 16. Steadman (Eastlake North)  | 24. Lynch (Tiffin Columbian)      |
| 17. Barteo (Barberton)         | 25. Patty (Mayfield)              |

This is one of the strongest and most intriguing weight classes in Division I. It is particularly powerful because those who want to be a State champion have come from 135# to avoid Marchette, and from 145# to bypass Heskett to augment an already strong nucleus. One can anticipate some reverse flow back to 145# as those realizing that a title may be unreachable will go back to 145#, calculating that qualification and placement may be more probable there. My feeling is that any of the top eight could potentially win, but the probabilities slide downward rapidly after Mallah.

Feeney, already a two-time placer, was 3rd at 135# last year losing only to Heskett in a 14-3 semi-final blowout. This year he had crushed everybody (at both 140# and 145#) until the 145# Alliance final when Heskett decked him in 88 seconds. It was probably the strongest possible signal that 140# is his best fit. Mees and Mallah will also exit the Hilliard District. The first named went 30-1 through District action last year -- his only loss a District semi-final 7-5 defeat to eventual State champ Bryant (incidentally, Bryant's closest bout by far in his 12 tourney outings). At Wright State he drew State runner-up Frederick in the first round and lost a hard fought decision, and was subsequently eliminated when Frederick was upset in the next round. He hasn't seemed quite as dominating this year, and Middlebrook hammered him 9-3 in the Brecksville final. Mallah, a former teammate of two-time champ Tomazz Wilson, is another of those Woodward stars that are difficult to rank. He remains undefeated with an overtime win over McCreary and a 5-2 victory over Division III Abbot at Perrysburg. If he wins, I owe Coach Smith a steak dinner for not picking him -- as urged, Lightfoot, now just returning from injury, is one of those all-out wrestlers that are so much fun to watch. Twice a State qualifier, his three bouts at Wright State last year were 23-15 and 15-7 losses, and a 10-9 win over former State runner-up Deering. He's just rounding into shape, but Feeney tried to establish dominance with a 22-9 drubbing. It convinced me. McCreary is also excellent, but 145# may look tempting. .

Middlebrook, Nakamura, Bilderback and Steadman are a formidable top quartet at Mentor. Middlebrook is another crowd pleaser. He was at 119# last year for what was a tantalizing look at his enormous strengths. In Sectional action, he pounded eventual State runner-up Favaro 18-4 in the semis, and then took the title with a 13-2 crush of Horvath. At the District level, he beat Nakamura and Bullard before falling in the slam-bang final 10-8 in overtime to Clark. But at the States he succumbed in a rather gentle manner to Howard 10-5 and was eliminated. This year he has taken no prisoners and his 9-3 win over Mees was no fluke. At the top of his game, he can beat anyone here --

including Feeney -- but whether he can maintain that level is still at issue. Nakamura has shown amazing improvement. He was 3rd at the Ironman, losing to the New Jersey winner 6-5 in the semi finals. He then won at both Medina and Alliance while placing 5th at Reno. His unorthodox style is likely to confound many first-time opponents, and he has a relentless will to win. State qualifiers Bilderback and Steadman are a respectful step behind the top twosome, while Ruth, Patty and Keller (Midview) are long shots.

There is an exceptionally well-matched field at Perry as well. Defending District champ Clint Douglas returns at this same weight after having spent most of the year at 145#. He lost only to Heskett at the Ironman, Medina and Alliance -- twice by regular decision and once (at Alliance) by fall. He will not be unhappy to avoid him at 140#. He has had few close bouts in his otherwise unblemished schedule. State qualifiers Ricciardi, Samu and Barteo are all currently at this class as well, and they will be joined by the dynamic Kenney and Kaufman. Again, with a much weaker looking group at 145#, we may see some movement in that direction.

The sophomore Shanklin would seem to stand with Davis at Centerville. He was a 135 pound District finalist and State qualifier as a freshman, but caught State placer Ciero in the first round and lost 12-9. This year at 145# he did not have to go six minutes in any of his five wins at the SWOCA, but suffered an early round upset loss at Kenston and finished 3rd, and was then 2nd at Fairfield. He will be very tough at 140#. Terry Davis defeated Shanklin for the District crown last year, but I'm not sure he can replicate that. He was 2nd at GMVWA and won easily at Xenia, and forms a solid duo with Shanklin.

145#

PROJECTED CHAMPION: JOE HESKETT (WALSH JESUIT)

#### TOP CONTENDERS

- |                                  |                                  |
|----------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| 2. Babinec (Milford)             | 13. Wright (East Liverpool)      |
| 3. Doggett (Tecumseh)            | 14. Luneke (Dayton Wayne)        |
| 4. Frohnafel (Groveport Madison) | 15. Duplay (Nordonia)            |
| 5. Hrovat (St. Edward)           | 16. Smith (Marion Harding)       |
| 6. Ray (Norton)                  | 17. Escola (North Canton)        |
| 7. Mullins (Perrysburg)          | 18. Majors (Garfield Hts.)       |
| 8. Walker (Upper Arlington)      | 19. Everhart (Massillon Perry)   |
| 9. E. Sellet (Harrison)          | 20. Hartman (Cincinnati Moeller) |
| 10. Marroquin (Defiance)         | 21. Platzar (Willoughby South)   |
| 11. Flower (St. Ignatius)        | 22. Gamby (Dublin Coffman)       |
| 12. Hoover (Akron Springfield)   | 23. Urban (Toledo St. John)      |

It's always interesting to watch the development of a high school wrestling superstar. Some explode onto the scene as freshmen, dominating from the first 30 seconds of their initial varsity bout. Wrestlers like Alan Fried, Clint Musser and Sonny Marchette fit

that model, and it is one that only a select few ever fill. A second template is the competitor who is clearly a superior athlete, but who requires some time before the full impact of his specialized genius can be felt. Time is required to make adjustments -- perhaps in style or mental preparation -- that trigger total domination. In this category I might place such wrestlers as Jimmy Heffernan, Mike Buddie and now Joe Heskett. A State qualifier as a freshman, Heskett seemed to wrestle, in many cases, not to lose rather than to dominate. As a sophomore that mental trigger was pulled and suddenly we were witness to an offensive onslaught that created a cascade of falls. It ended with a State tournament progression where 14-3 was the closest score, and where the undefeated and very talented Jeff Bucher was pinned in the finals. This year the story has been the same as Heskett totally dominates in a fashion that only the greatest can aspire to. At the Alliance Top Gun, Heskett had five falls -none later than the 2nd period -- with victims that included my 140# choice, Feeney, and the exceptional Douglas. While I anticipate some upward movement from the ever more crowded 140# division, there is no one here that will minimally challenge Heskett.

The ratings that you see at the top of this particular essay are transitional, since the real composition of the weight will not be clear until Sectionals. There will be substantial jockeying for position between 140# and 145#, with uncertainties prevailing into the last week of the regular season -- and beyond. Nonetheless, this array of names can serve as a starting point for a look at each of the districts. There is probably the most stability at Mentor. After Heskett, the three other State openings are wide open. I particularly like the sophomore Hrovat, and I keep waiting for him to really blossom. A District qualifier at this weight as a freshman, he won two bouts at Mentor losing only to eventual State champ Haney 7-6 and State runner-up Rawlings 8-5. When your District losses are narrow decisions to the eventual State finalists, you certainly can anticipate a very successful following year. And yet it really hasn't happened. Hrovat was 5th at the Ironman, failed to place at Mentor and Reno, and was 7th at Alliance. It just doesn't figure that this much talent will struggle for long, hence the high placement. My guess is that we'll see a far different Hrovat in March than we did in January. Flower, a 152 pounder all year, made, in my opinion, a great decision to move to 145#. He has shown steady improvement, placing 3rd at Solon and 2nd at both St. Xavier and the CIT. A steady, workmanlike wrestler, he won't throwaway any possible wins.

State qualifiers Babinec and Doggett head the Centerville District and each won a bout at Wright State last year. Babinec holds a decision over Doggett at the GMVWA, but neither had dominated this weight class in the Southwest. A wrestler that has made surprising progress is the older Sellet, who nipped the excellent Shanklin to win at Fairfield. He may have joined the top duo at the head of his district. Babinec beat him by a takedown early in the season. Luneke and Hartman are next best in what should be an evenly matched District competition.

There is no standout at Hilliard. Instead, a quintet of Walker, Marroquin, Smith, Frohnapfel and Mullins lead the way with nothing in terms of past performance to distinguish them from one another. I think that Frohnapfel's deliberate style could prove

very successful with this kind of competitive situation. Mullins, too, has placement potential, while the flashy Marroquin could be a District champ on a hot weekend. Below this fivesome I list Gamby, Linenkugel (Toledo St. Francis) and Dysart (Pickerington).

There is real uncertainty at Perry. How the situation involving the 140s and 145s will be resolved leaves the outcome of this district very much in doubt. Division II State qualifier Ray is now at Wadsworth, and has performed with reasonable success.

Hrovat dumped in the first round at Alliance and he failed to place, but was the champ at Wadsworth and North Canton. He can place. After him, Wright, Hoover, Escola and Everhart might be nominal leaders for the last two spots, but this story still has many chapters to be written.

152#

PROJECTED CHAMPION: BRAD HARRIS (PICKERINGTON)

#### TOP CONTENDERS

- |                                  |                                |
|----------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| 2. Tucceri (Euclid)              | 14. Marcellino (St. Edward)    |
| 3. Rawlings (Walsh Jesuit)       | 15. Hunley (Sandusky)          |
| 4. Chandler (Massillon Perry)    | 16. Archer (Groveport Madison) |
| S. Randolph (Beavercreek)        | 17. Alexander (Howland)        |
| 6. Deubel (Maple Hts.)           | 18. Stephens (Brookhaven)      |
| 7. LeBeau (Miami Trace)          | 19. Brown (Lorain Southview)   |
| 8. Gulbrandsen (Dublin Scioto)   | 20. O'Conner (Dayton Wayne)    |
| 9. Ambrose (Milford)             | 21. Lenix (Whitmer)            |
| 10. Copeland (Massillon Jackson) | 22. Anderson (Amherst)         |
| 11. Alvarez (Fairbornj .)        | 23. Clement/Meyer (Fairmont)   |
| 12. Roscoe (Marion Harding)      | 24. McCarter (Chillicothe)     |
| 13. Wagers (Harrison)            |                                |

It is a classy, high quality field that will come "together in the 1 b" 110 lb weight division. This year there are only a few classes that provide top level performers at every district leading to an outstanding State competition. Generally, that percentage is substantially higher, so this will be a competition to cherish and enjoy.

Hilliard is probably the weakest of the four districts, but the likely champion will compete there. Brad Harris has had about as complete a high school career as can be imagined. He has probably competed against the widest variety of competition from Todd Boerner and Adam Plouse through Brad Clement and Nick Mengerink. A four-time qualifier, he was 5th at 103# as a freshman and 3rd last year at 140#. For me, at least, he will always be remembered -- at least until he gains his well-deserved State title -- for two heroic bouts that he wrestled, both of which he lost. The first was his epic 9-8 struggle

with the heavily favored Sonny Marchette in the 1994 State quarter-finals. Wrestling brilliantly, he took an early lead, but the breaks (especially refereeing) and Sonny combined to thwart the upset bid. Then last year he battled everybody's title choice Brad Clement to a standstill before again losing by a single point 5-4. This year he is already 28-1, the great majority by fall. His only loss was at the Medina final when, injured from his physical semi-final win over Rawlings, he succumbed to Division III champ Mengerink 6-4. He pinned Randolph and decisioned Rawlings this year, and should finally bring home that elusive title. The only other potential place winner here is Gulbrandsen, who has very quietly had a fine year.

Tucceri and Rawlings (along with Chandler) are the principal threats to Harris. Last year they finished 2-3 at Mentor and then met in the State semi-finals. In an epic struggle, Rawlings finally scored an escape in the second overtime to reach the finals -where Haney avenged his District loss to take home the State title. Tucceri was eventually 5th. Tucceri is currently 20-1 -- his only loss at 160# to the excellent Greenspan. Now a mature competitor and a great athlete, he could be a finalist -especially if Harris draws into the Rawlings half of the draw. Rawlings started a little slowly this year, but as he did last season, he turned on the after-burners as we reached the halfway point of the year. He defeated Marcellino, Gulbrandsen, Peters and Stehura to win at Alliance, and he physically battered Harris at Medina in a losing effort. He'll not lose easily. State qualifier Deubel is a puzzle. Last year he defeated State champ Boross and State qualifier Greenspan back-to-back at the Sectional tourney, but never reached that level again. He was 3rd behind them at Mentor and then was one-and-out at Wright State. He has been erratic this year, but on any given day he could defeat anybody here.

There are four State caliber performers at Perry. State qualifier Chandler drew Tucceri in the first round and was pinned, but then won three consolation bouts to finish 4th. He's a very consistent performer who was 2nd at the Ironman and 3rd at Medina. In that latter event he wrestled State champ Mengerink to a standstill and led 3-2 late when a stalling point with eight seconds to go sent it into overtime. Even then he appeared to have the victory when he reached such a favorable position that a takedown seemed only seconds away, then Mengerink made a super-human effort to earn the two points. Sectional champ LeBeau was hurt at Districts last year and was unable to show his true abilities. This year he was stunning at the GMVWA defeating Ambrose by technical fall (unbelievable), decisioning West Virginia State champ Greathouse, and copping the title with a 23-12 with over State qualifier Franklin. He can go with anyone. State qualifier Copeland was 3rd at Alliance splitting with, Gulbrandsen and defeating his other competitors. The champ at Wadsworth, he lost the title at Solon by technical fall to Lara. He had serious trouble on the bottom against my Division II choice at 145#. Finally, Alexander lost an overtime battle for the last spot at 160# last year. Now down at 152#, he will challenge his three better known competitors.

Randolph was a rather bizarre 6th last year. He won his first State bout with a 23-15 major decision over Lightfoot. Then against State runner-up Deering, he was injured and then in a controversial call Deering was disqualified. Randolph was in the semi-

finals. He was forced to forfeit his last three bouts for 6th. This year he was 2nd at the SWOCA -- getting pinned by Harris -- and defaulted out of Medina on injury. State qualifiers Ambrose and Alvarez are also here, with fast-improving Wagers seeking to reach that same level. This is a nice tough quartet, any of whom could harbor hopes for a low place. O'Conner, Clement/Meyer, Eilerman (Cincinnati Elder), and Plowman (Miamisburg) are other contenders.

160#

PROJECTED CHAMPION: KEVIN BOROSS (SOLON)

#### TOP CONTENDERS

- |                                |                                    |
|--------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| 2. Root (West Chester Lakota)  | 14. Neal (Alliance)                |
| 3. Greenspan (Shaker Hts.)     | 15. Tomaszewski (Tiffin Columbian) |
| 4. Ford (Findlay)              | 16. Oberjohann (Cincinnati Elder)  |
| 5. Sletvold (Fitch)            | 17. Johnson (Delaware Hayes)       |
| 6. Mitchell (Walsh Jesuit)     | 18. Porowski (North Ridgeville)    |
| 7. Fitch (East Liverpool)      | 19. Williams (Toledo Roger)        |
| 8. Massouh (Massillon Jackson) | 20. Spaulding (Westland)           |
| 9. Brockhoff (Colerain)        | 21. Tepley (Garfield Hts.)         |
| 10. Hollo (St. Edward)         | 22. Watkins (West Carrollton)      |
| 11. Mellor (Pickerington)      | 23. Jarvis (Cloverleaf)            |
| 12. Abrams (Lebanon)           | 24. Schwaberow (Akron Springfield) |
| 13. Cassady (Gahanna Lincoln)  |                                    |

At season's beginning it seemed evident that defending State champion Kevin Boross had a relatively clear path to his second State title. He was clearly stronger and more confident after a summer of hard work, and he even won the Comet Classic, something he had never done before. However, it is now increasingly evident that a second title is in jeopardy with the rapid improvement of the brilliant sophomore Richie Root. It is not unmindful of a similar situation nine years ago when senior State runner-up Bob Genovese was challenged by another brilliant sophomore Mike Buddie from St. Ignatius. By sectionals, Buddie had crept to within a point of Genovese and at Districts. Buddie won 4-2. The hugely awaited rubber match never occurred, as Buddie was upset in the semi-finals and Genovese went on to take home the title. In the current situation, Root will only get one shot at Boross -- at Wright State.

Boross, after an upset loss to Deubel at least year's Sectional, never had a really close bout at the District or State level, winning by a minimum of four points. This year he is undefeated, although Solon did not participate at Medina and he has not wrestled a particularly rugged schedule. Root, on the other hand, has been everywhere. He pinned to win the SWOCA and the Fairfield, and beat Fitch by six to win the Medina. His rapid rise will be a stern test for Boross, however, there is a wild card here. Josh Greenspan was 6th at 160# last year and has looked exceptionally strong this year.

Like Root and Boross, he, too, is undefeated with wins at Brecksville and Richmond Hts. -- the latter a victory over the very tough Tucceri. Should Boross and Root be on the same side, he could be an easy finalist with at least a reasonable chance to win it all. There is one enormous absentee here. Mike Contos was 5th at this weight last year as a sophomore and had absolutely marvelous potential. He, for example, twice 10-pointed Greenspan last year, but has decided not to compete this season.

At Medina there are four outstanding State candidates and not much else. Since three of the four exit from the Garfield Sectional, there could be pairings problems which would be a shame. Beside Boross and Greenspan, State qualifier Mitchell and Hollo will also be factors. Mitchell, overshadowed by all of his brilliant teammates, has been rock solid for Walsh. In the Elite Duals he had the critical win to defeat Nazareth, and his 16-8 major decision provided the crucial team point that tied Easton and got to the winning tie breaker for Walsh. He defeated Hollo to win the Ironman and was 2nd at Alliance and 3rd at Medina. Hollo, too, is excellent, holding Root to a 7-5 win at Medina and being a solid placewinner at every tourney. Porowski and Tepley have the best chance to pull an upset, but Tepley, too, is at that rugged Garfield Hts. sectional.

Root should have far less trouble at Centerville than Boross may have at Mentor. State qualifier Brockhoff returns, but I don't believe he can match-up with the very top tier of competitors. He was the champ at St. Xavier and was 3rd at the SWOCA at 171 #. Abrams was a finalist at the SWOCA, but lost on a fall to Root. The rest of the field is very weak; although should State qualifier Alvarez opt to stay at 160#, he would strengthen the competition. Brockhoff defeated him 8-4 at St. Xavier.

Sletvold has really come on strong the last four weeks. Something of an unknown despite being the State alternate at 145# last year, he captured the Alliance title with wins over Mitchell, Hollo and Neal; and looked very good in the process. Factor in State qualifier Massouh and OVAC champ Fitch, and it provides for some real action at the far end of the bracket sheet. Massouh won two State matches last year, but lost a place medal win. Greenspan dumped him in the Consolation quarter-finals.

It's something of a divided field at Hilliard with a top quartet, and then a large number of potential contenders. Ford, a transfer from Tiffin Columbian, has been laying waste to the Northwest District 160s all year. He crushed the field at Perrysburg and Sylvania Southview, but missed a finals match up with Tomaszewski at Tiffin when he could not compete. He may be hampered by a far weaker schedule than the other top contenders. Mellor, Cassady and the aforementioned Tomaszewski are the other members of that top-rated foursome. It will be critical to finish at the top of this district, because the tough finalists from the other districts are likely to hammer the last couple qualifiers from Hilliard.

171#

**PROJECTED CHAMPION: TIM SANDERS (MASSILLON JACKSON)**

## TOP CONTENDERS

2. Magistrelli (Maple Hts.)
3. James (Akron Springfield)
4. Salmon (Worthington Kilbourne)
5. Sveda (Walsh Jesuit)
6. Blamer (Hilliard)
7. Martin (Cleveland Hts.)
8. Heid (North Canton Hoover)
9. B. Greenspan (Shaker Hts.)
10. Hertenstein (West Chester Lakota)
11. Vanni (Garfield Hts.)
12. Norvell (Garfield Hts.)
13. Fillo (S1. Edward)
14. Maher (Pickerington)
15. Haley (Dayton Wayne)
16. Newman (Westland)
17. Stillwagon (Clayton Northmont)
18. C. Smith (Cincinnati Princeton)
19. Kuns (Westlake)
20. Franke (Oregon Clay)
21. Klespies (Hudson)
22. Enochs (Miami Trace)
23. Gardner (Dublin Coffman)
24. Moye (Lorain Southview)
25. Moore (Hamilton)

Despite an enormous amount of time and energy spent analyzing and re-analyzing this weight class, I feel no closer to understanding its final resolution than I did six weeks ago. Part of the problem is that it's one of the weakest weight classes in Division I with no returning placers competing here. A second issue is that some of the best candidates have suffered such egregious losses, that it's difficult to believe that they were total flukes. So what I've tried to do is choose wrestlers that seem on hot streaks now for my top place.

