

Division III

103 #

PROJECTED CHAMPION: BEN SERGENT (TROY CHRISTIAN)

Top Contenders

2	Harrington (Sandusky St. Mary)	15	Kopp (Loudonville)
3	Pope (Pleasant)	16	Clark (Reading)
4	Householder (West Jefferson)	17	Jones (Licking Hts.)
5	Hall (Tuslaw)	18	Begg (Bluffton)
6	Peecook (Trinity)	19	Freeman (Allen East)
7	Gossard (Dayton Christian)	20	Dandurand (Hopewell-Loudon)
8	Marmaros (Beachwood)	21	Cummins (Dixie)
9	Coblentz (Waynedale)	22	Westhoven (Liberty Center)
10	Farley (Waterford)	23	Deady (Triad)
11	Pizzuto (Jackson Milton)	24	Aranjo (Delta)
12	Brown Edgerton)	25	Tinch (Mt. Gilead)
13	Lute (Indian Valley)	26	Knapp (Waterloo)
14	Yoder (Martins Ferry)		

Last year there was a deep and accomplished field at this weight class that produced some exciting wrestling and some very close scores. However, in 2006 most of those wrestlers have moved on to other weight classes and I have been unable to identify replacements of the same caliber. I think it may end up an individual duel between two very good wrestlers – one who placed 4th last year and is a Cadet All-American and the other who was a back up last year and did not compete in the tournament process. It sounds like an easy choice, but if you think so you are very much mistaken.

Sergent, a junior high state runner-up two years ago to Collin Palmer, had a great freshman season as a somewhat small 103-pounder. He split two bouts with the eventual champ Daniel Kolodzik, but the loss was at the district final and it put him in the tough half of the draw with Freeman and Opfer. He finished 4th losing only to the aforementioned duo. This year he opened this season with a win at Graham, which included a victory over Division II choice, David Taylor. He was a semi-finalist at both the Ironman (losing to Taylor) and Brecksville (losing in overtime to Division I choice Touris). His carry is outstanding and it sets up an entire arsenal of moves on his feet.

Harrington was a very small 103-pounder last year wrestling behind the state 3rd place finisher, Troy Opfer. He has amazing fighting spirit and the talent to back it up. Nobody has come close to him in Division III at 103# and his 7-6 loss to state runner-up Bryce Freeman while giving up nine pounds at 112# is indicative of his determination. His only losses at 103# have been to Mitcheff and Shilling. You would hope that these two might

be in opposite brackets but there is a one in three chance that it will not work out that way. It should be quite a battle.

Sergent should have minimal problems at the Fairmont District. Most of the names are new and unfamiliar with much to be decided. Cummins is a returning district qualifier, but I think Gossard has passed him. Last information had Gossard as 14-2 and 2nd to Quickle at Bellbrook. Deady has had his moment while Freeman and Begg might be the best from the invading Lima District. Clark and possibly two-time junior high qualifier Ziegler are also in the mix. It looks like Sergent and then, perhaps Gossard, Clark or Cummins and then chaos.

Harrington, like Sergent, should have few problems. I have struggled to come up with some real challengers and have failed. I think it's very likely that his back up, Costello, is second best in this district. I rate Brown second best but with a significant gap to Harrington. After that Dandurand, Westhoven, and Arango might be in a clump along with Rohn (a young lady with definite district potential) and Garza (Hicksville). Varner (Tinora), if he is competing, and Parrigan (Plymouth) are other possibilities.

I think Maple Heights District could place two or three at Columbus. State alternate Jase Hall is strong here, but Peacock has been consistently good as well. The former was 5th at the Dies while the latter placed 5th at the CIT. Coblenz won at Richmond Hts. and Marmaros has wrestled a very tough schedule with some success – he was 3rd at Solon in a strong weight class. Kopp looked very good at the Gorman and may beat out one of the top group for a state berth. I think Coblenz might be vulnerable. This quintet will be challenged, perhaps, by Pizzuto and Strine (Hillsdale). The district pairings should be reasonable with Hall, Peacock, and Marmaros all at different sectionals.

There is confusion in Columbus. Pope, 7th last year at this weight, has not, as far as I can tell, yet wrestled. He may be here or at 112# should he return. If at this weight class he would have solid placement potential. Householder, we know will be here, and he is very good as well. He has won at North Union and West Jefferson against solid competition. Farley lost a 9-7 overtime struggle in his go-to-state bout last year and has been a steady winner this year. I have him with two tourney wins and a runner-up finish. Lute, Yoder, and Jones should also play a role here with Tinch as a long shot. If Pope is healthy, this will be an exciting district, qualifying several potential state placers.

112 #

PROJECTED CHAMPION: TROY OPFER (SANDUSKY ST. MARY)

Top Contenders

2	Bryce Freeman (Berkshire)	15	Neer (Northmor)
3	Toal (Troy Christian)	16	Gualtieri (West Jefferson)
4	Gulley (Tri-County North)	17	Boney (Nelsonville York)
5	Savage (Carlisle)	18	Shumaker (Bluffton)
6	Reisz (Beallsville)	19	Mascioli (Jackson Milton)
7	Taylor (Elyria Catholic)	20	Karnes (Edgerton)
8	Schafer (Chanel)	21	Carnahan (Paulding)
9	Phillips (Waynedale)	22	Thomas (Bloom Carroll)
10	Reyna (Montpelier)	23	Giesler (Woodmore)
11	Carpenter (Madeira)	24	Poling (North Union)
12	Bernath (Archbold)	25	Manrique (Trinity)
13	Reynolds (Pleasant)	26	McGillvray (Miami East)
14	Pezzin (Swanton)	27	Vizer (Black River)

At the risk of being repetitive, I believe that this too, is likely to be a two-man competition featuring wrestlers who met in last year's semi-finals – Troy Opfer and Bryce Freeman. If so, and they win their districts, they will be bracketed apart setting up what could be an outstanding finals. Opfer lost that semi-final, in overtime, but I believe he has now moved ahead of Freeman. Still there is a two year difference favoring the senior, Freeman, and he would be a huge 112-pounder on Saturday night. That size comes at a price since it is clearly a difficult cut that may hamper Freeman's performance in earlier rounds. Freeman has spent much of the year at 119# finishing 4th at Solon and then failing to make weight at Wadsworth. Opfer wrestled a limited schedule in December, but should be in high gear by tourney time. At the Ohio Duals it was Opfer at 119# who got off his back to beat Blake Thoreson 8-5 while Freeman defeated Harrington 7-6.

Pezzin and Bernath, both state qualifiers, should provide some competition for Opfer at the Owens District. They are both experienced and have had some big wins the last two years. I'm not so sure, though, that state alternate Reyna hasn't passed them. He looked very strong at Richmond Hts. Pezzin, on the other hand, is between weights. He tried to make 103# but ended up as a small 112-pounder. As a result he has struggled somewhat and already has six losses. Giesler, who beat Bernath 19-6 at last year's district, has not produced the kind of results I expected this year. He will have to bounce back to qualify. Instead look to Karnes and Carnahan as boys with strong upset potential. Karnes won at Woodmore dominating Giesler in the finals.

Freeman's biggest problem at Maple Hts. may well be the scale though there are some very good wrestlers at this class. Taylor just won at Chippewa and CIT at 112# after spending some time at 119#. He beat Nycz in the finals but the really impressive result was a six-point victory over Brecksville semi-finalist, freshman Jake Vaughn of

Columbus DeSales. Freeman defeated Taylor 11-5 in last year's district semi-final, but it looks to be a lot closer now. Also, back is state placer Phillips who transferred from Dalton to Waynedale. He was 8th last year and should do better this time around. He won at Richmond Hts., beating Reyna 2-0, and was 5th at the Dies. Also returning is district 103# runner-up Schafer who has wrestled the very tough Chanel schedule. He was 2nd at Solon and 4th at North Canton, but failed to place by one bout at Brecksville. Freeman pinned him in the dual just as he did in the district final. That is an excellent quarter with Mascioli, Vizer, and Manrique able back-up talent.

Reisz won three consolation bouts last year at Columbus and ended up 6th. This year he has gone 30-1 as I write this and has won at Union Local and Beallsville. He will not have an easy time at Steubenville. I like the Columbus area trio of Reynolds, Neer and Gualtieri a lot. Reynolds missed qualification at this weight class last year by a takedown. This year he won at North Union and was 2nd at DeSales. Neer was runner-up at the Gorman and 6th at Marion Harding. Gualtieri handed Reisz his only loss while winning at West Jefferson. Factor in state alternate Cody Thomas and this is a dynamite group from the Central District. Boney will come from the southeast and he has solid credentials and several tourney titles. The pairings could be critical here.

Fairmont also hosts a strong district at this weight class. Let's look at some of the top returnees, Gulley was 7th last year at this weight class after capturing a district 3rd. He was 5th at GMVWA beating Boney 9-2. Savage was also a state qualifier who after winning his first state bout was injured and had to default in the quarter-finals. This year he was 2nd at Carlisle (at 119#) and 2nd at the GMVWA losing 3-1 to Jeff Penney in the finals. Also back is state alternate Carpenter who dropped a 7-4 decision to Savage in his go-to-state bout. This year he won at Madeira and was 3rd at the SWOCA losing only to Division I state runner-up Ryan Fields in the semi-finals. This is an exceptional group but the freshman Zach Toal might be better. He won at Graham and placed at the Ironman. At Brecksville he pinned Zamaria but eventually failed to place. He is very good. Shumaker and McGillvray have to hope that the bracketing works out badly for the top quartet.

