

Division II

103#

PROJECTED CHAMPION: NICK BRASCETTA (GRAHAM)

Top Contenders

2	McGee (Minerva)	14	Tiell (Upper Sandusky)
3	Burkhart (Carrollton)	15	Spangler (Keystone)
4	Langdon (Claymont)	16	Lee (Oakwood)
5	Gould (Lexington)	17	Ramos (Bryan)
6	Graham (West Branch)	18	Thompson (Hubbard)
7	Kazimir (Kenston)	19	Edwards (Greenville)
8	Bertubin (Cambridge)	20	Simpson (Clermont NE)
9	Ward (Goshen)	21	Stainbrook (Streetsboro)
10	Morris (Canton South)	22	McGrath (Hamilton Twp.)
11	Bergman (Oak Harbor)	23	Sidoti (Norwalk)
12	Heavilin (Harrison Central)	24	Broska (Walsh)
13	November (West Geauga)	25	Gerber (Clyde)
		26	Gunter (Coventry)

We will almost surely witness a milestone at this weight class in Columbus. The Division II tournament was begun in 1971 as the number of wrestling schools grew to a point where a split needed to be made. The Northeast District quickly piled up a lead in terms of number of champions, but the Central District always sent a strong contingent of wrestlers. At that time you hoped to draw into someone from the Southwest District. At one point the Central District had provided 24 champions to just 2 for the Southwest. Later that margin increased to a 43 to 18 differential. However, beginning in the 1990's that balance of power shifted. If Brascetta prevails as anticipated, it will give the Southwest District its 71st individual title, one more than claimed by the Central District.

Brascetta was 3rd last year at this weight class, losing only to state champion Mitch in the semi-finals. His other four victories were all completed in convincing style, including a 10-5 win over Romanchik in the consolation finals. This year he opened with a sensational run at the Ironman, which concluded with a 6-3 win over the nation's number one ranked 103-pounder Mark Grey. He did not have to go six minutes in any bout at the GMVWA and won by technical fall against the highly regarded Gould at the Ohio Duals. As we saw, it was more of the same at the Top Gun with Brascetta totally dominating every opponent. At this moment no serious challenge would seem to exist for him at the Division II (or any other) level.

Some of the top contenders for the spot opposite Brascetta in the finals will emerge from the Firestone District. Foremost, in this group is Cody McGee who was 5th last year beating Burkhart 4-2 in that bout. He won this year at Smithville and was 4th at the Top Gun. Sometimes a wrestler's losses can bring him into the foreground quicker than

a dozen inauspicious victories. So it is with West Branch newcomer, Dustin Graham – a good name to have this year. He was 2nd at the Riverside Rumble, but what caught my eye was that he lost in the final round to Division I third-place finisher, Uland Ralston, by only 4-2. Shortly thereafter he defeated Division II place-winner Burkhart by that same score. He was 4th at the Dies as reality struck back but, clearly, he's a real threat. State qualifier Thompson entered last year's districts with a losing record, dropped his first bout, and then reeled off four straight wins to qualify. He was still at 112# at the Top Gun this year, but I think he'll have to be at this weight class if he wants a return ticket to Columbus – and even that will not be assured here. State alternate Morris was 5th at North Canton, but has lost to McGee by five. That's four possibilities, but Graham is inexperienced and Thompson looks possibly vulnerable which could open the door for Kazimir and November. Kazimir lost to Labry, 1-0, in the Solon finals (note Labry defeated Graham by 3), but has been plagued by injury problems. He won two district bouts last year and lost a narrow bout to McGee, 2-0. November beat Harrington to win at Perry and was 3rd at Kenston after an upset loss. Add in Stainbrook, Broska, and Gunter and this will be an extremely competitive district.

The other strong district is at Heath. Both finalists return at this weight class as does the 4th place finisher. Burkhart was the dominating figure winning the finals 11-1 and then going on to place 6th in Columbus. This year he was 2nd at North Canton and lost the dual to Graham, but has otherwise been very strong. He has finalist potential. Bertubin was the district runner-up and was the center of attention at Value City Arena when he wrestled Dustin Carter in what had to be a difficult first round bout. He beat Thompson in the consolation, but ended one bout from placement. He has been at 112# virtually the entire season, but will compete at this weight class starting with the OVAC. Heavilin, the third returning state qualifier, had a tough draw in Columbus losing to Brascetta and McGee in back-to-back bouts. He was 2nd at Barnesville this year, and should qualify once more. They'll all have to worry about the freshman Langdon (3rd at Junior High States), who was 3rd at Medina--and one point from being in the finals—placed at the Top Gun, and was a one point loser to Gray at the Ironman. Only Burkhart and (maybe) Bertubin can go with him here. I don't see much else at this district with Maynard, McGrath, and McGhee possibilities.

There are no returning state qualifiers at Fostoria in a weight class that should be dominated by one wrestler, senior John Gould. The igniter for a wonderful Lexington team that, to outsiders, seemed to emerge overnight, he has real finalist potential. He was at 103# at a sophomore, and, if memory serves, just missed state qualification. Last year he was pushed up to 112# by the arrival of state placer Gambucci, but has now returned to this weight class. He has pretty much crushed everybody, losing only to Brascetta, 21-5, at the Ohio Duals. If nothing else, that defines the gap at this weight class. State alternate Tiell also returns and will battle with folks like Perrysburg and Oak Harbor champ Alex Bergman, Sidoti, and Gerber. Dark horse candidates for state places might be Ramos or Spangler, but no one here, except Gould, will be a major threat at States.

That same conclusion also applies to Goshen. Brascetta is great, but no one else can probably hope for more than a very low place, with the possible exception of the freshman Ward. Highly touted at the onset of the season, he has been very good. He beat GMVWA place winner Edwards 15-3 in their dual meet. Edwards defeated Simpson who won two district bouts last year, while Lee was 2nd at Troy and 3rd at Bellbrook. This trio will likely battle for the last two state slots.

112#

PROJECTED CHAMPION: TY MITCH (AURORA)

Top Contenders

2	Jordan (Graham)	15	Beemer (Wapakoneta)
3	Westfall (Perry)	16	Hutchins (Canal Winchester)
4	B.Miller (Defiance)	17	Harting (Kenton Ridge)
5	McLaughlin (Canal Fulton NW)	18	Stevens (Carroll)
6	A. Miller (Beaver Local)	19	Simpson (Salem)
7	Mirman (Padua)	20	Colvin (London)
8	Romanchik (Padua)	21	Brooks (Benedictine)
9	Warner (Claymont)	22	Thurn (Clyde)
10	Stone (Oak Harbor)	23	Hupp (West Branch)
11	Gambucci (Lexington)	24	Johnson (Logan Elm)
12	Wiltshire (Buckeye Local)	25	Webb (Miami Trace)
13	Hayes (Ravenna)	26	Parsons (Licking Valley)
14	Jacobs (Oakwood)		

Moving up from 103# to 112# is very often a treacherous climb. Not only are there weight and strength issues, but age and experience factors (often sophomore versus senior) can play a major role. Since 2000, 23 underclassmen have won state titles at 103#. Of that number only nine repeated as champion the next year, or 39%. However, two of those repeat winners competed at 103# the next year, so that the true percentage of success for those moving up at least one weight class was 7 of 21 – just 33%. That is not to say that some of these 4 non-repeaters did not win state titles later in their careers, but that just 33% did so in the very next year.

Those are the odds that face state champion Ty Mitch (and Sako and Stieber, as well). And, indeed, this weight looks like a remarkably even, three way battle for the top spot giving Mitch about a 33% chance of winning. However, I think the odds may be just a little better than that. He is a strong and resilient wrestler who has proven resourceful in times of crisis. His battles with Johnni DiJulius last year proved he could bounce back from a defeat one weekend and win the next. He also has a canny (if old) coach who is probably worth a point or two on the side of that mat. This year he lost twice to freshmen at the Ironman – once to Squire (by two) and once to Jordan (by one). At Brecksville he was 4th, losing a semi-final overtime thriller to Squire and a close consolation battle to Robinson. He could have won any of those early season bouts.

Last year it was just Mitch and DiJulius, no one else was close. This year there will be many more contenders, so those overtime losses will have to be converted into wins. I think that will occur as Mitch will go one up on his grandfather in terms of state titles.

The Jordan family, fathers and sons, have done rather well at state tournaments. I have them at 47-1 including eleven state titles. If they had been a high school, that would rank them 34th in Ohio history. Isaac Jordan will surely add to that total – the question is whether it will begin this year. A Junior High State champion last year, he failed to place at that brutal Ironman weight class, but did defeat Mitch. And, besides, that was his first weekend of varsity experience (just for the record David Taylor also lost his first varsity weekend). Since then he has crushed everyone, winning the GMVWA with huge scores and defeating Westfall, 7-1, at the Ohio Duals. He is getting ever more comfortable on the mat and that is not a good sign for his opponents. Mitch will want to meet him late on Saturday when he could have a size advantage.

The third primary contender for the state title is Nate Westfall. It seems that he has been with us for a decade and this is, indeed, his senior season. He is a three-time state placer and two-time state semi-finalist who has always drawn tough foes in his career. Last year he beat A. Miller and B. Miller in the first two rounds at this weight class, but, unfortunately, there was no C. Miller in the semi-finals only D. Taylor. With well over 100 career wins Westfall will exit the same district as Mitch. They should then be apart at Columbus and should Jordan draw into Mitch it would give Westfall a great shot at wrestling Saturday night.

Mitch and Westfall are part of a district weight class at Firestone that has four state placers and very little else. McLaughlin is a two time state qualifier who cashed in last year with a 7th place finish. This year he was at 119# for the longest time, but finally moved down for the Dies. Matched up against a representative field he took the title beating Mirman, 6-5. He should place again this year. The fourth state placer is Hayes, who was 4th two years ago for CVCA. I saw him at Solon, but he was injured at that meet and has not yet reappeared. He seems problematical at this district. If so, the fourth slot is wide open with Simpson, Hupp, and Brooks possible contenders.

