

## Division II

### 103#

#### **PROJECTED CHAMPION: TY MITCH (AURORA)**

#### Top Contenders

2	DiJulius (Walsh Jesuit)	16	Romanchik (Padua)
3	Garabrandt (Claymont)	17	Kazimer (Kenston)
4	Brascetta (Graham)	18	Ackerman (Bellevue)
5	Burkhart (Carrollton)	19	Latham (West Branch)
6	Mirman (Highland)	20	Nemec (Crestwood)
7	Hayes (Ravenna)	21	Fishking (Columbus DeSales)
8	Gambucci (Lexington)	22	Greenlee (Circleville)
9	Carter (Hillsboro)	23	McGrath (Hamilton Twp.)
10	Ward (Napoleon)	24	Jacobs (Oakwood)
11	McGee (Minerva)	25	Sidoti (Norwalk)
12	Cramer (Oak Harbor)	26	Harting (Kenton Ridge)
13	Hunlock (Elida)	27	Maynard (Licking Hts.)
14	November (West Geauga)	28	Heavilin (Harrison Central)
15	Bertubin (Cambridge)	29	Davidson (Bethel Tate)

This is a very crowded weight class, but there is a real possibility that the finalists will both live in the same community. I was not overly surprised when Mitch beat DiJulius at the Top Gun because he looks like the bigger boy to me. Both boys have excellent skills, but as the weight allowance goes up I think it helps Mitch a little bit more. They'll probably meet three more times and it's difficult to believe that one boy will win all three. Both boys have great credentials.

Mitch, a sophomore, lost only to state runner-up Inghram at the district level last year, and made it to the state quarterfinals before getting teched by Taylor. He ended up 8<sup>th</sup>, as much stronger wrestlers were able to handle him. This year he was 7<sup>th</sup> at the Ironman (pinning Corrill) and 3<sup>rd</sup> at Brecksville – losing to Stieber and pinning Hayes. At the Top Gun he beat Brascetta by seven and decisioned DiJulius in the finals 10-6. I saw his grandfather, Ernie Krean, lose a state title on a referee's decision to the gutsiest guy in my high school, and then turn around and win it all the next year. I think his grandson will do the same.

DiJulius, only a freshman, is not a surprise. He was 3<sup>rd</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> at the last two Junior High State meets – losing, 9-5, to Stieber in the last year's final. This year he was 3<sup>rd</sup> at the Ironman, defeating Sako, and 2<sup>nd</sup> at Brecksville, losing again to Stieber. He has been exceptional every week this season.

These two face stiff competition from around the state and even at the Firestone District. Hayes was 4<sup>th</sup> last year in Division III, losing in the state semi-finals to Logan

Stieber. He was 4<sup>th</sup> at Brecksville, but I thought he looked sluggish, barely beating DiSabato, getting shut out by DiJulius, and losing by fall to Mitch. It might have just been the holiday blahs. I suspect he'll be better at sectionals. McGee, November, and Kazimer will probably fight for the last qualifying spot that could include Latham and Nemec. Of this group November has probably wrestled the toughest schedule which might serve him well in this donnybrook. McGee was 6<sup>th</sup> at the Top Gun and won at Coshocton, while Kazimer won at Avon Lake and placed well at every other tourney. Nemec, only a sophomore, has won three tournaments, including a fall over Lehotay, but her bid to become the first female state qualifier is likely to fall short at this rough district.

Brascetta has had a great freshman year. He was 6<sup>th</sup> at the Ironman, losing to Stieber and Sako and 4<sup>th</sup> at the Top Gun. He won the GMVWA and dominates the Goshen District with one exception – the incredible Carter. They went into overtime with Brascetta finally getting the win. Carter is difficult to wrestle – very strong with good movement and some unorthodox techniques, plus the crowd is always on his side. So am I. He was 1<sup>st</sup> at Bellbrook, Lebanon, and Western Brown (over Schilling), and 3<sup>rd</sup> at GMVWA. Greenlee and Davidson are both district returnees who have done well this year, while Jacobs and Harting have been consistent placers. Do not be surprised to see folks with other last names qualify here.

The most crowded district is at Fostoria. I count at least seven wrestlers talented enough to wrestle at the state level. The hottest wrestler in the last few weeks has been the freshman Mirman. A junior high state champion last year, he has been getting better every week. He was 4<sup>th</sup> at North Canton (losing to Burkhart), and 3<sup>rd</sup> at the MIT, losing only to Sako and beating Manley, Gambucci, and Hannan. That was December. In January he won at both the Gorman and the Dies. It is exciting that once again Highland has an outstanding team. It harkens back to the past when legendary coach, for more than a decade, Jim Florian led them to a state title. It will not be easy for Mirman to qualify. Ward was a district semi-finalist last year, while Hunlock and Gambucci have district experience. Gambucci, the lead-off man for the powerful Lexington squad was 1<sup>st</sup> at Northwood and 2<sup>nd</sup> at the Gorman and 5<sup>th</sup> at the MIT. His two losses to Mirman have been by a total of three points. Cramer has won two big tourneys and has also been strong in January. He had a tough Ohio Duals, losing badly to DiJulius and Brascetta, but defeating Garabrandt. Romanchik is another excellent freshman with plenty of experience, including junior high state placement (he was 2<sup>nd</sup> to Mirman last year), while Ackerman and Sidoti will need to be very fortunate.

I'm not sure what we'll see at Steubenville. Burkhart has had a great year, but Garabrandt has some excellent credentials. Burkhart, only a freshmen, won at North Canton defeating Gray and Mirman, but did not place at the Top Gun, losing to Brascetta 3-2. Garabrandt was a district 3<sup>rd</sup> last year, and he exploded at the state meet reaching the semi-finals (before losing to Taylor – how many times have I written those four words), and finishing 4<sup>th</sup>. He seems to have trouble with weight, failing to wrestle at the MIT, Top Gun, or the Ironman at 103#. However, should he be comfortable at this class, he could be a finalist. Bertubin and Lehotay (Meadowbrook)

are solid OVAC wrestlers (3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup>) and Fishking leads a rather weak Columbus group. Only the top duo at this district will cause much noise at the state meet.

**112#**

**PROJECTED CHAMPION: DAVID TAYLOR (GRAHAM)**

Top Contenders

2	Westfall (Perry)	16	Stepp (Jackson)
3	Inghram (University School)	17	Storts (Springfield Shawnee)
4	Minnard (Fairfield Union)	18	Gould (Lexington)
5	Young (Highland)	19	Pace (Big Walnut)
6	Ditcher (Claymont)	20	Vargo (Akron St. Vincent)
7	Strasbaugh (Orrville)	21	Holy (Lake Catholic)
8	Worthington (Shelby)	22	Von Neumann (Carroll)
9	A. Miller (Beaver Local)	23	McGraw (Fairless)
10	McGovern (Columbus DeSales)	24	Kazimer (Kenston)
11	Stone (Oak Harbor)	25	Maggard (Eaton)
12	B. Miller (Defiance)	26	Kessinger (West Holmes)
13	McLaughlin (Canal Fulton NW)	27	Wilshire (Buckeye Local)
14	Brower (Bellbrook)	28	Beemer (Wapakoneta)
15	Cook (Toledo Central Catholic)	29	Bright (Granville)

What more can we say about David Taylor? He, as a junior, already has to be considered one of the greatest lightweights in Ohio history – maybe, the greatest. He has over 100 victories against two losses and will dominate this weight class once again. He outscored his four state opponents 68-6, and in his eight state bouts has gone the full six minutes just once (Gilchrist). He is one for the ages.

The two most likely final round opponents for Taylor are both at Firestone. Westfall has been 4<sup>th</sup> (103#) and 6<sup>th</sup> (112#) the past two years wrestling for Lake Catholic, but has moved to Perry. He has wrestled all of the good lightweights the last two years, but he has been even better this year. He won all four tournaments entered in impressive fashion, and should be ready for anything. Inghram was a district champ and state runner-up last year losing to Taylor 17-1 in the finals. This year he was 1<sup>st</sup> at North Canton and 2<sup>nd</sup> at Brecksville (losing to Tessari) and the Top Gun (Taylor, 19-4). He and Taylor will be seeded apart should both win their district which is, obviously, a major incentive. Both have defeated Minnard at States (Westfall two years ago and Inghram last year). Strausbaugh was 6<sup>th</sup> last year and is probably third best at this district. He won the WIT and was a solid 4<sup>th</sup> at the Top Gun. State qualifier McLaughlin is left to fight for the fourth state berth with a cadre of fine wrestlers. He went 1-2 at States last year. Holy, Vargo, and Kazimir are the major competition, while McGraw is the dark horse contender.

Taylor will have no trouble at Goshen, but there are four other returning state qualifiers. By far the best of this quartet is Minnard. He was 3<sup>rd</sup> at 103# after majoring both

McLaughlin and Worthington to reach the semi-finals. He has been a crusher this year winning, within my view, at Wadsworth and Sheridan. He has been scoring points in large quantities and should be away from Taylor at States. That makes him finalist material. State qualifiers Brower, Stepp, and Storts also return. Storts won at Licking Hts. (Ash) and Troy, while Brower was 1st at Bellbrook, 2nd at Edgewood, and 5th at GMVWA. He wrestles a much tougher schedule than Storts. Stepp was 2nd at Western Brown and went 1-2 at States losing to Westfall. I think Storts might be the odd man out. Also watch for Von Neumann – winner at Mt. Vernon and Troy – and Maggard.

As will often be the case, there is great depth at Fostoria. There are four returning state qualifiers although only one placed. That was Young, who was 5<sup>th</sup> including a loss to Minnard and wins over McLaughlin, Storts, and Strasbaugh. He was an easy district champ here last year and should do so again. He has run up some big scores this year, winning at the Dies, finishing 2<sup>nd</sup> at North Canton (to Inghram) and 3<sup>rd</sup> at the MIT. He'll need to pull some upset to better last year's finish. I think Worthington is second best (as he was last year) and should do better than his 1-2 result at last year's states. Stone missed state placement by two points last year, while B. Miller drew Taylor in the first round and couldn't bounce back. State alternate Gould will again challenge for a state berth. One to watch is Cook who won at Tiffin and was 2<sup>nd</sup> at the CIT, including a 3-2 win over McGovern who had just dropped down. I may have under-rated him. Beemer was 2<sup>nd</sup> at Wapakoneta and 3<sup>rd</sup> at Oak Harbor and is a dark horse candidate.

