

2005 HIGH SCHOOL WRESTLING FORECAST

(34th ANNUAL EDITION)

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As always there are many people who help create this report. The most important are three masterful typists.

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Kim Hiemstra - Division III

Without their skill and dedication this report would never have been completed. My thanks to them all.

NOTE

Many people have asked me about the telecasts of the National High School tournament held in Cleveland the past few years.

This is a real opportunity to see some of the finest senior wrestlers in the country at a well-run tournament. We offer that show to any cable operator within the United States, so call your local provider and ask them to schedule it on their station. Incidentally, the senior nationals have been augmented by a high school junior tournament that promises to be just as exciting. The website www.nhsca.com provides details.

Introduction

The object of these annual reports encompasses two basic goals. First is to acquaint everyone with the basic character of each weight class and identify the participants who are likely to play a major role in its resolution. In addition, each individual district is examined as to whom its representatives might be. Second is to stimulate interest in the whole State tournament process throughout Ohio. Naturally, accuracy is also of primary concern, so care is taken to develop the most comprehensive list possible of outstanding wrestlers, though of necessity, the evaluation of their final place is, in part, subjective. This report was written during a ten-day period ending January 21, based on the information available at that time. Because this material was written by the 21st and in the hands of the typists after that I have not included any information that may become available after that time--though that shuts me out of, for example the OVAC. It's kind of a snapshot in time, with a picture that will surely change in many ways by tournament time. Certainly many of those listed at weight classes where they are currently certified will move up for competitive reasons or because they cannot make the 50 percent rule. In fact, some of those moves may well be precipitated by information contained within this document.

There are several ways you can help make this report more accurate. First by sending me bracket sheets for tournaments you enter either by fax or mail – I'm especially interested in sectional and district bracket sheets this year and **any** tournaments for next year. Also, phone calls, or better yet, e-mail messages dealing with results, weight class selection, or whatever, are gratefully received. I especially appreciate coaches who provide an honest overview of their squad and superior wrestlers they've seen in competition. Already I get messages and information from too many people to name individually, but I appreciate it all.

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This report is also available on the Internet on Gary Baumgartner's website, The Ohio Wrestler, as well as Brecksville High School's website:

<http://www.baumspage.com>

<http://www.brecksvillevrestling.com>

<http://www.ohiowrestler.com>

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**And remember, my usual fee is a wrestling T-shirt – XL.
(and that includes all you Internet readers)**

DIVISION I

For the second consecutive year the Division I landscape looks a little less formidable than usual. While there are, clearly, some superior wrestlers this year, the normal depth one might anticipate is absent at a number of weight classes. This is somewhat alleviated by the emergence of a fine freshman class that holds great promise for the future. One complicating factor, as it was last year, is the uncertain composition of the districts at Darby and Fairfield. Again, the two Dayton area sectionals will send yet to be specified teams to Darby.

103

PROJECTED CHAMPION: TONY JAMIESON (FITCH)

Top Contenders

2	Rini (Massillon Jackson)	14	Millar (Davidson)
3	Fields/Touris (Lakota West)	15	Lem (Avon Lake)
4	Weaver (Moeller)	16	Kretz (Twinsburg)
5	Sneyd (Waite)	17	Harrington (Sycamore)
6	Bowman (Whitmer)	18	Segovia (Springfield North)
7	S. Mitcheff (Elyria)	19	McCoy (Elder)
8	Birt (St. Edward)	20	D'Allesandro (Mayfield)
9	Genetin (Massillon Perry)	21	Sturm (Geneva)
10	Radsky (Thomas Worthington)	22	Bivenour (Olentangy)
11	Lichtenberg (Strongsville)	23	Burdiss (Sidney)
12	Nighman (Riverside)	24	Reese (Shaker Hts)
13	Williams (Piqua)	25	Mead (Harrison)
		26	Hinkle (Central Crossing)

The State tournament is officially regarded as having begun in 1938 as an invitational meet sponsored by the Greater Cleveland Coaches Association. Each year since then, individual titles have been awarded in 10 to 14 weight classes. School classification divisions were initiated in 1971 and 1976, but the large school classification has been continually contested for 67 years. The introductory title awarded this year--at 103#--will be the 800th contested since 1938. In that time frame the level of sophistication in technique and training has been astounding and the hours invested in the sport increased many times. In addition the sheer difficulty of reaching the state meet, let alone winning it cannot be overestimated.

As is often the case at 103# there is no clear-cut choice at this class. It seems to me that there are four boys with the best chance of winning--the junior Weaver, sophomore Rini, and freshmen Fields and Jamieson. A dark-horse candidate might be Sneyd, but more about him later. Let's look at the district breakout for clues that might resolve this weight class.

The best and deepest district is at Perry. Two of my top contenders and a whole host of strong performers will compete at that locale. Jamieson was the state junior high runner-up at 96# last year (to Kolodzik) and has outstanding youth credentials. This year he was 4th at Brecksville and then won the Top Gun over a strong field. At Brecksville he split two bouts with Rini while at the Top Gun he, this time, beat Kolodzik and handled Roche. He looks to be on the steep part of the learning curve. Rini, having moved to Jackson from Massillon Perry, is probably the most fearsome wrestler here. A state qualifier last year (he did not compete because of injury) he has grown into a very large 103-pounder. He was 3rd at Brecksville losing the first day to Jamieson and then winning their consolation final and that points to an issue. He's cutting a lot of weight and may have first day problems. The other concern is the injury jinx that has afflicted him of late. If we find him, however, on the mat Saturday night he will then become very difficult to beat. Nighman won two district bouts last year and placed at the Top Gun and Medina. Genetin was runner-up at Medina and upset Fields in the Ohio Duals. Kretz has been brilliant in winning the WRC and Southview tournaments. It goes on and on with Sturm, Lichtenberg, Reese and Guthrie (Parma) all potential players here. The eventual outcome is very dependent on styles and that comes back to the pairings. The top duo will probably qualify however they fall in the bracket, but for the rest, it could be crucial.

There are lots of wrestlers at Mentor who look like low-to-middle placers, but no one who one might expect to see in the finals. Birt, the Medina champ, and Mitcheff, who beat him, 6-5 in a dual meet led my list here, with Bowman and Lem somewhere in the mix behind them. The unknown element is Sneyd. He was forced to wrestle at 112# last year (state runner-up Holliday was Waite's 103) and still won two district bouts. He's ranked first in his area, but I don't have results that clarify his status with most of the rest of this field. He was 2nd at Perrysburg--but that was a default injury in the finals. It may be the middle of February before it all becomes clear. Also look for D'Allesandro, Ciccarello (Brush), Dinda (Garfield Hts.) and Bathurst (Euclid) at this district. It's a crowded field.

Weaver and Fields are just about at the top of my list. Weaver was a state qualifier last year and went 1-2. This year he beat Fields in overtime to win the SWOCA and was 2nd at the CIT--losing to Earley 16-1 (hard to figure). He is tough, experienced, and should be toward the top of the awards stand. Fields was a state junior high champ last year. As mentioned he was 2nd at the SWOCA and has been a dominant dual meet force. He and state qualifier Touris both certified at this class so the battle for state honors for them begins in the wrestling room. No one else here should challenge the top two.

I don't see much at Darby. Radsky has been the most successful in the local area but was 6th at the Top Gun. Millar, Bivenour, or Hinkle might also have legitimate qualification aspirations here. One possibility is that Segovia, a Division III transfer, might be here, and if so, he would definitely be an important component of the overall results--possibly winning it.

112 #

PROJECTED CHAMPION: SHAWN HARRIS (ST. EDWARD)

Top Contenders

2	Hardy (Solon)	15	Touris (Lakota West)
3	Barnard (Geneva)	16	Schilling (Mentor)
4	Adams (Harrison)	17	Arnold (Garfield Hts.)
5	Dunlap (Riverside)	18	Hahn (Darby)
6	Shaft (Strongville)	19	Peskar (Maple Hts.)
7	Graszl (Mansfield Madison)	20	Hirth (Elder)
8	Ali (Westlake)	21	Myers (Butler)
9	Gobin (Moeller)	22	Cline (Lake)
10	Wolf (Northmont)	23	Zamaria (Brecksville)
11	Lybarger (Mt. Vernon)	24	Flores (Perrysburg)
12	Rooney (Massillon Perry)	25	Sasfy (Westerville South)
13	Palivoda (Marysville)	26	Dukes (Princeton)
14	Catalona (Mayfield)	27	Byers (Holland Springfield)

Harris and Nemeč made up a fabulous one-two freshman punch for St. Edward last year with both reaching the state finals, and Harris taking the title. He really progressed the second half of the year, and many feel that he'll have a relatively easy time of it at 112# this year. I'm not so sure. Granted that every returning 112# state qualifier from last year has moved to a higher weight class and Harris defeated all the 103's last year sure makes it look like it might be kind of easy. However, there remain some solid obstacles to a second title, (see the 112# Division II essay), and I keep thinking, maybe, Harris is still not quite 100% physically. He doesn't seem to have quite the quickness or the explosiveness I seem to remember. Still, there are far more reasons to choose him than to look for an upset.

It's never easy to follow a legend, but Greg Urbas has managed that gargantuan task. Wrestlers like Harris make St. Ed's a prohibitive favorite to win their 21st state title – and their 10th for Coach Urbas. That would tie him with the legendary Mike Milkovich and put him just one behind the founder of this dynasty, Howard Ferguson. It certainly gives lie to Leo Durocher's famous line "that nice guys finish last." It also bestows credit on the St. Ed's assistant coaches like John Heffernan, Jeff Leonard, Dave Holian and a host of others.

Harris was 4th at the Ironman, but won at Medina beating Dunlap 4-2 in the final. He looked a little sharper at the Ohio Duals majoring Rooney and handling Gobin with little trouble. He should dominate the Mentor District. Ali won three district bouts at this weight class last year and lost three times to Brown--Jordan twice and Ruben once. He is probably second best--though it is difficult to tell given Westlake's schedule. State alternate Graszl is also back and he was a district semi-finalist last year, but Harris beat him in 88 seconds. Schilling is "on the bubble" again this year. In 2004 he got pinned in the first round of districts won three consolation bouts, and then lost his go-to-state bout

with Rini, 15-4. However, when Rini could not wrestle at Columbus Schilling stepped in and placed 5th. It was the second consecutive year that a Mentor 103-pounder had finished 5th, gotten a huge break and placed. This year he has struggled at 112# and his qualification is again in doubt. Catalona, Peskar, Arnold, and are all possibilities as are four closely bunched wrestlers from the Toledo area--Byers, Carmona (Waite), Briceno (Anthony Wayne) and Jones (Start).

There are five exceptionally good candidates at the Perry District. I've rated all of them within the top twelve places, but only four will qualify. Hardy, a second-stringer, was plugged in at 103" when Ricky Floyd couldn't wrestle and ended up 3rd at Columbus (not bad depth). A tremendous rider he controls the bout on the mat and wins a lot of relatively low-scoring bouts. Harris did beat him in the state semi-finals on his feet. Hardy was 2nd at Solon and won the Midwest Classic and WRC. Only a sophomore, like Harris, he is tough to beat. Barnard was a district finalist last year and won two state bouts. I don't have him losing this year. He tried to make 103#, but has now certified at 112#. Dunlap was, as mentioned, 2nd at Medina and has won two other tourneys. The unseeded Shaft roared to the Brecksville title, beating Catalona, Llanas, and Boing in the process while Rooney has moved over to Massillon Perry. His only loss at 112# was to Harris. Zamaria, Cline and Valore (Twinsburg) are slightly behind this quintet, but their chances for advancement don't look good.

I think the Darby District is much weaker. State qualifiers Palivoda and Lybarger head that group, but they are likely to struggle against the top Northern boys. With state qualifier Curtin apparently not wrestling there is not a lot of depth here. The district may well get stronger depending on what teams come over from the Southwest District.

At Fairfield there is much more talent. State qualifier Adams went 1-2 at Columbus and should do better this year. He won the SWOCA with relative ease. Wolf was a district champ and then had a tough state tourney losing twice opening night. He has bounced back with a series of good performances this year and has placement potential. The freshman Gobin is good and while state qualifier Hirth has struggled (5th at the CIT and SWOCA) he should bounce back in February. Touris and Dukes are also possibilities with Calabro (Springboro) or Nguyen (Mason) a long shot. Watch for the freshman Vaughn (Fairfield) who may be a year away.

119 #

PROJECTED CHAMPION: DAN MITCHEFF (ELYRIA)

Top Contenders

2	Hartley (Massillon Perry)	15	Hulce (Marysville)
3	Floyd (Solon)	16	Hotopp (Harrison)
4	Sulzer (St. Edward)	17	Curitore (Hudson)
5	Fetchko (North Royalton)	18	Dennis (Holland Springfield)
6	Kaake (LaSalle)	19	Filicky (Massillon Jackson)
7	Ko. Pierson (Lakota East)	20	Woo (Westerville South)
8	T. Rodriguez (Perrysburg)	21	Hansen (Pickerington Central)
9	Davis (Mt. Vernon)	22	Chizmar (Boardman)
10	Cramer (Centerville)	23	Highbaugh (Maple Hts.)
11	Chappell (Davidson)	24	Reese (Amelia)
12	Mercado (Lorain Southview)	25	Roesser (Sidney)
13	Mikicic (Darby)	26	Smotherman (Bowling Green)
14	Steele (Hamilton)		

This should be one of the most entertaining weight classes at the entire state meet replete with tremendous action and eagerly anticipated match-ups. The way I see it is in the form of triads. At the top are an absolutely formidable threesome of Mitcheff, Floyd, and Hartley. Just a shade behind this group is another trio consisting of Sulzer, Fetchko, and Kaake. However there are others at each district (particularly Darby) that cannot be overlooked.

My choice is the outstanding senior Dan Mitcheff from Elyria. A state qualifier as both a freshman and a sophomore he was injured most of last year and defaulted out of the district. This year he's back and healthy. He crushed the field at Avon Lake and was the Outstanding Wrestler at Brecksville pulverizing a star-studded field. He was 3rd at the Ironman after being beaten early by state champion Kriwinsky and then winning six tough consolation bouts. He will have to be at his absolute best to win at this tough weight class.

Also in that top group is super-quick Ricky Floyd who was at 103# last year. After a great start he did not compete after January, but, interestingly, his back-up Hardy, finished 3rd in the state. This year he, too, has been brilliant winning at Solon and the Midwest Classic. However, he did stumble at the Powerade suffering his first loss.

The third member is Hartley who missed the early part of the year with an injury. He has been 4th and 3rd the last two years losing both times to Palmer. He is just now rounding into shape after being tech falled by (who else) Palmer at Medina. He could easily win this weight class.

Another wrestler we haven't seen much of is Sulzer who has had injury problems, too. Last year he qualified at this weight class, but went 1-2 at Columbus. Not as flashy as my top trio he is a strong defensive wrestler who knows how to win the close ones. He has prime upset potential. Fetchko, 4th last year at 103#, has also missed time, but he is a proven quantity who I thought looked far more aggressive than last year. Kaake, another state qualifier at this weight, battled two-time state runner-up Andrew Perez in the first round losing a 16-12 struggle. He won at the SWOCA and is the best in the Southwest.

Obviously, Mitcheff and Sulzer should be finalists at Mentor since they exit the same sectional and thus will be apart in the bracket. Also leaving that the same sectional is the rapidly improving Mercado who was 2nd at Waite and Southview and who has good state chances. Rodriguez is the best out of the Toledo area with Dennis and Smotherman also viable contenders. My guess is that all four qualifiers have placement possibilities in Columbus.

The Perry District has three of my top six in Hartley, Floyd, and Fetchko. That would appear to leave just one spot open but I'm having problems coming up with names to fill it. I've listed some possibilities in the lower portion of the ranking table, but you might anticipate an unfamiliar name showing up on Saturday night.