Jordan faces a field that is a clear step below him at Goshen. Stevens was the district runner-up last year at 103# before losing by technical fall in the finals. He won three bouts at States to finish a solid 7th. This year he was also 7th at the GMVWA, but met Jordan (who must have not been seeded) in the second round and lost 12-4. Jacobs was a state alternate last year, while Harting was a district quarter finalist. Both have improved. Harting was 3rd at Troy and 6th at GMVWA, beating Stevens, 11-3, in a consolation bout. Jacob was 3rd at Bellbrook and 2nd at Troy ahead of Harting. This suggests both may have passed Stevens. Johnson has been a finalist in at least three tournaments and seems best from the southeast. Webb, also from that area, may also get in the picture.

The deepest strongest district is undoubtedly at Fostoria. There are two state placers, two state qualifiers, with at least four other first wrestlers in the mix. It is from this group

of district qualifiers that upsets may be hatched. Also part of the forecasting problem is that two or three of these wrestlers are still deciding whether to wrestle here or at 119#. For purposes of clarity I've placed Cook and Schneider at 119# since they have been there all year and I have no definitive evidence they'll be down at this weight class. Also remember that this district is fed by three northwest sectionals and one northeast sectional.

In this case, I think two of the better wrestlers are both from the northeast sectional. Romanchik was the district champ at 103# last year beating Gambucci in the finals 12-2. He was a state semi-finalist before losing to DiJulius and Brascetta and finishing 4th. This year he was 5th at Brecksville losing only to Squire and Robinson. He did, however, have a disappointing CIT. Mirman was a district semi-finalist, but had to forfeit his second day bouts. This year he was just recently a one-point loser to McLaughlin in the Dies final. Gambucci was 8th last year and has spent much of the year at 119#. He won at Coffman and the Gorman, and should qualify once more. It looks like Stone, a state qualifier two years ago, will represent Oak Harbor at this class instead of Cramer. He won at 119# at Oak Harbor and placed at Medina and has the experience and talent to be good at this lower weight class. That's four excellent wrestlers, but it ignores the returning district champion at this weight, B. J. Miller. He had very little trouble winning here in 2008 and went to States with a 42-0 record. A quarterfinal loss by major decision put him into the consolations where he finished 8th. I do worry about his relatively weak schedule. Add in Beemer and Thurn and this is an outstanding district weight class.

Most of the best wrestlers at Heath will be from along the river. The only returning state qualifier is Arizona Miller who went 1-2 off a tough draw that saw him open with three-time placer Westfall and close with state runner-up Inghram. He'll improve on last year's district 3rd by winning this year and, in all likelihood, find himself with a far more generous bracket. His big win was over Division I stalwart Inchaurregui, 7-3, at Southview. State alternate Wiltshire could be the other district finalist. He was a solid 3rd at North Coast and 1st at Steubenville, where he beat Division III placer Reed. Challenging him will be the second of the great Claymont freshmen, Kyle Warner. He was 2nd at the Junior High States last year, losing to Bo Jordan in the finals. This year he won three bouts at the Ironman losing to Sako and Squire, was 3rd at Medina losing in overtime, and 3rd at the Top Gun, losing this time to Isaac Jordan 16-6. He has already passed Wiltshire, but Miller is still slightly ahead of him. Hutchins looks like the favorite for the fourth berth with Colvin and Parsons other viable candidates.

119#

PROJECTED CHAMPION: JOHNNI DIJULIUS (WALSH)

Top Contenders

2	Inghram (University School)	15	Foster (East Liverpool)
3	Neff (Miami Trace)	16	Cramer (Oak Harbor)
4	Minnard (Fairfield Union)	17	Hoopes (West Branch)
5	Jones (Licking Hts.)	18	Warner (Greenville)
6	Worthington (Shelby)	19	Schneider (Tiffin)
7	Perez (Wauseon)	20	Seldenright (New Philadelphia)
8	Kegley (Graham)	21	Kissinger (West Holmes)
9	DaFonseca (Padua)	22	Nelson (Carroll)
10	Cook (Toledo Central Catholic)	23	Greenlee (Circleville)
11	Brown (Tallmadge)	24	Hughes (Utica)
12	Brunk (Elida)	25	Oberholtzer (Ravenna)
13	McGovern (DeSales)	26	Leonetti (West Geauga)
14	Smith (Kenston)	27	Hochwalt (Oakwood)

This is one of those rare weight classes where a Graham wrestler is not in the top tier of wrestlers (although Kegley looks to have placement potential). I mention that in the context that four different Graham wrestlers have won this weight class in the past four years (Jordan, Hart, Longstreath and Neibert). I'm not sure that has ever happened before. At any rate the top four contenders all have outstanding credentials in what should shape up as an intense struggle.

DiJulius had an exceptional freshman year at 103#, losing in overtime in the state finals to a rival he had beaten the previous weekend. He cranked out 48 victories and (with Mitch) dominated the 103# class. He missed the earlier part of the season, but looked terrific at Brecksville while beating Kovach in the finals. He is a big 119-pounder and his added strength is impressive.

With DiJulius at Firestone is two-time placer James Inghram, 2nd two years ago to Taylor and 3rd last year after losing to Neff in the quarterfinals. He was a semi-finalist at the Ironman, losing by two, and then finishing 3rd. In the third week of the season he won handily at North Canton and was at the top of my pre-Christmas list for this weight class. However, he suffered a dislocated knee at Brecksville and that will set him back, perhaps, even prevent his participation in the state tournament process. However, if fully healthy he could easily win it all.

Neff faked me out last year. He spent most of the season at 125# and then dropped two weight classes to 112# at tournament time. It seemed to work as he finished 3rd at districts (losing to Taylor), and then won his first three state bouts including a four-point win over Inghram and a semi-final fall over Minnard. Of course, Taylor was there for the finals to snuff out any hops of a state title. This year Neff has followed the same plot line wrestling at 130#, but will compete at this class in February and March. He, too,

had injury issues (what is it with these 119's) and defaulted out of Brecksville without placing. He'll be a real load at this weight class.

Minnard is also a two-time placer (3rd and 5th) who dominates in the southeast part of the state. He defeated Neff in overtime at last year's sectional, but then fell victim to that third period fall in last year's state semi-finals. If he has lost this year I am unaware of it, and that could be a problem. His schedule does not measure up to what the other three must confront.

The pairings will be interesting. If Neff wins his district he will be away from either DiJulius or Inghram – whichever one wins that Firestone District. Should Minnard win then the seeding process will not be employed.

DiJulius and Inghram are both at Firestone, leaving only two spots (if Inghram is healthy) for everybody else. I think there are four logical contenders with one long shot. The two favorites have to be Brown and Smith. Brown won at Aurora and now at the Dies in impressive fashion, while Smith is a whirlwind and one of the most entertaining wrestlers I've seen this year. He goes for the fall as hard and as long as he can. At Hudson he was beating Polley, 14-12, when he got pinned, but then reversed that result two weeks later. Hoopes and Oberholtzer both have district experience and know how to win. Leonetti, winner at Perry, is my long-shot threat here.

Again Neff and Minnard are both terrific and that leaves only two openings for all the rest. I think Kegley snags one of those. He was 2nd to Mirman at the Midwest Classic, 14-12, and won the GMVWA over admittedly not the strongest of fields. He defeated Gambucci at the Ohio Duals, but twice lost narrowly at the Top Gun – once to Brunk. That doesn't leave much margin for error for the rest of the contenders. I think Warner and Nelson battle it out with state qualifier Greenlee and Hochwalt probably doomed to disappointment.

I could very well have enumerated at the beginning of this essay five great contenders and, perhaps, rightfully included Chandler Jones. He is a two-time Division III placer and has qualified three times. He lost two one-point decisions last year while failing to place for the first time at States. This year he has won what seems like a myriad of small tournaments, however he was most impressive getting 2nd at Medina, beating both Stone and Hannan in overtime before losing to state champion Sako. Quite honestly the rest of this district is pretty ordinary. State qualifier McGovern brightens it up a bit. He was 5th at the CIT and 8th at Brecksville, losing to Cook and Perez. District semi-finalist Foster is certainly a strong possibility, but that last state ticket is really available. The Smithville finalists Seldenright and Kissinger are both good, while Hughes has been an oft times tournament finalist.

As is so often the case at these lower weights, the Fostoria District has great depth, but few with finalist potential – and so it is at 119#. Five state qualifiers are here, along with a state alternate and two other potential qualifiers. Those five state qualifiers were 2-10 in Columbus last year so there is room for improvement on the last weekend of the

season. Trying to parse this out I'm putting Worthington at the top after a district 3rd last year and tourney wins all through the midlands of Ohio. Perez was the district runner-up at this weight class and won at Northwood. I wonder if his weak schedule will end up biting him. DaFonseca was 3rd at Brecksville and the CIT over Cook. He might be a district finalist. Cook is right there, certainly in the qualifying circle as of now. One to watch is Brunk who won at Tiffin and was 5th at the Top Gun. He looks like the type of wrestler primed to pull off the big upset. He won two district bouts last year. That leaves state qualifier Cramer and state alternate Schneider outside the qualifying circle, but not by much.

125#

PROJECTED CHAMPION: ZACH NEIBERT (GRAHAM)

Top Contenders

2	Skonieczny (Walsh)	14	Holy (Lake Catholic)
3	Garringer (Miami Trace)	15	Brower (Bellbrook)
4	Fickel (Padua)	16	Hile/DeVito (Lexington)
5	Lynch (Napoleon)	17	Beemer (Bath)
6	Morris (Ravenna Southeast)	18	DeLorge (Avon)
7	Alsip (Norwood)	19	Van Dyne (Cambridge)
8	Rininger (Highland)	20	Overholt (West Holmes)
9	Risdon (Harrison Central)	21	Quisenberry (Kenton Ridge)
10	McGraw (Fairless)	22	Wilson (Valley View)
11	Kazimir (Kenston)	23	Monebrake (Eaton)
12	Cohen (Granville)	24	Scavuzzo (Revere)
13	Troyer (Elida)	25	Campbell (Marlington)
		26	Townsend (Hamilton Twp.)_

Defending state champion Zach Neibert has to be the heavy favorite at this weight class, although there may be slender upset possibilities for some of the top contenders. I thought Neibert looked terrific at the Ironman, especially in the finals where he was the more aggressive wrestler, keeping White on his heels most of the bout. I, frankly, thought he deserved a victory for that effort. He crushed everybody at the GMVWA, and only Rininger gave him any kind of resistance at the Ohio Duals. At the Top Gun he pinned Skonieczny in 89 seconds and had little trouble with anyone else. This is not unexpected. Neibert is a three-time placer who was 2nd two years ago to Garbrandt and then pinned him in last year's finals at 119#. Neibert has needed to be tough. After all he had to defeat the defending state champ at this weight class – Tucker Armstrong – just to make the team. Graham has won this weight class five of the last six years with some of their brightest lights, Schlatter, Doggett, and Jordan, included in that list. Neibert will be a worthy addition.