Given that criterion, Tim Sanders is an almost immediate top choice. A District champ last year, he won one bout and lost a second in overtime. This year Burger handled him easily in the Solon semi-finals, and it certainly provided uncertainty. However, since then he has won at Wadsworth with a fall over the tough McFarland and at Alliance with another fall over Donehue. He comes from a well-defined district where he, State qualifier James and Heid should be the three qualifiers. James, who certainly could be a finalist, won two State bouts at 152# last year, and is slowly rounding into form at this substantially higher weight class. He will be worrisome to everyone here. Enochs and Wepler (Chillicothe) are probably the next best, but it's real difficult seeing anyone beating out that top trio.

I've listed nine Mentor entrants as part of my top 25 and, of course, only four will qualify. Magistrelli was a State qualifier as both a freshman (119#) and sophomore (135#), but lost a first-round district upset last year and was eliminated. He has the experience and athleticism to do well, and it may be just a question of who gets the pairing and refereeing breaks in such a closely matched field. Magistrelli defeated James at Brecksville, but then lost to Martin who had beaten Greenspan who defeated James. Right! I don't know much about Martin, but he is 17-2 and won the Brecksville. Sveda is yet another one of those excellent Walsh juniors who has a 23-6 record despite a positively brutal schedule. Vanni qualified for the State tourney at this weight last year and was 3rd at Wadsworth and 5th at the Ironman. And there's the undefeated Kuns

who may be far better than I've ranked him, but who has wrestled a far gentler schedule. A complicating factor is that Greenspan, Sveda, Magistrelli, Vanni and Klespies are all at the Garfield Hts. sectional. One of them won't even reach the District level. One darkhorse to watch is Fillo who has, in my mind, at least one big upset up his sleeve.

The quartet of Salmon, Blamer, Newman and Maher should dominate this weight class at Hilliard. These are all Central District competitors with strong 1996 credentials. Salmon is something of a mystery since I have not seen a lot of his results. However, he was the champion at the Midwest Classic and has been dominating in the results so far received. Blamer was at 189# at Medina -- a strong 4th -- losing only to Martin and Zerkle. Now at 171#, he has placement potential. I've always liked Newman and keep believing that he will have a break-out tournament that will shoot him up the rankings sheet.

Hertenstein, tall and slender, would seem the best of a rather ordinary Centerville group. There are no returning State qualifiers here, and they may have substantial trouble matching up with the boys from the North. The powerful Norvell, winner at Tiffin, may be the one wrestler here that is far better than currently rated. It will be interesting to monitor his progress.

189#

PROJECTED CHAMPION: ZACH THOMPSON (ST. EDWARD)

#### TOP CONTENDERS

- |                                 |                                      |
|---------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| 2. Martin (Beavercreek)         | 15. Bruno (Hudson)                   |
| 3. Lynch (Holy Name)            | 16. Chafins (Marion Franklin)        |
| 4. Simpson (Dublin Scioto)      | 17. D. Smith (Princeton)             |
| 5. Todd (Worthington Kilbourne) | 18. Alberry (Gahanna Lincoln)        |
| 6. Grigsby (Tecumseh)           | 19. Bondurant (Akron Springfield)    |
| 7. Aaron (Sandusky)             | 20. Barnhorst (Oak Hills)            |
| 8. Bittinger (Kent Roosevelt)   | 21. Ware (Wapakoneta)                |
| 9. McKown (Toledo Whitmer)      | 22. Kruse (Hudson)                   |
| 10. Santosuosso (St. Ignatius)  | 23. Leskovan (Painesville Riverside) |
| 11. Bednar (Brecksville)        | 24. Denno (Howland)                  |
| 12. Noble (Cincinnati Elder)    | 25. Cox (Ashland)                    |
| 13. Martin (Walsh Jesuit)       | 26. Payne (Mt. Healthy)              |
| 14. Smith (Wadsworth)           | 27. Peed (Miamisburg)                |

The muscular Zach Thompson has already twice been 3rd at the State meet and he is certainly looking to avoid the hat trick. Thompson first finished 3rd as a sophomore 189 pounder beating Knupp in the consolation rounds. Then last year he moved up to 215# to avoid the O'Neill, Hendricks and Root confrontations, but again finished 3rd at both

the District and State level. He wrestled four excellent consolation rounds at Wright State. This year, back at 189#, he must be accorded the favorite's role, but there will be substantial competition. Thompson must overcome two potential problems -- a tendency toward nagging, performance-sapping injuries and losses in early rounds of tournaments. Given that, he will be tough to keep of that top step of honors podium Saturday night.

Lynch should join Thompson in qualification out of Mentor. A real pinner, Lynch won at Solon and Brunswick pinning each time in the finals. He is very strong and physical. After him, the remainder of the field will battle for the last two State berths. My favorites are Santosuosso, Bednar and Martin, with each having low place capabilities. Bednar won at the Early Bird, Brecksville and Massillon Perry tourneys.. Martin was a 103 pounder as a freshman, but missed his junior year of wrestling. His 4th place finish at Alliance suggests he now has reached this second tier of District wrestlers. Kruse, Leskovan, Baran (Solon), Stachowitz (Garfield Hts.) and Porowski (North Ridgeville) may also make a run for it at this weight.

The Perry District is neither strong nor deep. State qualifiers Bittinger and Smith head the bracket sheet, but only the former can compete with the top boys. The field is very weak after this duo.

On the other hand, there is a lot of depth at Centerville. State qualifiers Martin, Grigsby and Noble return, but it is only the first two who can challenge the very best. Martin, a finalist at Medina, lasted 39 seconds in his only bout at Wright State last year, but he'll do far better this year. Grigsby also has solid placement potential and this duo should be finalists at this district. Noble crushed Smith to win the SWOCA, but lost to Ehram and Kruse at the GMVWA. He may be better than I have him placed.

As we'll also see at 215#, the Hilliard District is very crowded. State qualifier Todd missed part of the season, but he has performed very well since his return. While he defeated Simpson 8-3 at last year's District, I believe that the latter boy may have passed him. Simpson was 2nd at 215# at Alliance and has been dominating in the Central District this year. Maybe we could call he and Todd district co-favorites. State qualifier Aaron is also part of this seething stew and should reach Wright State once again -- and this time avoid early falls. State qualifiers Bruno and Chafins, along with McKown and Alberry, would seem to be in a frantic four-way battle for the last two berths. Chafins is up from 160#, while Bruno has had an up-and-down season. Alberry took Martin into overtime and has lost some close bouts to excellent performers. Ware and Cox are far lesser known, but they can also be factors here, while Carney (Toledo Rogers) and Williams (Mansfield) may need heavenly intervention.

215#

PROJECTED CHAMPION: JEFF KNUPP (WALSH)

## TOP CONTENDERS

2. Tackett (Westland)
3. Johnson (Lorain Southview)
4. Clark (Sylvania Northview)
5. Willer (Fremont Ross)
6. Lindsay (Massillon Jackson)
7. Graham (Westerville South)
8. Falcione (Howland)
9. Ebert (St. Edward)
10. Kelley (Sandusky)
11. Sylvester (Massillon Perry)
12. McCaffrey (Glen Estey)
13. Eperson (Lebanon)
14. Black (Cincinnati Princeton)!
15. Pearson (West Chester Lakota)
16. Yokley (Maple Hts.)
17. Padgett (Fairfield)
18. Peck (Mentor)
19. Lovell (Akron Springfield)
20. Salsberry (East Liverpool)
21. Brugler (Defiance)
22. Durden (Shaker Hts.)
23. Handy (Hoover)
24. Orozco (Toledo Whitmer)
25. Critzer (Miamisburg)
26. Leonard (Findlay)

Knupp is the third of the great Walsh juniors and his accomplishments more than match those of Marchette and Heskett. I'm not sure he is as highly appreciated as his accomplishments merit, which is, I guess, understandable in view of the brilliance of his colleagues. Still he is the only undefeated Walsh wrestler and the only one to win two Ironman titles and maybe someday he'll even win an Outstanding Wrestler Award. Although for some reason heavyweight wrestlers (and I'm including the 215# class here) almost never receive them. At any rate Knupp is a prodigy. He won at Reno, Alliance, Medina and the Ironman, and has rarely been pushed. None of his bouts went the distance at Alliance, nor did any at Medina or the Ironman either. A sensational student (2nd in his class), he wrestles with skill, experience and a penetrating intelligence. There are no real challenges here.

At Mentor, state qualifier Johnson looks like a solid second choice. He missed State placement by one point last year. Ebert is probably at about the same level, but continuing injuries may sidetrack his chances. He was 4th at Reno -- after a final round injury default. It could well be Yokley versus Peck for the last spot, with the latter boy winning their first confrontation -- although I believe Yokley will win next time. Durden is yet another candidate with right draw and effort.

The Hilliard District is really loaded with potential placewinners. Tackett crushed the Brecksville champ Kelley at Sandusky St. Marys 14-2, and some feel he has the best shot at giving Knupp a tough bout. A State qualifier last year, he has made real progress this season. Clark is top rated in the Toledo District and has won some tough bouts this year. Willer, Kelly and Graham are all State caliber wrestlers, but there is some question as to the availability of the latter boy. Each of them has had solid successes during the year, but each has had at least one setback as well. Willer, for example, had big wins at Tiffin, Fremont and Ashland, but lost to Graham at Toledo Rogers. Right behind this quintet is another fivesome of Brugler, Orozco, Leonard, Williams (Mansfield) and Bartlett (Wapakoneta). It should be an excellent competition.

It is also a very crowded and demanding field at Perry. There are only three spots available and I count eight legitimate contenders. Not only that, but they come from all over that mammoth district so that I don't have a lot of "comparables." In the grand scheme of things, nobody here is likely to get anything more than a low place at best, but it should be an exciting process to get that far. Howland High School comes from a "wrestling impaired" part of the State, but they have really put together a fine team, and Falcione is one of the best. He won the Brooke Classic in West Virginia and was the State alternate at this class last year losing 3rd place to Bittinger. Lindsey and Sylvester are rivals at school districts that are adjacent to one another, with the latter boy generally on the losing side. Lindsay was the champ at Solon and Wadsworth and grabbed a strong 3rd at Alliance. He, too, was a State alternate last year. Sylvester was 4th at both Medina and Alliance, and just a little higher performance level might boost him up three or four spots. Lovell is a solid performer who competed at heavyweight last year and won the Dies after a 3rd place at Brecksville. The freshman Salsberry is amazing. He was 2nd at Medina -- pinning Pearson and Bowe -- and was 4th at the OVAC. He may not be quite ready to get through this formidable field. Handy placed at Medina losing to Sylvester by a single point. Emch (Wadsworth) and Eggleton (Miami Trace) are also possibilities.

State qualifier Black returns at Centerville, but he has met stiff competition in his home area. This has probably been the most volatile area in the State at this weight with McCaffrey nominally the best. The competitor to watch is the freshman Epperson who has the fluidity and moves that suggest that with work he will be a big-time contender -- perhaps as early as this year.

HVY.

PROJECTED CHAMPION: AARON DARDZINSKI (GARFIELD HTS.)

#### TOP CONTENDERS

- |                                  |                               |
|----------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| 2. Jones (Wadsworth)             | 14. Brown (Pattersdn)         |
| 3. Kreider (Cloverleaf)          | 15. Edwards (Toledo St. John) |
| 4. Bailey (Cincinnati Princeton) | 16. Tyla (Walsh Jesuit)       |
| 5. Orr (Cincinnati Northwest)    | 17. Colahan (Westland)        |
| 6. Nader (Lakewood)              | 18. Bailey (Hamilton)         |
| 7. Orsky (St. Edward)            | 19. Lave (Berea)              |
| 8. Faunda (Fitch)                | 20. Keaton (Miami Trace)      |
| 9. Norris (Findlay)              | 21. Salvino (Massillon)       |
| 10. Duncil (Fairfield)           | 22. Watrob (Strongsville)     |
| 11. Matalka (Gahanna Lincoln)    | 23. Stout (Fremont Ross)      |
| 12. Smith (Alliance)             | 24. Smith (Stebbins)          |
| 13. Millisor (Delaware Hayes)    | 25. Purdy (Elida)             |

During the early 1980s, I had a horrendous spell in choosing Division I heavyweight champions, but somehow (either through close analysis or incredibly good luck -- choose only one) I've been correct the last five years. That streak is in real jeopardy this year as we look at a weight class with no clear favorite; a weight class, in fact, where it would be impossible to choose a top foursome and be comfortable in concluding that there is a 90% chance that the winner will come from that leading quartet. In reality, no one here has a probability of a State title above, say, 15%. This is a very undifferentiated field where week-to-week events constantly shuffle heavyweights into the limelight and then back out again.

During the past two years, 20 of the 27 State champs in Division I have emerged from the Mentor District -- including the last nine weight classes last year. So, playing the percentages, my choice this year is the big Garfield Hts. junior Aaron Dardzinski. Dardzinski missed State qualification by two points last year losing to Nader 5-3. This year he won the Ironman in a convincing manner, but was 3rd at Wadsworth being 'upset by Emch in an early round (and then thoroughly avenging that loss for 3rd). Dardzinski weighs about 250#, but is a mobile, big man and that could spell the difference. If he or Jones were to win as juniors, they then would, next year, have the opportunity to win a second heavyweight title -- a feat that has never been accomplished by a Division I wrestler since the classes split in 1971. The last big school heavyweight to win two titles was the great Greg Wojciechowski in 1967 and 1968. The only three-time winner was John Marshall's outstanding big man, Jim Dregalla, back in the 1950s.

A trio of heavyweights seem somewhat better than the rest of the field at Mentor -- with Nader and Orsky joining Dardzinski. Nader was 5th last year after finishing 4th in the Mentor District. He is a defensive specialist who is very difficult to score against, but is not real aggressive himself. That almost guarantees a lot of close, low-scoring battles. His only loss VAS to Dardzinski. Orsky was behind State champ King last season, but he has come into his own this year. He was 2nd at the Ironman to Dardzinski, 3rd at Medina losing only to the champion Reed and 6th at Alliance after. an injury in the semi-finals. Below this trio are the improving Tyla and the mammoth Lane.

Orr and R. Bailey are both returning State qualifiers who have battled for several years on the Cincinnati mats. I've always favored Orr, but this year Bailey took a convincing 7-1 decision at the SWOCA final to move ahead. Bailey also won at St. Xavier and Fairfield, and this junior will be a threat to anyone in the field. Duncil took the Kenston crown, but didn't make the finals at Fairfield, but has only suffered two defeats this year. Brown was a District semi-finalist last year before losing twice and being eliminated. This year he has roamed around the State meeting some tough opposition. He was 4th at Medina including a win over Matalka. Smith and P. Bailey certainly could crack the top four, while Quay (Sycamore), Catanzaro (Cincinnati Elder) and Walker (Lebanon) are possibilities.

I'm not terrifically impressed with the likely entrants at Hilliard. Matalka was 6th last year, but has struggled big-time this year. He was 5th at Medina and 4th at Perrysburg, but his great size (6' 6", 266#) make him very dangerous. The equally huge Norris has been more consistent, while State qualifier Millisor is inconsistent. There is a further drop-off in quality after this threesome, but with the difficult-to-decipher field, any of them may have an important role to play.

The most intriguing entrant is the junior Bob Jones. We are talking about a superior athlete here. Last year as a 215# sophomore, he racked up a very high percentage of falls while accumulating over 30 wins. He pinned through the Perry District (the longest taking 2:56) and then enjoyed a 49-second fall in the State opening round. An overtime loss to eventual champ Kessler and another to Thompson eliminated him. This year a football injury sidelined him until the third week in January. His first real action was at Alliance where an opening loss in 29 seconds was followed by five wins before a one-point loss to the excellent Majusik put him 5th. I am terribly tempted to choose him, but he may have returned just a little too late. State qualifier Kreider won two State bouts last year and is solid. He was 1st at Richmond Hts. and 2nd at Wadsworth. Faunda, the Wadsworth champ, is another heavyweight to watch. The win at Wadsworth over Kreider was revenge for a 6-4 District loss in the finals that cost him a State place. Orsky beat Faunda 12-6 at Alliance, but Faunda came back for a 4th. Nick Smith and Keaton could probably qualify at other districts but may be out of luck here -- while Salvino and Hummel (Kent-Roosevelt) are long-shots.

## TEAMS

1. Walsh Jesuit -- Last year during the break between the final consolation bouts for 3rd place and the individual title bouts, I calculated that Walsh wrestlers had a combined record of 28-1 with 16 of the wins earning bonus points. By tourney's end, Walsh had five champions, three runners-up and a 3rd place to claim their 4th title in five years with a record 203 team point total -- and that was with Marchette injured. This year they'll win their 5th team title, putting them 3rd on the all-time big school list behind only Maple Hts. and St. Edward. The big three of Marchette, Heskett and Knupp are all awesome and all are only juniors. Favaro, Thompson and Rawlings could help match last years five individual titles (or surpass it) and Mitchell, Sveda, Tyla, Martin and Forsyth are all very good. One last thing, 9 of the 14 starters return next year.
2. St. Edward -- This will make 20 consecutive years that St. Edward has been in the Top Ten and the last 19 will have been in the Top Four. I'm very sure that this team hasn't quite put it all together yet this year, and if they can really mesh, they'll score close to 100 points. Thompson, Kulczycki and Nakamma are their best hopes, but Hrovat, Toyama, Hollo and Orsky have placement potential. Long-shots include Ebert, Fillo and Marcellino, but this team just doesn't have the firepower to catch Walsh.

3. Massillon Perry -- Dave Riggs has put together an outstanding team at Massillon and his real payoff should be this year. Smith, Metzger, Douglas and the two Chandlers are flat out excellent with the four of them having State finalist potential. They'll likely win the designation as having the best public school wrestling team in Ohio, if nothing else.
4. Pickerington -- It seems like they have an outstanding team every year, but if Anderson or Harris can win an individual it will be the first in the school's history. This team should have a lot of State qualifiers, but after the top duo they'll have to hope that people like Lightfoot, Mellor, Hughes or the Vennons get hot.
5. Massillon Jackson -- This is a darkhorse contender for a Top Five slot that is closely tied to Sanders being at least a finalist at 171 #, and Childress, Copeland, Massillon, Nettle and Lindsey wrestling at absolute peak form. The Perry District is tougher than last year, but it's still a friendly district from which to qualify. Massillon Jackson needs to take advantage of that.
6. Dublin Scioto -- This is by no means a great dual meet team, but the quartet of Feeney, Simpson, Gulbrandsen and Homan could put a lot of points on the board. The key will be to get Simpson at the right weight, and for Feeney to whip the tough field at 140#.
7. Garfield Hts. --A team with a plenitude of underclassmen with just enough firepower -- maybe -- to make the Top Ten. Both DiMichele and Dardzinski wrestle at relatively weak, wide open weight classes and they need to use that to their advantage. State qualifiers Vanni and Greene return, but there's not much back up help and both their Sectional and District are rugged.
8. Westland -- A team that has several potential finalists and back-up strength that could play a role at Wright State. Tackett and Je. Moore lead the way at weight classes ideally suited for their skills. Ji. Moore, Newman, Spaulding and Calahan are Wright State possibilities who could score with the right draw.
9. Cincinnati Princeton -- A well-balanced and powerful team that may not have enough "star power" to do well at the State meet. I came close to picking Hill at 112# and Bailey could win as easily as anyone at heavyweight. The question then remains as to whether Black, Brooks, Fox and the Smiths are District wrestlers or State wrestlers.
10. Shaker Hts. -- This is my long shot special. Sharpley and the Greenspans are all at weight classes where solid wrestling will be rewarded. Sharpley needs to have an "out of his mind" weekend, while J. Greenspan draws away from Boross and Root and is a finalist. That leaves B. Greenspan to place, since there is no margin for error.