Kaake was only one of my top six coming out of Fairfield, but I'm now pretty sure that Kody Pierson belongs there, too. He won at Medina and has been impressive all year. It would not be a surprise to see him edge out some of those ranked ahead of him. State qualifier Steele and state alternate Cramer (if he is not at Darby) are a respectful step behind this top duo with another three or four boys a further step back.

It is again a tightly bunched group at Darby. State qualifiers Davis and Mikicic are there, but Chappell and Hucle seem about as strong. I noted, for example, that Hucle placed at Brecksville while Mikicic did not at a much weaker weight class at Medina. My view is that there are six to eight 119's in Columbus who do not vary widely in ability. The qualifiers will be the ones who get good pairings, have a hot weekend, and who get a lucky break or two. It'll be a group, however, who'll have to be at the top of their game to survive the following weekend.

125 #

PROJECTED CHAMPION: LANCE PALMER (ST. EDWARD)

Top Contenders

2	DePoy (Greenville)	15	Elliott (Mayfield)
3	Johnson (Massillon Jackson)	16	Hollandsworth (Hamilton)
4	Vaccari (Davidson)	17	R. Roth (Toledo CC)
5	Ciccarello (Brush)	18	Kneeland (Gahanna Lincoln)
6	Ke. Pierson (Lakota East)	19	Wade (Berea)
7	Newbanks (Moeller)	20	Curley (Lakewood)
8	Hopkins (Marysville)	21	McNutt (Grove City)
9	Clark (Solon)	22	Smith (Lake)
10	Bryson (Wadsworth)	23	Weidenthal (Fitch)
11	Carpenter (Rogers)	24	Edwards (Mansfield Madison)
12	Dong (Westerville North)	25	Leslie (Wayne)
13	Mihelich (Brunswick)	26	Vandromme (Holland Springfield)
14	Tebbe (Troy)	27	Deinlein (Oak Hills)

As I mentioned last year this is a weight class that has been dominated by the Northeast District. The last six champions have come from schools in that district and nine of the past 10 share that geographical distinction. At the same time a St. Edward wrestler has placed every year since the millennium change (the past five years) while crowning three champions in Mark Jayne, Ryan Lange, and Albert Madsen. All of these streaks are likely to continue now that Lance Palmer has opted for this weight class. Only a junior and already a two-time champ he is--in a word--awesome. Last year he had three falls in winning at 112# including one in both the semis and finals. This year he has won convincingly over every opponent with titles at the Ironman and Medina. There is really no one here who should unduly trouble him setting him up for a run at four titles in 2006.

The Mentor District is not overly strong. Palmer, of course, towers over the field, but I'm not seeing many potential placers here. One exception is the junior, Jordan Ciccarello who won one bout at Columbus last year. He went 2-2 at the Ironman losing to two-time champ Doggett by one point in the second round. Since then he won handily at Kenston. Incidentally his father Mark was the winner in the greatest high school bout I have ever witnessed. Because of atrocious bracketing luck Mark wrestled defending state champion John Grasinger in the second round of the state tournament. Widely considered the two best and most aggressive wrestlers in an excellent weight class, an exciting bout was anticipated. We had no idea. The first six minutes was non-stop whirlwind action ending in a frantic flurry that left the score tied at 6-6. That necessitated three one-minute periods (a mini-match) where, unbelievably, the action escalated in speed and fury with Grasinger taking an early lead. Then with 30 seconds left in the third overtime period Mark got another takedown to tie the score at 7-7 (in just the overtime). Without thought and with high drama he let the state champion go and then took him down again in the last few seconds to win 6-6, 9-8. Ciccarello then won

two more bouts to finish 1st with Grasinger earning 3rd place. By the way I invite readers to e-mail me their favorite bout and I'll tally the scores for next year. Meanwhile, back at the Mentor District, I'm looking for Carpenter and Roth to capture the last two state berths, but with folks like Elliott, Curley, and Edwards having every intention of stopping them.

DePoy will be at Darby and, if bracketed away from Palmer, has a solid chance of being a finalist. A state semi-finalist last year he ended up 4th behind Smith, Perez, and Hunt. He has been a big-time winner in the southwest losing only a careless bout to Division III Pike at the GMVWA. Assuming, he retains focus he should win at Darby, but it won't be easy. I was impressed with Vaccari at Brecksville and he can score in rapid fashion. State qualifier Hopkins was 6th at Brecksville (in a tough weight class), but DePoy did handle him 5-1 last year. After this trio there are a number of solid wrestlers with qualification ability. This is probably the best district at this weight class.

Johnson is a smart, talented wrestler who just hasn't won as consistently as I would have thought. Still, he was a state quarter-finalist last year finishing 5th--and that's not bad. He was 3rd at Brecksville--losing to Koballa--and should win this district. State qualifier Bryson and Clark are back but have had somewhat slow starts. Bryson's problem may be the constant weight shuffling in the middle of the Wadsworth line-up that has now been settled. Clark, on the other hand, has had serious medical issues that have left him at less than 100%. Assuming both boys get on track there will be a fierce battle for the last spot featuring those rated along with Cantera (Glen Oak), the freshman Mencini (Twinsburg) and Austin (Strongsville).

Pierson and Newbank would seem to be the best of what appears to be a rather shallow district at Fairfield. With DePoy, apparently, headed to Darby only these two would appear to have placement chances. Both are former state qualifiers. Pierson's big win was at the SWOCA where he defeated a field that had three other state qualifiers. Newbanks triumphed at the CIT, but was 4th at the SWOCA. After that, it's pretty much potluck with Tebbe and Hollandsworth the two most likely possibilities.

130 #

PROJECTED CHAMPION: MATT LERER (MAYFIELD)

Top Contenders

2	Mizer (Massillon Perry)	15	Holland (Perrysburg)
3	Flake (Lakota West)	16	Mazur (Coffman)
4	Lindsey (Moeller)	17	Spicel (Brunswick)
5	Felton (Elyria)	18	Reddinger (Lorain Southview)
6	Treneck (Gahanna Lincoln)	19	Miller (Grove City)
7	Young (St. Edward)	20	Gray (Celina)
8	Guy (Miamisburg)	21	Campbell (Midpark)
9	Reams (Toledo Central Catholic)	22	Campbell (Harrison)
10	Green (Boardman)	23	Meyers (Oak Hills)
11	Turner (Scioto)	24	Godsey (Butler)
12	Haas (Massillon Jackson)	25	Spirk (Northmont)
13	Porter (Glen Este)	26	Cronin (Mt. Vernon)
14	Kline (Westerville North)		

For the second successive year this is probably the weakest weight class in Division I. Last year, having no idea who to select, I was the recipient of some excellent advice that pointed out a superior performer just beginning to emerge from obscurity. I need that same kind of advice this year because like Mother Hubbard, the cupboard is bare. While I ponder let's take a quick look at district performance the last two years.

2003-2004 DISTRICT ANALYSIS
Winning Percentage

	2004 Championship Bracket*	No. of Champs	No. of Finalists	No. of Placers	2003 Championship Bracket
Firestone II	61.1%	6	12	29	48.0%
Perrysburg I (Mentor)	60.8%	7	14	21	55.9%
Mass. Perry I	58.1%	6	10	27	52.4%
Mentor III	54.0%	5	11	21	68.4%
Owens III	52.0%	4	6	23	34.1%
Galion II	48.5%	2	5	17	58.5%
Coshocton III (Watkins)	47.9%	4	8	20	56.1%
Xenia III	46.1%	1	3	14	32.1%
Goshen II	45.7%	5	7	20	44.2%
Watkins II (Coshocton)	42.7%	1	4	18	47.5%
Darby I	41.1%	0	2	17	42.7%
Fairfield I	37.5%	1	2	13	47.9%

*Does not include bouts that matched wrestlers from the same district

Clearly, the switch of the Plymouth Sectional back to the Owens District was a major positive, it evened out the winning percentage between Mentor (Division III) and Owens (Division III) and made for a much fairer allocation of state berths. It was also a big year for the North where 13 of the 14 state champs came from either Perrysburg or Massillon Perry. Much more detailed analysis flows from information such as this, but I leave it up to the interested and dedicated reader to pursue that kind of analysis.

Meanwhile, back at 130# the principal reason for few well-credentialed wrestlers at the weight class is that 13 seniors were in the state bracket at 125# last year. The natural flow is up one (or two) weight classes, but this year there is not much to flow upward. My choice is a wrestler who has moved up two weight classes and does have a solid resume. Matt Lerer was 3rd two years ago at 103# and then 6th last year at the brutally tough 119# class. This year he has not only changed weight classes, but schools as well, and there has been a period of adjustment. He was 3rd at the Ironman (but one of the walking wounded at the end) and 5th at Brecksville in what will not be remembered as one of his best tournaments. Still, he has a track record of coming on very strong at year's end and I am anticipating exactly that this year.

If there is one constant theme at this weight class it is inconsistency. Virtually every top-rated wrestler has had some great weeks and some he'd rather forget. At Fairfield, state qualifier Flake is an excellent example. He won the tough SWOCA tournament over Lindsey, but then at Brecksville lost to Haas and Shroyer and failed to place. He bounced back to win decisively at Mason where he majored Mazur. He should get a high place. Lindsey, a state qualifier in Division III last year, was 2nd at the SWOCA and won easily at the CIT. He has wrestled a much tougher schedule this year and will be ready for Columbus. After this duo the rest of the Southwest District is pretty much chaotic. I like the sophomore Guy and I think he'll be able to score some at the state level. I've ranked a number of Southwest boys some of whom will undoubtedly win up at Darby. Two others to watch might be Dilworth (Tecumseh) and Bedinger (Trotwood Madison). I'm confused about state placer Ken Touris (Lakota West) who wrestled, in part, at 125#, but certified at 130#. He'll have to oust either Flake or Bradberry to compete.

Lerer faces strong competition at Mentor. Felton has had great weeks (2nd at Avon Lake) and some not-so-great- ones (7th at Brecksville). He can be very good. Reams looks to be the best in the Toledo area and was 3rd at the CIT. He struggled, however, at last year's district meet. The sophomore Young has started to put it together. He took the title at Medina, but then was pinned by Felton in the dual meet. He is on the edge of being very good. Gray, another sophomore, is strong while Reddinger bounced back from a slow start by defeating Lopez (Waite) to win at Waite. This might be the best district.

Mizer is another wrestler with some up-and-down results. He went 1-2 at the Ironman losing to Lerer and Friery, but was a solid 3rd at Medina. At the Ohio Duals he beat Flake and Bryson before losing an 18-10 decision to Palmer, who was up a weight

class. When he is hot he can beat anyone here. Green, 2nd at the Top Gun, is not well recognized in most of the state, but he can be very tough. The freshman Spicel, a state junior high finalist, has had a great season and has an excellent chance of making the state. Haas is a total mystery. At Brecksville he beat Flake and Lerer back-to-back and battled Scaletta in a 6-3 loss. He has also had some unexpected losses and failed to place at the Top Gun.

As seems often the case, the Darby District is loaded with wrestlers who seem about equivalent. It's parity that's run amok. I've seen the same pattern with Treneff as with many of the others--some great results and then a 5th at Marion Harding. State qualifier Turner returns at this class followed by a squadron of other possibilities. Miller is one to watch. He has had a pedestrian year except at Brecksville where he finished a very strong 3rd.

135

PROJECTED CHAMPION: SEAN NEMEC (ST. EDWARD)

Top Contenders

2	Bodnar (Fitch)	15	Sargent (Eastlake North)
3	Billet (Coffman)	16	Conley (Glen Este)
4	Dowell (Pickerington Central)	17	Dima (Anderson)
5	Oberdove (North Royalton)	18	D. Castillo (Perrysburg)
6	Foore (Wadsworth)	19	Allesandro (Glen Oak)
7	Ruff (Beavercreek)	20	Carmack (Miamisburg)
8	Bradberry (Lakota West)	21	Harrison (Wooster)
9	Dickey (Green)	22	Tentler (Massillon Jackson)
10	Ward (Marion Franklin)	23	Moore (Upper Arlington)
11	Salem (Westlake)	24	Edgell (Toledo St. Francis)
12	Deliberato (Brush)	25	DiYanni (Reynoldsburg)
13	A. Castillo (Waite)	26	Tawney (Sycamore)
14	Carraher (St. Xavier)		

If I had picked the best freshman at the end of last February Sean Nemec would have been my choice. A state junior high champ his high school learning curve was virtually a vertical line as he improved so rapidly. At Perrysburg he had two falls and two majors in easing to the district title at 130#. Then at Columbus he cruised to the finals (including a 17-1 win in the semis) to face Mathews, who he had pinned the previous week--and there he stubbed his toe. He attacked straight on the entire bout, seemed to get a little panicky when he lost the first takedown and ended up a 3-2 loser to the senior Bryan Mathews. It was the fewest points he scored all year. He has spent much of this year at 140#--finishing 2nd at the Ironman and winning at Medina and the Beast. Unlike last year when he was something of a darkhorse candidate he'll be the clear favorite this time, and that means there'll be a target on his back every step of the way.

He'll face tough competition from every district, but Massillon Perry will likely have the most firepower. Bodnar, now a junior went 2-2 at Columbus last year. He lost an overtime battle to eventual champ Mathews in the first round, had two exciting wins, then lost to state placer Spencer. He was 2nd at both Brecksville and the Top Gun and the scary thing is that he's just rounding into shape. Oberdove was 2nd at Medina (to Billet) and won at Perrysburg, while Foore has been solid all year. He won at North Canton (over Dickey) and Wadsworth and was perfect at the Ohio Duals. Dickey, a state alternate last year, lost a one-point (2-1) bout in the district semi-finals last year and by the same score to Foore this year. That's four solid contenders, but if the pairings turn bad state qualifier Harrison, Allesandro, and Tentler are all very good. It should be a real battle at this district, watch out for the freshman Saraniti (Stow).

Nemec will face a crowded field at Mentor. Salem was a district runner-up at this weight class last year, but lost a 23-12 point-fest to Davis in the first round at States and ended up going 1-2. This year he has been perfect and will be a factor at both the district and state level. The Toledo contingent will be strong. I'm continually confusing the Castillo competitors--but they are both good. Angelo, a junior at Waite, won two district bouts last year and lost narrowly to Salem 7-5. He has come down from 140# and was most recently 3rd at Waite--losing to Deliberato in overtime. Dan, a senior, also lost to Salem, 8-5, at the district level and is now ranked first at this weight class in the Northwest District. He was 3rd at the Midwest Classic. I also like Edgell and Fowler (Northview) from that area and they will all be possible qualifiers. There is good depth here. Two Southwest Conference stalwarts are Noll (North Olmsted) who won two district bouts last year, and Brunner (Avon Lake) who has been a consistent place winner this year.

There are three very strong contenders at Darby and I'm still not sure how to rank them. Billet lost an 11-9 overtime bout in his go-to-state match last year, but has returned with a vengeance. He beat a good field at Medina and was 2nd at 140# at Coffman, early in the year, losing to Angelo Castillo in overtime. He most recently beat Bradberry to win at Mason. State qualifier Dowell has had a bit of a slow start, but Pickerington wrestlers have a history of performing well at tourney time. Nemec only beat him by 5-2 last year. He was not particularly sharp at Medina, but still won four bouts--both of his losses to the freshmen Tank. State qualifier Ward does not wrestle as difficult as schedule as others but he has undeniable talent. An explosive wrestler he must be handled with care. The fourth state berth is wide open.

