

Division I

103

PROJECTED CHAMPION: KORY MINES (MAPLE HTS.)

Top Contenders

2	Ralston (Lorain Southview)	15	Labry (Twinsburg)
3	DiCamillo (St. Ignatius)	16	Marsico (Pickerington North)
4	Gray (Wadsworth)	17	Griffith (Medina)
5	Ague (Fitch)	18	Victor (Mentor)
6	Hauser (Brush)	19	Windsor (Wayne)
7	Terry (Butler)	20	Lyon (Massillon Perry)
8	Selmon (Princeton)	21	Moore/Barber (St. Edward)
9	Zingale (Mayfield)	22	Campbell (Harrison)
10	Garcia (Clay)	23	Strope (Lancaster)
11	Baran (Brecksville)	24	Fox (Western Brown)
12	Dillon (Boardman)	25	Hauber (Central Crossing)
13	Murdock (Coffman)	26	Fiorucci (Olentangy)
14	Clolinger (Amelia)		

I'm getting a little worried about the situation at 103#. Mines, as of this writing, still hasn't made 103# and it looks like it is a much tougher cut than anticipated. Still, I expect him to compete at this weight class and, once there, he remains the favorite. A two-time state placer (6th and 2nd) he has the combination of strength, speed, and experience that most younger 103-pounders will find difficult to overcome. Last year he was 43-2 losing to Sako in the finals by a deceptively large 9-1 score. That was a bout that hinged on some mat management decisions that failed to take into account Sako's strengths. Mines has, in the past, already defeated many of the best returning 103's (Ralston, Gray, Ague, etc.), but they were often relatively close battles. With this weight issue Mines may be vulnerable early in tournaments so he'll need to be alert to this possibility. He and Ralston should be in different half-brackets at Columbus which could work to Mines' advantage. This year at 112# Mines has lost twice - - outmuscled by Robinson in a dual and to Westfall at Kenston. The Northeast District has won six consecutive titles at this weight class. Mines should make it seven.

Ralston heads what amounts to a two-man district at Mentor and should be Mines' fiercest challenger for the title. He was a state semi-finalist last year, but then dropped a 6-4 decision to Mines. He quickly snapped back with shutout wins over Boehm and Manley to clinch 3rd place. He has been at 103# all year and won at Riverside, Southview, and Fairfield –generally, winning handily though Dronzek and Graham kept it close. With district titles he and Mines will be seeded apart setting up a possible Saturday night confrontation. The second top contender here is the freshman DiCamillo. A junior high state champion he has been a force from the start. He placed at the Ironman and then won titles at Brecksville and the CIT. He is a small 103-pounder—a problem likely to become exacerbated by the weight allowances – but has tremendous technique. His lengthy youth experience has provided excellent mat management skills making him tough to defeat. I think the powerful Garcia will have the best shot at the third qualifying berth, but that 6th place finish at the GMVWA is worrisome. However, he did win two district bouts at this weight class last year. The last

qualifier could come from almost any direction. I'm looking at Victor as a strong possibility along with the fast improving Moore or Barber from St. Edward.

Unlike Ralston, Mines exits a very deep and strong district at this weight class. I count ten quality candidates meaning there will be sharp district struggles from the very first round. Gray has been outstanding. He was 6th at the Ironman and 3rd at Brecksville and was very good at the Ohio Duals. He was one bout from States last year. Ague was a state qualifier last year, but is still getting use to the weight cut. He has been better on second days of tourneys, but he'll have to be sharp from the "get-go" to qualify. He was 7th at Brecksville and 3rd at the Top Gun as he rounds into form. State alternate Zingale was 2nd at Brecksville, but only 5th at the Top Gun (despite beating Ague). Zingale, a senior, is not as athletic as some of the other top boys are, but he knows how to win, and given a lead he nurses it beautifully. Hauser is out of the limelight, but he is very, very good and should capture a state berth. A "mystery man" to me is state junior high champ Dillon. I have not seen him and there are wildly divergent views as to his ability. I need help here since he may be way better than I have ranked him. That leaves Baran and Labry - - the finalists at the Dies - - probably looking forward to next year, though they would have solid chances for Columbus if they were at the Mentor District. I like Griffith, but he and Lyon will have to pull off two big upsets to qualify. This is a brutal district and the four survivors will be battle-hardened for States.

In stark contrast there is very little depth at Darby. Murdock would seem to be the best following his 8th place result at Medina, but that was not an overly strong weight class. The younger Marsico has had some successes while Hauber won at Franklin Hts. This district may well be beefed up at this weight class by the addition of southwestern boys like Terry or Windsor, but that remains in the future. Perhaps, Tiffin champ Strobe or Fiorucci will make a difference.

It will not be an overpowering field at Fairfield, but there are some solid contenders. State qualifier Terry is back at this weight after finishing 4th at Fairfield last year. He was 2nd at the GMVWA losing only to Brascetta and defeating Selmon, 8-5. Tack in the win at Fairmont and he probably is the best here. Selmon, the SWOCA winner, is a potential district finalist with strong pinning ability. He has made rapid progress (e.g. losing by fall to Terry last year compared to 8-5 this year). Fox, a 6-5 loser to Terry, Clolinger and Campbell are other real possibilities. Campbell was 3rd at the Mayfield Big 8 and the SWOCA, but was swamped by Clolinger. Windsor, 4th at the GMVWA and 1st at Xenia could also be a threat. With good state draws we could see a couple of low placers out of this group.

112

PROJECTED CHAMPION: GUS SAKO (ST. EDWARD)

Top Contenders

2	Robinson (St. Ignatius)	14	Birr (Mayfield)
3	Squire (Wadsworth)	15	Higgins (Central Crossing)
4	Inchaurregui (Lorain Southview)	16	Adelman (Hoover)
5	Manley (Holland Springfield)	17	Wright (Lima Senior)
6	Boehm (Watkins Memorial)	18	Caston (Sandusky)
7	Polley (Maple Hts.)	19	Keeling (St. Xavier)
8	DiSabato (Davidson)	20	Frehmeyer (Parma)
9	MacVeigh (Moeller)	21	Turek (Madison)
10	Martin (Toledo St. Francis)	22	Nein (Reynoldsburg)
11	Young (Mentor)	23	Schultz (Elder)
12	Regan (Miamisburg)	24	Vinas (Twinsburg)
13	Artrip (Mason)	25	Sarnecki (Loveland)
		26	Boyd (Marion Franklin)

I anticipate a fierce four-way battle for top honors at this weight class - - a battle that will be exacerbated by the geography of the participants. Let's first take a look at this top quartet and then sketch out some of the strategic implications.

Sako, now a junior, was behind Jamie Clark his freshman year (although he probably had state placement potential) and then won it all last year at 103#. He did so easily ripping through districts and states with 5 falls or tech falls, two majors, and one convincing four point victory. It was a very impressive and dominating performance. It has not been nearly so easy this year at 112#. One often finds that the nine pound jump to bigger and, often older, boys a significant hurdle. He has lost twice to Robinson, by one and two point decisions, and once to Squire, again by one point. He was 7th at the Ironman and 1st at Medina at 119#, a relatively pedestrian weight class. Still, this is a smart, canny wrestler who knows how to win when it counts. He'll be making the adjustments needed to win and it's a question of their success that will determine the outcome. If so, it will not nearly be as easy as last year.

Robinson, also a junior, has made a marvelous comeback after essentially a year wasted by injury and illness. As a ninth-grader he was a brilliant 3rd at 103# - - winning five bouts by big scores and losing only that highly controversial bout to Jamie Clark in the quarter-finals by one point. Then last year, as mentioned, he wrestled infrequently, struggled at 112#, and moved to 119# where he showed flashes of brilliance before losing his first two bouts at States. This year he has been exceptional. He beat Sako and Squire at the Ironman while finishing 4th, defeated Sako and Mines in duals, and was 3rd at Brecksville - - losing an overtime tiebreaker to state champ Stieber in the semi-finals and defeating state champion Mitch for 3rd. He looks so strong and confident that he will be difficult to beat.

Squire is another one of those terrific youth wrestlers that Wadsworth so regularly showcases. He was 2nd and 3rd at the last two Junior High States, both times competing in sensational weight classes - - so everyone knew how good he was going to be. He was 6th at the Ironman, losing three excruciatingly close bouts including one to Robinson, and defeating Mitch, and 2nd at Brecksville again beating Mitch, but losing to Stieber. His victory over Sako won the state dual meet tournament, and he seems to have the steepest learning curve of this quartet. He'll win state titles.

Inchaurregui is the least well known of this group. A junior high place winner two years ago he stepped right into Southview's difficult schedule with 40 + wins and a 7th place state finish at 112#. He has lost only once this year and has dominated a wide selection of competitors. One significant issue is that he has not wrestled any of the other top contenders. That could prove to be a real negative in the battles to come.

The brackets should be interesting. Sako and Inchaurregui exit the same sectional and then meet up with Robinson at the Mentor in what will be a brutally tough district (especially if state placer Manley remains at this weight class). Should they finish in the top three spots then the champion will have a 67% chance of being away from the other two and Squire at the state meet. That would be a significant advantage. Still, I see Sako better than Inchaurregui and beating Squire the next time they meet (no more big moves). Robinson has beaten him. That is true, but like Lenhard years ago against Pflug, I think he will get him when it counts.

We've already discussed Sako, Robinson, and Inchaurregui at Mentor, but there is even more talent there. Manley, 4th last year at 103#, will also head in that direction and should get that fourth qualifying berth. Sako beat him 17-2 at last year's district so there is a gap between them. Manley was 2nd at Medina (Sako at 119#) losing only to Boehm. Also back are state qualifier Frehmeyer and state alternate Caston. I don't see either of them challenging the top trio, but they could well unseat Manley. State qualifier Wright is something of an enigma - - he can be brilliant and then not nearly as good the next time. Last year he won four consolation bouts, including the critical one over Caston, to qualify. He is a long-shot to do it again this year. I also like the short, powerful Young who has been a consistent placer this year including wins at Solon and North Coast. He is just at the wrong weight class this year. Long term watch for Martin, a junior high state runner-up last year who finished second to Isaac Jordon and ahead of Squire. He will likely be a huge factor next year.

There is not nearly this depth of talent at Perry. Squire leads the way with state qualifier Polley probably next best. Polley looked huge as a 119-pounder at Hudson so he will be a mammoth 112-pounder. He had a difficult state meet last year losing to the excellent Herrington in that ultimate overtime and then after a victory losing to McNulty. He has been at 119# all year finishing 2nd at Hudson (to Mitch) and 3rd at Kenston. Birr, 8th at Brecksville, has suddenly gotten hot finishing 2nd at the Big 8 and Top Gun. Still, I remember Young beating him decisively at Brecksville. Adelman won at North Canton but lost to Birr at the Top Gun. That gives us Turek and Vinas as other possibilities.