Neibert heads an excellent field at Goshen. Garringer is a three-time state placer (6th-5th-5th) and in many years would probably be a favorite for the state title. He has placed

at the first three weight classes, and has been knocked out of the championship round all three years by Kyle Gilchrist – twice in the first round, once in the second. It is an almost unbelievable coincidence that they would be paired that closely together for three consecutive meets. Mercifully, Gilchrist graduated and the pairings should be far better since he should be away from Neibert. Incidentally, Garringer has one of the most ferocious facial expressions as he competes. It has to be worth the first takedown alone. Alsip placed 8th last year and put up a 50 win season for Norwood. He has solid placement potential, but lost to both Neibert and Garringer last year. State qualifier Brower has to be the favorite for the last state ticket. He was 5th at the GMVWA, but lost to Alsip, 10-3, in the Bellbrook final. District placer Quisenberry might be the most likely candidate to upset one of this top quartet with Wilson and Monebrake also in the picture.

There are two exceptional freshmen at this weight class, both with placement potential and one with possible finalist opportunities. That latter wrestler is Nate Skonieczny, and it would not be a major surprise to see him across the mat from Neibert on the first Saturday night in March. He was a State Junior High champ last year and second to Ian Miller the year before, and has stepped right into the Walsh lineup. He was 2nd at Brecksville after beating Reynolds and Garringer, but then losing the finals bout when he was probably the better boy that particular night. He was 2nd at the Top Gun, beating Garringer again, but this time only by a point, before losing to Neibert on a quick fall. Brother Chase won a state title, but I think this boy will better that. State placer Shelton Morris is a pretty tough boy to track down. Last year he moved over to CVCA and was a state semi-finalist, losing to two-time champ Sergeant 5-3 and finishing 4th. This year he has just started competing for Ravenna Southeast and I expect to find him (eventually) at this weight class. He's very good and Skonieczny will have to be in top form to win. McGraw was a state alternate last year and should reach Columbus this year. He has lost some close bouts during the year, but I think he'll squeeze into the top four here. It would help if Morris stayed at 130#. District semi-finalist Kazimir would be the favorite, if healthy, with Holy, Scavuzzo and, maybe, Campbell in the mix. Watch out for Holy who could be real surprise.

The other great freshman is Brent Fickel, who was 2nd last year at the Junior High States to Skonieczny. He started off with a bang at the Ironman beating a three-time Georgia state champ the opening night. Unfortunately, reality took hold and he did not place. He was 5th at Brecksville, defeating a number of excellent wrestlers (Reynolds, McIntire, etc.), but losing twice to Garringer. At the CIT he was 2nd to Hammer by a point. He will face stiff competition at the Fostoria District. Lynch, Rininger, and Beemer are all returning state qualifiers, with Lynch also a defending district champ. Each has crafted a solid season and should again return to Columbus. However, Hile, a state alternate last year, may be the wild card here. He won the Gorman at 130#, but is now at 125#. He is a scorer with real upset potential. Should he move back to 130# then former state qualifier DeVito would play a similar role. Also very strong is Troyer, a semi-finalist at the Top Gun who finished 4th. He was impressive at Tiffin and cannot be overlooked. DeLorge, a transfer from St. Edward, is also very good and could catch

one of the top kids by surprise. This will be a wild competition and we haven't even talked about Crozier (Clear Fork), Liechty (Fairview Park), or Hackworth (Oak Harbor).

Heath is by far the weakest of the districts. Risdon did place 7th last year and is top rated in that Eastern District. I think Cohen is probably next best, winning at Licking County and Coshocton. Van Dyne and Overholt are possible qualifiers, with Townsend also a reasonable choice. I think we'll see some surprises here, possibly from some of the younger wrestlers.

130#

PROJECTED CHAMPION: FELIPE MARTINEZ (GRAHAM)

Top Contenders

2	Vaughan (DeSales)	14	Lawler (University School)
3	Strausbaugh (Orrville)	15	Katich (Louisville)
4	Nakama (Big Walnut)	16	Frey (Wauseon)
5	Knotek (Walsh)	17	Plavka (Carrollton)
6	Hile/DeVito (Lexington)	18	Santoferraro (Hoban)
7	Storts (Springfield Shawnee)	19	Taylor (Elyria Catholic)
8	Wolfe (Licking Hts.)	20	Rose (New Richmond)
9	DiFrancesco (Avon)	21	Numbers (Kenton Ridge)
10	Duckett (Toledo Central Catholic)	22	Bryant (Rossford)
11	Mellinger (West Branch)	23	Warren (Maumee)
12	Hupp (Marietta)	24	Kooser (Oakwood)
13	Mahoney (Rocky River)	25	Dennis (McNicholas)
		26	Kaufman (New Albany)

They say that when the great concert violinist Paganini performed in his twenties he played so rapidly that audience members swore they saw an ethereal presence next to him (angel or demon) helping him move at superhuman speed. Somehow you get that same feeling watching that acrobatic whirlwind named Felipe Martinez wrestle. All of that was on display at the Ironman. He defeated two excellent out-of-state wrestlers – Kelly and Garafolo – in early rounds, but then met the number one ranked wrestler in the nation, Tony Ramos, in the semi-finals. The key moment occurred when Martinez hit a rapid-fire double leg, converted it into a bear hug, and threw Ramos for five points, and the eventual win. He lost to the long and slithery Villalonga in the finals, but this tournament cemented his top tier placement as a freshman – not that there was really any doubt. He was a three-time junior high champ, and I remember Jeff Jordan telling me that he had a fifth grader that could go with his varsity lightweights. Martinez rolled through the Ohio Duals and won at the GMVWA, crushing everyone until the final round. Then state runner-up Shawn Fayette provided a template for competing with Martinez, wrestle a defensive, down tempo style and try to make it a one move bout. The question is can any Division II wrestler execute such a plan and the answer might be.....

Jake Vaughn was my choice last year, but failed to place. I wondered about the unnecessary (?) cut to 125# and whether that impacted his first round performance. At any rate he went 1-2 at Columbus after a solid regular season. This year, again, I thought he looked great at Brecksville, losing only to Tessari by a point and majoring Davis for 3rd. A state placer his first two years of high school, he has finalist potential again this year.

Martinez should have little trouble at Goshen. Starts, a state qualifier two years ago at 103#, was 2nd at Olentangy and 1st at Troy. He has good qualification chances, but will be no match for Martiez. State qualifier Hupp, if healthy and if at this weight class, has district finalist potential. He has a solid foundation of fundamentals, but has missed time due to injury and does not wrestle a strong schedule. That leaves GMVWA placer Numbers, Rose, and Kooser in a good position to get to Columbus. Certainly one other possibility is Dennis, winner at Franklin.

In a perfect world Cody Garbrandt would be healthy and fit for tournament action. He was a freshman state champ two years ago (over Neibert) and 2nd last year (to Neibert), and one of the more exciting wrestlers in the state--the author of that dramatic comeback over Gilchrist. Picture him battling Vaughan at districts, or even better, matching athleticism and speed with Martinez. Not happening now, maybe next year. Two-time state qualifier Nakama will have to do as Vaughan's biggest obstacle. Vaughan defeated him, 5-4, in last year's district semi-finals and then Nakama went 1-2 at States. He won up a weight class at Olentangy defeating Languis for a most impressive win. He was 2nd at Marion Harding, losing to Jordan Palmer (Lance and Collin's brother), giving him his only defeat of the year. State alternate Wolfe is back, a finalist this year in at least three tournaments, he should qualify. Nakama sent him to a 5th place bout last year with a second period fall. Plavka, if healthy, has had substantial district experience, and could finally make it to States. I don't see anything along the river.

This is one of the few times where there is little depth at Firestone. State placer Strausbaugh is up three weight classes, but is well situated at this level. He has been 6th and 4th the last two years, and with a little luck and a hot weekend (get Vaughn and Martinez on the other side of the bracket) he could be a finalist. This year he won at Smithville, beat Mattingly in a dual meet, and was 3rd at the Top Gun after losing to Martinez by technical fall. Knotek was a state quarter-finalist last year before losing a 9-8 thriller to Baxter and failing to place. He has had an "up-and-down" career, but has real talent. He should place in this his last attempt. I think Mellinger and Lawler are next best. The first named was a district 6th last year, losing to Ford in the go-to-state bout. This year he won at Riverside and was 2nd at the Dies to Dalton, losing by 7. Lawler was a junior high state champ two years ago and then spent a year at St. Ignatius before moving to University School. He hasn't quite put it together, but the talent is there. He hasn't placed in any tournament this year so this is a very speculative ranking. Still he has had tough draws and keeps losing to good people by

very respectable scores. I also like Katich and Santoferraro in a district weight class that is not overly demanding.

The depth is at Fostoria. However, it's the kind of depth where we have ten wrestlers clawing for the four state berths, but none of them have much more than low placement potential. State qualifier DeVito (or Hile) along with state alternate DiFrancesco, might be said to be the top of this large contingent, but it is all very close. Duckett was 2nd at the CIT to Vaughan, while Mahoney and Frey have good district pedigrees. Taylor also was a CIT semi-finalist. Bryant and Warren are possibilities. Somehow it will all get sorted out in two frantic days the last weekend of February.