Three state qualifiers head a strong group at Fairfield--though it's likely some may end up assigned to Darby. Ruff went 0-2 at Columbus including a memorable 19-15 struggle with Straughn and a 9-8 loss to Touris. He missed the early part of the year, but went undefeated at the Ohio Duals including a win over Bradberry. He'll be aggressive. Bradberry, a junior transfer from Fairfield, won the SWOCA and was 4th at Brecksville and 2nd at Mason. Dowell beat him by seven last year, but I'm guessing that gap may be nearly erased this year. Carraher up three weight classes was 6th at Brecksville after being a semi-finalist but ran into a buzzsaw (McLemore) and struggled the last day. He was 2nd at the SWOCA and should qualify. Conley and Dima are both good with consistent placement results. They have to prove, however, that they can

beat the really good boys. Carmack and Tawney (who won at Sycamore) are longshots here.

140

PROJECTED CHAMPION: JOSH HORNE (PICKERINGTON CENTRAL)

Top Contenders

2	Davis (Davidson)	15	Harris (Greenville)
3	Crenshaw (Sycamore)	16	Gasser (Wadsworth)
4	Straughn (Massillon Perry)	17	Janik/Bertin St. Edward
5	Haxton (Strongsville)	18	Bohl (Lakota West)
6	Pycraft (Elyria)	19	Hilton (Moeller)
7	Jiannetti (Mayfield)	20	Dettwiller (Springboro)
8	Stevenson (Reynoldsburg)	21	Oelbracht (Madison)
9	Bork (Toledo Central Catholic)	22	Geist (Beavercreek)
10	Beech (Mentor)	23	Spagnola (Olmsted Falls)
11	Donadee (Fitch)	24	Zayed (Westlake)
12	Shackle (Massillon Jackson)	25	Bivenour (Olentangy)
13	T. Castillo (Perrysburg)	26	Braun (Colerain)
14	Mizener (Mason)	27	Abruzzi (Glen Oak)
		28	Gariety (Centerville)

Even with Nemec now at 135# this is a strong and diverse field headed by at least three possible champs. My choice, and to some extent it's a sentimental one, is Josh Horne. We've had "feel good" type stories out of Columbus now for three years. It started with T. J. Enright who everyone knew had paid his dues, but had never won a state title. I was pleased when he won. On the other hand Tommy Cunningham fit that same template, but it was not to be last year as he lost early and finished 3rd. Still no one has had quite the track record of Josh Horne. He has been 2nd in the state four consecutive years--at 108# to Schlatter in the junior high states and then to Luce and Johnstone twice at Columbus. No high school wrestler has ever been a four-time runner-up and I hope it never happens. Horne is no lock here--is not even the favorite in many people's eyes. He was injured at Medina after winning the Midwest Classic, and has still not reached peak form. It's a tough weight cut and Davis and Crenshaw are very, very good, but I like Horne to relax a bit and win it all this time.

Mikey Davis is very good. Horne beat him 6-5 in last year's district semi-final and Davis ended 3rd there and then 3rd again at States. His only loss was 4-1 to two time state champion Johnstone. This year he is undefeated and rated ahead of Horne in Columbus. However, he is not unbeatable. The freshman Wilson gave him a terrific battle at Brecksville losing a semi-final thriller, 9-7, and Kriebel finished strong losing 6-5 in the final round. Both boys exit Darby so they should be apart in the state bracket.

The one who draws away from Crenshaw will have an advantage--and you double your odds of that by winning the district. Crenshaw has been exceptional this year and may

be well be the best of the top trio. He was 4th last year at 140# losing a 9-7 semi-final to Ciracky. This year no one has been close as he has crushed every foe. However, his is the weakest district and he has not yet ventured out of it. He wouldn't, shall we say, be getting strength of schedule points if he were in the BCS. Fortunately, it will be determined on the mat here.

As I said, Crenshaw has the easiest district. Mizener, Bohl, Hilton and Dettwiller are all possible qualifiers, but they are a giant step behind Crenshaw, and may not match up well with the best from other districts. I've also rated Geist, Gariety, and Braun, but after Crenshaw, this is pretty much a wide-open competition.

Unbelievably, Horne and Davis are not the only two state placers at Darby. Stevenson, 5th last year at 135#, also returns. Last year his first three district wins were by a combined 44-7 margin before dropping a 7-4 bout to Horne in the final. He, like the other two, also lost to Johnstone at States and ended with a 4-2 record. He, apparently, is still in the process of recovering from a badly broken ankle--a process that may not be totally complete by the end of February. Still, he managed a 6th at Brecksville and a title at Waite, and could still be a significant factor come tourney time. Harris and, maybe, Bivenour are next best with much to still be decided at that district level.

The two northern districts look to be on the periphery when it comes to the top steps on the podium, but there are likely to be plenty of possible placers from these two sites. I think Mentor is probably the stronger of the two. The quartet of Pycraft, state qualifier Jiannetti, state qualifier Bork, and Beech is solid. Pycraft won at Avon Lake and was 3rd at Brecksville losing by a point to Kriebel. This should be his breakout year. Jiannetti is down a weight class and he has a tough, grind it out style. Last year he lost in the first round of districts but then ground out four tough consolation wins (by a total of five points) to qualify. He was 3rd at Brecksville (at 145#) and also won the WRC. State qualifier Bork is just down from 145#, but struggled a bit at the CIT. Still, I think he'll return to Columbus though it could also be at 145#. Beech is steady and consistent with (yet another) Castillo and Janik (or Bertin). Also in the hunt are Zayed, and, maybe, Visocky (Brush).

The one wrestler with solid upset possibilities against "The Big Three" is Straughn. This kid is really good, and working out with Schlatter probably isn't hurting him any. Last year, as a freshman, he was the district champ at 130# and then finished 4th at Columbus--losing a first round bout 15-12 and then winning four consolation bouts--19-15, 2:38, 15-6, and 15-5. I love wrestlers who want to score points. This year he was 3rd at Medina--losing for the second time this year to Nemec--and undefeated at the Ohio Duals where he beat three good opponents by a combined 55-20 score. He cannot be overlooked. Haxton was 2nd at Brecksville and should be particularly fierce at this weight class. Gasser, at 103# last year and a state placer, will move up six weight classes with uncertain results. Shackle, also best remembered as a 103-pounder several years ago, has resurfaced at this weight class and placed at Brecksville at 145#. Donadee is also tough with Spagnola, Oelbracht, and Abruzzi as other possible qualifiers.

145#

PROJECTED CHAMPION: DUSTIN SCHLATTER (MASSILLON PERRY)

Top Contenders

2	Gaier (Moeller)	15	Barga (Westland)
3	Gigliotti (Fitch)	16	Campbell (Solon)
4	Whitely (Elyria)	17	Andrews (Marysville)
5	Weisenstein (Ashland)	18	Ferguson (Milford)
6	Becka (North Royalton)	19	Adams (Maumee)
7	McLaughlin (St. Edward)	20	Hill (Grove City)
8	Crone (Lakota East)	21	Flanigan (LaSalle)
9	Nickolai (Piqua)	22	Deak (Madison)
10	Gray (Celina)	23	Helmingier (Olentangy)
11	Sheets (Hayes)	24	Sizemore (Wayne)
12	Rager (Wadsworth)	25	Mickley (Davidson)
13	Switzer (Anthony Wayne)	26	Sims (Shaker Hts)
14	Soukup (Hudson)	27	Dies (Firestone)

During the sack of Rome in 1527--when civilians in great numbers were being murdered and buildings looted and burned--the great Italian painter Parmigianino failed to notice the turmoil all about him. A man preoccupied with his work he was unaware of the disaster until German mercenaries, with swords drawn were already in his house. Finding him painting they were then so stunned by his genius that instead of pillaging and murdering they sat down and asked him to render them on paper. Even the lowliest of troops instantly recognized his genius.

So it is with Dustin Schlatter. Anyone who sees him wrestle, but one time can instantly recognize he is someone special. He will become our 14th four-time champion and permanently engrave his name on the list of all-time greats. He has excelled at every level in wrestling and I have never seen a high school wrestler better at flowing from move to move. No three-time champion has ever failed to win in his senior year and Schlatter will most certainly extend that trend. His ability to instantly discern an opponent's weakness and turn it into points is unparalleled and will serve him well in his college years at Minnesota.

Much has been written and discussed about the outcome of Schlatter's bout with Brent Metcalfe. Both boys are absolutely marvelous with tremendous futures ahead of them. It was my good fortune to watch the bout from the press balcony looking slightly down and across to the center mat. Tied at three at the end of the third period Schlatter was working toward his second takedown (he had the only one to this point) as the clock ticked down the last few seconds. Strictly by chance I was perfectly aligned to see both the referee and the clock. As the official began to move his hand upward to signify control and two points there was still time on the clock. There is no doubt in my mind that the takedown was good and, I believe, that the referee also thought so. However,

the mat judge, who seemed well positioned, appeared unsure and the timekeeper was consulted. An experienced man he nonetheless was a victim of the reaction time it takes the referee to recognize control and signal it and then his reaction time to see that signal and check the clock. With the takedown waved off Metcalfe eventually prevailed by riding out Schlatter in the 30-second tiebreaker. Credit Metcalfe with a brilliant game plan that featured "in your face" pressure that seemed to disconcert the normally unflappable Schlatter. Also note the strength and athletic ability that Metcalfe demonstrated throughout the match in avoiding a second takedown (especially countering that wicked duck under) and in keeping Schlatter off balance with his own attacks. I hope that we will see a rematch at the National High School Tournament.

We'll not talk about Schlatter any more except to say that he will win the Perry District. Gigliotti, an out-of-state move-in, has been exceptional at Fitch. He was 2nd at Brecksville at 152#, and then won the Top Gun at this weight class. Becka and Rager have both had some highs and lows this year. I like what I saw of Becka at last year's district and this year he was 2nd at Hudson. The other solid possibility here might be a healthy Campbell. Dies and Sims must battle the odds here along with Wagner (Marietta) and Dellapina (Hoover).

There is good talent at Mentor. Whitely can be very good. He was 6th at the Ironman and 3rd at Avon Lake. He pinned McLaughlin in the dual and will be a big 145-pounder. State qualifier Weisenstein is also back along with McLaughlin who I thought might go at 140# when Nemec dropped. Gray, from a distant part of the state, might be better than any of them but I just don't have the comparables to tell.

Gaier, Crone, and Nickolai are a solid trio at Fairfield who have traded wins with one another. Gaier, the CIT champ, is still only a sophomore and has the most upside. A state qualifier last year he beat Kallai in the first round and lost a close quarterfinal bout to the eventual state runner-up. Crone beat Gaier at the SWOCA and is a tough, hard-nosed competitor. Nickolai, who may end at Darby, should qualify at either location. He was a solid third at, perhaps, the toughest weight class at the GMVWA - - losing only to the Florida state champion.

The Darby District, barring a huge infusion of talent from the southwest, is probably not going to be a huge factor in the eventual resolution of this weight class. Most of the top boys have yet to establish a statewide reputation to date.

152 #

PROJECTED CHAMPION: TRAVIS POPHAM (MT. VERNON)

Top Contenders

2	Ciracky (Westerville South)	15	Savona (Toledo St. John)
3	Jonhenry (Berea)	16	Fisher (Twinsburg)
4	Kallai (Wadsworth)	17	Joles (Riverside)
5	Tomasone (St. Edward)	18	Myers (Butler)
6	Milavec (Elyria)	19	Melin (Pickerington North)
7	Jones (Central Crossing)	20	Dozanti (Hudson)
8	Boerger (St. Xavier)	21	Kassil (Westlake)
9	Mahon (Moeller)	22	Wittman (Coffman)
10	Purnell (Springfield North)	23	Daniels (Rogers)
11	Dowdy (Princeton)	24	Shalash (Reynoldsburg)
12	Franklin (New Philadelphia)	25	Fry (Fairborn)
13	Mauro (Centerville)	26	Nelson (Massillon Perry)
14	Grandominico (Olentangy)		

During the first six weeks of wrestling season I not only spend an enormous amount of time in the data collection process, but I analyze and review boatloads of data. Then, like I do when golfing, I try to visualize the outcome. It doesn't seem to work too often in golf (though Laren Wikel might disagree), but often in this state I begin to see a clear picture of what the final bracket sheet might look like. Strangely, while it seemed to work so well at 145# I'm not getting any clarity at this weight class.

The complicating issue is Travis Popham. He looked exceptional at Brecksville winning easily, but at 160#. The week before he had been 2nd at the SWOCA wrestling at 152#. My view is that if he can wrestle with the same efficiency he showed at 160# at this weight class he should win. At the time I asked him what direction he would take and he indicated laughingly that it would be the opposite of whatever I wrote. Well, he did certify at 152# so that is where I will rank him. Should he compete at 160# then Ciracky would be a close call over Jonhenry, Kallai, and Tomasone.

Popham, still only a junior, is a two-time state qualifier who battled injuries during the middle of last year. Still he qualified second out of Darby and went 2-2 including a 16-13 quarterfinal loss to Monk. Ciracky will exit the same district and is undefeated this year. He was state runner-up at 140# last year to Schlatter after beating Kallai, Gaier, and Crenshaw. He, too, is a junior and finished last year 42-2.

These two lead the way at a very tough Darby District. If no one of note comes from the southwest this would still be a most difficult location. Jones went 1-2 at the district level and this will be his last chance for state qualification and placement. He has undeniable talent, but has, in the past, lost bouts that were well within his grasp. He was 4th at Wadsworth behind Kallai and Jonhenry. There is a quartet of other able performers as well. I like Grandominico, a state alternate, Melin, Wittman and Shalash. There may be

only one state berth reachable for this foursome. On the other hand all three ranked above them recognize that there is real upset potential here.

Again, not knowing the eventual disbursement plan, I can still conclude that Fairfield will have a lot of solid talent--perhaps not high placers, but many with the talent to land a low place. I'm of a mind that Boerger and Mahon (finalists at the CIT) might be best here, but state qualifier Purnell pinned in both the semi-finals and finals to win the GMVWA. It's a solid trio, but state qualifier Dowdy also returns and that makes it four wrestlers rated in my top dozen. Right behind this group is Mauro and state alternate Myers who certainly have state qualification aspirations. This is, like Darby, a very strong area.

Two of the top challengers for the Columbus duo come out of the Massillon Perry District. Kallai, one of the countless excellent wrestlers with that name, qualified at 140# last year. Apparently injured he lost by technical fall in the first round and then immediately dropped his consolation bout, too. It was a totally unexpected outcome. This year he bounced back with a string of scintillating victories (mostly by fall) to win at North Canton and Wadsworth. There he defeated Jonhenry by a point. Then at the Ohio Duals, he rather inexplicably lost to Mahon--not that Mahon is not a solid performer. Then he struggled against Tomasone before pinning him. I wonder if this regression is due to injury, but in any event it is worrisome. Still, I think he'll bounce back and make a strong run at the state meet. Jonhenry is very athletic and is a strong threat--he has had some injury problems in the past, but has performed this year without issues. Franklin was 2nd at Medina and has dominated in his part of the state. He was a state alternate last year and is an aggressive point-scorer. Fisher, often overlooked, may be better than where I've placed him. He was 3rd at Solon (losing only to Rohler) and Southview and 1st at the WRC. Joles, Dozanti, and Nelson are other possibilities while the freshman Darlington (Stow) while a year away was 6th at Brecksville.

No one can tell what might happen at Mentor. Milavec has had great performances and some that seemed quite ordinary. Still, he has placement ability and that needs to make itself manifest at tourney time. The big mystery, though, is Tomasone. Two years ago, as a freshman, he was 5th in Division II at 119# wrestling for Chanel. He then transferred to St. Ed's where he wrestled on the Green Team last year and was incapacitated by injury this season. He reappeared at the Ohio Duals with two big wins at this weight class. Then, in a dual meet, comfortably ahead of Kallai he was pinned. Should he be healthy he will be a major factor at this weight class-- but that is still open to question. The rest of this district is not that strong, although Savona or, maybe, Kassil will surprise me. Kassil is the major unknown. He was injured all last year and missed the entire season. Now he is 24-0, but against a schedule that is not overly testing. He could well be much better than I have him rated.