There are three returning state qualifiers at Darby all of whom have low placement potential. Boehm is still on top after winning last year's district at 103# and finishing 6th in Columbus. He defeated Manley, 3-2, to win at Medina and the only loss I've seen was to his old workout partner, Spencer Pierce. He'll have to hustle to place higher than last year. I rate DiSabato about even with Boehm (he lost to him 3-2 at last year's district). He failed to place at Brecksville defeating Vinas but losing to

Mitch and Birr. Higgins was 7th at Brecksville losing to Robinson and Young but beating Birr. The fourth berth will be a battle with Nein, last year's state alternate, the favorite with Boyd and Hunter (Pickerington Central) in pursuit.

There are no returning placers at Fairfield, but there are three wrestlers with past state experience. Regan, Artrip and Keeling all went 1-2 in Columbus after strong district performances at both Fairfield (the latter two at 103#) and Darby (Regan at 112#). While this trio has a leg up on a return trip to States I think state alternate MacVeigh may have moved ahead of them. He was 1st at the SWOCA defeating both Artrip and Keeling, and finished 3rd at the CIT. Regan was 3rd at GMVWA (losing to Jordan) and 2nd at North Canton (to Adelman). Two other possibilities here are Schultz' and Sarnecki who met for 5th place at last year's district. Schultz won three bouts at Brecksville and placed at the SWOCA and is probably moving ahead of Sarnecki.

119

PROJECTED CHAMPION: JAMIE CLARK (ST. EDWARD)

Top Contenders

2	McNulty (Mayfield)	14	McSorley (Edgewood)
3	Corrill (Moeller)	15	Urias (Clay)
4	Bolger (Strongsville)	16	Long (St. Ignatius)
5	Farber (St. Xavier)	17	Kocol (West Carrollton)
6	Hannan (Massillon Perry)	18	Marcial (Southview)
7	Gray (Wadsworth)	19	Smith (Mt. Vernon)
8	Jones (Beavercreek)	20	Bable (Firestone)
9	Riegle (Springboro)	21	Williamson (Miamisburg)
10	Pasquale (Boardman)	22	O'Conner (Toledo St. John)
11	Feller (Hoover)	23	Cochrane (Troy)
12	Kunzi (Watkins Memorial)	24	McMahon (Cuyahoga Falls)
13	Jordan (Teays Valley)	25	Flaglor (Hayes)

After his pair of titanic struggles the last two years Jamie Clark should have a far easier time winning a state title this year. Two years ago he lost to Sammy White in a controversial overtime title bout at 103# and then last year at 112# beat White, again in overtime, on a penalty point. In both these bouts Clark was by far the more aggressive wrestler with an internal engine that never seems to sputter or tire. Last year he won his first three state bouts by a combined score of 60-17 with most of the opponents' points coming on give-up escapes. This year he remains undefeated - - winning at the Ironman, but missing Medina due to injury. There are six wrestlers at this class who have placed at the state level. They're all good, solid competitors, but I think Clark is at least six points better than any of them.

The Mentor District appears to be particularly weak at this weight class. There are no returning state qualifiers (except for Clark) and I'm thinking that if I was one of those excess 112's I'd have to

consider a move up. I'm guessing Urias, Marcial, Long, and O'Conner might be possibilities, but without an infusion of talent from either 112# or 125# this will be a weak contingent.

The opposite problem, an excess of excellent 119's, confronts us at Perry. There are four returning state place winners and another quartet of serious challengers. McNulty, who I see as best here, had a great freshman campaign winning over 40 bouts and finishing 5th at Columbus. At the state meet he had some big wins over Farber, Polley, Inchaurregui, and Bolger. He has had some injury problems this year and missed both Brecksville and the Top Gun. How this time off will impact him is unclear. Bolger has also had injury issues after his 6th place finish at Columbus last year. He was injured in the Solon finals and has just recently returned. That places uncertainty very much in the mix at Perry. Pasquale was 8th two years ago while Hannan duplicated that feat last March. Hannan was 3rd at Medina while Pasquale was 2nd at the Top Gun - - although at a relatively weak weight class. That provides something of a dilemma - - the two top choices have had injuries and the next two haven't yet been dominating. That leaves Feller, injured at the Top Gun, and state alternate Gray as real possibilities with the onrushing Bable and McMahan also in the mix. I think McNulty and Bolger move on to Columbus with Hannan and Gray also qualifying.

The Darby District is an amalgamation of three Columbus area sectionals and one from the Dayton area. The Dayton area actually has two sectionals and so coaches choose in some arcane manner whether they want to compete at the Fairfield or Darby District. My guess is that those with reasonable 119's will want to head to Darby. At the moment there are no returning state qualifiers from the Columbus area which leads off with state alternate Kunzi and follows up with Jordan, Smith, and Flaglor. Kunzi was 5th at Medina and last year was a district semi-finalist at 112#. However Flaglor pinned him at Elgin in the finals roiling the waters. Jordan won the Porter, St. Clairsville and Franklin Hts. and went 1-2 at last year's district. Smith won two district bouts last year and won at Mt. Vernon. I expect that a couple of the good 119's from the Southwest (who we'll discuss in the next paragraph will be at Darby).

I think there are eight state caliber 119's at Fairfield (or Darby). It seems that two-time state qualifier Corrill has stepped up to take the top spot. He was 7th last year at 103#, but easily won at the SWOCA beating both Farber and Jones by seven. He was 7th at the Ironman including some big wins, but was decked by Clark. Farber is a two-time placer (7th and 8th) who was also 7th at Brecksville and 4th at the SWOCA. I've always seen him being near the top of the state podium and it's his last chance this year. McSorley, Kocol, and Riegle are all returning state qualifiers who went a combined 1-6 last year. I think Riegle might be the best of this group with both McSorley and Kocol at risk. Jones was 2nd at the SWOCA and 3rd at the Top Gun and I would rate him above this trio. Other possibilities are Cochrane and Williamson, but they have to be very good (or at Darby) to have much of a chance.

125

PROJECTED CHAMPION: SAMMY WHITE (MASSILLON PERRY)

Top Contenders

2	Lawrence (Westlake)	14	Bucca (Brecksville)
3	McCombs (Marysville)	15	Weiskittel (Oak Hills)
4	Vanderhoff (Marion Harding)	16	Huffman (Maple Hts.)
5	Shivener (Springboro)	17	Walker (Northmont)
6	Hammer (Moeller)	18	Carlone (Mayfield)
7	Wenger (Wadsworth)	19	Marzec (Toledo St. Francis)
8	Marsico (Pickerington North)	20	Seiple (Coffman)
9	Cobos (St. Edward)	21	Egnor (Elyria)
10	McIntire (Lakota West)	22	Pickleheimer (Glen Este)
11	Speelman (Mansfield Madison)	23	Rich (Davidson)
12	Skilton (Mentor)	24	Irwin (Anthony Wayne)
13	Pitts (Darby)	25	Brunner (North Olmsted)

Like the previous weight class this is one that should be dominated by a single wrestler - - former state champion Sammy White. I never agreed with the move last year that had White drop to 112# to battle Clark when he was wrestling so brilliantly at 119#. Meaning absolutely no disrespect to Garrett Henry who wrestled wonderfully at Columbus, I think White would have been the solid favorite had he remained at 119#. This year should see his second state title though I'm nagged by his lack of aggressiveness against top-rated foes. In both his battles with Clark he was strangely passive and waiting to react rather than attack---costing him, in the end the fatal stalling point. This year at the Ironman he won two of his earlier bouts 3-1 and 3-2 and in the final Neibert did most of the attacking. It looked like wrestling he was in that "not to lose" mentality, ironic, when he has so many weapons at his disposal. While I did not see Medina my understanding is that the aggressive Sammy White showed up. That will not be news that will thrill the rest of this field.

White should have few problems at Perry. No one here has ever reached Columbus so the last three berths will be filled by state newcomers. I look for Wenger (yes, I know it's a tough cut) to have a breakout tournament and qualify rather easily with Bucca and Huffman as two other possibilities. Carlone has really picked up the pace and he must be considered. He was 2nd at the Big 8, 5th at the Top Gun, but finished behind Bucca at Brecksville. Again, we may see some migration from the crowded fields at 119# and 130# in this district.

There are a lot of interesting possibilities at Mentor. The key player here is state runner-up Nick Lawrence. I think he is the best 125-pounder in Division I not named Sammy White, but he may feel he has a better shot at 130# where there is no dominant player. I'll rank him here knowing that he and White would be seeded apart, and where he has far less chance of falling victim to an upset. State placer Vanderhoff has had another fine year (one loss) and should qualify again at this weight class. He won at Marion Harding and Brookhaven and is good in close bouts. State placer Cobos returns and he needs to bounce back from a 1-2 performance at the Ohio Duals---losing to Wenger and Hammer. Skilton and Speelman are right on the periphery. The former won at North Coast (over

a three-time Georgia champion) was 3rd at Solon, and 4th at Brecksville. The latter took the Gorman easily and won at North Canton as well. Add in Marzec, Irwin, and Egnor and it's a very solid weight class. It looks like Lawrence and Vanderhoff, for sure, with, maybe, Cobos and Speelman sneaking past Skilton for the last two spots.

McCombs has been red-hot for Marysville. Undefeated this year he continues to win by a lot of different methods. He was 8th last year---losing early and late to Fuller, but squeezing two wins in the middle. At Brecksville he won big---tech falling Skillton 16-1--- and he won little beating Skonieczny, 4-3 in the finals. McCombs was clearly not his best in that latter bout as Skonieczny did all the attacking, but McCombs' masterful defense preserved the victory. He will not, however, want to wrestle like that very often. He also won by technical fall over his strongest rival in Columbus, Travante Pitts. Pitts, also a returning state qualifier, had a terrible state draw getting Genetin and Harger back-to-back. Also returning is state qualifier Marsico who upset Vanderhoff at Wapakoneta. That is easily his biggest win of the year and vaults him into placement consideration. Add in Seiple, Rich, and, maybe, somebody from the Southwest and this will be a strong competition.

I've felt that Shivener had super potential after watching him win a junior high state title two years ago. As a freshman he won the Darby District and went to the state meet with a 38-1 record. However, it was a quick "two and out" at Columbus. He has missed much of this year, but he is such an outstanding talent that shouldn't be much of an issue. State alternates Hammer and McIntire are also here with the former winning the SWOCA over the latter. Hammer has been solid all year defeating Cobos, for example, and should qualify. McIntyre will have to contend with Weiskittel - - 2nd at the GMVWA and 3rd at the SWOCA - - and Walker who can be a scoring machine. He won at Troy and was 3rd at the GMVWA. Factor in Pickleheimer and Morgan as possible upset choices.