135#

PROJECTED CHAMPION: DAVID TAYLOR (GRAHAM)

Top Contenders

2	Miller (Oak Harbor)	15	Berger (Cambridge)
3	Maiwurm (Orrville)	16	Schlegel (Maumee)
4	Henline (Coventry)	17	Ritchey (Big Walnut)
5	Cintron (Alliance)	18	Barnett (Sheridan)
6	Skonieczny (Walsh)	19	Bolton (Bellbrook)
7	Eaton (Eastwood)	20	Tomayko (Copley)
8	Rosch (Canal Winchester)	21	Kardasz (Lexington)
9	Shaw (Minerva)	22	Unger (Ross)
10	Hefner (Lima Bath)	23	Bartrug (Buckeye Local)
11	Zappitella (Conneaut)	24	Iachini (Steubenville)
12	Jacobs (West Holmes)	25	Montana (Norwalk)
13	Combs (Bryan)	26	Seldenright (New Philadelphia)
14	Gresham (Goshen)	27	Land (Valley View)

When I was in school I can remember taking the bus downtown to the Cleveland Public Library and poring through the old newspaper files for wrestling results. It didn't take long to calculate that Cleveland West had produced the most state champions. Eventually the great Maple Heights dynasty claimed that mark and held it until St. Edward put up numbers that could not be matched. Still, Maple Heights held on to second place with 46 individual titles. However, it will be just about at this weight class when St. Paris Graham takes over the second spot (depending, of course, on the battles at the lower weight classes). If this is, indeed the timing, then who better to set the mark than the incomparable David Taylor. One of the most accomplished youth wrestlers in history he has tacked on to that legacy with three junior high titles, four state titles and four Ironman titles (the only one to do so). He'll beat Palmer by one weight class to become our first seven-time champion, but he has accomplished so much more. It could be argued (and convincingly) that he was the best little guy in Ohio history, but now he's getting much bigger. He is a marvelous takedown wrestler, but he is even better on top. Riding had kind of gone out of style in Ohio, but Taylor has

proven how important it can be. He will be Graham's third four-time champ, the most of any school (and I'm not even giving a half credit apiece for the Schlatter brothers). Yet in a few years when experts look back to identify the ten or so best Ohio wrestlers in history I'm sure Taylor will make that cut.

While Taylor is clearly the best wrestler at this weight class, his district is (not so coincidentally) the weakest. I see no other returning state qualifiers, but a pair of state alternates has the inside track to Columbus. If your goal is to be a state qualifier or state placer and standing tallest on the podium doesn't figure in your plans, this is a good district weight class to select. At any rate, Unger and Barnett were both one bout from States last year and should make it this year. Barnett has wrestled at several weights, most recently finishing 2nd to Block at Sheridan. I think he'll end up here. Unger won at Franklin and is an experienced senior. The touted freshman Gresham is also here and should qualify. He was 4th at last year's Junior High States in the same weight class as Skonieczny and Fickel. I also like Bolton a lot and think he'll get to Columbus – maybe at the expense of Unger. That leaves Land as a long shot.

Ian Miller apparently had not heard that Taylor is unbeatable. The Oak Harbor sophomore had Taylor on his back at the Ironman and was winning well into the third period before losing 13-9 (see the *Amateur Wrestling News* description). It was the sensation of the tournament. Miller then lost in the tangle of consolations and did not place. Miller was a State Junior High champ two years ago (beating Skonieczny). He took the title at Medina this year beating Mattingly early and won handily at Oak Harbor. He also won at Perrysburg nipping the excellent Rojas, 3-2. State qualifiers Eaton and Hefner are here, neither should directly challenge Miller. Neither won a bout at Columbus, but that should change this year. State alternate Combs was a district semi-finalist last year, but could go no further. He is back at the same weight class. I believe Schlegel, Kardasz, and Montana are the top backups to the four already mentioned.

Easily the best weight class is at Firestone. There are six wrestlers strong enough to qualify or even place. I would not be surprised to see one or two of this group migrate to 140#. Maiwurm is one of those wrestlers who can beat almost anyone on a given day, but is also able to lose to unlikely opponents on that same day. Last year at the state meet he was on a hot streak. He beat two-time state place winner and favorite Brian Stephens in the first round in overtime, decisioned Rosch, and then lost a 9-8 thriller to Hightower in the semi-finals. The next day he was back in action defeating Melillo and state runner-up Severance, 12-11, to finish 3rd. He won at Smithville, but was pinned in the finals at North Canton. He looked very good at the Top Gun, finishing 2nd to Taylor. He could be 2nd or not place at all. The big plus for Maiwurm is that if he wins the district he will be seeded away from Taylor. Should that happen then, of course, the 2nd and 3rd place finishers will be in the same half bracket as Taylor – in fact, one in his quarter bracket. Henline was 5th last year, losing twice to Severance. He was 1st at North Coast and 3rd at the Dies at 140# (a trial balloon?) and has a very vocal cheering section. Cintron was state semi-finalist last year, losing a narrow decision and falling to 5th. He was a semi-finalist at the Top Gun, losing to Maiwurm, 6-4. This is an imposing threesome, but there is another trio just barely below this first bunch. Shaw

was a district semi-finalist last year and lost his go-to-state bout to Henline, 5-4. He was 2nd to Maiwurm at Smithville and beat Combs to win at Toledo St. John. Zappitella wrestles an unusual schedule, but won big at Riverside over Range. He won two district bouts last year until Maiwurm put him out. The “ringer” in this weight class is Nick Skonieczny. He, too, was a junior high state champ last year and has begun to fulfill that promise in his freshman year. He was the only one to give Georgia champ Lazor a battle at Brecksville, but had a tough Top Gun, losing to both Cintron and Shaw by a 1-0 score. He gets a little more offense and he'll be even tougher to defeat. Tomayko could also be a factor here.

The district at Heath has suddenly gotten stronger with the addition of Rosch. A state quarterfinalist last year he lost to Maiwurm and Henline and failed to place. He has won a number of small tournaments at 145# and 140#, and was 5th at Medina defeating McKee. I think the three next best are state qualifiers Jacobs and Berger and state alternate Richey. This group can really aspire to no more than a low place, however. Berger had an excellent district, but was overmatched at the state level last year, losing his two bouts by a combined 36-5 score. Jacobs was 4th at the Top Gun and beat Cintron in the consolations. I'm thinking, maybe, Iachini is the next solid possibility with Bartrug, Seldenright and Strayer (Hebron Lakewood) as possibilities.

140#

PROJECTED CHAMPION: HARRISON HIGHTOWER (UNIVERSITY SCHOOL)

Top Contenders

2	M. Stephens (Graham)	14	Schaffer (Roger Bacon)
3	Leek (Howland)	15	Ramsey (Canal Winchester)
4	Ice (Beaver Local)	16	Budka (Vermillion)
5	McKee (Highland)	17	Severino (Edgewood)
6	Beemer (Wapakoneta)	18	McGinnis (Bath)
7	Fraley (Streetsboro)	19	Beauch (Toledo Central Catholic)
8	Moeglin (New Lexington)	20	Gierhart (Amanda Clearcreek)
9	Conrad (Ross)	21	Armstrong (Miami Trace)
10	Slaga (Buckeye Local)	22	Loxterman (Perry)
11	Klosz (Holy Name)	23	Walker (Goshen)
12	Newell (Kenston)	24	Picklesimon (Alder)
13	Willis (Carroll)	25	Harble (Licking Valley)

One of the wrestlers who made enormous improvement last year was the then sophomore Harrison Hightower. He just seemed to make quantum-like improvements every couple of weeks. It paid off at year's end with sectional, district, and state titles. At Columbus Hightower had two quick first period falls and then outlasted the powerful Maiwurm, 9-8, in the semi-finals. It was not close in the finals as Hightower defeated the 53-0 Sean Collins by five points. Now a junior, Hightower began the year at 145#

and failing to place at the Ironman. He won at North Canton beating the excellent Cline 4-3 in the finals. He dropped to 140# and looked great pinning Sasfy in the finals. Then at the Top Gun, after this paragraph was already written, he pinned Stephens to cement his ranking at this weight class. There are some substantial obstacles in his path, but Hightower has to be the favorite and become University School's first two-time state champ.

One of the obstacles will be the sophomore Matt Stephens. He was a sectional and district 140# champ last year, but then lost his first round state bout in overtime. He bounced back with four consolation wins to take 4th place. This year, like Hightower, he failed to place at the Ironman losing to Palmer early. He won at the GMVWA, but had an upset loss to McKee at the Ohio Duals. I'm not sure he has been quite as sharp as expected, but one can expect that will be corrected by February.

The other major contender will be state runner-up Leek. He had an amazing two weeks last year. He lost in the first round of districts and got tangled up in the consolation rounds. He then won four consolation bouts including a 1-0 victory over Kostandaras in his go-to-state bout before bowing to Knotek and finishing 4th. Then at Columbus he upset my pick Vaughan, 9-6, in the first round and won twice more before losing to Armstrong in the 125-pound finals. I saw him at Hudson (which he won) at 140# and it's clear he could make 135#, but where is the reward. At best (if he won that brutal district) he would be seeded away from Taylor. He has already been 2nd. His best chance of taking the title is here.

Harrison and Leek already have their names engraved on two state tickets not leaving much for everyone else. I think Fraley is probably next best at Firststone. He was 2nd at Hudson, 1st at Kenston, and 4th at the Top Gun, losing to Peterson and Hightower. State alternate Newell is next in line after a great district last year that put him one bout from Columbus. However, he has missed a big part of the season returning only recently. I'm not seeing much else – maybe a Severino or a Loxterman. What I expect is that some of the 135's will move up.

The crew at Fostoria at this weight class is not overladen with fine credentials. McKee might just be the best choice here. He defeated Stephens, 8-6, at the Ohio Duals, and was 1st at North Canton over Yetzer. However he was only 6th at the MIT and defaulted to that same position at the Dies after losing 1-0 to McCormick in the semi-finals. He, obviously, can get the big win, but not always. State qualifier Beemer went 1-2 at Columbus, but was most recently 4th at Wapakoneta. He seems to wrestle at his best late in the year. I have few answers after this duo. I like the young Klosz who was 3rd at the Junior High States last year. He won at Avon Lake and was 2nd at the CIT. Beauch and Leis are two possibilities from the far west, while Budka and McGinnis are long shots.

