

## DIVISION I

This is a banner year in Division I wrestling. At last year's state meet 19 of the 28 finalists were underclassmen - - nine of whom won titles. In addition two state champions and a runner-up from previous years are also competing making this one of the best and most competitive tournaments in many years.

One of the questions that interested me this year was the value in team points for each level of placement. On average what is, for example, the differential in team points between a second place finish and a third place result. Summing over the 42 weight classes decided in 2006 the results, shown below, have some interesting features.

| Placement | Average Team Points | Difference From Preceding Place | Highest Scorers For That Placement |
|-----------|---------------------|---------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| First     | 25.01               | --                              | L. Palmer 29.0<br>D. Taylor 28.0   |
| Second    | 19.90               | 5.11                            | B Sergent 23.5                     |
| Third     | 16.85               | 3.05                            | T Blanton 22.0                     |
| Fourth    | 14.31               | 2.54                            | Many with 18.0                     |
| Fifth     | 11.01               | 3.30                            | J. Fose 16.0                       |
| Sixth     | 8.05                | 2.96                            | J. Mohney 12.0                     |
| Seventh   | 6.75                | 1.30                            | F. Becker 10.0                     |
| Eighth    | 4.88                | 1.87                            | J. Neff 8.0                        |

There can be substantial variability between places. For example, Blanton scored 22 team points finishing 3<sup>rd</sup> while the runner-up at that same weight class, Wolff scored but 18. Note that the biggest point spread, on average, is, as it should be, between first and second place. That gives a strong team component as well as individual glory on Saturday night. Also, it is clear that pins are always very important since they are very heavily weighted - - especially in the consolation rounds.

One last item. There are two districts in Division I that substantially blur district lines. At Waite last year two sectionals from the Northeast and two from the Northwest competed while at Darby there were three Central District sectionals and one from the

Dayton area. The breakouts look like this:

|                 |           | Expected<br>Qualifiers | Actual<br>Qualifiers |
|-----------------|-----------|------------------------|----------------------|
| <u>At Waite</u> | Northeast | 28                     | 36                   |
|                 | Northwest | 28                     | 20                   |
| <u>At Darby</u> | Central   | 42                     | 45                   |
|                 | Southwest | 14                     | 11                   |

**103 #**

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

Top Contenders

|    |                         |    |                              |
|----|-------------------------|----|------------------------------|
| 2  | White (Massillon Perry) | 15 | Corrill (Moeller)            |
| 3  | Robinson (St. Ignatius) | 16 | Meuer (Medina)               |
| 4  | Bolger (Strongsville)   | 17 | Corbett (Elder)              |
| 5  | Sako (St. Edward)       | 18 | Riegle (Springboro)          |
| 6  | Lawrence (Westlake)     | 19 | Smith (Centerville)          |
| 7  | Li (Reynoldsburg)       | 20 | Manley (Holland Springfield) |
| 8  | Farber (St. Xavier)     | 21 | Smutak (Nordoncia)           |
| 9  | Giffin (Harrison)       | 22 | Seiple (Coffman)             |
| 10 | Regan (Miamisburg)      | 23 | Hupp (Marietta)              |
| 11 | Foore (Wadsworth)       | 24 | Brunner (Avon Lake)          |
| 12 | Millar (Davidson)       | 25 | Toth (Riverside)             |
| 13 | Cruz (Lorain Soutview)  | 26 | Wimer (Central Crossing)     |
| 14 | Mines (Maple Heights)   |    |                              |

For much of the history of the state wrestling tournament big school wrestling has been dominated by schools from the Northeast District. Then in the 1990's that dominance began to fade as big schools from other parts of the state (particularly the Southwest) began to win on a more consistent basis. For example in three years beginning in 1999 only half the individual titles (21 of 42) were won by Northeast District competitors. Now, however, we see a turn to the past as in the last three years 86% (35 of 42) of the Division I title went to the Northeast. Based on results from the Junior High States this may be a temporary glitch with other areas of the state doing very well in that venue - - although much of that talent appears to flow to Division II or III schools.

As is often the case this is a freshman/sophomore dominated weight class. My choice is the exceptional freshman from St. Edward, Jamie Clark, who has more than lived up to the high expectations set for him. A two time state junior high champ and a Cadet

National Champ at Fargo Clark is experienced way beyond his years. He was 3<sup>rd</sup> at the Ironman losing to Stieber by one point and shutting out both White and Robinson. He lost to Taylor by two points in the dual and was 2<sup>nd</sup> to White at Medina. In that last bout he controlled the action took most of the shots but could not finish against White's stout defense and size advantage. That may be the issue. Clark is a small 103 pounder and as the weight allowance rises it becomes an increasing disadvantage.

White is also very good. He was 4<sup>th</sup> at Fargo and backed up Genetin last year at Massillon Perry. Robinson beat him at the Ironman, but I remain unconvinced that it will happen again. Clark will want to get White at the State Meet relatively early to help negate the possible size differential on Saturday night. In a break with tradition I've rated Sako in my top five despite the fact that he is unlikely to compete at tournament time. A junior high state champ he backs up Clark and has had an outstanding year winning big, for example, at Perry and Marion Harding. His wrestle-off with Clark, in other circumstances, would be a closely watched state bout.

There are three excellent 103's at Mentor. Clark will be joined by the previously mentioned Robinson who was 4<sup>th</sup> at the Ironman, won at the CIT, but did not compete at Wadsworth. He has lost twice to Clark, but has beaten White. He is dangerous. Lawrence, another freshman, is easily overlooked because of Westlake's low profile schedule, but he is very good. He has crushed every opponent and should be away from Clark at districts. The fourth spot will depend substantially on accurate pairings and a hot hand. Cruz probably has the inside track, but Manley, Avon Lake champion Brunner or Chorney (Solon) are certainly in the mix.

The field at Perry is deeper, but the top two boys stand out. We've already talked about White, but Bolger has also put together a great season. He won at Solon and was 3<sup>rd</sup> at Brecksville defeating both Farber and Li in overtime. Strong and a good rider he should prosper in the often more conservative district and state tournaments. There are a great many contenders for the last two state berths and it is difficult to separate them. Foore was 2<sup>nd</sup> at Wadsworth and North Canton while Mines won against a relatively weak field at Kenston. Smutak, Meuer and, maybe Toth or Hupp are other possibilities as we see a two-tier system with White and Bolger on the top level and half-dozen or more below.

Most of the top boys are from the north, but there are several potential place winners lurking at Fairfield, I think the best of them is the sophomore Farber. He won the SWOCA, was 2<sup>nd</sup> at the CIT to Robinson, and 5<sup>th</sup> at Brecksville - - losing in overtime to Bolger and by one point to Li. I think by year's end Farber will reverse at least one of those defeats. The trio of Giffin, Corrill, and Corbett are all relatively close after finishing in that order at the SWOCA. None of them are going to be a big, huge problem for the top boys. Giffin and Corrill both beat Corbett by two to emphasize their closeness. Three Dayton area boys deserve mention here, but of course, we don't know in which direction they'll head for districts. I think Regan is the best of the trio finishing 2<sup>nd</sup> at

GMVWA and finishing ahead of Riegle and Smith, but then did not place at North while Smith took a 4<sup>th</sup>.

The Darby District has two bonafide contenders for placement with Li having by far the best shot. A sturdy senior he has performed well against all but the very best boys - - getting a 4<sup>th</sup> at Brecksville and a 3<sup>rd</sup> at North Canton. A state qualifier last year he'll be a tough first round match-up. Millar was the state alternate last year winning over 30 times. He lost to Li at districts and still trails him in this area. I think he missed the early part of the year so at Brecksville it looked like he was working himself into top form. He lost early and bad to Farber, but ended up winning five bouts and finishing 6<sup>th</sup>. Bolger majored him and Farber beat him a second time in a much closer bout. After this duo the visitors from the Dayton area may get at least one of the other spots although Seiple and Wimer could be major factors.

### 112 #

#### **PROJECTED CHAMPION: BO TOURIS (LAKOTA WEST)**

##### Top Contenders

|    |                            |    |                              |
|----|----------------------------|----|------------------------------|
| 2  | Lang (Brecksville)         | 15 | Hillock (Jackson)            |
| 3  | Genetin (Massillon Perry)  | 16 | Cruz (Lorain Southview)      |
| 4  | Mitcheff (Elyria)          | 17 | Zupancic (Barberton)         |
| 5  | Sulzer (St Edward)         | 18 | Hartley (Pickerington North) |
| 6  | Mattingly (Uniontown Lake) | 19 | Kelly (Twinsburg)            |
| 7  | Ciccarello (Brush)         | 20 | Few (Reynoldsburg)           |
| 8  | Guerra (Waite)             | 21 | Speelman (Mansfield Madison) |
| 9  | Schilling (Mentor)         | 22 | Conn (Teays Valley)          |
| 10 | Roeth (Miamisburg)         | 23 | Farkas (Massillon)           |
| 11 | Crasto (Centerville)       | 24 | Olson (Fairfield)            |
| 12 | Lichtenberg (Strongsville) | 25 | Trauth (St. Xavier)          |
| 13 | Leedy (Start)              | 26 | Schlegel (Maumee)            |
| 14 | Sherman (Milford)          | 27 | Quinones (Perrysburg)        |

This is just a terrific weight class with more plot lines, surprises, and turnabouts than any place else. Almost every weekend results come in that amaze and confound the prognosticator and I'm sure the rest of the year will be in the same rein. Beginning at the sectional level this will be a roller coaster ride with results changing from weekend to weekend. This is a weight class to be enjoyed.

For much of baseball history starting pitchers were expected to pitch the whole game. Relief pitchers were guys who were struggling as starters, rookies, or over-the-hill veterans. There were a few exceptions--"Grandma" Johnny Murphy or a Firpo Marberry - - but for the most part relief specialists were unknown. That changed in the late '50's and early '60's as teams built up bullpens featuring one star reliever who would pitch two or three innings. Then, in the late '80's and '90's the concept of the closer took hold--a pitcher who came in only to pitch the 9<sup>th</sup> inning, in other words to "save" games.

In point of fact late leads are lost just as often nowadays as in the past but the “closer” is now one of the highest paid jobs in baseball.

Kyle Lang is probably the most talented 112-pounder in a weight class that features many gifted wrestlers. As a freshman last year he led Danny Genetin 8-1 in the state semi-finals and then in two minutes gave up ten unanswered points to lose 11-8 and eventually place 4<sup>th</sup>. This year at the Ironman he was in the process of dismantling Bo Touris when suddenly things fell apart and he was fortunate to gain a 11-9 win, and again at Brecksville he dominated Mitcheff for five minutes before almost losing at the end. If he can learn to close he'll have gone a long way toward a state title.

Touris, by the way, holds three victories over Lang including a finals win at Brecksville. He is the logical choice here - - the only senior and the most consistent performer - - but he has had some unexpected results. Last year he lost to Mitcheff in the state semis, and this year he was pinned by Genetin under controversial circumstances.

Genetin lost in overtime in last year's state final to Mitcheff after wrestling a great district and having the big rally against Lang. He was 5<sup>th</sup> at the Ironman losing this time 9-2 to Lang, but won big at Medina pinning Sulzer in the final. His big advantage is that he can score from the top with that deadly cradle - - as Touris discovered.