Ditcher was the Steubenville District champ at 119# last year and went 1-2 in Columbus, losing his placement bout in overtime. Apparently he will compete at 112# and should place. He was 3<sup>rd</sup> at the Top Gun, losing only to (you guessed it) Taylor and was 5<sup>th</sup> at the MIT, losing to state champ Sammy White and Young (by a point). District runner-up Arizona Miller lost last year to Minnard in the finals and went 1-2 at States, but defeating B. J. Miller for the mythical Miller family title. He won the giant OVAC tourney and was 3rd at Southview. I'm thinking McGovern should do very well at this class, but that has yet to be proven. He was one bout from qualification last year. This is not an overly strong district so those listed like Pace, Kessinger, and Wilshire have a real opportunity to qualify.

**119#**

**PROJECTED CHAMPION: JOHN PAPESH (AURORA)**

Top Contenders

2	Neibert (Graham)	16	Scavuzzo (Revere)
3	Garbrandt (Claymont)	17	Petrie (Monroe)
4	Gilchrist (Jefferson)	18	Williams (Wyoming)
5	Garringer (Miami Trace)	19	Voss (Canal Winchester)
6	Miller (Oak Harbor)	20	Rininger (Highland)
7	Jones (Licking Hts.)	21	Martin (Watterson)
8	Perez (Wausean)	22	Liechty (Fairview)
9	Thompson (Beaver Local)	23	Campbell (Marlington)
10	Lynch (Napoleon)	24	Warner (Greenville)
11	Kehn (Sheridan)	25	Ford (Southeast)
12	Rumple (Galion)	26	Mellinger (West Branch)
13	Kocheff (Kenston)	27	Hupp (Marietta)
14	Brunk (Elida)	28	Tomlin (Bellbrook)
15	Van Dyne (Cambridge)	29	Noll (Amanda Clearcreek)
		30	Hile (Lexington)

The top ten or so wrestlers are terrific making this one of the finest weight classes in Division II. There is not a lot of depth beyond that top group, but they will provide a multitude of fireworks. I'm particularly excited about the top quartet all of whom have been 3<sup>rd</sup> or better at least once. There are three seedable wrestlers and the pairings, if all goes as expected should be fine. Garbrandt would get the top seed with Neibert and Papesh bracketed on the other side in the most likely scenario. Before we explore that a little further let's briefly introduce the top quartet in seedable order.

Garbrandt, now a sophomore, was brilliant last year. He ripped through his district never needing the full six minutes to get the win. In Columbus he shut out Westfall and Gilchrist (winning 1-0) and then beat Neibert (4-2) for the title. He has wrestled something of an erratic schedule this year – missing some events and being at different weight classes at others. At this class he won the MIT over Ciccarello in overtime. If healthy and prepared he is very difficult to defeat.

Neibert was 6<sup>th</sup> in Division I as a freshman at Beavercreek before moving to Graham. Last year he beat Papesh in the semis, but fell to Garbrandt in the finals. This year he was 3<sup>rd</sup> at the Ironman, losing only to state champ Sammy White in the quarterfinals. He crushed everybody at GMVWA and won the Top Gun over Papesh. He benefits from the momentum inevitably generated by the fabulous Graham team.

Papesh has already been a three-time state placer (4-3-3), but has never made the finals. He lost early as a freshman, but the semi-final round has been his jinx the last two years. He was 6<sup>th</sup> at the Ironman, 4<sup>th</sup> at Brecksville, and 2<sup>nd</sup> at the Top Gun – losing only to the very best. He has been around a long time (he beat Zak Thomusseit when

they were freshmen 103's) and seems overdue. Neibert has won the last three against him, but they have been very close (3-1 OT, 5-4, and 1-0). Can that continue?

Gilchrist is a senior with great credentials. Two years ago he went 45-1, losing only to Taylor in the state finals. He is the only wrestler to extend Taylor to six minutes at the state level. Last year he took that loss to Garbrandt in the semis and ended up 4<sup>th</sup> – losing to Papesh 2-1 otu. This year he is again undefeated, winning at Southview, Riverside, and the Dies. Since the beginning of his sophomore year he is 129-5.

In my initial scenario – barring upset, a huge assumption – the semi-finals would be Neibert vs. Papesh and Gilchrist vs. Garbrandt. Should Gilchrist win the district the odds are 2 of 3 that they would reverse semi-final opponents. I'm not sure there is an advantage either way. The only thing that I am convinced of is if this contest gets played out on a thousand parallel planets, each contestant would win about equal number of times.

The Firestone District has very little depth after the top duo. I struggled to find other wrestlers with state placement potential, but that search yielded little. State alternate Scavuzzo might be the best bet with Kocheff or Campbell somewhere in the mix. I've also rated Ford and Mellinger, but I'm certain there are others with equal abilities. Perhaps Roch (Canal Fulton NW) is one such possibility.

Neibert stands alone at Goshen. The next tier starts with Garringer who won at the SWOCA and was 8<sup>th</sup> at Brecksville after losing to Opfer in the quarterfinals. Last year he was 5<sup>th</sup> at 112# after losing in the first round to Gilchrist and after three consolation wins losing again to him in the consolation semi-finals. It would be a real upset for him to beat one of my top quartet, but everyone else is certainly in range. State qualifiers Petrie and Williams are here, but I think they may struggle to qualify again. Warner is strong and should be a real factor at this district. Tomlin, Kehn, and Hochwalt (Oakwood) are other possibilities. The real dark horse is Hupp who has won several times this year. He wrestles a low profile schedule, but has good talent.

Garbrandt, fit and healthy, would have little real trouble at Steubenville. The two biggest obstacles would be Jones and Thompson. Jones is a two-time Division III place winner (8-5) whose school has moved up one classification. He was a district champ and state semi-finalist before defaulting to Sergent and losing to Pope. This year he won three local tournaments and was 5<sup>th</sup> at the MIT – including a win over Hillock and a loss by fall to Garbrandt. Thompson was the district runner-up to Ditcher at this class, but finished 8<sup>th</sup> in Columbus, including a win over Ditcher. He was a solid 2<sup>nd</sup> at the OVAC. State alternate Voss is up two weight classes, but should be a top contender for the fourth berth along with another state alternate, Van Dyne. Van Dyne was 2<sup>nd</sup> at Sheridan. Add in Martin and Noll and this is probably the deepest district at this weight class. Don't overlook Kendjorsky (Buckeye Local) whose OVAC performance (3<sup>rd</sup>) makes him a player.

The Fostoria District is in disarray with uneven results and surprising newcomers. The one constant, however, has been the increasing brilliance of freshman Ian Miller. A junior high state champ last year (5<sup>th</sup> the year before) he has vaulted to the top of my list at this district. He was 2-2 at the Ironman – losing to state champion Sam White, but beating Wallander. He was a strong 4<sup>th</sup> at the MIT, beating state runner-up Hall and Stoll, and just losing to Ciccarello in the semis, 10-8. A big January came next, winning at Oak Harbor and Perrysburg and beating Garbrandt on a last second move at the Ohio Duals. The only “downer” was getting pinned by Neibert. He will win a state title some day. State alternate Lynch and state qualifier Perez traded victories last year with Perez, winning the big one – the district go-to-state bout. He went 1-2 at Columbus. Neither has been sensational this year, but they’re experienced and battle proven. I’ve gotten very few results on state qualifier Rumble, but he cannot be overlooked. Any of this trio, though, could be upset with Brunk, Liechty, Rininger, and Gonzalez (Defiance) waiting in the wings. Three long shots are Hile, Heisser (Fostoria) and Hahn (Eastwood), which sounds like a law firm.

### 125#

#### **PROJECTED CHAMPION: JACOB VAUGHAN (COLUMBUS DESALES)**

##### Top Contenders

2	Armstrong (Graham)	17	Witt (Oak Harbor)
3	Baxter (Perkins)	18	Lay (Greenon)
4	Silver (Eaton)	19	Knotek (Walsh Jesuit)
5	Leek (Howland)	20	Jacobs (West Holmes)
6	Kostandares (Revere)	21	Becker (Minerva)
7	Meyer (Ravenna)	22	Risdon (Harrison Central)
8	Rose (Cambridge)	23	Bolton (Bellbrook)
9	Roddy (University)	24	Cook (Toledo Central Catholic)
10	King (Benedictine)	25	Longeretta (River View)
11	Nakama (Big Walnut)	26	Isaacs (Valley View)
12	Flores (Eastwood)	27	Springer (East Liverpool)
13	Wilbur (Hamilton Twp.)	28	Schlegel (Maumee)
14	Devito (Lexington)	29	Hazlett (Kenston)
15	Beemer (Bath)	30	Jackson (Shelby)
16	Neff (Miami Trace)		

This is a weight class that provides opportunity for a wide range of wrestlers. There is no dominant superstar like we see at 112# nor is there a superb quartet of state finalists like is present at 119#. Many could win the title here, and even more have a chance to place.

My favorite at this weight class is the solid junior from Columbus DeSales, Jacob Vaughn. He placed 5<sup>th</sup> as a freshman, but lost three close bouts last year and ended up 8<sup>th</sup>. There are a number in this field who have beaten him in the past – Meyer, Baxter – but, I believe, he has improved the most over the last 12 months. He was 2<sup>nd</sup> at 130# at

Brecksville, losing to an out-of-state wrestler, but beating Hancock and Fields. Yes, that Fields, and it was a solid 5-1 triumph. At the CIT he was 3<sup>rd</sup> losing to Pretty in the semi-finals in overtime, and at the Ohio Duals he majored Neff and beat Armstrong. He is so solid and strong that he is never out of a bout.

Some of his stiffest competition will come from the Goshen District. Armstrong, wrestling for Kenton Ridge, was a district runner-up and went 1-2 at States defeating Meyer, but getting pinned twice. Now at Graham and with workout partners like Neibert and Stephens he has further blossomed. He was 7<sup>th</sup> at the Ironman and won the GMVWA (with a dominating win over Fayette and an overtime win over Silvers) and Top Gun (beating Meyers and Roddy). He could easily win it all. Silvers was 1<sup>st</sup> at Mt. Vernon and then 2<sup>nd</sup> at GMVWA and 3<sup>rd</sup> at the Top Gun. A state qualifier last year he was pinned by Vaughn in the placement bout. Also here are state qualifiers Neff and Lay. Neff was 7<sup>th</sup> last year at 103#, while Lay, like Silvers, is a two time state qualifier. This is a very fine foursome and they stand above the rest of the contenders here with the exception of Bolton. He was 6<sup>th</sup> last year at this district, but wrestles a less testing schedule than the rest of this group. It may cost him.