## DIVISION II

103#

PROJECTED CHAMPION: JIM HOLMES (RAVENNA)

### TOP CONTENDERS

- |                                  |                                 |
|----------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| 2. Frederick (Vermillion)        | 14. Toukonen (Claymont)         |
| 3. Crane (Utica)                 | 15. Tomaso (Chardon)            |
| 4. Adkins (Coventry)             | 16. Ritter (Wauseon)            |
| 5. Kovach (Firelands)            | 17. Hickman (Alter)             |
| 6. Mesenberg (Milan Edison)      | 18. Tilson (Port Clinton)       |
| 7. Rossiter (Buckeye Local)      | 19. Chavers (Warrensville Hts.) |
| 8. Stroupe (Springfield Shawnee) | 20. Bellante (Dayton Christian) |
| 9. Falk (Orrville)               | 21. Wenzel (Olentangy)          |
| 10. Leng (Medina Highland)       | 22. Taylor (Carrollton)         |
| 11. Quick (Perkins)              | 23. Egger (Fairfield Union)     |
| 12. Mihalko (Twinsburg)          | 24. Thompson (Bethel Tate)      |
| 13. Lewis (Norwood)              | 25. Simmons (Lake Catholic)     |

The defending Division II and Division III champions will both compete at this weight in 1996, but there is not likely to be much suspense as to the final outcome. Jimmy Holmes defeated a tough field last year while taking the Division II title, and he has been even more imposing this year. While excellent on his feet, his real strength is on top where he can score and often pin in a hurry. Undefeated this season, he pinned to win championships at both Solon and Kenston and he will be a strong favorite to repeat this year. Last year he defeated Sessley in the semi-finals and Tompkins in the finals; and while this is a solid field, no one approaches the skills of that duo.

Holmes' top two challengers are likely to emerge from the Galion District. Frederick was 5th at this weight last year -- losing one-pointers to both Tompkins and Sessley. He has campaigned primarily at 112# without blemish and was 2nd at Medina at 103# -- losing in the finals to Kulczycki. A formidable competitor, he may have trouble matching up style-wise with Holmes. Also at Marion Harding is the defending Division III State champ, Scott Crane. Last year he capped a 44-2 season with a marvelous State tourney by dominating the field and avenging his district loss to Beyer with a 10-0 lambasting in the final. He has been at 112# all year finishing 5th at the Ironman and then defaulting at the Medina semi-finals to Sessley when injured while trailing 5-0. If he again gets hot at Wright State, he could challenge Holmes. Mesenburg, also at 112# most of the year, is probably next best at this district. A first-round district upset victim last year, he should qualify behind Frederick and Crane. Behind this trio are six to eight potential qualifiers that the district draw will eventually sort out. I've ranked the Tiffin champ Quick, Ritter, Tilson, Wenzel and Egger. Certainly Helton (Norwalk), Yates (Big Walnut), and Noftz (Clyde) are about equal in stature, and it should be a real donnybrook for those last two places.

The Firestone District is undoubtedly the deepest in the state this year at 103#. Holmes, of course, is the standout, but State qualifier Kovach and the powerful Adkins certainly have placement potential. Kovach dropped a 10-6 District decision to Holmes last year, but still grabbed the last qualifying spot. After an impressive first-round win over Hess, he was tech failed by Tompkins and eliminated in a one-point loss to Frederick. Adkins, behind Tompkins last year, has come into his own during his junior season. A ferocious pinner, he won easily at Wadsworth decking Nettle in the final. Despite all his fine wins, one of his most impressive outings was a 16-11 loss to Kulczycki in which he nearly pinned the Division I State placer and lost only in the last 15 seconds. He can pin anyone in this field, including Holmes, so he is capable of the big upset. His problem may well be handling Holmes' legs if he finds himself on the . bottom. Falk won two District bouts at 112# last year and will be tough at the lower weight. Leng is a great freshman who was 4th at Medina, losing twice to Stickel. Mihalko was a runner-up to Holmes at both Solon and Kenston, while Tomaso has previous District experience. Simmons must also be watched based on a 2nd at the CIT, including a 20-4 shellacking of Division I State qualifier Zielinski. The freshman Shutty (Padua), Merriman (Fairview Park), and Canzonetta (Ashtabula Edgewood) could be other factors.

It's much weaker at Wilmington. State alternate Stroupe was close to State qualification last year, and should dominate this season. He would appear to be a quantum jump ahead of everyone else here. A possible exception might be Lewis, who has been impressive in winning several small tourneys. Hickman might be best placed for the last qualifying berth, but that is certainly tenuous. Other than those listed, Uehlin (Purcell) and Wells (Franklin) might be other candidates.

The Buckeye Local District is nearly bereft of talent beyond the return of District champ and State qualifier Rossiter. He cruised through this district last year and there is far less talent here now. Toukonen seems next best, but after that I can detect virtually nothing. Except for Rossiter, this is the district you'll want to draw into.

112#

PROJECTED CHAMPION: SHAUN TOMPKINS (COVENTRY)

#### TOP CONTENDERS

- |                            |                                |
|----------------------------|--------------------------------|
| 2. Sessley (Beechcroft)    | 10. Alcantor (Girard)          |
| 3. Legarth (Fairview Park) | 11. Pusateri (DeSales)         |
| 4. Joltin (Liberty)        | 2. Ream (Springfield NW)       |
| 5. Fabian (Oak Harbor)     | 13. McCoy (Wilmington)         |
| 6. Smith (Lexington)       | 14. Kendjorsky (Buckeye Local) |
| 7. Cooper (Buckeye)        | 15. Hockaday (Watterson)       |
| 8. Huxel (Perry)           | 16. Mackesy (Indian Lake)      |
| 9. Hess (Graham)           | 17. Wall (Hamilton Twp.)       |
|                            | 18. Bullock (Cambridge)        |

19. Heitfield (Lemon Monroe)  
20. Hernandez (Wauseon)  
21. Metcalf (Padua)  
22. Schirig (Perkins)

23. Dixon (Steubenville)  
24. Brankatelli (Orange)  
25. O'Dell (Eaton)

This is unquestionably the strongest, deepest, best-credentialed weight class of the 42 to be contested this year. It currently includes 12 returning State qualifiers, including seven who have placed and three who were finalists (including two-time champion Joltin). While 119# is no treat, we may see some migration in that direction from this class. There will be great match-ups starting with the very first round and the eventual resolution of this weight is anything but clear.

Tompkins, the star Coventry junior, was 2nd at 103# last year losing a 14-11 battle with Holmes. An integral part of the Coventry's brilliant lower weights, he has sparkled all year. His only loss -- in the Dies Final -- was a second period fall by Cooper in a bout in which he was leading. Team momentum could be a major factor here.

Sessley is also very, very good. He was 3rd at 103# last year (losing to Holmes) and he was super-impressive. This year at Medina, he again looked great before dropping a close bout to Division I pick Smith in the finals -- a bout that will clearly not make the referee's Hall-of-Fame. Talent-wise, he may be the best candidate, but he'll need to string four great bouts together.

Joltin, of course, was a Division III champ at 103# in 1994, and then won at 112# in Division II last year. He could end up being the first Ohio three-time champ that never was made a top choice in this report. If so, shame on me. Joltin has exceptional talent and is far more battle-hardened than the relatively weak schedule he wrestles would suggest. More importantly, he exhibits great resiliency and resourcefulness. Last year, Legarth dominated him in the District final winning 9-4. He bounced back by wrestling a great State tourney, including a 10-2 victory in the finals over Drew Smith.

The real enigma here is the two-time State qualifier Legarth. Twice he has had exceptional seasons end with first-round State losses. This year has been his best so far as he has been thoroughly dominating in virtually every contested bout. If he wrestles at Wright State at the same level he has maintained this year, he will win.

Smith was a major surprise last year. He grabbed the 5th and last qualifying spot with a narrow 4-2 win over Wall, and then caught fire at Wright State. It was triggered with a 3-2 first round upset of Legarth and then solid wins over both Schlaegel and Dickson. Joltin hammered in the finals, but it was a great performance. It will take a miracle of similar Proportions to happen again, but this competitor is clearly a pressure wrestler.

Let's briefly plug these top contenders into the District context. It will be brutal at Firestone. Tompkins, Legarth and Joltin will be joined by Division III placer Huxel and State qualifier Cooper. Watch out for Cooper. He has the ability to take out anybody in this field once he gets rolling. He has to beat out Division I State qualifier Dennis

Archer just to make the team at 112#. Just another example of the fierce competition at every tier of this weight class. This is a sensational quintet and one can only hope that the pairings are such that all can qualify. State alternate Alcantor missed Wright State by two points last year, and he lost a narrow 9-7 decision to Joltin at Jackson-Milton. Beside Metcalf and Brankatelli, it would be unfair not to mention the excellent Watson (Benedictine), Varney (Kenston) and Miller (Lake Catholic).

Galion is equally crowded and nearly as tough. Besides Sessley and Smith, the competition will include the very tough State place winner Fabian. A rugged competitor, he defeated runner-up Smith at last year's District and wrestles primarily tight, low scoring bouts that almost always provide an opportunity to win. State qualifier Pusateri never really impresses me during the regular season, but he sure knows how to win at tournament time. Tompkins beat him 21-9 in the dual meet. Hockaday and Wall should battle for the last spot, but Hernandez and the recently cut-down Schirig should be right there, too.

Hess, McCoy and Ream are a trio of State qualifiers out of Wilmington who placed exactly in that order at the 103# District last year. The vagaries of the draw and some pressure wrestling got Ream a State 4th, which included a big win over Cooper. Hess, however, is still top dog here after winning at Graham and finishing 4th at Medina -- including a 7-1 loss to Fabian. A second trio of Mackesy, Heitfield and O'Dell seem somewhat behind the top group, while Pierce (Springfield Shawnee) and Baudendistel (Mason) have long-shot potential.

Again, the Buckeye Local District is way behind. It would not surprise me if their three qualifiers failed to win a bout. Kendjorsky seems best, but Dixon and Bullock' could challenge. Three with upset potential might be Hinzey (St. Clairsville), Burkhart (Morgan) and Smalley (Washington Court House).

119#

PROJECTED CHAMPION: DAMON STOUGH (COVENTRY)

#### TOP CONTENDERS

- |                               |                                    |
|-------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| 2. Spencer (Edison Local)     | 13. Murphy (Perry)                 |
| 3. Hickman (Alter)            | 14. Hassey (Columbus DeSales)      |
| 4. Davis (Utica)              | 15. Hansen (Indian Lake)           |
| 5. Hellickson (Olmsted Falls) | 16. Borjas (Oak Harbor)            |
| 6. Skarupa (Norwalk)          | 17. Wilson (West Holmes)           |
| 7. Coe (Ravenna)              | 18. Grant (Bryan)                  |
| 8. Novario (Twinsburg)        | 19. Everhart (Springfield Shawnee) |
| 9. Schlaegel (Graham)         | 20. Tolar (Padua)                  |
| 10. Archer (Buckeye)          | 21. Mauser (Orange)                |
| 11. Cooper (Steubenville)     | 22. Ramey (Circleville)            |
| 12. Johnson (Claymor:t)       | 23. Lowe (Clermont NE)             |

Damon Stough may turn out to be the shortest member of this field, but it's likely that he'll be on the top step come late Saturday afternoon at Wright State. A real crowd-pleaser, he is non-stop action looking to score or pin every second of the bout. He was 6th as a freshman, 4th last year as a sophomore, and he will be a solid favorite to win this year. He has manhandled every competitor this year including a fall over former State runner-up DiMichele. He is fun to watch.

Again, it's a very deep district at Firestone. While Stough stands ahead of the field, that distance is not insurmountable. Whoever the other four qualifiers are, they all will have placement potential; but identifying that quartet from among a tightly bunched field will be tough. State qualifiers Novario and Coe met for 3rd place at Solon with Coe a narrow winner. Cae is something of a paradox. On occasion he looks close to unbeatable, and then you see something like a 15-4 loss to Shawk and you have to wonder. State qualifier Archer certified at 112#, but unless he can defeat Cooper in the wrestle-off, he'll be here -- which, frankly, isn't that bad an outcome. He hasn't seemed focused in some of his bouts. Hellickson may be better than any of this group, while Division III qualifier Murphy could be the big surprise here. He wrestled McClanahan tough in the 125# finals at Wadsworth. He may be vastly under-appreciated at number 13 on this list. Mauser and Tolar are two outstanding freshmen who might not have the horsepower to go with the top boys. Gibbs may be another surprise. He looks to be a totally different wrestler at 119#, but his sectional at Olmsted Falls will be brutal. Spetz (Lake Catholic) and Daniels (Field) are another step behind.

I was tremendously impressed with Spencer at Medina. He was outstanding at 125# and he'll be even better at 119#. He ripped Forsyth 10-3 for 3rd place. The Buckeye Local District is solid. State qualifiers Johnson and Cooper are right behind Spencer with Wilson yet another contender. The physical style exhibited at this district may serve the qualifying trio well at Wright State. I also like Rinkes (Buckeye Local), Melvin (Maysville) and Pendleton (Indian Creek) here.

Davis, a Division III State qualifier, was also outstanding at Medina winning over State placer Wentz in the semi-finals and giving Thompson a battle in the finals. Those bouts exhibited both his strengths and weaknesses. He is very good in the top position and he dominated Wentz for much of the bout from there. Thompson, however, exposed some weaknesses on his feet -- never letting Davis gain control. Former State qualifier Skarupa might be next best here, but this district is difficult to "read." As the ratings show, except for the top duo, it seems a relatively weak field. Besides those I've listed look to Knous (St. Mary Memorial), Maehl (Olentangy) and Schumacher (Shelby) for possible qualification.

Hickman and Schlaegel have both won bouts at the State level and head the group at Wilmington. However, it looks to be a closely matched field with Everhart, Hansen, and Lowe all candidates for the third State berth. My guess is that the pairings will have a major impact on that process with Waldren (Urbana) and Mullen (New Richmond) as dark horses.

125#

PROJECTED CHAMPION: JESSE CLARK (PADUA)

### TOP CONTENDERS

- |                              |                                     |
|------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| 2. Ramos (Wauseon)           | 14. Concar (Avon Lake)              |
| 3. McClanahan (Coventry)     | 15. Kinzer (Washington Court House) |
| 4. Doyle (Buckeye Local)     | 16. Stopperich (Twinsburg)          |
| 5. Springer (Milan Edison)   | 17. Patrick (Tipp City)             |
| 6. Myers (New Philadelphia)  | 18. Anderson (Graham)               |
| 7. Dickson (Indian Lake)     | 19. Dickson (Port Clinton)          |
| 8. McEvoy (Wilmington)       | 20. Anderson (Trenton Edgewood)     |
| 9. Jordan (Ravenna)          | 21. Van Dorn (Lexington)            |
| 10. Cox/Gunn (Olentangy)     | 22. McArthur (V ASJ)                |
| 11. Evangelista (Geneva)     | 23. Stacy (Indian Creek)            |
| 12. Reid (Steubenville)      | 24. Knepper (Anthony Wayne)         |
| 13. Fransen (Buckeye Valley) | 25. Bartley (Ravenna Southeast)     |

This is a weight class filled with question marks. There have been very few match-ups of the top contenders, several of the highest rated come from different divisions, and injuries (past and present) may be at work here. My feeling is that the top trio stand somewhat above the rest of those ranked, with the second threesome, perhaps, good enough to challenge.

Jesse Clark has competed at four different weight classes with equal and astounding success. A Division I State qualifier the last three years (including a 4th last year), he has tremendous experience and handles pressure very well. Of equal importance is that he can score points in bunches, and has the ability to pin at any time. When Jesse gets on a roll, he can be totally awesome. To give one example, he demolished eventual State runner-up Frank Favaro 19-4 in 4:43 at last year's District, and did much the same at 140# this year to State placer Jerry Stratos.

Right behind Clark is State runner-up Jake Ramos who lost the State title in overtime at 119# last year. Ramos, who whipped Stough in that tourney, is the linch-pin of a very fine Wauseon team and he will not succumb easily to Clark (or anyone). One had to be impressed with his near victory over Lamson in the finals in a heart stopping bout that pushed both competitors to their limits.

State qualifier McClanahan is the third member of this top triad. My guess is that he could probably make 119#, but Stough makes for a tough wrestle-off. He, too, has had a great year (who at Coventry hasn't) that was highlighted by a 13-3 victory over Division I third-placer Mark Balog at the Dies final. Like anything else, wrestling feeds on emotion and McClanahan could benefit from Coventry momentum -- if it develops.

Clark and McClanahan should be in opposite halves of the draw, which would mean Ramos would have to beat both to win. That would truly be called earning the title. There is a fall-off behind this top duo at Firestone. Jordan was very impressive at Solon at 130#, but fell early and often at Kenston. I'm not sure how he'll do at 125#. State qualifier Evangelista may be undervalued in this rating and the same may be true for Stopperich who confounds me with his inconsistent results. Both could be substantial factors here. Concar has wrestled a great campaign and deserves qualification. Again Ketchum (Ashtabula Edgewood), McDonald (Warrensville Hts.) and Rhee (University School) deserve consideration.

Right behind Ramos at Galion is the excellent Springer. He has already won four, tournaments and would be in the top group except for his somewhat inexplicable State performance last year when he lost quickly in the first round. There is a big drop-off at this district after the top two with the other three qualifiers unlikely to place. Besides those listed look for Henn (Bexley), Gilmore (Willard) and Tailford (Oak Harbor) as long-shots for qualification.

There is substantial talent emerging from Buckeye Local. Doyle is the defending district champ who drew the redoubtable Tartt in the first round and lost a 12-7 slugfest (Tartt went on to finish 4th). This year he is even better and should be on the rostrum late Saturday afternoon. The only issue might be his physical condition after knee problems in January. Behind him is former State qualifier Myers who missed the important parts of last year with injuries. Healthy once more, he won handily at Smithville, but finished 4th at Wadsworth after losing in the semis to Murphy. Reid won three district bouts and looks ready to qualify, but will be pressed by Kinzer, Stacy and, perhaps, Martin (West Holmes). A solid district.

State qualifier Dickson and McEvoy head a cast of thousands at Wilmington. Dickson was a State semi-finalist last year, including a huge win over defending State champ Levi Spurlock before falling into reverse and losing three bouts to finish 6th. . McEvoy exactly paralleled that effort by winning two heart thumpers before an 8-5 loss to Philabaum set him on the path for 6th place. They'll have to be in top form to match or exceed that effort this year. The third qualifying spot is wide open. I've listed Patrick and a set of Anderson, but Sheffield (Loveland), Baker (Dayton Carroll), or Baker (Springfield Shwanee) will also challenge.

130#

**PROJECTED CHAMPION: SHAWN BRISTOW (AVON LAKE)**

#### TOP CONTENDERS

- |                               |                                |
|-------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| 2. DeShon (Coventry)          | 6. Muzykoski (Licking Valley)  |
| 3. Short (Olentangy)          | 7. Lensman (Graham)            |
| 4. Plouse (Akron St. Vincent) | 8. Rea (Hubbard)               |
| 5. Parrish (Buckeye Valley)   | 9. Moore (Springfield Shawnee) |

- |                             |                           |
|-----------------------------|---------------------------|
| 10. High (Lima Bath)        | 17. Weltle (Perkins)      |
| 11. Santiago (Canfield)     | 18. Clemons (Hillsboro)   |
| 12. Dixon (West Holmes)     | 19. M. Waits (Loveland)   |
| 13. Sanner (Chardon)        | 20. Boggs (South Point)   |
| 14. Woomer (Vincent Warren) | 21. Kline (Ravenna)       |
| 15. Jackson (Logan Elm)     | 22. Wick (Benjamin Logan) |
| 16. Mauro (Dayton Carroll)  | 23. Estrada (Wauseon)     |

There are some potentially intriguing match-ups at this weight class. Last year State runner-up Shawn Bristow lost a District quarter-final bout and was catapulted into the first round of the Consolation. It was there that he and Chris Plouse met in an overtime bout that Bristow eventually won with that sudden-death takedown. He then cruised through three more Consolation bouts and won his first three State bouts before falling in the finals. Plouse, of course, was by that narrow margin eliminated from District competition. That rivalry is likely to continue with Bristow the favorite at the class and Plouse a top contender. Bristow is undefeated at 135# this season, but will compete at 130#. He has not been challenged either at Avon Lake or Brunswick, and his buzz-saw style will be tough to beat.

DeShon and Plouse who look to be his two most determined rivals, were teammates last year at Akron St. Vincent and clearly must know every element of the other's style. They should be sectional finalists and, very likely, State qualifiers. DeShon had a tough draw at Wright State falling into the same quarter-bracket as the eventual champ and 3rd place finisher. He lost to the champ by one point and the third placer by two. That means he's right there. State qualifiers Rea and Sanner fall well behind this trio with the improving Santiago also within this grouping.