State champion Mitcheff has just not been himself this year. After beating Touris and Genetin back-to-back at Columbus he has struggled at 112#. He lost to Sulzer at the Ironman and then defaulted out and then lost to Lang and Sergent at Brecksville. I think you often see that when a 103-pounder moves up weight classes and is no longer bigger than his competition. A saving grace for him is that while many of the top boys will be in a tremendous struggle just to qualify out of the tough Perry District, he has a somewhat easier path at Mentor.

There is no surety at this weight class. Random factors will, I believe, have much to do with determining the champion since the top four, in particular, are so evenly matched. In that case you have to go with the most consistent performer, which I believe is Bo Touris. Lang might be the most talented wrestler, Genetin the most dangerous, and Mitcheff the most explosive, but I think consistency has the best odds of winning—albeit that is still less than 50%.

The top two contenders Mitcheff will face at Mentor should be the excellent St. Edward freshman Nick Sulzer and state alternate Justin Guerra. Sulzer was 2<sup>nd</sup> at Medina beating both Mattingly and Ciccarello in very close bouts. He is good at close, conservatively wrestled bouts. Touris won quite easily against him in the Ohio Duals. Guerra was at the brutal 112# class at Brecksville and failed to place after being pinned by Touris and majored by Papesh. However, he bounced back at Perrysburg with a big win over Quinones (Perrysburg)- - a Michigan state champ last year. I think Tommy Cruz or Bryce Leedy have a good shot at the fourth spot with maybe, the young Speelman or Frehmeyer (Parma) in the mix.

I count at least 10 state caliber wrestlers at Perry. Genetin and Lang have already been discussed. Ciccarello was 5<sup>th</sup> last year losing only to Mitcheff and Lang. This year he has been a consistent placer, but has lost twice to Mattingly and once to Sulzer. Mattingly won at North canton but was only 4<sup>th</sup> at Medina. State alternate Schilling is solid and tough defensively who wrestlers a lot of low scoring bouts. Zupancic is solid, but I'm not sure he can "go" with the top quintet. However, he could get to Columbus and he could score there. I've always liked Lichtenberg, but somehow he never quite wins the close one. He was 2<sup>nd</sup> at Solon, but did not place at Brecksville losing to Sergent and Schilling (by a point). Kelly was a state qualifier last year, but it will be a difficult task to replicate that performance. The sophomore Leek is an intriguing possibility. He was a district semi-finalist last year after pinning eventual state placer Dinda. I believe he will end up at 119#. He must be carefully watched and accounted for. That leaves Farkas and Hillock whose chances are slim at this powerful class. I would not be surprised to see some movement to 119#, though it is not easy at that class either.

All this power in the north could be short circuited by the powerful Touris. While they struggle he will have it much easier at Fairfield. He has not lost in the southwest in two years - - I'm not even sure he's had a close bout in that time frame. At the SWOCA nobody even went six minutes with him. State qualifier Sherman is probably next best, but he is a giant step behind Touris. He was 3<sup>rd</sup> at the SWOCA, but 4<sup>th</sup> at Wadsworth in a relatively weak field. State qualifier Roeth is also back at this weight class and was 4<sup>th</sup> at North Canton at 119# - - before moving down. Other possibilities are Crasto, Trauth, and Olson.

There is very little at Darby. The good 112's in the Dayton area may well want to move in this direction. There are no returning state qualifiers and the field is wide open. Hartley, Few and Conn have some local credentials, but nobody here has come close to winning one of the major tournaments.

**119 #**

**PROJECTED CHAMPION: RYAN FIELDS (LAKOTA WEST)**

Top Contenders

|    |                                |    |                             |
|----|--------------------------------|----|-----------------------------|
| 2  | Rini (Massillon Jackson)       | 17 | Boosz (Glen Oak)            |
| 3  | Squire (Wadsworth)             | 18 | Fuller (Waite)              |
| 4  | Pretty (Elder)                 | 19 | Martin (Fitch)              |
| 5  | Zamaria (Brecksville)          | 20 | Comar (Twinsburg)           |
| 6  | Stoll (Coffman)                | 21 | Henry (Solon)               |
| 7  | Harger (Moeller)               | 22 | Gyorfi (Lorain Southview)   |
| 8  | A. Radsky (Thomas Worthington) | 23 | Leedy (Start)               |
| 9  | Dukes (Princeton)              | 24 | Bencivenni (Eastlake North) |
| 10 | Cobos (St. Edward)             | 25 | Martin (Scioto)             |
| 11 | Skilton (Mentor)               | 26 | Fayette (Centerville)       |
| 12 | Newberry (Milford)             | 27 | Stemen (Teays Valley)       |
| 13 | Leak (Howland)                 | 28 | Dalton (Barberton)          |
| 14 | Nein (Reynoldsburg)            | 29 | Herrington (Sycamore)       |
| 15 | Mead (Harrison)                | 30 | Lardiere (St. Charles)      |
| 16 | McLaughlin (Sandusky)          |    |                             |

Fields in another wrestler who has struggled in the early going; however his past track record is exceptional. A state runner-up the past two years (to Jameson and Palmer) he has been one of Cincinnati's brightest stars. Last year he had 46 consecutive wins before running into Palmer who was at his brilliant best in the finals. This year it's been a different story. At the Ironman he defaulted in the first round and then lost again after two consolation wins. At the SWOCA he lost 6-1 to Pretty in what was a major surprise. At Brecksville Zamaria was pinning him when the referee broke it for injury (giving Zamaria a 5-0 lead), but came back to pin him (as he also did last year) with a headlock. Then he beat Pretty this time to take the title. Fields has beaten almost all the top contenders the past couple of years (including Rini), and I expect him to round into top form before we all go to Columbus.

If the natural progression of things were to happen Rini should be first this year. He was 3<sup>rd</sup> as a sophomore (losing to Fields), second last year at this weight to Jameson, and now as a senior first would seem his due. Maybe. We haven't seen much of Rini this year with injuries and possibly weight issues, but there was sighting at Brecksville before defaulting out. If he is ready and healthy he could be Fields' major obstacle as both look for a first state title after some very near misses. Perry is again a loaded district. State placer Zamaria returns and as already noted had Fields in deep trouble in the semi-finals at Brecksville. State qualifier Boosz also returns but will be on the bubble in terms of state qualification. That because there will be at least three other serious challengers. The best and most intriguing one is the freshman Squire. An absolutely brilliant middle school wrestler he missed much of the year with injuries. However, at Wadsworth he rolled through the field majoring state qualifier Mead for the title. Folks, he's the real deal and he can go with most anyone. Skilton is also a threat

at this class. He lost to Fields in the 4<sup>th</sup> tie breaker at Brecksville then inexplicably failed to place. He can win bouts at the state level. Also watch for the fast improving Comar whose performances have ranged from average to excellent. Other possibilities include the high scoring Bencivenni and Dalton with the transfer Martin a real threat once he gets acclimated to 119#.

I'm looking at five state qualifiers trying to squeeze into four state berths at Fairfield. Fields has to be the favorite, but Pretty has been a big surprise. A rather non-descript state qualifier at 103# last year (he went 1-2) who was crushed by Ciccarello, he suddenly bloomed moving up to 119#. Pretty became beautiful. He has become a scoring machine winning the SWOCA with wins over Dukes (9-0), Herrington (10-0), and Fields (16-1). He came right back the next week at Brecksville with four falls before losing narrowly to Field, 5-3. Perhaps the engine has cooled slightly with a 3<sup>rd</sup> at the CIT., but he could be a finalist. Newberry, Mead, and Dukes all have state qualification on the resumes, but the numbers are going to work against at least one of them. Each of them went 1-2 in their state appearance so they know they can win at that level. Just as big a problem is the rapid emergence of the freshman Pierce Harger. Lost among all the Moeller stars I never noticed him at the Ironman at 125#, but now at 119# he's easy to find - - on the podium. He was 3<sup>rd</sup> at the SWOCA finishing ahead of Dukes and Newberry, was undefeated at the Ohio Duals, and pinned Pretty while winning the CIT. Also here is the long-shot Herrington who will need to pull an upset or two to qualify.

The Mentor District's best, probably are looking at middle to low state places. State qualifier McLaughlin is explosive and this sophomore keeps getting better. I don't know if he has four good bouts in a row, but he certainly has one to spring the big upset. State qualifier Cobos has been hurt all year and his only bout was a 60 second pin at Willard. He'll be fresh at tourney and should qualify out of this district. Gyorf and Henry are other possibilities out of the Cleveland area, but I think the quartet out of Toledo - - state alternate Espinoza (Toledo St. John), Fuller, Leedy, and Bowman (Whitmer) - - are just as good. Fuller won at Perrysburg while Leedy took top prize at Northwood. Bowman had a district 6<sup>th</sup> last year after losing a tough battle to Lang in the go-to-state bout. Factor in Betzel Elyria) who pinned Espinoza early in the year and you have what the NFL wants - - parity.

Alex Radsky seems to have come into his own this year at 119#. His big win at the Top Gun including a victory over Longstreath confirms him as a co-favorite with Stoll at this district. Last year Stoll lost two tough luck matches at Columbus 5-4 and 6-5 denying him placement opportunities. This year he should do better especially if he can hold off Radsky and get the district title. Also back is state qualifier Martin, but I don't see him challenging the top duo, in fact, depending on the Dayton teams, he could struggle to gain a repeat state berth. I like the freshman Fayette along with Ballentine (Springfield North) and Phillips (Northmont) from that area. Nein was a state alternate last year with Stemen and Lardiere other possibilities.

**125 #**

**PROJECTED CHAMPION: COLLIN PALMER (ST. EDWARD)**

Top Contenders

|    |                                |    |                          |
|----|--------------------------------|----|--------------------------|
| 2  | McGuire (Miamisberg )          | 15 | Lester (Reynoldsburg)    |
| 3  | Horner (Massillon Perry)       | 16 | Carmona (Waite)          |
| 4  | Sutter (Clay)                  | 17 | Kretz (Twinsburg)        |
| 5  | Reese (Shaker Hts.)            | 18 | Garrett (Cloverleaf)     |
| 6  | Lambert (Stow)                 | 19 | Palmer (St. Ignatius)    |
| 7  | Highbaugh (Maple Hts.)         | 20 | Wallander (Moeller)      |
| 8  | McCoy (Elder)                  | 21 | James (Teays Valley)     |
| 9  | Dinda (Garfield Hts.)          | 22 | Moore (Beavercreek)      |
| 10 | Mercado (Lorain Southview)     | 23 | Puskas (Mayfield)        |
| 11 | Krummert (Milford)             | 24 | Funk (Nordonia)          |
| 12 | Channel (Central Crossing)     | 25 | Ducilli (Olentangy)      |
| 13 | V. Radsky (Thomas Worthington) | 26 | Marler (West Carrollton) |
| 14 | Crine (Barberton)              | 27 | Fehring (Amelia)         |

I'm not sure I've seen a better performance recently than Palmer's win over the undefeated Fields in last year's state finals. It was three minutes of pure beauty against an outstanding opponent. On that night Fields never had a chance as the always smiling freshman Palmer had a lot to enjoy. This year Palmer may well better the three falls he had last year at Columbus as the competition at this weight class will not much challenge him. If Palmer has a weakness it's in the down position, but that will not be tested this time around. We've twice had a set of two brothers each win four titles - - the Jordans and the Schlatters - - and it feels very much like the Palmers will join that very distinguished company. The Northeast District has now produced the champion at this weight class eight consecutive years and 11 of the past 12 while St. Eds has placed here seven straight including five champions. Those streaks do not appear in jeopardy in 2007.