130

PROJECTED CHAMPION: SHAWN FAYETTE (MIAMISBURG)

Top Contenders

2	Mattingly (Uniontown Lake)	15	Hill (Mt. Vernon)
3	Sanders (Central Crossing)	16	Hoyt (St. Ignatius)
4	McHenry (Elyria)	17	Meuer (Medina)
5	McLaughlin (Clay)	18	Marrone (Parma)
6	Welsh (Stow)	19	R. Moore (Butler)
7	Dailey (Massillon Perry)	20	Grame (Berea)
8	Davis (Lakota West)	21	Yurkovich (North Royalton)
9	Van Curren (St. Edward)	22	Stradling (Troy)
10	Foore (Wadsworth)	23	Johnson (Twinsburg)
11	Sage (Fairmont)	24	Hutchison (Eastlake North)
12	Williamson (Princeton)	25	Blanchard (Sandusky)
13	Allen (Reynoldsburg)	26	Ballou (western Hills)
14	Ruffing (St. Xavier)	27	Holtman (Moeller)

After the brilliant field that we saw last year at this weight class--Horner, Squire, Sulzer, Fields, etc.--we have a far more pedestrian group in 2009. It's a weight class waiting for someone to have a hot weekend in Columbus and take home the first place trophy. A weight class where the big upset, the unexpected participant, or the lightly regarded underdog cashes in big.

Fayette, only a junior has had an interesting career. As a freshman he went 1-2 at the state meet losing to a pair of eventual state champs, Squire and Henry. Last year he won the district title at Darby and then won three close bouts before succumbing to Tommy Pretty in the finals. It's interesting to note that in his four state bouts he scored a total of nine points--and gave up eight. This year he won at North Canton defeating Sommer in the finals 2-0, and handling Mattingly 6-3. He was 2nd at the GMVWA losing a close 3-2 decision to Felipe Martinez. He has, it seems, mastered the art of winning the close, low-scoring battle.

I'll assume for reasons of personal convenience that Fayette returns to Darby. If so, he faces a somewhat limited field, but with two returning state qualifiers. The first of these, Austin Sanders, is very good. He was 2nd to Fayette at Darby last year losing 4-0. He drew Mattingly in the first round and ended with only one state win when you need two to place. This year he won at Franklin Hts. At Brecksville he defeated state qualifier Foore and state runner-up Neff before losing to McHenry in the semi-finals and defaulting to 6th. He was undefeated at the Ohio Duals soundly beating McHenry this time, 7-1, and VanCurren. State qualifier Hill is also back after going 0-2 at Columbus last year. He won at Mt. Vernon and was 7th at the tough GMVWA. That would leave one opening which should go to Allen or maybe, the young Luft. This could change if state qualifier Riegler decides to compete here rather than at the expected 119#.

There is all kinds of depth at Fairfield although some of whom I'll mention will eventually migrate to Darby. There are four returning state qualifiers in this congregation of talent none of whom placed. Sage and Williamson were at 125# last year, but only the former won a bout at Columbus. Sage won handily over Moore at Fairmont and was 5th at the GMVWA losing to Fayette and McLaughlin. Williamson has transferred from Colerain to Princeton from whence he placed 4th at the GMVWA losing badly to Martinez and McLaughlin. Davis was a freshman qualifier at 119# after a very fine 9th grade year, but lost two close bouts on Thursday. He's had a busy sophomore year. He was 3rd at the SWOCA defeating Williamson, 8-7, in the consolation final. At Brecksville he lost early to Tessari, but came back strong losing to Vaughan for 4th. Finally Stradling qualified at 112# but drew White in the first round and was eliminated on Thursday. He was 2nd at Troy, but failed to place at the GMVWA. That still leaves state alternate Moore, district 6th placer Ballou and Holtman as possibilities. However, the wrestler to watch is Ruffing, the MVP at the SWOCA and 3rd at the CIT. He drew Tessari early but fought back for 7th at Brecksville. He should make waves at this district.

Operating under the assumption that Lawrence will wrestle at 125# there is still some solid talent at Mentor. McHenry was a state quarter-finalist losing a close 8-6 bout to three-time state runner-up Ryan Fields. He then won two consolation bouts to finish 6th. This year he lost to Lawrence in overtime at North Coast, and was 2nd at Brecksville losing only to Tessari. He had two wins at the Ohio Duals but Sanders beat him 7-1. McLaughlin has had a big year winning at Solon and finishing a strong 3rd at the GMVWA. Hoyt and state qualifier Grame are possibilities for the last two spots, but the freshman VanCurren has rung up some notable victories lately--including wins over Foore and Holtman at the Ohio Duals. Parma has not had a state champion since 1968 (Bobby Mason), but the

junior Marrone may have long-term plans in that direction. He was a state alternate last year losing a heartbreaking 1-0 go-to-state bout. This will be a good weight class to set the foundation for next year Blanchard has wrestled at least once at 125#, but I think he may find this one a better strategic fit.

Mattingly has had a sensational career. He is already a three-time state qualifier and was 4th as a sophomore and 3rd last year at 125#. He met the eventual champ Pretty in a quarter-final contest losing 11-9 and that was the only difficult bout Pretty had on his way to the title. I am assuming he will eventually decide to wrestle at this weight class and for which he would have a reasonable shot of winning. He was at this weight at North Canton finishing 3rd and losing 6-3 to Fayette--a not insurmountable margin. He was at 135 at Medina losing to Ian Miller very early and then coming back to get 4th--losing to Salupo, 6-3, not an insurmountable margin. At any rate he's the best at this district. State placer Foore has not been as sharp as I anticipated. He failed to place at the Ironman and Brecksville, but did win at the Searcy. He lost all three of his Ohio Duals, two of them to freshmen. One of those was to the junior high state champ Zach Dailey who is very impressive. He won three bouts at the Ironman before running into Tessari and that included a win over Sommer. At Medina he lost a 3-2 semi-final decision to Sommer and finished a solid 3rd. Welsh, the often overlooked 130-pounder from Stow, won at Hudson over state runner-up Lawrence and can't be overlooked here while Yurkovich, Johnson, and Hutchison are all solid. I think Meuer might be the "sleeper" pick here based on a very solid season. Even his losses have been very close. This is a very crowded district where some may chose to move up a class.

135

PROJECTED CHAMPION: ANTHONY SALUPO (ST. EDWARD)

Top Contenders

2	Calarco (North Royalton)	15	Jefferies (Watkins Memorial)
3	Gallagher (St. Xavier)	16	Gyorfi (Lorain Southview)
4	Parra (Barberton)	17	Hillock (Massillon Perry)
5	Languis (Scioto)	18	Range (Brush)
6	G. Moore (Beavercreek)	19	Burrel (Shaker Hts.)
7	Rojas (Fremont Ross)	20	Packard (Brecksville)
8	Shepherd (Mason)	21	Scarberry (Northmont)
9	Price (Masillon)	22	Cornell (Nordononia)
10	Channel (Central Crossing)	23	Merk (Oak Hills)
11	Dempsey (Westlake)	24	Clutter (Westland)
12	Gordon (Wadsworth)	25	McClatcher (Mentor)
13	Burkett (Westerville North)	26	Smith (Pickerington Central)
14	Jacobs (Miamisburg)	27	Castilleja (Clay)

This is another non-descript weight class that provides solid opportunity for as many as a dozen possible contenders. If Mattingly goes at 130# and Calarco is unable to surmount his injury the playing field here is very level. It would also provide St. Edward, in the form of Anthony Salupo a great opportunity to pick up a large number of team points.

When you look at this weight class without Mattingly and Calarco your first question is likely to be “where did everybody go?” These somewhat understaffed weight classes show up more frequently now than they did twenty years ago, primarily because of weight testing procedures. Two decades ago, when it became clear that an opportunity had arisen some of the 140’s would make the steep cut and hope to retain their strength. Now that is impossible to do since who could have foreseen such a situation in November and acted upon it.

Salupo will not have it all his own way at Mentor. After a year it is human nature to forget about how big a surprise he was. He came into this district with nine losses and lost the first night in the quarter-finals. He then won four consolation bouts to take 3rd. He had a terrible draw at States, but defeated the favored Harger, 4-3, and the heavily favored Genetin, 6-5, before losing to Fayette and finishing 5th. He was 7th at the Ironman after losing a 15-14 quarter-final bout and was 3rd at Medina--and I’m guessing that he slammed Powers in the semi-finals and that was the loss. Powers forfeited in the finals. At the Ohio Duals he crushed the accomplished Channel, 16-3, but barely beat the athletic Gordon 12-11 (more on him later). There is one very good state alternate looking to take that next step at this weight class. I saw Rojas a couple of years ago and thought he had a lot of talent and it is now beginning to be realized. He was a district semi-finalist last year, but the Lakewood connection of Palmer and Duffy frustrated his qualification plans. This year he won at Fremont Ross and Tiffin in crushing fashion, but it would have been nice to see him wrestle a tougher schedule. My third choice is Dempsey who was injured after a 2nd at the North Coast to Henline in overtime. He should come back strong at this weight class. Somehow the brilliant lightweights often obscure Gyorfi at Lorain Southview. He’s my choice for the fourth spot. After this it’s solid folks like Burrel, McClatcher, and, maybe, Castilleja.

There are three solid placement opportunities at Fairfield. They have traded victories so it is a little confusing. Gallagher, the defending district champion returns at the same weight class. He was a state quarter-finalist losing to Duffy and then Mencini to finish 7th. Moore was the district champ at Darby at 130#, but went 1-2 and failed to place. Shepherd, two years ago, pulled off a huge upset at 112# downing state runner-up Genetin in the quarter-finals and finishing 6th. Last year he lost two Saturday afternoon bouts at 119# and ended up as the state alternate. They all met this year at the SWOCA. Shepherd struck first taking out Gallagher in the semi-finals 6-4, but Moore had the last laugh taking the title 10-6 with Gallagher finishing 3rd. The next weekend Gallagher took 3rd at Brecksville after losing in a rat-tail and winning 8 consecutive consolation bouts. Shepherd also lost early--at Medina--to Powers, and Mattingly eliminated him before the placement rounds. Moore made it to the semi-finals, but losses to Miller and Mattingly pushed him to 5th. I’m looking at a Jacobs or Scarberry as a possible fourth qualifier, with Merk an outside shot.

There are three strong returning state qualifiers at Darby, but the one I like best is Languis. He was 7th last year at 130# losing to Sulzer and Calarco but beating Moore. This year he was 3rd at the Top Gun losing only to David Taylor and defeating Moore again. Channel is a two-time state qualifier, but missed out last year. He was 4th at Brecksville, but lost badly to Salupo at the duals. He deserves to place this year since he has certainly paid his dues. Burkett was two and out last year at Columbus and will face tough competition again this year. He did not place at Medina losing to Moore in the quarter-finals. Jefferies looks like the next best though he did place higher than Burkett at Medina. Clutter and Smith are other thoughts.

