

## Division III

### 103 #

#### **PROJECTED CHAMPION: ALEX DRONZEK (BEACHWOOD)**

#### Top Contenders

2	Harrington (Sandusky St. Mary)	14	Hall (Preble Shawnee)
3	Goebel (Elmwood)	15	Hiltibran (Mechanicsburg)
4	Mowen (Greeneview)	16	Nedved (Clinton Massie)
5	Michel (Edison)	17	Carroll (Northmor)
6	Tschantz (Chanel)	18	Mcfadden (Black River)
7	Grier (Norwayne)	19	Hamilton/Harter (Waynedale)
8	McLaughlin (Nelsonville York)	20	Harrison (Reading)
9	Pizzuto (Jackson Milton)	21	Kern (Liberty Center)
10	Border (Caldwell)	22	Fahrer (Evergreen)
11	Retay (CVCA)	23	Niese (Newark Catholic)
12	Hennegan (Purcell)	24	Schaffer (Seneca East)
13	Elchert (Arcadia)	25	Deaton (Blanchester)

This weight class has a tradition of being difficult to forecast because of the infusion of new exciting, but untested talent. However, that has not been a problem in recent years in Division III, as the Steibers, Harrington, Lint and others have enormously simplified this exercise. That will not be the case this year as we face a fluid, chaotic situation at this class. Should we go with the only returning state place winner or, maybe, the Medina Champ or an exciting freshman or, perhaps, a big school move-in, or...

As it turns out I'm making the safety play and going with the returning state placewinner. One of the reasons is that I've seen Dronzek a number of times the last two years and recognize how much better he is getting. He was the Maple Hts. district champ last year beating Tschantz in the semi-finals 5-2. He was 8<sup>th</sup> in Columbus losing a tight battle with the excellent Reed, 4-3 in the quarterfinals. This year he has won at Beachwood, North Coast, and Hudson while finishing 2<sup>nd</sup> at Southview, losing to Division I state 3<sup>rd</sup> place finisher Ralston 2-0. He is a good all-around wrestler and is particularly solid on top. He'll need to be in top form because this is an evenly matched weight class.

State qualifier Tschantz should be back at the Maple Hts. District with Dronzek. He drew Steiber in the first round of States and then the senior Yeary and was quickly out. This year he was hurt at Solon and has not competed since then. However, he is expected back by tournament time. After that it is a wide-open competition. Pizzuto missed state qualification by one point last year and was 4<sup>th</sup> at Solon in a good weight class. The experienced senior Hamilton also returns after winning two district bouts last year, but could end up at 112 with the young Harter, also good, taking his place. However, he will struggle with the red-hot Grier who won at Chippewa and was 3<sup>rd</sup> at

the Dies and the freshman Retay who was 6<sup>th</sup> at the Top Gun. An impressive result from the Dies for Grier was a fall over the excellent Graham for 3<sup>rd</sup>. Factor in McFadden and it's a very competitive weight class.

Two of Dronzek's chief adversaries will emerge from Owens. Harrington was a district runner-up to Steiber last year and went 1-2 losing to Dronzek by four in the consolation rounds. Now a junior he'll match up very well with many of the younger wrestlers in this weight class. One of his district victims last year was the oncoming Goebel who ended up as the state alternate. This year Goebel won three close, close bouts in a row at Medina, including a 2-1 decision over Retay, to make the finals where he dominated Lyons to win. I like Michel just slightly behind this duo as he has dominated most of his completion. He lost to Goebel in that ultimate overtime in the 5<sup>th</sup> place bout at districts. The last spot should go to former state qualifier Elchert who went to States two years ago, but missed out in 2008. Kern, Fahrer, and Schaffer are other contenders but may need good bracketing to succeed.

It was, I thought, to be a three-man battle at Steubenville. I favored Reichle who lost to Reed in the district quarterfinals last year and then in overtime to be eliminated. This year he had been dominant in the Columbus Area and appeared to have good placement potential. However, he apparently will not compete this rest of this year. Next on my list is the intriguing freshman from Nelsonville-York, the sensational McLaughlin. I have him winning four tournaments and just "crushing" everyone in his bracket. He seems to have had it almost too easy. Border is probably the best out of the Eastern District, and should provide good match-up with McLaughlin. We'll know more after we see the results of the OVAC, which occurs after this is written. The last two state berths are strictly up in the air. With Reichle out of the picture opportunity waits. Carroll is probably the best bet finishing 2<sup>nd</sup> at the Gorman with Niese 3<sup>rd</sup> at Coshocton, as another challenger, along with Crilley.

The news at this weight class in the Fairmont District was Mowen moving to Greeneview. A district quarter-finalist in Division I last year he has a solid experience base. He defeated Pizzuto to win at Elyria Catholic. He was an easy winner at Bellbrook and was 5<sup>th</sup> at the GMVWA defeating Garcia before being dropped into the consolations by Brascetta. I like Hall next best with Nedved and Hiltibran certainly capable of being a district finalist. Hennegan has seemingly come out of nowhere to capture 3rd place at the CIT and cannot be overlooked. Deaton could also be a player here, but the big question mark is Harrison, who was only 5<sup>th</sup> at Madeira.

**112 #**

**PROJECTED CHAMPION: SPENSER PIERCE (NORTH UNION)**

*Top Contenders*

2	Tolson (Delta)	14	Ankrom (Bloom Carroll)
3	Majoy (Edison)	15	Bailes (Mogadore)
4	Reed (Waterford)	16	Johnson (Monroeville)
5	Arthur (Greeneview)	17	Fortune (West Salem Northwestern)
6	Powers (CVCA)	18	Richter (Monroe Central)
7	Spreng (Loudonville)	19	Glosser (Otsego)
8	Porter (Bellaire)	20	Heiss (Miami East)
9	Pavia (Sandusky St. Mary)	21	Parker (Mohawk)
10	Weirauch (Archbold)	22	Kapper (Manchester)
11	Triskett (VASJ)	23	Lovejoy (Allen East)
12	Wiseman (Jackson Milton)	24	Johnston (Blufton)
13	Huffman (Tri-County Noth)	25	Frederickson (Dixie)

Now that Hunter Stieber has apparently moved to 119# this weight class has suddenly become a wide-open affair. It opens the door for any number of wrestlers who just a couple or weeks ago were just hoping to draw away from Stieber at the state meet. It also may mean a major revamping of the participants at this class. It is not difficult to envision 119 pounders who certified at 112#, but found it a tough cut suddenly re-examining their decision to compete at 119#. Some may well decide that 112# suddenly looks like a more congenial weight class. Look for some surprises here.

Early in the year, I envisioned a Pierce/Reed match-up at the district level would determine who was seeded away from Steiber and thus a potential finalist. At the time I favored the more explosive Reed. Now two things have changed. The district isn't nearly so important and I've switched to Pierce who has had a better year. He was the district champ last year beating Reed 8-7 and it was important since it put him away from Steiber (by chance) so that he could finish 2<sup>nd</sup> and the best Reed could do was 3<sup>rd</sup>. Pierce has won everything this year most recently at Elgin where he beat Division I place winner and old friend Boehm. I don't see many of Reed's scores but he was 2<sup>nd</sup> at Steubenville losing 8-2 to Wiltshire, however, I totally misread his talent last year and he may make me eat my words again in 2009. State alternate Ankrom should be the third qualifier out of this district and has had some impressive results this year. There is not a lot of wiggle room at this district so people like Porter and Richter have little margin for error. Both lost early last year and then had to try and qualify out of the consolations. It's a lot easier if you can make it to the semi-finals.

This is a weight class that seems to run in pairs, that is each district seems to have two outstanding contenders at Owens that works out to Tolson and Majoy. The first named was a state semi-finalist at this weight class before losing to Heminger and dropping to 4<sup>th</sup>. His recent victory over Manley to win at Perrysburg was significant and he, clearly,

has finalist potential. Majoy was 5<sup>th</sup> at this weight class last year after losing to Heminger in the quarterfinals. Tolson had defeated him in district action. This year he was 1<sup>st</sup> at Bellevue, Edison and Plymouth and this is his best opportunity to nail down a high place. State qualifier Pavia, Parker and Glosser all are at this weight class, but Weirauch is at that same level. The big unknown is Lance Johnson for whom the dramatic Stieber weight adjustment was made. At the moment it is a bit of a mystery as to how well he'll do. Last year he was a district qualifier at 125# and went 1-2 with two close losses. This year at Brecksville at 119# he won three bouts losing to state runner-up Inghram and state qualifier Cook. My guess is that you have to get tough rolling around with the Stiebers every day. Only two will qualify and with the spread between sectionals the pairing should be reasonable. Currently, I favor Weirauch and Pavia to capture those last two spots. That would leave out Glosser and Parker who were 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> at Tiffin, and, of course Johnson. Should this be incorrect and Johnson qualifies, it would be an enormous plus for Monreville's team chances.

State placer Spreng and state alternate Powers are the top duo at Maple Hts. Spreng was 6<sup>th</sup> last year which included a first round win over Glosser. Spreng has been a consistent placer this year finishing 2<sup>nd</sup> at Mt. Vernon and the Gorman and 5<sup>th</sup> at North Canton. He is a battle-hardened veteran who should place again. Power lost a semi-final donnybrook in overtime to Spreng in last year's district semi-finals. He was 5<sup>th</sup> at Medina defeating Artrip 7-6 and if you believe in the "common opponents" philosophy Spreng lost to Artrip 8-3. He was 6<sup>th</sup> at the Top Gun losing to Birr in the semi-finals. The lanky Triskett who power washed my house this fall is third and if he hits his opponents with the same energy he used on my house he'll be in good shape. He was a sectional champ last year beating Dronzek and then failed to make weight for districts. He did not, however, have a real good CIT, but then Romanchik didn't place either. Fortune is an excellent freshman, who was 5<sup>th</sup> in one of the toughest weight classes at the Junior High States last year. Also here is Wiseman who won at Elyria Catholic beating state qualifier Tim Arthur 7-3. The senior Bailes and Kapper are two other quality competitors. This will be a dynamite competition.