119 #

PROJECTED CHAMPION: DARREN BOING (CHANEL)

Top Contenders

2	Kolodzik (Miami Valley)	14	Reggetti (Canton Central Catholic)
3	Gambill (Miami East)	15	Young (Norwayne)
4	Wilson (Pleasant)	16	Middleton (Johnstown Northridge)
5	Scarberry (Liberty Center)	17	Runkle (West Salem Northwestern)
6	Reyes (Belpre)	18	Clark (Union Local)
7	Thompson (Brookfield)	19	Belcastro (Woodridge)
8	Thome (Troy Christian)	20	Beach (Dixie)
9	F. Wilson (Malvern)	21	Walter (Hopewell Loudon)
10	Stephen (Barnesville)	22	Caesar (Madeira)
11	Weirauch (Archbold)	23	VanAtta (McComb)
12	Border (Caldwell)	24	Thoreson (Berkshire)
13	Herner (Monroeville)	25	Petrie (Lemon Monroe)
		26	Avila (Margaretta)

This is arguably the strongest and deepest weight class in Division III with only the 140# class in the same ballpark. It may be made even more difficult should state runner-up Bryce Freeman find the cut to 112# too difficult and return to this class. However, even as it is presently constituted there are an exceptional group of athletes here. Included among their numbers are two state champions and a host of returning qualifiers. It's instructive to look more closely at the top contenders.

Kolodzik, now a sophomore, won the title last year at the very tough 103# class finishing ahead of Freeman, Opfer, and Sergeant. He is a one-man team for the small private Miami Valley High School, but has not been deterred by that handicap. He has moved up two weight classes this year and has not had, at least to this point, the same level of success. He was 5th at the Ironman and 2nd at GMVWA getting pinned by Hart in the finals – not that bad, but indicative of someone adjusting to a new body size and older, more mature opponents. At the Top Gun, Jameson who he has met many times, defeated him 9-3 in the finals – a larger margin than might have been expected based on Kolodzik's win over him last year.

Gambill, also a sophomore, was something of a surprise champion as he swept to the title at 112#. A district runner-up he blew through the first two rounds in Columbus and then beat Lint and Freeman back-to-back to take the title. He was 3rd at GMVWA losing a four-point decision to Hart in the semi-finals. He comes from an outstanding wrestling family (he is the third) and that life long attachment shows with his poise on the mat.

Boing, still only a junior, is already twice a state place winner finishing 3rd and 4th the past two years. Last year he lost his district final, 1-0, and found himself in the tough half of the draw with Freeman, Thome and Scarberry. He was a semi-finalist, but lost

the semi-final to the larger Freeman 3-2. This year he was 2nd at Solon, which included a win over Ricky Floyd, 1st at North Canton at 125#, and 4th at the absolutely brutal 119 pound class at Brecksville losing to Pelton and Rini. He is a big 119-pounder, but will have to beat both of the state champs to take the title.

Wilson is an enigma. A state qualifier as a freshman he gave every indication of being an enormous force for three more seasons. As it turned out injuries have prevented him from competing at the state meet the past two years. He has also missed this entire season, but is scheduled to return at this weight class, the last weekend of January. Last year he was a district champ and 39-1 before an injury sidelined him, so the potential is there. If he returns in peak form both state champions (and everyone else) will have to be at 100% to compete.

The Fairmont District features both state champions and won't that be a marvelous confrontation. The other important factor will be Jordan Thome who was 2nd at Graham to Aaron Hart. He won four bouts at Brecksville but failed to place – losing to state champion Tony Jameson and state runner-up Jeffrey Pelton. Clearly, he has experience in tough weight classes. Beach and Caesar are the best shots at 119# with Petrie and Clum (Spencerville) a further step behind.

Boing is light years better than anyone else at Maple Hts. State qualifier Thompson won at Elyria Catholic, but missed Mentor due to injury. State qualifier Young is up two weight classes and has done reasonably well. He won handsomely at the WIT and was 2nd at Chippewa – losing to Reghetti. Also here is Runkle who was one win from state last year at this weight class. He won at Black River and Hillsdale and was 4th at the Gorman. Add in state alternate Belcastro and the rapidly improving Thoreson and it will be a real donnybrook for the three slots behind Boing.

It will be total anarchy at Steubenville. I count seven returning state qualifiers plus some solid others who are nearly as good. We've discussed Mike Wilson, let's briefly review the rest. Fred Wilson is already a two time state qualifier who won three state matches during those years. He won at the Chertow Classic and Malvern (over Reghetti). Reyes was 6th last year at this weight class and is very good. He is a punishing wrestler who could beat either Wilson. Chaz Clark is also a two time state qualifier who has yet to place. He was only 4th at Shadyside (behind Stephan and Border) and was 2nd at Barnesville defeating Stephen.

Border made it out at 103# last year, and has lost eight times at the higher weight. However, his 2nd place finish to Shadyside shows how fast he is adjusting. Middleton replaced Wilson at the state meet last year and wrestled bravely – scoring 15 points in two hard fought losses. Stephan didn't make it out last year but he has been very successful. He won at Shadyside, finished 2nd at St. Clairsville and Sheridan and 4th at Barnesville. He was the 2nd seed at the OVAC. Add in a Martin (West Jefferson), Ruhl (Northmor) or Canter (Bellaire) and it is quite a group.

I like Scarberry the best at Owens. He was a district champ last year and went 1-2 at Columbus. This year he was 5th at Hudson and 6th at Medina while steadily winning in his area. He took Boing into overtime (11-9) at the Ohio Duals in probably his most impressive outing. Weirauch and Herner are returning state qualifiers both of whom lost to Fred Wilson at that level. I think Walters and Van Atta have the firepower to upset this twosome. They went 1st and 2nd at Woodmore and Van Atta won at Richmond Hts. Avila is always a threat and he could be a finalist or could lose early. Devers might be a factor here or possibly Reed (Collins Western Reserve) or Reindel (Stritch).

125

PROJECTED CHAMPION: ADAM KOBALLA (CHANEL)

Top Contenders

2	Thome (Troy Christian)	14	Edgell (Crestview)
3	Brett Freeman (Berkshire)	15	Crispin (West Jefferson)
4	Lint (Cuyahoga Hts.)	16	Betts (Elmwood)
5	Shumaker (Arcadia)	17	Espinoza (Genoa)
6	Pike (Greeneview)	18	Brown (Newark Catholic)
7	Clark (Union Local)	19	Hayden (Independence)
8	Anderson (Bluffton)	20	Russell (Spencerville)
9	Holt (Martins Ferry)	21	Peyton-Cook (Hawken)
10	Zolman (Northmor)	22	Moore (Dixie)
11	Redd (Archbold)	23	Halcomb (Hopewell-Loudon)
12	Shubert (Oberlin)	24	Bazerbashi (Academy)
13	Rohda (Liberty Center)	25	Bemmes (Reading)
		26	Evans (Madison Plains)

It will require exceptional forecasting to successfully choose the winner at this weight class. That is because we have a quartet of outstanding wrestlers looking to win a state title at another extremely competitive weight--three of whom battled it out at 112# last year. Three of the four will emerge from the Maple Hts. District potentially causing a misshapen bracket. We are likely to have Thome and the two Twinsburg non-winners in the same half of the draw while the Maple Hts. champ draws away from all three of them. That would make that particular district title a juicy prize.

At Maple Hts. Koballa should be a slender favorite. A state champion two years ago at 112# he caught eventual champ Blonairz in the semi-finals and lost a 6-5 heartbreaker likely costing him the title (Blonairz beat Hamilton 16-5 in the finals). This year he has confounded his coaching staff by failing to make weight at both Solon and Brecksville. He was 3rd at North Canton at 130# -- losing early but coming back to take 3rd. At the Ohio Duals he defeated an admittedly rusty Hartley, 5-4, and looks to be gearing up for his last chance for a title. He has tremendous experience, great mat presence, and knows how to win. That should be a recipe for a state title.

Freeman was a state runner-up at 112# last year defeating Thome 7-5 in the quarterfinals. This year he has been rock solid for Berkshire winning at Wadsworth and finishing 2nd to the dynamic Keyes at Solon. Lint, on the other hand, has been off the radar screen until lately, but he was 5th last year at Columbus. He lost a 5-3 semi-final bout to Gambill and then was beaten by Thome in a late consolation round. He was 2nd at Brecksville this year slipping through a crowded field until Thome beat him once again for the title.

Thome, the only junior in this quartet, is a tremendous competitor. Remember he beat eventual state champ Gambill 8-4, to win his district last year. He was 43-2 overall with the critical loss in the quarterfinals forcing him into the consolation round. His only loss this year was to Division II state champion Ben Jordan, 7-5, the first week of the season. He is the most athletic of this foursome, but whether that will translate into a state title is still an open question.