The big mysteries are at Perry. I've ranked Mattingly at 130#, but I believe he has, perhaps, a somewhat higher probability of winning a title here. Yes, I know Salupo, beat him by three at Medina but that was after Mattingly had wrestled those interminable consolation rounds--remember he lost early there. Also recall that Mattingly defeated Salupo twice last year on, perhaps, a more even playing field. Meanwhile, what do we do about Calarco. The coaches think he might be back soon (as of 12-30), but how will all this impact his performance. I ranked him as if he had been perfectly healthy all year coming off his great 5th place finish last year--great and rather unexpected. Parra has an interesting history. He was 3rd two years ago at 130# after making the semi-finals and losing to eventual champ Palivoda. Then last year after finishing 2nd to Squire at sectional he had to drop out of district competition. This year he's back, winning the Dies and possibly setting himself for up for state placement. State qualifier Hillock is also here in a good position if the top duo are absent while Range, Packard and, possibly, Cornell if at this weight class can be good. A third mystery might be Loudon Gordon. I saw him last year and he is a terrific athlete. He has been part-time at 135, but placed at the Searcy and lost 12-11 to Salupo and defeated Hillock 12-4 at the Ohio Duals. Keep an eye on him. Finally, it appears Wes Price will wrestle. If that be the case he could easily qualify here.

140

PROJECTED CHAMPION: COLLIN PALMER (ST. EDWARD)

Top Contenders

- | | | | |
|----|------------------------------|----|--------------------------------|
| 2 | Zivcic (Mentor) | 14 | Giffin (Harrison) |
| 3 | Sasfy (Reynoldsburg) | 15 | Luft (Teays Valley) |
| 4 | Comar (Twinsburg) | 16 | Ferguson (Holland Springfield) |
| 5 | McCormick (Kenmore) | 17 | Wirtz (Marysville) |
| 6 | Grandominico (Olentangy) | 18 | Dietsch (Toledo St. Francis) |
| 7 | Ball/Brandenburg (Wadsworth) | 19 | McGrain (Olmsted Falls) |
| 8 | Yetzer (Mansfield Madison) | 20 | Clouser-Simmelink (Fairmont) |
| 9 | Foster (Massillon Perry) | 21 | Wimer (Central Crossing) |
| 10 | Hodge (Bedford) | 22 | Nelson (Gahanna-Lincoln) |
| 11 | Fehring (Glen Este) | 23 | Morgan (Amherst) |
| 12 | Peterson (Fitch) | 24 | Mialma (Lakaota-East) |
| 13 | Myers (Butler) | 25 | Rieman (Hayes) |

After Genghis Khan unified the Mongol tribes in what was a monumental struggle he set his eyes upon the riches of China. His game plan was simple he would besiege each of the major cities with his army until all were captured and he was the undisputed emperor. He used an interesting psychological ploy. When first they surrounded a city he would make his headquarters in a brilliant white tent. This let the city fathers know that if they immediately surrendered no real harm would come to their community except that they would have to pay enormous tribute to Genghis and provide him with soldiers. If a few days passed with no surrender he moved into a red tent that signified that when the city was captured all of the men would be killed, most of the women and children sold into slavery and only a few citizens would be left to manage the city. If there was still no action Genghis moved into a black tent which meant that once captured, everyone would be put to the sword and the town razed to the ground.

It seems to me that since the Ironman, Collin Palmer has pretty much had the black tent set up next to the mat. He had all falls at Medina and has regained his aggressive, pin-driven style. He will be a heavy favorite (along with David Taylor) to become the first to win seven state titles combining three junior high state championships with four high school trophies. Overall, I have him at 128-3 that includes a high percentage of falls. He has never lost after the first week of the season and has never been defeated by an Ohio wrestler. I've always liked Palmer's wrestling which shows a hunger for falls and a smile on his face. The bout I remember best was his state title match against the undefeated Ryan Fields in his freshman year. In 188 seconds he was at his brilliant best in totally overwhelming an exceptional foe. His only real competition would arise if former state champion Brad Squire decides to compete at 140#, but why would he do that?

Palmer heads a very good district. An unexpected factor is Zivcic who told me at Brecksville he'd drop and has done exactly that. He was very good at 145# winning at North Coast and Solon and finishing 2nd only to Habat at Brecksville. He should be a powerhouse at this class. Also here is state placer Yetzer who was 7th last year while winning 44 bouts. This year he won at the Madison Classic and then was 2nd at the Gorman (to Pfister) and at North Canton (to McKee). He'll be looking to place higher this year. State alternate Ferguson is the favorite for the last state ticket. He was 4th at the Medina and undefeated at Springfield. There are a trio of solid contenders looking to break apart this top quartet starting with Dietsch, McGrain, and Morgan. Dietsch was a district semi-finalist last year, but was outscored by a combined 21-3 in his two go-to-state bouts. That won't happen this year. Morgan and McGrain had two district wins last year and have built on that this year - - Morgan winning at Avon Lake and McGrain placing at Medina and the Dies.

There are six excellent wrestlers for the four allocated state berths out of Perry--and each has a bit of a back story. Comar was 4th last year at 119# and has moved up four weight classes. It hasn't made any difference with regard to results or his complaints about making weight. He won at Solon and the Dies and was 3rd at Brecksville after being beaten by Sasfy in the quarter-finals. He is better on second days of tournaments. McCormick, only a junior, is already a two-time state qualifier who has gone 1-2 each time. He started the year at 145#, but recently dropped. He won at Smithville, but was 2nd at Solon to Zivcic and 2nd at the Dies to Comar, both wrestlers he can expect to meet again. At Brecksville he was 7th losing to state champion Hancock and Comar (again). Foster transferred from Bellaire St. John this year after placing 5th in Division III--much like John did several years ago. He was 2nd at Medina losing by fall to Palmer. I'm not sure what will happen but both Ball and Brandenburg are good. The former, in particular, has been sensational subbing for Squire at 145#. He was 7th at the Ironman, 4th at Brecksville and won the Searcy. Hodge, a state alternate last year, is also very good. He has been a finalist at Solon, the Searcy, Normandy, and Toledo St. John--winning the latter two. McCormick beat him by two to thwart a state trip last year. He might have to reverse that to qualify this time. Finally, there's Peterson who was a district 6th in 2008. He was 3rd at the Top Gun and 4th at Brecksville and that means he is ready for Columbus, if he can get there.

I thought Sasfy looked very good at Brecksville--majoring Comar and decisioning state champion Hancock before losing in the finals. He was a district champ last year and won three state bouts to finish 6th--twice losing to Cline. He also won at the SWOCA and has high placement potential. I also think that Grandominico could grab a low place with his grind it out style. He was 3rd at Medina losing only to Palmer by fall. He was 1-2 at last year's state meet and should better that this year. Luft and

Wirtz are very good with Wimer in reserve. He was 2nd at Wapakoneta--finishing ahead of Grandominico. Nelson is the "sleeper" here who could easily qualify, also don't forget Rieman who won at Marion Harding and is currently 21-2.

There always seems to be imbalances between districts with one having eight state quality wrestlers and another having barely any. At the moment it looks like Fairfield may be "the barely any" at this weight. The exception might be Fehring who was a district semi-finalist last year, but lost one of his go-to-state bouts 7-6. This year he was 3rd at the SWOCA losing a 10-8 battle to Sasfy and 3rd at the GMVWA losing to Stephens, 8-4. Myers won at Fairmont and has a chance here along with Clouser-Simmelink and, maybe, Mialma. The real possibility here, though, is Giffin who was at 103# just two years ago.

145#

PROJECTED CHAMPION: DAVE HABAT (ST. IGNATIUS)

Top Contenders

2	Horner (Massillon Perry)	14	Leidecker (Teays Valley)
3	Squire (Wadsworth)	15	White (Hoover)
4	Harger (Moeller)	16	Hoffman (Kilbourne)
5	Cline (Uniontown Lake)	17	Ryman (Marion Franklin)
6	Valliant (Sandusky)	18	Shirley (Harrison)
7	Greco (Fitch)	19	Travgliante (Normandy)
8	Drake (Upper Arlington)	20	Castoneda (Amherst)
9	Gordon (Scioto)	21	Ramsey (Springboro)
10	Churchill (Elyria)	22	Millisor (Lakota West)
11	Nickolai (Piqua)	23	Arthur (Holland Springfield)
12	Orth (Clay)	24	Brown (Hamilton)
13	Bass (Marysville)	25	Spangler (Sidney)

This strikes me as one of the best and most intriguing weight class in Division I. There will be a titanic struggle at the top with a solid second tier of wrestlers eager for upsets. The quartet that will battle it out include two wrestlers who have already won state titles, one who twice has been 3rd at tremendously difficult weight classes, and another who placed both of his high school years.

Brad Squire, only a junior, crafted an undefeated state championship season as a freshman. Last year he again reached the finals before losing to his nemesis, Seth Horner in overtime. Squire is 72-3 in his high school career with all three defeats to Horner. This year Squire has yet to compete but is expected back at this weight class. Good in all three positions Squire has a great sense of balance and never seems to find himself out of position.

Horner won his first state title last year after twice finishing 3rd. When he defeated Squire at the Mayfield Big 8 it seemed to provide that last bit of confidence to take it all. But it wasn't easy. He beat both Sulzer and Squire in the eighth minute of wrestling to capture that well deserved title. This

year he was 3rd at the Ironman losing to Stephens, but defeating Harger in overtime, and 1st at Medina. His ability to win close bouts will again be needed this year.

Habat has had a real affinity for tough weight classes. Both as a freshman and a sophomore it could be argued that he faced the sternest competition--and both times finishing 3rd. Last year it was an overtime loss to Lang that cost him a shot at the title. He has spent some of this year at 152#--finishing 4th at the Ironman losing twice narrowly (once to Sulzer) and 1st at Brecksville at 145#, where I thought he looked a shade sloppy.

Harger has twice captured a low place at the state meet, but as always seemed better than that. As a freshman he gave Squire a tough bout in the quarters and, surprisingly, fell to 6th. Last year he had beaten eventual champ Pretty, but lost a first-round upset to Salupo and then was beaten in overtime by Mattingly to finish 7th. This year he was a semi-finalist at the Ironman losing to one of the Alton twins (no disgrace there) and finished 4th after losing in overtime to Horner. He crushed the field at the SWOCA and seems primed for more than a low place this year.

Horner and Squire exit the same district and will be apart with Habat seeded in the same half-bracket as the loser. That gives the Perry District champion a huge advantage which could be augmented if Harger (a 67% chance) also falls in that opposite half bracket.

The Perry District has four terrific wrestlers at this weight class. We've already talked about state champions Squire and Horner, but there is more. Cline was a state semi-finalist last year, but lost to Palmer and finished 5th. This year he was second to Hightower at North Canton losing 4-3 and 3rd at Medina after being upset by Fondale. State qualifier Greco was 3rd at both the Top Gun and Brecksville, but this will be a survival test to get out of this district. One issue could be the bracketing. Horner, Squire, and Cline all emerge from the same sectional so you need to be careful where (if?) you lose so that Cline and Greco don't end up meeting in a go-to-state bout. Shannon White might grab a spot should that happen.