The slippery Baxter was 7<sup>th</sup> last year, and, is probably, best out of Fostoria. A very personable young man off the mat, he is unorthodox and hard to handle on it. His matches often have big scores as he is at his best when folks are rolling around. He lost to Vaughn in the first round last year 22-10, but then beat him for 7<sup>th</sup>, 6-5. He was 2<sup>nd</sup> at North Canton (to Chapman) and 2<sup>nd</sup> at the Brecksville (beating King, Kostandares and Chapman) before meeting Pretty in the finals. He took Pretty down, but ended up losing by fall. It's a little unclear behind him. Flores, a defending district champ and two-time state qualifier, has been in and out of the lineup. When he is "on" he can be very good. DeVito is a returning state qualifier who I may have under-rated. He was 2<sup>nd</sup> at Northwood and the Gorman, although he did not place at the MIT. Beemer was a district 6<sup>th</sup> place finisher at 119# last year. He wrestles a relatively weak schedule, winning most recently at Lima. The wrestler to watch, though, is freshman Konnor Witt. A two-time junior high state placewinner, he has recently won at Perrysburg and Oak Harbor after not placing at Medina. As they did three years ago with Tank, Witt, and Magrum, Oak Harbor has another great freshman group lead by Miller and Witt. At the State Duals he defeated Knotek, but lost badly to Armstrong. There are a number of other possibilities some of whom I listed in the grid and others like the Hursts (one at Norwalk and one at Defiance) and Thees (Celina) who I mention now.

The Firestone District is loaded with viable contenders. I've ranked nine here and they're all good. Leek was a state alternate at Perry in Division I last year – making the semi-finals but losing to state champ Squire, 4-1, and former state runner-up Rini, 4-3. He's the real deal, but I'm not sure at what weight class. He has competed in at least three going as low as 119#. I think he'll end up here because it gives him his best shot at a final round appearance. This is just a guess since inquiries indicate flexibility. Meyer is a two time state placer (7-4) who was 4<sup>th</sup> at Brecksville and 5<sup>th</sup> at the Top Gun where Armstrong soundly beat him. I've ranked Kostandares ahead based on his win over Meyer for 3<sup>rd</sup> at Brecksville, and his runner-up finish at the Top Gun. A state

alternate last year, I've always seen him as exceptionally talented, but only now does he seem able to capitalize on it. King is a two time state placer (8-7) even though he has lost his first-round bout each time. He seems able to win the absolutely critical bout to qualify or place. The freshman Roddy has been tremendous. At last year's state junior high tournament I wandered over, more in curiosity, to see Brian's brother. He ended up 5<sup>th</sup> with a solid, but not spectacular performance. How wrong I was (again). He was 5<sup>th</sup> at North Canton and failed to place at Brecksville, losing to Neff. Then at the Ohio Duals he beat Armstrong 8-6 and finished 2<sup>nd</sup> at the Top Gun, beating Nakama, but losing to Armstrong. He is moving up a steep learning curve. I like Becker to challenge very strongly for a state berth with 1<sup>st</sup> place finishes at Coshocton and the WIT. Knotek has been something of an enigma. I believe he has superior talent that hasn't quite yet expressed itself consistently. At Brecksville he beat the #1 seed (a two-time state champ) in the first round, lost in overtime to Kostandares, and then failed to place. He lost to Neff at the State Duals, but then easily beat Flores. With Randazzo apparently competing at 130# there is a little more room for advancement here.

Vaughn heads up a very deep weight class at Steubenville. Some good people are going to get left home. Rose is a two time state placer (8-5) who has won titles at the OVAC, Sheridan, and Barnesville, but failed to place at Brecksville. He should get a low to middle place this year. Risdon, Jacobs, and Nakama are all returning state qualifiers and already you can see that the numbers are not going to fit. Add in state alternate Wilbur, who is very good, and state alternate Longeretta and it is getting very crowded. Bring in Springer, two titles and an OVAC runner-up, Layman (Granville) and Barnett (Sheridan) and it is clearly chaotic.

### 130#

#### **PROJECTED CHAMPION: BRIAN STEPHENS (GRAHAM)**

##### Top Contenders

- |    |                          |    |                                   |
|----|--------------------------|----|-----------------------------------|
| 2  | Severance (Sheridan)     | 16 | Osterloh (McClain)                |
| 3  | Collins (Coshocton)      | 17 | Brink (Buckeye Valley)            |
| 4  | Hightower (University)   | 18 | Kaplan (Fairview Park)            |
| 5  | Lucas (Fairless)         | 19 | James (Norwood)                   |
| 6  | Jameson (Indian Hill)    | 20 | Maiwurn (Orrville)                |
| 7  | Meillo (Padua)           | 21 | Hayes (Holy Name)                 |
| 8  | Randazzo (Lake Catholic) | 22 | Costa (Edison)                    |
| 9  | McClintock (Galion)      | 23 | Duckett (Toledo Central Catholic) |
| 10 | Shaw (Minerva)           | 24 | Maiwurm (Orrville)                |
| 11 | Brown (Tallmadge)        | 25 | Zappitelli (Conneaut)             |
| 12 | Reeser (Miami Trace)     | 26 | Richey (Big Walnut)               |
| 13 | Pazyniak (West Geauga)   | 27 | Robinson (Milton Union)           |
| 14 | Munafa (Perkins)         | 28 | Banda (Oak Harbor)                |
| 15 | McHugh (Bellbrook)       | 29 | Prezzia (St. Clairsville)         |

This is a weak weight class and you're going to see people scurrying in this direction. There is a boatload of good 125's and I can't imagine that a few of them aren't going to see "the weight of opportunity". We've already seen some movement. Pazyniak is down from 135# and Randazzo looks (especially after his CIT win) like he is coming to stay at 130#. It seems like this migration will last right up to sectionals.

While this weight class may not be strong, the top choice is very, very good. Stephens was 6<sup>th</sup> in Division I as a freshman two years ago, and was 3<sup>rd</sup> last year at 125#. Stephens had roared through the district beating current teammate Tucker Armstrong in the final. At States he beat two excellent wrestlers in the first two rounds – Chapman and Vaughan. Then came the titanic struggle with eventual champ Dean that had its moments of controversy, but ended tied at 12-12. Dean then won it in overtime, and Stephens took 3<sup>rd</sup>. This year he was 5<sup>th</sup> at the Ironman and an easy 1<sup>st</sup> at GMVWA. He won at the Top Gun, given a good bout only by D'Alessandro.

The two most likely challengers exit Steubenville. Severance really fooled me last year. I knew he was good, but not that good. After two district scares – 12-9 over Nakama and 11-10 over Vaughan he entered the state meet as a district champ. He then pinned in both the quarter and semi-finals before losing to Dean. It had to be a breathtaking two weeks. Now with a target on his back he will likely be Stephens' biggest obstacle. Collins was a Division III place winner last year after losing to Hancock, 5-4, in the first round. This year he has been crushing everyone, admittedly not at Brecksville or the Top Gun, and looks ready to challenge for a higher place. He is likely to be in the same half (or even quarter) as Stephens – not good – because Severance and Stephen will be seeded apart. The solution is to win the district. The rest of that district is rather frail. Brink, Prezizia, and, maybe, Costa are somewhere in the bracket, but look for a surprise or two.

The Firestone District, as usual, is the most crowded. I count nine potential qualifiers which means that more than half the good wrestlers will not get a ticket to Columbus. It will be, I suspect, a topsy-turvy district with much dependent on how sectional results impact bracket position. Unusually, no one here, at least at this time, has previous state experience. The young Hightower and the senior Lucas might be a millimeter ahead of the rest, but that will not count for much when competition begins. Hightower was 2<sup>nd</sup> at North Canton, 3<sup>rd</sup> at the Top Gun, and 7<sup>th</sup> at Brecksville. He is a coming star. Lucas has never qualified and does not wrestle a high-powered schedule. However, he was 3<sup>rd</sup> at North Canton losing only to state champion Squire. Shaw has been tough lately, winning at the WIT, finishing 2<sup>nd</sup> to Collins at Coshocton and getting 4<sup>th</sup> at the Top Gun – losing in overtime to Hightower. Brown has an upset win over Parra, while finishing 2<sup>nd</sup> at the Dies and Pazyniak won at Kenston. A key figure is Randazzo. Stuck in the morass at 125# he moved up and won the CIT at this class. Now well fed and confident, he could grab a middle place. Zappitelli and Maiwurm are also state-capable, but it will be a long, difficult road to qualification.

Stephens will have few problems at Goshen. Reeser, Osterloh, and Jameson are returning state qualifiers, but one has struggled while the other two have not competed

recently. Reeser went 1-2 at the state level, but has moved up two weight classes. He was 6<sup>th</sup> at the SWOCA and had an absolutely awful tournament at Brecksville (sick? injured?). This gives McHugh, James, Robinson and a host of others a solid chance at state qualification. Of this group McHugh would seem to stand above the rest with a 1<sup>st</sup> at Bellbrook and Edgewood.

State qualifier Melillo is an excellent talent, but has had trouble staying healthy. When at 100% he can wrestle with just about everyone here – except Stephens – but he has missed a lot of this year. He was the district runner-up at this class last year, but after an opening win, lost to Fondale and Sheppard. He defaulted out at Brecksville and has not competed since. McClintock, a former state qualifier, would look to be best with the title at the Gorman and a win at the NOL Duals. After that it is wide open with, perhaps, Kaplan and Munafo next in line. I like Hayes, 5<sup>th</sup> at the CIT, and he could be a surprise at this weight class.

### **135#**

#### **PROJECTED CHAMPION: CHASE SKONIECZNY (WALSH JESUIT)**

##### Top Contenders

2	Wukie (University School)	14	Wray (Rossford)
3	Gaskins (Sheridan)	15	Gresock (Highland)
4	Ryan (Howland)	16	Cintron (Alliance)
5	Regula (Claymont)	17	Fey (Norwood)
6	A. Stine (Edison)	18	Markoff (Fostoria)
7	Johnson (Milton Union)	19	Kopecky (Franklin)
8	Fee (Lake Catholic)	20	McMorrow (Orrville)
9	Harmon (Indian Lake)	21	Moffatt (Whitehall)
10	Dittrich (Copley)	22	Combs (Bryan)
11	Meyer/Bair (Graham)	23	Burrows (Lexington)
12	Beemer (Wapakoneta)	24	Worley (Big Walnut)
13	Moeglin (New Lexington)	25	Ecker (Watterson)

The first 33 state tournaments were competitions with every school, no matter how large or small, competing against each other in one classification. Then, in 1971, the tournament was split in half with the creation of a Division II category. It has been a fabulous success with some of the best wrestling and best teams competing in this classification. The champion at this weight class will be the 500<sup>th</sup> crowned in Division II starting with Tom Bauer in 1971.