Freeman and Koballa emerge from the same sectional so they will be apart at the Maple Hts. District with Lint drawing into one of them. They are far ahead of everyone else here with the fourth qualifier unlikely to do much in Columbus. I think Shubert, Hayden, Peyton-Cook, and Perry are possibilities for that spot. With three heavy hitters in the bracket, the pairings will be critical for the fourth berth.

State qualifier Pike is back after qualifying at 112# last year. He won at Bellbrook recently and placed well at the GMVWA. I don't see him threatening Thome. I know Anderson certified at 119#, but he has wrestled most of the year at 125# and I think he may end up here. The odds of qualification look a little steeper at 119#. He was a state alternate last year and has been winning at a steady clip this year – for example, at Bellefontaine and Allen East. After this trio I'm stumped so maybe it will be Russell, Moore, and Bemmes.

I'm seeing very little at Owens – surprising considering the usual depth at this district. The one exception is Lee Shumaker, a district runner-up last year, and 6th in the state the following week. He twice lost to Lint in Columbus, both times by a single point. This year he has won at Arcadia, Plymouth, and Van Wert. After that, there is Reed and Rohda but the wrestler to watch for is Edgell. At 130# most of the year he has apparently certified at 125# which makes strategic sense. He was 3rd at 130# at the Gorman. The freshman Betts won at Richmond Hts. and could surprise the more experienced boys. Halcomb and Hendrick might be factors too.

There are some solid wrestlers at Steubenville, but that group may be augmented if several of the 119's in that crowded field move up. Holt, still only a sophomore, won a sectional title and then a district 4th to gain state experience. He has lost some early bouts this year, as he did last, but expect a lot from him. Another sophomore Chase Clark has been outstanding (24-2) along the river and has pulled even with Holt. Zolman was 2nd at the Gorman and might be the best from the Central District. I also like Crispin and Evans, but wonder about former state qualifier Brown and state alternate

Bazerbashi. The latter two look a step behind that top trio. Weatherholt (Garaway) could also be a factor here as could Vaughn (Belpre) and Jones (Waterford).

130

PROJECTED CHAMPION: KYLE GARDELLA (CHANEL)

Top Contenders

2	Guerra (Sandusky St. Mary)	15	Padach (South Range)
3	Ells (Grandview Hts.)	16	Eavers (Greeneview)
4	Young (Nelsonville York)	17	Nelson (Madison Plains)
5	Jenkins (Berkshire)	18	Johnson (Otsego)
6	Wetzel (River View)	19	Hancock (Troy Christian)
7	Toney (Mechanicsburg)	20	Kosky (Bellaire St. John)
8	Grigson (Northwood)	21	Schalk (Hopewell-Loudon)
9	Butler (Collins Western Reserve)	22	Furbee (Shadyside)
10	Stapleton (Carlisle)	23	Bassitt (Allen East)
11	Woody (Chippewa)	24	Bush (Black River)
12	Young (Norwayne)	25	Dodd (Shenandoah)
13	Franks (Fremont St. Joseph)	26	Vogelpohl (Genoa)
14	Pajestka (Cuyahoga Hts.)	27	Gfell (Monroeville)

Chris Hartley is a tremendous talent – three-time Division I place winner and absent Lance Palmer a possible two-time champion. He has also been the biggest mystery in Ohio this year. Would he wrestle for Perry or Berkshire or, maybe, Crestwood and would it be at 119# or 125# or 130# and would he be in top form or rusty or out of shape. The answer, apparently, is that he will not wrestle at all. My feeling was that he would be here, round into shape, and win. Now that such a scenario is extremely unlikely we'll need to re-visit each district and identify possible champs.

At Maple Hts. the junior Kyle Gardella would seem to be the best at 130#. A district runner-up last year, he was a state semi-finalist before getting decked by Tinnel and falling to 5th. This year he was 3rd at Solon (losing to Mencini) and 6th at Solon. Interestingly his only dual loss was to Brett Freeman, up a weight class. Jenkins fooled a lot of people last year (count me as one) when he not only qualified for the state meet, but won four consolation bouts to finish 4th. Up just two weight classes now that Hartley is gone he is in prime position to fool me again. Pajestka, also a state qualifier, got off to a late start and has gradually moved down from 140#. He lost to Pajestka 8-7 in the go-to-state bout last year. The clever Padach and Woody are other contenders – the former a runner-up at Richmond Hts. and the latter the Chippewa champ. Still I think Young has a chance to be better than anyone here but Gardella and Jenkins.

Guerra was 4th two years ago at 103# and then last February qualified at 112#. He caught eventual champ Gambill in the first round, got caught early, and never recovered. His tournament ended Thursday night. This year at 130# he should prosper. I also like Grigson who was the state alternate at 125# last year, and won at Northwood,

and Sylvania Southview this season. State qualifier Butler is also returning as he is on a rising trajectory this year including a big win at Edison. Franks has made giant strides this year and was 2nd at the CIT. Last year Butler defeated him 11-2. It should be a lot closer. Johnson, Schalk, and, maybe, Vogelpohl are at the next level down along with Gfell.

Ells and Nelson were both district champs last year and both finished 8th at the state meet. I rate Ells a little higher based on a 4th at Medina and a title at Groveport. Two-time state placer Wetzel should also be here, but I have not seen that he has competed recently. The wrestler to watch, however, is Steve Young. A state qualifier at 130# last year he remains at the same weight this year. He gave Hartley plenty of trouble in the dual meet before succumbing 4-2. He could be the champion at this district. That's a solid trio with lots of state placement possibilities. Three boys along the Ohio River – Furbee, Kosky and Dodd – may be able to scarf up one qualifying spot.

Defending district champ Toney is up two weights at Fairmont and will be a co-favorite with state qualifier Stapleton for the district title. They both have wrestled well this year, but Toney has particularly been good given the more difficult schedule he has wrestled. Eavers and the young Hancock are probably next best with Bassitt a possibility. The last two qualifiers are likely to struggle in Columbus.

135

PROJECTED CHAMPION: DUSTY HERMES (SANDUSKY ST. MARY)

Top Contenders

- | | | | |
|----|-----------------------------|----|------------------------------|
| 2 | Gambill (Miami East) | 15 | Estrada (Fremont St. Joseph) |
| 3 | Skoff (Bellaire St. John) | 16 | Hill (Liberty Center) |
| 4 | Chmura (Chanel) | 17 | Skaggs (Jackson Milton) |
| 5 | True (Arcadia) | 18 | Cowgill (Berkshire) |
| 6 | Hill (McComb) | 19 | Tighe (Purcell) |
| 7 | Levy (West Liberty Salem) | 20 | Garrett (Madison Plains) |
| 8 | Prickett (Monroe Central) | 21 | Ash (Waynedale) |
| 9 | Campbell (Dayton Christian) | 22 | Pfister (Black River) |
| 10 | Harnett (Brookfield) | 23 | Hemmelgarn (Coldwater) |
| 11 | Beam (Cardington Lincoln) | 24 | Basting (Huron) |
| 12 | Cloran (Madeira) | 25 | Ford (Allen East) |
| 13 | Murray (Grandview Hts.) | 26 | Norway (Nelsonville York) |
| 14 | McCreary (Fairbanks) | | |

The dynamics of the next four weight classes has totally surprised me. Generally, at the beginning of the year the weight classes are irregular – some very strong others fairly weak. This clumpiness generally disappears as wrestlers, calculating the odds, flee to weight classes that seem less crowded and less strong. It happens every year, kind of like the diffusion of gas molecules in a large room as they end up with relatively equal density. However, this year in the middleweight classes we've had exactly the opposite

reaction. It's like all the molecules suddenly raced to one corner of the room leaving us gasping for breath everywhere else. We, all at once, have all kinds of excellent wrestlers at 140# and 145#, not nearly as much at 135#, and something of a scarcity at 152#. I mean Lipp moved up to 140# while Nicola, Wilson, and Seebach all cut down to certify at 140# in the Steubenville District. Hoff moved down to 145# as Lerer moved up to that weight class leaving things somehow out of balance. My guess is that with increased knowledge we may see additional movement before sectionals. Three weeks ago I had Hartley winning the title at 130# and Lipp and Falk breezing through at 135# and 140#. Three quick and easy checkmarks Now, with Hartley gone and Lipp at 140#, all three check marks have been erased.

With Lipp's somewhat surprising defection to 140# this has become a weight class without a strong focus. The movement of Hill and Gambill down to this classification gives it increased depth, but no one individual or even group of individuals can be accorded as heavy favorites. This is one of the situations where differences in style, fortune or misfortune in bracketing, and the lucky takedown or controversial referee's call will make a huge difference. Each district has a least one reasonable candidate for the title and it may well be that someone ranked in the bottom half of my table captures the prize.