Habat won't have it easy at Mentor. Valliant, what a great name for a wrestler, pulled a major upset at Columbus last year dumping Demas out of the championship bracket in the quarter-finals. However, three straight losses plummeted him into 6th place. He has been very solid this year beating, for example, Witt to win at Oak Harbor. Churchill is starting to realize that enormous potential finishing 6th at the Ironman and 3rd at North Coast. However, he'll be pushed hard by Orth, Travgliante, and Castoneda. Orth lost to Valliant, 3-2, at last year's district and is one of the leaders of Oregon Clay squad that is very solid. He was a bout from state qualification last year. He was 4th at Solon at a tough weight. Travgliante was 2nd at Normandy and North Coast and 3rd at Avon Lake.

Two names stand out at Darby--state qualifiers Drake and Gordon. The latter, only a junior, qualified 4th out of this district at 145#. He drew eventual state runner-up Rigel in the first round and ended up losing twice and being blanked in both bouts. He was undefeated until the Top Gun where he wrestled well finishing 2nd to Stephens, 13-6. He also won handily at Olentangy and should qualify easily for States this year. Drake is a two-time state qualifier who has yet to win at the big show. However, he has been excellent in the Columbus area -- compiling well over 100 victories. This year he won at Upper Arlington, Fairmont, and very convincingly at Kenston, and should be a candidate for a low place. I think Bass could well end up as the third best 145-pounder here with Leidecker and

Hoffman next best. I also think we'll find Ryman also competing at this class. That's a lot of possibilities for those last two spots.

Harger is a sure qualifier, but the other three berths are wide open at Fairfield. Well, not totally. I think we can pencil in the name of Trevor Nickolai. A district finalist and state qualifier last year he quickly lost twice at Columbus. This year he was 3rd at the GMVWA losing a 6-5 decision to DeHart but pinning Massillo. After this duo there is a real chasm until we get to Shirley, Ramsey, and Millisor. I suspect there are other possibilities such as Brown, but this is a weight class for opportunists.

152

PROJECTED CHAMPION: ANDREW GASBER (MADISON)

Top Contenders

2	Sulzer (St. Edward)	15	Egnor (Elyria)
3	Demas (Westerville North)	16	Bissell (Twinsburg)
4	Rigel (Tecumseh)	17	Perry (Mentor)
5	Marsh (Marysville)	18	Laney (Toledo St. Francis)
6	Russ (Nardonina)	19	Rahm (Moeller)
7	Crabtree (Darby)	20	Tischler (Berea)
8	Cruz (Lorain Southview)	21	Graham (Teays Valley)
9	Brenner (Canfield)	22	LeForce (Springboro)
10	Mason (Princeton)	23	Burton (Kilbourne)
11	Frost (Upper Arlington)	24	Conners (Elder)
12	Doyle (Brunswick)	25	Haren (Troy)
13	Campbell (Harrison)	26	Gruber (Massillon Jackson)
14	Smith (Davidson)		

This weight class is just about as exciting and competitive as the previous one. Again there are four exceptional contenders with a backdrop of some excellent potential place winners--including one who may well force his way into the finals. Fortunately, the top quartet all compete at different districts so if form holds sway the pairings should be perfect.

If things had worked out a little differently two of the contenders might even now be wrestling off in a back corner of the St. Edward wrestling room. Two years ago Sulzer was a freshman 112-pounder who took full advantage of a bracket sheet that put Touris, Mitcheff, Lang, Mattingly and Ciccarello in the other half. He swept to the finals before losing to Touris on a slippery and cold Saturday night. Last year he wrestled very well losing in overtime to Horner in the semi-finals and then defeating the redoubtable Fields for 3rd. Gasber has endured a more torturous path. Two years ago as a sophomore 135-pounder he was 5th at that brutal weight class losing to four-time champ Jameson and Habat. He was quoted as being very disappointed with his performance. Then last year for primarily family reasons he transferred back to his home school during the season and OHSAA in their collective wisdom ruled him ineligible. So after a year lay-off he returns at this weight class so far winning all 19 of his bouts. I saw him twice. He remains physically and athletically well beyond most wrestlers, but I thought he looked a little sloppy, a little unsure at times. He'll hit a duck under

so quickly its difficult to believe it even happened, but then there are little timing errors that show up. Still, he is one of those wonderful wrestlers who thumbs his nose at those risk/reward equations that always seem to favor a defensive posture and goes out there takes a chance and tries to score points. By March he'll be fully back in form. Should Gasber win it would free Madison from two burdens--they have had seven runner-ups (the most) and 17 placers without ever capturing a state title. Assuredly that would create great excitement in that part of Lake County.

Another wrestler who looks to score early and often is Demas. He was 2nd as a freshman in Division III two years ago and 3rd last year in Division I after being upset by Valliant in the quarter-finals. I like a wrestler who produce wins in Columbus with scores like 16-8, 17-11, and 12-8. I would loved to have seen him and Jameson in the Finals last year--it would have been a You-Tube prizewinner. This year Demas has lost only to Sulzer who made it a low scoring bout in his 3-2 win. It would easily be worth the drive to Columbus just to see a Demas/Gasber donnybrook. Westerville North had back-to-back champions last year including Dong at 152#. Demas could make it two in a row at this class for the school and three in a row for the community of Westerville.

Somehow, I keep thinking that Rigel's trip to the state finals last year was an anomaly. The evidence, on the other hand, suggests otherwise. In the three weekends of tournament action Rigel never had a close bout until losing to Jameson in the finals. At States he never had to go six minutes to win his first three bouts. I don't get many Tecumseh scores, but this year the only loss I've seen was a 6-4 defeat by the sensational St. Paris Graham freshman Huston Evans--in overtime. Rigel may be substantially better than I've rated him here.

I think the pairings are critical. If all four of these wrestlers win their districts, a fair assumption, and then win their first two bouts at States, still probable, then the semifinal pairings will be Rigel vs. Gasber and Demas vs. Sulzer. I like the second named in each bout and that sets up a final that pits Gasber against Sulzer in what could well be the bout of the tournament.

I suspect that the Darby District is strongest at this weight class with at least five wrestlers with placement potential--and that's with Ryman at 145#. We've already talked about Demas, but Marsh is a solid second banana. He lost to Demas, 7-2, in last year's district final, but made it to the state quarter-finals where he lost to four-time champ Jameson. He came back with three consolations wins before losing to Demas again. He started at 160# this year, but had dropped to 152# at Brecksville. He started with three very impressive wins, but then, on the second day, just when we were getting to the exciting match-ups, he failed to make weight. It makes you wonder whether he'll go back to 160#, so I've rated him in both places. Still, based on his history he'll be great at either weight class. Crabtree, who was 3rd at the district, last year, had an interesting state tourney. He won a close first round bout then lost an overtime heartbreaker to Schreiner and finally ended up 7th. This year he won at the Porter over the tough Graham, but was only 7th at Medina. Frost was a district semi-finalist last year who lost that by two points and then dropped to 6th. This year he won at Upper Arlington and Fairmont. That provides four possible qualifiers, but Graham and Burton would definitely be potential qualifiers should that top quartet stumble or Marsh return to 160#. However, I think the most probable replacement would be state alternate Smith. He missed qualification last year by one point (5-4 to Gordon), but did not place at Brecksville though he had four wins.

We've talked about Gasber at Perry, but there isn't a lot of depth behind him. State qualifier Russ is back from injury and he was a point from placing last year. He was 2nd at 160# at Solon, but then missed some time. He has been back at both this weight class and 160# but I think he'll end up here. A wrestler I anticipated seeing here was the excellent Jamar Sheppard, a state qualifier at 145# last year. He, apparently, will not be competing. Two who will be at Perry are Brenner, a dominating 1st at the Dies, and state alternate Doyle. The latter missed state qualification by one point last year and was 4th at Medina losing to Brenner by a point. Other strong possibilities are Bissell and, maybe, Gruber.

Sulzer leads the group at Mentor, but this is not a broad-based weight class here. Bobby Cruz was a state alternate last year losing a 5-3 go-to-state bout to eventual state placer Valliant. This year he won at Southview, Fairfield, and Riverside en route to a 22-1 record. He is at the same sectional as Sulzer so they should be apart at both the district and state level. Egnor, Perry, and Tischler are all possibilities with Laney also in the mix. Egnor was 2nd at North Coast and 5th at Brecksville while Tischler was 4th at North Coast, and 4th at the Top Gun. Laney was one bout away from States last year while Perry won at the Searcy and beat Tischler, 8-1, for 3rd at the North Coast. This is a shifting, amorphous grouping where the hot weekend and fortunate bracketing get you to Columbus.

There are three strong candidates for Columbus at Fairfield. Rigel we've discussed and he should be joined by Mason and Campbell. They finished 1st and 2nd at the SWOCA with Mason winning by three. He was 2nd at the GMVWA losing to the freshman Evans in a relatively close final. Campbell was 2nd at the Big 8 and 5th at Medina after making the semis and then losing to Demas and Doyle. Both won two district bouts last year and seemed ready for more this time around. The last spot should be a tug-of-war with Rahm, LeForce, and Haren the principal tuggers.

160#

PROJECTED CHAMPION: KYLE LANG (BRECKSVILLE)

Top Contenders

- | | | | |
|----|----------------------------|----|-------------------------------|
| 2 | Goins (Elyria) | 14 | Korb (Elder) |
| 3 | Marsh (Marysville) | 15 | Pike (Scioto) |
| 4 | Rhodes (Nordononia) | 16 | Ferguson (Pickerington North) |
| 5 | Rice (Davidson) | 17 | Berman (Beavercreek) |
| 6 | Coleman (Mayfield) | 18 | Tischler (Berea) |
| 7 | Harrison (Massillon Perry) | 19 | Zehler (Edgewood) |
| 8 | Wharton (Clay) | 20 | Holte (Colerain) |
| 9 | Maserang (Moeller) | 21 | Cvetic (St. Edward) |
| 10 | DiSabato (Olentangy) | 22 | McLaughlin (Mentor) |
| 11 | Glasko (Normandy) | 23 | Sneary (Tecumseh) |
| 12 | Skoberne (Twinsburg) | 24 | Brown (Sylvania Northview) |
| 13 | Calhoun (Kenmore) | 25 | Rivera (Harrison) |

This is another very good weight class, though not quite as strong as the preceding two. It features one of the more enigmatic wrestlers in the competition in the person of senior Kyle Lang. Lang could become the first wrestler ever to finish 4th, 3rd, 2nd, and 1st in his high school career if he can win at this weight class. A superbly talented performer he continues to struggle when reaching for the top step of the podium. I have him with 133 high school wins ranging from 103# to 160# and three state placements, but he has never won a district title. Last year he beat Habat in overtime, crushed Sheppard (who had beaten him the previous week) in the semis before losing to Spicel in overtime in the state finals. This year he has been 2nd at the Ironman, Beast of the East, and Brecksville losing twice to Toal. In that latter bout he sometimes appeared to lose focus giving away two takedowns in a 9-8 loss. And yet earlier that same day he beat defending state runner-up J.T. Rice, 10-0, in a flawless performance as you can imagine. The first tourney title came at the Dies where Lang shut out Rhodes in the finals. I expect to see a succession of those by Lang at tourney time.