The Galion District is strong, but it's difficult to envision any of these qualifiers taking home the State title. State qualifiers Short, High, Muzykoski, Parrish and Weltle are all certified at this class, and if you factor Jackson, Estrada and Gammie (Milan Edison) into the mix, it makes for an exceptionally competitive tourney. Parrish has won a couple of State bouts, while Muzykoski placed 4th in Division III two years ago. All of this group has performed well this season and it will be those having a hot weekend who will qualify. Long-shots are the younger Spurlock (Bellevue) and Weinhammer (Clyde).

My guess is that State qualifier Woomer will move up to 130# and join Dixon and Clemons as co-favorite at Buckeye Local. While very competitive, this district is unlikely to challenge for more than a very low place at the State level.

We've talked a lot about Coventry's brilliant lightweights, but St. Paris Graham also has an exceptional group of performers between 112# and 145#. Lensman is a typical example of the quality product put out by that school on an every year basis. He heads a Wilmington District that displays substantial depth, but not much up-top strength. Luke More is now a maturing sophomore and is following in the footsteps of his State placing

brother. He could well upset one of the higher rated wrestlers from the two northern districts.

135#

PROJECTED CHAMPION: TAIT MILLER (OAK HARBOR)

#### TOP CONTENDERS

- |                              |                                |
|------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| 2. Burkhard (Olmsted Falls)  | 14. Schneider (Wauseon)        |
| 3. Tartt (Warrensville Hts.) | 15. McCort (Carrollton)        |
| 4. Morgan (Graham)           | 16. Kelley (Kenton Ridge)      |
| 5. Smith (St. Charles)       | 17. Cain (Steubenville)        |
| 6. Marder (Twinsburg)        | 18. Pastva (Ravenna Southeast) |
| 7. Wenzel (Olentangy)        | 19. Almaster (Rossford)        |
| 8. Wallace (Valley View)     | 20. Hopkins (Coventry)         |
| 9. Eger (Watterson)          | 21. Foos (Dover)               |
| 10. Sommer (Crestwood)       | 22. Montgomery (Taylor)        |
| 11. Gabriel (Maysville)      | 23. Shaw (Hamilton Twp.)       |
| 12. Brunetti (Lake Catholic) | 24. Cummins (Indian Lake)      |
| 13. Porter (Bellaire)        | 25. Spies (Logan Elm)          |

Several of the top rated people at this weight class are actually certified at 130#, but, I believe, will flow up to the more congenial 135# class. One who will be coming from the opposite direction is defending State champion Tait Miller, who apparently found the cut to 135# difficult. Nonetheless, come February and March I anticipate hireturning to this class to successfully defend his title. He has had an up-and-down year. At the Ironman he competed at 140# defeating Favaro 16-14 OT, and then in an epic 9-9 tie with Hartzler, received a victory by disqualification on a biting foul. His drop to 135#, on the other hand, ended with Schneider headlocking him into an unexpected second period fall. Miller had six losses entering the States last year before taking the title. That experience gives him a slight advantage over his top two Northeastern District competitors.

Both Tartt, 4th last year, and State qualifier Burkhard certified at 130#, but I anticipate them here where they both stand good chances of winning it all. Tartt is a go-for-broke scorer who can put a lot of points on the board. He pinned with 10 seconds to go to win the 5th and last State qualifying spot, then took a strong 4th at Wright State. Burkhard was a District runner-up who lost an overtime tie-breaker in the State quarter-finals and failed to place. He's due for a big State tourney. Marder, Sommer, and Brunetti are all State caliber wrestlers who must beat back some spirited competition to qualify. Hopkins, for example, would be at 130# except that DeShon has already staked out that spot for Coventry. His victory over Toyama at the St. Edward's dual showed his capability there. He may be overmatched by the very best at 135#. Kellhoffer (Geneva), Springob (West Geauga), and Mendez (Salem) are just three of a lot of other possibilities.

Miller will face plenty of tough competition at Galion. Devin Smith has particularly caught my attention, and his recent title at the CIT at 140# is confirmation of his standing. He lost some very close bouts at both the District and State level last year, but should reverse those in 1996. State qualifiers Wenzel and Eger are looking for a return trip to Wright State, and then moving to the next level with State victories. That would appear to leave just one remaining qualifying spot for Schneider, Almester, Shaw, and Spies, but expect them to pull at least one upset. Another possibility is Isaac Burger (Bellevue) who has missed the entire season, but should return shortly. Rooney (Columbus DeSales), Howell (Paulding) and Veliz (Milan Edison) are other thoughts here.

It's going to be an uphill struggle for the Buckeye Local qualifiers. Gabriel looked real quick at Tiffin and exhibited possible placement potential. State qualifiers Porter and McCort are right behind him, while Cain and Foos will challenge.

One of the most impressive freshmen that I've seen this year is Graham's outstanding Ty Morgan. He was a semi-finalist at Medina wrestling up a weight and appears to be otherwise undefeated in his own area. If he follows the normal improvement curve we're looking at a multiple State champ by the time he graduates. Wallace has had a solid year for Valley View, while a number of solid performers like Kelley, Montgomery, and Cummins are right behind. DeMarco (Springfield NE) and Fahnstock (Bellefontaine) are other possibilities.

140#

PROJECTED CHAMPION: SHANE HARTZLER (ORRVILLE)

#### TOP CONTENDERS

- |                                  |                                 |
|----------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| 2. Tomcik (Norton)               | 14. Frick (John Glenn)          |
| 3. Pusateri (Columbus DeSales)   | 15. Eisenmann (Avon Lake)       |
| 4. Miller (Teays Valley)         | 16. Birden (Steubenville)       |
| 5. Ma. Taylor (Dover)            | 17. DeLamatre (Milan Edison)    |
| 6. M. Becks (Lake Catholic)      | 18. Meinking (Purcell)          |
| 7. Newell (Hubbard)              | 19. Priebe (Ravenna)            |
| 8. Schnittker (Perkins)          | 20. White (Sheridan)            |
| 9. Ray (Hamilton Ross)           | 21. Zickafoose (Tipp City)      |
| 10. C. Anderson (Chardon)        | 22. Mathews (Big Walnut)        |
| 11. Bryant (New Lexington)       | 23. Hieber (Galion)             |
| 12. J. Waits/Kenney (Loveland) 1 | 24. C. DeMarco (Springfield NE) |
| 13. Flanagan (Watterson)         | 25. DeMarco (Padua)             |

Early in the year I anticipated a strictly two-man battle for the top spot between neighborhood rivals Hartzler and T omcik. Last year Hartzler took a strong 2nd losing only to three-time champ Pariano in the finals at both Districts and States. Tomcik was right behind him with a solid 3rd losing only to the top two boys at the Sectional, District

and State levels. Since they exit the same sectional, they would be opposite halves at both the District and State competitions. Now, however, that initial certainty has faded to, perhaps, a strong possibility. Tomcik, although he won the title, was not overly impressive at Solon, and then failed to place at Medina. However, he did bounce back strongly at the Dies, and may be rounding back into 1995 form. Hartzler, too, suffered a setback at the Ironman in the now controversial biting incident which also cost him a suspension. However, big wins at Chippewa and Tri-West would also seem to indicate a return to form.

The Firestone District has a lot of firepower. Becks was a District semi-finalist last year before a 13-2 loss to Pariano sent him spiraling down to 6th place, missing qualification by one spot. Newell, Anderson and Eisenmann are all State caliber wrestlers who will face challenges from Priebe, DeMarco and the like. Again it looks like Hartzler versus Tomcik at the top with everyone else battling for the last three spots.

There is also a powerful duo atop the Galion District. State qualifier Pusateri and Miller (6th last year) have the firepower to challenge Tomcik and Hartzler, although they would be underdogs in any such confrontation. Pusateri, at 135# last year, looked like sure placement potential, but after a strong first-round performance, he got stuck by Weinfurter in just 92 seconds and then lost his first Consolation bout in overtime. Late word is that an arm injury may prematurely end his season. Miller, on the other hand, got a somewhat unexpected place keyed by two one-point victories. The rest of this district is substantially less strong and unlikely challenge to the top group. A wrestler to keep in mind for the future is the Galion freshman Ryan Hieber. While not quite ready for prime time, he'll soon be there.

Matt Taylor is the other potential candidate to unseat one of my top two choices. He won one State bout at 140# last year losing to Tomcik 9-2 in the championship round. I think he has substantially narrowed that gap. Frick, Bryant and Birden would seem to be the three next best here. White, DaRe (St. Clairsville), and Bostian (Beaver Local) are other, more distant, possibilities.

It is not a strong group of 140#ers at Wilmington despite the potential addition of some 135s from that crowded district class. I've listed Ray, Waits and Meinking as the top threesome, but that is far more guesswork than analysis. It's difficult to see much chance of State placement from this group, although bigger surprises have certainly occurred.

145#

PROJECTED CHAMPION: JASON LARA (RAVENNA)

#### TOP CONTENDERS

- |                             |                            |
|-----------------------------|----------------------------|
| 2. DeFranco (Fairview Park) | 4. Weeks (Watterson)       |
| 3. D. Anderson (Chardon)    | 5. Workman (Olmsted Falls) |

- |                                  |                               |
|----------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| 6. Sax (Milan Edison)            | 16. Montgomery (Rossford)     |
| 7. Fullerton (Graham)            | 17. Lindner (Hamilton Ross)   |
| 8. Pleger (Watkins Memorial)     | 18. Sass (Padua)              |
| 9. Mi. Taylor (Dover)            | 19. Glancy (Vincent Warren)   |
| 10. Shamblin (Ravenna Southeast) | 20. Jewell (Trenton Edgewood) |
| 11. Neider (Rocky River)         | 21. Haas (Wauseon)            |
| 12. Cornish (Buckeye Local)      | 22. Schmidt (Clermont NE)     |
| 13. Anderson (Bethel Tate)       | 23. O'Donaghue (Bay)          |
| 14. Valentine (Columbus DeSales) | 24. Lucas (Beaver Local)      |
| 15. Finck (New Lexington)        | 25. Goings (Paulding)         |

This is a weight class that is really up for grabs. My choice is solid season veteran Jason Lara who was 4th at this weight last year and has had an outstanding season -- losing only once at 152# to Josh Hegedish. Lara is particularly good on top and the ability to score from that position is an enormous advantage at any level. He wins a lot of technical falls, which indicates the kind of scoring machine he can be.

The Firestone District contains three of Lara's toughest title competitors. DeFranco would have been at 140# last year, but Pariano's presence pushed him up to 145#. Lara nipped him 3-1 in his District opener, and then State qualifier Hageman squeaked out a 5-4 win in the Consolations. This year he has been dominant at both Brecksville and Solon -- his only close bout a dual meet win over Neider. Anderson was 5th last year at 140# losing primarily to the Hartzler/Tomcik/Pariano triad at the District and State level. He defeated Workman 8-7 at the Kenston final. State qualifier Workman should place this year and he certainly has finalist potential. He has shown steady improvement over the past four years, and this will be his final opportunity. This great District quartet is augmented by some fine secondary strength. Neider is very good and, or far, very unlucky. He needs a reversal of fortune, but he, too, has placement potential. I've listed Shamblin, Sass and O'Donaghue, but they are not the only potential qualifiers at this weight. Crossen (Talmadge), Vanni (Highland), Stewart (Akron St. Vincent) and Ferrara (Trinity) all could make waves in what should be a Vf~ry interesting competition.

There will be a strong and deep field at Galion. Weeks won the District title at this weight class last year, but then lost an overtime bout to Workman in the first round and was eliminated. He is ever better this year and was solid at Medina in that absolutely monstrous 152# class. State qualifiers Pleger and Valentine are back, with the former converting two consolation wins into a 6th place finish last year. Valentine has wrestled much of the year at 160#, and it will be interesting to see how quickly he adjusts to this much lower weight. He could be a key element in DeSales' team chances. An otherwise solid year for Pleger was disturbed by a recent 16-4 loss to Tracy Miller, but the size of the score may be just an anomaly. Montgomery and Haas both look like State material, but one will have to pull an upset to make it. Goings, Fisher (Bellevue) and Uhl (Perkins) are long shots.

It's a very solid group at Buckeye Local. Mike Taylor and Cornish are both returning State qualifiers, while Finck was a State alternate. Mix in Glancy, Lucas, Zuercher

(West Holmes) and Unger (Coshocton) and you have the potential for an exceptionally good competition. I still see the top-rated all qualifying, but a single misstep is likely to be fatal here. I think Taylor's win over Rhett Peters at 152# is a good indicator of his placement potential.

Two-time State qualifier Fullerton stands pretty much alone in the Southwest District. Two years ago he qualified as a 140# freshman ending up with a 21-17 record. Then last year he built on that by finishing 2nd to eventual State champ Hildebrand at the District level, but again took an early first round State exit. This year he has dominated this district and was a Medina semi-finalist losing a tough battle to Tracy Miller. The rest of this group will struggle at the State level.

152#

PROJECTED CHAMPION: JOSH HEGEDISH (TWINSBURG)

#### TOP CONTENDERS

- |                           |                                 |
|---------------------------|---------------------------------|
| 2. Boggs (Perkins)        | 14. Tim Miller (Teays Valley)   |
| 3. Stehura (Jefferson)    | 15. Reeder (Green)              |
| 4. Burkholder (Wauseon)   | 16. Dyrdek (St. Clairsville)    |
| 5. Hageman (Buckeye)      | 17. Roberts (Ravenna Southeast) |
| 6. Wallace (Franklin)     | 18. Kalla (Roger Bacon)         |
| 7. Davis (Paulding)       | 19. Hager (Beaver Local)        |
| 8. Davis (Alter)          | 20. Brink (Minerva)             |
| 9. Peters (Claymont)      | 21. Daniels (Kenton Ridge)      |
| 10. Ivory (Hamilton Twp.) | 22. Adkins (South Point)        |
| 11. Gantz (Avon Lake)     | 23. Sundermeier (Lake)          |
| 12. Avers (Oak Harbor)    | 24. Young (Ravenna)             |
| 13. Myers (Eaton)         | 25. Smith (River Valley)        |

This is a very tough call, in part because of the contrasting styles of the top two contenders. Two-time State qualifier Boggs is a strong, flashy wrestler who can score big and pin with real abandon. In winning his District last year, he didn't have a bout go the full six minutes as he totally dominated the field. However, he drew into the McFarland-Knaze quarter-bracket, and after an 11-3 loss to McFarland never got a second chance when Knaze took out McFarland. My thoughts are that a down-tempo match is the best chance to overcome his quickness and strength. Hegedish may not be quite the athlete that Boggs is, but he just keeps getting better and better. He was a surprise State qualifier two years ago, but injuries sidelined him in District action in 1995. He caught my eye last year at Solon when he beat State champion Boross for 3rd, and this season lost in the title round to the same competitor by a tight 7-6 bout. He is methodical and consistent and provides six tough, competitive minutes of wrestling. A title match featuring these two would provoke substantial fan interest. However, neither wrestler will have an automatic berth to the finals.

At Galion, Boggs will match up with the returning 145# District champ in Josh Burkholder. After a 5th place finish last year, the very strong Burkholder has been dominant at 160# this season. He won the Rogers with a 12-2 title round victory, and won at Oak Harbor with almost equal ease. If Boggs and Hegedish draw into the same half bracket, he could be a finalist. It's a loaded district. State qualifier Davis also returns after moving down from 160# at certification time. He has dominated the smaller school tourneys in the Northwest District. His problem will be improving on a 0-2 State record that saw him outscored 40-13. State qualifier Ivory will also be a factor, as will the solid Avers. I've also listed Miller, Sundermeier and Smith -- and the first of this trio is a particular threat. He, too, is down from 160#.

The Firestone District, as is almost always the case, is very strong. State qualifiers Stehura and Hageman both placed at the very strong 160# class at Medina. Both boys are excellent competitors and have upset potential versus anyone in this field, and both are undefeated outside of Medina. Hageman's recent win at the Dies was a good confirmation of his ranking. After the top trio, there is something of a fall off. Gantz, however, has had a big year winning at Avon lake and Brunswick and lost by two points at Buckeye to Hageman. He may have substantially narrowed that perceived gap. Reeder and Roberts are two other possibilities, with Brink and Young in the hunt. This latter boy was displaced at 145# when lara moved down, but he may be a much better competitor here than anticipated. While at 145# he was 2nd at Solon to DeFranco and 4th at Kenston in a strong field. He could be a real fetor. Other thoughts are Conroy/Pennell (Chardon), Mumin (Warrensville Hts.) and Martig (West Branch).

If memory serves, Rhett Peters will be the sixth brother of that illustrious clan to qualify for State action (Scott, Matt, Brett, Chett and Kurtt). That will tie the current' record held by the DiSabatos, and with Elliott and Clintt yet to come that record is in real jeopardy. Peters has lost only to State qualifiers King (at 160#) and Taylor (at 152#) this year, and neither will be at this District weight class. His only real competition could be State qualifier Dyrdek whose sudden-death takedown got him a ticket to Wright State. After this duo, all is chaos with any of a dozen potential qualifiers.

State qualifier Wallace heads the field at Wilmington. He lost a one-pointer for the District crown at this weight last year, but it should be a relatively easy win this time. He easily chopped up the solid junior Myers at Trenton Edgewood, and has won three of four tournaments entered. His only defeat was at the mammoth GMVWA where he lost a 23-15 barn burner to Division I LeBeau. His stiffest competition could be Davis who crushed the field at Troy. Still, Weeks decked Davis at the CIT. I've also listed Kalla and Daniels with Knoll (St. Paris Graham) another possibility. This group will be severely tested in the cauldron of Wright State.

160#

PROJECTED CHAMPION: JOHN McGHEE (COVENTRY)

TOP CONTENDERS

- |                                |                                   |
|--------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| 2. Wervey (Kenston)            | 13. Eastes (Wilmington)           |
| 3. Long (Clyde)                | 14. Poland (Claymont)             |
| 4. B. Becks (Lake Catholic)    | 15. Schill (Brookside)            |
| 5. King (Cambridge)            | 16. Webber (St. Mary Memorial)    |
| 6. D. Crossen (Tallmadge)      | 17. Osborne (Franklin)            |
| 7. Ogilbee (Licking Valley)    | 18. Folkerth (Ravenna)            |
| 8. Eulrich (Indian Lake)       | 19. Brightman (Dayton Northridge) |
| 9. Z. Miller (Oak Harbor)      | 20. Tyrell (Galion)               |
| 10. Roe (Buckeye Local)        | 21. Roell (Springboro)            |
| 11. Preston (Columbus DeSales) | 22. Zales (Padua)                 |
| 12. Ziegler (Wauseon)          | 23. Keller (Bellaire)             |

Over the years I've had the privilege of seeing any number of great wrestlers. As I scroll forward in my memory, they jump forward in sharp relief from people like Houska and Peritore through Milkovich and Kemp, DeAnna and Jordan, Heffernan and Elinsky, and today Fried and Musser. Certainly one who'll join that list will be John McGhee -many of whose bouts I've enjoyed as much as any I've seen. Absolutely fearless, he works not just to win, but to score and pin regardless of the score, the time remaining, or even the position. If it's any comfort to John, no three-time champ ever failed to win a fourth title his senior year (though Wineberg almost did); and injury will probably be McGhee's biggest danger. He should become Ohio's eighth four-time champ, and the only one who began at a weight class as high as 135#. His four bouts as a freshman initiated us into the classic McGhee style -- especially coming back in the semi-finals from a 10-2 deficit to win in overtime. All three career losses came in his sophomore year, and so he is likely to complete three undefeated seasons during his high school career. The trait that makes John such a crowd favorite, besides his incredible record, is that his style holds no artifice or subterfuge. He's come to pin his opponent, and he will bear substantial risks to achieve that end.

Both Becks and Wervey are involved in difficult wrestle-off situations. Becks and State qualifier McGuirk have vied for the 160# slot with Becks forcing McGuirk to move (away from McGhee). Eastman, on the other hand, is currently at 171# as State qualifier Wervey moved down. Wervey will apparently remain at 160# and he would be the champ in a normal year. He is every bit as fearless as McGhee and the three-time State champ won't have to race around the mat trying to catch him. The likelihood is that he and McGhee will be on opposite halves of the draw with their last bout being for the State title. Becks is also excellent. He pinned to win the CIT and has lost but once this year.

Star football player Chad Long has recovered from some nagging injuries and has had an outstanding January, including a big victory over Boggs. This junior, already twice a State qualifier, has undergone some tough weight reductions in the last two years, and it may have impacted his State performance. Last year he was 2-2 at Wright State, losing a one-pointer to Hill and an inexplicable overtime bout to Gallagher. Now at 160#, he should be comfortable and strong. The rest of that district is reasonably weak, but

that may still be enough for one of them to place. With McGhee at the top, many of the best 160s who are interested in winning it all have moved either up or down. Thus, it is a weight class that is neither deep nor particularly strong; it provides a solid opportunity for those looking for a good chance at either qualification or placement. State qualifier Ogilbee heads that list with Miller, Preston and Ziegler close behind. Any number of others could grab one of the low qualifying berths as well.