I see seven possible qualifiers at Mentor. Palmer, of course, has one wrapped up so that means there'll be a 50% attrition rate for the other six. From a talent perspective Reese would appear the best choice from the remaining half-dozen. Two years ago, as a sophomore, he finished 5<sup>th</sup> at 103#, in a weight class loaded with good people. He did not compete last year, but won the Solon Tourney and was 5<sup>th</sup> at the Top Gun - - losing twice to Stephens including one in overtime. There are three solid possibilities out of Toledo. Sutter was 8<sup>th</sup> at 103# last year and earlier in the year won the Sylvania Southview at 130#. He was a solid 2<sup>nd</sup> at the GMVWA including a big win over McGuire in the semi-finals, 6-3. Carmona has vacillated between 125# and 130#. He won handsomely at Perrysburg (125#), but was 4<sup>th</sup> at Waite (130#). He missed placement at Brecksville (125#), but he'll have to step it up to qualify at this district. Smith, a transfer from Eastwood, placed, like Sutter, at 103# last year. He was 3<sup>rd</sup> at Perrysburg and will need to pull an upset to qualify. Besides Reese the northeast area will add Mercado and Johnson. The first named was undefeated until Waite where he lost early and

finished 3<sup>rd</sup>. He was a district semi-finalist last year before losing to Birt and Roshawn Jones in what had to be a tough Saturday afternoon for him. He had beaten Jones in the first round 8-2. The third possibility is the excellent Johnson. He'll have to make a choice between here and 130#. I'm not sure what would be best. If here, he's a real threat. He was 2<sup>nd</sup> at Solon to Boing and 2<sup>nd</sup> at Clyde to former state champ Gambill, 8-7 in overtime. Should Johnson be at 130# another Palmer, William, could be a dark-horse candidate along with young Marrone (Parma).

There are five returning state qualifiers at Perry - - three of whom placed. Horner was terrific last year finishing 3<sup>rd</sup> at 112#. His only loss was to Fields and he defeated a lot of good people. He has, however, had a slow start this year. He lost early and often at the Ironman (pinned by Nevin Brown), failed to place at Medina (pinned by Garrett), and was 3<sup>rd</sup> at the Big 8. He did much the same last year coming into States with ten losses, but, never the less, I'm worried. Dinda was 5<sup>th</sup> at 112# and has been gradually working himself down to the class. He wrestled at 135# the first week. He has finally reached 125# and was 2<sup>nd</sup> at the Dies to Lambert, 7-4 and ahead of some good people. Puskas, placed in Division III, before transferring to Mayfield. It could be a struggle for him at this very difficult district. State qualifier Lambert is a better bet to qualify. He won the Dies, Hudson, and was 2<sup>nd</sup> at Wadsworth. He lost both his state bouts, but his first round double overtime loss, 7-6, to the undefeated Adams was exciting. Highbaugh, also a state qualifier, has been at 130# most of the year. This year he was 1<sup>st</sup> at Hudson and 2<sup>nd</sup> to Hayes at Kenston—all at 130#. There is a quartet of excellent competitors at least one of whom, in my opinion will qualify. That group consists of Crine, Kretz, Garrett, and Funk. They would be strong choices in some of the other districts, but they are just on the periphery of qualification here.

With some of the Dayton teams going to Darby it's difficult to know where some of the best contenders will end up. So, as in many weight classes, I'm just guessing as to whom will be at Fairfield. In this case there are two standouts. McGuire was 4<sup>th</sup> at 119# after losing in the first round. He won at North Canton and Sycamore but was 4<sup>th</sup> at the GMVWA losing to Sutter and getting crushed by Kolodzik. He should place again. McCoy was 8<sup>th</sup> at 112# and won the SWOCA this year narrowly over Krummert. State qualifier Wallander was 3<sup>rd</sup> at the SWOCA but did not compete at the CIT as his back-up, Andrew Hammer, finished 76<sup>th</sup>. Krummert beat Wallander by five at the SWOCA in finishing 2<sup>nd</sup>. However, he failed to place at Wadsworth losing to William Palmer. Fehring, Price (Harrison), Redavide (Fairmont) and Marler are certainly in the mix here although the latter could end up at the somewhat easier Darby District.

At Darby, there are four returning state qualifiers who went a combined 0-8 in Columbus. Radsy and Ducilli are up three weight classes and seem to be struggling at 125#. Lester missed a good part of the year, but returned two weeks ago. He lost all three of his bouts at the Ohio Duals, but came back strong at Waite finishing 2<sup>nd</sup> to Ulinski and ahead of Mercado. Channel was 5<sup>th</sup> at Wadsworth - - losing badly to Lambert and Henline - - but 1<sup>st</sup> at Franklin Hts. over Radsy. James may be as good as any of this quartet and the Dayton contingent could include McGuire, Marler or both Moores - - Gavin and Ryan.

**130 #**

**PROJECTED CHAMPION: NEIL BIRT (ST.EDWARD)**

Top Contenders

|    |                              |    |                            |
|----|------------------------------|----|----------------------------|
| 2  | Palivoda (Marysville)        | 15 | Melink (Moeller)           |
| 3  | Haas (Jackson)               | 16 | McHenry (Elyria)           |
| 4  | Wentink (Cloverleaf)         | 17 | Freed (Springboro)         |
| 5  | Dennis (Holland Springfield) | 18 | Hotopp (Harrison)          |
| 6  | Lopez (Waite)                | 19 | J. Schreiner (Mentor)      |
| 7  | Weaver (Olentangy)           | 20 | Hayes (Mayfield)           |
| 8  | Johnson (Midview)            | 21 | Gordon (Scioto)            |
| 9  | Sanders (Westland)           | 22 | Groh (Northmont)           |
| 10 | Green (Lakota West)          | 23 | Yetzer (Mansfield Madison) |
| 11 | Cline (Uniontown Lake)       | 24 | Oberschlake (Fairborn)     |
| 12 | Price (Massillon)            | 25 | Sasfy (Reynoldsburg)       |
| 13 | Duffy (Lakewood)             | 26 | Shadrach (Parma)           |
| 14 | Parra (Barberton)            |    |                            |

Most seasons begin with wrestlers searching for the optimal weight class in terms of performance and competition. Initially you see clumping with some classes overloaded with strong performers and others deficient in that category. Under the old weight certification procedure there would be a gradually smoothing out process where wrestlers would move (sometimes after heroic or foolhardy weight loss) into more congenial classes gradually evening out the competition. I'm not sure that is happening under this new system though, under these rules, it is too early to tell. The alpha weight limitation may leave some weights glutted with talent while an adjacent one is far easier.

That may be the case at 130#. At this point in time, though still unsure of many possibilities, this weight class is easily the weakest in Division I. Ironically, as we shall shortly see 135# is absolutely loaded with incredible talent.

At least on paper the Mentor District is strongest. Birt was 6<sup>th</sup> two years ago as a freshman at 103#, but after winning this district at 119# last year went 1-2 at the state level - including a loss to a wrestler he beat this previous week. This year he was a semi-finalist at the Ironman finishing 3<sup>rd</sup>, but missed the Medina tourney and the Ohio Duals. Dennis was 3<sup>rd</sup> last year winning five consolation bouts after a first round loss. He was a semi-finalist at Medina, but lost to Birt's back-up. He bounced back at Perrysburg with some big wins and should be a factor. Lopez was the district runner-up at this weight class last year defaulting to Gonsor, and then was unable to wrestle at States. He has been at 135# much of the year, but I have been assured he will end up here - clearly, the correct choice. He was 4<sup>th</sup> at Brecksville losing only to Pelton and Casey Thome and was 2<sup>nd</sup> at Waite losing to Webb in overtime. He will be a dynamite 130 pounder. Also here is state alternate Duffy and excellent sophomore McHenry - who won three bouts at the Ironman and four at Brecksville. Yetzer won the Gorman and was 6<sup>th</sup> at the Top Gun and is getting better rapidly. Finally, if Johnson opts for this weight class this will be an exceptionally interesting competition.

The Perry District is not as strong as normal. With Jameson choosing to stay at 135# it has become a wide-open competition. Haas, a state qualifier, has just dropped to this weight class and could be an enormous factor. He was 6<sup>th</sup> at Brecksville losing two close bouts to Lybarger. Then he took Spicel into overtime before losing 3-1. Price has had a great year and might be the best here. He won at Waite and was 3<sup>rd</sup> at North Canton and Wadsworth, both losses to Division II contenders. North Canton champ Cline is solid as is Medina champ Wentink. They'll need to string together a series of good bouts to qualify. Schreiner, Parra, and the young Hayes could also be factors in a weight class that is wide open.

Palivoda was a state semi-finalist at 119# last year narrowly losing to Rini at that point and falling to 5<sup>th</sup>. It was his second state placement. He was 3<sup>rd</sup> at Brecksville losing to the young Thome in the semi-finals in a bout he should have won. Otherwise undefeated he has finalist potential - - and, maybe, even more. I also like Weaver. He won at Darby and was 3<sup>rd</sup> at Medina beating both Cline and Parra. Right with him is the sophomore Sanders who was a district finalist last year, but was unable to compete at the state level. He was 1<sup>st</sup> at Franklin Hts., but only 4<sup>th</sup> at Wadsworth losing to Sulzer and Price. Sasfy has done some good work here with Gordon another possibility. Freed and Groh from the Dayton area also have qualification chances. Freed was 3<sup>rd</sup> at Wapakaneta behind Palivoda and was 4<sup>th</sup> at the GMVWA - - and the top placing Division I wrestler. Factor in a 2<sup>nd</sup> place finish at Fairfield and were seeing a level of consistency that could be rewarded at this weight class.

I'm struggling just to come up with names at Fairfield. Tyler Green qualified for a state berth in an unusual manner last year. After winning identical 4-1 decisions on Friday night to reach the semi-finals, he advanced when Gobin could not make weight. This year he won the SWOCA beating Melink in the process 15-4. He was 8<sup>th</sup> at Brecksville. Melink was 4<sup>th</sup> at the SWOCA after losing to Green. Last year he came on strong at the districts and missed qualification again. He failed to place at the CIT's toughest weight class after getting pinned by Skonieczny. Hotopp is another contender. Freed, of course, could be at this district with Obershlake another contender.

**135 #**

**PROJECTED CHAMPION: TONY JAMESON (FITCH)**

Top Contenders

|    |                                |    |                         |
|----|--------------------------------|----|-------------------------|
| 2  | Spicel (Brunswick)             | 15 | E. Schreiner (Mentor)   |
| 3  | Clopton (Shaker Hts.)          | 16 | Myers (Butler)          |
| 4  | Gasber (St. Edward)            | 17 | Hammer (Moeller)        |
| 5  | Habat (St. Ignatius)           | 18 | Drake (Upper Arlington) |
| 6  | Speelman (Mansfield Madison)   | 19 | Gallagher (St. Xavier)  |
| 7  | Mencini (Twinsburg)            | 20 | Gray (Celina)           |
| 8  | Webb (Sandusky)                | 21 | Herrick (Waite)         |
| 9  | Alboreo (Stow)                 | 22 | Tuttle (Whetstone)      |
| 10 | Paplacyzk (Thomas Worthington) | 23 | Nickolai (Piqua)        |
| 11 | Sheppard (Western Brown)       | 24 | Millsaps (Green)        |
| 12 | Dooley (Lakota West)           | 25 | Shilt (Greenville)      |
| 13 | Kolevski (Reynoldsburg)        | 26 | Languis (Scioto)        |
| 14 | Byers (Holland Springfield)    |    |                         |

This is a weight class of exceptional strength and depth. It is so good that I would not be surprised to see some folks move up to 140# or, perhaps, with the right alpha weight look to compete at 130#. Almost all of this talent is located in the two northern districts where some state caliber wrestlers will be left home. What is interesting is that many of the top boys are fun to watch - - we have very few of the backers, grabbers, and stallers that clog up some of the other weight classes.