The top twosome at Fairmont is state qualifier Arthur and state alternate Huffman, and they'll compete at slightly different levels. Arthur went 1-2 at the state meet beating Parker. This year he was 2<sup>nd</sup> at Elyria Catholic, 1<sup>st</sup> at Bellbrook and 2<sup>nd</sup> at the GMVWA losing only to Isaac Jordan and beating Tolson 10-5. Go figure. Arthur defeated Huffman in their go-to-state bout, but he has quickly bounced back. Also a wrestler to watch is Heiss. He won convincingly at Troy over a solid field and placed 8th at the GMVWA losing to Regan and Heidkamp in overtime. He was a district 6<sup>th</sup> last year. That leaves one open slot to be fought over with Lovejoy, Johnston and, very probably, Frederickson or Beatty.

**119 #**

**PROJECTED CHAMPION: HUNTER STIEBER (MONROEVILLE)**

Top Contenders

2	Heminger (Northmor)	14	Branham (West Jefferson)
3	Kovach (Chanel)	15	Cattran (Bloom Carroll)
4	Hall (Tuslaw)	16	Lee (Elmwood)
5	Barlow (Heath)	17	Jacober (Beachwood)
6	Hoskins (Greeneview)	18	Caudill (Spencerville)
7	Anthony (Carlisle)	19	Cole (Edison)
8	Harbart (Garrettsville Garfield)	20	Ganger (Miami East)
9	Hancock (Troy Christian)	21	A.Merschman (Delphos St. John)
10	Dandurand (Hopewell Loudon)	22	Gantka (Genoa)
11	Pizzuto (Jackson Milton)	23	Wooton (West Liberty Salem)
12	Glenn (Otsego)	24	Barker (Barnesville)
13	Thompson (Brookfield)	25	Lump (Paint Valley)
		26	Yoder (Martins Ferry)

Defending State Champion Hunter Stieber will apparently, in a strategic decision, abandon 112# where he competed the first third of the season and move to 119#. It's a decision predicated on acquiring the team title and its one the great Division III Coach Jude Roth undoubtedly applauds. The point is to give Lance Johnson the best chance to contribute some team points in what may become a close battle with Troy Christian (See the Team Section for more thoughts on its ramifications). As it is, I don't see it as much of a gamble. Stieber had four falls in winning last year at 103# and should not be overly discomfited wrestling at 119# rather than at 112#. He was 51-0 last year, but lost for the first time in his high school career at the Ironman finals to a very hot Devin Carter, who he had majored the year before. He defended his title at Brecksville in a far tougher weight class at 112# than he'll face here at 119#, defeating Robinson in a tiebreaker and Squire with two takedowns to one escape. Like all of the Monroeville wrestlers he is good in all three positions, but I'm most impressed by how well all four of them can ride. They are tough, aggressive and relentless and react like college wrestlers on top. It's their not so-secret weapon when faced with a tenacious opponent.

With Stieber at 119# that leaves only three state spots open at Owens at this weight class. Despite that I expect to see some of the 112's to move from that terribly crowded field to the relative serenity of 119#, except, of course, when you are on the mat with Stieber. The natural second choice is three-time state qualifier Dandurand, who has been a constant winner in the northwest for four years. He has a 1-6 record at the state meet, but has placement potential in this his last opportunity. I rate state alternate Glenn and Lee dead even and if a dynamite 112 pounder moves up, the bracketing could decide who goes. As currently constituted they both should qualify. After that one sees only chaos. I think Cole might be next, but Gantka was a district semi-finalist last year with Fleming, perhaps another option.

The competition at Maple Hts. will be far more dramatic than what will happen at Owens. There are six bona fide state candidates looking at four state tickets. The alpha wrestler here is defending district champ Kovach who leveraged that win to a 4<sup>th</sup> place finish at Columbus. He's been very solid this year winning at Solon and finishing 2<sup>nd</sup> at Brecksville (to DiJulius), Mayfield (to DiJulius) and the CIT (to Corrill) with two of the three losses closely fought. Many-time state qualifier Hall and Harbart are just behind. Hall was the state runner-up at 103# two years ago, but failed even to qualify last year. Harbart was 4<sup>th</sup> two years ago, but did not place last year. Both would like to improve on junior season that probably did not quite meet expectations. That leaves state qualifiers Pizzuto and Thompson in the unenviable position of fighting over most likely just one spot. Also a possible issue is that Harbart exits from the same sectional making the pairings rather dicey. I favor Pizzuto in this battle. Also here is the gifted Jacober. A tremendous wrestler he is very small for this weight class and that will likely be exacerbated with the weight allowances. That he continues to win is a testament to his ability and he could qualify.

Heminger is fun to watch and a very good wrestler. Last year as a freshman he ripped through a very tough district defeating two-time state place winner Reynolds in the finals 18-11. Then in Columbus two falls and a 14-0 win put him in the finals where he nearly pinned Tessari. Down 9-4 he tied it with the big move, but lost 12-9. Except for not being able to beat the boy from Shelby, Worthington, he has had another big year. For example at Gorman he had a succession of quick falls before again losing to Worthington. One major positive for Heminger is that as a district champion he will be seeded away from Stieber, a real incentive to win another district title. The other place winner at Steubenville is Barlow who was 4<sup>th</sup> at 103# last year losing to Stieber and Reed by fall. Now at 119# he has been a steady placer and should hold off the many challenges here. That group would include Cattran, Branham, Yoder, and Barker. I like the first two slightly better, but it should generate a lot of close bouts. Last year at districts Yoder defeated Cattran in overtime and Branham, 7-3, but that relationship could easily have changed. Lump and Rozman (Ready) are other thoughts here.

There are four returning state qualifiers at Fairmont including two who placed last year. Hancock was 5<sup>th</sup> at 103#, losing a one-pointer to Pierce in the semi-finals and a two-pointer to Barlow. He wrestles a big time schedule around the state including an impressive 4<sup>th</sup> at Brecksville and a 3<sup>rd</sup> at Wapakoneta. If healthy, he's the best here. Hoskins was 7<sup>th</sup> at 112# after a district 2<sup>nd</sup> behind Anthony--a loss that was avenged in the state placement bout. He and Anthony will again lock up starting at the sectional. They've had parallel years winning or placing high in small tourneys and failing to place at the GMVWA. Hoskins won two of their three tourney bouts last year. Ganger is the other returning state qualifier, but I see him as a long-shot to repeat, but then again he was an underdog last year. Instead state alternate Caudill might be the favorite for that coveted fourth slot. He missed by two points last year. In that same sectional Beck and the younger Merschman are also possibilities, joining Wooten and the freshman Perdue (Reading).

**125 #**

**PROJECTED CHAMPION: LOGAN STIEBER (MONROEVILLE)**

Top Contenders

2	Reynolds (Pleasant)	16	Goldberg (Miami East)
3	Donahue (Tuslaw)	17	B.Merschman (Delphos St. John)
4	Vargo (CVCA)	18	Fano (Waterloo)
5	Shepard (Sparta Highland)	19	Petersheim (Waynedale)
6	Lopez (Patrick Henry)	20	Guilford (Badin)
7	Kiefer (Chanel)	21	Fisher (Carlisle)
8	Campbell (Troy Christian)	22	Smith (Delta)
9	Mallos (Cuyahoga Hts.)	23	Fisher (Allen East)
10	Fusco (Hartley)	24	Foster (Bellaire)
11	Panno (Blanchester)	25	Coulter (Cardington Lincoln)
12	Burns (Edison)	26	Smith (Evergreen)
13	Nolte (St. Clairsville)	27	Matacic (Jackson Milton)
14	Border (Caldwell)	28	Burge (Norwayne)
15	Johannsen (Port Clinton)	29	Norval (Woodridge)

If at the beginning of this year one was to list those wrestlers with the highest probability of becoming a 2009 State Champion the name Logan Stieber would have to be at the very top of the list. Already a two time state champ he has been on of the most dominating wrestlers in state history and was moving up only one weight class. He came into this season with a 94-1 record (losing only to David Taylor when a freshman) and was never really tested last year. Yet, had he fractured his hand in February rather than November it would have destroyed his season. Such are the vagaries of chance in all sports (and in life) where the unexpected can bring down giants. As it is Stieber has just returned and barring further bad luck will overwhelm the field at this weight class. Incidentally, Stieber could become the first wrestler in history to win four state titles without ever needing to wrestle a six-minute bout. In his first two years he has had five falls (in exactly six minutes) and three technical falls.

With the battle being for 2<sup>nd</sup> place it will be an advantage to exit Stieber's district (you'll be away from him in Columbus) and it just so happens that Lopez, a top contender, will also be at Owens. Lopez placed two years ago and had a terrific regular season last year, but did not participate in the tournament process. Lopez has won this year at Arcadia and Woodmore, but wrestles a weak schedule. State qualifier Johannsen is also a threat here. He wrestles a much more vigorous schedule and took a title at Black River. He should qualify again. The fourth spot, or, maybe better, belongs to the freshman Burns. He upset three-time state qualifier Dandurand to win at Edison, won again at Bellevue and just three days ago won at Plymouth. McGrail is a possibility but if there is an upset it's likely to be pulled off by a Smith, Jordan (Delta), Jeff (Evergreen) or Matt (Margaretta). They're all good.

The Steubenville District is terrific. I think at least two of the top contenders have finalist potential. And one of them, Reynolds, if he wins his district will be paired away from

Stieber. Reynolds was 5<sup>th</sup> two years ago at 103# and 3<sup>rd</sup> last year after losing by fall to Tessari at 112#. He's wrestled a solid schedule finishing 2<sup>nd</sup> at the Midwest Classic and Elgin, but failing to place at Brecksville after losing to two fabulous freshmen. I've always liked Shepard, but he just hasn't done much once he gets to States. Last year he took Householder (eventual state runner-up) into overtime in the district final, but then went 1-2 at States, losing to Sommers and Begg. This year he's been great again and needs to carry that to the Value City Arena. Fusco was a state quarter-finalist last year losing to Tolson and failing to place. This year he most recently was 4<sup>th</sup> at the CIT. All these boys are from the Central District, but both Nolte and Border are from the Eastern District and both are also returning state qualifiers. They split two bouts this year and could challenge Fusco, but probably not the top duo. Jake Foster, Coulter and Neer are other possibilities, but this is a very crowded district.