This is another relatively weak weight class with little depth – especially in the northwest area. I picked Skonieczny to win last year, but a late drop by the then undefeated Espinoza upset the applecart. Still Skonieczny had a great year finishing 3rd. It has gotten better this season. He won at Brecksville and the Big 8, and was 2<sup>nd</sup> at the Ironman (defaulted down 4-0) and Top Gun. Both losses were to current two-time state

champs. He has wrestled with confidence and has looked better on his feet. He was a state junior high champion in the 7<sup>th</sup> grade, but has been shut out since then. It's his turn again now.

I think there are two principal contenders. One is Brad Wukie who was a state runner-up last year at 119#. He had a great run – winning a district title over a formidable field and then winning three tough state bouts before losing in overtime to Longstreath in the final. Oh, and by the way, he was a freshman. He is up three weight classes and it hasn't been all that easy. He was 2<sup>nd</sup> at North Canton to the powerful Speelman, 3<sup>rd</sup> at the Top Gun, losing to Skonieczny by five and beating Regula in overtime, and 5<sup>th</sup> at Brecksville. The other major obstacle is Gaskins who was 4<sup>th</sup> at this weight class. He lost only twice at the state meet – both times to Fraley, and won four solidly wrestled consolation bouts. He is even better this year and has finalist potential.

The Firestone District is easily the best. Skonieczny and Wukie have a better portfolio of credentials, but I think Ryan may be just as tough. He was 3<sup>rd</sup> at the Perry Division I district last year, losing only to state runner-up Haas. After a first round win over Cory Hayes he lost in one of those extended overtimes to eventual state champ Palivoda, and then caught Birt in the consolations and failed to place. He faces district competition that will not be that much easier than what he'll see in Columbus. Fee should get the fourth berth, although his CIT results were somewhat less than expected. That may provide an opening for Dittrich, Cintron, or McMorrow.

Gaskins also has a tough district. Regula, 4<sup>th</sup> at both the MIT and Top Gun, cannot be overlooked. A former state qualifier, his losses at Medina were both close – to Grandominico, while Meyer upset him at the Top Gun, but finished behind him. Stine is 31-0 at Edison, winning the OVAC and pretty much everything else with good solid wrestling. This trio would seem to be a quantum jump ahead of anyone else at this district.

There are a half-dozen candidates at Goshen – the top three with legitimate placement hopes. The real question is how good will Mark Meyer be come tournament time. A junior high state place winner, he shares this weight class with Jordan Bair (if that isn't playing up to the coach), but I think we'll see Meyer at tournament time. He was 6<sup>th</sup> at the Top Gun with some big wins. More conventional choices here are former state qualifier Johnson and state alternate Harmon. Johnson was 1<sup>st</sup> at Indian Lake and Troy, and 3<sup>rd</sup> at the GMVWA. At Indian Lake he beat two-time state placer Jordan Thome in the finals. At the GMVWA he wrestled a great tournament, losing only to two-time state champion Ryan Gambill. Harmon, who apparently has some type of lingering injury, was 2<sup>nd</sup> at Clyde and 4<sup>th</sup> at Indian Lake, both times having to default. He was also the runner-up at Troy and 6<sup>th</sup> at GMVWA, where he was a semi-finalist before losing to Kolodzik. Backing up this trio are Moeglin, Kopecky, and Fry, but their presence will not deter other challengers.

For some reason I'm finding very few names at Fostoria. Generally, I'm bombarded by possibilities in that very strong district, but at the moment that is not the case. Beemer

was the state alternate last year, but has missed some time after winning at Fairmont. Wray has been particularly busy while winning at Edison (getting the OW for defeating Dinda), finishing 2nd at Marion Harding and 3rd at Lima. Gresock and Markoff are other possibilities. The former placing at every tourney, while Markoff, overcoming some Indiana genes, was 4<sup>th</sup> at Tiffin and sharp in the NOL Duals.

### 140#

#### **PROJECTED CHAMPION: AARON SULZER (HOLY NAME)**

##### Top Contenders

2	Dukes (Ravenna)	16	Henline (Coventry)
3	Stephens (Graham)	17	Eddy (Harrison Central)
4	Neff (Miami Trace)	18	Fondale (New Lexington)
5	Gifford (Logan Elm)	19	McKee (Highland)
6	Riedy (Bellevue)	20	Scaglia (Kenton Ridge)
7	Delpra (West Geauga)	21	Rector (Carrollton)
8	Ray (Cambridge)	22	Fraley (Streetsboro)
9	Schell (Greenon)	23	Brancker (Edison)
10	Starr (Franklin)	24	Newell (Kenston)
11	Mellor (River View)	25	Penhorwood (Benjamin Logan)
12	Johnson (Maumee)	26	Ursetti (Tallmadge)
13	Bernardo (Columbus DeSales)	27	Rich (Clyde)
14	Combs (Bryan)	28	Burks (Lexington)
15	Hurley (Walsh Jesuit)	29	Tackett (Hamilton Twp.)

Sulzer and Dukes met in the first round of States last year with Sulzer taking a 2-1 decision and using that as a jumping off point to win a state title. He upset the undefeated Espinoza in overtime to cap a masterly tournament of clutch wrestling. Duke made similar use winning four consecutive consolation bouts before losing to Skonieczny and finishing 4<sup>th</sup>. If the pairings are right (67% chance), these two could meet again in the final round instead of the first. There has been an interim match in the Brecksville semis where Dukes took a 3-1 decision. My view is that Sulzer will reverse that result when the chips are down on an unseasonably (hopefully) warm Saturday night.

The strongest sectional boasts neither of these wrestlers, but Goshen hosts a half dozen potential placers. The best looks more and more likely to be Matt Stephens. Last year we televised the Junior High State finals and Stephens got very little "face" time. He pinned in 72 seconds in a display of powerful wrestling. He slipped right into the 140# spot vacated by state runner-up Newland and has had few problems. He was 1<sup>st</sup> at the GMVWA majoring Gombash and was 4<sup>th</sup> at the Top Gun, losing to Messerall and Neff in ultimate overtime – a verdict I don't think will be repeated. Even at the Ironman in his varsity experience he was 5<sup>th</sup> losing to Sulzer 7-3. I see him as the biggest threat to a Sulzer/Dukes match-up. Neff was a qualifier at 145# last year and missed placement by two points. He was, as mentioned, 3<sup>rd</sup> at the Top Gun, losing to

Dukes in the semi-finals. He was 3<sup>rd</sup> at the SWOCA at 152#, but failed to place at the Brecksville up two weight classes. State placer Gifford was 7<sup>th</sup> last year at this weight class as a sophomore. This year he is undefeated although not wrestling the most demanding of schedules. Nonetheless, he showed few problems dealing with more experienced wrestlers. State qualifiers Starr and Schell are also at this weight class and, already, it's getting crowded. Starr went two and out, but has won at Franklin and Western Brown this year along with a 3<sup>rd</sup> at Coffman. I have not seen scores for Schell recently but he was 8<sup>th</sup> last year at 130#. Fondale will certainly mount a challenge after a at 5<sup>th</sup> at the MIT and may have moved ahead of Schell. Starr, however, beat him 8-2. That leaves Penhorwood and Scaglia with, likely, nowhere to go.

Dukes should have very little trouble at Firestone. Not only did he win the Top Gun, but was 2<sup>nd</sup> at Brecksville. In the final round he had moved ahead of the excellent Habat, but wore down in the third period. However, I was very impressed by those first four minutes. Delpra is a returning state qualifier with placement potential. He was 7<sup>th</sup> at the top Gun and 2<sup>nd</sup> at both Kenston and the Mayfield Big 8. After this duo it is wide open. Fraley and Henline have both had some good results, but normally not against top tier competition. Hurley, Ursetti, and Newell are all possibilities, but the first named never quite gets healthy. Hatch (University School) is a long shot here.

Sulzer has one major obstacle at Fostoria in state qualifier Dawson Riedy. Still, Sulzer was a finalist at the Ironman and the CIT besides his 4<sup>th</sup> place finish at Brecksville. Riedy was 6<sup>th</sup> at Brecksville, losing to Sulzer, 3-1, in the consolation semi-finals. He has won at Clyde and Bellevue. Last year he went 1-2 at States. After this top duo the remainder of the competition is at a somewhat lower level. I think Johnson, 1<sup>st</sup> at Bellevue and 2<sup>nd</sup> at Waite, Perrysburg, and Tiffin is next best with some placement chances. McKee, from the resurgent Highland squad, and Combs might be marginal favorites for the fourth spot, but with a host of other contenders.

There are quite a number of rather similar wrestlers at Steubenville. Marginally, the best of this group is state qualifier Ray who had a very tough draw at Columbus. After a first round victory he gave Skonieczny an excellent match losing 10-8 and then dropped a 13-6 decision to Dukes. He was 2<sup>nd</sup> at Sheridan (to Gaskins) and 3<sup>rd</sup> at the OVAC at 145#. State alternate Mellor is next in line with Bernardo, Eddy, and Rector close behind. Bernardo has a certain flair that on a hot weekend could get him a place at Columbus.