The choice here is two-time state champ Tony Jameson now a junior, and better than ever. Only five of Ohio's 42 state champs ended up undefeated last year with Jameson being one of the two who returns. He is someone who wrestles without fear and with a willingness to try almost anything. It occasionally gets him into trouble, but he is fun to watch and spectators tired of "push and shove" love him. He'll be a small 135 pounder, but that was the case when he won last year at 119# as well. In last year's semi-finals Roshawn Jones used his superior strength and defensive skills to thwart Jameson for five minutes. It was a beautiful combination of mat management and execution. Then Jameson narrowed the lead to a single point with a takedown. The conventional strategy would normally be a quick "give-up" escape and a try for bout tying takedown. Not Jameson. Working against both Jones and the clock he locked up one of his unorthodox cradles and won the bout with a stunning fall. A potential problem for Jameson is that he seems to lose focus when ahead - - gets bored, maybe, or tries something goofy just to make it interesting. I saw him do it with Lybarger and get put on his back for four points.

Former state champ Richie Spicel will exit at Perry - - the same district as Jameson. As a freshman Spicel had a completely improbable run through the state tournament winning the title in overtime after winning two other one-point bouts. Last year an injured ankle kept him at way less than 100% in the tournaments - - but he still

managed to qualify although he did not place. He is tremendously quick and has a wonderful portfolio of takedowns, and should be better on his feet than Jameson. He is not as good on the mat and, like Jameson, has his moments of carelessness. At Medina he took St. Ed's excellent sophomore Andrew Gasber down five times in the semi-finals, but escaped with a 15-13 win when he twice was trapped on his back for nine points at the end of the second and third period. He has won everything this year, but Haas did take him into overtime. Being at the same district Spicel and Jameson should be in opposite halves of the draw at Columbus.

State runner-up Clopton is also at this weight class. He had to default to Straughn in the finals. This year he was 2<sup>nd</sup> at Solon (at 140#), but beat Haas, 8-0, to win at North Canton and also won at Kenston. Then at the Top gun he beat Jordan in the semis, 4-3, before losing to Jameson 11-7. In that bout he fell behind early, but took Jameson down three times in the late going. Crushingly strong and surprisingly mobile he is very difficult to beat.

You have to look at it this way. Jameson will have to combat Spicel's takedowns and Clopton's size and strength to win. He can do this, but only with six minutes of focus and wrestling.

Joining Spicel and Jameson at Perry is state qualifier Mike Mencini - - who I think is very talented. He won at Solon, Kenston, and Hudson (defeating Alboreo). His only tournament loss was to Spicel, 5-1, at the Dies. This is a great trio and let's hope that the pairings are right. I like Alboreo or Millsaps in back-up roles.

The Mentor District will be just as brutal and difficult. Clopton, of course, rates as the favorites, but there are six other excellent contenders including two sensational young wrestlers who we'll discuss first. Gasber, a sophomore, was 6<sup>th</sup> at the Ironman including a bout where he was at one point 7-7 with the top-ranked wrestler in the United States at this weight. He was 3<sup>rd</sup> at Medina - - site of his epic bout with Spicel - - and pinned two-time champ Ben Jordan in the dual meet. He is very dangerous. David Habat, only a freshman, was a state junior high champ and has jumped into St. Ignatius line-up without missing a beat. He won at Wadsworth (beating Webb) and at the CIT, but did not meet Gasber in the St. Ed's dual. He'll win a couple of titles. Speelman, already a two-time state qualifier, grabbed a lot of attention last year when he had quick falls (40 and 37 seconds) in the first two rounds at states. His nemesis Sulzer beat him in the semis and he finished 4<sup>th</sup>. A terrific upper body wrestler he won the Gorman and the Coke Classic and was 2<sup>nd</sup> at Medina - - unable to fend off Spicel's takedowns. He was 4<sup>th</sup> at the Top gun losing to two-time champs Jameson and Jordan. State qualifier Webb is strong and powerful and won at Waite. He is very dangerous while state qualifier Byers has moved up three weight classes and won at Perrysburg. He was a semi-finalist at Medina, but lost 17-5 to Speelman and finished 6<sup>th</sup>. There are two dark-horse contenders. Gray and Herrick have state level talent, but face a long road just to get to Columbus.

Since I'm guessing that Lybarger will go at 140# the Darby District will not be strong. State Qualifier Paplacyzk was 5<sup>th</sup> at the Top Gun and has low placement potential. Kolevski who has not wrestled all year has just returned. He won several bouts at the district last year, and should be a major factor this time around. Drake and Tuttle are solid possibilities with Languis also in the picture. It's my guess that some of the Dayton area boys will do well here. Shilt, Myers, and Nickolai are three who come to mind. Of course should I be wrong on Lybarger and he is at 135# he'll romp through this district.

It's very competitive at Fairfield, but I don't think that any of this crew can go with boys from the northern part of the state. I think Sheppard has the best chance of doing well based on wins at the SWOCA, Fairfield, and Western Brown plus he has district experience. Dooley is a former state qualifier, who was 2<sup>nd</sup> at the SWOCA, but failed to place at Brecksville. Hammer and Gallagher have had some successes and are the best bets for the last two berths. Gallagher was 2<sup>nd</sup> at the CIT and 5<sup>th</sup> at the SWOCA. Williamson and Ward are other prospects.

### 140 #

#### **PROJECTED CHAMPION: SHAWN HARRIS (ST. EDWARD)**

##### Top Contenders

|    |                                |    |                          |
|----|--------------------------------|----|--------------------------|
| 2  | Lybarger (Mount Vernon)        | 15 | Goins (Elyria)           |
| 3  | Lindsey (Moeller)              | 16 | Leek (Howland)           |
| 4  | Heflin (Massillon Perry)       | 17 | Young (Avon Lake)        |
| 5  | Vaccari (Davidson)             | 18 | Rigel (Tecumseh)         |
| 6  | Graszl (Mansfield Madison)     | 19 | Bryan (St. Ignatius)     |
| 7  | Messerall (Thomas Worthington) | 20 | Gushard (Marion Harding) |
| 8  | Gooden (Waite)                 | 21 | Potts (Kenston)          |
| 9  | Lowe (Mentor)                  | 22 | Tvergyak (Chardon)       |
| 10 | Guy (Miamisburg)               | 23 | Hodge (Bedford)          |
| 11 | Stevens (Lakota West)          | 24 | Gorrasi (Elder)          |
| 12 | Harker (Westland)              | 25 | Burgdorf (Milford)       |
| 13 | Wills (Boardman)               | 26 | Smith (Massillon)        |
| 14 | Greco (Fitch)                  | 27 | Manzano (Cleveland Hts.) |
|    |                                | 28 | Porter (Mason)           |

Well, Rocky Balboa is back for his sixth go around at the local theaters and it's very likely we'll see Harris versus Lindsay, also for the sixth time, sometime in early March. I think these are the only two that really count at this weight class, but there is, I'm sure, a very real possibility that state runner-up Michael Lybarger will choose to compete here which would make it a threesome.

Harris is looking for bookend titles having won as a freshman at 103# and then finishing 2<sup>nd</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> the last years. He cannot match Lindsey in strength or speed, but his exceptional takedown skills serve as the compensatory element. Lindsey was 3<sup>rd</sup> last year winning five consolation bouts after a first round loss. Head-to-head Lindsey leads

over Harris winning three times (in their first, third and fifth meetings) while Harris has twice won (on the even bouts). It would appear to be Harris's turn. This year Harris was sensational at the Ironman. In the quarter-finals he trounced Lindsey 6-2 in a bout that wasn't that close. Then in the semis against the number one ranked 140# in the country he pinned in the 4<sup>th</sup> overtime period - - it was easily the best and most exciting bout of the tourney. He won convincingly at Medina, but suffered his first in-state loss to Lindsey in the Ohio Duals - - for the second consecutive year.

State runner-up Lybarger will need to make a decision. Here's how I look at it. As a senior the only goal he hasn't reached is a state title. How does he maximize his chances? If he goes 135# and Jameson, Clopton, and he all win their districts Jameson would be in one-half of the draw and Clopton, Lybarger, and probably, Spicel would all be in the other half. Besides, Jameson defeated him rather handily at Brecksville. At 140# he and Lindsey would be in opposite halves of the draw with Harris having a 50% chance of being in with Lindsey - - giving Lybarger a rather smooth ride to the finals. And, remember, Lybarger beat Lindsey 13-6 at the SWOCA. Believe me, Lybarger is very good, he can just go out and be determined to beat everyone at either weight class and not concern himself with all this strategy.

Harris should have relatively clear sailing at Mentor. Old teammate Errol Young - - 3<sup>rd</sup> in the state two years ago - - is at Avon Lake and started the year with a runner-up finish at the Knights of Columbus tourney. However, he has not wrestled lately. State qualifier Graszl is also back. He won the Coke Classic, North Canton, and the Gorman and was 5<sup>th</sup> at Medina losing to Harris (5-0) and Cavello. Also here is state qualifier Gooden who grabbed a 7<sup>th</sup> last year. He has been at 145# almost the entire season, but anticipate him at this class. He was 2<sup>nd</sup> at Perrysburg (to Tank) and 3<sup>rd</sup> at Waite (losing to Andreas) all at 145#. A semi finalist at Brecksville he lost to Reedy and Lowe to finish 4<sup>th</sup>. A fourth, senior Gushard, won at Harding and Wapakoneta and could make waves here. These four upperclassmen will have to contend with two excellent sophomores. Goins is a terrific athlete who hasn't quite harnessed that talent yet, but when he does - - watch out. Bryan was 2<sup>nd</sup> at Wadsworth and he is close to being very good. Watch out for Hodge and Manzano who have been under the radar all year, but who can compete with this bunch. Hodge in particular has had some impressive wins.

While none of the big three are at Perry the sophomore Heflin has the highest probability of upsetting one of them. A state qualifier as a freshman last year he lost to Lybarger, 6-3, in the quarter finals. He won at Perry and was 2<sup>nd</sup> at Medina defeating Cavello and Harker, but losing to Harris 7-1. At the Ohio Duals, he lost to Lindsey, 5-4 so he has met all of the top contenders. The powerful Lowe qualified 4<sup>th</sup> out of Mentor last year losing a pair of 2-point bouts to Clopton. He had, I believe, the worst state draw of 2006, getting Jesse Dong first and Germaine Lindsey in the first consolation round. There is a boatload of contenders for the last two spots. Greco, really a 135 pounder, looked great at Brecksville finishing 3<sup>rd</sup>, but then did poorly at the Top Gun losing badly to Wills. I think they both rate ahead of state qualifier Tvergyak with Potts and Smith at about the same place. I hear so little about Cody Leek I am unsure of where he should be rated.