160#

PROJECTED CHAMPION: MIKE MILLER (LAKE)

Top Contenders

2	Koz (St. Edward)	15	DeLande (Davidson)
3	Daugherty (Xenia)	16	Muhammad (Shake Hts.)
4	Nusekabel (Elder)	17	Foreman (Coffman)
5	Kilgore (Berea)	18	Spickler (Strongsville)
6	Denman (St. Xavier)	19	Hess (Ashland)
7	Weidenthal (Fitch)	20	Iammarino (Brush)
8	Kmetz (Moeller)	21	Wilder (Princeton)
9	Kettinger (Toledo St. John)	22	Beat (Perrysburg)
10	Standish (Hudson)	23	Fulton (Fairborn)
11	Wiley (Beavercreek)	24	Hossfeld (Scioto)
12	LaFollette (Marysville)	25	Holztrager (Normandy)
13	Hogan (Avon Lake)	26	Wise (Grove City)
14	Green (Westlake)	27	Favazzo (St. Charles)

Earlier this month I got off I-77 at the Newcomerstown exit for breakfast at the nearby McDonalds. Much to my surprise it was filled with some fabulous baseball pictures dealing with local icon, Cy Young. One picture, in particular, caught my attention. It was a shot of a 1930 old-timers reunion and in it were recently retired superstars like Ty Cobb and Tris Speaker, Eddie Collins and Home Run Baker, and in the middle a white-haired gentleman named Billy Hamilton. Now, virtually forgotten, he was, in my view, one of the truly great players of the 1890's. Lightning fast, a defensive whiz, and a superb baserunner he hit for a high average, led the league in walks, and scored an enormous number of runs. However, somehow his skills were overlooked, even by his contemporaries (a walk meant you were lazy to many folks) and he was vastly under-appreciated. Unbelievably 13 players from his era entered the Hall of Fame before him, and his plaque there draws little attention. In recent years the explosion in statistical analysis has shown what a great player Hamilton was and, slowly, admiration for his efforts are growing.

In a way I wonder if Mike Miller is in a similar situation. Somehow we forget what a great performer he has been. A Division I state title over a strong field at 145 in his sophomore year and then a second title last year while hampered by injury are very impressive. His ability to impose his will on an opponent often goes unnoticed while his penchant for scoring points in bunches make his bouts seem somehow less demanding. In the future I hope we recognize that he was one of our finest middleweight wrestlers in a time of exceptional talent in those weight classes.

I think there is only one wrestler here who stands as a real threat to Miller. Bryan Koz (he needs to learn that it's spelled with an i) has had a great year. He majored the excellent Kent Smith in a dual and won big at Medina never having to go six minutes in his 5 bouts. At the Ohio Duals he was undefeated--beating Popham by six and

majoring Kmetz. A St. Edward Koz (Chuck) was 2nd last year at this weight, and history may repeat itself this year.

The rest of that Mentor District looks a little shaky. I still think Kettinger can get the job done, but he was 5th at the CIT losing to Rohler (who doesn't) and Denman. Hogan, Green and Iammarino are possibilities with Hess waiting in the wings. I noted that Drew Beat certified at this weight although I have yet to see any results, he might play a role at this district.

I like the wrestlers at Fairfield, but the rules of internal consistency and transitivity just do not apply. One week one of two of them will perform at a high level, the next week it'll be a different pair who shine. Nonetheless, I think state placer Nusekabel, Denman, Kmetz, Wiley, and Wilder all have placement potential. Wiley won the SWOCA with Denman, Kmetz, and Nusekabel close behind in that order. At Brecksville Nusekabel was a finalist with Denman 8th. At the CIT the order once again changed with Kmetz the finalist and Denman beating Nusekabel. Go figure. It's really a toss-up at the district with the finalist likely to get pairings that will smooth the path to placement.

I've put state qualifier Daugherty at Darby where he would be the favorite. State qualifier LaFollette also returns, as does the excellent sophomore DeLande (who might still go at 152#). Fulton, winner at Xenia, may also be here and I suspect we'll have a good mix of Central and Southwest wrestlers. Foreman, recent winner at Mason, could also be a factor as the battles here will be close.

Kilgore was a state qualifier at 152# as a freshman last year and he should have placement hopes this year. He'll be at Massillon Perry with Miller who beat him by technical fall at Wadsworth. In fact, there will be a very spirited battle for the last three spots. State qualifier Standish is very good and Weidenthal might be the surprise package. He was 5th at Brecksville (over Standish) and second at the Top Gun. State alternate Spickler has not had, up to now, the results I anticipated, but, clearly, his performance last year shows how dangerous he can be.

171 #

PROJECTED CHAMPION: DAVID CLEMENS (BEAVERCREEK)

Top Contenders

2	T. Miller (Wadsworth)	15	Dattillo (Centerville)
3	Place (Central Crossing)	16	Gemmell (Green)
4	Marrero (Reynoldsburg)	17	Nickolai (Piqua)
5	Sen (Elyria)	18	Sokolow (Avon Lake)
6	Almer (Lakota West)	19	Trusnik (Nordonia)
7	Reitmeier (Holland Springfield)	20	Cameron (Moeller)
8	Steele (Chillicothe)	21	Peacock (Hudson)
9	Lee (Marion Franklin)	22	Barrett (Garfield Hts.)
10	Roddy (St. Edward)	23	Pushpak (Brecksville)
11	Rice (Grove City)	24	Alexander (Findlay)
12	Robertson (Maple Hts.)	25	Darnell (Scioto)
13	Trujillo (Groveport Madison)	26	Gibbs (Oak Hills)
14	L. Miller (St. Xavier)		

This weight class shapes up as a titanic struggle between two superior wrestlers. Both boys are strong, quick, and very experienced and, as seniors, desperate to win that first state title. One problem is that they have had only one common opponent of significant stature with which to measure them. They did both compete against the freshman Brian Roddy with Clemens winning 19-7 and Miller triumphing 11-7. Is that significant?

Let's start with Clemens. He was 3rd at 152# last year losing to Mike Miller in the semi-finals. This year he is unbeaten winning, among others, both the SWOCA and Medina titles. Most of his wins have been wipeouts like the 14-0 victory over the very good Reitmeier in the Medina final. His only relatively close bout was a 4-1 win over state placer Almer.

Tim Miller was also at 152# last year finishing 2nd losing to Mike Miller in the finals. Oddly Mike Miller beat them back-to-back at Columbus by five points, but that is very deceptive--he beat Tim, 5-0, and Clemens 17-12. Miller is already a three-time placer (6-3-2) as he has improved each year. This year he has begun to pin far more often. He won titles at North Canton and Wadsworth and like Clemens has had one relatively close bout, 12-8, against Place.

Thanks to the magic of seeding it is likely that these two will not meet until the final round (both have to win their district--probably easier for Miller). Clemens is rightfully confident being quoted that he expected to go undefeated and win a state title and I'm guessing that Miller feels the same way.

Hmm. Clemens or Miller, Miller or Clemens, how does one choose. I'm kind of obligated to pick one of them, but on this particular day, January 18, I still have no idea. I guess you need to hope for two things--that they don't think too far and overlook the

worthy opponents they must first meet and second that their bout fully showcases their talents and doesn't devolve into a one-move match or even worse go into the 30-second tie breaker. Let it be Clemens.

The dynamite district is at Darby. There are six Central District wrestlers with state caliber skills and only four will prevail. I like state qualifier Place who has crushed just about everyone except for his four point loss to Miller at Wadsworth. Most recently he won at Mason defeating state placer Almer in the finals 16-4. He could upset the applecart for Miller or Clemens, or both. Steele, of whom we hear little, won two district bouts last year but apparently has undergone a transformation. I have him beating district champ Rice in a dual, 11-1, and also see him locally rated over Place. Marrero, a New Jersey move-in, was 2nd at Brecksville including a 9-8 win over Almer. Perhaps the most athletic of this sextet is state qualifier Lee of whom I have received rave reviews. His only problem is that he can, on occasion, be out-finessed. District champion Rice returns, but while the faces are the same as last year the competition will be even more brutal. Last year he beat Trujillo (who is also back) 8-7 and Place in overtime. It will be even tougher this year. And, yes, Trujillo is back and he just beat Lee at Scioto. What a great competition.

The other highly competitive district is at Mentor. However, the jockeying will be for position, not qualification. State qualifier Reitmeier was 2nd at Medina and he wrestles a funky style, all arms and legs, he has folks pinned before they know what hit them. State qualifier Sen avenged his first round state loss to Almer last year at Brecksville and he won at Avon Lake. Then there is the brilliant freshman, Roddy. A two-time state junior high champ he is something special. He was 5th at Medina (losing to Clemens and Ciccone) and won three bouts at the Ironman. More recently, he caught and pinned Sen and gave Miller a tough bout. I may have him too low here and he could well end up high on the awards stand. He won't win it this year, but watch out in 2006, 2007, and 2008. Robertson beat Almer and lost, 1-0, to Sen at Brecksville. Very strong and an experienced competitor he'll not lose easily to anyone.

Tim Miller should dominate at Massillon Perry. It is by far the weakest district and the other three qualifiers are likely to struggle at Columbus. I cannot decide whether a rather non-competitive situation will be a plus or a minus for him.

Clemens won't have it quite so easy. Almer lost 14 times last year and still placed. He knows how to win close bouts and he seems to have a lot of them. He won his first two bouts at Columbus by a total of three points. Both should qualify with the last two spots up in the air.

189 #

PROJECTED CHAMPION: MIKE WARD (MAYFIELD)

Top Contenders

2	Morrison (Shaker Hts.)	15	Pasquale (Boardman)
3	Michel (Northmont)	16	Godfrey (Glen Este)
4	Anevski (Elder)	17	Francis (Maumee)
5	Hellwarth (Celina)	18	Balogh (Valley Forge)
6	Thomas (Marion Harding)	19	Kingrey (Greenville)
7	Shilling (Massillon Perry)	20	Eller (Findlay)
8	Hetlinger (Darby)	21	Varner (Lake)
9	Peterson (Coffman)	22	Legg (Westerville South)
10	Porter (Mason)	23	Hylton (Marion Franklin)
11	Ray (Groveport Madison)	24	Fox (Toledo Central Catholic)
12	Iammarino (Brush)	25	McGrain (Olmsted Falls)
13	Hohla (Amherst Steele)	26	Robinson (Maple Hts.)
14	Rettig (St. Xavier)	27	Jayjack (North Royalton)

There are some years where it seems that close to half the weight class are dominated by one, almost unbeatable superstar. Unfortunately this is not one of those years, so it with some relief that we reach 189#. Mike Ward clearly stands out in what appears to be a relatively thin field. When I first heard that he was headed for 189# I wondered whether he might be a little small for that class. After all, he had gone up 19 pounds and two weight classes last year and now we were seeing a similar move yet again. It has not been a problem. He was 4th at the Ironman losing to the #1 ranked Patrick Bond on a fluky, probably out-of-bounds takedown and then dropped a narrow 2-1 decision to Division II choice Pucillo. Since then he has been awesome manhandling every opponent. He is now wrestling with tremendous confidence. He was 2nd at 152# as a sophomore and 1st last year avenging a district loss to Melton. He had some close bouts then, I don't think he'll have any this time. That's not to say that a Morrison or Roman (if he is at this weight) won't challenge him, but he looks ready to surmount any obstacle.

None of the districts seem very strong or very deep. Ward will emerge from Mentor and one of his opponents will be state qualifier Thomas. Up two weight classes (and 29 pounds) he was 2nd at Marion Harding. I think the Northwest boys will do well here. Francis, Eller, Fox and especially Hellwarth are all good and along with Thomas are likely to give Ward his stiffest challenge at this district. Hohla has made significant progress and Iammarino was 3rd at Waite--ahead of Francis.

Morrison should stand out at Perry if two things happen--he maintains a tight, mental focus and he continues to improve. If Roman is here it will be much tougher, but he does hold a win over the big Glen Oak senior. The question for Roman is clear. It's 2nd or 3rd at 189# or a possible (only possible) title shot at 215#. I've ranked him at 215#, but I'd put him 3rd here. The rest of this district has not yet established a "laundry list" of

accomplishments. I've ranked Shilling, but he struggled big time at Brecksville. My brother went to Valley Forge and yet I know little about Balogh. His progress will be of interest. I've listed some other possible candidate with, perhaps, Srock (Wadsworth) and Swinderman (New Philadelphia) also in that group.

There is not much differentiation at Darby. There are a half-dozen (at least) candidates for the four qualifying spots and little to separate them. It would not shock me if several of the 171's in that brutal slugfest at this district opt for the more congenial environment of 189#. As it is Hetlinger, Peterson, and, perhaps,. Krugh are the best here. There will probably be a couple unfamiliar names who will challenge them.

I'm having trouble getting a good fix on Anevski, but I suspect he is the best at Fairfield. He pinned Godfrey to win at the SWOCA, but at Brecksville he was hurt in a quarterfinal win and had to default down to 6th place. Had he remained healthy he would gone up against Ward, and probably Caponi and those would have been useful measuring sticks. He was 3rd at the CIT losing to the excellent Tymoszczuk in the semi-finals. Rettig, Godfrey, and Porter would seem to be next, but that is uncertain. A top contender whose assignment is unknown is state qualifier Michel. He was the Fairfield District runner-up at this weight class last year, but went 0-2 at Columbus. I would rank him first at either district--but I think Anevski might give him a tougher battle at Fairfield. Either way with the right draw he should have high placement aspirations.

215

PROJECTED CHAMPION: NICK SIMON (SHAKER HTS.)

Top Contenders

2	Roman (Glen Oak)	14	Ochab (St. Charles)
3	Palmieri (Mayfield)	15	Watson (Sandusky)
4	Quehl (Moeller)	16	Hoffner (Massillon Perry)
5	Lovy (Lebanon)	17	Adam (Loveland)
6	Jabbie (Westerville South)	18	Jones (Ashland)
7	Crowley (Wadsworth)	19	Keefer (Reynoldsburg)
8	Marcellino (St. Edward)	20	LeStrange (Toledo Central Catholic)
9	Sexton (New Philadelphia)	21	Truster (Talawanda)
10	Mernedakis (Pickerington North)	22	Mann (Miamisburg)
11	Simmons (Scioto)	23	Stolarsky (Solon)
12	Winemiller (Amherst Steele)	24	Pritchard (Northmont)
13	Jameson (Elder)	25	Perez (Fremont Ross)

Assuming my calculations are correct there have been 1,638 state titles awarded since 1938. What interested me was how many different individuals had won titles (since we, of course, have had over 250 multiple winners). As we begin this year's tournament process 1,322 different boys have been champions. It's a pretty exclusive club when you consider the millions of boys who have passed through our secondary school

network in the nearly 70 past years. It would be interesting to know who has seen the most state championships, and who has coached the most.

Last year this was one of the most competitive weight classes in Division I. As it turned out all four semi-finalists emerged from the Massillon Perry District in what was a mad scramble. Ironically the finalists were the same pair who had wrestled for 3rd place the week before. It was a senior-oriented group that included some great boys from other parts of the state as well (Adkins, Huddle, Stegeman, etc.). This year there is far less depth at this weight with many of the top contenders still not clearly defined. In addition we may see some of the 189's that fled that weight class when faced with the specter of Mike Ward.

It just occurred to me that this is the first time in 34 years that my first three choices have the same first name--Nick. They also share about the same level of wrestling ability--very high--making the final choice difficult. I've gone with Simon based on overall state experience and determination, but to triumph he'll need to win a number of close bouts.