**145#**

**PROJECTED CHAMPION: BEN JORDAN (GRAHAM)**

Top Contenders

2	Tank (Oak Harbor)	15	Christman (Indian Lake)
3	Fraley (Miami Trace)	16	Vocke (Napoleon)
4	Painter (Aurora)	17	Martycz (Kenton Ridge)
5	Leonard (Norton)	18	Huffman (Eastwood)
6	Canty (Columbus DeSales)	19	Shockey (Fairless)
7	McGookey (Perkins)	20	Dulaney (Whitehall)
8	Hoover (West Holmes)	21	Massillo (Van Wert)
9	Szucs (Holy Name)	22	Swank (University School)
10	Dynes (Claymont)	23	Bruggeman (Bellbrook)
11	Pearce (Poland Seminary)	24	Graves (Maumee)
12	Shiff (Findlay)	25	Hildenbrand (Franklin)
13	Stine (Edison)	26	Ringle (Norwalk)
14	Piechuta (Marlington)	27	Moore (Warrensville)

A final round match-up of Ben Jordan versus Kirk Tank would generate an enormous amount of interest throughout the wrestling community. Jordan has had an absolutely brilliant career winning a state title as both a freshman and a sophomore and suffering a one-point loss in last year's state final. No one could have done better in fending off the expectations and pressure he has faced in his career. So many big wins – like beating three-time champion Jameson at the Top Gun – and so many individual tournament titles on a state championship team. It has been a remarkable run by an outstanding wrestler. Tank, too, has had four great years – state qualification each time and two placements (4<sup>th</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup>). Tank has a choice to make – 145# or 152#. Clearly with his record all that really matters is a state title, he has accomplished everything else. So what Graham opponent gives him the best chance to win? In my view history has shown that beating Boyd is a low probability event – so bring on Jordan.

Jordan should win. Early in the year I thought he was wrestling not to lose rather than going out and being aggressive – using his athleticism and talent to score points not prevent them. All those 2-1 and 2-0 scores kept the opponent in the match. Now, I notice we are seeing more scoring. Tank will be happy to keep it close for five minutes because he has a great one-minute spurt – so Jordan has to pressure him right from the start. Tank can win if he can get ahead and use his riding ability to sit on it. It should be interesting.

Fraley is the only possible issue for Jordan at Goshen. He was 3<sup>rd</sup> last year losing 6-5 to Leonard in the quarterfinals, but winning five other bouts. It gave him a 53-4 record. This year he won at the SWOCA and was 3<sup>rd</sup> at Brecksville, losing only to three-time champ Jameson in the semi-finals. He beat Canty, 4-3, in the consolation finals. He was also 3<sup>rd</sup> at the Top Gun, losing to Jordan 8-2 in the semi-finals. He should be a high placer – possibly a finalist since he'll be away from Jordan. The rest of this district

is miles behind the top two and will be very happy just to have qualified. I give Christman and Martycz a slight advantage over several others.

Tank, on the other hand will face a more varied assortment of competitors. McGookey was 8<sup>th</sup> last year, losing by ten early to Jordan. He won at Fremont Ross and was 5<sup>th</sup> at Brecksville, losing by fall to state champion Toal in the semi-finals and to Canty, 1-0. Szucs was 6<sup>th</sup> last year at 140#, but hasn't had the results you might come to expect. He missed Brecksville and was 6<sup>th</sup> at the CIT, losing three bouts after reaching the semi-finals. Shiff has missed much of the year because of a serious injury, but has recently returned. He was a district semi-finalist last year before inexplicably losing twice Saturday afternoon with one fall in less than 60 seconds. If totally fit he could well outperform his current ranking. They'll be a lot sniping at the four front-runners from a cadre of capable wrestlers. Vocke and Hoffman are sound, experienced wrestlers who will pounce on mistake, while Graves and Ringle are also strong. Graves, for example, has been 2<sup>nd</sup> at Waite, Bellevue and Tiffin. A wrestler to watch in the future is Massillo. A junior high state place winner last year he won at the Hamilton Twp., was 2<sup>nd</sup> at Oak Harbor, and finished a strong 4<sup>th</sup> at the GMVWA. He may be a year away from qualification.

Painter has been at 152# all year, but I have been assured by the highest possible Aurora source that he will compete at 145# at tourney time. He and Leonard make a strong one-two punch at Firestone. Painter was 8<sup>th</sup> at this weight class last year – beating Neff, but being shut out by Tank. He has been very good at the higher weight finishing 5<sup>th</sup> at Brecksville and 2<sup>nd</sup> at the Top Gun to Kusar. He could be a finalist here. Leonard was 6<sup>th</sup> at 135# last year after making the state semi-finals. His 10-1 loss to Pelton pushed him deep into the consolations. This year he was 2<sup>nd</sup> at Solon (to Pearce) and 1<sup>st</sup> at the Dies where he beat D-3 state champ Stiltner, 5-4. Apparently missing here is state qualifier David Lee (Akron St. Vincent) who has left the team – at least for the moment. He would have had a top ten ranking. Pearce, champ at Solon and Kenston, and Swank, 6<sup>th</sup> at the Top Gun, are two solid prospects for the last two spots, but the powerful Shockey, just coming off the disabled list may circumvent those plans. Now that Piechuta has moved down to 145# he will muddy the waters when it comes to those last two berths. He was 6<sup>th</sup> at North Canton (to Timoteo) and was 7<sup>th</sup> at the Top Gun—losing early and close to Greco and then wending his way through the myriad consolation rounds. All this was at 152#. It puts Swank suddenly in the role of underdog.

I only have five names at Steubenville, but they are all good. Canty has been wrestling very well lately, winning at the CIT and finishing 4<sup>th</sup> at Brecksville. A state qualifier last year, he lost two one-point decisions on Thursday and was quickly gone. It won't happen this year! Hoover was also a state qualifier after a runner-up district finish, and went 1-2 including a first-round loss to Carlo. He was 2<sup>nd</sup> at the MIT, losing to Suba, after an overtime win over Dynes. Tow years ago he met Tank in the first round and also went 1-2. He needs to find a couple more wins at the state level this year. Dynes is also a returning state qualifier who got Tank in the first round and was pinned. He lost to Neff in overtime and was eliminated. He was 3<sup>rd</sup> at the MIT and 4<sup>th</sup> at the Top

Gun – powerful reasons for eventual state placement. Stine won the OVAC at this class, while Dulaney won at Perrysburg and was 2<sup>nd</sup> at the Ash. They'll be fighting for that fourth slot.

### 152#

#### **PROJECTED CHAMPION: COBY BOYD (GRAHAM)**

##### Top Contenders

2	Schott (Marlington)	16	Rubesich (Howland))
3	Timoteo (Highland)	17	Stout (Utica)
4	Carlo (Fairview Park)	18	Lee (Vincent Warren)
5	Boso (Akron Springfield)	19	Emery (Indian Creek)
6	Gregor (Buckeye)	20	McKenzie (Carroll)
7	M. Gallik (Lexington)	21	Edwards (Greenville)
8	Karaffa (Ravenna)	22	Conrad (Ross)
9	Drummond (Napoleon)	23	Oktavec (Streetsboro)
10	Bidwill (Conneaut)	24	King (Milton Union)
11	Stout (Buckeye Valley)	25	Kitner (Big Walnut)
12	Bailey (Washington CH)	26	Renner (New Philadelphia)
13	Raber (Orrville)	27	Spence (Walsh Jesuit)
14	Mullins (Perry)	28	Mallarnee (Oak Harbor)
15	Ray (Indian Lake)	29	

If Tank is, as anticipated, at 145#, Coby Boyd will have only one major obstacle on his path to a second state title. He is already a three-time state placer (6-3-1) and one of the most ferocious pinners in the middleweights since Joe Heskett. His only loss this year was in the Ironman finals to the #1 wrestler in the country at this weight class and that was on an overtime tiebreaker. He has been a superb four-year starter who quite easily could have won another title or two (that two overtime loss in the semis to Kriwinsky two years ago and the semi-final loss to Friery when a freshman).

The only real barrier is Schott. He has been terrific all year at 160#, going undefeated until Cubberly mauled him in the Top Gun finals. Prior to that Schott had shutout Tate and pinned Garbrandt. Except for that one bout no one has been close to him. Now down at 152# he'll give Boyd something to think during boring classes. Overall, he has traded a #2 ranking at 160# for one at 152#.

There is little else to say at this weight class. It is easily the weakest weight class in Division II headed by one of the state's best wrestlers. The most competitive district is at Fostoria – even without Tank. There are two returning state qualifiers and three other good competitors. Timoteo was a state quarter-finalist at this class last year and then lost two bouts by a total of three points and failed to place. This year he won at the Dies and Gorman and was 5<sup>th</sup> at North Canton and the MIT. At the MIT he lost to Kusar (quite close) and Tank. Carlo was 6<sup>th</sup> last year at 145#, including a quarterfinal loss by

fall to Boyd. He has wrestled a comfortable schedule winning at Clyde and Southview and is, at this writing, undefeated. Gregor has had a busy schedule, winning at Oak Harbor and Norwalk, and finishing 3<sup>rd</sup> at the Dies after being shutout by Timoteo. Drummond was a state alternate two years ago, but struggled last year at the district level. He and Gallik (8<sup>th</sup> at the MIT, and 3<sup>rd</sup> at Northwood) should battle for the last state spot.

The field, after Schott, at Firestone is very competitive and should provide some interesting match-ups. Many of the wrestlers at this venue look like potential middle to low placers at the state level if they can get there. A number of them have district experience, but only Boso, two years ago, has competed at the state level. Boso went 2-2 at last year's district, but has come back strong this year – winning at Northwest and losing, 8-3, to Timoteo in the Dies final. Karaffa has made a big step forward this year. He lost in the first round at Brecksville 9-8 to the excellent Greco and after three wins fell to Carraher. He was a semi-finalist at the Top Gun, losing to Painter and ended up 4<sup>th</sup> with another narrow loss to Greco. If he can sustain this momentum he should qualify. Bidwill and Mullins met for two tournament titles with the former winning both. Raber, the young sophomore, was 3<sup>rd</sup> at the WIT, while Oktavec won at Wadsworth and was 4<sup>th</sup> at Hudson behind Rubesich. All of them have an upward climb to qualify.

I must be missing all kinds of data out of the Steubenville District. I'm just not finding many names to put on my grid. In the Eastern District this weight class has been dominated by Division III wrestlers, while the Central District has not yet performed as anticipated. I keep thinking Carfagna will have a breakout year or that Kitner or one of the Stouts will post huge numbers. I've listed Stout (the one from Buckeye Valley) who has been best here after some solid performances. I wouldn't be surprised if some 145's wrestle here.

There is very little at Goshen that will trouble Boyd's sleep. He should have very little difficulty subduing all that are here, and the battle is definitely for 2<sup>nd</sup> (and 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup>) place. Bailey and Ray would seem to have an inside track based on their good district performances of last year. Bailey, in particular, was two points from qualification. Lee won at Sheridan and was 2-2 at last year's district. The southwestern boys have been placers, but very few have won a tournament. McKenzie was 4<sup>th</sup> at the CIT, while Edwards was 6<sup>th</sup> at the GMVWA. Since we have pretty much a level playing field after Boyd the key, oftentimes, to qualification is a strong sectional performance. A good spot in the bracket sheet can be worth a lot in circumstances like these.