One downside for Lybarger is that Darby is much tougher at 140# than at 135#, though I don't think it's anything he can't handle. Messerall, Vaccari, and Harker are all state qualifiers with the first two placing 7<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> respectively. I like Vaccari the best, but after his early season win at DeSales he has been absent from the Columbus results except for a big dual meet win over McGovern. He should place high this year. Messerall won at Franklin Hts. and was 3<sup>rd</sup> at Marion Harding getting pinned by Gushard. He was a far more impressive 3<sup>rd</sup> at the Top Gun beating Wills for 3<sup>rd</sup>. Harker, down a weight class, was the fourth seed at Medina, but was pinned by Heflin and lost to Grazi and Andrews to finish 6<sup>th</sup>. He would seem to be on the bubble. I'm hoping Guy heads toward Fairfield that would leave Rizzonelli (Darby) as the principal back-up.

There are some good wrestlers in addition to Lindsey at Fairfield. The best is Tucker Guy who was 4<sup>th</sup> last year at 130#. Miamisburg again has a nice squad and this is one of their linchpins. McGookey upset him at North Canton, but he won at Sycamore and the GMVWA. Still he'll have to be at the top of his game to match his 4<sup>th</sup> place finish of a year ago. State qualifier Stevens also returns hoping for better luck at states this year after being injured in the first round. He was 8<sup>th</sup> at Brecksville and 5<sup>th</sup> at the SWOCA where Lybarger beat him by four and Gorrasi by one. I think Rigel might grab that fourth spot with Burgdorf and Gorrasi probably the next best and Leland (Colerain) or Porter as more distant possibilities.

### 145#

#### **PROJECTED CHAMPION: KEVIN HARDY (SOLON)**

##### Top Contenders

|    |                             |    |                           |
|----|-----------------------------|----|---------------------------|
| 2  | Dong (Westerville North)    | 14 | Jones (Amherst)           |
| 3  | Gonsor (St. Edward)         | 15 | Casper (Medina)           |
| 4  | Gobin (Moeller)             | 16 | Wiggins (Maple Hts.)      |
| 5  | Brownlee (Western Brown)    | 17 | Campbell (Hayes)          |
| 6  | Jones (Start)               | 18 | Zupancic (Eastlake North) |
| 7  | Andreas (Darby)             | 19 | Vaughn Fairfield)         |
| 8  | Garcia (Sylvania Southview) | 20 | Connell (Twinsburg)       |
| 9  | Rice (Davidson)             | 21 | Creatore (Boardman)       |
| 10 | Lijoi (Uniontown Lake)      | 22 | Carraher (St. Xavier)     |
| 11 | Marrone (Parma)             | 23 | Hendon (Bowling Green)    |
| 12 | Ewing (Miamisburg)          | 24 | Cardenas (Olentangy)      |
| 13 | Snodgrass (Wadsworth)       | 25 | Caraballo (St. Ignatius)  |

Solon has produced a number of great wrestlers and a team title, but I think we can now anoint Kevin Hardy as the finest wrestler to emerge from that school. He was 3<sup>rd</sup> as a freshman back-up in 2004 and now has won titles at 112# and 130#. This year he'll be the favorite at 145# although this third title run will face some serious obstacles. It's

amazing that he has wrestled a St. Edward competitor three consecutive years at states – losing to Harris in the semi-finals when both were freshman and then beating Harris and Gonsor in the final round the last two years. Always an exceptional rider he has diversified this past year getting much better on his feet and pinning far more often.

That St. Edward streak may well continue given that Gonsor looks to be one of his toughest obstacles again this year. It's not a good match-up, though, for Gonsor. His strength is also on top with the legs whereas Hardy has the most to fear from a takedown artist who can build a first period lead. Gonsor missed half of last year, but finished strong winning the Waite District (and beating state champ Spicel) and then making the finals at Columbus before being crushed by Hardy 7-0. This year they exit the same district and that may give Gonsor an opportunity to try some new strategies - - the crucial one being get the first takedown.

Having Hardy and Gonsor at Mentor makes it difficult for everybody else. The wrestler with huge upset potential is state 6<sup>th</sup> place finisher Roshawn Jones. I have already discussed (at 135#) his near upset of Tony Jameson in last year's state semi-finals. For five minutes he wrestled the perfect match and nobody is safe if he extends it to six minutes. He is up five weight classes – a “victim” of alpha weigh--and has struggled somewhat. He was accustomed to being the biggest, strongest guy on the bracket sheet and that is no longer true. He won at Northwood, but was 2<sup>nd</sup> at Sylvania Southview and Waite. He cannot be overlooked. State qualifier Marrone returns and won at Aurora while finishing 2<sup>nd</sup> at Midpark. Garcia defeated Jones at Sylvania but then lost to him 15-2 at Waite. He'll lead the attack for Marrone's state spot along with Jones from Amherst, CIT third-place finisher Caraballo, and Hendon.

This is a weight class, apparently, for guys good on top. Dong could well break up the Mentor monopoly of Hardy and Gonsor. He was 6<sup>th</sup> last year in Columbus after winning the Darby District and coming in with a 45-1 record. He twice lost to Harris including a 2-1 quarterfinal defeat. I expected a Gonsor match-up at Medina, but Dong pinned himself with a 5-0 lead and 10 seconds to go in the quarterfinals. He won by tech fall to take 3<sup>rd</sup>. What gives Dong a better chance against Hardy is that he has better takedowns. State qualifiers Andreas and Rice make this the second toughest district at this weight class. Andreas got a 7<sup>th</sup> place with three consolation wins and has built upon that this year. He pinned Jones to win at Waite and was 5<sup>th</sup> at Medina losing to Tank by a point and to Dong 7-2. He also won the Porter Tourney. Rice has been steady all year. He defaulted to 6<sup>th</sup> at Brecksville, but won five bouts before that. Depending on the Dayton entrants it's difficult to judge who that fourth state spot will be. I think Campbell, and, maybe Lesley (Colerain) or Cardenas have the best shot.

Gobin placed 5<sup>th</sup> as a freshman two years ago, but then had that problem with weight the second day at districts last year. He was a quarter-finalist at the Ironman losing, then, to the #1 boy the in the nation, 7-3, and finishing 7<sup>th</sup>. He was 2<sup>nd</sup> at the SWOCA to the Indiana state champ and then won the CIT rather handily. Gonsor beat him 7-2 at the Ohio Duals. He should win this district. I am always amazed that Ryan Brownlee hasn't won more. He was a state placer as a freshman, qualified as a sophomore, but

did not get out last year after moving to Division I. He is very physical and good defensively. He was 4<sup>th</sup> at the SWOCA but won at Western Brown and Fairfield. This is his last chance and I expect him to do well. Carraher - - there always seems to be one at St. X - - and Vaughn are next best in Cincinnati. Vaughn was 3<sup>rd</sup> at Fairfield and had to default to 6<sup>th</sup> at Kenston Ewing, should he be here is probably third best in this district, but probably not so at Darby. He won at Sycamore and was 4<sup>th</sup> at the GMVWA while finishing 2<sup>nd</sup> at North Canton.

The field is uncharacteristically weak at Perry. I have lots of names, but there are no returning state qualifiers and a certain lack of consistency in results. Lijoi, for example, had a sparkling win at North Canton beating Windom and Ewing (by 12-3), but then at Medina failed to place. Casper was 4<sup>th</sup> at Medina and Snodgrass won at Wadsworth. Creatore and Wiggins are also possibilities. Zupancic and Connell have chosen the right weight class and will be rewarded with a solid opportunity to reach Columbus.

### 152 #

#### **PROJECTED CHAMPION: THOMAS STRAUGHN (MASSILLON PERRY)**

##### Top Contenders

- |    |                           |    |                           |
|----|---------------------------|----|---------------------------|
| 2  | Abdur-Rahman (Princeton)  | 14 | Wharton (Clay)            |
| 3  | Weinkam (Moeller)         | 15 | Basham (Central Crossing) |
| 4  | Kline (Westerville North) | 16 | Myers (Bowling Green)     |
| 5  | Mickley (Davidson)        | 17 | Sutton Canton McKinley)   |
| 6  | Elliott (St. Edward)      | 18 | Cotton (Amherst)          |
| 7  | Roth (Whitmer)            | 19 | Nemec (Mentor)            |
| 8  | McNamara (North Olmsted)  | 20 | Vonderbrink (Fairmont)    |
| 9  | Rees (Miamisburg)         | 21 | Smilek (Jackson)          |
| 10 | Bivenour (Olentangy)      | 22 | Holthaus (LaSalle)        |
| 11 | DeMarinis (Boardman)      | 23 | McCoy (Upper Arlington)   |
| 12 | Brochetti (Parma)         | 24 | Stapleton (Elder)         |
| 13 | Weidenthal (Fitch)        | 25 | Nickolai (Piqua)          |

Despite what senior citizens constantly say, old ways are not always the best way. A good example was the great 17<sup>th</sup> century French composer Lully who refused to conduct with the new-fangled baton, and used only a large wooden staff to keep time for the orchestra. Later in life while conducting the exciting finale of one of his operas he mistakenly smashed his foot with the heavy staff. Inadequate medical care led first to infection, then gangrene, and eventually painful death.

For two years Straughn chose the old path cutting very little weight and finishing 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> in the state his first two varsity years. Then last year he embraced a moderate weight reduction plan and the rest is history. He laid waste to the 135# weight class in one of the most physically dominating displays of wrestling that I've seen in many years. This year he has moved all the way up to 152#, but I think he can win again - - using his

speed and power to overcome larger wrestlers. He was 2<sup>nd</sup> at the Ironman losing only to the #1 ranked Medina (who had four quick, earlier falls) 5-3. Then at Mentor he had four easy wins, but Kusar gave him a good bout in the finals. Using his strength Kusar kept it close and when Straughn stumbled going in for the clinching takedown he was able to score and take it in to overtime. Straughn's quick takedown off a Kusar headlock decided the bout. It was a wake-up call for Straughn to adjust to stronger competitors. Eight of the last nine champions have come from the Northeast District. That should continue this year.

Two major threats emerge out of the Fairfield District - - state placers Abdur-Rahman and Weinkam. Straughn has beaten both of them by the identical score of 4-2. Against Abdur-Rahman he won with a takedown in the last seconds after stalking him the entire match. I would like to have seen Abdur-Rahman (3<sup>rd</sup> at 145# last year) show a little more offense in that bout, but his strength and defense kept it close. Nowhere in sight was that great lateral drop he has used to such great advantage in the past. Weinkam just keeps getting better and clearly has finalist potential. He was 4<sup>th</sup> last year losing twice to Bodnar. Abdur-Rahman beat him 5-04 at the Ironman, but Weinkam has since won the SWOCA (Abdur-Rahman did not compete) and the CIT.

There is not a lot at Fairfield after this dynamic duo. The exception is state qualifier Rees who went 1-2 at the Value City Arena losing to eventual champ Pycraft and placer Mahon. He was s strong 2<sup>nd</sup> at North Canton, but stumbled badly at the GMVWA finishing 8<sup>th</sup> with early losses to Holt and Schmittmeyer. He did bounce back to win at Sycamore. Vonderbrink, 4<sup>th</sup> at the GMVWA is a possibility with Holthaus and Stapleton also challenging. Both of the latter two boys worked their way deep into the districts last year.

Straughn should have no problem at Perry. I am struggling to find possibilities let alone challengers for Straughn. There will be some real surprises here. Two wrestlers from the EOWL - - Weidenthal and DeMarinis - - both have district experience. Neither placed at the Top gun both being gunned down early by Kusar. Sutton and Smilek might be best from the Canton area with, perhaps, Nemeč catching a break at Perry. Don't look for a lot of state placers except for Straughn from this district.