T. J. King was one of my mystery men last year. He came to Wright State with a 34-0 record after completely dominating the Eastern District. He won the OV AC title 14-3. In the first round, a Firestone District 4th place finisher knocked him off 14-10 and then a 98 second pin destroyed his consolation chances. This year he did not place at Medina, losing to Hollo and being majored by Stehura. He'll show this year that he's better than that. I expect him to again dominate in the Eastern District, but I anticipate a medium to low place at Wright State as well. The rest of that qualifying group will be underdogs with Roe, Poland, and Keller as possibilities. A wonderful name returning to the scorebook is Steve Hoppel (Beaver Local) who, while certified at 145#, continues to perform well at this weight class.

It's a tightly bracketed group out of Wilmington with Eulrich and Eastes leading the way. I've also listed Brightman, Roell and Osborne, and you could put these five names in a hat and draw any three without significantly altering the laws of chance. Curry (Purcell) and Patrick (Tipp City) fall into virtually the same category.

172#

PROJECTED CHAMPION: JOE McGUIRK (LAKE CATHOLIC)

#### TOP CONTENDERS

- |                                   |                                 |
|-----------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| 2. McFarland (Marlington)         | 15. LeMar (Indian lake)         |
| 3. Donehue (Dover)                | 16. DeLong (South Point)        |
| 4. Didion (Bellevue)              | 17. White (Cincinnati Purcell)  |
| 5. Deluca (Norwalk)               | 18. Dusseau (Oak Harbor)        |
| 6. Burger (Fairview Park)         | 19. Jackson (Warrensville Hts.) |
| 7. Eastman (Kenston)              | 20. Sharpe (West Geauga)        |
| 8. Andrews (Marysville)           | 21. Akers (Claymont)            |
| 9. K. Heath (St. Clairsville)     | 22. Young (Ravenna Southeast)   |
| 10. Swartz (HamiltonTwp.)         | 23. Abner (Bethel Tate)         |
| 11. Fullerton (Bellefontaine)     | 24. Bleil (Eaton)               |
| 12. Weilbacher (Columbus DeSales) | 25. Durben (Coshocton)          |
| 13. Borer (Clyde)                 | 26. Freson (Roger Bacon)        |
| 14. Perrin (Orange)               |                                 |

The way this report is constructed centers around writing 42 short reports (one for each weight class) over a seven-day period. There is no reason to write them in any particular order (thanks to the magic of Kim and her computer), so I start first with those

that seem easiest -- like ones that contain names such as Knupp, Holmes, or Schroeder. That gives me a little more time to collect information on difficult weight classes hoping that something will turn up that will make things clearer. Gradually they all get done until I'm left with the single most difficult case -- and this is it (along with 171# in Division I).

Ironically, my top choice is someone who doesn't even want to wrestle here. . McGuirk finished 4th in the State at 160#, and apparently wanted to compete at that weight again. However, the rapidly improving Becks kept him on the bench until McGuirk moved up to 171# at the CIT and basically pinned his way to the title. Now comfortably situated at 171# -- away from McGhee and Wervey -- he becomes a slight favorite. Actually I was going to choose State qualifier Wervey who won two bouts at State and defeated him 11-7 to win last year's sectional, but, as I understand it, it's ironclad that Wervey will be at 160#.

The districts are very unbalanced with two very weak ones and two that are deep and relatively strong. Firestone is probably the best of the top two with real depth and good quality. State qualifier McFarland has had a great season, finishing 2nd at Wadsworth to my Division I choice Sanders, and generally dominating local area foes. He was 5th last year at 152# and has apparently made a smooth transition to 171 #. Eastman, a runaway winner at Kenston, is probably better suited to 171#, but will face stiff competition from the unorthodox Burger and Perrin. There is tremendous depth here and I particularly like Sharpe and Young. Besides those listed, other contenders are Corrigan (Twinsburg), Cramer (Coventry) and Steiner (Orrville).

There is also solid depth at Galion. State qualifier Didion is now a junior and he will easily match the 30-win season he fashioned last year. He already has won at Bellevue, Avon lake, Oak Harbor and Clyde, and defeated the tough Deluca 8-5 in their dual meet. Deluca and Andrews are basically just below Didion, while Weilbacher, Swartz and Borer are another half step behind. Two or three of this set of qualifiers could well place.

Donahue, already twice a State qualifier, is still but a junior, but he has outstanding talent. Injured for the first six weeks of the season, he has returned without missing a beat. He was 2nd at Alliance defeating Chevalier and Swartz. This lad is a scorer and a pinner, and is dangerous for the full six minutes. Heath is the best Division II competitor along the river (assuming King wrestles at 160#) and he could be a factor here. The rest of the field is relatively weak.

I'm also less than impressed with potential qualifiers from the Southwest. State qualifier Fullerton has done well there, but was not real impressive at Medina getting "decked" by Sveda and Collins. LeMar and Eulrich both certified at 160#, but I anticipate seeing the first name at this weight. It's pretty much chaos after that.

189#

## PROJECTED CHAMPION: MIKE FICKELL (COLUMBUS DeSALES)

### TOP CONTENDERS

- |                               |   |
|-------------------------------|---|
| 2. Zerkle (Graham)            | 13. Newsome (Hamilton Twp.)             |
| 3. Funk (Olmsted Falls)       | 14. Soehnlein (Canton Central Catholic) |
| 4. Tate (Licking Valley)      | 15. Knaack (Bay)                        |
| 5. C. Heath (St. Clairsville) | 16. Spurell (Hillsboro)                 |
| 6. Mathisen (Avon Lake)       | 17. O'Brien (Kenston)                   |
| 7. Campbell (Galion)          | 18. Nickle (Perkins)                    |
| 8. Pankiewicz (Canfield)      | 19. Clemens (Taylor)                    |
| 9. Sheets (Meigs)             | 20. Kuhns (Bellevue)                    |
| 10. Boyuk (Indian Creek)      | 21. Allen (Indian Lake)                 |
| 11. Dohse (Ravenna Southeast) | 22. Davis (Lemon-Monroe)                |
| 12. Ramsey (Loveland)         | 23. Shapiro (University School)         |

This is a solid, well-distributed weight class which features top contenders from every corner of the state. Included in the field are two returning State runner-ups and seven State qualifiers -- a relatively high number for this heavy a weight class. Earlier in the year I thought this might be a runaway for Mike Fickell, but now I believe it will be a much tougher road for him. This is not to suggest that he has regressed in any way, just that the other contestants continue to improve. We've watched Fickell grow from a 119# State qualifying freshman (who authored an enormous first round upset over Haverdill) to a solid 189# wrestler with a wide array of competitive strengths. Last year after an epic first-round overtime win, he cruised into the finals losing a 10-9 heartbreaker to Justin Chagnon. This year, campaigning at both 215# and 189#, he is undefeated save for a double overtime loss to my Division I choice Zach Thompson. Incidentally, Chagnon-- who certainly would be a co-favorite with Fickell at this weight -has apparently decided not to wrestled in this his senior season. Many, including this fan, had looked forward to a 1996 re-match.

Fickell emerges from a difficult district. Last year he was forced to win four consolation bouts to gain a District 3rd before kicking into a higher gear at Wright State. This year he will face an equally tough field at Galion. Paramount among the competition is another Columbus area senior Rocky Tate. There is a certain parallelism between he and Fickell, both having two-time State heavyweight champs as brothers (Luke also won at 189#) and both losing heartbreakers in last year's State finals (Tate fell 14-13 to Neil Harvey). In any event, Tate had won his first 47 bouts last year before that difficult loss. This season Tate twice lost at Medina, finishing 5th, but has been his usual dominating self elsewhere. Clearly a level lower is State qualifier Campbell who was 2nd at Galion and the Gorman, and defaulted to 6th at Marion Harding because of the flu. A solid performer, he is particularly good in the first round of tourneys. Newsome, Kuhn and Nickel would be top choices for the last two spots, with the latter boy owning a victory by fall over Campbell. Kuhbender (Ottawa-Glandorf), Hite (Big Walnut) and Bidlack (Paulding) are other possibilities, but they would need both perfect performance and a favorable draw to have a real chance.

Funk went to Wright State as the undefeated District champion out of Firestone, but ended losing three times in State competition and finishing 6th. This year he should improve upon that performance and certainly has finalist potential. Relatively short for the weight class, he has the ability to get inside on taller opponents (like Fickell) and score heavily. His goal would be to retain his District title and draw away from both Fickell and Zerkle. Mathisen, out of the same conference as Funk, is second best here. A State qualifier last year, he beat Kuhn handily in the Avon Lake final and was runner-up to Division I Lynch at Brunswick. Last year Funk beat him 7-0 at Sectionals. Pankiewicz was impressive winning the Dies, including an 8-2 victory over Dohse. This pair, along with the rapidly improving Soehnlein and O'Brien, would seem to have the best shot at the last three State berths. However, Shapiro and Knaack have possibilities as well. Zarzeczny (Padua) shares with Division III contender Zizzo the distinction of having three "Zs" in his name. More importantly, his return from injury may thrust him into the competitive mix at 189# along with Storm (Fairview Park).

The Buckeye Local District is solid. Defending District champ Cary Heath is the bellwether, and a first-round injury default at Wright State cost him a potential place in that competition. This year he is totally undefeated and has dominated the Eastern District teams. However, Sheets, Boyuk and Spruell all won two District bouts last season and are State caliber wrestlers. Unfortunately, there are but three spots available here, so the potential exists that one of them (perhaps Boyuk) may attempt at 215#. However, that weight class may be even more difficult than this one already is. My guess is that Spruell, up from 160#, may be the odd man out here. A solid long-shot is Fleming (Steubenville) who gave Heath his toughest battle this year. McCort (Carrollton) and Talbot/Fondale (New Lexington) look like they'll be left on the sidelines.

Fickell's biggest challenge may exit from the Southwest. Zerkle, only a junior, is already twice a State qualifier, but has only one Wright State victory to date. That will change this year. He has been totally dominant in his region and his only loss was to Division I pick Zach Thompson, 5-3. He defeated Tate by 4 points in a high scoring bout, and seems to be at the peak of his game. Clemens and Ramsay should snag the last two spots with Allen and Davis close behind.

215#

PROJECTED CHAMPION: RICK CONROY (CHARDON)

#### TOP CONTENDERS

- |                             |                                 |
|-----------------------------|---------------------------------|
| 2. Pallinger (Avon lake)    | 8. Williams (St. Mary Memorial) |
| 3. Rauch (New Philadelphia) | 9. Woodruff (Clyde)             |
| 4. Fafrak (Twinsburg)       | 10. Sechrist (Bellaire)         |
| 5. Mackeever (Bucyrus)      | 11. Spuriel (Steubenville)      |
| 6. Gianfagna (Perry)        | 12. Dobyans (Kenton Ridge)      |
| 7. Shuckman (Purcell)       | 13. Mampieri (Columbus DeSales) |

- |                                  |                                 |
|----------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| 14. Wortman (Mason)              | 20. Gerdeman (Napoleon)         |
| 15. Hartzell (Ravenna Southeast) | 21. Zakrajsek (Medina Highland) |
| 16. Allen (Springfield Shawnee)  | 22. Bolenbaugh (Van Wert)       |
| 17. Burkey (Orrville)            | 23. Carreon (Edison Local)      |
| 18. Beistline (Greenon)          | 24. Bloomfield (Olmsted Falls)  |
| 19. Shumate (Galion)             | 25. Began (Trenton Edgewood)    |

There is a solid chance that this weight class will be dominated by Firestone District wrestlers. The two returning State place winners come from the Northeast, as does another State qualifier (from Division III) and the State alternate as well. However, there is some experienced talent at other districts as well, leading to a far stronger competition than the weight's introductory debut in 1995.

Let's look at the pivotal Firestone District in more detail. Conroy had a sensational season last year and entered the State competition with a 28-1 record (his only loss to defending champ Adeniyi-Bada), but was injured early on in his bout with eventual champ Cominsky. He defaulted that one, but won two consolation bouts before eventually falling to 6th. This year he is undefeated with wins over Fafrak and Bloomquist. Pallinger was a State semi-finalist before losing to Adeniyi-Bada and battled back to 3rd place finish. This year he, too, is undefeated with titles at both Avon lake and Brunswick. He and Conroy met twice last year -- both times in consolation rounds. Conroy won 9-4 at the District level, while Pallinger won at States 3-1 OT, after which Conroy's injuries forced him to forfeit. Originally, State qualifier Dobies (Benedictine) could have reasonably been anticipated to join these two to form a top-notch trio. Not so as apparently Dobies will not compete. However, State alternate Fafrak is back at this weight and he could also be a factor. He lost to Conroy 3-0 at Kenston. Division III State qualifier Gianfagna will also be at Firestone this year, but I'm not sure what to anticipate. He took a strong 3rd at Wadsworth and may well challenge the top boys. The last spot is wide open. Hartzell and Burkey seem like the best bets, but Bloomquist has won some big bouts for Olmsted Falls. Zakrajsek is just back from injury and where his place will be in the scheme of things is still to be determined. Saccomen (Hubbard) and Mohner (NDCI) are long shots.

There is also substantial uncertainty at Galion. State qualifier Mackeeper has returned and should qualify rather comfortably for a second trip to Wright State. Still Woodruff caught and pinned him at Clyde just to provide that edge of uncertainty. Woodruff and Williams are top 10 candidates, too. The former has certified at 189#, but my guess is that 215# will look like greener pastures. As mentioned, he pinned Mackeeper to win at Clyde and also took the title at Fremont St. Joe, while finishing 3rd at Edison. Williams was the State alternate last year at this weight losing in the consolations to Mackeeper 10-6. He wrestles a nearly invisible schedule to me, but the results I have seen indicate continued success -- in fact, all falls. A mystery man is Mampieri who came from nowhere to take the CIT title, although admittedly at a very weak weight class. However, if he's been battling boys like Fickell, Belli and Kelley for the last several years, he is probably pretty tough. The remainder of this District is pretty non-descript with little placement potential.

The top four at Buckeye local are all strong. I watched Rauch in the Consolation round at Wright State and he certainly seemed intense. Competing in Division I, all three of his State bouts ended in falls, with him on the plus side of only one of them. This year he pinned Hartzell to win at Smithville and was 2nd at Wadsworth to Lindsay losing a 15-10 battle. Right behind him is State qualifier Spuriel who, at 189# last year, won two State bouts succumbing twice only to those who ultimately placed. He has yet to wrestle this year -- at least that I know of -- but he is certified at 215#. The question is will he be fresh or rusty. Sechrist has had a fabulous year earning the #1 seed at the OV AC with an unblemished record last year he was the State alternate, losing his go-to-State match to the excellent Frye. Should Spuriel not compete or Sechrist falter, Carreon should jump right in. He won big at Steubenville and Coshocton, and two of his three losses were at Medina.

There is no one with State experience at Wilmington, and that may not bode well for their success at Wright State. However, the top quartet of Shuckman, Dobyms, Wortman and Allen seem easily capable of pulling a surprise in the State bracket. Shuckman, in particular, has been exceptional winning at the SWOCA, Carroll and Sycamore while building an undefeated record. Wortman was the champ at Mason and was 2nd to Shuckman at the SWOCA. Both have strong pinning potential. Allen hasn't been quite as consistent, but he came the closest of the four to State qualification last year including a solid win over Wortman. Dobyms has won two tough regional tourneys including the one at Graham, and he may have surpassed all of the others except Shuckman.

HVY

PROJECTED CHAMPION: JASON PENCE (RAVENNA SOUTHEAST)

#### TOP CONTENDERS

- |                                      |                              |
|--------------------------------------|------------------------------|
| 2. Kelley (Columbus DeSales)         | 14. Studeny (Fairview Park)  |
| 3. Reed (Medina Highland)            | 15. Grayson (Vincent Warren) |
| 4. Sautter (Galion)                  | 16. GranUGreen (Bellevue)    |
| 5. Matusik (Trinity)                 | 17. Chalk (Trenton Edgewood) |
| 6. Speakman (River Valley)           | 18. Forman (New Lexington)   |
| 7. Jones (South Point)               | 19. Conroy (Chardon)         |
| 8. McGlothin (Port Clinton)          | 20. Welch (Eaton)            |
| 9. Baker (Wilmington)                | 21. Villwock (Claymont)      |
| 10. Holt (Steubenville)              | 22. Wolford (Licking Hts.)   |
| 11. Young (Springfield Shawnee)      | 23. Benner (Van Wert)        |
| 12. Kutscher (Lake Catholic)         | 24. Fellows (Buckeye Local)  |
| 13. Klopfleisch (St. Marys Memorial) | 25. Kettler (Mason)          |

Is it Reed, Kelley, Pence? Or is it Kelly, Pence, Reed? Or maybe it should be Reed, Pence, Kelley. Somehow I just cannot find the right combination. And what makes it worse -- they've met one another and it still isn't clear.

Pence was the District runner-up to eventual State champ Cowsette last year, and then lost an overtime quarter-final bout to the eventual runner-up. Reed then knocked him out of the competition by a solid 12-5 mark. This year nobody has come close as he had first period falls to win at both Smithville and the Dies. More aggressive than in the past, he is the most athletic of the three. Kelley, last year's choice, crushed all opposition at Marion Harding last year, but struggled at Wright State. He defeated Matusik by one point in the opening round, but lost to Cowsette in the semis and to Reed in the consolations 3-2 finishing 5th. He, too, has had no problems this season.

Reed is a surprise. He is huge and he uses those upper body tie-ups to stop any scoring and he just grinds his opponent into dust. Pence defeated him at the District level (as did Matusik), but he beat both Pence and Kelley at States and copped a 4th place medal. He was 5th at the Ironman (losing twice to out-of-staters), but won at Doylestown and Medina. In the Medina final, he met my Division III choice, Estell, and frankly I didn't think he had a chance of winning. Instead, he totally controlled the tempo of the bout and scored heavily at the end against a tired Estell to win 8-0.

Not only can I not decide between these three, but I've begun to worry that my fixation on this trio might cause me to overlook a Sautter, Matusik, or even Jones. Anyway, it should be a great competition -- so enjoy!

Pence and Reed along with State qualifier Matusik should have pretty much their own way at Firestone, but, of course, at heavyweight there are always upsets. Matusik has really improved, winning at Brunswick and the Early Bird and losing in CIT finals to Kelley. The mammoth Kutscher was 3rd at the CIT and 5th at Kenston, and he may be good enough to grab a low qualifying spot. Conroy and Studeny would surprise no one by reaching Wright State though placement might be tough. Other possibilities are Nicholson (Louisville), Caramell (Bay) and Holy (NDCI).

The Galion District has an unwieldy number of potential qualifiers. One who will be missing is State qualifier Chuck Buday (Norwalk) who missed both football and wrestling due to injuries suffered in a car accident. He certainly would have been near the top on my rankings. There may be something of a gulf between Kelley and the rest of the field, but State qualifier Sautter may be reducing it. He has come on strong in the latter part of the season and seems to have established good momentum. Last year at States, though, he lost two bouts by a combined 19-1 tally.

State qualifier Speakman is a consistent finalist at tournaments, while McGlothin has shown flashes of brilliance. Klopfleisch lost a two-point first round District contest to McGlothin and remains just a tad behind my top quartet. I've also listed Benner and Wolford along with the tag team ensemble from Bellevue, Grant and Green. Conner

Grant won at Bellevue and Oak Harbor, while Green was runner-up to McGlothin at Clyde. Also look for Anderson (Clyde), Abbot (Teays Valley) and Fabian (Oak Harbor).

State qualifier Jones is right at the 275# limit, and the big junior has a lot of skill and experience. What he lacks is the big time schedule to "stretch him" and boost him more quickly to the next level. He should win at Buckeye local after losing an overtime final last year. However, there is a lot of depth here. Ten of the 16 District participants were underclassmen and will be returning for a second shot at each other. I favor H91t and Grayson for the other two qualifying berths, but there should be a lot of close bouts and plenty of upsets.

I confess to a real lack of knowledge regarding the southwestern District. Baker and Young stick out as the best of a somewhat non-descript lot, but there are probably some newcomers who just haven't registered yet. Baker won two District bouts last year and was a finalist at St. Xavier losing on injury default to Bailey. Young is currently 19-2 losing both times to Division I competitors. Seventeen of those wins have been by fall -- nine in the first period -- indicating a certain turn of temperament. After this top two, all is darkness with Chalk, Welch, Kettler and, maybe, Deaton (Franklin) next best.