Stephens should have little trouble at Goshen. Moeglin was 8th last year after rebounding from a first round district loss just to qualify. He failed to place at Medina, but part of that might have occurred because it was his first time down at weight – and

the loss to McGrain was only 1-0. Schaffer was 6th at the SWOCA, but failed to place at the CIT, losing to Klosz. I think Conrad has gone past both of this duo. A district semi-finalist last year, he was pinned by Meyer in 46 seconds and forfeited his last two bouts. Willis, 4th at the CIT, Armstrong, and Walker are my other top contenders at this district.

There should be at least two placers out of Heath. Ice was a big surprise, at least to me last year. He crushed all opposition at his district last year looking nothing like a young sophomore. He then won his first two bouts at states before Riedy and Stephens (by 4-2 margin) pushed him to 5th place. He has been just as good this year and is the best at this weight class in the east. I saw Slaga at North Coast and he is physical and strong as he won handily. He also won at Steubenville pinning Hobley, and is second ranked along the river. The powerful Ramsey has moved down from 145#. He won several smaller tourneys early in the year, and could be a real surprise. Gierhart might be a possibility with Picklesimon having two district wins last year also in the picture.

145#

PROJECTED CHAMPION: BRIAN STEPHENS (GRAHAM)

Top Contenders

2	Witt (Oak Harbor)	16	Williams (Wyoming)
3	Fondale (New Lexington)	17	Burrows (Lexington)
4	Fee (Lake Catholic)	18	Ryba (Crestwood)
5	Mullins (Perry)	19	Renner (New Philadelphia)
6	Dulaney (Whitehall)	20	McKenzie (Carroll)
7	Gresock (Highland)	21	Johnson (Morgan)
8	Johnson (Maumee)	22	Bihun (Revere)
9	Massillo (Van Wert)	23	Fraley (Miami Trace)
10	Fry (River View)	24	Rogel (West Branch)
11	Roddy (University School)	25	Banks (Harrison Central)
12	Redden (Washington CH)	26	Habash (Copley)
13	Stout (Buckeye Valley)	27	Bays (Gallia)
14	Wagenhauser (Defiance)	28	El-Tatawy (Toledo Central Catholic)
15	Disbennet (Bethel Tate)	29	Eby (Valley View)

My guess is that Brian Stephens has something to prove this year. He was 6th as a freshman and then as a sophomore he lost that titanic 14-12 overtime battle in the state semi-finals to Brian Dean and finished 3rd. Last year he was the standard choice at 130# with Collins and Severance, perhaps, a half step behind him. After a district win over Severance he was bracketed away from both of them, but lost immediately to Maiwurm in overtime and then quickly lost his first consolation bout. An entire season had evaporated on a late Thursday afternoon. Now up three weight classes he looks terrific. He rolled into the Ironman finals off a win over Division I state champion Seth Horner and provided stubborn competition before losing, 5-3, to one of the Alton twins. No one went the distance with him at the GMVWA, which included wins by technical fall

over Massillo and DeHart. That continued at the Ohio Duals where he pinned Burrows and tech falled Gresock. There were no close bouts at the Top Gun where he beat Roddy 28-13 and Greco 20-8. It will take a monumental upset to derail this express train in 2009.

There won't be any close bouts at Goshen for him either. That's not to say that Fondale isn't very good. He was a district 6th last year, losing to Gifford in his go-to-state bout. He was very impressive at Medina beating Cline and Betts before running into Horner on one of his best nights. Fondale has won everywhere else and should easily qualify for States. A major positive is that he will be away from Stephens in Columbus. State alternates McKenzie and Williams return, but I'm not sure they have state spots nailed down. McKenzie is down from 152#, but did not place at the GMVWA and apparently did not compete at the CIT. Williams, up five weight classes, was 2nd at Reading (to Disbennet) and 2nd at the SWOCA (to Harger) and 1st at Norwood. That seems like a smooth transition for a five weight class jump. However, I think Redden and Disbennet may have moved ahead of this pair with Fraley, Eby, and Bays still having chances.

Some of the best district action at this weight class will be at Fostoria. I like the sophomore Witt best, but he is not shining quite as brightly as I thought. I hope he doesn't intend to wait until his senior year like his brother to win a state title. What is really amazing is that Oak Harbor won three state titles in four weight classes – at the upper weights. It doesn't happen very often when you start dealing with the big boys. Witt was a state quarter-finalist last year as a freshman and has now moved up four weight classes. It's taking a little time to get used to. He was 2nd at Oak Harbor (to Valliant), but was hurt at Medina and failed to place. However, he just recently won at Perrysburg. He's probably still a year away. Johnson is also a returning state qualifier, but struggled in Columbus. Maumee has a good team this year and he is one of its prime movers. He won at Tiffin (as did the team), but was only 5th at Oak Harbor in a very difficult weight class. State qualifier Gresock is up two weight classes. He was 2nd at the Midwest Classic and 6th at North Canton at 152#, and then was 5th at Medina and 1st at the Dies after moving down. I show this to demonstrate the roller coaster pattern that makes it difficult to decide what happens next. He had a tough Ohio Duals, losing to two of my picks – Stephens and Hightower. State alternate Massillo was a Junior High State placer two years ago, and has wrestled well this year, finishing 4th at Oak Harbor and the GMVWA. Add in the excellent Burrows, Wagenhauser, and El-Tatawy and it will be a great competition.

Dulaney and Fry were state qualifiers last year, but it is not a particularly formidable district at Heath. I do believe Dulaney has placement potential, while Stout could well be second best, though that is yet to be determined. The problem for Dulaney may be that he does not wrestle a testing schedule, although he does win a lot of tournaments. Fry was 4th at the Top Gun, losing by only a point to Gordon. Renner was 2nd to McCormick at Smithville, while Johnson and Banks are both good. I wonder if Mellot (West Holmes) will return to this weight class.

There is some solid placement potential at Firestone. A major reason is Fee who was a district semi-finalist last year before losing to Cintron and then to state runner-up Wukie, 3-2, in his go-to-state bout. He was 8th at Brecksville at 152# after winning at Coffman at that class. He was 3rd at the CIT, losing only to two-time Division I placer Harger. I also like Mullins who missed state qualification by one point at 152# last year. He was 2nd at Riverside at 152#, but won big at Perry beating Bihun, 11-3, in the finals. Roddy has moved down to 145# and was 6th at the Top Gun in a tough field. He beat Burrows, 8-0, at the Ohio Duals. I think Schindel should be good at this class along with Bihun, while Hudson champ Ryba could also qualify. Rogel and Habash could also be factors in what should be a rough struggle for qualification spots. The mystery is whether Zupancic (Norton) will be able to compete. If so, he will have to be accounted for.

152#

PROJECTED CHAMPION: JONATHAN MCGOOKEY (PERKINS)

Top Contenders

2	Wukie (University School)	14	Wohlgamuth (Benjamin Logan)
3	Evans (Graham)	15	Martycz (Kenton Ridge)
4	Gifford (Logan Elm)	16	Eicher (Canal Fulton NW)
5	Rosch (Canal Winchester)	17	Delpra (West Geauga)
6	Eddy (Buckeye Central)	18	McGinnis (Valley View)
7	Hildenbrand (Franklin)	19	Graves (Maumee)
8	Oktavec (Streetsboro)	20	Hepner (Carrollton)
9	McLaughlin (Athens)	21	Supanik (Buckeye Local)
10	Stoffer (West Brqnc)	22	Van Wey (John Glenn)
11	Mossing (Toledo Central Catholic)	23	Watkins (Tipp City)
12	Carfagn (Columbus DeSales)	24	Steiner (Buckey Valley)
13	Gregor (Buckeye)	25	Siegenthaler (Dover)

If you think these telecasts are easy just try doing McGookey versus Wukie for 15 minutes. At that time, the Brecksville tournament, I thought that might be a preview of the state finals, but now I'm not so sure. There are some younger wrestlers who are showing rapid improvement, who could play a significant role in the resolution of this weight class.

McGookey still has to be the favorite. Last year he was a state semi-finalist (losing to Jordan) and then wrestled well to nail down 3rd. All four of his wins were by reasonably comfortable margins. This year he was 5th at the Ironman and had the big win at Brecksville defeating two-time place winner Wukie, 8-6, in a bout that never seemed to be that close. That mirrored his win over Wukie at the Ironman where he got the critical takedowns. He was excellent on his feet, registering a wide variety of takedowns. In the semi-finals he took state quarter-finalist Rob Eddy down, perhaps 10 to 12 times en route to a 31-16 victory. By the way, last year the Northwest District won five

consecutive weight classes (first time ever) starting at this weight class beginning with Tank's upset of Boyd and finishing with Cubberly, Witt, Magrum and Fisher.

Wukie is a two-time state place winner who was an overtime loser in the state finals at 119# two years ago. Last year at 135# he broke bones in both elbows (check out the scars), but continued wrestling. He was 4th at the district level (defaulting his last bout) then won two state bouts before Skonieczny effectively ended his season with a 43 second pin. This year, besides the second at Brecksville, he won at North Canton, and did not place at the Ironman. If he is to beat McGookey, he must do better on his feet.

McGookey will not lose any sleep worrying about the district battles to come. For a while I didn't even have four people listed at this weight class. Mossing was 3rd at the CIT and Sylvania Southview and was a sectional champ before being injured in the first round of districts. Gregor was 6th at Medina and 4th at the Dies, while district placer Graves returns at this weight class. Schutte (Wauseon) might be a possibility, but my feeling is that several of the 145's may move up to fill this void.

Wukie also will have little to concern himself with at Firestone. It's a weight class where a few little things done correctly can vault a wrestler into the top four at this district. Oktavec was 2nd at Hudson to Gasber, losing only by 4-3, and won at Kenston. Stoffer was 2nd at the Dies and 3rd at Riverside. He can be a player here. Eicher was 6th at the Dies and was a factor at last year's district. The dark horse candidate here is Delpra who was 2nd at Perry (to Gasber) and 4th at Kenston. Everyone here (after Wukie) has about equal chances.