I think the champ could well be from Owens. Hermes is a two-time state qualifier who was 4th last year 125# -- losing twice to Koballa, once in overtime. Sandusky St. Mary had a relatively casual schedule in December, but have ramped it up this month. Hermes has been winning big except a tight 4-3 victory over Chmura – perhaps, a foreshadowing of things to come. Also, there is junior Derrick Hill who found out a tough way to miss out on state qualification – having to default in overtime in his go-to-state bout. I don't think he has lost this year winning at Richmond Hts. very easily and crushing the field at Woodmore – both at 140#. State alternate Mason True as had similar success winning by big scores at Arcadia, Northwood, and Plymouth, but I don't see him able to beat the Hermes. Other possibilities are Clayton Hill who was 5th at the Gorman and at Hudson, Billy Dotson, Nick Basting, Estrada and Wagner (Genoa).

There is some power at Maple Hts. Chmura is a returning state qualifier at this class and was something of a surprise last year. He went 1-2 in the state meeting losing two close bouts including an 11-9 decision to state runner-up Joe Skoff. He had 15 losses showing the difficulty of Chanel's schedule. This year he was 5th at Solon and 7th at Brecksville and lost a hard fought battle to Hermes 4-3. He was 6th at Solon. Harnett was 7th at the State meet winning three consolation bouts. He won at Elyria Catholic over Skaggs who might be fourth best at this district. With Jenkins moving down to 130# Cowgill slips right into this weight class. Last year he missed state qualification by a single point in an 8-7 loss to Pajestka. He could do very well here. Ash and Pfister are also factors with Ash winning their individual battle 15-9 at the Dies. Pfister won three district bouts last year so he still remains a contender.

The Steubenville District divides into two components – two sectionals from the Central District and two from the Eastern. At this district I have identified a quartet of

possibilities from each area with the Central group overall a little stronger. However, the best wrestler is from the Eastern as Joe Skoff returns for his senior year. A state runner-up two years at 119# he jumped up three weight classes to 135#. He had to default his district final and, apparently little improved went 1-2 in Columbus.. This year again 135#, he is 21-1 as of the moment, including a big win at Marion Harding. State qualifier Prickett went 1-2 in Columbus and is the second-best of our eastern contingent. He is 21-4 this year with a couple of upset losses on his record. Norway and Mardis (Newcomerstown) are two other possibilities from the east.

Murray and Beam are at about the same level. Beam was a state alternate losing his go-to-state bout to eventual state runner-up Justin Seebach. Murray also had some district wins and has been generally good all year with the possible exception of Medina. The one bracketed away from Skoff could well be a finalist at Steubenville. I saw McCreary win at Richmond Hts. and he and Albanese (see next weight class) are a nice one-two combination. State qualifier Garrett, up five weight classes has predictably struggled, but will certainly be a factor come February. Also look to Wright (Tusky Valley), only a sophomore, for a potential upset.

Gambill has to be thought of as a co-favorite at this weight class. Last year he lost the district final to Falk 13-9 which might have been Josh's closest bout of the year. Gambill then lost a 9-8 first round barnburner to eventual runner-up Seebach before ripping through the consolation round with five straight wins to finish 3rd. He was 2nd at GMVWA to Kyle at 140# and has otherwise been close to perfect. Levy, a two-time state qualifier, is next best. His two state meets have had some uncanny parallels. Each trip has resulted in a first round loss by exactly three points, a first round consolation win in overtime, and then a second loss and Sayonara! He should do better this year with placement a reasonable outcome. Robel Campbell also qualified last year going 1-2. He has been burning up the southwest with good wrestling, He won at both Bellbrook and Madeira beating the excellent Tighe and state qualifier Cloran. Those two are right there with the top threesome making for a very good quintet of contenders. Factor in Hemmelgarn, Huffman (Tri-County North) and Ford and we may see some movement to 140#.

140 #

PROJECTED CHAMPION: KEVIN LIPP (BEACHWOOD)

Top Contenders

2	Falk (Bluffton)	14	Zaborski (Collins Western Reserve)
3	Seebach (Caldwell)	15	Bogan (Wellington)
4	Wyse (Grandview Hts.)	16	Petrella (Hartley)
5	Melko (Bellaire St. John)	17	Kazdin (Berkshire)
6	Fose (Middletown Madison)	18	Grys (New London)
7	Ware (Martins Ferry)	19	Dauski (Sandy Valley)
8	Taylor (Elyria Catholic)	20	Young (Seneca East)
9	Albanese (Fairbanks)	21	Rutan (Mechanicsburg)
10	Chasteen (Black River)	22	Elliott (Brookville)
11	Arreola (Fremont St. Joseph)	23	Kaufman (Loudonville)
12	Smith (Miami East)	24	Levy (Hicksville)
13	Dotson (Liberty Center)	25	Kirian (Arcadia)
		26	Marsteller (Allen East)

There are 42 weight classes at the Value Center Arena the last weekend of February, but there is no question that one of the two highlight match-ups --- the ones everyone wants to see -- will be at this weight class. Since Lipp certified at 140# there is a rising crescendo of excitement generated by the possibilities inherent in such a confrontation. Falk, now a junior, won his first state title at 135# with relative ease coasting past Seebach in the finals 10-5. He has not lost since his freshman year (a streak that now hovers at close to 70) though he does not wrestle a super-demanding schedule. I hypothesized last year that he was on track to becoming a three-time champ and join his father as the first father-son combination to each win three titles. I was comfortable with that until Kevin Lipp decided, for whatever reason, to forego an almost sure title at 135# and challenge Falk. Lipp, a three-time placer and one-time champ, is very good. He was 2nd at the Ironman and 1st at Brecksville and has conquered a very rugged schedule. Falk has been sensational on his feet, but Lipp is not easy prey and Lipp is very good on top. Lipp's problem has been some early round upsets the last two years, but the higher weight may actually help that. The pairings algorithm should put Falk in one half the draw and Seebach (if he competes at 140#) and Lipp in the other half. Look to Lipp to win by three or four points.

Lipp should have no trouble at the Maple Hts. district. Chasteen is the only returning state qualifier and he has been overpowering to this point at 140# -- most recently a DNP at the Dies -- though he did win at Black River. I think the last two qualifying spots might come from the trio of Taylor, Kazdin, and Bogan. Taylor won at Chippewa and was 6th at the CIT. He'll want to join his brother in Columbus. Kazdin was 18-15 last year going into districts and nearly qualified. With all the Berkshire shuffling, he just now is settling in at 140#. Bogan has been steady all year and should make a good run at it.

Falk should not be staying up nights worrying about his district competition. State qualifier Fose is back, but Falk defeated him in the district semi-finals, 18-3. Don't get me wrong, Fose is good. He won at Carlisle and Edgewood and should be a finalist at Fairmont. After that it's anybody's guess. Marsteller, Smith, Rutan and Elliott might be next in line with Warrick (Preble Shawnee) or Benedict (Greenview) a possibility. If Barga (Versailles) is at this weight class he could also do some damage.

I have been stymied finding solid contenders at Owens. Arreola, first at Northwood and 4th at the CIT, looks to be the best. Dotson was 2nd at Hudson and 4th at the Gorman, but lost badly to Arreola last year. Grys and Seth Kirian are other possibilities, but I don't want to raise anyone's hope too much. Zaborski is another strong candidate, but there must be others that I'm just missing.

The big puzzle is at Steubenville. The three best wrestlers at 145# suddenly all certified at 140#. Is it true that they are all moving down or are they just keeping their options open. My guess is that Nicola stays at 145#. Melko is a solid 140-pounder and Nicola has a slightly better chance of winning at 145# than at 140#. Wilson, too, stays at 145# for no better reason than that's where he has been all year. Seebach has been at 140# and decides to compete there after not making the finals at the OVAC at 145#. There are eight possible arrangements so I have a 12.5% probability of getting this right.

Even configured my way 140# will be very difficult at Steubenville. Seebach was the state runner-up at 135# last year losing only to Falk. This year he has been at 152#, 145#, and 140# with generally good success. He'll need to be in top form just to qualify. Wyse lost to Seebach in the district consolation finals and that was critical. He caught Falk in the first round and Chmura immediately afterward and his state tournament was over Thursday night. I saw him at Medina where he finished 4th – twice losing to Cavello. However, he defeated Dotson, Deliberato, and Triplett and that was impressive. Ware and Melko are both returning state qualifiers who excel along the river. Melko won (at 152#) at Bellaire St. John, was 2nd (to Myers) at Barnesville and finished 3rd at Marion Harding. He also was 3rd at the CIT beating Arreola in the consolation final. He and Ware have yet to meet. Dauski, now a junior, qualified as a freshman, but missed out last year. He'll be a longshot here. That's because Petrella and Albanese are both very good. I saw Albanese at Richmond Hts. and he did well until Hill shut him out in the final. He was the state alternate at 130# last year.