I wasn't sure whether Donahue or Vargo should be top rated at Maple Hts. but the question was nicely answered when Donahue won 6-2 at Medina. Donahue was a state qualifier last year, but drew two-time champ Sergent in the first round and got pushed into the loser's bracket. After a shutout win over Gualtieri, he lost to three-time state placer Pope. It was not the luckiest of draws. He was a semi-finalist at Medina finishing 4<sup>th</sup> and then won the Dies. Vargo, a transfer from Akron St. Vincent, was 5<sup>th</sup> at Medina and 3<sup>rd</sup> at the Top Gun losing only to state champ Zach Neibert 6-1. Both have finalist potential. Right with this duo is Kiefer, sometimes hurt and always just getting to weight, but very solid. He was 3<sup>rd</sup> at the CIT splitting two bouts with Fusco. Prior to that, he was 4<sup>th</sup> at Brecksville including a win over Skilton. Injuries caused him to miss the tournaments last year. That leaves, in my mind, state placer Mallos and state qualifier Fano with just one open berth. Last year, after a first round state loss, Mallos beat Merschman and Fusco to place. He could meet both of them again if he can get to Columbus. I favor the former, but Petersheim, Maticic and Norval are possibilities. Watch for Burge he went into overtime last year with Donahue almost eliminating him from state qualification.

Despite some solid credentials Fairmont is probably not the strongest district. Campbell, who has great talent, stepped in as a backup last year and wound up taking 6<sup>th</sup>, nice depth for a Division III team. This year it's been more of a struggle partly due, I believe, to the injury bug. State qualifier Panno was quarter-finalist last year, but then quickly lost to Kovach and was soon gone. He's been even better this year winning, for example, at Edgewood and was 3<sup>rd</sup> at Elgin at 125#. Merschman placed two years ago at 103# and qualified last year, but he'll have to be at his best to get out for a third time. Still he has proven to be a resourceful wrestler. Goldberg has something of the same history. This year he was 2<sup>nd</sup> at Troy. Guilford is one of the first wrestlers from Badin I've mentioned and he has been cleaning up in smaller tournaments and was a placer at the SWOCA. Trey Fisher (Carlisle) and Ty Fisher (Allen East) both, coincidentally, made my list along with Breisch.

**130 #**

**PROJECTED CHAMPION: CAM TESSARI (MONROEVILLE)**

Top Contenders

2	Carpenter (Madeira)	14	Freeman (Allan East)
3	Sommers (CVCA)	15	Hook (Nelsonville York)
4	Canter (Bellaire)	16	Widder (Waynedale)
5	Kuzma (Hopewell Loudon)	17	Correll (Calvert)
6	Begg (Bluffton)	18	Breuer (Deer Park)
7	Orrill (Chanel)	19	Hernandez (Elmwood)
8	Gualtieri (West Jefferson)	20	Gerber (Garaway)
9	Dankle (Cuyahoga Hts.)	21	Mackey (Martins Ferry)
10	Callarik (St. Clairsville)	22	Freiberg (Cardinal)
11	Ziegler (Mechanicsburg)	23	Sandridge (Johnstown Monroe)
12	Cardiero (Girard)	24	McDonald (Plymouth)
13	Bodenbender (Tinora)	25	Grys (Western Reserve)
		26	Bouman (Norwayne)

For the second consecutive year Monroeville will be heavy favorites to win state titles in three consecutive weight classes. Tessari, perhaps the least well known of Monroeville's four superstars, will be the anchor man in that quest, but like the other two will be a heavy favorite. Tessari has had a knack for finding rough weight classes in which to compete. Last year he opened his state competition facing three returning state placers, pinning them all. Then in the finals he surrendered a big five-point move to fellow freshman Tyler Heminger, but then earned an escape and a clinching takedown to win 12-9. This year he was 4<sup>th</sup> at the Ironman, losing to the brilliant Chris Villalonga in the semi-finals and 1<sup>st</sup> at Brecksville. At the latter tournament he eked out a tough 4-3 semi-finals win over the redoubtable Jake Vaughan. In his high school career he has suffered 5 losses all at the Ironman Tourney.

I happened to be standing right next to the mat when Johnny Carpenter and Mike Kovach battled for 3<sup>rd</sup> place at 119# last year. These were two fine young wrestlers at the end of a long tournament still going all out and still very physical in a battle of equals. Carpenter was happy to win the 4-3 decision, and, today, maybe even happier since a district title seeds him away from Tessari. Carpenter was very good, beating Sommers 12-2, and pinning Johannsen, to make the semi-finals where Logan Stieber tech falled him. This year he's up two weight classes and was 2<sup>nd</sup> at the SWOCA, an upset loser to a suddenly hot Ruffing, who won the MVP. Carpenter could be a finalist. State placer Begg was 7<sup>th</sup> last year and has wrestled primarily at 135#. I'm guessing he's keeping his options open. He should easily be second best at this district and maybe more. He only lost to Carpenter 11-9 in the district finals. A reversal of that score might well put him opposite Stieber. State qualifier Ziegler is one of the leaders of a good Mechanicsburg team and won most recently at Olentangy. He missed out on qualification last year, but seems to have bounced back strongly. Freeman won at Allen East and was 3<sup>rd</sup> at Marion Harding, in this, his last run at state qualification. Factor in

Breuer, Timmerman (Coldwater) and Bierman (Badin) and this will be a solid test for Carpenter.

I'm not seeing the normal level of depth at Maple Hts., however, Sommers, who was 5<sup>th</sup> last year at Columbus, has apparently made a quantum leap forward. He was 2<sup>nd</sup> at North Canton losing to D-I state runner-up Fayette 2-0 and 1<sup>st</sup> at Medina. He looks ready. Orrill qualified at 125# last year, but lost to Carpenter in 33 seconds and to Kuzma 8-7. He'll do better this year if he can bounce back from injuries. State alternate Dankle should be in a solid position to qualify. I watched him last year use tremendous quickness to upset Donahue at districts, but Morris and Orrill cost him a state trip. Cardiero was also one bout from States last year with Freiberg, Widder and, maybe, Bouman with similar type chances.

After Tessari it's a weak group at Owens. A possible exception might be Kuzma who qualified for States with a district 4<sup>th</sup> and went 1-2 in Columbus. He's wrestled at three different weight classes but I think he'll end up here. It's his easiest path to Columbus. He was 2<sup>nd</sup> at Tiffin at 135#. Hernandez and McDonald are seasoned veterans who could do something here, but do not look to have the firepower to compete well at States. Bodenbender, just down from 135# was a big winner at Perrysburg and this is the kind of weight class where a hot weekend can get you to Columbus. Perhaps Grys or Crapo are more the answer. Crapo (Seneca East) just won big at Plymouth while Grys won handily at Clyde. Still both have had uneven years. Two mysteries surround this weight class. Will state alternate Correll participate in the tournament process and how good is the young Cowell (Archbold)?

State qualifiers Canter and Gualtieri shine at Steubenville. Canter has been winning everything after going 1-2 at the state meet. Bellaire has had a nice team the last few years and its strength has often been in the middle of the lineup. At Columbus last year he won his first bout, but then drew two-time state champion Daniel Kolodzick in the quarterfinals losing 12-4. Immediately thereafter he lost to Powers and was eliminated. He kicks off a segment of their lineup that includes state qualifier Faykus, Dobson, state runner-up Chilson, and Porter. Gualtieri won 46 bouts last year, but suffered a heart-breaking 8-7 loss in first round action at States and failed to place. I thought he might go at 135# but has apparently settled here. After that it's by guess and by golly. Hook is a monster winner in the Southeast but Gualtieri beat him 12-3 at district while Callarik just won at St. Clairsville, Gualtieri also beat him at districts 2-1. You might look for Gerber, 1<sup>st</sup> at Aurora or Sandridge.

**135 #**

**PROJECTED CHAMPION: JORDAN THOME (TROY CHRISTIAN)**

*Top Contenders*

2	Oney (South Central)	14	Rayfield (Delta)
3	Powers (CVCA)	15	Gainey (Girard)
4	Prezzia (St.Clairsville)	16	Robinson (Heath)
5	Rentschler (Liberty Center)	17	Clark (Monroeville)
6	Collier (Chanel)	18	Hershey (West Salem Northwestern)
7	Vitallo (Waynedale)	19	Traver (Genoa)
8	Deady (Triad)	20	Allen (Ridgewood)
9	Espinoza (Milbury Lake)	21	Sanders (Badin)
10	Alexander (Elmwood)	22	Stretar (Black River)
11	Faykus (Bellaire)	23	Cummins (Cardington Lincoln)
12	Hussey (Ayersville)	24	Klaus (Mechanicsburg)
13	Montoney (Woodridge)	25	Meinking (Purcell)
		26	Borton (Clinton Massie)

As a three-time state placer Jordan Thome is in the top of echelon of Division III wrestlers, but he has struggled the last night of major tournaments. He is a three-time Brecksville runner-up, a three-time district runner-up, and has lost his last bout at all three of his state tournament appearances, finishing 6<sup>th</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup>, and 2<sup>nd</sup>. This is the year where he closes the deal and takes home the state title at 135<sup>th</sup>. The same weight class his brother dominated just two years ago, Troy Christian has had a brilliant four year run, already winning two state titles and likely a third to this year and gaining a runner-up trophy in 2006. That dominance is not likely to be sustained next year as the last three stalwarts, Hancock, Toal, and Thome will graduate.