The Perry District is very good. Rhodes was a state quarter-finalist last year before losing to eventual champ Kline and failing to place. This year he was 3rd at Solon (at 171#) and 1st at North Canton in a romp. He is good on his feet and can turn from the top position and that combination should lead to state placement this year. Coleman was a real "fooler". At the Big 8 last year I asked Frank Cikach whether the then absent Hayes boy would wrestle by tourney time. He answered in the affirmative and as something of an afterthought mentioned that they'd be starting a freshman in late January who was pretty good. Actually, he was very good. He was a sectional champ and then swept his way to the district finals before losing to Taylor. By this time I was cursing myself for not asking Cikach his name. And yet, he went on, as he made the state semi-finals before losing to Kline and finishing 5th. This year I kept his name in mind as he finished 3rd at Brecksville --losing only a one-pointer to Goins--and 4th at the Top Gun after a 9-8 OT loss in the semis. The Perry move-in Harrison was a state placer in Texas (?) and has been outstanding winning at Medina in a curiously symmetrical bout that featured Courtland Harrison and Harrison Rosch neither of whom wrestled for Harrison High. Skoberne, 1st at Solon and 3rd at the Dies, is another top contender with another move in, Calhoun, now representing Kenmore.

State placer Goins leads a representative group of 160-pounders at Mentor. A tough, physical wrestler he has gotten to be super on his feet. He was the district champion at 152# winning all three of his contested bouts by technical fall. A state semi-finalist he ran into Dong who crushed him from the top position, 12-0, and he ended up 4th. He got off to a slow start at the Ironman going 3-2 and failing to place. He won at North Coast getting a takedown record. He was a semi-finalist at Brecksville before losing badly to Toal and eventually defaulting to 4th. I think he has high placement potential (maybe even finalist), but he'll need to stay injury free. State qualifier Wharton is back from that solid Clay squad as is state qualifier Glasko. Wharton wrestles a tougher schedule, but Glasko won at Normandy and lost to Goins, 9-6, in the North Coast final. Tischler, Cvetic and McLaughlin are other possibilities with only one spot to be earned while Brown could be a surprise.

Rice was pinned in the district quarter-finals last year, but fought his way back with four consolation wins (including a one-point decision in his go-to-state bout) to qualify. Then he wrestled three very solid bouts to reach the finals before losing to Kline. That is the definition of a hot weekend. Short and stocky he is difficult to wrestle. He was 6th at Brecksville defaulting down after being injured in a 10-0 loss to Lang. If Marsh is here this will be a very strong twosome out of Darby, but, if not,

DiSabato should easily qualify with Pike, a 6-5 loser to DiSabato, also a strong contender. The other possibility is Ferguson, who won two district bouts last year.

Most of the candidates at Fairfield look like state quarter-finalists and very low placers, at best. The top trios include Maserang, Korb, and Berman all of whom were at the SWOCA. Maserang, then at 171# finished 2nd losing only to an out-of-state wrestler and was again 2nd at the CIT. He was a district 6th at this weight class last year losing his go-to-state bout by four points. Korb won at the SWOCA beating Berman in the finals. He was 4th at the CIT, but did not place at Brecksville, losing to Lang in the first round. Berman was a state alternate at 152# and was 2nd at the SWOCA. Other possibilities are Sneary, Zehler and Holte with Rivera still in the picture.

171#

PROJECTED CHAMPION: NICK HEFLIN (MASSILLON PERRY)

Top Contenders

2	Taylor (Cuyahoga Falls)	16	Houston (Maple Hts)
3	Dilley (Lancaster)	17	Dixon (Fairfield)
4	Abujaradeh (Berea)	18	Stepp (Princeton)
5	Brubaker (Start)	19	Ormiston (Teays Valley)
6	Bryan (St. Ignatius)	20	Meek (Holland Springfield)
7	Hayes (Mayfield)	21	Dove (Western Hills)
8	Alexander (Findlay)	22	Harris (Kenmore)
9	Moore (Lakeside)	23	Hasselmeyer (Elder)
10	Ajayi (Shaker Hts)	24	Morrissey (Clay)
11	Brankamp (Thomas Worthington)	25	Tennant (Reynoldsburg)
12	Nickolai (Piqua)	26	Franz (Springboro)
13	DeLande (Davidson)	27	Godfrey (Glen Este)
14	Tatum (Pickerington Central)	28	Rigsby (St. Charles)
15	Sabo (Olentangy)	29	Randolph (Wadsworth)

If I were recruiting seniors out of Ohio one wrestler that would be near the top of my list is Nick Heflin. Sometimes you can just tell when a performer is great, but still has more potential to be realized. Heflin should win relatively easily at this weight class, but he'll be even better in the future. He made a quantum leap forward last year finishing 2nd at 152# losing a close bout to the superb Jesse Dong in the finals. This year he was 1st at the King of the Mountain and Medina and 4th at the Ironman. That last result was deceptive as Heflin, far ahead, was flukily (if that's a word) pinned in the quarter-finals by a wrestler who lost by one point in the semis. I think Heflin would have, at a minimum, been a finalist. He lost to Phillips (who else?) for 3rd. There are three other returning state placers at this weight class, but I don't think any of them will severely challenge him.

The deepest district is at Mentor which features three returning state qualifiers, a state alternate, and some strong, experienced challengers. Abujaradeh seemingly came out of nowhere last year.

Despite keeping encyclopedic lists I had never written down his name and had absolutely no knowledge of his progress. Embarrassing since I grew up just two communities over from Berea. At any rate he was a sectional runner-up with nine losses going into districts where he went 3-2 to grab the fourth qualifying berth. At States he pulled a first-round upset, wrestled well in the consolation rounds and finished a startling 5th. His 13 losses were within one for the most losses of any placer. Tall and rangy he has been 1st at Solon and North Coast and 3rd at the Top Gun including a big win over Brankamp and there will be no double figure losses this year for the leader of a much improved Berea team. Bryan and Ajayi are both returning state qualifiers, but have markedly different seasons. Bryan won the CIT and Big 8 and was 2nd to Phillips at Brecksville. He could wrestle at 160# (he did so at the Ironman), but seems more comfortable here. Ajayi has just not put it totally together. He was 2nd at Solon (to Abujaradeh who he had beaten in their two previous meetings), 4th at North Canton and 3rd at Kenston--each time not quite wrestling up to expectations. I've been assured (Will Knight) that he'll soon be in top form. The one to watch is the junior Alexander. A state alternate last year he may be using the same strategy as his older brother. Hang around the periphery of States for a couple of years then explode at Columbus and take away a state title. This might be the year. He is undefeated this year--including a big win over Brankamp to win at Marion Harding--and dominating his opponents. He has not wrestled an overly vigorous schedule, but then I would have said that about his brother last year. By the way what is it with Findlay and upper weight wrestlers? They seem always to produce solid big guys and this year is no exception. Also here is Morrissey who was a district 6th and lost to Abujaradeh in the go-to-state bout. He was 4th at Solon and 6th at the GMVWA and this weight class is so crowded it will take even stronger efforts to prosper here. The dark horse candidate hence is the onrushing Brubaker. He has won at Northwood, Sylvania Southview and Toledo St. John never going the full six minutes in any of the finals. I think he'll bump out one of my top four, and, quite possibly, win this district. That's six quality wrestlers and Meek, Fadenholz, Kelly, and very possibly Greene, if he can compete.

While Heflin is a heavy favorite at Perry (and Columbus) Ethan Taylor seems primed for a high state placement. A district champ he was 21-1 going to states last year, but was upset in the first round. He bounced back to finish 7th, but I think there was much more possible. This year he won relatively easily at Hudson and the Dies and now sports a perfect 20-0 record. He'll be away from Heflin at Columbus which will be a real positive. State qualifier Hayes has been slowly working his way into the lineup and should be a factor by tournament. Rumors abound that he may try 160#, but it would force Coleman to 152#--not a pleasant process. Houston was 2nd at Hudson, but was only 5th at Kenston. Still the lean, lanky Maple Hts. star could reach state qualification. A surprise candidate is Moore who wrestles a nearly invisible schedule (for me), but was 2nd at Kenston--defeating Ajayi in the process. He had a district win last year. I'm giving Harris, Randolph, and Erb long-shot probabilities here.

The Darby District is very strong. At the moment I see at least six solid contenders for the four berths. Dilley is the centerpiece of this district. He lost to eventual state champ Kline, 5-4, in the district finals. He was a state quarter-finalist losing there to Tomanek, 14-10, before coming back to finish 4th (losing to Tomanek, again). I have him winning everything this year--Tiffin, Olentangy, Licking Hts.--usually with ridiculous ease. However, it has not been, in general, a taxing schedule. State qualifier Brankamp has been a consistent placer most recently 4th at the Top Gun and 2nd at Marion Harding and has solid placement opportunities. Still he'll have to muscle up to get out of this district. State qualifier Tatum has switched schools, but continues to win. State alternate Sabo is up

from 140# (for now) and placed 4th at Medina losing to Heflin in the semi-finals. He lost his go-to-state bout last year 16-15 which has to be one of the most heartbreaking kinds of defeats. Ormiston is another of the very fine Teays Valley wrestlers with excellent credentials while Tennant and Rigsby are reasonable long-shots. The one to watch, though, is DeLande. A superior athlete he was 4th at Brecksville losing only to the incomparable Phillips and Georgia state champ Roberts.

Fairfield will probably be the district you'll want to draw into at this weight class. I think state alternate Colin Nickolai is best here finishing 2nd at GMVWA and giving Mannier a reasonable tussle in the finals. However, he was only 7th at the Top Gun losing a couple of close bouts. State qualifier Stepp had some close calls but made it to Columbus last year and with a relatively weak field may well do so again. He was 4th at the SWOCA and is just returning from injury issues now. Dove lost an overtime thriller to Stepp last year that cost him a state shot. He is extremely successful in the smaller tournament in and around Cincinnati. Franz and Hasselmeyer are two more conventional choices with Godfrey and Kelly possibilities. The surprise here might be Dixon. He was a district 6th last year at 189#, but will likely compete here. He did not wrestle at Kenston, but, if in good health, he could be a real threat to everyone at this district. There will be a couple of surprise qualifiers is my best guess.