145 #

PROJECTED CHAMPION: MARC HOFF (LIBERTY CENTER)

Top Contenders

2	Lerer (Beachwood)	14	Kiefer (Chanel)
3	Nicola (Bellaire St. John)	15	Worthington (Crestview)
4	Reer (Collins Western Reserve)	16	Hessick (Fremont St. Joseph)
5	Wilson (Pleasant)	17	Kuzma (Hopewell-Loudon)
6	Heasley (Worthington Christian)	18	Looser (Delphos St. John)
7	Thatcher (Loudonville)	19	Miller (West Jefferson)
8	Dolinski (Brookville)	20	Crapo (Seneca East)
9	Ortolani (Sandusky St. Mary)	21	Keuterman (Versailles)
10	Wren (Berkshire)	22	Hatton (Smithville)
11	Howe (Northmor)	23	Domres (Licking Hts.)
12	Smyers (Norwayne)	24	Staley (Allen East)
13	Lopez (Patrick Henry)	25	Parker (West Liberty Salem)

I approach this weight class with real uncertainty and trepidation – even more than usual. I have hypothesized that Wilson and Nicola will be here and Seebach will not. Again, speculation on my part, I would not be surprised to see Hoff at 152# - -in fact, I might recommend it – as it is a far easier (at least to my eye) weight class. Even Lerer, who certified at 140# could conceivably return to that weight class should Lipp be unable to compete. There are five wrestlers here, any of who could be state champ, and, probably, deserve to be state champ.

Hoff has paid his dues. The last two years he beat eventual champ Jamison Moss in the Sectionals, had that victory reversed at Districts, and then lost heartbreakingly close state semi-final bouts. This year, at 152#, he had all falls at Hudson and was 4th at Medina after getting caught by Van Fossen in the semis. He will be a very big 145-pounder. Lerer has moved from 103# as a freshman to this weight class, and he is by no means undersized. Rather short, but very powerful, he like Hoff, has both experience and technique. He is a three-time placer in Division I with tremendous experience in gaining an advantage and maintaining it. Sometimes I think we tend to overvalue boys who move from Division I to Division III believing that they will automatically win big at the smaller school level. Experience has shown that that is not always the case. Lerer will be yet another test case of that theory.

Another dues-paying wrestler is the senior, Mick Nicola. He is a two-time state qualifier and was 4th last year at 130#. His district finals loss to Andrews threw him in the same quarter-bracket as two-time champ Scaletta and Shindledecker while Andrews cruised to the final round. This year he is 26-1 winning at Marion Harding, Bellaire St. John, and Barnesville, losing only in the CIT finals to state champion Friery. A very talented wrestler we've seen him compete for four successful years.

The fourth leg of the 145# weight class is the junior Eric Reer. He was 45-1 last year while finishing 3rd at Columbus. His only loss was a 10-9 barnburner to Justin Hill in the

quarter-finals. He has gotten very little notice, but is an outstanding talent. Western Reserve, almost a non-entity in wrestling for many years, has built a solid program that peaked last year when Chris Estep became their first state finalist. If everything goes perfectly right, they could win one or even two titles in 2006.

Wilson, only a sophomore, was 8th last year after burning up the mats during the early part of the year. He was 5th at Brecksville and won big at North Union and 4th at DeSales losing to Straughn and Lovell. He can be absolutely brilliant at times – almost unbeatable – and when he learns to sustain those surges everyone else better head for the hills.

Thatcher was the district champ at 140# last year, but was upset in the first round at Columbus and finished with a 1-2 record. He looked in top form at Black River, but has not appeared in my scorebook since then. He could give Lerer some problems at the Maple Hts. District. State qualifiers Wren and Smyers are also back. They were a combined 0-4 at Columbus and have looked vulnerable at times during the year. Kiefer lost to Wren by three at the Ohio Duals and might have a chance while Hatton and, maybe, Bender (Brookfield) could pull off the big upset. Tomaino (Jackson-Milton) has been out all year, but may wrestle here.

Hoff and Reer are likely to “own” this district and their bout will be most interesting. Lopez and Ortolani are my other two choices to qualify, but they will need to be at 100% to do so. Worthington, 3rd at the Gorman, is another candidate for a state berth, but there are several others. Hessick, Kuzma, and Crapo are all good and could easily qualify. Hessick was 5th at the CIT while Kuzma won at Van Buren. Harden(McComb) was 2nd at Richmond Hts. and Woodmore and is another possibility.

They'll break attendance records at Steubenville for a Wilson versus Nicola final, but state qualifier Heasley could make things difficult for the top duo. He was 4th at the district level and then lost two tough bouts against very good wrestlers in his first two state bouts. Not bad for a freshman. This year he has been even better during the regular season and, if in a different sectional than Wilson, could draw away from both he and Nicola. Howe and Domres are also strong out of the Central. And I would not be surprised to see Miller at this weight class. I haven't seen Chase Tucker's (Martins Ferry) name all year, but it looks like he may have certified here where he could certainly be an important bracket element. Kreinbihl (Indian Valley), Crock (Shenandoah) and Cooper (Belpre) might be other possibilities. This might have been the weight class where the excellent Jeremy Peoples would have been a favorite for state qualification. As it is he lost his season and very nearly his life in a tragic automobile accident.

With so many high-powered contenders in the other districts some will treat Fairmont as kind of an afterthought. There are no returning state qualifiers and no one that, at least at this moment, sets your blood aboil. I think Dolinski may well be the best here with Looser and Staley from the Northwest next in line. Keuterman is up three classes, but

has solid district experience. Parker and Sides (Coldwater) are two other possibilities, but state placers from this district are going to be rare.

152

PROJECTED CHAMPION: ROSS TICE (BROOKFIELD)

Top Contenders

2	Petrella (Hartley)	16	Jackson (Grand Valley)
3	Wiseman (Jackson Milton)	17	Hathaway (Genoa)
4	Bostleman (Otsego)	18	Porter (Berkshire)
5	Welfle (Norwalk St. Paul)	19	Alexander (Monroeville)
6	Johns (Brookville)	20	Mohney (Nelsonville York)
7	Gallik (Northmor)	21	Blosser (Dixie)
8	Foley (Worthington Christian)	22	Neff (Waynedale)
9	Reynolds (Black River)	23	Carnahan (Liberty Center)
10	Bowers (Martins Ferry)	24	Hickin (Waterloo)
11	Brunnett (Chanel)	25	Clack (Tri-County North)
12	Cartwright (Mohawk)	26	Jameson (Collins Western Reserve)
13	Deetz (Garaway)	27	Schmidt (Coldwater)
14	Lowe (Northridge)	28	Caligiuri (Van Buren)
15	Randolph (Belpre)	29	Donley (Lima Central Catholic)

As I have intimated in earlier essays, this is not a particularly strong or deep weight class thus providing a great opportunity for someone to snare a state title. This is a weight class where a "Hot Weekend" could propel a wrestler to a surprise title. A good example was at 135# last year in Division II where Trevor Bowers (a very good wrestler) won neither his sectional nor district but caught fire at Columbus and steamrolled four quality opponents. That could well happen here. The trick will be to identify who that might be. As we do that, keep in mind that Hoff may choose to compete here with monumental ramifications.

Tice has to be a slight favorite at this weight class. He was a state qualifier last year losing a critical 15-13 OT bout early and going 1-2. This year he won at Elyria Catholic (over Wiseman) and was 5th at Medina losing to Sponseller in the semi-final. Wiseman, also a state qualifier, is close to as good. He, too, went 1-2 at Columbus after being put out by eventual champ Brinden Baum. Also back is state qualifier Brunnett who got a late start, began at 145#, and is now just starting to perform. He started very slowly placing in only one of three tournaments --- a 6th at North Canton. Jackson was a district semi-finalist last year at this class, but failed to qualify. He started the year at 160# with a 4th at Richmond Hts. and did not seem to be comfortable at that weight. Reynolds was also a district semi-finalist who didn't qualify and that is a tough way to miss out. He won at Black River, was 2nd at the Gorman and was 6th at the Dies. He could easily bounce ahead of Brunnett and Jackson. Porter is a rising star for Berkshire, while Neff could easily be the same. He beat Jackson 11-9 at Richmond Hts.

The field at Owens is depleted since first I pondered it. Hoff is at 145# and the excellent sophomore Ryan Wasylik is hurt and out for the year. That still leaves two returning state qualifiers. After substantial thought Welfle went at 135# last year and it was a touch of genius. He crept into 4th at the district and then wrestled well at Columbus to get a 6th. A close quarter-final loss to eventual runner-up Seebach could have gone the other way and what happens next is unclear. This year he has again chosen exactly the right weight class and could go higher at the state level. He was 1st at Richmond Hts. and Edison and 2nd (to Hupp) at Bellevue. Bostleman qualified two years ago, but was shut out last year when he finished 6th at this district. He won at Rogers and should get a second trip to our capital city. I like state alternate Cartwright a lot and expect him to qualify easily this time. He was, for example, 4th at the GMVWA after that, its almost random. Hathaway and Alexander should do well while Carnahan, Jameson, and Caligiuri are long shots.

The question at Steubenville is, "Where will we find Tony Petrella?" He was certified at 152# and that is where I will rank him (although he has been at 160# much of the year). If he can perform at this weight it's a great strategic move. A state qualifier at this weight class and defending district titleholder, he will be the favorite to win at this district. Gallik and Foley are right behind him and both have good years. Bowers and Skoff are both solid with a consistent record of placements. The sophomore Randolph and Deetz are likely to be underdogs here, but they have upset potential as does Mohney (Nelsonville York) and Rossiter (Shenandoah).