The question really is; Are there wrestlers out there in Division III who could frustrate Thome yet again? My answer is that Thome would be at least a 90% favorite against any contender, but that still leaves an edge of uncertainty. One of those ten percenters is Tyler Powers, a state qualifier at 130<sup>#</sup>. Last year he caught Thome's buddy, state champion Zac Hancock in the first round, and lost by fall. However, he went on to win three time state consolation bouts to finish 7<sup>th</sup>. This year he was one win from placing at Ironman, and then won at North Canton, including falls over Burrel and Maiwurm. At Medina he moved into the semi-finals after an impressive win over Shepard to meet Salupo. It appears (and this is strictly by interference) that he was injured in the bout, but declared the winner. He forfeited in the finals and has not wrestled since. State qualifier Collier returns after a 1-2 record in Columbus last year after an amazing tournament run. He entered the sectional with a 15-18 record, but won a sectional title and was a district runner-up. He'll do much better this year. After early season injuries he was 2<sup>nd</sup> at the Big 8. But then failed to place at the CIT. I like Vitallo as third best. Last year at districts he lost to state placewinner Thoreson in a tough two-point bout and then in overtime in his go-to-state battle. This year he was 4<sup>th</sup> at the Dies and 1<sup>st</sup> at Elgin. The last state ticket is there for the asking. I favor Montoney after his gutty 2<sup>nd</sup>, up

a weight at North Coast, and his recent win at Woodridge. Gainey is another possibility after recently defeating Tomaino and having previous district experience. Hershey, Stretar and Rose (Cardinal) are other wrestlers with good credentials. .

Oney should dominate at Owens. Now a junior he has matured into a high-scoring wrestling machine. Already a two time state qualifier he was 6<sup>th</sup> last year losing early to Sergent and later to the older Carpenter. This year he has ripped off wins at Black River, Plymouth, and Clyde and has demonstrated finalist potential. If Kuzma wrestles at 130<sup>th</sup> as I hypothesize, that would leave three vacant state possibilities. One would think that returning state qualifiers Rentschler, Alexander, and Traver would be natural favorites, but I don't see it this way. It looks like Rentschler should qualify, but Traver will have to be at this absolute best to do so. Alexander is somewhere in the middle with perhaps, thoughts of competing at 140#. Hussey, down from 140# is a solid choice as is Espinoza who won at Northwood and was 2<sup>nd</sup> to Hussey at Woodmore. Rayfield is also a solid contender despite a problematic genetic background on the paternal side, but Clark is the long shot candidate. He won three bouts at Brecksville, losing his placement match, 4-3, to two-time Division I placer Channel.

I'm not seeing a whole lot after state qualifier Prezzia at Steubenville however this sophomore has solid placement potential. He upset district champ Costello in the first round at Columbus and then loss to Hancock and Carnahan (in overtime). If he has lost this year I haven't seen it and most of his victories are by big scores. State qualifier Faykus also returns after missing out last year. He's won at Shadyside and East Liverpool this year. Two returning state alternates, Allen and Robinson, are also in the mix. Watch, particularly, the latter boy who is only a sophomore and narrowly missed qualification last year. Boyd (Caldwell) and Tanner (Johnstown Monroe) are other possibilities with Cummins also a having upset potential.

Thome will be the heavy favorite at Fairmont. Begg will decide between 130# and 135# trying to match his goals with the best possible outcome. If here he would rank second best at this district, the same as at 130#. After Thome (and, possibly, Begg) this will not be a strong district. State qualifier Deady, may compete here and that would add to its substance. He was a district 3<sup>rd</sup> last year, but lost two close bouts on Thursday and failed to advance. The sophomore Sanders is the last of four consecutive good wrestlers at Badin. He should qualify. That leaves Klaus as a solid alternative and Burton and Meinking as longshots.

**140 #**

**PROJECTED CHAMPION: ZAC HANCOCK (TROY CHRISTIAN)**

Top Contenders

2	Coomes (Pleasant)	14	Hickin (CVCA)
3	Pfister (Black River)	15	Paus (Clinton Massie)
4	Block (Johnstown Monroe)	16	McNichols (East Knox)
5	Sonnenberg (Van Buren)	17	Davis (Zane Trace)
6	Noernberg (Cuyahoga Hts.)	18	Rinehart (Plymouth)
7	J.Reindel (Stritch)	19	Bromelmeier (VASJ)
8	Goebel (Edgerton)	20	Cartwright (Mohawk)
9	Trusnik (Chanel)	21	Blackwell (Grandview Hts.)
10	Espinoza (Genoa)	22	Z.Reindel (Delphos St. John)
11	Freeman (Bluffton)	23	Ziegler (Cardinal)
12	Malkus (Berkshire)	24	Dobson (Bellaire)
13	Bruns (Versailles)	25	Walters (Allan East)

Probably the single biggest surprise in the final round at the state meet last year was Zac Hancock's upset win over Daniel Kolodzick at 130#. He defeated a two time state champ who had been at 135# most off the year and had defeated the D-II and III state champions at that weight class. In addition it avenged an 11-0 drubbing he had received from Kolodzick in the 2007 finals and ended a streak of at least three losses to that wrestler. I credit Steve Goudy and his staff for having an excellent game plan to win that Saturday night. However, don't get me wrong, Hancock is a tremendous wrestler, a three time state placer with a boatload of tournament titles. This is the fifth consecutive weight class with a heavily favored wrestler at the top of my list. However, I'm a little worried here since Hancock did not look particularly sharp at either the Ironman or Brecksville.

One of the significant positives is that he'll emerge from a very weak district. I'm not finding much competition for him. There is, of course, the possibility that Deady might move back to 140# or that some of the excess 145's have room to drop. There is a huge quality difference at this district between this weight class and 145#. I do expect to see district semi-finalist Freeman competing here and if so he'll be second best. Add in Bruns and Paus and that might be the top four that I see currently there. Two other possibilities from the north are Zach Reindel and Walters. There will probably be additional movement into the weight class, and possibly, out.

Two solid contenders for high placement will emerge from Steubenville. Coomes has been 5<sup>th</sup> the past two years as part of those fine Pleasant teams. Both times he reached the semi-finals only to lose to the eventual champ, last year it was 12-3 to Hancock. He was 2<sup>nd</sup> at Brecksville, losing to Hightower in the semi-finals (and giving him his only tough bout) and ended up, you guessed it 5<sup>th</sup>. Ironically, that was by virtue of a forfeit win over Hancock. Block was a solid 7<sup>th</sup> last year and he has been a

consistent winner this year, most recently at Sheridan. This duo should dominate here with the added bonus of having a two-thirds chance of being opposite Hanock for the winner. There are probably 10-12 wrestlers with legitimate shots at the last two berths, and some of them are from schools with little wrestling visibility. I have listed four possibilities, but as before, this is really just a semi-educated guess. At any rate I'm looking at McNichols, Davis, Blackwell and Dobson. It should be interesting.

Owens is another district that doesn't have real depth at this weight class. Reindel is a two time state qualifier who has recently opted for this weight class. He is 1-4 at the state level losing two close bouts last year, one in overtime. He has won at Northwood and, significantly at the CIT. He was also 3<sup>rd</sup> at Oak Harbor, when at 145#, behind Valliant and Witt. The other returning state qualifier is Goebel, who qualified at this weight class last year, beating Dye for 3<sup>rd</sup>. He, too, has been at 145#, but expect to see him here. I really like state alternate Sonnenberg who was a placer at the Junior High State Meet. He dropped late to 130# last year and ended up as the state alternate when, I think, strategically, 135# might have been a better location. Now at 140# he could be a district finalist. He was 1<sup>st</sup> at Woodmore and Arcadia, but doesn't wrestle a tough schedule. Rinehart and Cartwright are possibilities with the Northwood champ Espinoza slightly ahead. If Alexander is here he severely diminishes the opportunity of this last group.

Pfister is a potential state finalist coming out of Maple Hts. He was undefeated last year when hurt at mid-season and missed the rest of the year. Two years ago he was a state semi-finalist before losing to Chilson and dropping to 6<sup>th</sup>. This year he won at Black River and the Gorman where he defeated Yetzer in overtime. He was again injured at Black River where he lost two close bouts to McKee and McGrain. State qualifier Noernberg should qualify once more. Last year he beat Reindel in the first round at Columbus, but then lost to three-time state champ Gambill. He has been a finalist at all of his tournaments this year. I then count five wrestles for the last couple of spots. I like Trusnik and Hickin best with Malkus very close behind and with Bromelmeier and Ziegler still in good position. Each has had a successful year with Trusnik, for example, winning at the Big 8, 2<sup>nd</sup> at Solon and 3<sup>rd</sup> at the CIT. These will be the qualifiers you won't want to draw into.

**145 #**

**PROJECTED CHAMPION: KURTIS JEFFERIS (BARNSVILLE)**

Top Contenders

2	Burns (Troy Christian)	16	Runyon (Blanchester)
3	Hunter (Manchester)	17	Boehm (Montpelier)
4	Chilson (Bellaire)	18	DeWitt (Delphos St. John)
5	Betts (Elmwood)	19	Swan (Western Reserve)
6	DeHart (Covington)	20	Cochrane (Berkshire)
7	Cooperider (Pleasant)	21	Monesmith (Preble Shawnee)
8	Bender (Loudonville)	22	Robinson (Johnstown Monroe)
9	Miller (Brookfield)	23	Pridemore (Margaretta)
10	Rufenacht (Archbold)	24	Fleming (Port Clinton)
11	Rado (Woodridge)	25	Nelson (Newark Catholic)
12	Neuberger (Edison)	26	Kassnel (Cuyahoga Hts.)
13	Ferber (South Central)	27	Hayes (Madeira)
14	Washington (Carlisle)	28	Griffin (Fairport Harbor)
15	Schafer (Chanel)	29	Wireman (Fairland)

I think this is the deepest weight class in Division III with quality wrestlers emerging from almost every corner of the state. I've identified at least eight wrestlers with a minimum of a 10% chance of winning the title. That means great matchups, ones that in other years might be the state finals, could happen as early as the quarterfinals. It will be important to win the district title because it provides the highest probability of avoiding such early round battles. And, as always, pairings will be critical because of the diversity of styles we'll be seeing here.