It is rather ironic that the top two state candidates come from relatively easy districts, while many wrestlers with good placement chances will struggle through tough ones. At Heath state qualifiers Rosch, Eddy and Carfagna lead the way. Rosch had a district 3rd last year and then won two bouts at States to finish 8th. This year he has worked his way down from 171#. He was a finalist at Medina at 160# defeating the excellent Packard, but losing to Harrison. Eddy pulled off one of those unexpected first round upsets at Columbus when he beat Stephens in overtime. However, the euphoria quickly wore off as he was pinned the next two rounds. He was 4th at Brecksville and 1st at Barnesville, and I see him ranked first in the Eastern District. He probably "owes" McGookey a little revenge after the 31-16 score at Brecksville. It looked a little over the top. Carfagna was 5th at the CIT, but lost twice early at Brecksville – one of which was to Mossing. State alternates Hepner and Van Wey both were close with Hepner being put out by Carfagna. Other good choices here might be Supanik, Steiner, and Siegenthaler who are all strong and alliterative.

The powerhouse district is at Goshen, and there are good wrestlers everywhere. Evans was a Junior High State champion the last two years and you begin to wonder whether he'll just keep that momentum going. He was 7th at the Ironman, losing only to Sulzer and McGookey (by five). He was 3rd at the Midwest Classic, but won the GMVWA, including an overtime win over Division I state runner-up T. J. Rigel. He was 3rd at the Top Gun behind Gasber and Wukie, losing to the latter 4-3. Gifford is very good. He

placed two years ago and has not, to my knowledge, lost this year, winning recently at Grandview Hts. McLaughlin and Hildenbrand are both returning state qualifiers. The first named was 6th last year at 145# - twice in the tournament losing to McGookey by fall. Hildenbrand was a district 3rd over McLaughlin, but did not place. He won at Franklin, but has not been tested in big tournaments to date. Wohlgamuth was a district 6th last year, losing his go-to-state by a point to Hildenbrand. I also rate Martycz, McGinnis, and Watkins as potential qualifiers. This should be a real battle.

160#

PROJECTED CHAMPION: ADAM WALTERS (WEST GEAUGA)

Top Contenders

2	Kilroy (Padua)	14	Gryniuk (Wshington CH)
3	Ryan (Graham)	15	Green (Elida)
4	Tate (A SV)	16	Nadeja (Hubbard)
5	B. Brown (Highland)	17	Eshelman (Milton Union)
6	Mellor (River View)	18	Kaiser (Buckeye Valley)
7	Christman (Indian Valley)	19	Clark (Whitehall)
8	Hoffman (Eastwood)	20	Wilson (Amanda Clearcreek)
9	Spence (Walsh)	21	Washam (Lima Shawnee)
10	J. Brown (Eastwood)	22	Garner (Finneytown)
11	Gallik (Lexington)	23	Lamancusa (West Branch)
12	Nealan (New Richmond)	24	Starner (Circleville)
13	Bernardo (DeSales)	25	Gilday (Kenston)

At last a wide open weight class where at least a half dozen boys have an opportunity to win. It's a weight class with a lot of returning state experience, but no one who has reached the state finals. This is where the "hot weekend theory" could kick in with a relative unknown winning the title--but then again, maybe not.

West Geauga had state champions in back-to-back years with the great Sam Komar and Rocky Woodie providing the titles. Since then they have had a 35 year dry spell that could be lifted this year. Walters was a state semi-finalist last year before losing quickly to two-time champ Eric Cubberly. He bounced back to get 4th in a tournament where he recorded two falls. This year at the Ironman he absolutely gave away his bout to an Illinois wrestler after securing a too comfortable lead. He regained his momentum and took a third defeating that same wrestler with relative ease. Since then it's been a little too simple with the Kenston title as the last signature moment.

Walters will have to contend with an old foe at Firestone. Tate is two-time state qualifier who twice has now missed state placement by one bout. Last year it was an overtime decision to Garbrandt. He was 7th at Brecksville giving Lang a tough quarter-final bout and then losing a close contest with Kilroy. Spence was a semi-finalist at the Top Gun

before losing to Utley and was 8th at Brecksville losing to Tate, 8-2, after dropping an earlier, 12-11, bout. Other possibilities are Nadeja and Lamancusa from the east and Hudson champ Gilday.

I think it's time to see Kilroy step up at this weight class and start winning tournaments. It always seems he is wrestling well in the consolation rounds, but now as a junior, it's title time. Last year he was 6th at Columbus, losing in the first round, but coming back to place. This year he was 7th at the Ironman and 6th at Brecksville after quarterfinal losses. However, at the CIT he suddenly exploded beating the solid Maserang, 13-2, in the finals. There are six other possible qualifiers and it's a colorful lot as it includes Jason Brown, Ben Brown, and Cody Green. Ben Brown was 4th at Medina and 5th at the Dies and has two important head-to-head wins --4-3 over Ryan and 4-2 over Jason Brown. Jason was 1st at Perrysburg and Sylvania Southview and 5th at Medina. He was a state alternate losing to Kilroy 4-3 last year. Gallik is also a returning state alternate who has won this year at Coffman and was 2nd at the Gorman. Hoffman and Green have a substantial portfolio of victories and places. Maxworthy and Washam are both very good, but will need to spring major upsets to qualify.

I thought it would be a two-man battle at Heath with state qualifiers Mellor and Rosch on center stage. However, with Rosch moving down to 152# it looks like Mellor will have far less competition. Mellor was 2nd in his big tournament--the Top Gun. That included a big 9-8 OT victory over Division I placer Coleman and a fall over Pike. However, Utley beat him badly in the finals. I believe that the exciting Bernardo---3rd at the CIT--comes next with Kaiser, Wilson, and perhaps Clark to follow.

Ryan got caught early by Kwiat and was 3rd at the GMVWA and was also 3rd at the Top Gun as the red-hot Utley majored him. He did win at the Midwest Classic and that is enough to rank him first at Goshen. State alternate Christman was 2nd at the GMVWA and should surely qualify this year. I put state qualifier Nealan 3rd here. He wrestles a low profile schedule but has won at Roger Bacon. Don't discount him, he had four district wins at this weight last year and none of them were remotely close. It looks like Gryniuk will opt for 160# and should play a role at this weight. Eshelman has been a consistent placer this year and along with Garner has to be hopeful for a state berth. A long hot possibility here is Starnier operating in the southeastern part of the state, an area which seems to be developing a greater number of solid wrestlers than in the past.

#171

PROJECTED CHAMPION: JAMES MANNIER (GRAHAM)

Top Contenders

2	Raber (Orville)	14	Bates (West Branch)
3	Garbrandt (Claymont)	15	Lauth (St. Marys Memorial)
4	Sarosy (Perry)	16	Maxworthy (Buckeye)
5	Nolan (Coshocton)	17	Wolford (Logan Elm)
6	Kuechler (DeSales)	18	Trautman (Perkins)
7	Gaydosh (Padua)	19	Robinson (New Lexington)
8	Bishop Eaton)	20	Scott (Edgewood)
9	Magalski (Walsh)	21	Flaherty (Hamilton Twp.)
10	Mallarnee (Oak Harbor)	22	Borac (Lake Catholic)
11	Howell (Harrison Central)	23	Krownapple (River View)
12	Eschenbrenner (Eastwood)	24	King (Milton Union)
13	Recknagel (Rossford)	25	Nentwick (Beaver Local)
		26	Miller Chaminade)

St. Paris Graham has so many marvelous wrestlers it's easy to lose track of some of their stars. One wrestler often overlooked is James Mannier who has provided four quality years of varsity wrestling, and now has his last and best shot at his first state title. Unlike some of his teammates this title, should it be gained, will not have come quickly and he has paid his dues, in full, in time and effort. Already a three time district champion he missed state placement his freshman and sophomore by one and two points respectively. Last year he finally placed 3rd, losing a tough 160# semi-final to Bittinger. This year he was 6th at the Ironman losing to Chris Phillips' conqueror, Ed Ruth, in the semi-finals and to Heflin in the consolations. He won the GMVWA, but had two close bouts and then swept all three of his Ohio Duals bouts including an 8-6 win over Sarosy. He crushed the field at the Top Gun scoring points in bushel size amounts. He will be the favorite at this weight class, but like everything else, I do not see the title coming easily. He'll need to be rock solid in the close bouts that will inevitably occur.

A recent surprise has seen Howell move down to this weight class making for a very spirited competition at Heath. However two-time placer Garbrandt is still the top guy here, though, I keep wondering whether he'll take a shot at 160#. He was 4th two years ago and 8th last year after getting beat 15-0 by Cubberly and that vicious tilt. He also lost to Kilroy who remains at 160#. He was 2nd at Medina pinning the red-hot Utley in overtime, but then losing to Heflin. Nolan was also 8th at this weight class last year as he benefitted by being the champ at this district, and then won at Coshocton and Northwestern this year. Every note I get on him talks about his toughness. State alternate Kuechler was 2nd at the CIT and 5th at Brecksville. If DeSales gets off to a good start he could easily place. Howell won two district bouts after a sectional title. This year at 189# he was 2nd at Barnesville and a strong 6th at Brecksville. That's my

top quartet with Flaherty, Krownapple, and Nentwick, at this point, outside the qualifying circle.

There are also four “evident” choices at Firestone—so you know how that will work out. Sarosy, Magalski, and Raber all qualified for States last year, but at different weight classes. Raber drew that powerhouse Pool in the first round and ended up going 1-2. This year he was 2nd to Mannier, 19-7, at the Top Gun while beating Nickolai and Abujaradeh back-to-back. He won at both Smithville and North Canton and this junior will likely only get better. Sarosy qualified at 160# and went 1-2 losing to Cubberly early. This year he won at Riverside, Perry, and Kenston. Magalski qualified at 171# and he has had the least successful season to this point. He was injured at Brecksville and failed to place and missed the Top Gun as well. He needs to get back to his 2008 form. Bates and Scott are my next two choices, but Borac, 3rd at the CIT, is rapidly closing in.