**160#**

**PROJECTED CHAMPION: ERIC CUBBERLY (EASTWOOD)**

Top Contenders

2	Mannier (Graham)	16	Neely (Upper Sandusky)
3	Bittenger (Beaver Local)	17	Giachetti (Oak Harbor)
4	Garbrandt (Claymont)	18	Krownapple (River Valley)
5	Kilroy (Padua)	19	Snider (Hamilton Twp.)
6	Cheatham (Walsh Jesuit)	20	Rosch (Canal Winchester)
7	Thurn (Clyde)	21	Snider (Valley View)
8	Pool (Benjamin Logan)	22	Novicky (Willard)
9	Walters (West Geauga)	23	Hamilton (Salem)
10	Tate (Akron St. Vincent)	24	Witt (Indian Lake)
11	Bragg (Morgan)	25	Brown (Highland)
12	Brown (Napoleon)	26	Gilmore (Dover)
13	Harris (Greenville)	27	Bates (West Branch)
14	Sexton (Franklin)	28	Recknagel (Rossford)
15	Sarosy (Perry)	29	Cardone (Toledo Central Catholic)

In the past, weight classes tended to even out. As information accumulated about the competitive disposition of each weight class, coaches and wrestlers began to make rational calculations. They analyzed their opportunities at the various weight classes against the goals each wrestler had in mind (do I want to be a district qualifier? State qualifier? State placer? State champ?). Then something like a risk/reward calculation was done and wrestlers began to drift to their optimal weight class. There was a kind of Brownian motion that smoothed out the weight classes, taking wrestlers from a crowded weight class to one that seemed less populated. In some instances this meant some fairly dramatic weight losses as certification time neared. Now, with alpha weights done early, we see greater disparity in weight class talent. A good example is at this class and the one that precedes it. There seems to be almost a vacuum at 152#, whereas at 160# there are at least a dozen superior wrestlers.

The best of this group is the exciting Cubberly. The defending state champ was a dominating winner at Brecksville and the Top Gun – defeating, at the latter, many of the top contenders in Division II. His only loss was in the Ironman semi-finals when the Georgia state champ (and a very impressive one) decisioned him – a match in which Cubberly was injured. He is a three-time state placer (8-3-1), and came very close to winning his sophomore year. I have him at 72-2 since the beginning of his junior year.

The Fostoria District offers a wide variety of challengers for Cubberly. The rugged Kilroy, a Cadet National Champion, was 3<sup>rd</sup> at this tough district, beating Nino twice – not bad for a freshman. At States he drew state placer Rhoads in the first round and failed to place. The Brecksville Tournament was a great test, with a bracket full of excellent 160's. Kilroy lost in the quarterfinals to Cheatham, but came back for 3<sup>rd</sup>, defeating Pankewicz, Bryan, Georgia runner-up Banks, and, finally, Cheatham. Thurn

could easily have placed last year. He lost a pair of one-point decisions after reaching the state quarter-finals. He and Michaels have been switching off between this weight class and 171# with Thurn apparently ticketed for here. He won at Clyde and Southview and may be under-rated here. He'll be away from Cubberly and certainly has high placement potential. The rest of this district is good, but probably at a level below the top trio. Neely won at Tiffin, while Novicky was a district semi-finalist last year. They'll be top contenders for that fourth state berth. A strong contender is Giachetti – winner of two tournaments – surrounded by a host of great workout partners at Oak Harbor. Add in the young Recknagel and Brown and this is an excellent district. The real dark horse here is Brown from Napoleon. He certainly has qualification chances after that top trio.

There is also a very strong trio at Firestone. Cheatham was a state placer at 1781#, but has moved to this crowded weight class, though I don't know why. He won the Big 8 (over Walters) and was 4<sup>th</sup> at Brecksville. Walters went 2-2 at districts last year, but has gotten both bigger and better this year. He was 1<sup>st</sup> at Kenston, 2<sup>nd</sup> at the Big 8, and 5<sup>th</sup> at the Top Gun, defeating Tate (again), but losing to Cubberly (badly) and Mannier. Tate still looks third best here with an excellent chance to return to Columbus. Sarosy and Hamilton are very capable and will be the early co-favorites for that last berth.

Mannier, now a junior, has won two district titles, but has yet to place at states. That will be rectified this year. He was 4<sup>th</sup> at the Ironman and 1<sup>st</sup> at the GMVWA, while finishing 3<sup>rd</sup> at the Top Gun. He defeated Garbrandt and Tate, losing only to Cubberly. He'll want to draw away from Cubberly – 67% probability --- and pressure everyone else. Pool is the only real challenger. He was 5<sup>th</sup> last year at 152#, losing twice to Garbrandt – both on falls. He was 1<sup>st</sup> at North Union and Franklin, but has not, to my knowledge, wrestled any of the other top contenders. I like state alternate Sexton next best, though I was disappointed by his 8<sup>th</sup> place finish at the MIT. He made up for that with a win at Coffman, a 2<sup>nd</sup> at Franklin, and a 3<sup>rd</sup> at Western Brown. Greenville has moved to Division II and so Harris will have a chance to qualify at this level. Snider, Witt, and Robinson are just three of his other challengers.

I see some upsets at Steubenville. I've rated Bittenger the best at this district based on some powerful wins this year – none more impressive than his win over Danny Michaels in the finals at Southview. His only loss, and it was a bit of a surprise, was to Skoff in the finals at the OVAC. He was 8<sup>th</sup> at this weight class last year. Garbrandt, now a junior, went into states with nine losses but had a first round fall over Pool and then upset Kusar. Cubberly got him 74 seconds, but he ended up 4<sup>th</sup>. He was 2<sup>nd</sup> at the MIT to D-1 choice Kline and was 4<sup>th</sup> at the Top Gun, losing to Mannier and Schott. Bragg is a returning district champ who went 1-2 at the state meet. He has won at Licking Hts., Coshocton, and Barnesville, and that makes it a trio of top stars at this district. I've listed a wide variety of possibilities for the fourth berth with that spot still well up in the air.

**#171**

**PROJECTED CHAMPION: ZAC THOMUSSEIT (GRAHAM)**

Top Contenders

2	Mills (University School)	16	Van Sickle (West Holmes)
3	Roth (Eastwood)	17	Lauth (St. Marys Memorial)
4	Michaels (Clyde)	18	Cope (Indian Lake)
5	Witt (Oak Harbor)	19	Wheeler (Perry)
6	Griffin (Canal Fulton NW)	20	Ousley (Vinton County)
7	Michael (Valley View)	21	Howell (Harrison Central)
8	Rhoads (Hillsboro)	22	Boggs (Ravenna)
9	Nino (Toledo Central Catholic)	23	Ford (Circleville)
10	Teague (Cambridge)	24	Heldt (Dover)
11	Woods (Claymont)	25	Schaal (Buckeye Local)
12	Donze (Tallmadge)	26	Collins (Bellbrook)
13	Shipp (Wapakoneta)	27	Ponchak (Morgan)
14	Stygler (Columbus DeSales)	28	Rice (Conneaut)
15	Lochtefeld (Lexington)	29	Franklin (Big Walnut)
		30	Weber (Wauseon)

This is just another terrific weight class with a multitude of fine wrestlers in competition. There is no clear-cut favorite with five very strong contenders, none of whom has attained dominance over the rest. If we were to wrestle this weight class for a half dozen successive weekends we'd see a radically changing order each time. Not only that, the next half-dozen wrestlers are all very good. In many years they would be top five contenders with few worries about escaping from their district.

The top choice has to be Thomusseit who has not lost to anyone this year in Division II. He has beaten Mills and Witt and finished ahead of Roth. He was 4<sup>th</sup> last year at 160#, losing in the semi-finals (with wins over Mills and Nino) and was 6<sup>th</sup> three years ago at 103# (losing to Papes in the semi-finals). This year he won at the Top Gun and GMVWA and was 3<sup>rd</sup> at the Ironman, losing only to "wunderkind" Chris Phillips. He may be helped by the team momentum that will be generated by this spectacular Graham team.

The Fostoria District is sensational. Roth is a transfer from Whitmer where he was a state qualifier in Division I last year. He started slowly, losing to Witt the first week, but has begun to pour it on now. He was 3<sup>rd</sup> at Brecksville, losing to Mills and 3<sup>rd</sup> at the Top Gun again losing to Mills. He defeated Witt in their dual meet. Michaels was 3<sup>rd</sup> at 145# last year, losing a classic semi-final bout to Coby Boyd 18-14. This year he is making the huge jump to 171# even though he has made 160#. The logic flow is clear. He wants to win a state title and 171# is somewhat the better of two very difficult choices. He won at Clyde, Coffman, and Hamilton Twp., but was 2<sup>nd</sup> (at 160#) to Bittenger at Southview. Witt is also terrific. He was a state semi-finalist last year before losing to Sponseller and finishing 5<sup>th</sup> (with a win over Mills). He was 7<sup>th</sup> the year before.

He was 1<sup>st</sup> at Oak Harbor and Perrysburg, and 2<sup>nd</sup> at the MIT to Roddy. He was 5<sup>th</sup> at the Ironman and beat Michaels 3-2 in the dual. That's three great wrestlers, but, wait, there's more (infomercial material), Nino cannot be overlooked. A state qualifier last year, he took Thomusseit into overtime before losing and then had to come right back and wrestle Mills. He won at Tiffin (with his closest match, 12-1) and the CIT (pinning in the semi-finals and finals). State qualifier Shipp is also back with wins at Wapkoneta and Fairmount and 2<sup>nd</sup> at Oak Harbor (to Witt). Lauth and Weber are both good as is Ladd (Elida) and Trisel (Celina).

Mills was 7<sup>th</sup> at the rugged Ironman (losing to Roddy in the quarter-finals), but he was 1<sup>st</sup> at North Canton and 2<sup>nd</sup> at Brecksville (Phillips) and Top Gun (Thomusseit). He was 6<sup>th</sup> last year. Griffin was 7<sup>th</sup> at 171# at last year's States and cannot be overlooked. He got off to a bit of a rocky start at 189#, but now at 171# he won at Northwest and was 2<sup>nd</sup> at the Dies. Donze was 6<sup>th</sup> last year after a district 4<sup>th</sup>, which included a run to the semi-finals. This year he was only a 5<sup>th</sup> at the Dies, losing 4-3 to Griffin. He seems to wrestle his best at crunch time. There is a drop-off after this trio. Wheeler, another transfer from Lake Catholic won two district bouts last year being eliminated by Tate. He missed the early part of this season, but snapped up a 3<sup>rd</sup> at Waite. Rice has been at 160#, but could also go here, while Boggs and Fadoul (Aurora) are long-shots.