That same lack of depth is also evident at Mentor. Scott Elliott is not one of the St. Ed's returning superstars, but he has performed well his first varsity year and is marginally best at this district. He was 4<sup>th</sup> at Medina losing twice to Collett (the last time 11-10) and lost to Weinkam at the Ohio Duals. State qualifier Roth is up two weight classes and has good success. He was 2<sup>nd</sup> at Waite to Cumberly and 2<sup>nd</sup> at Tiffin to Reer. He should qualify again. Also back is state qualifier McNomara who won at Solon and was 2<sup>nd</sup> at Kenston losing to Brochetti - - another strong contender at this weight class. Add in Cotton and there are five solid contenders from the two northeast sectionals. But Roth is not alone from the northwest. I like both Wharton and Myers from that area. That's seven possibilities with only Elliott and Roth with high probability.

There have been a lot of weight classes where Darby has had three solid, successful performers and this is yet another. Kline was a total shock last year. I had him highly rated after his strong freshman year (he was a state qualifier) and a 40-0 record after sectionals. Then he lost to Vaccari and Hipp and was eliminated. Again, this year he has been good (but not undefeated) finishing 5<sup>th</sup> at Medina and splitting two bouts with Bivenour. Mickley and Bivenour both went to state last year with the former snagging a 6<sup>th</sup> place. Mickley was 6<sup>th</sup> at Brecksville while Bivenour got that same place at Medina. Mickley peaks at tourney time and will need that momentum going into the state meet. Basham was 4<sup>th</sup> at Wadsworth and won at Franklin Hts. He could be the fourth qualifier but McCoy and Nickolai will probably be contenders as well.

### 160#

#### **PROJECTED CHAMPION: SEAN NEMEC (ST. EDWARD)**

##### Top Contenders

|    |                            |    |                            |
|----|----------------------------|----|----------------------------|
| 2  | Foore (Wadsworth)          | 14 | Alexander (Findlay)        |
| 3  | Shalash (Reynoldsburg)     | 15 | Dilley (Lancaster)         |
| 4  | Mahon (Moeller)            | 16 | Badovick (North Royalton)  |
| 5  | Pankewicz (Fitch)          | 17 | Harting (Mentor)           |
| 6  | Green (Westlake)           | 18 | Lovell (Westerville North) |
| 7  | Findley (Lorain Southview) | 19 | Munson (Anthony Wayne)     |
| 8  | Coleman (Massillon Perry)  | 20 | Christy (Tecumseh)         |
| 9  | McClary (Loveland)         | 21 | Newburg (Northmont)        |
| 10 | Ambrose (Strongsville)     | 22 | Hiller (Greenville)        |
| 11 | Muscaro (Davidson)         | 23 | Denman (Riverside)         |
| 12 | Schoenling (St. Xavier)    | 24 | Loushin (Amherst)          |
| 13 | Ellis (Western Brown)      | 25 | Pizzuli (North Olmsted)    |
|    |                            | 26 | Rivera (Princeton)         |

Had it not been for a major upset in the 2004 state finals Sean Nemece would be seeking to become a four-time state champion. In that bout Bryan Mathews, who Nemece had pinned the preceding week, wrestled the bout of his life to win 3-2. Reverse that score and Nemece would have had the opportunity to join the great Johnny McGhee as the only four-timers who began their careers as middleweights. However, don't get me wrong, this title will not come easily. Nemece was 2<sup>nd</sup> at the Ironman, but was clearly the better boy as he took shot after shot at a wrestler who did nothing but back away and defend (where are the refs when you really need them?). At Medina Nemece was clearly not 100 per cent. Take nothing away from Sponseller who might easily have won anyway, but Nemece's quarter-final and semi-final close bouts telegraphed a problem probably an arm or shoulder injury. Out now resting that injury one would hope he would return at full strength. I remember John Heffernan telling me midway though Nemece's freshman year that he might well be the best middleweight in that program since Greg Elinsky and his brother Jim. With that level of forecasting, maybe, he ought to be writing this report.

A likely finals opponent will be Derek Foore who Nemec has already twice defeated to win state titles. It would be the first time in history that the same two boys would meet three consecutive times in the final round. Yes, I know Foore beat Kilgore at 171#, but I think he'll like his odds better here than tussling with Roddy and an unhappy Kilgore. After losing badly to Nemec the previous two meetings (12-2 and 10-0), Foore kept it close in last year's final with a totally defensive game plan losing 3-1.

Nemec, who was at 145# last year, will find that his two principal rivals at Mentor were both state qualifying 160's last year. Green who beat Findley for place at this district went on to win four state bouts and finish 5<sup>th</sup>. This year he won handily at Hudson, but lost to Bittinger at Lorain Southview and finished 3<sup>rd</sup>. Findley, now 24-4, also lost to Bittinger while finished 2<sup>nd</sup> at Beaver Local and matched that at Waite losing to Shalash. All three of these boys are at the same sectional so a Nemec title would put him away from both. The two top boys from Toledo might be Munson and the freshman Alexander who finished 1-2 at Sylvania with Helminiak and LeClair not far behind. If Loushin or Pizzuli can battle through that vicious Lorain Southview that sectional might win all four state berths at Mentor. I

I don't see anyone at Perry giving Foore a bad time at the district level. Pankewicz, who was 1-2 at States last year, is his most likely rival, but Pankewicz still has to adjust for his move down from 171#. At that weight he was 4<sup>th</sup> at Brecksville and then finished 6<sup>th</sup> at the Top Gun at the lower weight. He lost to the excellent Dukes 3-2 in the semi-finals and then lost momentum and finished 6<sup>th</sup>. He'll be ready, though, when he gets to mentor at this weight where he was a district finalist last year. Coleman was 4<sup>th</sup> at Medina and won at Perry earlier in the year. He was then 2<sup>nd</sup> to Foore at the Big 8 getting pinned in 99 seconds. Ambrose, 5<sup>th</sup> at Medina and 1st at Solon is right there with him. He was 3<sup>rd</sup> at the Big 8. I've got Badovick, perhaps, next in line with Harting and Denman very plausible threats.

Shalash may have the best chance of preventing a third Nemec/Foore showdown. He was 3<sup>rd</sup> last year at 152# losing only to eventual champ Pycraft. He wrestles a conservative, defensive style and is excellent in close bouts - - three of his four state wins came in overtime. This year he was first at North Canton (beating Mills by one point) and 3<sup>rd</sup> at Brecksville (losing to Mills) and beating Fisher and Dukes. He won big at Waite, opening up and showing his scoring power. The rest of the Darby District is well behind him in their ability to win close bouts. Muscaro, Dilley and Faiella have all had successes, but Shalash seems out of reach. At Medina Muscaro lost a tight bout to Badovick and then won three consolation bouts before being tripped up by Shalash 3-2. These two met for 5<sup>th</sup> place at last year's district with Muscaro winning, 10-4. I expect Lovell to be at this class for Westerville North. A brilliant youth, he qualified twice for States with Columbus DeSales. Now at Westerville North he has missed time with injuries. In peak form he can be sensational. In fact, no one could move up more ranking points than this boy if he is on his game. The sophomore Dilley will be a threat here as will Seckman. Dilley was 4<sup>th</sup> at Tiffin while Seckman was one bout from placement at the tough Top Gun. The Dayton area's representatives will have immediate impact at this weight class.

Mahon has been 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> the last two years, but I think he is better than that. I saw him go to-toe with Rohler last year before getting “turked” over and pinned. This year he was 4<sup>th</sup> at the very tough Ironman and won the SWOCA over Rhoads. He was undefeated at the Ohio Duals and should be a real factor at Columbus. I have seven possibilities for three spots, though several of these wrestlers could end up at Darby. They all had remarkably similar outcomes with six of them advancing two or three rounds in district competition but none qualifying for Columbus. I favor McClary and Schoenling with Christy a good third choice. Newburg is next best, but certainly could oust one of the above three. Ellis is the one to be scared of. He is down from 171# where he missed state qualification by one win. He has won two tournaments this year, but failed to place at the SWOCA losing two one-point bouts. That leaves Rivera and Hiller in the wild card spots.

### 171 #

#### **PROJECTED CHAMPION: DUSTIN KILGORE (BEREA)**

##### Top Contenders

|    |                             |    |                              |
|----|-----------------------------|----|------------------------------|
| 2  | Roddy (St. Edward)          | 14 | Porter (Mason)               |
| 3  | Gaier (Moeller)             | 15 | Zellers (Sylvania Southview) |
| 4  | Sanders (St. Charles)       | 16 | Winemiller (Amherst)         |
| 5  | Mauro (Centerville)         | 17 | Bachman (Miamisburg)         |
| 6  | Saks (Kenston)              | 18 | Fosco (Strongsville)         |
| 7  | McKinley (Davidson)         | 19 | Krueger (Lebanon)            |
| 8  | Roman (GlenOak)             | 20 | Kalenterides (Green)         |
| 9  | Harpel (Toledo St. John)    | 21 | Eltatawy (Whitmer)           |
| 10 | Harasyn (Mentor)            | 22 | Kordich (North Royalton)     |
| 11 | Witty (Mount Vernon)        | 23 | Momic (Valley Forge)         |
| 12 | Zipfel (Sylvania Northview) | 24 | Lonardo (Boardman)           |
| 13 | Sasfy (Reynoldsburg)        | 25 | Kapostasy Findlay)           |

Apparently once each year Kilgore loses (on a fall) to someone whose last name begins with an “F”. This year it was Foore – last year Foster – but once that’s out of the way he continues to dominate at 171#. Third as a sophomore he wrestled an absolutely brilliant bout in beating Roddy to win last year’s title. The first two periods, in particular, were absolute poetry. This year except for the one glitch, he has been perfect, and has been reported he had Foore on his back when he got caught. I anticipate Foore at 160#. So the challenge again this year is likely to be Roddy.

Before last year’s final I was uncertain whether Kilgore could win against Roddy. The latter had wrestled three exceptionally fine bouts and seemed at the top of his game. This year, Roddy, now a junior, finished 3<sup>rd</sup> at the Ironman after getting defeated, 12-5, by Division II champ Magrum. Since then he has been sensational blending exceptional talent with raw physicality. He and Kilgore exit the same district and it will give Roddy

(and the St. Ed's coaches) a learning experience with regard to the champion. I think it will be very close this year in Columbus. I read where Foore said he didn't know how Kilgore could ever beat Roddy. We'll see which of us is the better forecaster come early March.

That Mentor District squeezes some good wrestlers from the northwest. Given that Roddy and Kilgore qualify (a safe wager) only two spots remain. Harpel was 2<sup>nd</sup> at the CIT and a state alternate last year. Down from 189# he gets the nod as third best. Zipfel was 2<sup>nd</sup> at both Northwood and Sylvania and beat Zellers head-to-head as well. Winemiller was 2<sup>nd</sup> at Avon Lake and was 7<sup>th</sup> at Brecksville. He beat the Tiffin champ Eltatawy, 5-2. That leaves Zeller and Kapostasy - - fine district performers last year - - with a lot of catching up to do. Keep an eye on Momic since he could get to districts as a second place finisher.