Nick Simon was 6th last year at this weight class including consolation wins over Quehl and Adkins. Just as impressive were his losses to Busson and Burger where he was in the match to the very end. A big-time football player he got a bit of a late start finishing 2nd at Solon (to a Detroit CC wrestler) and winning at Kenston and North Canton. He defeated Crowley 3-1 in taking that title. Wrestling expert Josh Johnson believes its Simon's exceptional determination that has made him successful--he only started wrestling in high school--and he'll need all of it at this weight class. It's not a place for hockey players.

Nick Roman placed 5th at 189# last year beating the defending state champ Ryan Lukens twice. He was nearly a finalist dropping a close decision to eventual champ Carpenter in the semi-finals. This year he started out at 189# finishing 2nd at North Canton to Simon's teammate Corey Morrison. He moved up to 215# at Brecksville and it worked perfectly as he defeated a tough field--beating Palmieri in the final. Since then he has been undefeated also winning the Dies handily. He has certified at 189#, but his success at 215# and the shadow of Mike Ward may keep him at 215#--where his probability of a state title is likely much higher.

Nick Palmieri has come on strong in this his senior year. He has lost three times. A one-pointer to Roman at Brecksville and twice at the Ironman--to Division II pick Marshall and Pennsylvania star Pellar (who has also beaten Quehl). He is not the biggest 215 pounder in the state but he is brutally strong and quick. He has Ward as a workout partner and his improvement has been dramatic.

There are a quartet of good 215's, the three just mentioned and Charles (no, not Nick) Quehl. A state qualifier last year Quehl is a big 215-pounder who has lost only once to an Ohio wrestler this year--a 9-7 OT decision to Crowley. He was 1-2 at Columbus last year losing to eventual champ Noga by three points and to Simon in overtime. He won

the SWOCA and was 5th at the Powerade. He could easily be the champ. The pairings could be lopsided with Simon and Roman exiting the same districts. Winning at Massillon Perry could turn out to be an enormous plus.

That Massillon Perry District is the best one. Roman and Simon would appear to be best, but there are three other top-notch boys. Sexton 4th at Medina lost a 3-1 semi-final district bout last year and then dropped his go-to-state bout to eventual state finalist Trusnik. He is solid. Crowley was the champ at Wadsworth and has beaten Quehl and Marcellino, but lost to Simon in the North Canton final and Palmieri. Hoffner is good, but may get left out. Stolarsky, the Solon sophomore, probably isn't ready for this level of competition quite yet, but he looks like a coming star.

Palmieri has to beat Marcellino to win at Mentor and that won't be easy. Marcellino had five falls while winning at Medina and he can score from any position. After this duo, it's a tad weaker with Winemiller, Watson, and Jones strong possibilities. I keep thinking LeStrange might be a state qualifier, but he'll have to hustle to do so at this district.

Quehl will be challenged by state qualifier Lovy. He went 1-2 at Columbus last year after a brilliant 40 win season. He and Quehl met in the SWOCA finals with the latter boy taking a 6-5 decision. There is a major drop-off after this top two with the last two qualifiers like to come from a pool of eight to ten wrestlers.

There would seem to be three fairly secure choices at Darby. State qualifier Jabbie heads the list and would appear poised for a low to middle placement. Mernedakis and state qualifier Simmons are equally well placed and winning this district title could be critical. A low place at Darby probably sets you up against the very top boys early. Watch Mernedakis, only a junior, who won two district bouts last year. He won at Scioto and has been a high placer elsewhere.

HVY.

PROJECTED CHAMPION: STEVE DUMAS (BRUSH)

Top Contenders

2	Reed (Madison)	15	Carroll (Solon)
3	Marshall (Mason)	16	Terifaj (Strongsville)
4	Kowalski (Nordonia)	17	Hartshorn (Reynoldsburg)
5	Salamone (Mentor)	18	Firm (Central Crossing)
6	Nicholson (Marion Franklin)	19	Senal (North Olmsted)
7	Kuhar (St. Edward)	20	Gawronski (Toledo St. Francis)
8	Keferl (Thomas Worthington)	21	Wade (Beavercreek)
9	Mosier (Mansfield Madison)	22	Stryfeller (Fitch)
10	Wood (Miamisburg)	23	Yeager (Sidney)
11	Wagner (Wayne)	24	Hayes (Darby)
12	Lytz (New Philadelphia)	25	McKenzie (Parma)
13	McGhee (Groveport Madison)	26	Samson (Whitmer)
14	Reinhardt (Lakota West)		

The most recent era of superb heavyweight wrestling ended last March. It was the greatest collection of talent at this weight class in Ohio history challenged only by the 1975 crop that included Bob Golic, Tom Cousineau, Harold Smith, Tim Payne, Mike Weitzman, Jeff Sanicky, Jerry Fultz and Eric Cunningham. Yet even that group does not match up with the superstars of the last three years. There is not much left. There were 14 seniors in the Division I bracket and that doesn't provide many returning state qualifiers, and though I have searched and researched very diligently we're back to "by guess and by golly" in the heavyweight forecasting business.

My choice is the excellent Brush heavyweight, the soft-spoken Steve Dumas. He won two district bouts last year, but was eliminated by two very close defeats. This year he has so far run the table. He had a thrilling last-second, come-from-behind victory to triumph at the Ironman and won much more easily at Kenston and the WRC. He has really improved and will be difficult to beat.

Each district is loaded with possibilities and Mentor is no different. The top quartet begins with Dumas but includes three other top-notch heavyweights. Salamone won at Solon, was 2nd at the Midwest Classic and 4th at Brecksville. Only a sophomore he has an outstanding future. Kuhar is also a sophomore and has wrestled a big-time St. Ed's schedule. He was 3rd at the Ironman but had to default due to injury at the Medina. He has been slow returning to form, but now seems close to 100%. Mosier doesn't get much publicity but he was a state alternate last year losing a tough 9-6 decision in his go-to-state bout. He won at Madison, Marion Harding, was 2nd at North Canton and was 5th at the Top Gun losing to Reed in the semi-finals. This district is loaded with other possibilities. I've listed Senal, Gawronski and Samson--with the first two multiple winners at last year's district. Moore (Woodward), Craddolph (Columbian) and, especially, Gibson (Sandusky) are other thoughts.

The big (and I use that word in two senses) challenge for Dumas is likely to be Reed. A state qualifier, he beat Dumas , 4-3, in that process last year. He went on to be a semi-finalist at Columbus eventually finishing 6th. This year he won the mighty Top Gun over my Division III choice Ryan Bowers coming back from early season injuries. The major challenge will be the athletic Kowalski. He is big, strong and quick and has as much talent as anyone here. He was 1st at Brecksville, and 2nd to Dumas in overtime at the WRC. I just worry that he rolls around just a little too much and could get burned. He has a great collegiate upside. Lytz, Terifaj, Carroll, and Stryfeller are all good and given the shifting fortunes of the heavyweight class could all potentially qualify.

The one heavyweight to really watch is the enormous Marshall. He is over six and a half feet tall and knows how to move. Last year he lost to eventual state champ Tony Johnson in the district semi-finals and then dropped one of those 30-second tie breakers to end up as a state alternate. Undeclared this year he has won everything that has come his way. He could easily be champ. Wagner, the Cadet Greco National Champ is another powerhouse at this district. Marshall has defeated him twice and he has lost to Wood. That competitor is the third member of the top trio that will test the other heavyweight around the state.

State qualifier Keferl and Nicholson head the Darby District with both of these boys having placement potential. Nicholson gets the nod having beaten Keferl in their most recent outing. A most intriguing possibility is the excellent McGhee. He had brain surgery this past summer, and I know from personal experience (my daughter) how difficult that recuperation can be. He has had mostly good results to date and should be a "player" at the state level.

TEAMS

1. St. Edward This will be their 21st championship and it happens in what could only be called a rebuilding year. They graduated 10 senior starters last year, but the replacements will eventually be great. The core of the team is the returnees Palmer, Nemec, Harris, and Sulzer. However, Koz and Marcellino have produced solid leadership and newcomers like Kuhar and Young are outstanding..
2. Massillon Perry A perennial public school power they have the only team that has any chance (still small) of challenging St. Edward. The incomparable Schlatter leads the way with Hartley and Straughn both possible finalists. Mizer is in a very weak weight class and should score heavily. If the enigmatic Rooney can contribute and some of the big men or Genetin pitch in it might be surprisingly close.
3. Moeller They exit a relatively weak district this year and could bring, perhaps, eight to Columbus. The trick will be to have them all score there. Weaver, Lindsey, Gaier, and Quehl are “musts” in this endeavor, while Newbanks, Gobin, Mahon and Kmetz need to exceed expectations.
4. Mayfield Ward, Lerer, and Palmieri are the absolute heart of this team and must all score big. Jiannetti has state experience, but needs to prove he can score at the state level. After that people like Catalona, D’Allesandro, and the like have to pitch in.
5. Fitch Coach Brett Powell does a brilliant job each year in fashioning an excellent team in a “wrestling apathetic” part of the state. They make the Top Five only if Jamieson is as good as I think he is and Bodnar wrestles up to his true potential. They should get some big points from the move-in Gigliotti and Weidenthal, Dunadee, and Stryfeller could help. A nice coaching job by the big guy.
6. Elyria An influx of new blood the last two years has elevated this team to the upper echelon. Mitcheff is the favorite at 119# and Pycraft, Whitely, and Milavec form a nice trio of middleweights. They could move up if Felton and Sen are at the top of their game and the little Mitcheff does well at the crowded 103# class.

7. Wadsworth A team that might be on the edge of greatness. Miller is the nucleus and he should be a finalist. Then there are a lot of possibilities--Bryson, Foore, Gasser, Rager, Jones, and Crowley--some of whom must score at the state level. The big question is Kallaj; is he a possible finalist or will injuries make him something less.
8. Lakota West Flake, Almer, Bradberry, and Fields could all be big scorers, and, if so, they are woefully underrated at #8. Reinhardt and Bohl are distinct possibilities and somehow a way has to be found to utilize the Touris brothers. If all this happens they'll move up two or three positions.
9. Massillon Jackson My report suggests that Johnson and Rini could be solid point contributors. To make the Top Ten they'll need help from Filicky, Haas, Shackle, or Tentler. That may be asking too much.
10. Solon Hardy and Floyd are a pair of exceptional lightweights with possible finalist aspirations. However, I'm struggling to find other point scorers--can Carroll, Clark or Campbell help out.

Division II

This classification is extremely strong this year with many of the best wrestlers in the state operating within its confines. The Graham success has raised the bar in the Southwest District, and there are so many good young wrestlers competing there it seemed that every other finalist at the Junior High States was from that area.

103#

PROJECTED CHAMPION: DANIEL EARLEY (COLUMBUS DESALES)

Top Contenders

2	Pelton (Bellevue)	16	Foldvary (Defiance)
3	Cisco (St. Marys Memorial)	17	Jellison (Ross)
4	Roche (University School)	18	Danielson (New Lexington)
5	Miller (Brookville)	19	Rose (Cambridge)
6	Kostandaras (Revere)	20	Lambert (Walsh)
7	Sexton (Springfield Shawnee)	21	Thomusseit (Graham)
8	Potts (Kenston)	22	Jameson Indian Hills)
9	Papesh (Aurora)	23	Scammell (St. Clairsville)
10	Santry (Whitehall)	24	Palladino (Padua)
11	McClintock (Galion)	25	Weisman (Bexley)
12	Quickle (Hillsboro)	26	Nycz (Holy Name)
13	Campbell (Perkins)	27	Lay (Greenon)
14	Cribari (West Geauga)	28	Wardle (Ontario)
15	Hildebrand (Franklin)	29	Fraley (Miami Trace)

The lowest weight class is generally the domain of underclassmen where freshmen and sophomores win about half the time and juniors collect most of the remaining titles. There are normally only a couple of seniors in the state bracket (last year just two), and the brilliant, younger wrestlers combat them with blinding speed and technique. However, every five or six years a senior persists at this weight class and displays not only the added power of age, but also the experience and skill to win. One remembers the powerful Shawn Adkins and the exceptionally strong John Purcell (he at 98#) bulldozing their way through crowded state brackets. This year the equally talented senior, Daniel Earley, is a clear favorite to capture his first state title. A brilliant student, he possesses the strength, technique and savvy to win. Last year, in Division I, he was a top contender, but was only 2-2 at the state meet after being upset in the quarterfinals. His transfer to Columbus DeSales should optimize his state title chances, although continuing to make weight and remain strong is always an issue. So far he has been very solid, winning at DeSales at 112#, and dominating the field at Brecksville, including a convincing win over Pelton in the finals.

Earley should have little trouble at the Steubenville District. Santry won a district bout last year and I think he might be second best, but it's a big step back from Earley. While I'm finding lots of candidates at the other three districts, there is not as much at this one. Rose, Scammell, and Weisman are possibilities here, but some folks I haven't ranked are probably also in the mix. If so, someone like Stemen (Teays Valley) or Ditcher (Claymont) might be a candidate.

Perhaps the biggest challenge for Earley might come from the Northwest. Pelton has won just about everything entered except Brecksville, where Earley handled him 6-1. Still, he could be a finalist. State qualifier Cisco is back at this weight class and could also be a threat. He defeated Pelton by two in the district semi-finals last year, but I think that score will be different this time. Campbell and McClintock have had solid years at this weight class, but may not match up well with the top duo. For example, Cisco beat McClintock, 9-0, to win at Marion Harding. Foldvary could be the surprise at this district. He won at Sylvania Southview and is an experienced competitor. Cisco beat him badly in their dual meet, but he should be able to compete with Campbell and McClintock. The Northeast sectional has Palladino and Nycz--both solid performers. Nycz was the Wadsworth champ, while Palladino was 4th at Avon Lake, losing a close bout to Mitcheff.

Roche stands out at Firestone and he has finalist potential. He won at Kenston, was 2nd at the Top Gun, and placed at the Ironman. He has also defeated a number of the other competitors at this district. Behind him is a quartet of fine wrestlers who are closely bunched. Kostandaras stands out as, perhaps, a shade better than the rest, but it is very close. Potts beat Papesch in overtime and both have won often against the rest of the 103's in the area. Cribari, a good mat wrestler and pinner, is very dangerous. He has placed well recently. Mix in the improving Lambert and it will be a great competition for the four state berths.

The most crowded and chaotic district is at Goshen. I have nearly a dozen boys listed, few of whom have progressed deep into district competition. State qualifier Miller, state alternate Sexton, Quickle, and Jellison are an experienced quartet with state caliber ability. However, the newcomers Jameson, Thomusseit, and Fraley are good. Jameson may be the most advanced of this group and has lost but twice this year. Thomusseit, trying to survive in the Graham room, has shown solid progress and could possibly qualify. Two possibilities are Danielson from the southeastern part of this district and Lay who won at Xenia.

112#

PROJECTED CHAMPION: AARON HART (GRAHAM)

Top Contenders

2	Llanas (Eastwood)	14	Silvers (Eaton)
3	Penny (Milton Union)	15	Stone (University School)
4	Dean (Akron St. Vincent)	16	Jordan (Ravenna)
5	Wagers (Willard)	17	McKay (Miami Trace)
6	Sulzer (Holy Name)	18	Kidd (Bellevue)
7	Cormier (Columbus DeSales)	19	Anspach (Franklin)
8	Ebert (Triway)	20	Humenik (Revere)
9	Michaels (Clyde)	21	Miller (West Branch)
10	Duffield (East Liverpool)	22	Nakama (Big Walnut)
11	Klein (River View)	23	McHugh (Bellbrook)
12	Morton (Canal Winchester)	24	Chapman (Kenmore)
13	Lehotay (Meadowbrook)	25	Romeo (Lake Catholic)

Defending state champ Aaron Hart has to be the favorite at this weight based on two years of outstanding wrestling. Last year, as a sophomore, he was 43-1 (winning at the Ironman and Beast) and outscored his four opponents at Columbus by a combined 32-3 margin. He also twice defeated Division I state champ Shawn Harris. This year it has been more of the same winning at Graham, the GMVVA, and Ironman (defeating the #1 ranked wrestler in the country, Rollie Peterkin, in an exciting overtime bout) while finishing 4th at the exhausting Beast of the East in Wilmington, Delaware. I was particularly interested in his championship bout at the GMWVA when he faced off with the very tough Jeff Penny (3rd last year). One of Hart's toughest in-state foes, Hart prevailed, 5-1, about the same margin he won their district and sectional final bouts last year (4-0 and 9-6).