Thomusseit will not have it as easy as some of his Graham brethren at the district. Michaels was a D-3 state qualifier two years ago at Carlisle at 189# - going 1-2. Now at Valley View he has had a great year winning at Valley View and Bellbrook and finishing 5<sup>th</sup> at GMVWA after a loss to state placer Rhoads. That was avenged 6-2 at Bellbrook. Rhoads, a three-time state qualifier and a placer two years ago, returns for his last state tournament. He's won two important tournaments and his lowest result was a 4<sup>th</sup> at GMVWA. That followed a close semi-final loss to Yant. Cope and Ousley were close to qualification last year and should lead the pack looking for the last entry to States.

Perhaps, the weakest district, but it isn't bad, is at Steubenville. I may have badly under-valued Teague who won at the OVAC and Sheridan and was 3<sup>rd</sup> at Barnesville. He was 6<sup>th</sup> at Brecksville, losing to Phillips (no disgrace) in the quarter-finals and then falling to 6<sup>th</sup>. Woods was a state qualifier at Indian Valley and gave up 44 points in his two state bouts losing 24-9 and 20-17. He has clearly worked on his defense this year with a 4<sup>th</sup> at the MIT and a 6<sup>th</sup> at the Top Gun. Stygler is now at 171# and was 3<sup>rd</sup> at the CIT. A real dark horse here is Van Sickle who was 2<sup>nd</sup> at the WIT, 5<sup>th</sup> at the MIT, and 7<sup>th</sup> at the Top Gun. That is a strong, solid schedule with good success. He should qualify.

**189#**

**PROJECTED CHAMPION: CODY MAGRUM (OAK HARBOR)**

Top Contenders

2	Foster (Eastwood)	16	Wittkamp (Elida)
3	Bailey (Walsh Jesuit)	17	Day (Valley View)
4	M. Thomusseit (Graham)	18	Hufford (Tiffin Columbian)
5	Andrews (Clyde)	19	Wenger (Fairless)
6	Wetherell (Cambridge)	20	Klingerman (Hebron Lakewood)
7	Angelotta (West Geauga)	21	Sill (Perry)
8	Marshall (Indian Lake)	22	Henderson (Louisville)
9	Gallik (Lexington)	23	Ludwig (Beaver Local)
10	Anthony (Greenon)	24	Henderson (Toledo Central Catholic)
11	Wilcox (Hamilton Twp.)	25	McIntosh (Miami Trace)
12	Carpenter (Sheridan)	26	Brentlinger (Benjamin Logan)
13	Dilley (Amanda Clearcreek)	27	Thompson (Tallmadge)
14	Rosen (University School)	28	Maxworthy (Buckeye)
15	Talbert (Akron Springfield)	29	Sanford (Finneytown)
		30	Tope (Canal Winchester)

The epic battles between Magrum and Foster continue for yet another year. It seems that we have seen them go at it since the age of knighthood – since Sandy Cageao was young. They attend nearby schools and wrestle in the same weight classes and they are both extremely successful. Three years ago Magrum was 7<sup>th</sup>, while Foster was 4<sup>th</sup>. Two years ago Magrum won his first state title, while Foster was upset in the first round and didn't place. Last year it seemed turned around as Foster crushed Magrum 8-0 in the district final. It made no difference. Magrum drew away from Thompson and rolled into the finals, while Thompson nipped Foster 3-2. And so it was that Magrum took his second title, 3-1 over Thompson. This year Magrum was 2<sup>nd</sup> at the Ironman, while Foster was 4<sup>th</sup>. Magrum won their individual bout when Foster clearly was still in football shape. Since then Foster was 2<sup>nd</sup> at Brecksville and 1<sup>st</sup> at the Top Gun, while Magrum won at the MIT, Perrysburg and Oak harbor. He also won at the dual meet 4-2. So does Foster have one last Herculean effort to upset Magrum one last time? Maybe so, but this time he might save it for Columbus.

Let me add that Magrum has been one of the great upper weight wrestlers in Ohio. When, next year, we start to think about the best high school wrestlers in Ohio during the first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century his name must certainly be prominently mentioned.

Their district is by far the best. Andrews and Gallik both have previous state experience and know their way around a wrestling mat. Andrews was at 215# much of the year, winning three tournaments there and now one at 189#. He'll be a real load for anyone – including the top duo. Gallik was twice a D-3 state qualifier, but has never placed going 1-4. This is his last chance to turn it around. Waiting in the wings are Wittkamp and Hufford, both rock steady placers who'll need that big upset to qualify. Maxworth and

Henderson are also possible factors with Gallik, in all likelihood, the principal target. The Northeast District wrestlers have won the last four titles at this weight class – the longest such streak in Division II. It will take a monumental effort to extend that streak with Foster and Magrum at their weight class.

However, the Northeast District does have a legitimate prospect coming out of Firestone. Bailey was 4<sup>th</sup> at this weight class last year – losing 7-6 in the first round then winning four consolation bouts, the first one a 5-4 win over Andrews. He was 2<sup>nd</sup> at the Top Gun to Foster, losing by six and 4<sup>th</sup> at Brecksville, losing to eventual champ Lamberg, 9-8. Angelotta has made great progress during the past year and has solid placement potential. He was 5<sup>th</sup> at the Top Gun losing to Bailey by seven. After him there are a host of possibilities. The steady Rosen always seems to place, while Talbert has done much the same. Wenger is relatively small and quick and may give the bigger boys problems.

It's a nice steady group of contenders at Goshen. Thomusseit placed at 130# and has moved up seven weight classes – a large jump even in that family. I'm guessing he is probably a 160-pounder unable to dislodge Mannier, but he may have found a more congenial niche at 189#. He was 2<sup>nd</sup> at the GMVWA and 3<sup>rd</sup> at the Top Gun, losing only to Bailey. He would certainly set a state record by placing in consecutive years at weight classes set so far apart. State qualifier Marshall is second best, winning at Indian Lake Indian and finishing 2<sup>nd</sup> at Troy and Clyde, losing by four points to Andrews. Last year he drew Weakley in the first round and wrestled well losing 9-5. Anthony was a district semi-finalist last year before losing twice and falling to 5<sup>th</sup>. He was a solid 5<sup>th</sup> at the MIT and has won several smaller tournaments. Day has three times been a tourney finalist and is a candidate for qualification. McIntosh was 3<sup>rd</sup> at the Junior High States, losing to Phillips, and is a rising star. He might qualify as early as this year.

Wetherell should dominate the action at Steubenville. He had an unhappy Brecksville tournament, but since then was 1<sup>st</sup> at the OVAC and at Sheridan. Carpenter has been successful at 215#, but will be a real "load" at this weight class. Wilcox and Dilley are strong in the Columbus area, while Ludwig, 5<sup>th</sup> at the OVAC, may do well from the east. Except for Wetherell the other three qualifiers may struggle in Columbus.

**215#**

**PROJECTED CHAMPION: MATT FISHER (PERKINS)**

Top Contenders

2	Pummill (Valley View)	14	Poucher (West Geauga)
3	Houska (Highland)	15	Renward (Bellevue)
4	Pickerel (Toledo Central Catholic)	16	Lias (Hubbard)
5	Snyder (Hillsboro)	17	Plunkett (Carrollton)
6	Taylor (Indian Lake)	18	Erb (Wapakoneta)
7	Busick (Steubenville)	19	Thompson (Tallmadge)
8	Gidcumb (John Glenn)	20	Baker (Oak Harbor)
9	Schlarb (New Philadelphia)	21	Stanley (New Lexington)
10	White (Graham)	22	Webber (Claymont)
11	DeRoia (Walsh Jesuit)	23	Pavlik (Ravenna)
12	Whitehead (Columbus deSales)	24	Korth (new Albany)
13	Hale (Eastwood)	25	Barnett (Eaton)

This is actually the last of the 42 weight classes to be examined and written up. The top choice is an obvious one based on 2 ½ years of sustained excellence. Fisher first hit the state meet as a sophomore and immediately made an impact reaching the semi-finals before losing a narrow decision to Srock and finishing 4<sup>th</sup>. Last year, again at 189#, he reached the finals with his 46<sup>th</sup> win, but lost to Weakley, who won the bout on his feet. This year he is undefeated (on the mat) winning at the Ironman, North Canton, and Fremont Ross and forfeiting to Scales, due to injury, in the finals at Brecksville, a bout that I would have loved to have seen. Big, strong, and very powerful, he is difficult to score against, and wins bouts by a process of attrition. Sometimes, the score at the end seems a lot closer than what was just witnessed, but Fisher never seems in real danger.

He emerges from an excellent district. Houska, still just a junior, was an easy winner at the Gorman, was 2<sup>nd</sup> at North Canton to Fisher (7-2), and 3<sup>rd</sup> at the MIT, losing to Division I state runner-up Cogar (12-3). A district semi-finalist last year, he lost his two Saturday afternoon bouts by a total of three points and became a state alternate. One of those losses was to Pickerel who is also back. I think Houska has passed his fellow junior, but Pickerel is still very good. He lost to Pummill in the first round (9-8) and then won three bouts to finish 7<sup>th</sup>. He should do even better this year after winning at Tiffin and finishing 2<sup>nd</sup> to Scales at the CIT. Hale and Renward are top contenders for that fourth berth, with Baker and Rippke (Maumee) also in the mix. A future star is Erb who won at Fairmont, Oak harbor, and Wapakoneta and is only a freshman. He was 3<sup>rd</sup> at the Junior High States last year and clearly has a most promising future.