189 #

PROJECTED CHAMPION: ANDREW TUMLIN (HARRISON)

Top Contenders

2	Lamberg (Kenmore)	14	Weeks (Lancaster)
3	Isley (Sylvania Southview)	15	Porter (Mason)
4	Borgstrom (Middletown)	16	Trautwein (Fremont Ross)
5	Sanders (St. Charles)	17	Robertson (Maple Hts.)
6	Phillips (Massillon Perry)	18	Friend (North Ridgeville)
7	Miller (Centerville)	19	Meadows (Toledo St.John)
8	Cook (Reynoldsburg)	20	Mast (Fairfield)
9	Smugala (Westlake)	21	Gilmore (Teays Valley)
10	Busson (Wadsworth)	22	Powell (Lakota East)
11	Benton (Waite)	23	Seng (Findlay)
12	Bailey (Grveport Madison)	24	Marrone (Parma)
13	Lanigan (Brecksville)	25	Browning (Troy)

Last year I ranked Tumlin, Lamberg, and Isley at the top of this weight class with the result that none of them won--although they did finish 2nd through 4th. As it turned out Matt Alexander beat Lamberg and Isley by identical 3-2 scores to complete a mild surprise, though his senior season should have been a portend to the excellence he showed at states.

Somehow, I still retain the disproven belief (it's probably ego) that my ranking wasn't totally incorrect. Tumlin finished at 37-1, his only loss to Isley in the semi-finals, and defeated Lamberg 18-6 for 3rd

place after beating the excellent Miller 16-2 in the consolation semi-finals. This year Tumlin again won the SWOCA (but only by a point in the finals), won at Medina (going overtime with Phillips and beating Schafer by two), and at Mayfield. Those close bouts are worrisome, because eventually your luck runs out. Tumlin has been 7th, 5th and 3rd at the last three state meeting, winning his last bout each time. He would like to complete that sequence with a win late Saturday night.

Isley has missed much of the year to this date, returning only last weekend. He'll be the freshest of this trio, but whether that translates to victories is uncertain. Still as a two-time qualifier and the highest returning placer at this weight class he cannot be overlooked as a potential title holder.

Lamberg could have some trouble at Perry. I've been told that Chris Miller will cut to 189# and if comfortable with the weight has solid placement potential. Phillips could provide huge help for Perry's team chances if he can do well at this weight class. Last year he was a district 6th losing his go-to-state bout 5-3. This year he was 6th at Medina losing to Tumli--and that in overtime. That was such a positive omen and then at the Ohio Duals he lost 3-2 in a critical bout against Wadsworth losing some momentum. That was the week Wadsworth unleashed Caleb Busson, and it was a significant move. Not only did his win over Phillips provide a crucial difference in the semi-finals, but his fall against St. Edward was of critical importance in their two point team margin. He then went on to pin Marrone to win the Searcy and jump way up in the rankings. Two other able contenders are Lanigan --2nd at the Dies and 7th at Brecksville including a win over Busson-- and the improving Robertson. His brother Erique, of course, won three years ago including a very exciting semifinal over Honeycutt.

Lamberg, still only a junior, looked very different at Brecksville. He was still losing weight with the idea of possibly competing at 171#. That has not yet happened (he was still at 189# at the Dies). But it is a bold initiative--although I'm not sure it enhances his prospects for a state title this year. Lamberg won his first 40 bouts last year before losing that semi-final to Alexander and then finished 4th. This year he won handily at Solon, pinning everybody, and Smithville while dominating in a similar manner. However, at Brecksville it was totally different. Looking small for this weight class he had two narrow wins before losing to Mills, 12-8, and finishing 3rd. I'm not sure its been decided which way he'll go, but he did win the Dies at this weight class.

Tumlin exits the easiest district. The only possible threats are state qualifiers Borgstrom and Miller (if not at Darby). Borgstrom was a district 3rd that included a go-to-state win over Dixon (see 171#), and went 1-2 at Columbus including a 6-5 loss to Miller. He was 2nd at the GMVWA this time defeating Miller in the semi-finals 12-7. Miller was 3rd at the GMVWA and 5th at North Canton. Then he and Borgstrom met again in Fairfield where Borgstrom prevailed by five once again. He ended up 6th at Columbus last year which included a 16-2 loss to Tumlin. I'd place Porter and Powell next in line with Mast, Browning and Inkrott also possible factors.

Isley faces a crowded field at Mentor, but one without a lot of credentials. The top threat out of the two Cleveland sectionals is probably state qualifier Smugala. He made it to Columbus at 215# last year with some solid wrestling, but quickly lost once there. He is planning to move to 189# and, if there, could be a real factor. That is if he wrestles with an aggressive attitude like he did while winning at Hudson rather than the passive performance we saw at North Coast. I think he has more ability than he suspects. Other possibilities from those sectionals include Marrone and Goff. State alternate Benton is the best from the two Toledo sectionals after missing state qualification by two

points last year. He won at Coffman, but failed to place at Brecksville. That may have been an anomaly. District 6th place winner Meadows opened the year with a title at Avon Lake at 215#. He then dropped a weight class and then dropped out of sight. If he wrestles he could be a real threat. Trautwein was a state junior high champ two years ago and is now starting to assert himself. He won at Fremont Ross and was 3rd at Marion Harding, losing to Weeks. Another Findlay big man, David Seng, is down from 215# and has a long-shot chance at this muddled weight class, but a stronger choice might be the onrushing Friend.

There is also significant talent at Darby. Both Cook and Sanders have placed, but I think the latter has the best chance to topple the top three. It could be an instant replay (well, an annual replay) of what happened last year when Alexander wrestled past all three of the top boys. Last year Sanders lost in overtime to Isley in the quarter-finals and eventually ended up 7th. This year he won big at Olentangy and the CIT and was a shocking 2nd to Dues at Marion Harding. Cook on the other hand has been a little shaky. He was 5th at the SWOCA and failed to place at Brecksville. He'll need to turn it around. State alternate Bailey returns and should qualify this year. Most recently he was 3rd at Marion Harding, losing for the first time. I also like Weeks who beat the formidable Wittkamp at Tiffin and also triumphed at Liberty. He has made substantial progress this season. Gilmore and Shalash may be other contenders with good opportunities here.

215

PROJECTED CHAMPION: ORLANDO SCALES (ELDER)

Top Contenders

2	Smith (Wayne)	15	Wise (Massillon Perry)
3	Nelisse (Elyria)	16	Krimmer (Glen Este)
4	Hayes (Mayfield)	17	Primavera (Darby)
5	Allen (Hamilton)	18	Gordon (Fairfield)
6	Tavanello (Wadsworth)	19	Mulkey (Coffman)
7	Nelson (Groveport Madison)	20	Skinner (Lebanon)
8	Weeks (Marysville)	21	McCormick (Mason)
9	Miller (Fitch)	22	Santana (Lorain Southview)
10	Lawson (Shaker Hts.)	23	Newberry (Kenmore)
11	Green (St. Edward)	24	Knowles (Springfield North)
12	Romine (Xenia)	25	Goff (Cuyahoga Falls)
13	Rose (Centerville)	26	Staebler (Sylvania Southview)
14	Samiljenko (Normandy)	27	Miller (Teays Valley)

Orlando Scales has dominated this weight class for the past year and a half winning 70 bouts in a row. Strong, agile and a terrific thrower he forces the action in directions that favor him. Controlling most of the tie-ups he keeps looking for upper body throws that keep his opponent defensive and moving backward. As the top-ranked high school wrestler at this weight class, he is very confident and has backed that up with wins at Brecksville and the SWOCA. At the latter he had a succession

of first period falls including one against the excellent Allen in the finals. At Brecksville, however, both Pickerel and Hayes kept it close with a defensive strategy that left Scales somewhat frustrated, but he ended up with 4-1 and 6-2 decisions that were not that close. That seems to be the templates for wrestling Scales today--fight off the upper body ties, moving quickly backward when threatened, keep it close, and hope for something good at the end. Scales and Pretty became Elder's first state champions (and third overall) since 1973 when the very talented Dave Shuler took first place at 152.

The one wrestler who could really challenge Scales is the peripatetic Cody Smith. He began his career as a freshman state qualifier for St. Paris Graham at this weight class three years ago. Last season competing for Beavercreek (reported as a football inspired move) he was disqualified in the district final throwing him into the same quarter-bracket as Scales. In a real battle Scales kept his unbeaten streak alive in overtime while Smith quickly won four consolation bouts to finish 3rd. Now, as a senior, Smith is at Wayne just beginning to compete. He has missed a substantial part of the season, but he remains as the biggest threat to derail Scales attempt for a second title.

Scales and Smith could come out of the same district or Wayne could opt for Darby in which case they would still be apart by virtue of the seeding mechanism. The Darby District has three solid wrestlers, but the depth is not there so you can anticipate some movement from the Dayton area where there are a flock of contenders. Weeks, now a junior leads the Columbus group after returning from an injury hiatus. He was 3-2 at States last year losing to two time state runner-up Cogar and to Smith while finishing 7th. He beat both Lawson and Green in the consolations. Obviously he has just started to compete, but he will be very good. Nelson also qualified, beating Weeks 7-0 for 3rd, and until that score is reversed has to be top-rated in Columbus. He won easily at Marion Harding and has not lost since dropping to 215#. Primavera won two district bouts last year and is a solid third best in this area. Miller and, particularly, Mulkey are well within shouting distance of the top trio.

There are five possibilities in the Dayton area with some moving to Darby and others to Fairfield. Smith is, of course, the best, but Romine, whose results I have not seen in some time, is very good. He was the district runner-up to Scales last year and went 1-2 at Columbus being eliminated from the tournament by Smith, 4-0. If he competes he'll be a real threat. Skinner lost 9-6 to Smith at the Fairfield final while Knowles was 3rd at Fairfield and 1st at Tipp City. Still the wrestler with the best chance of qualifying after Smith and Romine is Rose. He was 3rd at the GMVWA and North Canton, and has wrestled a solid schedule. You may remember him from two years ago wrestling Phillips in the junior high state finals at 176#.

Allen ranks second to Scales in the Cincinnati area, but has had no luck with him in head-to-head bouts. Last year he was the state alternate at 215# after getting pinned late by Scales in the semi-finals. This year he was dominant at the SWOCA until the finals where he was pinned early by Scales. He won at Fairfield pinning the undefeated Gordon in the finals. He could well place in Columbus this year. I like Krimmer next best with a 3rd at the SWOCA and a 4th at the GMVWA. McCormick, a district 6th last year is also good, and along with Gordon will be a dangerous foe.