The most rugged district competition is likely to be at Steubenville where there are three state title contenders. Jefferis was a state qualifier at 140# last year losing to eventual champ Pajestka 6-4 in the quarterfinals and failing to place. Part of the problem was a one-point district final loss to Chilson that threw him into a more difficult bracket placement. This year he was undefeated at 152#, but recently dropped to 145# where he "handled" Chilson in a 5-2 win at Shadyside. Only a junior he is, like all of the many Jefferis wrestlers, rugged and relentless. Chilson will likely get another shot at Jefferis at the OVAC and he has been a big event wrestler. A state-finalist two years ago at 135#, he was 5<sup>th</sup> last year after losing a narrow semi-finals bout to Cloran. The Jefferis loss is the only blemish on his record and he has a proven track record at the state meet. Cooperider cannot be overlooked at this district. He was a state quarter-finalist last year losing a tough 10-9 bout and then failing to place. I have him winning at DeSales and Elgin and losing only to Stephens (Graham) in the finals at the Midwest Classic. Since Chilson and Jefferis exit the same sectional, he'll have to defeat both to win at districts. The fourth qualifying spot is likely to be a real donnybrook, but at a much lower level of performance. Perhaps, Robinson or Nelson might be the leading candidates for that spot, but do not be surprised if someone like Wireman, completely off the radar, qualifies.

Two wrestles stand out at Fairmont. The first is Chris Burns who, as I will later discuss in the team section, is a key element in Troy Christian's plan to win a third consecutive state title. Two years ago wrestling up a weight class, he took a 7<sup>th</sup>, and last year followed up his district title with a strong 4<sup>th</sup> place finish. This year he has been absent almost from the start, with injuries. Still he beat Chilson by three points last year and the Troy Christian wrestlers are always well coached. If healthy he has to be in the top three. DeHart was 2<sup>nd</sup> to Shivener at the Junior High States two years ago. He was a state quarter-finalist at 130# last year losing a 12-11 decision to Coomes and eventually finishing 6<sup>th</sup> (losing to Coomes again 8-7). This year he was 2<sup>nd</sup> at GMVWA to Brian Stephens while beating some good kids in the earlier rounds. He is an aggressive wrestler providing Covington with another state title contender just three years after Logan Brown swept away all competition in 2006. This duo stands somewhat above a talented field of potential qualifiers. State qualifiers Washington and Runyon are currently at this weight class and are both possible contenders. Both qualified two years ago, but missed out last year. Runyon was 2<sup>nd</sup> at Elgin (to Cooperider) and 1<sup>st</sup> at Edgewood. Washington struggled at the GMVWA, but has the experience to qualify. District semi-finalist and state alternate DeWitt might be a stronger candidate, but wrestles a relatively undemanding schedule. Add in Monesmith and Hayes and that adds up to five well-credentialed wrestlers for two openings. We may have some of this group at 140# or 152#, particularly the former which looks like a far easier district.

The Owens District also has no shortage of potential state qualifiers. There are currently three returning state qualifiers, a state alternate and at least three other solid contenders. I think the best of this contingent is the senior Alex Betts, who had 40 wins last year including a 1-2 record in Columbus. This year he has spent much of the time at 160#, but competed at this class at Medina. He managed a solid 4<sup>th</sup> place ribbon that included a big win over Konner Witt. I think we can expect a medium to high place from Betts. State qualifier Rufenacht would by some natural progression seem to be the next best at this weight class. Rufenacht has been at 152# much of the season, but won at the weight class at Vermillion. He had a difficult state meet last year, but has bounded back well. I think state alternate Neuberger is at the same level. He won at both Edison and Bellevue and has a solid defensive philosophy. One to watch is Ferber. He was a district semi-finalist last year as a sophomore, missing state qualification by two points. He was very impressive at Black River majoring Fleming in the finals. I think he'll reach Columbus this year. Also in contention are Boehm, Swan and Pridemore with first named a particular threat. Again, as I mentioned at Fairmont it is likely some will bail from this weight.

Early on in this process I had Aaron Hunter as the top-ranked 145#, but now I'm not so sure. Yes, he has won a couple of relatively weak tournaments, but his 4<sup>th</sup> place finish at North Canton was somewhat disconcerting. Not that I expected him to beat Hightower and Cline (he wrestled neither), but that his two losses were to far less credentialed wrestlers. Hunter was 3<sup>rd</sup> last year at 145# in Columbus, losing in the opening round and then winning five consecutive bouts, including one over defending champ Stiltner. He has the ability to win it all, and while he is not ranked first here he

could certainly end up on the top step of the podium. The wrestler to watch is the unheralded Dylan Bender. He was 1<sup>st</sup> at Mt. Vernon, 2<sup>nd</sup> at the Gorman and a semi-finalist at North Canton. The last tournament is where he upset Hunter 6-4. Last year he was at 160# and failed to reach the district tournament. This year he should do far better. State qualifier Miller now seems likely to be at 145#. He is a two time Top Gun placer and has placement potential at this difficult weight. I don't want to overlook Rado who was at 152# last year and was a district semi-finalist. These Woodridge kids were all tough a year ago and the same looks to be true this year. At any rate Rado who was a point from qualification last year remains a real threat at this weight class. That still leaves room for at least one more qualifier and that should come from Schafer, Cochran or Kassnel. All three have district experience and have had solid years. I think Schafer is the most athletic of this group and therefore has a slight edge.

### 152 #

#### **PROJECTED CHAMPION: MICHAEL CAWLEY (NORWALK ST. PAUL)**

##### Top Contenders

2	Gladieux (Stritch)	14	K. Burns (Troy Christian)
3	Walter (Chanel)	15	Drake (Triway)
4	Howe (Blanchester)	16	Falk (Grandview Hts.)
5	Price (Mechanicsburg)	17	Francis (Girard)
6	Rayl (Blufton)	18	Remenaric (Tuslaw)
7	Pajestka (Cuyahoga Hts.)	20	Chatterton (Dixie)
8	Chapman (Hopewell-Loudon)	21	Elling (Liberty Center)
9	Prather (West Jefferson)	22	Kunk (Coldwater)
10	Porter (Bellaire)	23	Howard (Edison)
11	Georgian (VASJ)	24	Dies (Manchester)
12	Fullenkamp (Versailles)	25	Keller (Montpelier)
13	McElrath (Woodridge)	26	Kaiser (Martins Ferry)

This is the kind of weight class that frustrates and depresses forecasters. To me at least there just doesn't seem to be anyone that I can quite envision walking off the mat Saturday night and jumping into his coach's embrace. There are a lot of people who mentally forecast their choices for state titles (only a few idiots write them down) and my guess is that precious few will get it right at 152#. Don't get me wrong, there are a lot of very competent wrestlers at this class, but I'm just wondering which one will grab it by the throat and win. Yes, certainty is the last thing you'll find here, but that's what will make it fun to watch. Most people like a good mystery and this one will be tough for all of us to untangle. I think the pairings are critical here because we have defensive wrestlers and some heavy-duty scorers. My view is that if the defensive wrestlers draw into each other not only will it make for some boring wrestling, but it will make certain that at least one aggressive wrestler will be on the mat Saturday night. That's the night when stalling warnings increase giving the aggressive wrestler, perhaps, a slight edge.

One of the best districts will be at Owens. There a pair of state qualifiers who didn't make it to Columbus will do battle. Gladieux, now a junior, has had a terrific season. He is not just defeating people, he is pinning them. Most recently he finished off Cody Walters in less than 90 seconds to win the CIT. He also had a quick fall to win at Northwood, and he seems to be in total control at this time. Cawley also missed out last year, losing to Schalk and Rufenaecht after reaching the district finals. He is the kind of wrestler you enjoy watching with his go-for-broke style. He worries far more about getting back points than in defending his opponent. He beat Prather to win the Gorman and was second at Lorain Southview, losing to Bobby Cruz, 12-10, in overtime. He and Gladieux should light up the scoreboard. State alternate Chapman has moved up three weight classes without missing a beat. He missed state qualification by two points last year. He has been wrestling at 160#, but was at 152# at Tiffin where he finished 2<sup>nd</sup> to Laney, 3-1. Yet another contender is Elling who was 3<sup>rd</sup> at Marion Harding after suffering his first loss. Howard is also here after finishing 2<sup>nd</sup> to Chapman at Edison when both were at 160#. I would not be, as mentioned, surprised to see a couple of 145's move up (or back) to this weight class.

It's a very crowded weight class at Maple Hts. with four wrestlers who have state experience. Walter is the only placer in that quartet, finishing a sturdy 7<sup>th</sup> after a narrow first round loss to Foley. He won three bouts, including one over Kyle Burns. This year he was 3<sup>rd</sup> at Solon (splitting two bouts with Eddy), 1<sup>st</sup> at Mayfield, and 2<sup>nd</sup> at the CIT to Gladieux. Pajestka, Drake, and McElrath all went to Columbus last year, but were a combined 0-6. I think Pajestka is the best of this bunch despite the fact that he hasn't wrestled much due to injury. Last year his brother made spaghetti of my rankings winning the state titles from 13<sup>th</sup> spot – the lowest ranked wrestler to win in a couple of years. Pajestka could easily do the same – except that he isn't ranked 13<sup>th</sup>. McElrath is a mystery at districts. He won his first two bouts 12-10 and 10-8 and then was pinned in 25 seconds by Pajestka. Still, he came back to beat Georgian to go to States. He may have to do that again as Georgian is also here, losing to Walters in the semi-finals 5-4. The sophomore Hall has surpassed some of this state qualifying group. He beat Drake 17-1 to win at Smithville and was 2<sup>nd</sup> at Chippewa. Also here is the excellent Dies and Remenaric along with Freiberg. Finally, state alternate Francis is at this weight class and he was very impressive last year. My guess is that Walters and Pajestka qualify easily with Hall next – after that chaos.