## TEAMS

1. Coventry -- The last Division II team to score over 100 points at the State meet was the 1987 Chanel squad, but Coventry certainly has a good chance of duplicating that feat. The Division II record is 158~ points held by the 1978 Coventry team that also fielded four State champs. There are echoes of the past here as both Glover and McCahan were scoring elements of that 1978 group, I don't think the 1996 squad can break the record, but they might have an outside shot at the second best score of 131 ~ points by the 1979 Coventry team. this is a wonderful team with the incomparable McGhee and the marvelous lightweights leading the way. They'd have to suffer a real breakdown for Ravenna to catch them.
2. Ravenna -- Holmes and Lara have the look of State champs, but enough points to catch Coventry will be difficult to find. The inconsistent Coe, Jordan and Young could do well, but they'll need a Coventry meltdown in concert with a great performance to win.
3. Columbus OeSales -- Kelly and Fickell could both be State champs, but there are formidable obstacles for each. Factor in a healthy Rusateri and they'll be locked in a fierce battle with Ravenna for second place. Without him, Mampieri, Valentine, Weilbacher and the little Pusateri would have to provide yeoman's efforts.

4. Olmsted Falls -- I think Funk and Burkhard are set for breakthrough years, and that would be a lot of points. If Workman and Hellickson can "reach" a little, this team will be over the 60 point level.
5. 8t. Paris Graham -- A team that could move all the way up to 2nd place is they're hitting on all cylinders. Zerkle will be Fickell's biggest obstacle and the lightweights like Hess, Schaegel, Anderson and Lensman should provide some scoring. However, the outstanding freshman Morgan is the key element to vaulting upward.
6. Avon Lake -- While Bristow and Pallinger make it look like a two-man team, there are some hidden strengths here. Mathisen is a State qualifier, while Gantz and Concar have had great years. Eisenmann might help here, too.
7. Twinsburg --This is probably a better dual meet team than tourney squad. Hegedish has been marvelous and Fafrak and Novario are solid. Marder is inconsistent, but has real ability, while Stoppperich always leaves me befuddled. They'd like to get some help from some of the other upper weights as well.
8. Fairview Park -- Much of the great teams of yesteryear have graduated, but there are still some resources here. leGarth and DeFranco could both be State finalists while Burger, Studeny and maybe Gibbs can help. The problem is that there are no sure points here.
9. Chardon -- A team replete with Andersons and Conroys of all kinds and types. Still, they have exceptional strength at 215# and 145# with Conroy and Anderson (who else?) with possibilities like Sanner, C. Anderson and, perhaps, Tomaso.
10. Lake Catholic -- This team may be a year away from real glory, but they're starting to put it together now. The brothers Becks are great at 140# and 160# with, perhaps, six other potential scoring threats. The CIT champs need a crucial title from McGuirk, though, to keep that Top Ten rating. They only graduate two starters.

## DIVISION III

103#

PROJECTED CHAMPION: JARED OPFER (SANDUSKY ST. MARY)

### TOP CONTENDERS

- |                                 |                             |
|---------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 2. N. Creech (Milton Union)     | 15. Bright (Dixie)          |
| 3. Carrizales (Delta)           | 16. Hodapp (Edgerton)       |
| 4. Boyd (Lima Central Catholic) | 17. McElroy (Barnesville)   |
| 5. Tipple (Grandview Hts.)      | 18. McDivitt (Cardinal)     |
| 6. Gregg (Preble Shawnee)       | 19. B. Gleckler (Evergreen) |
| 7. Haimerl (Bishop Ready)       | 20. Evans (Jonathan Alder)  |
| 8. Yonker (Manchester)          | 21. Tardiff (Wood ridge)    |
| 9. Horney (Liberty Center)      | 22. Dean (Genoa)            |
| 10. Davis (Loudonville)         | 23. Gondol (Jackson Milton) |
| 11. Hughes (Black River)        | 24. Alexander (Triad)       |
| 12. Donahue (Bellaire St. John) | 25. Mendenhall (Versailles) |
| 13. Stutz (Hillsdale)           | 26. Simok (Northwood)       |
| 14. Bays (Carey)                |                             |

It takes a truly exceptional freshman to withstand all the pressure and all the turmoil to win a State title. Not only is the competition rugged, but the wrestler is exposed to an entirely new set of circumstances that require adjustment outside the wrestling mat. Certainly that pressure is magnified when the freshman brings with him a reputation such that many anticipate his victory well in advance of the State meet. All these conditions apply to Jared Opfer. An outstanding youth wrestler, it was widely reported last spring, when as an 8th grader, he defeated the Division III State champ, Scott Crane, in a spring tourney. With such victories come great expectations, and so far Opfer has proven to be the real deal. Already the champ in three tourneys, his only loss was to another scintillating freshman, Jeff Ratliff, at the Top Gun. While I project a well-balanced field at this class, much of it, as usual, is very young and Opfer will be competing against similarly aged contestants. Given that, his great record and an ability to control in the top position, I think Opfer can win some tight bouts to take the title. It shouldn't hurt that his uncle, Jude Roth, an outstanding coach and former State champ, will be in his corner.

Opfer is joined by Boyd and Carrizales to form an excellent threesome at Fostoria. All have had continued success throughout the year and should qualify easily. Boyd, who has one of my favorite first names, Tristan, began the year by dominating at Northwood and hasn't stopped. He was a strong third at the GMVWA and then won at 112# at the "A" Classic. His big win at the CIT against solid opposition re-inforced the notion that he has high placement potential. Carrizales campaigned at 112# much of the year, but has recently dropped. He

was second at Perryshurg losing only to Stickel, but was apparently injured at Toledo Waite and defaulted. After that there is a log jam of potential qualifiers with Horney and Bays, perhaps, a half step. ahead of the remainder of the field.

There is also a strong trio atop this weight class at Xenia. Creech was a finalist at GMVWA and has to beat out State qualifier Sharp just to make the team. We might see those two switch weights at tourney time, since both have certified at 103#. Gregg, too, is very strong and he, with the right draw, might gain a relatively high place.

Tipple and Haimerl are both from the Columbus area and should dominate the competition at Marion. I don't see much along the river this year, so that Evans and Clum (Northmor) could make it a Columbus sweep. Other possibilities are Sefsick (Cadiz), Schmidt (Malvern), Allen (Crooksville) and Knight (Hannibal River).

The field exiting from Elyria Catholic looks to be unexpectedly weak. With Burnett now solidly committed to 112#, there is no one in this group that has solid placement chances. It's been a long time since the Northeast District has failed to place a wrestler at 103# -- but it could happen in 1996. Yonker and Davis seem strongest, but one has wrestled primarily at 112#, while the other wrestles a less-than-strong schedule. Not ranked, but possible qualifiers are Allega (Independence), Adler (Beachwood) and Richards (Columbia Station).

112#

PROJECTED CHAMPION: GREG ZOLOTY (INDEPENDENCE)

#### TOP CONTENDERS

- |                                  |                              |
|----------------------------------|------------------------------|
| 2. Burnett (Elyria Catholic)     | 15. Ward (Martins Ferry)     |
| 3. Balamenti (Chanel)            | 16. Christy (Liberty Union)  |
| 4. Schmidt (Sandusky St. Mary)   | 17. Kruse (Miami East)       |
| 5. Stover (Brookville)           | 18. Gray (Columbia Station)  |
| 6. Cullen (Margaretta)           | 19. Br. Smith (Cory Rawson)  |
| 7. Gerak (Streetsboro)           | 20. Lang (Waterford)         |
| 8. dohns (Lima Central Catholic) | 21. Eicher (Archbold)        |
| 9. Geiger (Westfall)             | 22. Jennewein (Shadyside)    |
| 10. Sharp (Milton Union)         | 23. Ferdon (Deer Park)       |
| 11. Blaylock (Preble Shawnee)    | 24. Honaker (Jonathan Alder) |
| 12. Mast (Cardinal)              | 25. Hallis (CWCA)            |
| 13. Fairbanks (Woodmore)         | 26. Weller (Lakota)          |
| 14. Cross (New London)           |                              |

By my highly unofficial count, there are now 15 returning State qualifiers anticipating competition at this weight class -- seven of them are former placers. Two conclusions can almost immediately be drawn from these facts -- it will be a battle royal for the title and even a place on the medals rostrum, and some of these participants may conclude that 119# offers a surer chance for a lovely March weekend in Dayton.

At Elyria Catholic there are five returning State qualifiers for four places, with three of them having a legitimate chance for the title. Zoloty was 3rd last year at 112# losing only a close decision to eventual champ Lamont Turner in the semi-finals, and crushing his other four opponents -- including Stover twice. He has wrestled a difficult schedule finishing 2nd at one of the toughest Ironman weight classes to the exceptional Kelly from Easton, Pennsylvania (who was 2nd at Reno), and 2nd at Brecksville in a close 9-7 match with Legarth. Not as highly touted as some others, he is very good. Burnett was 5th last year at Wright State and is undefeated this season with wins over Division II runner-up Smith and Balamenti. He is very strong on his feet and should be totally focused now that he is set at 112#. Balamenti, twice a Division II placer, knows how to win. He was champ at Troy and 2nd at Solon to Legarth (who "owns" him) 12-0. Burnett also defeated him at the dual 4-3, twice taking him down. An interesting sidelight is that all three of these contenders exit the same sectional, meaning that the champ should be away from the other two at the District level. State qualifiers Mast and Gerak will battle for the last State berth.

Veteran competitors Schmidt and Cullen hope to rebound from disappointing year-end results in 1995 after placing the previous years. Schmidt was a 34-1 District champ at 103# last year heading into Wright State, where he dropped an inexplicable first round overtime bout to Mast and was eliminated. It was a disappointing end to what had been a brilliant season. Cullen fared even worse, losing three straight Saturday district bouts to finish 6th and miss qualification by one point. This year both have again dominated the Northwest as they look for a happier ending to this season. State qualifiers Johns, Fairbanks and Cross are a clear-step behind the top duo with very limited competition below them.

Two State placers, Stover and Sharp, lead the Xenia brigade with a quartet of solid performers behind them. However, going upward is no solution as 119# is the toughest District weight class here. Stover won four bouts at Wright State by a combined 43-9 tally, but Zoloty crushed him twice. I think placement will be a real challenge this year.

There are also three State qualifiers at Marion, but they are at a somewhat lower level than from the other three Districts. While Geiger, Christy and Ward are all solid performers, they'll face tough match-ups against the rest of what'll be on the bracket sheet. They were a combined 0-5 at last year's State meet and it's not going to be any easier this year. Geiger, however, has good upset potential, and must be treated with concern.

119#

PROJECTED CHAMPION: MARK WENTZ (STREETSBORO)

TOP CONTENDERS

- |                             |                                    |
|-----------------------------|------------------------------------|
| 2. Wright (Carlisle)        | 14. Smith (Malvern)                |
| 3. Wrobel (Chanel)          | 15. Ballinger (North Union)        |
| 4. J. Creech (Milton-Union) | 16. Cattano (Sandusky St. Mary)    |
| 5. McKinnon (Wellsville)    | 17. Heffernan (Painesville Harvey) |
| 6. Forward (Archbold)       | 18. Davis (Elmwood)                |
| 7. LaCure (Greeneview)      | 19. Abbott (Beallsville)           |
| 8. Smeltzer (Crestview)     | 20. Cecil (Elyria Catholic)        |
| 9. Jones (Martins Ferry)    | 21. Be. Smith (McComb)             |
| 10. Bein (Batavia)          | 22. Pfeffer (Shenendoah)           |
| 11. Walton (Hawken)         | 23. T. Gleckler (Evergreen)        |
| 12. Trostel (Brookville)    | 24. Lunquest (Pleasant)            |
| 13. Jordan (Independence)   |                                    |

"

Clearly the dominant issue at 119# is whether defending State champion Tony Lopez (Genoa) will be available to compete. If so, he would be the favorite to repeat based not only on last season's efforts, but on his exceptional record this winter, it seems, however as I understand it, highly unlikely that Lopez will be wrestling which creates a wide open scenario at this class.

Two of the top contenders will be refugees from Division II where both qualified for State action last year at this weight class. Wentz finished 6th with losses to three outstanding wrestlers -- Lamson, Stough and Felty. Now at Streetsboro, he has been hugely successful at 125#, but apparently will compete here at tourney time. He looked good at Medina losing by a point to McCampbell, but struggling with Davis in the down position in a 5-2 defeat. Wright pinned Jesse Moore to win the GMVWA at 125# and has been untouchable in the Southwest. He, too, lost to Lamson last year, 4-2, and then dropped an 8-4 decision to Wentz.

It's pretty much a two-man competition at Elyria Catholic. Wentz and Wrobel look far better than anyone else. Wrobel has already won at Solon, North Canton and Troy with a 5th at Wadsworth losing to State qualifiers Nash and Huxel. The big surprise is Cecil at 119# and he could be the unknown factor at this district.

It's totally crazy at Xenia, and I anticipate a number of certified 119s will move to 125# live already rated Meyer, Lathan and Flora at the higher weight, but others might opt to go that route as well. Wright, of course, is the standard bearer, but State qualifiers Creech, LaCure, Bein and Trostel form an incredibly competitive quartet with McDaniel (Preble Shawnee), Neer/Gregg (Triad), and Barber

(Covington) also to be heard from. Creech won the SWOCA at 119# and it is conceivable, but unlikely, that he and Wright could be finalists.

The field at Marion is also crowded, but the quality level is not as high. Jones is 17 -0 this year after sitting on the bench at Martins Ferry behind the Tuckers, Kennedy and Ward. McKinnon was a State qualifier at 125# last year and has moved down in concert with Nightengale. LaCure beat him in overtime at Medina. The other two qualifiers will not match-up well with other parts of the State.

Uncharacteristically, the Fostoria District is not particularly strong or deep if the absence of Lopez is confirmed. The freshman Forward has been a revelation - winning the "A" Classic and Beavercreek, and giving solid evidence that he'll be a major Division III factor for the next four years. State qualifier Smeltzer is also good, but after that it's pretty much a journeyman's dream.

125#

PROJECTED CHAMPION: JASON NIGHTENGALS (WELLSVILLE)

#### TOP CONTENDERS

- |                               |                                  |
|-------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| 2. J. Kern (Liberty Center)   | 14. Rowlands (Bishop Ready)      |
| 3. Zizzo (Triad)              | 15. Bright (Dixie)               |
| 4. Dunstan (Elyria Catholic)  | 16. Firem (Chanel)               |
| 5. Schuster (Oberlin)         | 17. Ju. Grime (Archbold)         |
| 6. Armitage (Edgerton)        | 18. Coljohn (Independence)       |
| 7. Beetham (Cadiz)            | 19. Flora (Brookville)           |
| 8. Kline (Mapleton)           | 20. Drayer (Mogadore)            |
| 9. Johnson (Preble Shawnee)   | 21. Dobson (Martins Ferry)       |
| 10. J. Jefferis (Barnesville) | 22. Villalon (Sandusky St. Mary) |
| 11. Bylow (Otsego)            | 23. Wasserman (Lakota)           |
| 12. Meyer (Reading)           | 24. Tallmage (Grandview Hts.)    |
| 13. Dodd (Swanton)            | 25. Lathan (Madeira)             |

It's really about time that Jason Nightengale won a State title. He was 2nd at 103# as a freshman losing to Eric Anderson for about the fourth time that year. Then as a sophomore at 112# he lost to the then invincible Mescan in the semi-finals and Anderson again beat him -- this time for 3rd place. Last year he lost a quarter-final 7-5 overtime bout to Marion, but won five others by scores of 18-3, 16-0, 15-3, 3:49 and 2:47. That latter pin was over Marion for 3rd. If he can avoid the big upset early in the bracket sheet, he can win over a not too powerful field.

Nightengale should dominate at Marion. State qualifier Beetham is overmatched against Nightengale, while the rest of the field will have even less success against him. In reality, it's a pretty pedestrian crew below the top spot, although I

believe that Rowlands possesses good upset potential. I wouldn't be surprised to see some unexpected names like Crews (Tusky Valley) make the final cut for Wright State.

Jeremy Kern has spent virtually the entire season at 130# with sterling success. He pinned Stopperich to win at Hudson and cruised to an easy win at the "A" Classic. A 5th place State finisher at 119# last year, he was decked by Nightengale in the consolation round. He's much stronger this year. Again, the participants below Kern are not, in the main, a formidable lot. An exception might be the rapidly improving Armitage. Tall and lanky, he seems to have made a breakthrough in 1996 dominating every tournament entered. He crushed the field at Wayne Trace, Edgerton and the "A" Classic, and is probably second best here. I've listed another half dozen candidates for the last three State berths with Bylow, Dodd and Justin Grime as nominal favorites. The freshman, Villalon, up a weight class, could make waves, while Riggle and ., Wasserman have come on strong at the end of the year. Other possibilities include Case (Fairview), Gase (Fostoria St. Wendel in), Suhor (Van Buren) and Noonan (Delphos St. John). This latter boy, in particular, could qualify on a hot weekend with his physical style.

State qualifiers Dunstan and Schuster head the Northeast contingent. I didn't think Dunstan wrestled up to his potential at States last year and anticipate a far stronger performance this time. It didn't help that his District 4th place finish put him up against eventual champ Lopez in the first round. Schuster, tall and very slender, can be baffling to the unsuspecting and his 6th place finish at 125# was built on that advantage. He has had a series of nagging injuries in his career. Kline, up three weight classes, is solid and well coached, but the rest of this field is real shaky.

It's again a jammed field at Xenia as some of the excess 119s will crowd into this class. Zizzo was 2-2 last year at Wright State, losing to Lopez and Nightengale in horrendous fashion, but beating both the excellent Davis and Dunstan. The Triad team just seems to get stronger every year, and while I know absolutely nothing about the school, I admire the progress that they have made. Johnson, Bright, State qualifier Meyer and Flora are all good candidates for Wright State, but it won't be easy. With only three spots and Lathan, Girard/Eichorn (Miami East) and Anderson (Greenview) in the mix it will be very difficult to qualify.

130#

PROJECTED CHAMPION: ANTHONY RALPH (CHANEL)

#### TOP CONTENDERS

- |                                 |                             |
|---------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 2. Anderson (Bellaire St. John) | 4. Padgelak (Martins Ferry) |
| 3. Blanton (Sandusky St. Mary)  | 5. Sachs (Lakota)           |

- |                                  |                                      |
|----------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| 6. Perry (Ontario)               | 17. Cardenas (Otsego)                |
| 7. Idell (Oakwood)               | 18. Winkler (Hannibal River)         |
| 8. Robb (Barnesville)            | 19. Kleman (Lima Central Catholic)   |
| 9. Schwan beck (Delta)           | 20. Thomas (Newbury)                 |
| 10. Gregovich (Williamsburg)     | 21. Juszli (Manchester)              |
| 11. Schron (Chagrin Falls)       | 22. Gearheart (Miami East)           |
| 12. Gray (Mississinawa Valley)   | 23. Tracy (Ayresville)               |
| 13. Marcin (Aurora)              | 24. Sedgmer (Cadiz)                  |
| 14. Kirkland (Bishop Ready)      | 25. Chmielewski (Summit Country Day) |
| 15. Beal (Wickliffe)             | 26. Wytko (Jackson-Milton)           |
| 16. J. Woodland (Grandview Hts.) |                                      |

I think there are a lot of opportunities lurking at this weight class. It possesses neither formidable up-top strength nor substantial depth, and it provides top teams like Chanel, Sandusky St. Mary, Delta and Aurora with a chance to pick up some unexpected team points.

Even the selection of the projected champ is a difficult one with reverberations from the past playing at least a minor role. Anthony Ralph finished 2nd in the State at 112# in an unexpected and thoroughly surprising manner. Only a freshman and a 3rd place District winner, he made a great run defeating Tony Lopez and Eric Anderson (both State champs at one time) on his way to the finals. Last year, beset by injuries and a crowded field at 119#, Ralph failed to qualify for Wright State. Well, this year he's back having won at Solon, Troy and North Canton, and seems to me to be the narrow favorite.

Anderson had even a better freshman year winning the State title at 103#. Then Ralph beat him 8-7 two years ago as he copped a 3rd and then last year he fen to 5th at 112#. I wondered at the time whether that had been an uncomfortable weight cut for him. This year he has been at 135# dueling often with Padgelak, but will move down to 130# at tourney time. Only one wrestler has won State titles his freshman and senior year and not in between -- Reed Case of Cadiz. Anderson could be the second.