The Mentor District has three returning state qualifiers with Nelisse at the top of my list. He was a state quarter-finalist at 189# last year before losing to Tumlin and failing to place. This year he was a narrow semi-final loser at the Ironman and then defaulting to 6th, 1st at North Coast, and 3rd at Brecksville--losing only to Pickerel in overtime. About to suit up—perhaps, as early as this week--is

the defending district champion Roman Lawson. Out all year recovering from a football injury he'll have a few weeks to shake off the rust before the tournaments. He went 1-2 in Columbus last year losing a tight 6-5 quarter-final bout to two-time placer Rasha. Green was the district runner-up to Lawson, but failed to score at Columbus. He has had an up-and-down year--failing to place at the Ironman, but finishing a very strong 2nd at Medina losing to Houska in the ultimate overtime--and then losing a critical bout to the freshman Tavanello at the Ohio Duals. He is a grinder who must score some state points for Ed's to win their 13th consecutive state title. State alternate Samijlenko will try to move up at least one place at the district level after winning at Normandy, finishing 2nd at Avon Lake, and coming in 3rd at North Coast. Other possibilities are Santana and Staebler.

Cody Hayes stands out at Perry. He was 2nd at Brecksville and the Top Gun with some big wins the past three weeks. A state qualifier last year he lost an ultimate overtime thriller in the first round and couldn't bounce back in the consolations. Tavanello is an amazing find. He was a junior high state champion last year, but has been brilliant at 215# as a freshman. He was 4th at Brecksville losing only to Hayes in the tie breaker and narrowly to Nelisse while defeating state qualifier Miller and state placer Pickerel. He was also 1st at the Searcy and had three huge wins at the Ohio Duals. Miller had plans to head to 189#, but apparently decided to stay at 215#. He has solid placement potential. He lost one of those ultimate overtime decisions, 6-5, in his state placement bout last year. He was 7th at Brecksville and 3rd at the Top Gun losing only to Hayes. I'd rank Wise below Tavanello and Miller with Newberry and Goff a respectful step behind.

285

PROJECTED CHAMPION: JAMES MEDER (VALLEY FORGE)

Top Contenders

2	Walls (Beavercreek)	16	Brooks (Northmont)
3	Johnson (Brecksville)	17	Stocum (Riverside)
4	Beverly (West Carrollton)	18	Reinold (Coffman)
5	Buzzelli (Wadsworth)	19	Curry (Fairfield)
6	Baker (Sandusky)	20	Oglesbee (Olentangy)
7	Caldwell (Marion Franklin)	21	Ballow (Brunswick)
8	Gladstone (Findlay)	22	Powell (Moeller)
9	Schramm (Central Crossing)	23	Cox (Bowling Green)
10	Laird (Olmsted Falls)	24	Kravic (Garfield Hts)
11	Coher (Barberton)	25	Marrero (Reynoldsburg)
12	Watson (Admiral King)	26	Karageorge (Thomas Worthington)
13	Moss (Fitch)	27	Forfia (Firestone)
14	Bucknell (Twinsburg)	28	Stotter (Shaker Hts)
15	Burton (Lorain Southview)	29	Brading (Troy)

Last year I struggled much of the year finding a viable choice for this title before receiving excellent advice about my eventual choice and winner Josh Kline. This year the problem comes from the other

direction with at least six viable candidates in what is always a volatile weight class. Interestingly three of the possible choices are from the Northeast Districts which has not taken this title since 2002 (Adebesin).

The most crowded district is at Perry. Johnson, the defending district champion was 7th last year at Columbus--losing in overtime in the first round to Meder and later getting pinned by Buzzelli. This year he won at the Ironman (beating Buzzelli in the semi-finals) and at Brecksville (majoring Buzzelli in the semis). His only loss was something of a fluke at the Beast of the East. Not an overly huge heavyweight (about 250#) he relies on good mobility and solid technique. Buzzelli, 4th last year, will undoubtedly renew his acquaintance with Johnson one more time. As noted he has twice lost to Johnson, but was 3rd at the Ironman and had all falls at the Ohio Duals. Buzzelli is a very large heavyweight with good athleticism. There is nobody in the field he could not beat. Also returning is state qualifier Bucknell, but he will have to be at the top of his game to qualify again. Moss, Stocum and Coher are all very good and Kravic has had some impressive victories. Factor in Forfia and Ballow and it's quite a list. Bucknell won at Solon beating Stocum by a point while Coher has gone 24-1 this year. Watch out for the newly arriving Moss. He had three district wins last year and battled Buzzelli in a 3-1 loss. Kravic must also be handled with care as he pinned Coher last year.

There is a crowded field at Mentor as well. Meder is 270 pounds of muscle, but has had a topsy-turvy two years. He was 2nd at the Ironman last year, but shortly thereafter was injured and was never quite the same. Nonetheless he beat Laird to reach Columbus as a 4th place district finisher, upset Johnson in the first round, lost to Baker in the ultimate overtime, and eventually defaulted to 6th place. This year, when well ahead (6-0) in the Ironman quarter-finals, he unaccountably threw in the legs, and quickly found himself on his back and pinned. Instead of a clear road to the finals and Johnson (again) the best he could do was his 3rd place finish. He was also 3rd at Black River losing to Hamilton (who he had previously defeated), but won at Marion Harding beating Gladstone and Neal and winning an OW. He can defeat anyone in the field on a good day. Baker has already proven he can do that --well, almost. Last year Baker entered sectional with 6 losses and garnered a runner-up finish at that venue. He barely defeated Burton in the first round of districts, but then won three more to win the district title. Invigorated he won his first three state bouts before losing to Kline in the finals. It was great. This year he won at Oak Harbor, but lost to Torrence at Norwalk. State qualifier Gladstone was a quarter-finalist last year and knows how to win. He'll have to hold off to Lorain area warriors--Watson and Burton--along with the impressive Laird, who has but one loss this year. He was a district 6th last year and was 3rd at Medina losing only to Walls. Well coached and strong he is difficult to defeat. Mix in the rapidly improving Cox and Stotter and this is a potent combination. I think Gladstone and Laird get out, but it won't be easy.

While Baker, Meder, Johnson, and Buzzelli lead the northern contingent. Walls and Beverly are best in the south. Walls was a three time placer for Graham (6th, 4th, and 2nd), but transferred to Beaver creek for football (?). Last year he defeated the favored John Hiles in an overtime semi-final struggle and the way to the title looked clear, but Hawkins scored an upset 3-2 win to squelch that opportunity. Ironically, Walls would be a huge favorite in Division II this year with the weakened crop of heavyweights there. This year Walls was 1st at the SWOCA and 2nd at Medina losing a 1-0 bout to Morosko, but then won again at Beaver creek. This is a very experienced heavyweight wrestler fully aware of the best way to beat bigger, stronger heavyweights. Beverly was 3rd last year--losing only to Baker and wrestling less than the regulation time in all five of his victories. He had all falls winning

the GMVWA and is, probably, the strongest pinner in the field. Now both of these teams wrestled in the Darby District this year, but, of course, that lineup changes every year, so it is impossible to know where each will compete at the district level.

At any rate the Columbus area boasts few big men with placement potential this year. Caldwell is a returning state quarter-finalist and leads this group. Reinold is a bit of mystery since he has missed almost of this year. He won two district bouts last year and could be a factor. Schramm was a state alternate last year and should qualify this time around. He was 2nd at Franklin Hts. and 4th at Brecksville losing only to Johnson and Buzzelli. Other possibilities are Karageorge, Oglesbee, and Marrero. Of this trio I like Marrero the best after placing 2nd at the SWOCA and 8th at Brecksville.

I'm guessing that either Walls or Beverly will head the field at Fairfield. The other three qualifiers are likely to be a step behind as none of the six district placers returned this year. I think Brooks is a possible district finalist after finishing 2nd to Beverly at the GMVWA. A 215-pounder last year he brings quickness to the mat. Curry, 2nd at Fairfield and Kenston this year, and had two district falls last year. He should also be a top contender at Fairfield that leaves Powell, Brading, and possibly Owen as possible qualifiers. This group will likely struggle against the northern contingent.

TEAMS

1. St. Edward it's being written that Goliath has been brought to its knees, but can that really be true. St. Edward has won 12 consecutive team titles and 24 in the last 31 years, and has proved very resilient over the years. Not only have they won 12 in a row, but it hasn't been close with an average victory margin of nearly 83 points. Let's look at their assets this year—seven returning state qualifiers including three champions and two other placers, a couple of additional qualifying prospects, and a far easier district, which could mean a couple of extra qualifiers and higher district finishes which translates into better pairings. Palmer, Clark, Sako, Sulzer, and Salupo are all potential finalists, but they need help from Green and Cobos. If VanCurren, Cvetic, or one of the 103's can get out so much the better. Bonus points could decide this contest and with Palmer and Clark leading the way they could win it, as Troy Christian did two years with extra scoring.
2. Massillon Perry No public school has won a Division I team title since the days of Jenkins Codner and Cole and the 1977 Nordonia team. Massillon Perry has a glorious opportunity to write a new chapter in the history of big school wrestling—but do they have enough points. Heflin, Horner, and White should be finalists and rack up big points. Hannan looks like a sure placer, but they'll need lots of help from the freshman, Dailey transfers Foster and Harrison, and Phillips. That's a lot of question marks. They have won the runner-up trophy five of the last six years, and its time to move forward.
3. Wadsworth The state dual meet champs created an enormous stir with their big win. The question remains, however, whether they can win their second team title in history and their first since 1942—when they edged out a fine Shadyside squad. Only the two Squire boys would seem to have finalist potential, although Buzzelli and, maybe, Tavanello could be major surprises. That means Wenger, Gordon, Busson, and the Grays have to really pitch in. It is such a tough district that both Perry and Wadsworth will be hurt by it.
4. St. Ignatius They are not nearly the dual meet team of the top trio, but they have, potentially, four big-time scorers. Habat and Robinson have the look of finalists with DiCamillo looking for a high place and Bryan hoping to score big. If Hoyt and Long can help it'll cement this top four finish for coach Mark Sullivan.
5. Mayfield McNulty and Cody Hayes should be big scorers with Coleman and Cory Hayes potentially piling up some points as well. If Zingale can negotiate that treacherous 103# district and Birr or Carlone get hot they could move up a place.

6. Marysville The trio of Marsh, McCombs, and Weeks can score a lot of points especially with the favorable pairings they should generate as district champs. If they can augment these three high placements with help from people like Wirtz or Bass they'll have solidified this placement.
7. Elyria A team that has the ability to do better than this ranking. Nelisse, Goins, and McHenry are all terrific, but need to be 100% healthy at tourney time. If Churchill or one of the Egnors can score at the state level, it could mean a Top Five finish.
8. Brecksville Lang and Johnson could score 50 points, but increasing that number seems difficult. Baran would have a chance, but he has to get out of that brutal 103# bracket. Maybe, Lanigan or Bucca can help but if they get those 50 points and others falter that could still be Top Five.
9. Moeller A powerhouse team for the last decade fell back a little last year, but still finished 6th. This year Harger and Corrill should put up a lot of points with Maserang or Hammer helping. They generally have one "sleeper" who contributes as well.
10. Fitch Is Fitch a Top Ten team or one that falls completely by the wayside. They have a lot of upside with Greco, Miller, and Ague and I wouldn't be surprised if Peterson scores some points and helps their chances.