The top challengers for that top duo will come out of Fairfield. Gaier is a three-time state qualifier and two-time placer who has not had much luck at states. As a freshman he lost in the quarterfinal to three time state finalist Ciraky. As a sophomore he cruised into the semi-finals only to have Dustin Schlatter in the other corner, while last year he lost to Ciraky again this time in the 30-second tie-breaker. This year he was 6<sup>th</sup> at the Ironman and won the SWOCA by technical fall - - none of his bouts going six minutes. He defaulted to Roddy at the Ohio Duals and showed excellent sportsmanship in that bout. He came back with another technical fall finals win at the CIT. Only Mauro has a chance against Gaier in this district. He missed much of last year due to injury, but nonetheless qualified for states at 152#. This year he seems more comfortable at 171# winning the GMVWA in impressive fashion, 9-3, over Rhoads. He was 3<sup>rd</sup> at North Canton losing to Foore by four in the semi—finals. The other two qualifiers will be far below this top twosome. Perhaps, Krueger and Bachman are next best with Andy Porter challenging them.

State qualifiers Sanders and Sasfy would appear to be the best at Darby. Neither won a state bout, but you can't come much closer. Sanders, after losing to Roddy lost his consolation bout 12-10, while Sasfy lost twice 12-11 and 11-10. Sasfy was 3<sup>rd</sup> at Waite losing a close bout to Wolff, but failed to place at North Canton and was 8<sup>th</sup> at Brecksville. That was particular telling since district opponents - - Witry and McKinley were 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup>. Their semi-final bout was a head-turner with Witry winning 21-15. Interestingly, both McKinley and Sasfy had perfect records at the Ohio Duals. McKinly, the state alternate this year might end up a finalist at this district, once he gets into good shape.

It's a pretty pedestrian group of 171's at Perry. State alternate Marcus Roman heads the list, but he has struggled at times. He did not place at North Canton, but was 2<sup>nd</sup> at both the Dies and Beaver Local. Saks won at Avon Lake and Kenston but did lose to Roman at last year's district. Harasyn was 3<sup>rd</sup> at Brecksville beating Sasfy and Pankewicz and won at Solon over a good field. However he was 0-3 at the Ohio Duals. The fourth spot is wide open with Lonardo and Fosco the two most likely choices. However, Kalenterides, Kordich, and Fusco also have qualification talent.

**189 #**

**PROJECTED CHAMPION: CHRIS HONEYCUTT (ST. EDWARD)**

Top Contenders

|    |                             |    |                                 |
|----|-----------------------------|----|---------------------------------|
| 2  | Iammarino (Brush)           | 15 | Jontony (Strongsville)          |
| 3  | Jones (Sidney)              | 16 | Kuti (Fitch)                    |
| 4  | Pushpak (Brecksville)       | 17 | Hayes (Mayfield)                |
| 5  | Samson (Whitmer)            | 18 | Masterson (St. Ignatius)        |
| 6  | Canfield (Lakota East)      | 19 | Oblisk (Massillon Jackson)      |
| 7  | Snyder (North Royalton)     | 20 | Roerig (Fairmont)               |
| 8  | Brown (Pickerington North)  | 21 | Snyder (Grove City)             |
| 9  | Alexander (Findlay)         | 22 | Crutcher (Glenville)            |
| 10 | DeLande (Davidson)          | 23 | Wright (Trenton Edgewood)       |
| 11 | Schilling (Massillon Perry) | 24 | Humphries (Worthington Central) |
| 12 | Massie (Troy)               | 25 | McCartney (Toledo St. John)     |
| 13 | Nelisse (Elyria)            | 26 | Thesing (Westerville South)     |
| 14 | Molder (Mentor)             | 27 | Wuest (Harrison)                |

Chris Honeycutt has been one of the most impressive wrestlers I've seen this year. Undefeated he was the OW at the Ironman Tournament and was equally good at Medina. His takedowns conclude with thunderous, bone-rattling finishes, backpoints are generated almost at will, and enormous pressure is applied to the opponent for every one of the 360 seconds (or often less) needed for victory. He dominated John Weakley at the Ironman (perhaps a less than 100% Weakley) and took apart the Colorado state champion in the finals. At Medina the Michigan state runner-up was losing 11-0 in the second period, and Honeycutt has twice easily defeated the excellent D-3 state champion Nick Purdue. I don't believe anyone currently at this weight class can challenge Honeycutt for six minutes. Defending state champion Erique Robertson who beat Honeycutt in the state semi-finals is apparently in pursuit of a football scholarship and will not compete. Would that have been a dream match-up?

It should be interesting at Mentor for the other three state tickets. Samson placed at heavyweight two years ago, but has been battling injuries now for a season and a half. He was 3<sup>rd</sup> at Waite, but beat Fisher to win at Tiffin. He should place again this year. I think Alexander is third best with a huge win at Marion Harding over Knapp and a 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> at Perrysburg and Sylvania - - losing both times to Gilgenbach. The young Nelisse and the late arriving Masterson are next in line with the latter just finishing 2<sup>nd</sup> at the Cit.

There is a huge logjam of good wrestlers at Perry. I count at least 10 competitors with a reasonable chance of qualification. Clearly the bracketing and random luck will play an important role. Iammarino and Pushpak stand at the head of the list. The former was a state placer as a sophomore two years ago, but got left home last year after losing to

eventual state champ Erique Robertson and failing to come back in the consolations. This year he won at North Canton, was second to state champ Purdue (2-1) at Waite, and was 4<sup>th</sup> at Medina losing to Michigan state runner-up Kirksey twice. He is difficult to score against and has offense of his own. Pushpak shocked the world by being the only unseeded wrestler to make the finals of the beast of the East. He followed that up with wins at Brecksville and the Dies. Snyder was 8<sup>th</sup> at states last year, but has been fighting injuries all season. Schilling and Oblisk are tough Federal League wrestlers while Molder and Jontovy are consistent performers. The young Hayes was only 5<sup>th</sup> at Kenston, but rebounded to finish 2<sup>nd</sup> at the Top Gun and was also 2<sup>nd</sup> at the Big 8. I'm worried about state qualifier Kuti who was 7<sup>th</sup> at the Top Gun and was 8<sup>th</sup> at Brecksville. Was that an illusion we all saw last year? Two lost points - - state qualifier Dru Jones will not compete this year and watch out for Hassan Crutcher who won two district bouts last year including one over Roman.

I'm not sure what to make of Bo DeLande. I know he is very good at the fall sports he plays, but I'm confused about his wrestling prowess. Last year he won at district and this season he has recuperated from injuries and wrestled a little including a big win over Molder and getting pinned by Schilling. Should all that athleticism be channeled into takedowns and reversals he should do okay. State alternate Brown and Franklin Hts. champ Snyder look to be the best at this point in time with Humphries and Tesing all potential state scorers. Whatever Dayton sends over will challenge for at least one state spot. If it's Nathan Jones he'll be looking for the district title as he beat Brown 11-2 at Wapakoneta.

Jones won two state bouts and got 8<sup>th</sup> at 171# last year. It looks like he is much better than that now. He won the GMVWA with ease starting off with two major decisions and then finishing with three bouts none of which went six minutes. Canfield was 7<sup>th</sup> at Columbus, but Jones has gone by him. He was 2<sup>nd</sup> at the SWOCA, but only 5<sup>th</sup> at Medina losing to Iammarino and Purdue. State alternate Massie and Fixler are probably next best. Roerig was 3<sup>rd</sup> at the GMVWA while Wright won at Edgewood. It's Canfield and Jones as the state threats with the other qualifiers looking for upsets at the state meet.

**215 #**

**PROJECTED CHAMPION: JUSTIN POWELL ( BOARDMAN)**

Top Contenders

|    |                           |    |                             |
|----|---------------------------|----|-----------------------------|
| 2  | Rasho (Uniontown Lake)    | 14 | Scales (Elder)              |
| 3  | Smith (Beavercreek)       | 15 | Holcomb (Wilmington)        |
| 4  | Cogar (Barberton)         | 16 | Sato (Darby)                |
| 5  | Neumanitis (Brecksville)  | 17 | Quehl (Moeller)             |
| 6  | Rios (St. Edward)         | 18 | Zifzal (North Royalton)     |
| 7  | Tumlin (Harrison)         | 19 | Warnecke (Anthony Wayne)    |
| 8  | Fletcher (Greenville)     | 20 | Emmons (Milford)            |
| 9  | Beatty (Central Crossing) | 21 | Shalash (Gahanna Lincoln)   |
| 10 | Booker (Cleveland Hts.)   | 22 | Patrick (Midview)           |
| 11 | Hale (Mentor)             | 23 | Havrilla (Reynoldsburg)     |
| 12 | Metzger (Findlay)         | 24 | Knowles (Springfield North) |
| 13 | Brogan (Westland)         | 25 | Wiley Centerville)          |

The 215 pound weight class provided surprises in all three school classifications. In Division II the unheralded Jarrid Rodriguez left the heavyweight ranks to surprise a strong field while in Division III Chad Davis finished ahead of higher-rated wrestlers. However, it was in Division I where the strongest shockwaves were felt. In the very first round undefeated co-favorite Manju Jabbie lost and shortly, thereafter, Justin Powell was upset by a wrestler he had previously defeated. Dave Crowley the eventual and deserving champion entered with seven losses, but more importantly, left Columbus with that same number.

This year expect far fewer surprises in Division I. Powell has been sensational finishing 3<sup>rd</sup> at the Ironman (losing to the top two kids in the nation - one time by 3-2) and winning everything else. It was an upset when he didn't win last year, it would cause widespread pandemonium should that happen this year. For example, at the Top Gun, he had four first period falls and a 12-1 decision in the final. Same story at Kenston as nobody was in the ballgame and that was surprisingly enough the way it was in Columbus last year. Except for the strangely wrestled quarterfinal Powell had absolutely no problems.

Powell will be at Perry that is by far the most difficult district. Rasho, as a sophomore last year, was a district finalist (losing 6-0 to Powell) and a state 6<sup>th</sup>. This year he won at Medina and was 2<sup>nd</sup> at North Canton to Division II co-favorite Clum. If he is at 215# next year he'll win it. Neumanitis was 5th at the Ironman beating Srock in the process. He was 3<sup>rd</sup> at Brecksville beating Hale and Zifzal, but getting upset by the unorthodox Scales. Cogar and Hale are both very physical. Both were undefeated at the Ohio Duals. Cogar had to forfeit in the final at Medina because of a semi-final injury but won at Cuyahoga Hts. and the Dies. Hale won impressively at Solon, but let the Greco-

Roman star Scales pin him in the Medina semis and he finished 4<sup>th</sup>. Zifzal is a good choice if some of the top boys come up short.

There are few contenders at mentor with state qualifier Ben Rios leading the way. He was 5<sup>th</sup> at Medina losing to Rasho and Houska by a point. Winning this district should get him a good state draw. Metzger is very tough getting 2<sup>nd</sup> at Perrysburg and Sylvania. Booker lost only to Powell and Stolarsky at districts last year, and has not, I believe, lost at all this season. At this point I'm grasping for names - - perhaps, LaRosa or Patrick will win that last state berth.

Beatty is the only returning state qualifier at this weight class in the Central District. He lost both his state bouts by very close scores and certainly has podium placement potential. He was 3<sup>rd</sup> at Wadsworth getting caught in one of the early rounds and then won everything easily including a decision over state placer Tumlin. He also won at Franklin Hts., getting a 19-4 technical fall in the final. Brogan won at Waite and defaulted to 8<sup>th</sup> at Medina. State alternate Sato won at Darby and was 7<sup>th</sup> at Medina while Shalash was 2<sup>nd</sup> at Marion Harding and 5<sup>th</sup> at Solon. He has gotten better as the year has gone on. Havrilla struggles against the better kids.