It's not nearly that frantic at Steubenville. State qualifier Prather returns up three weight classes from last year. It hasn't hurt this sophomore as he finished 2<sup>nd</sup> to Cawley (by two points) at the Gorman. Bracken and Falk are both good and with Prather make a formidable Columbus contingent. Falk is just back from injury, but was 3<sup>rd</sup> behind Gifford at Grandview Hts. Bracken was a district 6<sup>th</sup> last year losing to Gilmore by four in his go-to-state bout. Porter is yet another of those good Bellaire middleweights that include Canter and Chilson. He's the best along the river now that Jefferis has moved to 145#. Kaiser and, maybe, Hudson (Elgin) should also be role players here.

The district at Fairmont is first-rate, but I just wonder if all of them will stay here. Price was a district runner-up at 160# last year and ended up winning three bouts at Columbus to place 6<sup>th</sup>. He has to be considered as a top prospect to be a finalist at this weight class at States.

Also here is two-time state qualifier and state placer Howe. He was 7<sup>th</sup> two years ago. He was 2<sup>nd</sup> at Elgin (an up and coming tourney), losing only to Division II favorite McGookey. Rayl qualified last year at 135#, but has spent much of this year at 160#. He's a terrific kid, but you have to wonder who in this group will move to the far, far easier 160# class. Rayl is a pinner. Burns, who was the state alternate, had one of those breaks last year when Mendenhall did not wrestle and he was able to compete. Even better, he won a bout at Columbus. He has had some injuries and seems rather small for this weight, but he will likely qualify. State alternate Fullenkamp just won at Plymouth after finishing 4<sup>th</sup> at the GMVWA. This creates an issue since Price, Howe, Rayl, Burns, and Fullenkamp cannot all qualify at this weight. Also here is Chatterton. I saw him last year at Richmond Hts., and, frankly, was very surprised that he failed to qualify. He may struggle this year if this weight class stays as presently constituted. Add in Kunk and Hahn and it will be a tough two days in Kettering.

### 160 #

#### **PROJECTED CHAMPION: ZACH TOAL (TROY CHRISTIAN)**

##### Top Contenders

2	Utley (CVCA)	14	Meade (Cuyahoga Hts.)
3	Kwait (Calvert)	15	Leininger (Archbold)
4	Packard (Belpre)	16	Norway (Nelsonville York)
5	Merryman (Shadyside)	17	Angevine (Reading)
6	Dye (Patrick Henry)	18	Elling (Liberty Center)
7	Lewis (West Liberty Salem)	19	Carr (Northmor)
8	Stewart (Mogadore)	20	Zelev (Kirtland)
9	Kapelka (Calvert)	21	Hinkle (Purcell)
10	Kobilarscik (Tuslaw)	22	King (Heath)
11	Gilmore (Indian Valley)	23	Ramage (Wellington)
12	Grine (Van Buren)	24	Cochran (West Jefferson)
13	LaRosa (Ledgemont)	25	Miller (Delphos Jefferson)
		26	Gross (Norwalk St. Paul)

This is one of the stronger weight classes in Division III featuring two-time state champion Zach Toal and a host of strong contenders. Still despite the quality emerging from every district it is difficult to see a healthy Toal being dethroned in his senior year. After all Toal, except for a quarterfinal loss by fall as a 112# freshman (avenged by fall for 3<sup>rd</sup> place) would be going for his fourth state title. He has had the ability throughout his career to win the close bout as evidenced again this year when he twice beat Kyle Lang in close, tough bouts to win at the Ironman and Brecksville. Last year he had two

close state bouts beating Petrella and McCoy by a total of three points and I would anticipate he will have at least one close bout again this year. Still, in future years when we look back at the Troy Christian Era the signature wrestler that we'll attach to that time will be Zach Toal.

There are two excellent challengers to Toal. In other years they might well be favorites. Utley, only a sophomore had a sensational freshman season. He won the Maple Hts. districts with three falls and a comfortable win and then was a state semi-finalist after beating Faunce and Packard. A three-point loss pushed him into the consolation bracket where he had two falls to finish 3<sup>rd</sup>. This year he has rotated between 160# and 171#. He would be seeded away from Toal should he repeat as district champ. The other great challenger is Kwiat. Now a senior he was 5<sup>th</sup> at Columbus last year, but never met Utley. He started the year at 171# and placed 7<sup>th</sup> at the Ironman. Since then he has been at 160# and has been almost unbeatable. His last big win was at the Gorman where he defeated Gallik by nine points. He'd very likely have to defeat both Utley and Toal to win the title.

Toal does not face overly stern competition at Fairmont. If Rayl stays at 152#, and why wouldn't he, state qualifier Lewis is the only possible threat. He was the district champion at the weight class last year winning three close battles, but the pairing gods pulled an evil trick. He drew eventual champ Heasley in the first round and ended up failing to place. This year he remains a constant finalist with his most recent win at Valley View. Angevine and Hinkle are leading candidates for the last two state slots with the younger Miller a possibility.

Utley should not have an inordinate number of problems at Maple Hts. Stewart and Kobilarscik are both state qualifiers, but they will not match up well with him. However, they both should qualify again. Kobilarscik was an overtime loss away from placing last year at 152#. He was 6<sup>th</sup> at Medina and 5<sup>th</sup> at the Dies. Stewart qualified at 160#, but drew state runner-up Yant in the first round and was out Thursday night. Stewart was 4<sup>th</sup> at the Dies with he and Kobilarscik both losing in the semi-finals. State alternate LaRosa and Meade are the principal contenders for the last spot. I wouldn't count out Zele or Ramage both of whom recently dropped down from 160# and could be a threat for the last spot.

The principle threat to Kwiat at Owens is the sophomore Xavier Dye. A former junior high state champion, he qualified at 140# last year, but went 0-2 in Columbus. He has won at Arcadia and Woodmore, but I believe Kwiat will overpower him. I think Kapelka has made giant strides this year and he and Dye are about even. Winning at Tiffin just validated what I heard about him this year. That leaves state alternate Grine, Leininger, Elling and Sheets (Edgerton) all at about the same level. Solid journeyman wrestlers with high productivity and a reasonable shot at state qualification.

I talked a lot about it being a three-man battle, but there is one wrestler who may barge into this weight class and make it a quartet. Packard qualified 3<sup>rd</sup> out of the Steubenville district losing a semi-final double overtime decision to state champion Steve Wilson 9-8.

An easy first round state winner he met Utey in the quarterfinals losing 1-0 and then was eliminated by Kwiat 12-5. So, he's seen two of the top three. He was 3<sup>rd</sup> at Medina losing a 9-7 overtime bout to Rosch. Clearly, his weakness is high scoring overtime bouts. These top four all exit different districts so the pairings should be great. One upset and Packard could be in the finals. There is a lot of depth at Steubenville. Merryman was a state placer at 152#, beating Kobilarscik in overtime in the critical go-to-state bout, and remains a high performing wrestler along the river. State qualifier Gilmore is a very solid wrestler for a much improved Indian Valley team. Who would have guessed just a couple of years ago that they would give Claymont a real battle. Norway is the best from the southeastern part of the state, winning the small tournaments and placing in the big ones. The best wrestlers from the Central District all seem to have "hard C" names with Carr, King, and Cochran in the forefront.

### 171 #

#### **PROJECTED CHAMPION: CHRIS PHILLIPS (MONROEVILLE)**

##### Top Contenders

2	Beam (Waynedale)	14	Amos (Tusky Valley)
3	Rodgers (Mechanicsburg)	15	Thompson (West Liberty Salem)
4	Brettrager (Kirtland)	16	Kwiat (Calvert)
5	Bowden (South Range)	17	Boyce (Edison)
6	Akins/ Kepplinger (Troy Christian)	18	Kucera (Sparta Highland)
7	Mickle (West Jefferson)	19	Hainline (Norwalk St. Paul)
8	Ackley (Elmwood)	20	Hochstetler (Garaway)
9	Wagner (Greeneview)	21	Kleman (Lakota)
10	Marthey (Tuslaw)	22	Scott (River Valley)
11	Hrabrak (Fostoria St. Wendelin)	23	Bonifas (Lincolnview)
12	Hunter (Manchester)	24	Oberdick (Martins Ferry)
13	Hursey (Indian Valley)	25	Parsons (Ledgemont)
		26	Richardson (Blanchester)

Ohio has produced some sensational upper weight wrestlers. High school superstars like Rex Holman, Mike Davies, Tommy Rowlands, Luke Fickell, Mike Coleman, come quickly to mind, and the list goes on and on back through the years. It looks ever more likely that Chris Phillips will join this legendary group, perhaps, in the fullness in time to become the first of equals. Last year he won at the Ironman and Brecksville, went 51-0, and dominated the state tournament. A Division III wrestler he nonetheless, comfortably defeated both Division I state finalists en route to the finest freshman year ever experienced by a freshman upper weight wrestler. This year its been more of the same with one hiccup losing at the Ironman to the excellent, defensive wrestler Ed Ruth of Blair Academy who frustrated Phillips' many takedown attempts and made it a one-move match handing Phillips his only high school defeat. Still the bout I remember was Phillips beating the excellent Nick Heflin for 3<sup>rd</sup> place in a bout of two aggressive wrestlers. No one in Division III can challenge Phillips and, if healthy, he won't go six full

minutes very often. He'll protect Division III's longest district streak by giving the Northwest District its sixth consecutive title at this weight class.

The awesome shadow of Phillips has caused some to find greener pastures and seek other, more comfortable weight classes. That will make the battle for placement no less energetic or passionate, but, perhaps, at a somewhat less lofty level. Part of the issue is that the 171 # bracket last year had only three underclassmen contained within it. One of those Dahs is not wrestling and (unsurprisingly) none of the 160# state qualifiers moved up and none of the 189# state qualifiers moved down. I'm not sure I've ever seen a weight class this lacking in past state experience.