After Ralph, the Elyria Catholic District is very weak. I've listed a number of experienced performers, but it will be a wide-open battle for the last three spots. Other possibilities in addition to those ranked are the freshman Goins (Elyria Catholic), England (Waterloo), Tinen (Streetsboro) and Fetters (Pymatuning Valley).

Anderson and Padgelak have had some tremendous battles this year. Padgelak prevailed at Bellaire St. John 11-6 in overtime, while Anderson won in overtime at Barnesville 3-1. State qualifier Robb is probably next best with the Central District stars Kirkland and Woodland right behind. Two possibilities are Stevens (Nelsonville York) and Orsini (Steubenville Central Catholic).

While there are three returning State qualifiers at Xenia -- Idell, Gregovich and Gray -- none of them made much of an impact at States. They all pretty much got hammered every time out of the box, although Idell came back to give State runner-up Kessen a late battle losing 16-11. We're likely to see those same three faces again, but the real test will be if the results are better.

Blanton is a solid performer and this returning State qualifier has finalist potential. He qualified at 135# last year, but caught the very tough Partlon early on and was gone. Sachs and Perry are also returning State qualifiers with placement potential. I'm still waiting for Sachs to have that real hot weekend and just blow everyone away. Schwan beck may not be real flashy, but he doesn't lose bouts he should win, and he wins some where he's the underdog. At a weight class like this, he could place. Other possibilities are Price (Swanton), Busbey (Lincolnview) and Marlowe (Woodmore).

135#

PROJECTED CHAMPION: JIM KESSEN (LIMA CENTRAL CATHOLIC)

#### TOP CONTENDERS

- |                                    |                                 |
|------------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| 2. Stratos (Mogadore)              | 15. Wacker (Wellington)         |
| 3. Abott (Delta)                   | 16. Sowles (Hicksville)         |
| 4. B. Reineck (Fremont St. Joseph) | 17. Pomeroy (Black River)       |
| 5. R. Jefferis (Barnesville)       | 18. Hayes (Cadiz)               |
| 6. Inghram (Streetsboro)           | 19. Thomas (North Union)        |
| 7. Woods (Elyria Catholic)         | 20. Scroggy (Sandusky St. Mary) |
| 8. Sanders (Miami East)            | 21. Puterbaugh (Milton Union)   |
| 9. Yonikus (Lakota)                | 22. Roberts (Chagrin Falls)     |
| 10. Long (Wellsville)              | 23. Sawmiller (Spencerville)    |
| 11. Copen (Rootstown)              | 24. Davis (Chesapeake)          |
| 12. Byrd (Oakwood)                 | 25. Schwamberger (Covington)    |
| 13. Mulcahy (Liberty Union)        | 26. Belfore (Columbus Academy)  |
| 14. Gable (Delphos St. John)       |                                 |

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During the past half dozen years, Lima Central Catholic has put together a program that consistently puts out a solid team that always has at least three or four State caliber members. This year is no exception. Kessen is bidding to become their second State champion and he has to be the favorite to do so. Again, this is not a particularly formidable assemblage, populated primarily by experienced upper classmen without a lot of previous State experience.

Kessen will exit from the strongest and deepest district. My final list usually contains 8 to 10 names for the Northwest District, and I have 13 here. Kessen,

2nd last year at 125#, has been at 140# most of the year. He won the giant GMVWA in solid fashion, overcoming a semi-final overtime bout. He was in command at the "A" Classic, but was upset by the excellent Becks, 10-9, in the CIT semi-finals. Last year at Wright State, he outscored his first three opponents 51-18 before wrestling a bad final. State qualifiers Abbott and Yonikus have good placement potential, with the former looking like a possible finalist. A steady place-winner, he seems poised to explode one of these weekends. Another incendiary candidate is Brett Reineck and he's someone to watch closely. He mauled Yonikus twice while winning at Fremont St. Joseph and Perrysburg, and he can score points in a big hurry when he's in the flow. Kessen, however, handled easily at Northwood. This quartet would be the anticipated qualifiers although one upset is a probable with the strong field. Besides the many listed, look for Contreras (North Baltimore), L. Kern (Liberty Center), Froehlich (Coldwater), Luke (Montpelier) and Summit (Carey).

State placer Stratos just keeps rolling along winning so consistently you hardly seem to notice. He placed 5th last year, losing his only two bouts all year to Wrobel and Jones at States. His consistency stands him in good stead here, and with the memories of Jesse Clark quickly fading, he will be a tough foe to defeat. I've always liked Inghram, but somehow he just hasn't won as much as I've always anticipated. Maybe this will be the year. Woods beat Inghram 13-2 last year, so those folks will shake their heads at my ranking, while Copen and Wacker are both good enough to go. A nice group at the Elyria Catholic District.

Two-time State qualifier Ray Jefferis heads the Marion District and he should place. I've listed a number of other solid performers, with both Long and Mulcahy having good upside potential. Omar Foston (Bridgeport), who has not wrestled this year, may be returning and could be a factor here.

Except for State qualifier Sanders, there is not much depth or experience at Xenia. The last two qualifiers will likely enjoy a short stay in the competition; but making it to Wright State at any class, never easy, gets more difficult each year no matter what part of the state is examined.

140#

PROJECTED CHAMPION: DANNY HOSTETLER (TUSLAW)

#### TOP CONTENDERS

- |                                 |                              |
|---------------------------------|------------------------------|
| 2. Grubach (Chanel)             | 8. Timmons (Lakota)          |
| 3. J. Woodland (Grandview Hts.) | 9. Jang (Summit Country Day) |
| 4. Whelan (Sandusky St. Mary)   | 10. Schuette (Versailles)    |
| 5. Berry (Newbury)              | 11. Kill (Delphos St. John)  |
| 6. Copeland (Brookville)        | 12. Je. Grime (Archbold)     |
| 7. Glaze (Pleasant)             | 13. Adkins (Wellington)      |

- |                             |                                 |
|-----------------------------|---------------------------------|
| 14. Kagey (Liberty Union)   | 20. Garrott (Malvern)           |
| 15. Cull (Aurora)           | 21. Allen (Miami East)          |
| 16. De Marco (Cadiz)        | 22. Goudy (Milton Union)        |
| 17. Lutton (Delta)          | 23. Wasiniak (Norwalk St. Paul) |
| 18. Preseren (Kirtland)     | 24. McKean (Black River)        |
| 19. Cordes (Liberty Center) | 25. Lacy (Hannibal River)       |

This is my upset special. It's based in equal measure on past performance, intuition and lack of pertinent information. Let's look at the first and the last of these.

Hostetler put together a very strong junior season last year. He finished 31-6 which included a District runner-up trophy behind two-time State champ Corey Kline, and a 4th at Wright State which included wins over Whelan and Copeland. This year he has won several smaller tourneys and was 4th at Medina, including a big win over Tomcik. His biggest flaw -- and not an inconsiderable one -- is an occasional tendency to go to his back.

As for missing data, it is considerable. Grubach, who would be a top candidate at either 135# or 140#, has not yet wrestled. There is no certainty as to his weight class, or how this long lay-off will affect him. He was 4th last year at 130#. Berry, already a two-time State qualifier, has missed much of the year because of football injuries. His return to top form has still not been achieved.

All three of these contestants exit at Elyria Catholic, but the quality dips dramatically beyond them. Assuming they are all there and reasonably healthy, there is only one open spot and that should be a real donnybrook with Sectional results and pairings playing a big role.

Woodland should dominate the proceedings at Marion. He is a returning State qualifier who has enjoyed an excellent senior season, including a 2nd at Medina. As is always the lot of a forecaster, he and Hostetler managed not to meet at Medina, thus preserving my continuing uncertainty. The rest of that field will compete at a much lower level, with a high probability of one or two virtual unknowns qualifying.

The Fostoria District fields a representative group of wrestlers, any of whom could have placement potential at Wright State. Whelan took a 5th at this weight last year -- losing in the first round to Hostetler, but coming back to beat Copeland, Brush and Patthopf. He has wrestled as high as 152# this year. I've watched Grime, Timmons and Kill all year, and each has had some peaks and valley. Timmons, in particular, has been up and down. Lutton, however, is a new name for me and it surfaced upon his title winning effort at Perrysburg. He'll be pushed by Cordes, Wasiniak and Fletcher (Mohawk).

Copeland and Jang are both returning State qualifiers with substantial success the past two years. Copeland was two and out last year at States, losing to Borsky and Whelan by a combined 30-3 margin. Jang saw 95 seconds of action as he drew into an absolutely horrific quarter-bracket. Schuette may have caught both of them during the last six weeks. Jang eliminated him in the 3rd place District bout last year, but my guess is Schuette could well reverse that result in March. Other possibilities, besides those ranked, are McPherson (Reading), Schierloh (Lockland) and Evans (Madeira).

145#

PROJECTED CHAMPION: STEVE BRUSH (EIYRIA CATHOLIC)

#### TOP CONTENDERS

- |                                     |                                  |
|-------------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| 2. Martin (West Salem Northwestern) | 13. Dick (Reading)               |
| 3. Brown (Chesapeake)               | 14. Leeland (Huron)              |
| 4. Hunt (Covington)                 | 15. Tilton (Brookville)          |
| 5. Horvath (Tuslaw)                 | 16. Lejeune (Fremont St. Joseph) |
| 6. Hallett (Swanton)                | 17. Scharver (Sandy Valley)      |
| 7. Pilarczyk (Cardinal)             | 18. Landis (Crestview)           |
| 8. Borsky (Pleasant)                | 19. Burden (Oakwood)             |
| 9. Reid (Amanda Clearcreek)         | 20. Johnson (Archbold)           |
| 10. Laughlin (Carlisle)             | 21. Jones (Bridgeport)           |
| 11. Wondolowski (Chanel)            | 22. McCrate (Columbus Grove)     |
| 12. King (Wickliffe)                | 23. Vossmer (Sandusky St. Mary)  |

As presently constituted, this is one of the weaker weight classes among the 42 to be contested. Now, like anything else, there is always a flow from the full to the empty so we can probably anticipate some movement -- although after examining 140#, it will likely be of limited impact. Besides the lack of strength, a second issue also intrudes on the analysis which will cause a great deal of thought and some little consternation for coaches and wrestlers -- and that is the unbalanced nature of the Districts. There are probably eight wrestlers good enough to qualify out of Elyria Catholic at this weight -- almost all because of the lack of real up-top strength -- with a chance to win it. Of course, that also means that four will not qualify. On the other hand, 152# is very weak at Elyria Catholic, greatly expanding the probability of qualification, but nobody in this group is going to beat Mengerink.

My top choice is Steve Brush, who was 6th as a sophomore at 135#, but last year was injured in the quarter-finals and did not place. He has all the tools to win the title, but it's just a question of staying healthy and remaining focused. I first saw him at the CIT two years ago, and you could tell even then that he was going to be very good. This will be his last and best opportunity. State qualifiers Martin and Horvath are top placement prospects, with the former having a particularly

fine year to date. Martin has won at Tri-West, Chippewa, Hopewell-Loudon and Black River. Again, the real issue may be that it will be at least as difficult to qualify as it may be to place.

Pilarczyk is also excellent and has been at 152# all year. Should he remain there, he would be a favorite to take the District title, but he would be a huge underdog against Mengerink. Last year he missed going to State due to a 7-6 loss to Brush, indicating the relative quality spread at 145#. State qualifier King and the consistent. Wondolowski are also big-time players at this district, with Grimes (Smithville) another candidate.

Chesapeake hasn't exactly been a wrestling factory over the year (admit it, how many readers of this report even know where it's located), but Travis Brown is a stellar performer. He missed a District title by one point last year, and then lost a narrow first round State bout. He should be best at Marion. State qualifiers Reid and Borsky are good choices for two more State berths, with the last one wide open. Reid, who qualified at 152# last season, has a great two-year record, but was pinned twice in three bouts at Medina. That may have alerted him as to what still needed to be accomplished.

One of the State mystery men heads the field at Xenia. Hunt was a State qualifier as a sophomore, but did not participate last year. Covington wrestles a totally transparent schedule for me, so alii really know is that he is 15-0 with 13 falls. That could indicate either exceptional skill or a weak schedule, and it's probably a combination of both. Still, this lad showed real ability as a sophomore and it's difficult to believe that it has since disappeared. State alternate Dick and Laughlin are at the top of the list for the other two spots, but Tilton and Burden are both good.

The Fostoria District is very weak. I struggled finding enough names to get to the requisite five qualifiers, although a few more than that came to mind. I think Hallett has placement potential at States based on strong runner-up finishes at Tiffin and Rogers. It should be noted that Brush beat him 15-3 at Tiffin. It will be a great opportunity for a whole raft of lesser knowns to break the ice by qualifying at 145#. Besides those listed, I've identified Quaintance (Lakota), Seifert (Eastwood) and Evans (Elmwood).

152#

**PROJECTED CHAMPION: NICK MENGERINK (CAREY)**

#### TOP CONTENDERS

- |                            |                        |
|----------------------------|------------------------|
| 2. Risner (Versailles)     | 5. C. Sintobin (Delta) |
| 3. Bomer (Lakota)          | 6. Games (Brookville)  |
| 4. Knight (Hannibal River) | 7. Armrose (Northmor)  |

- |                                      |   |
|--------------------------------------|---|
| 8. Taylor (Swanton)                  | 18. Sterling/Dempsey (Delphos St. John) |
| 9. Miller. (Hicksville)              | 19. Emerson (Waynedale)                 |
| 10. Sprow (Ayresville)               | 20. Sedivec (Elyria Catholic)           |
| 11. Conforti (Oakwood)               | 21. Moyer (Sandy Valley)                |
| 12. Clark (Union Local)              | 22. Turner (Covington)                  |
| 13. Cook (Aurora)                    | 23. Welch (Mapleton)                    |
| 14. Moeglin (Tusky Central Catholic) | 24. Young (Cardinal)                    |
| 15. Byerly (Grandview Hts.)          | 25. Musselman (Batavia)                 |
| 16. McCoy (Triad)                    | 26. Yurkovitch (Bridgeport)             |
| 17. Bragg (Woodridge)                |   |

In what is a forecaster's nightmare, 1996 is one of those years when there are few weight classes with a clearly defined leader. The 152# weight class does not suffer from this defect with the defending State champ ready and healthy. After finishing 2nd to Tye in 1994, he put together a great season in 1995 (losing only twice at Medina) culminated by a relative cakewalk to the 145# crown. This year he is undefeated and the winner at Medina in the toughest weight class there. He beat Chandler in an exciting semi-final, extricating himself from an almost impossible position in overtime to get the winning takedown. Then in the finals, he defeated my Division I choice, Brad Harris, in a bout that wasn't as close as the 6-4 score. Absent injury, it shouldn't be close.

The Fostoria District should be well represented on the victory rostrum Saturday night. Bomer and Sintobin have had great years and have moved ahead of State qualifiers Sprow and Miller. Bomer was 2nd at Van Buren behind Mengerink, while winning at Northwood and Fremont St. Joe. He was 2nd at Clyde behind O'Donaghue. Sintobin is on a recent hot streak, winning the final at Perrysburg 17-2. Taylor could be the real surprise at this district, and has strong placement potential. The District action at this weight class should be outstanding -- not only very competitive, but at a relatively high level of skill.

Another deep district is at Xenia where GMVWA champ Paul Risner heads a varied field. Risner won two bouts at Wright State last year, and this season has been outstanding GMVWA at 160#. Games also won two State bouts last year, but I don't believe he can match up with Risner. One of his losses at GMVWA was a tight 7-6 battle with Sintobin. Conforti was one bout from a State qualification last year, but Games decisively shut that door. Musselman, Turner and McCoy may have trouble denting this top trio, with Duff (Preble Shawnee) further behind.

Corey Knight was 6th last year at this weight class -- twice losing to Baden the first time in double overtime. A District runner-up in a close battle with Chevalier, he should improve that finish by one place this year. I think that now that Armrose is committed to 152#, he should be a strong force at the District level. However, this rather diversified Marion field is a full step behind Knight.

The cupboard is truly bare at Elyria Catholic unless Ganzhorn decides to move down from 160# (he certified at 152#) and Pilarczyk opts to move up from 145#. It will be a tough decision for both of them. I've already reviewed Pilarczyk's situation, but Aurora coach Bliss has an interesting choice as well. Ganzhorn probably has a surer path to the top levels at 152#, but he has a far better chance of beating Speelman rather than Mengerink. Besides, who can be sure that Speelman won't compete at 152# where he, too, certified. The other angle is that Cook has a far better chance of qualifying at 152# than at the more crowded 145# at the Elyria Catholic District. Team points at both weights would still give Aurora a chance to defend its State title if the scoring begins to fragment. An interesting dilemma requiring some thoughtful analysis.

160#

PROJECTED CHAMPION: JERICO SPEELMAN (EDGERTON)

#### TOP CONTENDERS

- |  |                             |
|--|-----------------------------|
| 2. Ganzhorn (Aurora)                   | 15. Selsby (Oakwood)        |
| 3. Giebel (Streetsboro)                | 16. Guthrie (Reading)       |
| 4. Baden (Archbold)                    | 17. Risner (Mohawk)         |
| 5. Davlin (Sandusky St. Mary)          | 18. McFarland (Union Local) |
| 6. Bailey (Jackson Milton)             | 19. Frank (Grandview Hts.)  |
| 7. Smith (Brookville)                  | 20. Waite (Liberty Union)   |
| 8. Doan (Blanchester)                  | 21. Grillot (Versailles)    |
| 9. Wannemacher (Lima Central Catholic) | 22. Miller (Hawken)         |
| 10. Bowles (Mapleton)                  | 23. Miller (Caldwell)       |
| 11. Stevenson (Delphos St. John)       | 24. Wickham (Tusky Valley)  |
| 12. Wilson (Jonathan Alder)            | 25. Miltner (Wickliffe)     |
| 13. Schultz (Lakota)                   | 26. Williams (Shadyside)    |
| 14. Ankney (Ayersville)                | 27. Duce (Ledgemont)        |

This is another weight class where there are far more questions than answers. I'll be operating under the assumption that both Speelman and Ganzhorn will compete here between the domains of Mengerink and Schroeder. Even so, this will not be a terrifically powerful weight class since so many of the excellent 171 s stayed at that classification. My top choice is the lanky senior Jerico Speelman who, with his brother at the next weight class, has upheld the tradition set by older brother Jason of placing at the State level. He, however, could be the first to bring home a first-place trophy. Speelman was 4th at 152# last year, after a 5th place District finish, but has been even better in 1996. His biggest win was at the "A" Classic, where he defeated Risner 15-1 in the semi-finals and two-time State qualifier and defending District champ at this weight, Ben Baden, 16-1 in the final. Most of his other wins have been of an equally devastating nature.

He will contrast sharply with the much shorter Ganzhorn who just missed State competition last year. However, having a workout partner like Schroeder has got to be a positive, and Ganzhorn has really improved. He was a very solid 4th at the incredibly difficult 152# weight class at Medina, defeating Division I State runner-up Rawlings in the process. State 5th place winner Giebel will be a tough District challenge, and this pair are probably Speelman's biggest threats. Two other excellent competitors are Bailey and Bowles and this District quartet should be a very strong group at Wright State. Legros (West Salem Northwestern) has missed the entire year to date, but could be a factor upon his return, although breaking into the top four will be difficult.

Speelman and Baden are the class of the field at Fostoria, and one has to believe that the real difference between them is a lot less than 15 points. State qualifier Davlin has wrestled as high as 189# in Jude Roth's unique continuous upgrading approach, but will undoubtedly be here at tourney time. Giebel defeated him 10-4 in a consolation round, although Davlin was a very small 160 pounder last year. There'll be some tough face-offs for the last two spots.

State qualifiers Smith and Doan stand well above the rest of the field at Xenia. Neither won at Wright State, but both have been winning a lot this year. I've rated both ahead of Wannemacher, who did eclipse Smith's efforts at the GMVWA. Beside those ranked above, Sanders (Milton Union), Rutherford (Triad) and Schmidtgoessling (Lockland) are possibilities, with the latter now holding the record for the longest un-hyphenated last name ever recorded in this report.

I may be missing something, but I see very little at Marion. The four qualifiers, whoever they may be, are likely to be substantial underdogs at Wright State. My top two picks here, Wilson and Waite, have split a pair of bouts the last two years, so the competition is likely to be close, if not scintillating.