It's a toss up as to who the best 215-pounder is in the Southwest District. However, there are two sophomores who certainly can vie for that honor. Cody Smith, a sophomore transfer from Graham, won the SWOCA including an overtime victory over Tumlin. He also won at Beaver creek and was 4<sup>th</sup> at Medina losing to Rios and Houska. He was a tough loss for the Graham team because they have lightweights to spare, but it's difficult to fine good big men like Smith. Tumlin had a miraculous two weeks. He raced through the field to get 2<sup>nd</sup> at last year's district and then placed 7<sup>th</sup> at states when he scored five points in the waning seconds to beat Stolarsky and nipped Perez 11-10. He was 3<sup>rd</sup> at the SWOCA, but struggled at Wadsworth losing to Rhodes (Division III) and Beatty to finish 7<sup>th</sup>. State qualifier Fletcher upholds the senior class with a 3<sup>rd</sup> at GMVWA. He may end up at Darby as could, for that matter, Smith and Knowles. Quehl has been a steady placer getting 3<sup>rd</sup> at the CIT and 5<sup>th</sup> at the SWOCA - - which included a loss to Tumlin. Scales has those marvelous upper body throws which got him a 2<sup>nd</sup> at Brecksville, but did not place him at the SWOCA. Quehl beat him 5-3 in overtime as they battled for 3<sup>rd</sup>. Holcomb, son of the great Goshen heavyweight, is an undefeated pinning machine while Emmons is a solid placer. Holcomb may do better than I've rated him.

**285**

**PROJECTED CHAMPION: BRENDAN BARLOW (WESTERVILLE CENTRAL)**

Top Contenders

|    |                               |    |                             |
|----|-------------------------------|----|-----------------------------|
| 2  | Becker (Moeller)              | 14 | Urban (Sylvania Northview)  |
| 3  | Hartshorn (Reynoldsburg)      | 15 | Carpenter (St. Xavier)      |
| 4  | Jeremiah (Darby)              | 16 | Cline (Olentangy)           |
| 5  | Lipsey (Sycamore)             | 17 | Yoder (Massillon)           |
| 6  | Kuhar (St. Edward)            | 18 | Warford (Amherst)           |
| 7  | Stolarsky (Solon)             | 19 | Modessit (Newark)           |
| 8  | Gudmundson (Fairfield)        | 20 | Kinder (Lakewood)           |
| 9  | Piccirillo (Mayfield)         | 21 | Bradley (Grove City)        |
| 10 | Holland (Holland Springfield) | 22 | Krontz (Toledo St. Francis) |
| 11 | McCarthy (Strongsville)       | 23 | Cline (Mason)               |
| 12 | Prichard (Northmont)          | 24 | Mosier (Mansfield Madison)  |
| 13 | Williams (Canton McKinley)    | 25 | Williams (Marion Harding)   |

In the last half-dozen years or so Ohio has produced a stream of great heavyweights - - Tommy Rowlands, Dustin Fox, Kirk Nau, Adam Hoppel, Koel Davin - - and a number of others. This year is no exception, and, in fact, this may be the finest group of heavyweights across all three school classifications. Nowhere is that more true than in Division I where there are a half dozen or more superior performers. It makes you recall 1975 (well, not all of you may be able to recall it) when Bobby Golic, Harold Smith, Tom Cousineau, Mike Weiszman, Jerry Fultz, and Tim Payne roamed the earth.

The Columbus area has three of the best heavies including the defending champion, Brendon Barlow. Of the top group he is the lightest, but also very likely, the most mobile. He had only two close bouts at the state and district level, beating Jeremiah by one point and Wade in two overtimes. This year he remains undefeated winning at both Wadsworth and the Top Gun. While he has not wrestled an overly difficult schedule he clearly knows how to beat the very best. Hartshorn was 2<sup>nd</sup> last year after a district 3<sup>rd</sup> where he lost to Jeremiah. Wrestling right at the weight limit he has good mobility. I was impressed that he pinned Lipsey and defeated Becker last year at States. This year he was 2<sup>nd</sup> at Brecksville beating Hiles in overtime but losing to Cameron Wade in the same manner. Jeremiah, who is absolutely huge, was a tough-luck 6<sup>th</sup> last year, but has greatly improved. He beat Kuhar on his way to the Medina title and a good athlete at this size is immensely dangerous.

The top challengers for the Columbus trio will come from a Cincinnati duo - - Frank Becker and Caleb Lipsey. Becker had a great regular season last year making the finals at the Ironman, SWOCA, and CIT. After a runner-up district finish he drew Hartshorn in the first round and ended up 7<sup>th</sup> after getting pinned by Jeremiah in the consolations. This year he was 3<sup>rd</sup> at the Ironman and pinned Lipsey at the SWOCA. He also pinned Kuhar at the Ohio Duals. Another very large heavyweight there is no

one here he cannot beat. Lipsey was 4<sup>th</sup> last year including a fall over Jeremiah. As mentioned he was 2<sup>nd</sup> at the SWOCA and won big at Sycamore.

No northeast wrestler has won at heavyweight since 2002 (Hassan Adebessin). At the moment that vacuum seem likely to persist. Kuhar was 5 seconds from the title two years ago, but a very late reversal cost him the title. Then a torn ACL from football caused him to miss all of last year. It hasn't been the same for him this year. He had four falls at the Ironman, but looked slow and uncertain in the finals. Since then he has lost to Jeremiah, Becker and Walls - - all very good - - but people you might expect Kuhar to defeat. I know the St. Ed's folks think that it takes time to regain form in wrestling, but tournament time is not far off.

With really only one berth unaccounted for it would be wise if Dayton's best heavyweights decided to double their chances and head toward Fairfield. If so, that would give Modessit and Cline an opportunity to work for the last qualification spot. Cline was 2<sup>nd</sup> at Darby and was 7<sup>th</sup> at Medina losing a tight quarter-final bout to Holland, 7-6. Modessit won at Tiffin over a representative field. Bradley, 5<sup>th</sup> at Waite, and the Franklin Hts. champ, who has previous district experience might be the long-shot.

There is a little more room to maneuver at Fairfield with only Lipsey and Becker already in place. However, Prichard, a state alternate, and Gudmundson, a very experience senior, it will be tough to dislodge them from those last two spots. Prichard won at Dublin and was 3<sup>rd</sup> at the GMVWA losing only to Walls. Gudmundson won at Fairfield, Lebanon, and Kenston -- defeating Piccirillo at the last named venue. He is undefeated this year. Someone to watch is the move-in Carpenter who has a pin or be pinned mentality. He was 6<sup>th</sup> at Brecksville but failed to place at the CIT despite three falls. Also check out Josh Cline who has won at the district level.

After Kuhar's brilliant sophomore year he looked like money in the bank for the next two years. Now he may have trouble getting out of this district. Stolarsky has finally moved to heavyweight and has done very well. He was 2<sup>nd</sup> at Solon losing only to Cameron Wade. Then he had injury issues that took him off the mat. He'll be healthy and motivated by tournament time and should do well. Last year he was ahead by four at states in his placement bout when he gave up a five-point move and lost. This year there will be no such mistakes. Holland was also a state qualifier, but went "two and goodbye" at Columbus. He pinned Ishmael to win at Perrysburg, but was pinned by him and finished 4<sup>th</sup> at Medina losing to Kuhar in that bout. That leaves Urban, Krantz and Warford as possibilities for the last spot with Purcell also in the mix.

State qualifier Piccirillo has significantly reduced the gap between himself and the downstate heavyweights, but he has not entirely erased it. He was 2<sup>nd</sup> at Kenston and 3<sup>rd</sup> at the Top Gun losing to Barlow, 3-1. He was 2<sup>nd</sup> at the Big Eight to Cameron Wade and he should repeat as district champ at Perry. The other three spots should go to McCarthy who was 3<sup>rd</sup> at Solon and 7<sup>th</sup> at Brecksville, Williams, and Yoder - - the latter two 4<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> at North Canton. Should the bracketing go awry then Kinder might be the one to step in and win.

## TEAMS

1. St. Edward This will be a year of milestones for St. Edward. This will be their eleventh consecutive team title breaking the record set by their 1978 to 1987 squads. Also this year coach Greg Urbas will capture his 12<sup>th</sup> team title setting a new record and surpassing the legendary Howard Ferguson. In addition, they may well challenge one of the sport's oldest records—the six individual titles won by the Cleveland West team in 1951 (when there were only ten weight classes). St. Edward wrestlers have solid opportunities to win in eight weight classes this year—103, 125, 130, 140, 145, 160, 171, and 189. Should they win six of these, a difficult task, they would match that great Cleveland West team of more than 50 years ago. Oh, and by the way, they should break the team scoring record they set last year (210) by more than the half-point they did in 2006.
2. Moeller Again this year on paper or by formula Moeller should win the runner-up trophy—the same situation as we had last year. However, they got off to a relatively poor start and ended up 3<sup>rd</sup>. Their only competition this year is Massillon Perry, but their powerful middle and upper weights should carry the day. It starts at 140# with the powerful Lindsey and extends through Gobin, Weinkam, Mahon, Gaier, and Becker. Adding in the great freshman Harger and absent early round problems they should end up a strong 2<sup>nd</sup> with close to 100 points.
3. Massillon Perry They have won the runner-up trophy the last three years and could easily do so once again. Straugh, Genetin, and White could all be finalists and Heflin and Horner should place. If Coleman and Schilling can help they might overtake Moeller yet again.
4. Lakota West Fields and Touris can both be finalists and after the top three teams the scoring should be very fragmented. Their 40 to 50 points could be enough to put them in the Top Five, but they might get some help from Green, Stevens and Dooley.

5. Reynoldsburg This team is really more of a dual meet squad but they have some tournament muscle as well. The quartet of Hartshorn, Shalash, Lester, and Li should score—especially since the first two are proven commodities. After that they have to look for scoring from multiple sources that will add to the total.
6. Davidson This team has some depth, but it also has yet to prove it can score heavily at the state level. Vaccari and Mickley should score heavily and McKinley and Rice can also contribute. DeLande is a huge question mark while Muscaro and Millar are iffy. What they need is a big district to get good pairings and build momentum.
7. Brecksville One of the few teams that could have four solid scorers, but there are some questions. Lang needs to be a high scorer and Zamaria has to be a big help—since both placed last year that seems a reasonable goal. Pushpak has been a revelation, but he has never been at States, while Neumanitis is in the same boat and must avoid a Dies tournament flame out.
8. Miamisburg Another dual meet team that needs to put on tournament clothing. They have a whole lineup of wrestlers who could (but haven't yet) score big in Columbus. McGuire is an exception and he needs to have a big weekend. After that Guy, Rees, Ewing and their teammates need to step up and provide points. The little Regan could be a hidden resource.
9. Fitch Let's figure Jameson for 25+ points and then wonder who else can help out. I'm guessing it will be Pankewicz with Greco, Weidenthal, and Martin as other possibilities.
10. Wadsworth They'll have to get it done with a senior and a freshman. Both Foore and Squire could be finalists, but that is asking a lot of a ninth grader. The little Foore (how he must hate that label) and a wrestler to be named later could chip in.