State qualifier Johns is back and heads a rather uninspiring group of 152's at Fairmont. He won handily at Fairfield and should do well here. Lowe, Blosser, and Clack would seem to be next best with solid district performances in their background. Donley and Stemen (Delphos Jefferson) are Northern possibilities with Schmidt and O'Neil (Blanchester) as other candidates. This district will again be where you will want to draw into.

160 #

PROJECTED CHAMPION: KEN SANGER (LUTHERAN WEST)

Top Contenders

2	Nelson (Tuslaw)	14	Angle (Ridgewood)
3	Sowers (Mohawk)	15	Allis (Brookville)
4	Hines (Barnesville)	16	Wolff (Genoa)
5	Blanton (Sandusky St. Mary)	17	Gallik (Northmor)
6	Smith (Madison Plains)	18	Richardson (Berkshire)
7	Shockey (Bluffton)	19	Osterman (Grandview Hts.)
8	Hatfield (Hillsdale)	20	Wilson (Dixie)
9	Braden (Norwalk St. Paul)	21	Scavuzzo (Woodridge)
10	Kennedy (Manchester)	22	Bereschik (Wellsville)
11	Ziegler (Mechanicsburg)	23	Knipp (Archbold)
12	Taylor (Springfield Northeastern)	24	Lewis (Northridge)
13	Powell (Cory Rawson)	25	Hulit (Crestview)

You ever watch a Jackie Chan movie? Two or three times during the show about a dozen guys will attack him – always one at a time --- and he'll foot sweep one, kick another, karate chop a third, and so. I think that's the way the 160's are going to feel as there are a multitude of solid contenders.

The Owens District is in a state of transition. State runner-up Estep who originally certified at this weight class the first week of the season will apparently compete at 171#. That certainly swings open the door for state qualifiers Cory Braden and Brett Sowers. Braden won at Richmond Hts. and was 2nd at Bellevue to the excellent Baker. Sowers was a sectional champ and state alternate at 140# last year twice losing go-to-state bouts by just two points. This year he is much bigger and the results have been impressive. He won the GMVWA – only one of two Division III wrestlers to do so—and was 3rd at the Gorman losing in overtime in the semi-finals. Wolff winner at Northwood and Sylvania Southview is also strong and should be a factor. He would have placed at Medina but had to default out of the competition. Hulit, an unfamiliar name to me, was a finalist at the Gorman and vaults into contention along with Knipp. The major variable here, though, is T.J. Blanton. A super athlete – all-state first team quarterback and star baseball player – he also knows some wrestling. Last year he was champion in the tough Sandusky Bay Conference ahead of two Division II state qualifiers. Then Baum moved up to 152# at tournament time and Blanton could not compete. Baum, of course, won the state title three weekends later. This year Blanton has been inactive as this is written, but is due back soon. If he is 100% physically and rust-free, he will challenge all in this top group.

Maple Hts. is equally crowded. Sanger, after a great freshman year at Holy Name, disappeared for about 18 months, then suddenly, resurfaced at Lutheran West last January. His late start kept him off most radar screens but that didn't last for long. He

won the Twinsburg District at 152# and then won three state bouts by a total of five points before losing to Baum in an overtime final. This year he has been vacillating between 171# and 160# with solid success. He was 1st at Wadsworth and 2nd at Elyria Catholic and looks primed for another run deep into the tournament. Nelson was a Division I state qualifier last year for Massillon Perry at 152#. Now at Tuslaw, he won at Elyria Catholic beating Sanger in overtime. Hatfield was the district runner-up to Sanger, losing a narrow 8-7 bout, but was only 1-2 at Columbus and being, very uncharacteristically, outscored 26-6 in those two bouts. This year he has won at the WIT, Black River, and Chippewa while beating some top-notch opponents. Kennedy, a state alternate last year at this weight class, recently dropped from 171#. He promptly won at Canal Fulton over a tough field and was 5th at Wadsworth, losing to Sanger in overtime. Richardson and Scavuzzo are other possibilities if the bracketing is bad.

After two weak weight classes, Fairmont has some real depth. Shockey, the state pole vault champion, has a rare opportunity to win an individual state title in two different sports. A state qualifier last year he went 1-2 including a big win over Hatfield. He won at Allen County and Van Buren and is one of six good wrestlers looking to gain one of four state berths. Ziegler was 2nd at 152# at this district and finished 8th in the state. Taylor is also a returning state qualifier after a district runner-up finish at 160#. I like state alternate Powell a lot. He is a pinner who won at Woodmore and Arcadia. I think Allis and Wilson can do almost as well with Lewis as a possible upset maker.

Things will be no easier at Steubenville. I really like Hines and he could be the surprise package at this class. A district finalist at 152# -- he drew the tough Jeremiah Hill in the first round at Value City. After losing early, he won three consecutive consolation bouts before losing to Hill once again and ended up 6th. He has been on fire in the Eastern District this year. He won at Shadyside while taking the Outstanding Wrestler Award and also won at St. Clairsville defeating West Virginia state champ Rhett Northcraft. At Barnesville he defeated the highly ranked Kyle Henry from Claymont for the title, completing a rare sweep of all three titles. Smith was a state semi-finalist at this class defeating John Weakley in the quarters before ending up 6th. Now down at 160# he recently won the Chertow Classic in a tough battle with Angle, 4-3, as he strives to get comfortable at this weight. The last two spots are up for grabs. The top four possibilities are Osterman, Angle, Gallik, and Bereschik. I particularly like state alternate Angle and he would be the favorite from this quartet to qualify.

171 #

PROJECTED CHAMPION: NICK PURDUE (GENOA)

Top Contenders

2	Estep (Collins Western Reserve)	16	Sneary (Allen East)
3	Reed (Crestview)	17	Yearly (Reading)
4	Weiner (Beachwood)	18	McCraith (Wickliffe)
5	Kelley (Waynedale)	19	Albright (Indian Valley)
6	Ball (Licking Hts.)	20	Hughes (Seneca East)
7	Ross (Clinton Massie)	21	Dahm (Monroeville)
8	Mack (Tinora)	22	Border (Ridgewood)
9	Klaus (Mechanicsburg)	23	Pertee (Smithville)
10	Miely (Sandusky St. Mary)	24	Brickner (McComb)
11	Buena (Utica)	25	Inks (West Jefferson)
12	Herbert (Middletown Madison)	26	Barrett (Chanel)
13	Owens (Harvest Prep)	27	Stoll (Norwalk St. Paul)
14	Kennedy (Manchester)	28	Fritter (Barnesville)
15	Martter (Woodridge)	29	Kinzy (Beallsville)

One of the unusual things about Division III this year is that there is not a single weight class where you can give a contender something like a 90% chance of winning. Most years there are three or four wrestlers that meet that standard making things more comfortable for forecasters.

Here at 171# I see Purdue and Estep as co-favorites. Purdue, now a junior, was 3rd last year losing only to eventual champ Shannon 9-8 in the quarterfinals. He has, this year, won at Sylvania Southview and Northwood while finishing a solid 2nd to Cleveland State recruit Kyle Chittick at Medina. I worry that he has not had a roster of opponents who have pushed him, but part of that may be because of the high quality of his own performance. Last year he wrestled Adam Olds (Sandusky St. Mary) twice – losing at the district level and then winning 5-4, in the third consolation round at Columbus. Had Olds not torn up his knee, thus foregoing his senior year, they would have been rated as co-favorites.

Estep is the defending district champion and state runner-up at 160#. He opened the season at 160# at Edison, but has been at 171# since then. He has been very successful at this weight class highlighted by his win over Division II state place winner Cody Van Buskirk in the Tiffin finals. Both he and Purdue were sectional champs at 160# last year, but did not meet at either the district or state level despite finishing 2nd and 3rd.

There are four returning state qualifiers exiting the district at Maple Hts. At the top of my list is Weiner who has really flourished this year. Last year in Division II he earned a district 4th, meeting eventual champ Hackett in the first round and two-time placer Thompson in the second consolation round; needless to say he went 1-2. This year he

was 5th at Solon, but at Brecksville he finished a startling 2nd. In the semi-final he went toe-to-toe with the #1 seed Jeremy Foster and won 7-3. It was the best I'd ever seen him wrestle. Kelley was very impressive at Richmond Hts. shutting out McCraith in the final. He also won the Dies easily. He was also 1-2 at Columbus last year, but look for him to do more this time. McCraith returns after a state appearance last year and won at Hawken and was 2nd at Richmond Hts. I haven't seen state qualifier Martter in the agate for some time, but he certified at this class. He drew Purdue in the first round with predictable results. State alternate Nate Kennedy and state qualifier Pertee are also at this class and both have solid state potential. Add in Barrett and Delong (Hillsdale) and that is eight solid performers. I would think a couple of them – like Kennedy or Pertee – might re-consider their move down from the far less crowded 189# class.

Purdue Estep, and returning state qualifier Hunter Reed should dominate at Owens. It will be a tremendous battle between them likely to continue at the state level. Reed was 2nd at the Gorman and came off several other strong performances. Mack was the state alternate at this class last year and should qualify. He was 2nd at Perrysburg to the excellent Magrum. After this quartet it's wide open. My top three choices are Miely, Hughes, and Dahm. All of whom have had good years. Miely, in particular, has shown real flashes of excellence while Hughes won at Plymouth and Van Buren. Stockmaster (Calvert) and Kirian (Mohawk) certainly have to rate as possibilities.