There is a quartet of "heavy hitters" at Goshen, any of whom could be a finalist. Pummill was 3<sup>rd</sup> at last year's district, and then made the state semifinals before losing to Srock and falling to 4<sup>th</sup>. This year he is undefeated winning at four tournaments

including the GMVWA, and beating Snyder twice and Taylor. He has strongest finalist potential. Snyder has had a great four-year career twice qualifying for States, but going 1-2 each time. Last year Pickerel closed the door on his chances. This year he has won every tourney except those where Pummill showed up. This is definitely a high place year for him. Taylor was a state qualifier at 285# last year going two and out. This year at 215# he has been excellent – three times being a tournament finalist (two firsts) and a 5<sup>th</sup> at GMVWA. He has losses to both Snyder and Pummill. White continues to get better and this sophomore is now one of the top dozen or so wrestlers in the state at this weight class. He won two district bouts last year at 189#, but has been even better at 215# this year. He was 8<sup>th</sup> at the Ironman and 4<sup>th</sup> at the GMVWA – losing to Snyder by a single point. His problem may be in discovering the best way to work through this difficult bracket. Below this group we have Stanley and Barnett with Ford (Circleville) a possibility though I suspect (he and others) will quickly note the quality difference at this district between 215# and 285#.

There are a number of strong performers at Steubenville, too. The quartet of Busick, Gidcumb, Schlarb, and Whitehead all have placement potential. The first two were both state qualifiers last year who came within one bout of placement – Gidcumb missing out by a single point. He won at St. Clairsville and Coshocton this year and could be a real factor. Busick rounding out of football shape and into wrestling fitness was 2<sup>nd</sup> at Barnesville, but won the OVAC. He is very good. Schlarb was a district semi-finalist who lost to Gidcumb in overtime in his go-to-state bout. He would like to avoid that fate as he won this year at the WIT overwhelming the field. Whitehead has been a little slow rounding into form, but was 3<sup>rd</sup> at the CIT. He was 6<sup>th</sup> at Brecksville, but did not lose to any D-2 rivals. Plunkett and Weber, who have traded victories, might be next best with Korth also in the picture.

The cupboard is just about bare at Firestone. I'm not sure I can remember a time at this district when a weight class had so few names that are recognizable. My guess is that when we see the four state qualifiers they'll not be household words. I've put DeRoia at the top of my list with Poucher and Lias somewhere in the mix. It'll be like one of the mysteries I read when I cannot even identify any of the suspects.

**285#**

**PROJECTED CHAMPION: JOHN HILES (COLUMBUS DESALES)**

*Top Contenders*

2	Walls (Graham)	14	Willford (Meigs)
3	Hawkins (West Holmes)	15	Ciraldo (Walsh Jesuit)
4	Donna (Tiffin)	16	Wolfe (Beaver Local)
5	Williams (Woodward)	17	Jackson (Benjamin Logan)
6	Betz (Marlington)	18	Torrence (Norwalk)
7	Sanchez (Napoleon)	19	Williams (Geneva)
8	Britt (Clear Fork)	20	Van Sickle (Sheridan)
9	Bickham (Hebron Lakewood)	21	Slapnicker (West Geauga)
10	Brooks (Bellevue)	22	Ford (Circleville)
11	Hager (Ravenna)	23	Neal (St. Marys Memorial)
12	Jackson (Claymont)	24	Benson (Chillicothe)
13	Magestro (Canal Fulton NW)	25	Cooper (River View)

We had some great heavyweight champions in Division II the past few years. Wrestlers who have excelled for two or three years at a weight class that is difficult, unpredictable, and leaves one feeling that one or the other of the two contestants could be on the edge of disaster. We've had two-time champ Dustin Fox, now ranked #1 in the Nation, two-time finalist and one-time champ Matt Guhn, and two-time champ and three-time finalist Nathan Sharp. That tradition should continue with John Hiles – who has finished 3<sup>rd</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> the past two years. Ironically, he was 3<sup>rd</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> at the junior high states, but never got that last chance for a title. Well, the opportunity is here this year at the high school level, and I anticipate Hiles finally cashing in on his years of hard work. Last year he lost to Sharp in overtime for the title in a terrific struggle (incidentally Sharp was a phenomenal 5-0 in overtime during his state appearances). Hiles has won everything this year except for a highly dubious overtime defeat at the Beast of the East (one that won't make the referees' Hall of Fame). He had five falls at Brecksville and that will keep the referees out of the picture.

His principal rival is likely to be Wall, who was a junior high state champ. Walls, now a junior, has been 6<sup>th</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> the last two years, losing to Hiles two years ago. He was 5<sup>th</sup> at the Ironman and 2<sup>nd</sup> at the GMVWA (losing to Prichard) and was 1<sup>st</sup> at the Top gun (beating Hawkins in overtime). He exits by far the easiest district, one that you will want to draw into (except for Walls). None of the remaining qualifiers (whoever they may be) are likely to be more than very low placers. But it does provide plenty of district opportunities. I think boys from the southeast, like Ford, Willford, and fast moving Van Sickle have good chances to qualify.

Hawkins was 8<sup>th</sup> last year losing to both Sharp and Walls (no disgrace). This year he won the WIT and MIT and was 2<sup>nd</sup> at the Top Gun – losing to Walls 2-1, but decisioning Betz. His district is far more challenging than the one facing Walls. He has Hiles, of

course, at the top, but Bickham and Jackson are both solid. Jackson had a district 6<sup>th</sup>, losing to Hiles, and has been 8<sup>th</sup> at both the Ironman and the Top Gun. Bickham had a big win at Sheridan – finishing ahead of both Van Sickle and Ford. The OVAC champ, Wolfe, is also a strong contender and he was a runner-up at Southview losing to D-3 choice Stocum, 3-1. That leaves Coshocton champ Cooper, Spence (Amanda Clearcreek) and Dugan (Steubenville) with low probability chances.

The deepest district is at Fostoria. Donna was a surprise state semi-finalist last year before getting pinned by Hiles, decisioned by Walls, and falling to 6<sup>th</sup>. He has already won at Norwalk, Fremont Ross, and Clyde this year and was 2<sup>nd</sup> at Tiffin to Southwick. Williams was a Division I state qualifier last year and won a state bout. He has not wrestled many of the competitors he will see at this district, but, on the other hand, they haven't seen him. Sanchez (will he go 215?) seems likely to wrestle here. Relatively small, but exceedingly quick and deceptively strong, he is 30-2 this year losing only to Southwick and Hawkins. He should get a place. Britt, a returning qualifier, has been caught a couple of times finishing 3<sup>rd</sup> at the Gorman (losing to Windom) and 2<sup>nd</sup> at Norwalk (to Donna). He almost derailed Hiles in the first round last year, losing 5-4 then being eliminated by Hawkins. Brooks was 2-2 at last year's district getting majored by Donna. This year he won at Bellevue and was an excellent 7<sup>th</sup> at Brecksville. That's five solid choices, but Torrence, Neal, and Windom (Lexington) are all possibilities, as well. I'm sure we'll see at least one surprise here.

Betz has had a great season, building on his state qualification efforts last year. At Columbus he met Walls in the first round and wasn't able to bounce back. This year he has won at North Canton and was 3<sup>rd</sup> at the Top Gun, losing to Hawkins by two and beating Ciraldo in overtime. Hager and Magestro wrestled for 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> at last year's district, but it will not unduly stress probability if they were to meet for the title. Magestro has two first place finishes and two sixth place results and has been busier than Hager. Ciraldo has begun to really progress and he had that strong 4<sup>th</sup> at the Top Gun. That's my top quartet with Williams, Slapnicker, and Jones (Harvey) as possible back-ups.

## TEAMS

1. Graham

This will be their eighth consecutive team title and tenth overall extending both of their D-2 marks. It will also be Jeff Jordan's eighth title tying him with Bill Barger for 4<sup>th</sup> on the all-time coaching list. Last year they became the fifth team (and first in D-2) to score over 200 points when they brought home 208.5. This year they could surpass the record set last year by St. Edward (229) for most points in school classification. They also have an opportunity to tie or even beat the most hallowed of records – the six individual state champions produced by Cleveland West in 1951. I count eight classes where individual state titles are possible and four where they will be solid favorites. Not only that, the nation's #1 team loses only three seniors and anyone who attends the State Junior High Meet knows that they have tremendous talent in the pipeline
2. Oak Harbor

There is likely to be a tremendous battle for 2<sup>nd</sup> place since no team has more than three, sure big-time scorers. For Oak Harbor two-time champ Magrum, runner-up Tank, and placer Witt have been doing it for four years. Magrum needs to continue to beat Foster. Tank has to be at just the right weight class, and Witt has to outdo himself at the rough 171# weight class. If the freshman Miller is as good as I think he is at 119#, and Cramer, Stone, Konner Witt, and Baker can help they'll be hard to separate from the runner-up trophy.
3. Eastwood

They, too, have three primary scorers in state champ Cubberly, Roth, and Foster. Two of those are likely to go head-to-head with the Oak Harbor stars and need to gain at least a split. If Flores can have one, great hot weekend, and Hoffman and Hale pitch in, second place could belong to them.
4. Walsh Jesuit

They potentially, have four boys who could be in the top three. Skonieczny and DiJulius look to be finalists, while Bailey should place very high. They need Cheatham to have a personal best weekend and score well at the tough 160# class. After that the long shots like Hurley, Ciraldo, and DeRoia have to pitch in.

5. University School State runners-up Inghram and Wukie have moved up some weight classes, but still look effective. Mills is a real load, but 171# is very tough. If the freshman Roddy and Hightower can help, they'll be in the hunt.
6. Columbus DeSales I see two champions in Hiles and Vaughan and that's a lot of points to start off with. Add in good performances by Canty and McGovern and some scoring by Whitehead, Bernardo, and Stygler and the new regime will be off to a great start..
7. Claymont If only they could round up a few more Gar(a)brandts Graham would have to start worrying. They need to get the first three weight classes set up with state champ Cody Garbrandt in top form. Add Dynes and Regula in the middle and yet another Garbrandt and Woods toward the end and you could score a lot of points. Two keys would be getting Ditcher deep into the tournament and Jackson to score there. If all this happens, they're right in the battle.
8. Aurora This is strictly a three-man team, but those three are very good. Mitch and Papesh could both be finalists, with Painter also scoring big. The key is to get Painter at just the right weight class.
9. Ravenna The surprise state runner-up last year, they just might fool us again. Dukes could be a finalist and Meyer is very good at the not-so-strong 125# class. If Hayes suddenly reverts to powerhouse form at 103# they'll have a Top Ten look. After that Hager has to help.
10. Highland They have some excellent wrestlers at just the right weight classes. Mirman and Young lead off the first two weight classes with tremendous power and Houska can close at 215#. Add in Timoteo in the middle and get help from some of the others and they could challenge for the top five.