However, Hart must also prevail against Division II history. In the last 20 years only one wrestler (Mike Compton) has won at 103# and then captured a state title the next year at a higher weight class. As the table shows, the movement from 103# to 112# (or more) is often a difficult one.

	Underclass Champs at 103# and moved up the next year	Number who repeated as state champs	Pct.
Division III	14	3	22%
Division II	11	1	9%
Division I	12	6	50%
Total	37	10	27%

Evidence of this phenomenon was quickly provided by Ben Llanas who upset Hart 6-5 at the Ohio Duals. Llanas, a very talented junior, was my choice at this weight class last

year. It provides Hart with an early warning that this year it may not be quite so easy as twelve months ago.

Still, I believe Hart will repeat. The ones who are successful in making that jump to a higher weight are among the greats of the sport--Lang, Lester, Jayne, Wineberg, etc. It's my view that Hart will find his way into such a grouping.

It's basically a three-man contest, although I put Hart above the other two. Llanas was 3rd at this class last year, dropping a 4-3 semi-final to Keyes, who he had beaten 12-2 earlier in the year. He is an exceptional talent, obviously, beating Hart, but he was also 5th at Brecksville, losing to Shaft and Lint. This perceived inconsistency makes him tough to select as the top choice. Penny was also 3rd last year (at 103#) and is an excellent competitor. I've documented his losses to Hart, but he has beaten everyone else. With the current seeding algorithm Hart should be away from the other two.

Hart and Penny dominate at Goshen. State junior high placer Silvers and McKay are, perhaps, next best, but I don't see them challenging the top two boys. Anspach is also a possibility here, with McHugh, Harris (Roger Bacon), and Stevens (Goshen) also in the hunt. It seems unlikely that the last two qualifiers out of this district will be able to place at Columbus.

Llanas faces a district with solid contenders, but not much depth. Wagers has had a great year for Willard, winning at Wadsworth and Darby. A state qualifier at 103# last year he drew state runner-up Madison Davis in the first round and never recovered. Michaels and Sulzer are both youngsters with great futures. Sulzer was 2nd at the CIT with an impressive win over the always tough Cormier. Michaels has been a steady winner, taking home firsts at Coffman, Franklin, Southview and Clyde. He had a recent major decision over Guerra, but was upset by Blanca. He is a big-time scoring machine, already. If the pairings go awkwardly, a Kidd, Clark (Lexington), or J. Cisco (St. Marys Memorial) could sneak in a top four placement.

If anyone is going to break into the top trio it might be the fast-improving Dean. He was 1st at the CIT (easily) and 3rd at Brecksville, losing only to Boing. He is a consistently fine performer who should place. Ebert is, perhaps, next best, but I'm not seeing much after him. This is a surprisingly mild group at the usually roughhouse Firestone District.

There are four returning state qualifiers competing at Steubenville and five of my top thirteen choices will be assigned there. Cormier, now a senior, has never been quite as successful as I anticipated. Injuries and bad luck have dogged him, and this year is his last chance. He did not qualify last year after making it to States as a sophomore. Duffield has already twice qualified for Columbus, but has just one consolation win for his efforts. Like Cormier, this is his last chance. Klein, also a returning state qualifier, was the OW at Coshocton while state qualifier Lehotay went 1-2 in Columbus last year. Add Morton and Johnson to this list along with Nakama it should be the most thoroughly competitive district.

119#

PROJECTED CHAMPION: ADAM KRIWINSKY (UNIVERSITY SCHOOL)

Top Contenders

2	Keyes (Walsh)	15	Thurn (Clyde)
3	Pape (Carrollton)	16	Caudill (Beaver Local)
4	Land (Valley View)	17	Hogue (Southeast)
5	Salyer (Willard)	18	Ulinski (Eastwood)
6	Jordan/Newland (Graham)	19	Maze (St. Marys Memorial)
7	Artmann (Hillsboro)	20	McGovern (Columbus DeSales)
8	Kapper (Canal Fulton NW)	21	Fondale (New Lexington)
9	Morrow (West Branch)	22	Moore (Harrison Central)
10	Hostetter (Salem)	23	Espinoza (Rossford)
11	Ritzenthaler (Norwalk)	24	Daugherty (Cambridge)
12	Myers (Indian Creek)	25	Chaney (Miami Trace)
13	Block (Crestwood)	26	Krempel (Lake Catholic)
14	Mitchell (Padua)	27	Huffman (Watkins Memorial)
		28	Seeley (Bellefontaine)

Last year I predicted a madcap scramble at 112# and so it turned out to be. Lots of upsets, some big turnarounds from regular season results and a finalist with 18 losses who failed to win at both the sectional and district level. Many of that group has moved to 119#, so it's reasonable to expect that we'll see that same kind of confusion one more time. With Hart at 112#, and Doggett and Cubberly at 125#, this could become a very popular and crowded weight class. I think it's possible we will see Penny and Land here and, perhaps, one or two other potential surprises. Let's take a look at the two principal contenders.

Kriwinsky shook off one bad mid-season weekend and wrestled brilliantly to win his first state crown at 112#. He beat Keyes three weekends in a row, culminating in a 3-1 victory in the state finals. His first three state bouts were relatively uneventful and comfortable wins. This year he won at Kenston and the Top Gun, and placed at the Ironman. He has an uncanny knack for winning the close bouts and he'll test that skill once again at this weight class.

Keyes had 19 losses last year, but he was also the state runner-up. A junior, like Kriwinsky, he continues to improve and add technique to his explosiveness. He is an end-of-the-year wrestler who can convert a 10 point regular season loss to a victory at tournament time. This year it might be his turn to take the title.

The Firestone District is loaded. Keyes and Kriwinsky are the main attraction, but state qualifiers Morrow and Hostetter are right behind them. Both are experienced seniors who were at this weight class last year. Morrow lost two state heartbreakers 15-10 and 12-7 in overtime. Morrow was 2nd at the Dies after dropping down from 125# where he had been 2nd at Riverside. Hostetter was runner-up to Kriwinsky at Kenston losing a 5-3

bout in the finals. Block and Hogue both had district success last year and have built upon it this season. They could be qualifiers, especially if the bracketing works out badly. The real question is Kapper. I thought he'd eventually end up at the slightly easier 125# at this district, but his win at the Dies may convince him to stay here--so I've rated him at 119#.

It's a three-man group at Goshen. Land came on very strong at the end of last year, crushing his opposition with big scores. He won both sectional and district titles and opened with a 13-6 win at Columbus. Then Keyes and Pape both beat him by two points, putting him out of the competition. He has been at 125# much of the year, but was 3rd at this weight at Medina, beating Kapper by seven. Artmann was 5th two years ago, but lost to Salyer and Pape, and never got started at Columbus last year. He missed some early season bouts, but is now rounding into form. Jordan was a state junior high champ last year and finally has taken over the varsity spot from Newland--at least for now. He beat Artmann for 5th at the brutal 119# class at the GMVWA. His rapid improvement could mean a high place. I saw him upset Skonieczny to win the state title at 108# last year and this year he has had a coaching upgrade. State qualifier Fondale is also at this district, but he may well struggle against this top trio--but there are four qualifying spots.

The Steubenville District is loaded with former state qualifiers. Daugherty, Caudill, Pape, and Myers all have past experience with the latter two placing last year. In my mind Pape has moved to the forefront of this group. He was 4th at 112# last year and this year was 3rd at the Top Gun and 2nd at North Canton--losing by fall to his nemesis Kriwinsky. The three state qualifiers are all good, but McGovern and Moore have moved up to challenge them. Myers, who was 5th last year, has struggled a bit at this weight class, while Daugherty and Caudill have also had some problems. This is another strong district field, somewhat comparable to the one at Firestone.

It's a crowded field at Galion as well. I've put Salyer in the top spot after a fine performance not only this year, but at last year's state meet. Willard has an exceptional team and Salyer is one of the important cogs in it. I have ranked six others from this district with Ritzenthaler, Ulinski, and Mitchell right behind Salyer. However, watch out for Thurn and Maze, and remember Espinoza was a state alternate last year.

125#

PROJECTED CHAMPION: CAMERON DOGGETT (GRAHAM)

Top Contenders

2	Cubberly (Eastwood)	16	Walker (Licking Valley)
3	Saxton (Buckeye Local)	17	Sweeney (Franklin)
4	Reedy (Ravenna)	18	Murphy (Alliance)
5	Burton (Columbus DeSales)	19	Schenck (Milton Union)
6	Teter (Triway)	20	Garee (Utica)
7	Pusateri (Perkins)	21	Cozad (Ross)
8	Valentine (Clermont NE)	22	Gifford (Logan Elm)
9	Gayheart (Willard)	23	Sigurdson (Oak Harbor)
10	Newell (Kenston)	24	Neff (Miami Trace)
11	Manfull (Carrollton)	25	Shanholtz (ASV)
12	Skonieczny (Walsh)	26	Varkette (Ashtabula Edgewood)
13	Macko (Padua)	27	Tinstman (Eaton)
14	Pearce (Poland Seminary)	28	Overholt (Elida)
15	Nettis (NDCL)	29	Caracofe (Hamilton Twp.)

On the surface this looks like a three-man struggle with Cameron Doggett at the apex of the triangle. Now a two time state champ, Doggett already has all the qualities of a successful college wrestler. Last year he started a bit slowly, but was at the absolute top of his game in Columbus. After registering an early fall in the first round, he battered his last three opponents by a combined 33-10 score that included a 13-3 win over four-time placer Reichman and a 9-2 final round defeat of the redoubtable Cubberly. It was a great performance by a true champion. This year he was 2nd at the Ironman, losing in overtime to Frishkorn (after failing to receive credit for a buzzer beating takedown that our television replays showed was good, and then losing a frantic overtime takedown scramble) and 1st at the Beast with a solid thumping of the very same Frishkorn. Easy wins at the Graham and GMVWA are also in his resume. However, the most anticipated bout was his match-up with Palmer in their dual meet. Under difficult conditions he took a quick 4-0 lead, but under substantial pressure eventually lost. He also lost at the St Ed's dual last year, but with no impact on his final performance. I have correctly predicted the winner seven consecutive years at this weight class. Doggett should make it eight straight.

Cubberly, now having both a 3rd and 2nd place medal, is still a step behind Doggett based on the 6-3 score in the State Duals. A solid winner over a competitive field at Brecksville, he and Doggett will be on opposite sides of the bracket should they both win their district. It's unusual that both boys are back at 125#, and I wouldn't be at all surprised to see a rematch of their 2004 final. One thing I liked about Cubberly was his two overtime wins in the opening rounds at Columbus. He wasn't looking at the 30-second tiebreaker but, instead, sought out a surer win.

One of those overtime wins (in the quarter finals) was against the somewhat unheralded Willie Saxton. Already a two time state qualifier (and only a junior), he has upset potential here. The big problem is a somewhat weaker schedule and the lack of the variety of workout partners enjoyed by Doggett and Cubberly. Last year he was 2-2 at States (both losses in overtime), and this year won handily at the Midwest Classic and DeSales. He'll almost assuredly have to beat both Doggett and Cubberly to win. That may be asking too much.

This weight class has a great number of similarly performing wrestlers making for crowded districts. For example, the Firestone District has 10 reasonable good 125's--with only one that appears to stand out from the others. That would be Reedy, now a sophomore, who went 2-2 at last year's state meet. A consistently strong performer, he has moved up two weight classes with little trouble and wrestled everyone close and tough. Cubberly beat him 5-1 at the Brecksville, where he was a solid 5th in a difficult weight class. Teter, something of an unknown, was 1st at Wayne and the Dies, and 3rd at North Canton. He will surprise some people. Newell and Pearce are both good and have produced a consistent record of placement. The freshman Skonieczny is a junior high state runner-up with great upside potential, plus he hates to lose. Murphy, Shanholtz. Nettis and Varkette are all able wrestlers, who could grab a state ticket. Nettis, if healthy, has a particularly good chance to better his current ranking. It'll be tough from the first round.

Doggett should cruise through his district. Valentine is a consistent finalist in this area, but he does not match up with Doggett. The rest of this district is somewhat below the curve set in other areas and may not play much of a role in the final resolution of this weight class.

Cubberly, too, should have it pretty much his way at Galion. There is not much depth, but the trio of Pusateri, Macko, and Gayheart are strong. The first two were state qualifiers last year and should have every expectation of repeating that experience absent serious injury. Gayheart was a junior high state placer last year and has benefited from working with the excellent Willard lightweights.

Saxton will have a bit more to handle at Steubenville. Burton has blossomed at 125# and is a real threat. He was 2nd at DeSales and the CIT and 7th at Brecksville after losing a 4-2 bout to Reedy in the rat-tail. It required six consolation wins to get that 7th place. Manfull was 5th at the Top Gun and Hoover, and is just a small increment away from placing much higher. That would leave one open spot for a number of possible qualifiers. Walker and Garee are best positioned for that berth.

130#

PROJECTED CHAMPION: JORDAN LIPP (BEACHWOOD)

Top Contenders

2	Friery (Padua)	15	Lovell (Columbus DeSales)
3	Michaels (Clyde)	16	Yaros (Coventry)
4	Boyd (Graham)	17	Stroh (Canal Fulton NW)
5	Christensen (Greenon)	18	Mahley (Cambridge)
6	Nuhfer (Willard)	19	Cunningham (Miami Trace)
7	Collett (West Holmes)	20	Hilbert (Revere)
8	Shroyer (Eastwood)	21	McKibben (Claymont)
9	Blevins (Franklin)	22	Yackey (Dover)
10	Horne (Hillsboro)	23	Nagel (Avon)
11	B. Connelly (Lake Catholic)	24	Brown (Norwalk)
12	Klofta (Indian Lake)	25	Buck (Benjamin Logan)
13	Brassfield (Hebron Lakewood)	26	Johnston (Indian Creek)
14	Hoppel (Beaver Local)	27	Reese (Fostoria)
		28	Grabam (Hubbard)

This weight class is probably not as strong as the previous three, but it will be every bit as competitive. Each of the top contenders has some clearly defined strengths, but there are also question marks associated with each. I think there is also a possibility that one or more of the top 125's (Cubberly?) might move to 130# with the objective of bypassing Doggett. If so, they will become part of the mix, but certainly would not be considered favorites.

My choice is the sparkling senior, Jordan Lipp, who will try to join Reed Case and Ricky Deubel (last year) as the only wrestlers to win state titles in only their freshman and senior years. Lipp had a sensational first year going 42-0, and taking the 112# state title in Division III. Since then he seems to have had some nagging injuries that may have, at times, thwarted him. He was 4th as a sophomore and then last year, at this weight class in Division II, was 6th losing in the quarterfinals to eventual champ Drew Lashaway. This year he has been outstanding, winning titles at Solon and Kenston, and losing only to the fierce Dunn (from Pennsylvania) at the Ironman. He is fast, aggressive, intense, and experienced, and looks to be the favorite here. It will make him a four-time state placer--relatively unusual in this era of strong competition. The biggest issue is keeping him healthy during the remainder of the season. In kind of a quirky sidelight, Lipp has wrestled at Columbus in three different weight classes and in both Division II and III and yet met Jesse Emery from Harrison Central each year (twice, in fact, as a sophomore) winning the first two and losing the last pair (for 3rd and 5th). Won't happen this year since Emery has graduated.