It seems to me that the Steubenville District is in a state of flux at this weight class. There is a lot of churning in the results without generation of a recognizable pattern. Owens is a returning state qualifier, but wrestles a schedule that is invisible to me. At the district level he won two very close bouts that could have gone either way. Wrestling a weaker schedule, I wonder whether he can duplicate that feat. Instead, Ball and Inks may well have passed him while Buena, 2nd at North Union, is also strong. That quartet will match up with solid boys from the Eastern District. Albright lost to Owens 4-3 in that 30 second tie breaker last year and has been a consistent placer for Indian Valley. Border is also good, finishing 6th in the district and continuing to do well in his area. Fritter, Kinzy, and Stevens (Monroe Central) are OVAC wrestlers who have outside shots at qualification.

There are some intriguing contenders at Fairmont. Cole Ross was a state qualifier at this district last year at 189# and has dropped to this weight class for 2006. He had a superb 35-3 record before the state meet, but went two and out there. He won the Wolfpack Classic and Bellbrook, and seems ready to win some bouts at Columbus. Klaus was a state qualifier at 145# last year so he has gone in the opposite direction of Ross. He had two big wins at the Ohio Duals, losing only to Miely. The other top contender is Jake Herbert. He won at Carlisle over state placer Zach Smith and at Edgewood while becoming the top 171-pounder in this area. Yeary upset Herbert, but lost badly to Sneary, so in what mode will he be at tourney time. Sneary, Kunk Coldwater), and Ely (Covington) look to battle for that fourth state berth with Saam (Lincolnview) or Michael (Carlisle) a long shot.

189 #

PROJECTED CHAMPION: LOGAN BROWN (COVINGTON)

Top Contenders

2	Riedy (Sandusky St. Mary)	14	Hesson (Caldwell)
3	Kirian (Mohawk)	15	Reier (Troy Christian)
4	Urbina (Archbold)	16	Wilson (Wayne Trace)
5	Stevens (Crestview)	17	Nester (Grand Valley)
6	Beisner (Versailles)	18	Mead (Paulding)
7	Porter (Berkshire)	19	Johnson (West Salem Northwestern)
8	Steigerwald (Kirtland)	20	Mahl (Seneca East)
9	Schwab (Clinton Massie)	21	Cummins (Cardington Lincoln)
10	Hannum (Brooklyn)	22	Baum (Brookfield)
11	Wasserbeck North Union)	23	Grear (Barnesville)
12	Rice (West Jefferson)	24	Earley (Blanchester)
13	Buckner (Woodmore)	25	Garee (Utica)
		26	Pierson (Purcell)

Covington High School has never had a State Wrestling Champion, but Logan Brown gives them their best chance since Craig Vanderhorst back in 1983 and 1984. Last year he compiled a 50-1 record and a 3rd place state finish losing only to two-time state champ Spencer Dye. While he does not wrestle a high profile schedule, he is now a two-time champion at the Mammoth GMVWA that includes some powerful squads. This year he won a 5-4 final over Division I Dattilo, but the bouts that most interested me were the two that preceded it. In the first one he defeated Russ Beisner 8-7 while in the next round he pinned Brock Kirian in 75 seconds. Both opponents will challenge him during the tournament process and it showed both sides of him --- the dominating pinner and the wrestler who could be upended.

His district at Fairmont will be a challenge. I mentioned Beisner and he has gotten bigger and better. He was one win from Columbus last year at 171#. This year he placed at GMVWA after his close loss to Brown and won big at Plymouth. He has great upset potential against the entire field. Schwab was a state qualifier at 160# last year, but lost early and often at States. He was 2nd at both the Wolfpack and Bellbrook and I don't think will match up well with Brown. Reier lost his first district bout at this class and then won three consolation rounds only to lose to Ross in his go-to-state bout. He got a 4th seed at Brecksville, but was overmatched going 1-2. He may struggle here, too. Earley and Pierson, two strong boys from the Cincinnati area, will be challengers for most of the bracket while Gourley (Mechanicsburg), if he competes, could also be a factor.

Brown's biggest challenge is likely to emerge from the Owens District. There are four powerful contenders there waiting to confront him. Riedy qualified at 171# last year taking 7th place with a 3-2 record. This year he has been a mainstay at Sandusky St. Mary wrestling at both this weight and at 215#. He was perfect at the Ohio Duals. Last

year Kirian was 4th at this district losing to Riedy, 7-2, in the consolation finals. This year he was 4th at the GMVWA and won the Gorman. Urbina was the state alternate at 171# losing to Kirian by five. He wrestles a solid dual schedule. Then there is Stevens. He was a state qualifier at 189# last year, but drew Brown in the first round and lost 10-1. This year he was 3rd at the Gorman --- his only loss to Kirian, 9-5. If the bracketing is good, these are the four that should qualify. If not, Buckner, the Woodmore winner, would be a top candidate with Mahl and Mead in reserve.

I see very little at the Maple Hts. district. I would not be surprised to see some of the excess 171's travel here. I look for the sophomore Porter to survive and qualify after just missing out at 171# last year. He was 3rd at Wadsworth and had no problems at the Ohio Duals. I believe he is certified at 171#, but I think we'll find him here. Steigerwald and Hannum were finalists at Richmond Hts. with Steigerwald winning 12-9. I think he'll maintain that margin, but both should qualify. While this top trio seems marginal, the next threesome of Nester, Johnson, and Baum may be just as good. Again several of these boys have the option of 171# or 189#. Henderson or Salvaggi (Richmond Hts.) could also play a role here.

The Steubenville District is equally weak and, like at Maple Hts., we may see some movement by the lower-rated 171's. Last year's district bracket at this weight class only had five underclassmen – two of whom ended the year with losing records and one (Reichard) who moved to Division II. So there is not a lot of experience here. I rate Wasserbeck the best primarily because of his 6-2 win over Hesson, an OVAC placer. Rice is right behind Wasserbeck and this trio likely has the best chance for a low place at states for this district. Cummins and Gear are two other thoughts with Garee also in the mix.

215 #

PROJECTED CHAMPION: NICK GIRLIE (AYERSVILLE)

Top Contenders

2	Davis (Grandview Hts.)	15	Tiell (Hopewell-Loudon)
3	Studer (Mohawk)	16	Bowersox (Highland Sparta)
4	Bacci (Independence)	17	Wasserman (Fremont St. Joseph)
5	Hershey (West Salem Northwestern)	18	Clark (Martins Ferry)
6	Carr (Northmor)	19	Rhodes (Garrettsville Garfield)
7	Horn (Shenandoah)	20	Huber (Dixie)
8	Neff (Waynedale)	21	Stoll (Norwalk St. Paul)
9	Hooper (Manchester)	22	Gord (Dayton Christian)
10	Hughes (Tinora)	23	Zang (Hartley)
11	Taylor (Blanchester)	24	Keeney (Purcell)
12	Bostleman (Archbold)	25	Morosko (Tuslaw)
13	French (Middletown Madison)	26	Wagner (Triad)
14	Hunt (Calvert)	27	Matusik (River)

I remember when they added the 215# class there were naysayers (aren't there always) who said that the small schools would never be able to field boys there. Well, I hope they've looked at the bracket sheets the last few years as there has been excellent depth for some time – and this year is no different. I count at least eight possible winners spread out over three of the four Division III districts.

There are some interesting competitors at Owens. The top two were both state qualifiers, but come from diametrically opposed directions. Girlie was the district runner-up at this class last year losing to eventual state champ Van Sickle in the finals. He then finished 3rd at Value City defeating in the process returning 215's Bacci, Carr, and Davis. This year he is undefeated though he has not been overly tested to date. Studer was a state qualifier at 160# and then went 1-2 at Columbus. He has been excellent at this much higher weight finishing 2nd at the GMVWA including a win over the very tough Oney Snyder. I think there is a solid gap between these two and the next twosome of Tiell and Hughes. Tiell was a takedown from Columbus last year at 189#, but Girlie handled him easily, 14-4, at Woodmore. Girlie also beat Hughes in the dual suggesting that it'll be Studer who'll most challenge him. After that, there are some other possibilities that include Hunt, Wasserman, Bostleman, and Stoll.

It is very strong and crowded at Steubenville. Somewhat unusual, three of the four qualifiers at this weight class return for another go around. Carr was the district champ, but caught Girlie in the quarter-finals, lost, and was quickly eliminated. Davis, on the other hand was a semi-finalist eventually ending up 4th – losing the consolation final to Girlie. Interestingly, Girlie beat both of them by exactly the same score, 8-5. Horn, a district 4th never got started at Columbus and did not survive to Friday. Carr was 3rd at Marion Harding this year losing to Clum in the semi-finals and 5th at the Gorman losing to Studer and Hershey. I think it's possible that Davis may have erased that three point

deficit to Carr from last year's district final. Horn again dominates in the East, but we will have to assume that he still trails the Columbus duo. Jefferis and Clark both placed at the OVAC with the former a finalist. Bowersox and Zang have potential here with a squadron of possibilities behind them.