There are a number of solid wrestlers at Owens with good district experience. I've developed a list of eight possible qualifiers, but have had little luck in ranking them. Ackley was 7<sup>th</sup> at Medina while Hrabak won at Norwalk. Both boys have lots of experience, Kwiat is good, but he really, like his brother, is a 160-pounder. Boyce has been a finalist at least twice while Hainline won at the Gorman. This is my top five in no particular order with Kleman waiting in the wings. No matter how the ranking at the top of this essay reads we all know that everyone here is about even. So what will decide this issue; my guess is good health, bracketing that is favorable and keeps one away from Phillips, refereeing breaks and good fortune and, oh, a hot weekend on the mat.

I see five solid choices at Maple Hts. with all of them having placement opportunities. I like Beam the best after watching him compete last year at Richmond Hts. Now a junior he should be in the very top echelon of contenders looking to reach the finals. He was 3<sup>rd</sup> at Elgin behind Kuechler and Brankamp, and 2<sup>nd</sup> at the Dies losing to the excellent Taylor, 10-7. State alternate Brettrager has been off my radar screen, but I saw him pin Beam last year in a consolation round. He has some deadly moves. He has been as high as 189#. Bowden is a returning state qualifier, the only one besides Phillips. He failed to win at Columbus, but this year should provide him with some ample opportunities. Marthey was 6<sup>th</sup> at Medina and that should serve as enough credentials at this weight class. Hunter was a surprise finalist at the North Canton and won handily at Woodmore. Parsons has an outside shot, but I wouldn't be surprised to see one of the excess 160's move up.

Steubenville is another district where few wrestlers stand out. I didn't see Mickle at the Gorman, but I am assuming he will compete. He won three district bouts last year and missed qualification by one bout. Hursey and Amos both have district experience with the latter boy winning their matchup last year (2-1) and ending up 6<sup>th</sup>. Hursey did win two district bouts, but I'm looking for Hochstetler to play a role here as well. Kucera seems second best out of the Columbus area. Scott might be a long-shot threat as well.

Rodgers was 2<sup>nd</sup> (to Xavier Dye) two years ago in the Junior High States and had an exceptional freshman year. He was a state qualifier at 152 #, but lost quickly at Columbus. This year he has moved up two weight classes and been even more successful. He was 1<sup>st</sup> at Xenia. Akins was the state alternate at this weight class last year missing qualification by two points. He has missed some time, but is healthy now.

He has been at 189 #, but this looks like a golden opportunity. If not, Kepplinger will fit in here, as well. Wagner lost a consolation overtime bout to the eventual state qualifier last year so he was close. This year he was 2<sup>nd</sup> at Elyria Catholic forfeiting his final bout to Phillips and 8<sup>th</sup> at the GMVWA losing to Kwiat in the 7<sup>th</sup> place bout. I see three other potential qualifiers, district 6<sup>th</sup> place finishers Thompson, Bonifas, and Richardson. Undoubtedly, I'll be surprised.

### 189 #

#### **PROJECTED CHAMPION: KURTIS SCHAEFER (WEST SALEM NORTHWESTER)**

##### Top Contenders

2	Bowers (Pleasant)	16	Williams (Ontario)
3	Dues (Allen East)	17	Hayes (Dixie)
4	Hojnacki (CVCA)	18	Schafrath (Chippewa)
5	Running (Clinton Massie)	19	Neuenschwander (Archbold)
6	Shook (Newark Catholic)	20	Kahl (Shadyside)
7	Cheesman (Crestview)	21	Melvin (Brooklyn)
8	Crabtree (Wellsville)	22	Teach (Grandview Hts)
9	Zody (Triway)	23	Drumm (Heath)
10	Shreve (Martins Ferry)	24	Stockmaster (Buckeye Central)
11	McKnight (Carlisle)	25	Barrett (Chanel)
12	Klemp (Manchester)	26	Smithson (Blanchester)
13	Stacy (Liberty Center)	27	Blake (Tinora)
14	Akins/Kepplinger (Troy Christian)	28	Alig (Coldwater)
15	Kleman (Lakota)	29	Stewart (River)

It seems to be either feast or famine in Division III and this is one of those weight classes where it will be a feast of interesting wrestling. There is a nice mix of young and old, a wide range of geography, and no dominant superstar, but instead, a lot of good wrestlers. Let's first look at each district.

Kurtis Schaefer is on many days the best wrestler at the weight class in Division III. Whether those days will coincide with the days where the state title is decided is still an unanswered question. A Junior High State Champion two years ago he wrestled up a weight last year and was the state alternate. I thought, watching him, that he might have had injury issues. This year he won at Black River and was 2<sup>nd</sup> at Medina to Division I choice Tumlin. Most of the best kids at this weight class come from the two southern sectionals, and they keep beating each other up. For example, Zody beat Hojnacki and Klemp beat Zody and, of course, Hojnacki has beaten (pinned) Klemp—and thus we just disproved the Mathematical Law of Transitivity. I'm putting my faith in Hojnacki's 7<sup>th</sup> place finish last year and his 4<sup>th</sup> at Medina—where Schaefer defeated him, 8-4. I also like Schafrath from the southern region with Melvin and Barrett, maybe, the two best from the North.

The Owens District is not nearly as deep. The standout this year has been state alternate Cheesman who has won everywhere, most recently at Elgin over Burrell. I think Stacey is probably next with Kleman, Williams, and Neuenschwander as possibilities and with Stockmaster or Blake as long shots.

The top four districts placers at this weight class are back again. I can't even remember that happening at an upper weight class. That should make this easy. Last year, at least, Bowers was ahead of Crabtree and Shook who were equal with Shreve slightly further back, and Bowers was the only one to place. Has that changed? It's difficult to tell because they don't often compete against one another. Bowers is still ahead, but Shook seems to have improved more than the others as shown by his runner-up finish at the CIT. Kahl, Teach, Drumm, and Stewart all have significant district experience, but it's going to be tough to move up here. I wonder whether some are considering the far easier 215# weight class.

A wrestler that seems to be overlooked is Dues. He was the state alternate at Fairmount last year—losing a 4-3 squeaker to Running. The latter boy went on to take 6<sup>th</sup> at Columbus and I think Dues might have done as well. An explosive wrestler and pinner, I think he could easily win this district. He was 1<sup>st</sup> at Allen East and won at Marion Harding beating Sanders. Running hasn't been standing still. He won at Barnesville pinning Howell who easily beat Shreve. Also here is McKnight and Hayes as top choices for the last two berths. However, don't overlook state alternate Akins, should he come to rest here. He was a strong 2<sup>nd</sup> at Wapakoneta losing in overtime and, if here, would battle McKnight for that third slot. If not, Smithson might be the dark horse candidate.

**215 #**

**PROJECTED CHAMPION: STUART MILLER (DELPHOS JEFFERSON)**

Top Contenders

2	Bondy (Monroe Central)	16	Boney (Caldwell)
3	Barnes (Spencerville)	17	Walter (Cory Rawson)
4	Fabry (West Jefferson)	18	Hartfield (Newark Catholic)
5	Clawson (Jackson Milton)	19	Janas (Chippewa)
6	Ritz (Edison)	20	Curry (Blanchester)
7	Fields (Allen East)	21	Bellamy (Sandusky St. Mary)
8	Kelly (Manchester)	22	Garofolo (Columbia)
9	Sousa (Crestview)	23	Girard (Middletown Christian)
10	Skleres (Pymatuning Valley)	24	Lyell (Warren JFK)
11	Jackson (Hartley)	25	Wells (Montpelier)
12	Slee/Schwab (Liberty Center)	26	Uhlenhake (Coldwater)
13	Young (Seneca East)	27	Romick (Huron)
14	Holcomb (St. Clairsville)	28	Peters (Cuyahoga Hts.)
15	Costlow (Steubenville Central Catholic)	29	Hale (Preble Shawnee)

There were only four underclassmen in the state bracket at 215# last year and the only one that placed (Schuyler Bondy – 8<sup>th</sup>) apparently will be competing in the 285# class. That would appear to leave a vacuum at the top of this weight class, but that will be ably filled by the powerhouse from Delphos Jefferson, Stuart Miller. He was 4<sup>th</sup> as a sophomore at 189# and the runner-up last year winning 44 bouts in the process. While there are a substantial number of wrestlers at this weight class with placement potential, it would be a major upset if any were to defeat Miller. Delphos Jefferson has never won an individual state title in wrestling, but that categorization should disappear this March.

Miller should have few problems at Fairmont. State quarter-finalist Barnes has solid credentials, but Miller pinned him in the finals at Allen East. In fact that Lima Central Catholic Sectional has a number of good 215's. Miller and Barnes stand out, but Fields, 4<sup>th</sup> at Marion Harding, Walters and Uhlenhake are all solid performers. Fields won two district bouts last year while Walter won one. Salyers might be the best out of the southwest district, but there doesn't seem to be a lot of consistent results. Perhaps Curry or Girard will be factors, but it looks like that northern sectional will dominate.

It now appears that state placer Bondy will move down to this weight class and, as such, would be a solid favorite to capture the district title. He was 3<sup>rd</sup> here last year and then had a nice consolation run at States, pinning Ritz and Barnes, to finish 7<sup>th</sup>. He has won at Barnesville (285#) and Shadyside (215#) and has high placement potential in Columbus. Costlow is also good, (he pined Fabry last year) with Holcomb and Boney good back-ups along the river. Fabry, 3<sup>rd</sup> at the Gorman, and Jackson seem the best out of Columbus, with Hartfield also in the picture. Jackson was 4<sup>th</sup> at the CIT and Hartfield defaulted to 6<sup>th</sup>. Jackson was also 2<sup>nd</sup> at Marion Harding and Hartley always

seems to have one or two excellent wrestlers. However don't overlook McAfee who wrestles in something of a low profile area, but has good ability.