A major challenger will be the excellent Padua junior, Shane Friery, who was 4th at 125# last year losing twice to four-time placer Reichman. He is an experienced wrestler with a style that is difficult to combat. He gave defending Division III state champ Braxton Scaletta a terrific battle at Brecksville in the finals and was 6th at the Ironman losing, in

the process, a 12-4 consolation semi-final bout to Lipp. He won handily at Avon Lake and should be a major factor at this weight class.

Michaels is also a junior and I'm looking for a breakout state tournament from him. Last year he was a district champ and went into the state meet with a 43-2 record. After a first round technical fall, Kriebel wrestled a down-tempo match beating him 4-2 and Michaels ended up with a 2-2 record and failed to place. This year he has been even more dominant, winning three tournaments with a 17-5 rout being his closest final round result. His problem remains the upset loss such as he suffered at the Ohio Duals when the exceptional freshman Boyd caught him with that cement mixer and buried him for the fall. He and Friery exit the same district and should be apart in the state bracket – meaning Lipp will have to defeat both to take the title.

Every district at this weight class is excellent. Galion, for example, features both Friery and Michaels, and at least three other state caliber wrestlers. State qualifier Nuhfer has already been there losing in the quarterfinals last year to Doggett and then to Christensen. He got off to a slow start this year, but won brilliantly at both Wadsworth and Darby. Shroyer, thought possibly to be a substitute this year, has won a place at 130# with consistently good wrestling. Nagel and Brown also should have qualification hopes with Reese potentially in the picture.

The Goshen District has five very good wrestlers for four berths. The freshman Coby Boyd is just plain outstanding. I hesitate to think how good he might be in the coming years. His pin of Michaels was no fluke. He is extremely strong. A junior high state champ, he is a keg of dynamite that even the very best must handle with great care. Christensen is already a two time state qualifier. He had a very tough draw at Columbus, losing in the first round to Saxton by a point and then getting beat by Friery in his placement bout. He should get on the awards stand this year. State qualifiers Klofta, Cunningham, and Horne also return along with the excellent Blevins. Somebody here will only be a spectator at the state meet. Blevins placed at Medina and won at Franklin. Horne was 3rd at GMVNA, only losing in the semis to Boyd 10-5. Klofta beat Shroyer earlier in the year and he could easily better his current ranking. Cunningham has won at three tournaments, but struggled last year at the state level.

It's a crowded field at Steubenville, but Collett looks like he might be the best. He was 4th at Medina and has won several smaller tourneys. Both Brassfield and Yackey were state alternates last year, but with Hoppel, McKibben, and Tanzillo (Watkins Memorial) looking good, they'll have to be in peak form to better that result. I'm thinking Lovell must be injured or in a bit of a slump recently, but he cannot be overlooked here.

Jordan Lipp might have the easiest time. Connelly was 4th last year at 103# and his four weight class jump has not been without issue. Yaros is almost a total unknown, but he knows his way around a wrestling mat. He was 2nd at the Dies at 135#, but did certify here. He'll be a factor at either weight class. I may have Dies champ and state qualifier Hilbert rated too low and he could catch a low place at Columbus. Add in Stroh, Graban and Senty (Southeast) and it's another strong district.

135#

PROJECTED CHAMPION: KEVIN LIPP (BEACHWOOD)

Top Contenders

2	Kyle (Graham)	15	Brown (Columbus DeSales)
3	McLemore (Padua)	16	Chonko (Tallmadge)
4	Brownlee (Western Brown)	17	Learn (West Branch)
5	Tank (Oak Harbor)	18	Triplett (Claymont)
6	Tharp (Fairfield Union)	19	Kimble (Dover)
7	Rendinell (Kenston)	20	Bordner (Wapakoneta)
8	Sells (Milton Union)	21	Fisher (Morgan)
9	Aona (Clyde)	22	Alsip (Norwood)
10	E. Cubberly (Eastwood)	23	Stemen (Teays Valley)
11	Jenkins (Indian Lake)	24	Brower (Bellbrook)
12	Cavello (Willard)	25	Grescovich (Walsh)
13	Hughes (Buckeye Valley)	26	Porter (Perkins)
14	Bowers (Lake Catholic)	27	Jordan (Indian Creek)

The conventional wisdom is that state runner-up Jake Kyle will be one of five Graham state champions this year, while winning at this weight class. That is certainly a possibility, but my view is that Kevin Lipp will, instead, pull the “upset” and take the crown. A wild card here is the explosive Pat McLemore who has the ability and firepower to beat anyone. Interestingly, all three boys are juniors and all have been state finalists in the past. In fact, Kyle is the only one who has not won a state title.

Should the Lipp brothers prevail at back-to-back weight classes it would be an exceedingly rare achievement. Only once before has it occurred in Division II and that featured the incomparable Jordan brothers, winning at 98# and 105# in 1980. It has happened twice in Division I (or its precursor)--most recently in 1962 when the Sadowsky twins won at 120# and 127# for Maple Heights. The only other time was in 1955 when Daryl and Jim Hoppel (another storied name in Ohio wrestling) took consecutive titles. The most recent occasions have both been in Division III--1999 with the Opfer brothers and 1992 with the battling Boardwines.

The Galion District is loaded. McLemore was the 103# state champ two years ago, but did not place last year, losing to Lipp in the placement round. Tall and lanky he is a tremendous pinner. At Brecksville he won successive 15-0 tech falls in both the semi-finals and finals. Lipp seems to have his number, though, beating him again this year (and decisively) in their dual meet match-up. Tank is just a fabulous freshman. He was 3rd at Medina and 1st at Oak Harbor, and he continues to improve. The younger Cubberly should also be here and he is another freshman prodigy. I saw him win the Junior High States, but he has wrestled very little this year due to injury. His ranking is more an educated guess, but he and Tank will be super for three more years. State qualifier Aona returns, and he won a bout at Columbus last year. He has been 1st at Southview and Clyde, and 2nd at Franklin (in overtime). Tank beat him by two at the

SBC Duals. I also like the sophomore Cavello, but he'll have to wrestle a lot better than he did at last year's district meet.

Kyle will face solid competition at Goshen. State placer Brownlee and state qualifiers Sells, Jenkins, and Tharp all return at this weight class. Also in the mix are Brower and Alsip, and this will be a rugged competition. All four who exit this district should have placement potential. Brownlee and Tharp are only sophomores, but have solid bases. Brownlee wrestles a weak schedule, but finished 6th last year at this class after a narrow first round loss. Tharp took eventual state runner-up Strittmatter into overtime before losing his first round bout. Sells, 3rd at the GMVWA, should score at the state level and that could make Jenkins the odd man out.

There are still some unknowns at Firestone. Chonko, a state qualifier last year, has missed most of the year, and then struggled a bit on his return. He could well end up much higher than what I've currently ranked him. Learn is at 135# for West Branch, but Lamancusa certified there--although I believe he'll stay at the wide-open 140# class. Thus I've placed Rendinell and Bowers, 2nd at the CIT, behind Lipp.

I don't think there is a whole lot of placement potential at Steubenville. Hughes is good and has dominated in tournaments in the Columbus area. He will face solid competition from the Tuscarawas duo of Kimble and Triplett. A state alternate last year, Kimble was 1st at Dover, but did not place at the Top Gun. I originally anticipated ranking him much higher and he may well, in the end, prove my original insight to have been correct. A wrestler who has moved up is Brown who was 5th at Brecksville and 3rd at the CIT. He may well move past some of the Goshen and Galion competitors and place.

140#

PROJECTED CHAMPION: CHRIS KRIEBEL (ASV)

Top Contenders

2	Sponseller (West Holmes)	14	Cupp (Hamilton Twp.)
3	Hoppel (Columbus DeSales)	15	Dolinski (Brookville)
4	Doughty (Willard)	16	Clark (Louisville)
5	Lamancusa (West Branch)	17	Kocheff (Kenston)
6	Coleman (Preble Shawnee)	18	Grant (Benjamin Logan)
7	Gurley (Bellevue)	19	Rall (Upper Sandusky)
8	Witt (Oak Harbor)	20	England (Aurora)
9	Dunn (Beaver Local)	21	Schwartz (Clyde)
10	Lambert (Teays Valley)	22	Harter (Sheridan)
11	Simko (Revere)	23	Paul (Tallmadge)
12	Christman (Indian Lake)	24	Hammer (Hebron Lakewood)
13	Taylor (Eastwood)	25	Luster (Graham)

As it is presently constituted this just might be the weakest weight class in Division II, although I'm also struggling to find good heavyweights. I see this as a wide-open competition with no solid favorite. This is the classic situation where any of a dozen wrestlers, could, on a hot weekend, roll to the title. There are just not a lot of heavily credentialed wrestlers competing at 140# this year.

I've gone for consistency at this weight class. Kriebel is up four weight classes after placing 6th at 119# last year. He has touched all the bases – 1st at Solon and the CIT, 2nd at Brecksville (6-5 loss to Mikey Davis), and 3rd at the Ironman. He is a tough, workmanlike competitor, who knows how to win and how to control the tempo of a bout. This will not be an easy championship to win. There are a lot of wrestlers athletically as gifted as Kriebel, but his match management is the quality that can win it for him.

One of his obstacles (there are likely to be more than a few) is Colt Sponseller out of the Steubenville District. Colt was a state qualifier as a freshman last year and lost to Doggett in the first round--then watched older brother Clint get 3rd at 130#. This year he has won titles at Wayne and the Top Gun and was 2nd at Medina--beating Horne and losing to Nemec. That Steubenville District is an interesting one. State qualifier Hoppel has transferred to Columbus DeSales--it's difficult to imagine a Hoppel representing anyone but Beaver Local--and had a strange year. He won at the Midwest Classic, but then was 5th at Brecksville--winning five bouts, but losing by huge scores to Wilson and Pycraft. He was a semi-finalist at the CIT, but then forfeited his last three bouts. He has the experience and talent to challenge Sponseller. State qualifiers Lambert, Cupp, and Dunn would look to be battling for two state spots. It'll probably depend on the pairings. Cupp was 6th at the Top Gun and a DNP at Brecksville, and he may be the most vulnerable. Yet he was a strong 2nd at Riverside, losing to Lamancusa 13-9.

Kriebel has a rather ordinary type district. State alternate Lamancusa could end up at 135#, but I think we'll see him here. Simko could be a surprise. He was 1st at Perry and Kenston, and 2nd at the Dies. Kocheff is a very tough, defensive wrestler who is difficult to score on. Originally placed at 130# he had to move up here with Rendingell at 135#. Clark is, like Kriebel, steady. He was 3rd at the Top Gun and Wadsworth, and 4th at North Canton. He needs to keep generating those kinds of finishes.

It's a puzzling group at Goshen. State qualifier Coleman should lead this group, but I'm not sure that will happen. Christman, a state alternate, and Grant have posted good results with tougher schedules. Dolinski is a bit of a mystery. He was not even on my radar screen until he won the mammoth GMVWA, including a raucous 19-12 semi-final battle with Braun of Colerain. I'm not exactly sure where he fits in. Overall, this is a competitive district in a weight class with few real standouts anywhere in the state.

I think Doughty, a state alternate last year, may have moved to the head of the pack at Galion. He was 1st at both Wadsworth and Darby, and seems to be growing in stature. State qualifier Gurley returns, but his results have not been eye-opening. The freshman Witt is another 9th grader who's bound to be great. Oak Harbor is blessed with a

boatload of such youngsters. I have state qualifier Taylor ranked here, but he might be at 135#, depending on the status of Eric Cubberly.

145#

PROJECTED CHAMPION: KENNY QUALLICH (BUCKEYE)

Top Contenders

2	Schuller (Buckeye Local)	16	Pendleton (Indian Creek)
3	Vasiloff (Avon)	17	Lloyd (Ravenna)
4	Pelton (Bellevue)	18	Incorvaia (Highland)
5	McMullen (ASV)	19	Coleman (Benjamin Logan)
6	Kusar (Revere)	20	Huffman/.Kervin (Eastwood)
7	Ransbottom (Graham)	21	Ysaguirre (Clyde)
8	Spencer (McClain)	22	Mann (Orange)
9	Amick (Columbus DeSales)	23	Ray (Ross)
10	Zehler (Trenton Edgewood)	24	Coats (Willard)
11	Cornell (Port Clinton)	25	Bernon (Beachwood)
12	Deeter (Valley View)	26	Gilson (Napoleon)
13	Stover (Licking Valley)	27	Patrick (Western Brown)
14	Cecil (Orrville)	28	McCourt (Edison)
15	Tompkins (Miami Trace)	29	Johns (Brookville)

I currently count thirteen state qualifiers competing at this weight class, but only two of them have previously placed and both of those as low placers. This suggests, much like 140#, frantic competition with the pairings a critical component. This is not unlike what we saw at 130# last year where no consensus choice emerged.

Another weight class where the eventual champ will come from a pool of six to eight wrestlers. No one here has ever been in the top four at Columbus so that the winner will be going into uncharted territory. My choice is the powerful Buckeye senior Kenny Quallich. Last year he beat eventual placer Spencer in the first round and then ran into the Dave Rella Express 13-4 and could never recover. This year he has won at Buckeye, Norwalk, and the Dies. Up at 152# for Medina he reached the semi-finals before losing an 18-17 battle and ended up 3rd.

Quallich will exit the toughest district. Vasiloff was a district runner-up last year at 135# and went 2-2 at Columbus. He was 1st at Cuyahoga Hts. and Avon Lake (over Pelton) and 2nd at the Top Gun (to Gigliotti) and Marion Harding. Pelton, also a state qualifier, won at Brecksville this year to go with his title at Bellevue. On a hot weekend he could win it all. State qualifier Cornell is back and just finished wrapping up a perfect record at the SBC Duals. I suspect that Ysaguirre will be at this weight class for Clyde--with Dencer returning to 152#--and could be a factor. One to watch is Incorvaia who won two district bouts last year and has had some significant successes this year. Coats and Gilson could also play a role here, but the Eastwood options at this class could be

interesting. Both Huffman and Kervin are district qualifiers who may, if Eric Cubberly appears, face off to see who wrestles at this class. Both are good.

State placer Schuller (6th) is a strong performer. He was a solid 3rd at the Midwest Classic, losing only to three-time state runner-up Josh Horne in the semi-finals. He has finalist potential. State qualifier Amick also returns, but he has been a bit shaky to-date, 6th at the CIT and 8th at Brecksville. However, this is the weakest district and he should have little trouble qualifying. The rest of this district will struggle at the state level.

There are some interesting people at Firestone. Every time I see McMullen wrestle he looks super and his results have been good--2nd at the CIT, 3rd at Solon, and 4th at Brecksville and the Ironman. What's baffling are some individual scores--a 16-1 loss to Pelton, a 16-7 loss to Gaier, and getting pinned consecutively by Randazzo and Whitely. He'll have to avoid those in February. Junior high state champ Kusar is outstanding. He has stepped right in and won at Perry and Kenston and finished 2nd at Solon and the Dies. He'll win a couple titles before he is through. State alternate Cecil has a pair of seconds and a pair of thirds in four tourneys, while Lloyd and Mann have been good. Bernon, now a senior, is extremely strong and has qualification potential, if he stays healthy.

Goshen is one of those districts where the 145# class is total chaos. I have ten folks on my list with no surety as to who is first and who is tenth. Spencer did the best last year with a 6th place finish at this weight class. I cannot deny I was completely surprised. He'll have a chance to better that this year. Ransbottom, also a state qualifier, beat Spencer in Week 1 and has wrestled Graham's brutal schedule. If nothing else, he should be battle hardened. I like Zehler and Tompkins, but there are so many possibilities here. Deeter, a state qualifier, has bouts of brilliance and could be a placer at Columbus, if he can get there.