I wouldn't exactly say the cupboard was bare at Fostoria, but I wouldn't characterize it as overflowing either. There are some names, but none that look like they'll be able to exceed a low place at States. I am going to put forward six names, but the ranking will, of necessity, still be very problematic. Mallarnee was a state quarter-finalist at 145# last year, but has found this class somewhat more daunting finishing 8th at Medina and 1st at Oak Harbor. Gaydosh and Trautman were 7th and 8th at Brecksville while Recknagel and Lauth were 4th and 5th at Marion Harding. Maxworthy was 7th at Medina at 189# and 4th at this weight at the Dies. Meanwhile Recknagel has wrestled at least once at 160#, but this weight should seem more appealing. The dark horse candidate here is Eschenbrenner who lost, 10-7, to Mannier and then didn't place. The four that do qualify will need a few days to recover from this struggle.

It looks like a three man game at Goshen. Mannier, of course, tops the list with state alternates Bishop and Wolford next in line. Bishop was district semi-finalist, but then was pinned by both Thomusseit and Foster. This year he was 5th at the GMVWA losing in the semis to Mannier. Wolford most recently won at Grandview Hts. and could be a finalist at this district. I also like Robinson and King with Miller also in reserve.

189#

PROJECTED CHAMPION: NICK MILLS (UNIVERSITY SCHOOL)

Top Contenders

2	Thomusseit (Graham)	15	Viancourt (Holy Name)
3	Wenger (Fairless)	16	Young (Athens)
4	Brown (Eastwood)	17	Blankenship (Alder)
5	Mallarnee (Harrison Central)	18	Poyser (Louisville)
6	Henderson (Toledo Central Catholic)	19	Ulmer (Galion)
7	Woods (Claymont)	20	Moten (Cambridge)
8	Wittkamp (Elida)	21	Hagan (Benedictine)
9	McIntosh (Miami Trace)	22	Taylor (Licking Hts.)
10	Sanford (Finneytown)	23	Day (Valley View)
11	Henderson (Beaver Local)	24	Cross (Coventry)
12	Baker (Padua)	25	Childers (Lemon Monroe)
13	Rice (Conneaut)	26	Noggle (Van Wert)
14	Sill (Perry)	27	Monroe (Crestwood)
		28	Kelton (River View)

I think many people expect a classic two-man battle between Mills and Thomusseit at this weight class, but I'm not sure it will be quite that straightforward. Should they emerge as district champions they will be seeded apart, but that eventual finals meeting will have to overcome some potentially serious obstacles. There are, perhaps, a half-dozen wrestlers who could upset either of these top contenders, and some who have already made it close. Nonetheless, let's look at that top duo.

Mills seems a bit of a free spirit and he reminds me that my daughter, when she was in high school, should have realized that University School students make far superior boyfriends than boys from Hawken. He is twice a state placer, finishing 3rd last year at the absolutely brutal 171# class – his only loss a 5-4 decision to eventual champ Keith Witt. This year he won at North Canton and Brecksville and was 3rd at the Ironman, losing to Thomusseit, 2-1, on some kind of weird penalty point. He reversed that with a one point win of his own at the Top Gun.

Thomusseit is a wonder. He placed 7th as a freshman at 130# and then moved up seven weight classes to finish 3rd at 189#. No Ohio wrestler had ever done that. His only state loss was a semi-final decision administered by two-time state champion Cody Magrum. This year he was 2nd at the Ironman, won the GMVWA, and was 2nd at the Top Gun.

Wenger is the wild card at this weight class. He has won two tournaments and his only loss was in the finals at North Canton to Mills, 9-7. He is a high -energy wrestler, good on his feet (he twice took Mills down), and powerful. He has not wrestled the difficult schedule of a Mills or a Thomusseit, but it has been at least reasonably challenging. He holds the key to the state pairings. If Mills wins the Firestone District then Thomusseit

would have to beat Wenger and Mills to win. If Wenger closes that two-point gap and takes Firestone, then the odds favor Mills and Thomusseit on the same side of the bracket with Wenger apart from them. The rest of this district looks a full step below the top duo. Rice was just one win away from Columbus, but he wrestles a schedule where results rarely flow in my direction. He was 2nd at Riverside, but it was on a default to Hagan, so it's difficult to judge where he stands. Poyser wasn't on my original lists, but his 4th at the Top Gun thrusts him into the picture. Sill won at Kenston and Perry, but was only 4th at Riverside, losing to Hagan. Factor in Cross as a possibility with Monroe looking for upsets.

Thomusseit and McIntosh met in the finals at this weight class last year at Goshen, and I think we can expect a rematch. Still only a sophomore, McIntosh was 1-2 in Columbus and was just recently 5th at the Top Gun where he lost to Mills and was pinned by Woods. I saw him at Brecksville (but not for long) as he failed to place. Still, he should have little trouble at this district unless Sanford, a state qualifier last year, is able to compete. He barely defeated him, 6-5, last year. I have seen no scores for Sanford so his status is unclear. After that, district placer Young and Day (champ at Franklin and runner-up at Valley View) head my list. Back-up help might be had from Childers who won two district bouts last year.

The deepest district is at Fostoria. There are several wrestlers who should compete for low to middle places at States – or even more. Leading the pack is Brown, who was the state alternate at 215# last year. Now at this class he was 5th at GMVWA, losing two narrow bouts – to Thomusseit (6-4) and Division I placer Miller (5-4). State alternate Henderson, who was most recently 3rd at the CIT, and 4th at Brecksville, also should qualify. The powerful Wittkamp, 2nd at Tiffin, had to default his Top Gun semi-final bout to Thomusseit, but may see him again in Columbus. Baker and Viancourt will be strong representatives out of that northeastern sectional, with Gorman, champ Ulmer and Noggle also possibilities.

Woods, a former state qualifier, had an excellent tournament at the Top Gun, and his 3rd place finish combined with his 5th at Medina, make him a co-favorite with state qualifier Mallarnee at Heath. Mallarnee, who has been at 215# most of the year, was a semi-finalist at Brecksville and had a memorable bout with Hayes there. He ended up a solid 5th. Henderson, this one from Beaver Local, should follow this twosome. Blankenship, Moten, and Taylor are all contenders for that last state berth, with Kelton a long shot.

215#

PROJECTED CHAMPION: TYLER HOUSKA (HIGHLAND)

Top Contenders

2	Busick (Steubenville)	14	Burke (Milton Union)
3	Erb (Wapakoneta)	15	Bailey (Shelby)
4	Pickerel (Toledo Central Catholic)	16	Ramsey (Chillicothe)
5	White (Graham)	17	Halmbacher (Buckeye Valley)
6	Thompson (Tallmadge)	18	Pyciak (Buckeye Local)
7	Bloom (Napoleon)	19	Pavlik (Ravenna)
8	Carpenter (Sheridan)	20	Balzano (West Geauga)
9	Dilley (Amanda Clearcreek)	21	Rice (River View)
10	Rippke (Maumee)	22	Dorsten (Greenville)
11	Gravely (Gallia)	23	Bompezzi (Alder)
12	Lugo (ASV)	24	Kosley (Crestwood)
13	Lias (Hubbard)	25	Strickland (Clyde)
		26	Rose (Benjamin Logan)

One of the overlooked superstar wrestlers of the past was the prodigiously gifted Harry Houska, who won a state title in only his second year of wrestling. He subsequently won an NCAA Division I championship and was one of the most feared wrestlers of his time. (Disclaimer – Harry and I were on the same high school team for two years, but that in no way influenced this judgment.) He had a personal philosophy that Henry Wadsworth Longfellow once cogently encapsulated: “Never mind trifles. In this world a man must either be an anvil or a hammer.” Now almost 50 years later another Houska has appeared with a solid opportunity to wrest yet another state title from the wrestling gods.

Houska had a breakout season last year. He beat the strong 215-pound favorite Matt Fisher in the district finals, and won his first three state bouts. One of those was a semi-final overtime struggle against the exceptional freshman, Logan Erb. However, Fisher this time beat Houska in the finals, 4-3. This year Houska won at North Canton, Medina and the Dies, including a tough overtime win over Green at Medina. He has to be given the favorites role here, but the competition will be rugged with Busick, Pickerel, Erb, and several others, all very good. Keep in mind the 285# is extremely weak. It would not surprise me if some of this group decided to migrate to a heavier, but more congenial, weight class.

There will be difficult competition for Houska streaming in from every district, but one of the toughest will be Busick from the Heath District. He has been pretty much untouched and unchallenged in the East, and he brings great credentials to this forecast. He was a district champion last year and made it to the semi-finals before losing a one-point decision to Fisher and ending up 3rd. He defeated both Pickerel and Erb in that run. The only negative plays off one of his positives – that is he has not been challenged all year – so he has not had to perform under constant stress and pressure. Note Busick

has only lost two bouts in two years. Now that Mallarnee has moved to 189#, state alternate Dilley is probably second best. I show recent wins at Logan Elm and New Albany for Dilley, who is not a large 215-pounder, but one who relies more on mobility. It looks like Halmbacher or Pyciak might be in line for the last two spots, with Rice and Bompezzi as two other viable candidates.

Three of the four top rated boys exit Fostoria. Houska, of course, is the favorite, but all three are very close. Pickerel was a state placer two years ago (7th), but the narrow loss to Busick last year thrust him to the consolations and he did not place. At last years district Fisher beat Pickerel by one and then Pickerel was defeated for 3rd place by a point. At Brecksville Pickerel was 6th, losing a close semi-final bout to Scales and then after a consolation loss, defaulting to 6th. He was 2nd at the CIT, again losing to Scales – this time 2-1. I did notice a couple of competitive efforts by Pickerel at 285# and I wonder whether that is an audition for the future. Erb was a terrific freshman, coming off his 3rd place finish in the Junior High States. He was 34-4 going into district action last year and made it to the semi-finals before yielding a quick fall to Houska, but still ended up qualifying. Once there, he again reached the semi-final before again losing to Houska in double overtime. He ended up 4th after losing to Busick. He won at Wapakoneta and Elgin, of late, and will be a major threat. That takes up three of the four state berths leaving little for the rest – and yet there is so much more here. Bloom was a district semi-finalist last year and was 5th at the tough Medina weight class and 1st at Perrysburg. Rippke won the title at Tiffin, Oak Harbor, and Waite. Bailey took the Gorman, while Strickland won at Clyde and was 2nd at Sylvania Southview.