When I first started telecasting I would occasionally know an older sister of a wrestler, then, somewhat later I might be acquainted with a mother. Now, as time goes on, it's usually their grandmother I know. All this and it has not seemed that long a time period. At any rate, I think there are four wrestlers at Maple Hts. that really matter. State qualifier Bacci is back with a 30-2 record and titles at several tournaments (Hawken, Elyria Catholic, etc.) He was 0-2 at the state level, but he was a very light 215-pounder last year. Now he is substantially bigger and stronger and his narrow loss to Division I Cortez Robinson only cements my belief that he is the best here. Girlie, by the way, defeated him 8-4 in Columbus last year – one point different than Carr and Davis. Hershey lost to Bacci in the consolation finals last year at this district and also went 0-2 at the States. His recent 8-5 win over Carr suggests that the top half-dozen boys are very closely matched. Neff looked like a world-beater at Richmond Hts. crushing folks with speed and strength. Since then he was 2nd at the Dies finishing ahead of some excellent talent. And, again, the Hooper twins are at it – both certifying at 215# and then switching on and off at this weight class. My guess it will be Greg who was 3rd at Wadsworth and 5th at the Dies. This is really an excellent quartet. The pairing will have to be good for all four to qualify with three exiting the same sectional. The backup here would likely be Rhodes or Morosko.

While the three other districts are loaded, Fairmont will struggle to find four qualifiers with winning chances at Value City. Taylor, a district semi-finalist, last year seems best with French and Huber as strong possibilities. French, for example, won at Carlisle (while Huber was 3rd), and was 2nd at Edgewood to the excellent Truster. Both boys have flashy records, but some of the competition has been suspect. Gord pinned Hutchinson (Allen East) at Madeira and may be fourth best at this district although Kenney may surprise. Wagner is another option.

Hvy.

PROJECTED CHAMPION: CAMERON WADE (CHANEL)

Top Contenders

2	Taylor (Swanton)	15	Tahy (Elmwood)
3	Ruffer (Archbold)	16	Stewart (Brooklyn)
4	Harding (West Jefferson)	17	Johnson (Utica)
5	Campbell (Black River)	18	Endicott (Plymouth)
6	Gonzales (Paulding)	19	Bishop (Tusky Valley)
7	Phifer (Berkshire)	20	Burch (Sandusky St. Mary)
8	Ishmael (North Baltimore)	21	Fritz (Delphos St. John)
9	Hooper (Manchester)	22	Coole (Martins Ferry)
10	Salyers (Mechanicsburg)	23	Saylor (Nelsonville York)
11	Griffiths (Wayne Trace)	24	Hale (Preble Shawnee)
12	Robey (Licking Hts)	25	Foote (Liberty Center)
13	Rankin (Elyria Catholic)	26	Read (West Salem Northwestern)
14	Herrington (Blanchester)	27	Bruce (Bellaire)
		28	Hughes (Wellington)

There has never been a state finals rematch at the heavyweight class in Division III. It could happen in 2006. But there are, in the words of Howard Cosell, a plethora of 275-pounders with the talent to prevent it. Both Wade, who won, and Ruffer are back and look to be better than before. However, their competition has gotten deeper in scope and more athletic on the mat. In addition, neither of these boys won district titles last year suggesting that they had not overmatched the competition.

Last year Wade began the season as a 215-pounder and then moved up to heavyweight for the holiday tournaments. He used quickness, conditioning, and excellent coaching to wind a boatload of bouts. Beating Taylor and Ruffer back-to-back got him the deserved state title. This year he has won at both Brecksville and North Canton beating highly rated Division I competitors in both finals – and he no longer is winning on guile. A solid 250-pounder, Wade has now become a hammer who can score and pin.

Wade exits an extremely competitive district. Amazingly, all four placers from 2nd through 5th return and so do 13 of the 16 boys in the district bracket sheet. Campbell pinned Wade in the district quarter-finals and finished 2nd. However, he ended up 1-2 in Columbus losing to Taylor in the quarters. Close to the limit in size he was 5th at the very tough Dies and won at Firestone. Phifer, short and stocky, also qualified out of the fourth spot, and also went 1-2. He is very difficult to score against and wins a lot of defensive battles. He was 4th at Solon and 3rd at Wadsworth losing only to Nicholson. He had a controversial day at the Ohio Duals when he was disqualified against Wade for excessive stalling and then was dubiously pinned in the St. Mary's match and penalized a team point on a headgear violation in the 33-32 loss. A top contender would have to be Nick Hooper, who, outweighed by 50 pounds, beat Division II state runner-up

Nathan Sharp, 11-5, to win the Dies. It was one of the biggest upsets of the year, and it came on the heels of a 5-4 win over Weber in the quarter-finals. I keep wondering was it all an illusion or is Hooper for real. Rankin, champ at Elyria Catholic and 5th at the CIT is a player here. Last year Stewart rode him out in the 30 second tiebreaker to eliminate him, but this year he pinned him. Also on my list are Read, Ellsworth (Grand Valley), and Hughes all of whom could pull the big upset.

The Owens District is also deep in excellent heavyweights. Ruffer is the returning state runner-up, but like Wade lost at the district level. He did not look sharp early in the year, but he knows how to win. Taylor was the district champ and a state semi-finalist losing to Wade 3-1 and finishing 5th. He had built up a powerhouse record until Ishmael caught and pinned him at Van Buren. I still think Taylor is the best at this district. Ishmael was a great junior high wrestler who has started to capitalize on his talent this year. The mammoth red-headed Tathy won easily at Richmond Hts. after getting off his back in the semis to beat Ellsworth. The wildcard here is Gonzales. Missing a hand he has overcome that handicap and fashioned a great year for Paulding. I don't think he is overmatched against anyone here, but he doesn't have the experience that top trio possesses. Endicott or Burch are other possibilities, but watch for the pocket sized Foote who uses speed to win.

Harding is the only returning state qualifier at Steubenville. He drew Wade in the first round losing 6-2 and then failed to win his first consolation. Rather short he looks immensely strong at 275# and was an excellent 3rd at Medina – splitting two bouts with Sizemore and beating Holland and Foote. He won outright at North Union and was 2nd to Salyers at West Jefferson. Robey would seem to be the only other Central District wrestler with a chance to qualify. Most of the best heavyweights in the Eastern District are Division II with Coole and Bruce being the Division III exceptions. Bishop, though, in that middle area, has had some great victories winning at Beallsville and the Chertow. The huge Saylor has done well in Southeast, but may have trouble at the district level.

As we saw at Steubenville, the Fairmont District has only one returning state qualifier. Griffith went 1-2 at Columbus and has won this year at several tournaments. He should qualify, but it is likely to be a struggle at Columbus once again. Salyers might be the best at this district after checking out his win at West Jefferson and his two falls at the Ohio Duals (but losing to the 215# Davis). Herrington should also be a factor here Fritz, Hassett (Carlisle), and Hale also possibilities.

TEAMS

1. Sandusky St. Mary They are going for an unprecedented fifth consecutive title in Division III and their seventh title overall, but it won't be easy. Chanel has as many estimated points so it will come down to execution. The key elements are heavy point scoring by Guerra and Hermes, some help by Miely, and, most of all, Blanton performing at peak efficiency. They can't afford any missteps this year.
2. Chanel Always a contender this team has to be the co-favorite with Sandusky St. Mary. We expect Koballa, Wade Gardella, and Boing to score heavily, but they need some solid help from their second tier performer. Specifically Brunnett and Chmura have to come up big and a Barrett or a Schaefer have to have the weekend of their life. It could come down to Wade in the last bout of the year.
3. Berksire The Freeman twins are beautifully placed and should score heavily. I look for Phifer, Jenkins, and, maybe, a Porter to gain a middle to high place. Now that Hartley is gone they probably don't have enough to catch the top two, but stranger things have happened.
4. Beachwood Lipp and Lerer are both at brutally difficult weight classes, but they will still score a boatload of points. However, they'll only nail down fourth place if Weiner performs at a very high level – and he has shown signs of just that. Marmaros could also be a helper.
5. Troy Christian It all has to come from the young lightweights. Casey Thome and Sergent are possible finalists while the young Thome and Toal should be able to score at the state level. If a Hancock or Reier can help, this position will be secure.
6. Archbold The big men Ruffer, Urbina, and Bostleman have to do the heavy lifting (what else are big men for), but state qualifiers Weirauch and Bernath along with Redd have to provide some aid, too. This could be a stretch, but there are a number of possible scorers.
7. Grandview Hts. The middle trio of Ells, Murray, and Wise can all score at the state level, and Davis could be a finalist at 215#. Osterman could be a real plus but he is at the difficult 160-pound weight class.

8. Western Reserve Estep and Reer are both possible finalists, but they have to figure out the best weight class for both of them. Butler should be able to help, but where will other scoring come from?

9. Mohawk All their scoring will come at 152# or more. I like Sowers and Studer to do very well with Cartwright and Kirian to help out. This quartet will have to be error free because there is no help anywhere else.

10. Pleasant This is really going out on a limb – but think about. If Pope and Wilson came back at 103# and 119#, they could be top four placers. Give Steve Wilson the same placement at 145# and that is top ten points.