This is a weight class in disarray at Owens. Ritz is the only returning state qualifier, but he will be severely challenged. This year he has won at Edison and was 2<sup>nd</sup> at Bellevue and Plymouth, losing to Miller at the latter event, 13-2. A solid pinner he should still qualify and have low placement potential. Sousa has probably made the biggest step forward of this group. He had two district wins last year, but Ritz eliminated him with a quick fall. This year he was most recently 2<sup>nd</sup> at Elgin losing only 6-5 to the excellent Erb, an impressive result. Young is back and was 4<sup>th</sup> at Plymouth losing on a DQ for 3<sup>rd</sup> behind Miller and Ritz. Liberty Center has two high performance 215's. Slee was effective early in the year finishing for example, 5<sup>th</sup> at Marion Harding, but lately we've seen Schwab move down from 285 # and do equally well. Either will be a factor here. There are a lot of wrestlers on the periphery of qualification at this district and you'd have to expect one or two of them to spring a big upset. In that number include Bellamy, Wells, and Romick.

This will probably be the weakest weight class at Maple Hts. There are no returning state qualifiers and few who have put up big numbers. Top man here is Clawson who has wisely moved from 285 #, which is crowded, to this weight class. He was a district semi-finalist at the higher weight, but eventually defaulted to 6<sup>th</sup>. Also down from 285 # is Lyell who had a district win at that weight class last year. He was one bout from placement at the CIT. However, Clawson's top challenger will likely be Kelly who was 4<sup>th</sup> at North Canton and won at Manchester and Woodmore. He was beaten a number of better 215's in the area. Skleres wrestles an invisible schedule but was an excellent junior high wrestler, and last year, as a freshman, was one bout from state qualification. Also here are Janas, 1<sup>st</sup> at Chippewa and 2<sup>nd</sup> at Manchester (to Kelly), Garofolo, and Peters.

**285#**

**PROJECTED CHAMPION: TYLER OBRINGER (SPENCERVILLE)**

Top Contenders

2	Morosko (Tuslaw)	16	Stenger (Clinton Massie)
3	Thornton (Oberlin)	17	Schenkel (Caldwell)
4	Hamilton (South Central)	18	Brown (Grand Valley)
5	Treon (Versailles)	19	Pryer (Allen East)
6	Edington (Pleasant)	20	Van Winkle (East Knox)
7	Dailey (Independence)	21	Majoy (Huron)
8	Charlton (Bucyrus)	22	Cunningham (Newark Catholic)
9	Doughty (Norwalk St Paul)	23	Castillo (Ayersville)
10	Woodford (Martins Ferry)	24	Carr (Belpre)
11	Lytle (Swanton)	25	Ruckman (Beallsville)
12	Schwab (Liberty Center)	26	Duscherer (Cardinal)
13	Galvan (Fostoria St. Wendelin)	27	Lauer (Fenwick)
14	Tschour (Lima Central Catholic)	28	Endicott (Crestview)
15	West (Bridgeport)	29	Kelbly (Smithville)

This should be one of the more interesting competitions that we've had in the heavyweight division in recent years. There is an interesting mix of possible champions, some intriguing long-shot possibilities, and some major question marks that are unlikely to be answered until we reach Columbus.

The exciting new face is the Oberlin move-in, Hugh Thornton. At 6'5" and 285 pounds he is enormously big and has an equal measure of athletic talent. He has already accepted a full ride for football at the University of Illinois, and comes of a successful state title run in Idaho last year. Prodigiously quick he opened the season with titles at Avon Lake and Elyria Catholic pinning his first thirteen opponents, almost all in less than 60 seconds. Then at Black River, against state qualifier Nick Hamilton, he again appeared headed for another quick fall, but his upper-body throw was ruled illegal. After that Hamilton methodically won a 6-0 decision as Thornton showed less than championship stamina. No question that issue will be rigorously addressed. Still, he is an incredibly dangerous opponent.

Exiting with Thornton out of the Maple Hts. district is another talented senior, Josh Morosko. A far more conventional opponent than Thornton he has shown steady improvement over his career. Last year he lost only to eventual state champ Don Stocum at districts and then won three state bouts to finish 6<sup>th</sup>. His signature event this year was taking the title at the always enormously difficult Medina Tournament. This included a startling 1-0 win over three-time state placer and Division II state runner-up Adam Walls. Interestingly the last four heavy weight champions have all emerged from the Maple Hts. district.

Nick Hamilton, yet another solid senior, also has to be a strong contender for top honors. He won 44 bouts last year as a state qualifier while going 1-2 in Columbus. Both of those losses were by one point (10-9 and 5-4). This year he was sensational at Black River, not only beating Thornton in the finals, but nipping Division I state placer James Meder in the semi-finals. Along with Oney at 135 # he gives South Central a very strong "one-two punch" at the state level.

Despite the credentials of the above mentioned threesome, the wrestler who has the best Ohio credentials is the Spencerville junior. Tyler Obringer. A district champ and state semi-finalist last year, Obringer was just two points from being a finalist losing to Hesson, 6-4. He dominated his area and district last year and is even stronger this time around. He pinned Morosko to get 5<sup>th</sup> place last year. His only loss was to Marcus Neal at Marion Harding, but he then defeated the very tough Gladstone to finish 3<sup>rd</sup>. A possible issue here is a schedule that rarely challenges him.

The Maple Heights District would seem to have already allocated two state slots to Thornton and Morosko. A third very competitive contender is Dailey. He, too, is a move-in after winning two Division I district bouts for Parma last year. I saw him win at North Coast and he should challenge both of the top two boys at this district. State alternate Brown is also back and would seem to be fourth best in this always uncertain weight class. Most recently he was second at Perry. After this quartet there is a large fall-off in ability. However, somebody like Duchscherer or Kelbly might have upset possibilities.

It's a much more crowded district at Owens. Hamilton is my favorite, but I wish he wouldn't wrestle so many one-point bouts. It's a prescription for pain. Doughty and Charlton are returning state qualifiers, but neither are safe here. Neither won a state bout last year in that difficult weight class. I like the mammoth Doughty's persistence, and he gave Hamilton a tough bout losing 4-3. Charlton was second at the Gorman while Doughty was fourth, but the bracketing was an important factor there. However, Charlton did win their District Match-Up last year. If Schwab is at 285, he'll be right in the mix with this group. He was a district semi-finalist and lost his go-to-state bout to Charlton 1-0. Galvan was second at the CIT while Majoy has won some big bouts including one over Galvan. Castillo and Endicott are other possibilities. Someone to watch is Lytle from Swanton, who is, I believe, only a freshman. He was first at Toledo St. John and second at Elyria Catholic to Thornton. He is, in some way, almost surely distantly related to me.

Edington towers over the field at Steubenville. A two-time state qualifier it is now his turn to stand high on the podium. He missed placement last year in an overtime loss to Treon. He was fifth at Brecksville losing to probable Georgia state champ Wesley Mena in the semi-finals. His job at this district has been made somewhat easier by the apparent defection of Bondy and Holcomb to 215#. That still leaves state qualifier Woodford, state alternate West, and several other quality heavyweights to subdue. Schenkel and Carr are also good with the latter grabbing a district sixth last year. Also factor in the always dangerous Ruckman with Van Winkle and Cunningham central

district stalwarts. As I write this I'm beginning to notice how really deep this field is--even without Bondy and Holcomb.

Obringer is not the only returning state placer at Fairmont. Treon was the 8th last year defeating both Edington and Charlton. He also nipped Hamilton, 2-1, to win at Plymouth and make a bid to be considered as a top four wrestler at this class. Also returning are the two wrestlers who went overtime in the fifth place bout at last year's district. Stenger got that win, but Pryer was also nearly as strong. However Tschour who was third at the CIT and second Allen East may have vaulted past both of them. Finally Lauer—also a placer at the CIT may have some part to play at this weight class.

## TEAMS

1. Troy Christian

They have created a mini-dynasty finishing 2<sup>nd</sup> three years ago and winning the last two years. To win a third time they have to hit just one target—score more than 115 points. That is how many Monroeville scored last year and as I'll shortly explain I don't think they can better that number this year. I figure Thome, Toal, Z. Hancock and C. Burns can put up about 100 points—that's not rock-solid since the Burns part might be a little sketchy. That means Campbell, J. Hancock, K. Burns, and Akins have to put up, maybe, 20 points. —just to be on the safe side. I think they have just enough to make that doable.
2. Monroeville

They had four state champions last year, and they will have four state champions this year. They scored 115 points last year and they'll score just about 115 points this year. Putting Stieber up a weight class was a solid team move, but I just don't see Johnson or Clark (this year) able to help.
3. CVCA

There will be a sharp struggle for third place between CVCA and Pleasant, but I just don't see either squad having quite enough firepower to challenge the top two. CVCA has more scoring options than Pleasant, but ones in my mind that seem a little less sure. Utley seems to be the centerpiece for this team, but Sommer, T. Powers, Vargo and Hojnacki are all capable of scoring a lot of team points. Add in S. Powers, Retay, and Hickin and they should be in the 80 point range.
4. Pleasant

This is the team that I picked to win the last two years, but somehow it just got away from them. However, two runner-up trophies is a marvelous achievement and they still retain a quintet of solid State scorers. Reynolds, Coomes and Bowers could all be finalists and you have think that Cooperider and Edington will help—a lot. They could still have one huge effort left and make a play for more than third, but the firepower just doesn't seem to there in sufficient quantity.
5. Chanel

This team is still struggling to put it all together in terms of health and performance. They have a great first nine (unlike my golf game), but it hasn't quite jelled yet. Kovach is the primary cog, but they should be getting scoring from almost everyone up to 152#. Of course, that means Tchantz and Orrill have to be back and everyone else priming for high district places.

6. Tuslaw They should get big time points from Morosko and Donahue and Hall has to return to his form of two years ago. Add in Kobilarscik and Remenaric and this team might just reach Top Five status.
  
7. Elmwood The top six squads are teams in the sense that they have a reasonable expectation of state scoring ability from a number of their wrestlers. From this point on we'll be talking about teams that hope they can get scoring from three or four of their wrestlers. The best of these might be Elmwood which features Betts and Goebel as top hopes and Alexander, Ackley, Lee, and Hernandez for backup scoring.
  
8. Mechanicsburg This is a team with some possibly realizable upside. Price and Ziegler are consistent performers and Rodgers will shortly be a strong candidate for a state title. Add in Klaus and Salyer and there is some scoring to be had here.