The other principal threat is White, who was the state alternate at Goshen this year. At one point his role in high school might have been as a back-up for Cody Smith and Adam Walls, but their departure has allowed him to realize his potential. He has been 3rd at the Ironman, 2nd at the Midwest Classic, and 1st at the GMVWA and Top Gun. Two of his three losses have been to Houska – the last by a 9-1 count. Still, do not underestimate his determination. State alternate Carpenter is second best here and he has had a fine season. He was 3rd at Medina coming back after being pinned by Bloom in the quarterfinals. He dominates the southeastern area, both at this weight class and at heavyweight (where he recently won at Sheridan). I would not be surprised to see him move to 285# at tournament time. We'll write about that more in the next essay. There are four candidates for the last two spots (or three). Gravely won two district bouts at this weight class and will again wrestle at 215#. Burke, at heavyweight last year, won at Edgewood, was 4th at Troy, and defaulted to 6th at GMVWA. Ramsey won at Valley View, defeating a good field including Halmbacher. Dorsten, at 189# last year, was 5th at the GMVWA, but did not actually wrestle Burke. Rose was runner-up at both Tipp City and Franklin. I favor the first two, but it will be close.

The threat to Houska at Firestone will be state qualifier Thompson, who just lost to him 2-0 at the final of the Dies. He was a finalist at the district last year, but drew Pickerel in the first round, losing a narrow decision. This is a difficult weight class, but he has good placement potential. He beat Holcomb to win at St. Clairsville, and also was champion at Aurora. Lugo was one bout from qualification last year and has come back strong,

finishing 2nd at the Big 8 and 7th at the Top Gun. Pavlik, 6th at the Top Gun and Lias, 5th at the Dies, are also good and have solid district experience. The latter boy, like Lugo, was one bout from Columbus. Balzano, who is improving rapidly, was 2nd at Kenston and 1st at Perry and has good qualification chances with his grind it out style. Kosley is a long shot here.

285#

PROJECTED CHAMPION: JOSH JACKSON (CLAYMONT)

Top Contenders

2	A. Jackson (Benjamin Logan)	14	Keener (Athens)
3	Williams (Geneva)	15	Kidwell (Buckeye Valley)
4	Torrence (Norwalk)	16	Day (Valley View)
5	Neal (St. Marys Memorial)	17	Hawkins (Crestwood)
6	Malone (Carrollton)	18	Rutherford (Norton)
7	Spence (Amanda Clearcreek)	19	Puskac (Licking Hts.)
8	Brooks (Bellevue)	20	Sandwisch (Oak Harbor)
9	Demick (Chillicothe)	21	Chizmadia (Keystone)
10	Cardone (Toledo Central Catholic)	22	Watkins (Tipp City)
11	Jones (Harvey)	23	Quallich (Buckeye)
12	Selfinger (Lexington)	24	Chanthakoun (West Holmes)
13	Cresswell (ASV)	25	Miller (Jefferson)

This is quite honestly the weakest group of heavyweights that we've seen in Division II in a long time. Twelve of the sixteen state qualifiers last year were seniors, and the best of that remaining quartet, Adam Walls, is now in Division I. The remaining threesome went a combined 1-6 with the only victory when they wrestled each other. None of the 215's moved up, at least not yet, so we're not seeing a lot of state experience. This will be the opportunity for a heavyweight to have a couple of hot weekends and close his career with a state title. I did note that David Pickerel wrestled a little at heavyweight recently and we may find some 215-pounders in that crowded field at least thinking about other options.

When I looked at the top heavyweight wrestlers this year there was little to distinguish one from another. Nobody this year has bright, shiny credentials with state titles and placements in full view or with huge tournaments won and district titles to show. From the perspective of numbers they all look pretty much the same – except for one item. If you look at all the top contenders only one has wrestled a long and very testing schedule replete with top tournaments and strong competition. That wrestler is Josh Jackson, who was 5th at the Ironman, 4th at Medina, and 3rd at the Top Gun – a string of terribly difficult competitions. My guess that the lessons learned all year could be worth a point or two, and at heavyweight that is so often the difference.

Jackson was in the most difficult district last year (with state champion Hawkins and Hiles), and missed qualification in an overtime loss. He'll have to face again this year state qualifier Spence who beat him in last year's quarterfinals, 4-3. He was 1st at Logan Elm and 2nd at New Albany, and has the state experience to use as backup. Also here is Malone – 4th at the Top Gun (to Jackson) and 2nd at North Canton. He had an unlucky district draw last year, catching eventual state champ Hawkins in the first round. Factor in Kidwell and Puskac and it's one of the better districts. A long shot might be Smithville champ and Licking Hts. runner-up Chanthakoun.

One of the very top contenders leads the Goshen District contingent. State qualifier Alex Jackson was a district semi-finalist last year before getting pinned in 14 seconds by Chris Holcomb. As a labor saving device it worked perfectly as Jackson swept two bouts in the consolation rounds for 3rd place and a ticket to Columbus. This year he won at Tipp City and Franklin. I think Demick is next best, having pinned Kidwell to win at Bellbrook and also won at Circleville and Bishop Ready. It is totally wide open after this duo, with Keener, Day and Watkins as real possibilities. Clearly, Carpenter would qualify easily at 285# - probably as a finalist – taking advantage of his mobility and technique.

There is a lot more depth at Fostoria, but what I see is lacking in consistency. I like Torrence the best, but by a paper-thin margin. He was 1st at Edison and Norwalk, defeating Division I state runner-up Baker – and was 3rd at the Gorman, losing a one-pointer to Selfinger. Selfinger went on to win the Gorman and was 3rd at Coffman, while going undefeated at the Ohio Duals. Neal has lost only once at last count to Meder at Marion Harding and was a district quarter-finalist. Brooks was 2nd at Avon Lake and won at Bellevue. He was a quarter-finalist at Brecksville and finished 7th. The interesting figure is Cardone. He was a Junior High State 3rd a couple of years ago and is really a 215-pounder. However, with Pickerel at 215 he has gone up to heavyweight and won the CIT. His speed could cause real issues here. Sandwisch, Chizmadia, and Quallich will need a lot of good things to happen to qualify.

Ricky Williams leads the Firestone group and his 3rd place finish last year got him to Columbus. This year he won the Midwest Classic and Kenston and will be a major player in Columbus. Cresswell was hurt much of the year, but came back to get 2nd at the big 8. He should be ready by sectionals. Jones and Hawkins are possibilities, with Rutherford having solid upset opportunities. Miller, runner-up at Riverside, could also be a factor. This is not the most awesome set of heavyweights that Firestone will send to Columbus, although Williams could easily win it all.

TEAMS

1. Graham

This will be their ninth consecutive team title—by far the record in Division II and second only to a pair of streaks crafted by St. Edward (12 currently and 10 between 1978 and 1987). It will also be their 11th overall team title which will propel them past Maple Hts. and place them a clear second on the all-time list. They should also exceed the record number of team points for Division II that they set last year (221.5), and for all divisions currently held by the St. Edward team of 2007 with 229. The ancient record of six individual champions held by Cleveland West since 1951 is also in jeopardy as Graham could have as many as ten finalists and who knows how many champions. Still, we must remember that they had a little stumble in the first round last year which prevented them from breaking the overall scoring record, but that is unlikely to happen again.
2. University School

They were 4th last year, but have a solid opportunity to secure the runner-up trophy this time around. State champion Hightower, Mills, Inghram and Wukie are all possible finalists and all of them finished at least third or better in the past. Roddy and, maybe, Lawler can help with strong districts that give them a chance to score at the state level. Much, however, depends on Inghram's health for that is a critical element for their overall team success.
3. Highland

Houska is the centerpiece of this team and they need him to at least make it to the finals once again if they are to reach this level. Then, the returning quintet of potential placers--Rininger, Mirman, McKee, Brown and Gresock--have to contribute. Key parts of their success will be Mirman who has to cash in at 112# and the middleweights capturing some kind of place.
4. Walsh Jesuit

DiJulius should win at 119# and the two Skoniecznys need to take their exceptional freshman seasons all the way to Columbus. Nate at 125# has proven that he can compete with just about everyone at this weight class and he has, in the past, wrestled in so many big tournaments that I don't see his first state meet fazing him. That then leaves it up to the upperclassmen like state qualifiers Knotek and Magalski, and Spence to put on the finishing touches.

5. Claymont Their three very experienced seniors—Jackson, Garbrandt and Woods—all have the ability to score heavily at the State level. Jackson, in particular, is situated in a very weak weight class where opportunity abounds. If the two freshmen are as good as I think they are they could move up. You have to wonder where they would be at with a healthy Cody Garbrandt.
6. Orrville There are only three scorers on this team, but each of them is a top four performer in his weight class. Strausbaugh, Raber, and, particularly, Maiwurm (away from Taylor) need to be supercharged at the district level to get optimal pairings. If that happens and all goes well they could sneak into the Top Five.
7. Oak Harbor They had three state champions last year which provided enough momentum to nail down the runner-up trophy—even without a lot of backup. This year Witt and Miller need to score heavily, but others also have to contribute. That means Mallarnee, Stone, and, maybe, even Cramer have to be at the top of their game.
8. Padua This is a team with a significant upside. Kilroy has to become the main man and upper classmen like Gaydosh, DaFonseca, and Baker need to help out. Then Romanchik has to score heavily at the tough 112# class while the freshman Fickel shows us what the future will be like at 125#.
9. Miami Trace This is not the great all-around team that we saw last year. Still, Neff and Garringer should score big-time points once again and the sophomore McIntosh will chip in at 189#. However, after that trio it's difficult to know from what direction help will arrive—maybe, Fraley or Armstrong.
10. Columbus DeSales This year Vaughan has one last chance to showcase his talent and score heavily at the same time. Then, McGovern, Kuechler, Carfagna, and Bernardo have to put on their game face and score some ancillary points.