171#

PROJECTED CHAMPION: JOSH SCHROEDER (AURORA)

#### TOP CONTENDERS

- |                             |                                |
|-----------------------------|--------------------------------|
| 2. Chevalier (Belpre)       | 12. Creekbaum (Preble Shawnee) |
| 3. Adams (Mechanicsburg)    | 13. Kusmits (Manchester)       |
| 4. Wellman (Ayersville)     | 14. Traxler (Carey)            |
| 5. Jer. Speelman (Edgerton) | 15. Overstreet (Black River)   |
| 6. Roskovich (Bridgeport)   | 16. Mann (Blanchester)         |
| 7. Engel (Reading) \        | 17. Wade (Loudonville)         |
| 8. Collins (New London)     | 18. Mendenhall (Versailles)    |
| 9. Isenhart (Waynedale)     | 19. Sutter (Grandview Hts.)    |
| 10. Palomo (Margaretta)     | 20. Bostleman (Archbold)       |
| 11. Nickey (Jonathan Alder) | 21. Culbertson (Cadiz)         |

## 22. Glass (Newbury)

## 23. Frantz (Otsego)

This is a relatively strong weight class, but it really doesn't make any difference. Josh Schroeder is just too good for this fine field. Already a three-time State placewinner and the defending State champ, Schroeder could be back at 160#, but team considerations and personal comfort make 171# an easy choice. Last year, again facing a fine field, he had two falls and two major decisions winning the final against current Navy wrestler Brad Swanbeck 14-2. At Medina he dominated the field despite suffering from a flu that had him weighing in at 165 pounds. Actually, it would be great to see Schroeder up against his oftentimes youth opponent, Kevin Boross and Richie Root in Division I. In summary, Schroeder has too much athleticism, experience and technique to be challenged this year. Mark him down as champion.

While the other three districts all have substantial strengths, Schroeder exits from an uncharacteristically weak Elyria Catholic District. Nobody here is within 10 points of Schroeder, and what strength there is seems concentrated in the Highland Sectional. Isenhart, Wade, Overstreet and Kusmits are all there and, perhaps, three could qualify. The big problem for this latter trio will be getting beyond the first round at Wright State. .

It will be a two-man battle at Marion. Chevalier, only a junior, was the 152# District champ last year and then finished 3rd in the State losing only to Jeremiah Speelman -- which he avenged in the Consolation final. A very physical wrestler, he has plenty of horsepower, although perhaps somewhat vulnerable on his feet. Chevalier is fun to watch (unless you're the opponent), and a draw away from Schroeder could mean he's a finalist. Roskovich is a much bigger version of last year's 130# champ, but he has not yet enjoyed the same level of success as his brother. He and Cary Heath have had some "barn burners", and that experience will be useful when he challenges Chevalier. Nickey, a District semi-finalist last year, and Sutter have the best shot at the last two berths.

In a normal year, Adams and Engel might have title potential based on their excellent performance in the southwest. Adams, in particular, has been nothing short of sensational going undefeated and pinning about 80% of his opponents. Most impressive was his title run at the gigantic GMVWA where he bested a strong field without having a close bout. He beat Division I Newman 10-2 in the finals. Already twice a State qualifier, he has never won a bout at Wright State -- losing the first 8-6 to Chevalier. This year, a very different story will be told as to his State results. Engel is going to be outstanding. A State qualifier last year as a freshman 160 pounder, he has built on that success this year. His only loss was a shocking pin to Dean in the Madeira finals. He will be a force to be reckoned with during the next three years. There is a solid back-up group to this duo with Creekbaum, Mann, Mendenhall and Bubeck (Covington).

It's also a strong and crowded field in the Northwest District. Wellman defeated Jeremiah Speelman by one point in the "A" Classic semi-finals, and that is the reason he is rated one place higher. Let's call it even today. Wellman has made amazing progress. Last year, for some reason, he moved up to 189# at tourney and was pinned in the first round of the District. This year he has not lost and what has been impressive is the way he has won -- lots of pins and machine-like scoring. He defeated State 5th place finisher Joey Collins 16-7 in the "A" Classic finals. Speelman was 6th at this weight in 1995 losing to Collins 4-3. Like Wellman, he, too, has moved ahead of Collins and each could move higher than their current ranking with finalist aspirations not out of the question. Collins and Palomo are not that far behind, but the field begins to string out with the Traxler, Bostleman, Frantz group. Other possibilities are Stanley"(Genoa), Studer (Mohawk) and Roach (Riverdale). Apparently, Jeremiah Taylor (Swanton) will be among the missing for the remainder of the year due to injury. He had very strong qualification credentials.

189#

PROJECTED CHAMPION: RON CHAPMAN (MARGARETTA)

#### TOP CONTENDERS

- |                                   |                                  |
|-----------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| 2. Ehram (Delta)                  | 14. Troiano (Grandview Hts.)     |
| 3. Hinton (Northmor)              | 15. Seyer (Cardinal)             |
| 4. Truax (Loudonville)            | 16. Zingery (Brookville)         |
| 5. Jenison (CVCA)                 | 17. Hoover (Hopewell-Loudon)     |
| 6. Wolf (Reading)                 | 18. Dee (Lima Central Catholic)  |
| 7. Reynolds (Elmwood)             | 19. Russo (Chane/)               |
| 8. Durbin (Gevington)             | 20. Schumacher (Monroe Central)  |
| 9. Limberios (Sandusky St. Mary)  | 21. Meyer (Versailles)           |
| 10. Lewis (Hillsdale)             | 22. Turner (Hawken)              |
| 11. McLaughlin (Nelsonville-York) | 23. Brandon (Hannibal River)     |
| 12. Haar (Eastwood)               | 24. Yost (Fostoria St. Wendelin) |
| 13. Theis (Mohawk)                |                                  |

This is yet another weight class where any of eight to ten wrestlers could win, and where even the eventual participants is unclear. While it is a huge gamble, some of the excellent 171 s may calculate that their State title hopes here are better than against Schroeder and gamble that the weight differential will be relatively inconsequential. At the same time, some of the 215s are certified at 189# (as was Chapman) and may go down. Finally, of the 16-man bracket that qualified at this weight last year, only one returns (Reynolds) and there are only three returning State qualifiers in the entire field. It is a forecaster's worst case scenario.

With that disclaimer, let's talk about my choice of Chapman. Last year he won the Fostoria District crown defeating Schlatter and Wonderly on the second day. Then, in what is my pet beef, he drew Kristof who was 5th in that same district in the first round. Somehow that ought to be avoided, because it has someone who lost twice the previous weekend at the same location start out absolutely even the next. At any rate, Kristof won by a point and made it to the finals to finish 2nd. Chapman ended losing back-to-back 7-6 bouts. This has been a busy year for Chapman. He was 1st at Edison (215#), 1st at Hopewell-Loudon (215#), 1st at Oak Harbor (189#), 2nd at Marion Harding (215#), 1st at Clyde (189#) and 1st at the SBC Duals (189# and 215#). I think he is perfectly positioned for the maximization of his State title chances. Now all he has to do is wrestle at his peak level.

Chapman's biggest challenge is likely right at his own Fostoria District. Ehram missed last year's tourney with an injury after a great junior year, but has worked even harder this year with a 1st at Perrysburg and a 2nd at GMVWA. He ignites the outstanding trio of Delta upper weights. State qualifier Reynolds has been somewhat inconsistent, but he'll be there at tourney time. Limberios, a Margareta transfer, should know Chapman as well as anyone. He was really hot earlier in the year. Theis was undefeated at the St. Mary Duals, but has not wrestled since. My guess is 189# may be a tough cut for him. Haar was pretty much off my radar screen until an exceptional performance at Toledo Waite made me sit up and take notice. He won the title defeating both Ehram and Seyer to bring his record to 22-5. Whether that was his "15 minutes of fame" or the start of a strong stretch run is now the question. After that I've listed Hoover, Dee and Yost, with Hill (Wayne Trace) and Trout (Arcadia) real long-shots.

Wolf qualified at 215# last year and is apparently the leading light at Xenia. He had a big win at Bishop Ready defeating McCloy in the finals. I know little about Durben, but an 18-0 record suggests a certain competency. Last year at 171#, he was 32-3 recordwise on the Saturday of Districts, but quickly stumbled twice and was eliminated. Zingery was 6th at GMVWA and Meyer 8th, and I believe that they'll both challenge the top duo. Coffey (Finney town) and Townsend (Preble Shawnee) could also play a role.

State alternate Hinton is, perhaps, the stiffest challenge to the possibility of an all Northwest District final. He missed qualification by one bout last year, but he appears to have made startling improvement -- winning at the Gorman with overtime victories over Truax and Division II State qualifier Campbell, and crushing everyone at Bucyrus. McLaughlin was also one bout from a State qualification, and at Grandview he finished a tough 2nd, losing by only 7-4 to State runner-up Rocky Tate in the final. One other name to note is the freshman Schumacher at Monroe. Brother of the former State champ, he is already 9-3 in his first varsity year.

It's a diverse group at Elyria Catholic. Truax was 3rd at the Gorman, losing that overtime bout to Hinton, and was champ at several small tourneys. Jenison is tough to figure. He defeated both my Division I top choice and second choice, Thompson and

Martin, at the Ironman, finished a fabulous 3rd: but then was 4th at the Dies -- though his two losses were to the excellent Bittinger and Dohse. Last year he missed State qualification by a single point. Obviously, on a good weekend he could be a real load. Lewis is also good with Seyer, Russo and Turner as possibilities. Also look for Tolchinsky (Berkshire), Habbyshaw (Aurora) and Lanciewicz (Columbia Station) are all tough both on the mat and in spelling class.

215#

PROJECTED CHAMPION: BOBBY SCHLATTER (DELTA)

#### TOP CONTENDERS

- |                               |                               |
|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| 2. Wonderly (Hicksville)      | 13. Everhart (Mohawk)         |
| 3. Bakr (Chagrin Falls)       | 14. Glavich (Wellington)      |
| 4. Marshall (Versailles)      | 15. Bauer (Grandview Hts.)    |
| 5. Allen (Highland Sparta)    | 16. Poast (Covington)         |
| 6. Tucholski (Genoa)          | 17. Blattler (Hannibal River) |
| 7. Owen (Black River)         | 18. Vogelsong (Fairview)      |
| 8. Bowe (Elmwood)             | 19. Ward (Barnesville)        |
| 9. Reed (Licking Hts.)        | 20. Dixon (Blanchester)       |
| 10. Turner (Kirtland)         | 21. Snider (Jackson Milton)   |
| 11. Hitchcock (Mechanicsburg) | 22. Cutter (Waynedale)        |
| 12. Gruss (Coldwater)         | 23. Wright (Triad)            |

This could be one of the most entertaining weight classes in Division III. A number of this group are aggressive and like to score, which often creates memorable wrestling. A good example of this kind of attitude is the big junior from Delta, Bobby Schlatter. A 6th place finisher last year, he showed outstanding potential which is beginning to be realized the deeper into the season we progress. Already the champion at the GMVWA over the outstanding Division I wrestler Brandon Tackett, he came back with four first period falls to win at Perrysburg. Now that he has experienced Wright State and with a growing confidence in his own ability, he should take it all, but not without surviving at least one or two close bouts.

The Fostoria District returns State qualifier Wonderly (who won two bouts at Wright State), State alternate Bowe and a bevy of returning District competitors like Tucholski, Everhart, Vogelsong and Roll (Plymouth). That will form the backbone of the strongest district, especially with the addition of Gruss, Orr

(Bluffton) and Boes (Fairview). This should generate some sustained action and a qualifying group that could place as many as four of its members.

At Elyria Catholic, the field is much slimmer. Bakr and Owen both missed State qualification by a bout last year, and should be solid State performers this go around. Bakr had a particularly impressive win at Richmond Hts., cementing a top five rating in this report. Turner, a District qualifier as a 9th grader last year, is brutalizing most of the local competition. He is 16-0 with 13 falls, but he has yet to be tested by the top boys here. The remaining competition is much weaker.

It was a rather strange State bracket at 215# last year. The top half had seven seniors and one underclassman, while the bottom had six underclassmen and only two seniors. It provided a good look at those who would return. One of those was Tony Allen who finished with a 0-2 mark, including a narrow 8-7 loss to Wonderly. He has built on that with a 13-second fall to win at Reynoldsburg. Reed, the State alternate, has also won several big titles, as has Bauer. This trio, all from the Columbus area, looks to dominate those coming from the two Eastern District sectionals. Based on both past and current results that seems quite likely.

State qualifier Marshall lost his only State bout to Schlatter, but that was not indicative of his excellent junior season. This year he was 4th at GMVWA and 2nd at Graham, wrestling with good consistency. Hitchcock and Poast both have excellent records, but the latter's competition is somewhat suspect. Hitchcock was 6th at GMVWA, losing to Schlatter in 1:57 and to Marshall 6-3. Dixon and Wright have legitimate shots at the last two spots.

HVY

PROJECTED CHAMPION: COREY ESTELL (AMANDA CLEARCREEK)

#### TOP CONTENDERS

- |                                    |                                 |
|------------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| 2. Cameron (Brookville)            | 15. Pence (Greeneview)          |
| 3. Tule (Archbold)                 | 16. Gant (Elyria Catholic)      |
| 4. Young (Licking Hts.)            | 17. Bridgeford (Preble Shawnee) |
| 5. Wauford (Northwood)             | 18. Stryker (West Jefferson)    |
| 6. Balkin (Mapleton)               | 19. Zeller (Swanton)            |
| 7. Taylor (Delta)                  | 20. Wilson (Bellaire St. John)  |
| 8. McGill (West Liberty Salem)     | 21. Schmidt (Covington)         |
| 9. Busdeker (Wood more)            | 22. Norman (Painesville Harvey) |
| 10. Trent (Sandy Valley)           | 23. Allison (Elmwood)           |
| 11. Murgatroyd (Wood ridge)        | 24. McGlone (Waynedale)         |
| 12. Rose (Streetsboro)             | 25. Ray (Fairview)              |
| 13. Covert (Reading)               | 26. Robey (Hannibal River)      |
| 14. Sandy (Tusky Central Catholic) |                                 |

Last year Tim Courtad of Aurora totally dominated this class with two falls, one technical and a 15-3 major decision. It's unlikely that it will happen quite that way again this year, although I do believe that Corey Estell will totally dominate all but a handful of top contenders. Estell placed 5th last year, winning four bouts and losing a tough 11-10 decision to State runner-up Higgs in the championship bracket. This year he ripped through the Medina bracket pinning everyone, including Division I State place winner Matalka, until the finals when Reed wore him down to win. I don't think anyone here will be able to do that to a wrestler who reminds me both stylistically and facially of former State champ Larry Angles.

One of Estell's toughest foes will be State qualifier Ed Young. Young won by default over Estell for 3rd at the District level, but had his entire State tourney last but 63 seconds. He was champ at Licking Hts., Bishop Ready and Hamilton Twp., where he beat the fine Division II wrestler Scott Speakman. Estell and Young both look to be around 250#, somewhat less than Trent who is a distant third choice. In fact, beyond the top two, the field here is very weak.

State qualifier Tule won two bouts at Wright State, but twice got caught inside of two minutes for falls. He is the leading candidate to win this district, but it won't be easy.

Wauford was 9-13 last year, but he has developed into a consistent finalist who can challenge any of the top boys here. Taylor is a freshman heavyweight who is probably lighter than teammate Schlatter, but who is quick and strong. He lost to Cameron at the GMVWA in double overtime. He beat the gigantic Matalka to finish 3rd at Perrysburg, indicating that his superior mobility is tough to score upon. Busdeker lost to Tule in overtime at the "A" Classic and won at both Gibsonburg and Hopewell-Loudon. There is an enormous drop off after this quartet, although at heavyweight, upsets are very common.

Cameron and McGill seem far better than the rest of the competition at Xenia. Cameron is a returning State qualifier, who won the GMVWA over Taylor and has a 19-1 record so far this season. McGill, now a junior, lost a 15-10 shoot-out in the District first round last year, but has shown quicker improvement than the other area heavyweights. He was 4th at GMVWA and won with all falls at Graham. I've listed Covert, Pence, Bridgeford and Schmidt as top contenders for the last spot, with a host of other folks just a half step behind. I think the one to watch here might just be Pence, who won three District bouts last year.

I suspect that Balkin, up from 215#, is the class of the Elyria Catholic District. There are no Courtad clones here this year (though his younger brother is at 215#), but Balkin certainly has placement possibilities. He has won at Bucyrus, Tri-West, Hillsdale and Black River. Murgatroyd, who swings between 215# and heavyweight, and Rose are probably next best. After that it's anyone's guess with

Vavrek (Cuyahoga Hts.), Conner (Berkshire) and Kiba (Smithville) certainly capable of upsetting those listed in the ranking table.

## TEAMS

1. Sandusky St. Mary -- This team returns four quality State qualifiers plus one of the finest freshman in Division III, and yet the numbers show that Delta will score just as heavily. Opfer should be a finalist while Schmidt, Blanton and Whelan have strong middle to upper placement potential. They're going to need some points from people like Davlin, Limberios, or Cattano. Coach Roth has been a genius in getting people to Wright State, but more of them have to score there. A top ten team the last four years -- the longest streak in
2. Delta -- On paper this team scores very heavily, but they don't have the same margin of error as Sandusky St. Mary. Schlatter, Abbot and Ehram are all steady performers, but they must get heavy freshman scoring not only at 103# (like Sandusky St. Mary), but also at heavyweight -- a much more problematical outcome. If the weak 152# class gets Ganzhorn and/or Speelman that will hurt Sintobin's chance to score. An outstanding squad.
3. Chanel -- Another team that could easily win the team title under the veteran leadership of Graham Coghill. Ralph, Wrobel, Balamenti and Grubach all have finalist potential, but the last boy is the big unknown. He has not yet competed and could be at either 135# or 140#. Outside the big four the only possible helper is Wondolowski, and should he contribute their chances really improve. One big problem is log jam of State placement wrestlers at 112# and how that might impact Balamenti.
4. Elyria Catholic -- This is a squad that could also capture the top spot, or possibly not even make the Top Ten. Burnett is great at 112#, but that is a most difficult class. Donstan and Brush have flirted with stardom, but have not yet cashed in on those opportunities. Woods and Cecil could be surprise point scorers, but again that is probably a real shot, while Sedivec, Gant and Goins are probably not going to help. Lots of questions, but a championship possibility exists.
5. Streetsboro -- Always a fine team, Streetsboro may have enough horses to make a run at the top. Giebel and Inghram never quite seem to score as heavily as anticipated, but this is their last chance. Gerail is at that difficult 112# class, where all the top contenders, but Delta have strong contenders. The key of course, is Wentz piling up big points at 119# and establishing the momentum for the rest of them. Don't count them out.

6. Auror~ -- Two State champions can score a lot of points as Coach Bliss can readily attest to. The defending State champ again have two standouts, but while Schroder is a sure champ, Ganzhorn is no better than even money even at 160#. Last year Tonsin and Flynn scored some crucial points, but there may not be that kind of back-up this year. The best hopes are probably Cull, Cook, or Marlin. It would have to be a perfect weekend for this team to win.
7. Brookville --Always a solid team their 6th place team finish last year was the highest for a Southwest District team since 1990. The major issue is whether their State qualifiers will be able to score at the State level. The big hope (in more ways than one) is Cameron with Stover, Copeland and Games as the next best opportunities. They have lots of back-up strength at the District level, but it may evaporate in the harsh glare of Wright State.
8. Lima Central Catholic -- Kessen was 2nd last year, but nobody else did any serious scoring and they fell out of the Top Ten. This year Boyd should be a big-time help, but Johns is stuck at that brutal 112# class. People like Wannemacher, Dee and Kleman are on the periphery of State qualification, but probably not State scoring.
9. Edgerton -- The Speelman and Armitage are pretty much all there is, but if they are all at 100% that could be around 50 points. There doesn't seem to be anyone else who can help, but 50 points easily get you into the Top Ten.
10. Wellsville -- A team that is built around three good lightweights. Nightengale has to be the favorite at 125# -- which has been a good weight at Wellsville in the past. McKinnon is coming into his own and Long could be a factor. In this case there is no help at all, so it's strictly up to this trio.
11. Milton Union --The first three weight classes are outstanding and if you were allowed two entrants at 103# they'd even be better off. Both Creech boys are flat out excellent, while State placer Sharp is no slouch.
12. Archbold -- A rebuilding team after last year's great 3rd place finish. Baden and Tule are the mainstays, and both are at relatively easy weight classes. There are a lot of good back-up potential with the freshman Forward, the two Grimes, Bostleman and Johnson. With just a little bit of luck we're looking.at another Top Ten finish.
13. Lakota -- It's time for their middle weights to step forward. Sachs, Yonikus, Timmons and Bomer are now veteran performers who need to make a statement. Sachs is the best bet to do so, but they'll need at least two to match this team placement.