152#

PROJECTED CHAMPION: DAVE RELLA (WALSH JESUIT)

Top Contenders

2	Rohler (Akron St. Vincent)	14	Ramey (Teays Valley)
3	Smith (Eastwood)	15	Daniel (Highland)
4	Robinson (Bellbrook)	16	Kramer (Valley View)
5	Saladonis (Avon)	17	Apperson (Morgan)
6	Henry (Claymont)	18	Whitlow (Benjamin Logan)
7	Fuller (Willard)	19	Wheeland (Norton)
8	Esch (Indian Lake)	20	Ungaro (River View)
9	Solomon (Beachwood)	21	Kincaid (Watkins Memorial)
10	Bowman (Big Walnut)	22	Moritz (West Geauga)
11	Robinson (New Lexington)	23	Dickerhoof (Canton South)
12	Dencer (Clyde)	24	Akam (West Holmes)
13	Naylor (Western Brown)	25	Walker (Warrensville)

This should be, perhaps, the most exciting competition in Division II. It features three superb wrestlers (assuming Rohler and Rella remain at 152#), and a strong supporting cast. The pairings will be interesting, with the Firestone District champion having a clear edge since his two top threats will likely be on the other side of the bracket. If you're looking for wrestling of the very highest quality and exceptional competition, this should be the weight class for you.

Rella was my choice at 145# last year, but failed to win in the strangest of circumstances. A district champ, he won his first three bouts at Columbus by a 49-13 margin, including a 12-1 decision over the excellent Davis. In the finals he ended up in the 30-second tiebreaker with the defensive-minded Freirichs. Choosing the top he had Freirichs securely controlled when inexplicably he applied a full nelson and lost on a penalty point. This year he seemed set at 160#, but a pair of not-so-close losses to Erwin made him try 152#. He quickly proceeded to win at the Powerade, defeating the top ranked Jones and winning the OW award. He then handled Smith 14-9 on his feet at the Ohio Duals, though Smith was able to tilt him for back points. It is undoubtedly a tough cut, but should he maintain this weight, he will be very tough to beat. He is exceptional on his feet and his mat skills are vastly improved.

State runner-up Rohler also wrestled a strange final round bout at Columbus last year. He, too, dominated his first three opponents (first period falls in the quarters and semis) before meeting Morgan in the finals. There he was penalized several times before dropping a 5-3 decision. This year he was 3rd at both the Ironman and Beast, losing to the same out-of-state opponent in both semi-finals. He won at Solon with four falls and caught the eyes of the state by moving up to 160# and beating Erwin in the State Duals. Erwin was apparently not at 100%, but Rohler had proven the point. He has the potential to beat anyone. He and Rella exit the same district so they should be apart at

Columbus with the loser very likely wrestling Smith in either the quarters or semis. I think Rella will win the bout on his feet, but both these juniors will be superstars next year.

Smith is the other possibility here. A three-time state qualifier, this will be his third year at this weight class. Last March he was 3rd, losing only to the powerful Butzer in the semi-finals. This year his only loss until the Rella bout was at 160# the first week of the season when Koz of St. Edward caught him at something less than his best. He crushed the opposition at Brecksville and my broadcasting partners--Jeff Cole and Mike Gillmor--were extremely impressed with his workmanlike demeanor.

The real question is who goes where. I've placed Rella and Smith at 152# and Milano--also certified at 152#--at 160# with Erwin. The real issue is Rohler. As mentioned, he has been brilliant at 160#, beating Erwin and crushing the field at the CIT. I think he is second best at either weight. I've rated him here, but he could just as easily be at 160#.

Rella and Rohler (if here) will dominate at Firestone. I'm not sure that the other two qualifiers--whoever they may be--have much chance at state placement. Solomon has had some success and he is very strong. He might be the best possibility for the third spot. The key will be how wrestlers bounce back after getting beat up by Rella and Rohler and continue to wrestle well in the consolation bracket.

Smith is equally supreme at Galion, however, there are other good placement possibilities there. Saladonis was 1st at both Cuyahoga Hts. and Avon Lake, and a strong 4th at the Top Gun. Fuller and Dencer are both solid and have won tournaments this year. I particularly like Fuller to do well. Daniel has had a strong second half of the season and could play an important role.

Henry, if he stays here, now looks to be the very best at the Steubenville District. He was very impressive at Medina and had a good Top Gun, except for two losses to Saladonis. Bowman and Ramey look to be the best out of the Central District, but this is not a strong weight class at Steubenville. I think there is substantial opportunity for wrestlers having a hot weekend to qualify.

Just to keep myself on target, remember that there are two excellent wrestlers named Robinson--Eric and Jerry--at this district. The first named, Eric, was the district runner-up at 152# last year and made it to the state quarterfinals before Smith beat him by five. This year he was runner-up at the GMVWA, losing 8-6 to Division I qualifier Purnell. Esch was also a state qualifier, but drew Pucillo in the first round. This year he started slowly, losing to Fuller and Smith in their triangular. However, since then he has regained form and should qualify. The second Robinson, Jerry, was the state alternate at 130# last year and has not missed a beat moving up four weight classes. Naylor, Whitlow, and Kramer are an excellent back-up trio with strong qualification potential. Their problem is that they're not at Firestone or Steubenville.

160#

PROJECTED CHAMPION: DAVID ERWIN (GRAHAM)

Top Contenders

2*	Milano (Rocky River)	15	Hoehn (Wapakoneta)
3	Joseph (Norton)	16	Cologie (Buckeye Local)
4	Burns (Hillsboro)	17	Sandella (Avon)
5	Mizer (Carrollton)	18	Foster (Eastwood)
6	Baker (Bellevue)	19	Poyser (Louisville)
7	Magrum (Oak Harbor)	20	Thornton (Willard)
8	Police (Perry)	21	Huffman (New Lexington)
9	Weisenstein (Watkins Memorial)	22	Slovich (University School)
10	Winner (Alliance)	23	Kuechler (Columbus DeSales)
11	Kanta (Ross)	24	Wolverton (Van Wert)
12	Ashcraft (McClain)	25	Reynolds (Hebron Lakewood)
13	Taylor (ASV)	26	Boone (Lake Catholic)
14	Stahl (Benjamin Logan)		

*Josh Rohler if at this weight class.

Erwin was part of that fabulous class of freshmen that entered Graham three years ago. He was more or less ignored as higher profile teammates like Schlatter and Doggett garnered most of the publicity. Still it was easy to see that he was an exceptional talent who could only get better in the competitive atmosphere of the Graham wrestling room. That promise paid off early as he was 3rd at 145# as a sophomore and took the state title at this weight class last year. It was a powerful performance culminating in a technical fall in the finals after three easy triumphs in the earlier rounds. This year he rose to the #1 national ranking with wins at the Ironman and Beast before being upset by Rohler at the Ohio Duals. Certainly at less than 100%, he nonetheless succumbed for the second straight year at this meet--last year he was pinned by Lowther. In my mind that loss is relatively inconsequential. He'll face tough competition at this weight class, but I don't see him losing again this year.

Nevertheless, if Rohler is here it won't be easy. I'm not sure what it is but Graham seemed either tired or out of shape at St. Edward. Erwin was one of those who seemed to wilt (at least slightly) when faced with constant pressure from Koz. If this is not rectified (and Rohler is here and 100%), the state final could be a real slugfest.

Let's not forget Milano. He was 3rd as a sophomore, losing only to Butzer. Then last year, fighting injuries, he won his first 31 bouts before losing in the district finals to Smith. He was just a shadow of himself at Columbus and had to forfeit after a first round effort. Remember, this is a wrestler who has already signed with Michigan. This year he won the Top Gun and Avon Lake and was 3rd at Brecksville losing to Popham. He did certify at 152#, but I expect to see him here--and very possibly in the finals.

Some people think Erwin is the best 160-pounder in the country, so I think we can consider him the favorite at the Goshen District. Still, Ryan Burns is the big unknown here. A district champ at 152# last year, he went 2-2 at Columbus failing by a point to place. He is an exceptional talent, but he has had injury problems that have drastically reduced his wrestling schedule the last two years. Kanta won at Edgewood and was 2nd at Sycamore, and has excellent qualification chances. Ashcraft was a state alternate last year and he may be undervalued in this ranking. Add in Stahl, Huffman and Hamilton (Franklin) and this is a very fine district.

The best district, however, is at Galion. Milano is my top choice, but there is plenty here to challenge him. Two excellent freshmen are in the upper echelon. Both Magrum and Foster were state junior high champs last year and have performed very well as freshmen at an upper weight class. I think Magrum has the lead right now and his progress over the course of the season has been phenomenal. However, Baker, Sandella and Hoehn are also very good and have that important ingredient – experience. Wolverton and Thornton could also pull an upset here, but whether they can put together enough to qualify is open to question. The secret ingredient might be Frees (Byron) if he ends up here. I've ranked him at 171# where he competed last year.

There may be only one placer out of Firestone. State qualifier Joseph opened with a heart-stopping overtime win over Burns last year, but that was the high point of his Columbus weekend. He was 1st at Hudson, Solon, and the Dies, and was 4th at Brecksville. He'd like to be wrestling on Saturday night this year when he goes to Columbus. The rest of this district is not as strong. Police is solid, while Winner has been consistent--1st at Riverside, 4th at Top Gun--but neither has state experience. Poyser is a possibility and Slovich (brother of Amanda) could also reach Columbus. I think Joseph is a high probability qualifier, while for the rest it'll be a scramble.

I'm not sure that Steubenville might be even a tad weaker. Mizer and Weisenstein lead the way, and I was impressed with the latter's runner-up finish at Medina. Mizer was 5th at the Top Gun and I'm betting he was disappointed with that result. I still see him as a middle to high placer. These two would seem to be a step ahead of everyone else here.

#171

PROJECTED CHAMPION: NICK HACKETT (HAMILTON TWP.)

Top Contenders

2	Thompson (Graham)	15	Knapp (Morgan)
3	Van Buskirk (Benjamin Logan)	16	Weiner (Beachwood)
4	Ciccione (Lake Catholic)	17	Hill (Tallmadge)
5	Clark (Licking Valley)	18	Beach (Steubenville)
6	Ramirez (Eastwood)	19	Brackett (Bellbrook)
7	Tolson (Padua)	20	Andrea (Salem)
8	Costa (Edison)	21	Terrill (Franklin)
9	Malott (Bellevue)	22	Balogh (Clyde)
10	Miller (Highland)	23	Gibson (Watkins Memorial)
11	J. Lipstraw (Oak Harbor)	24	Saks (Kenston)
12	Frees (Bryan)	25	Korman (Finneytown)
13	Thomure (Springfield Shawnee)	26	Hudak (Lexington)
14	Nicholson (Canal Fulton NW)	27	Carter (Orange)

It would appear to be a two-man battle at 171#, featuring a pair of competitors who were state qualifiers at this weight class last year. In one corner we have state runner-up Nick Hackett, who lost only to the highly rated Caponi in last year's final. Overall he was 43-2 and I was impressed with his steady, workmanlike performance at States where he won his first three bouts 6-3, 6-3, and 6-2. This year he has been untouchable while winning at Hamilton, Riverside, and Brecksville, and rolling up big scores in virtually every bout. More confident, he is scoring from every position. An experienced senior (with an older brother who won the Nationals) he will be very tough to beat.

His big competition should be the sophomore Thompson, who was 6th at this weight class last year while winning a lot of close, low-scoring bouts like 2-1, 3-2, and 2-0. This year he won big at Graham, was 2nd at the Ironman and GMVWA (losing close bouts each time to out-of-state wrestlers), and placing at the Beast. An issue that sometimes arises is that talented freshmen thrust into a difficult schedule learn to be very conservative and defensive. They wrestle with understandable caution and can be successful in that style. Thompson, in my view, is so talented that the time has arrived to move into a more aggressive mode. It will make him a dominant upper weight the next two years.

There is no seeding here so if both boys win their district (a high probability event) there is still a one in three chance that they will meet in the semi-finals. Whenever their meeting does occur, Thompson will work to keep it close looking for a one-move bout that dramatically increases his chances of victory.

I think there is a big drop-off between our top duo and everyone else. Hackett, for example, heads a district at Steubenville where he is the only returning state qualifier. I

do like Clark who was a district semi-finalist last year, then lost to Hackett on a disqualification and could not recover. He has been dominant in the southeastern part of the state. Costa has also been solid and he has placement potential. Knapp and Beach will battle for the last qualifying spot with Gibson having an outside chance.

Thompson is not as far ahead at Goshen. Van Buskirk went 2-2 at Columbus last year and should do better than that this year. He's had several tourney wins, including one at Franklin. Behind this twosome is a quartet of solid 171's that include Brackett, Thomure, Terrill, and Korman. Whoever gets those last two berths will provide vigorous first round competition with whomever they meet.

The best all-around district is at Galion. There are a multitude of choices--none of whom are likely to be a finalist, but all of whom have placement potential. I'm not sure whether we should be ranking them individually, or just putting them on the table in a single lump. Ramirez started slowly, but has shown rapid improvement. He took the title at the Top Gun, which has to have his confidence soaring. Tolson had to default in his go-to-state bout last year, but he has come back strong. He has been competing at 160# and 171# and I have placed him here. He beat Malott at Avon Lake and was 3rd at the CIT after losing a first round 3-2 decision to Ciccone (great pairings?) and then winning countless consolation bouts. Malott and Miller are both returning state qualifiers, while Frees was a state alternate last year. All have had successful seasons to-date. A dark horse candidate is Josh Lipstraw, who ran away from the field at the SBC Duals. Balogh has done a fine job for Clyde, but there may be too much here to overcome. Clyde, by the way, lost two state qualifiers in the last six weeks--Garcia to a heart condition and Martin who took early retirement in preparation for college football.

Ciccone is about "it" at Firestone. I am quite sure that this is the first time ever that my list for this district consisted of one name. A state qualifier last year, he went 1-2 losing an overtime heartbreaker in the consolation round. This year he won at the CIT, was 3rd at Dublin (beating Martin), and 4th at Medina. I've searched for the best candidates for the last spots, but I'm guessing that, perhaps, two of the qualifiers will be names unfamiliar to most.

189#

PROJECTED CHAMPION: MIKE PUCILLO (WALSH JESUIT)

Top Contenders

2	Tymoszczuk (Lake Catholic)	15	George (Rossford)
3	Cook (Bellbrook)	16	Schindel (Hoban)
4	LaRosa (Avon)	17	Bose (Gallia)
5	Brown (Eastwood)	18	McClintock (West Holmes)
6	Caponi (ASV)	19	Neptune (John Glenn)
7	White (Sheridan)	20	Storts (Springfield Shawnee)
8	Griffin (Canal Fulton NW)	21	Medrick (Padua)
9	Schwartz (Clyde)	22	Hochstetler (Orrville)
10	Johnson (Hamilton Twp.)	23	Blackburn (Fairview)
11	Slupski (Columbus DeSales)	24	Scurlock (Cambridge)
12	Hammond (Willard)	25	Blakely (Benjamin Logan)
13	Hess (Urbana)	26	Kline (Van Wert)
14	Bowman (Big Walnut)		

I never expected to see Mike Pucillo competing at 189# anytime in his high school career. After all, he placed at 125# as a freshman and since has twice been runner-up – once at 145# when Tripp proved to be too big (and too good), and last year at 152# when Butzer wrestled the match of his life to avenge Pucillo’s district win--and that’s not even counting his 2nd place finish to Rohler at the Junior High States four years ago. So at the Ironman I was surprised to see him at 189# wrestling beautifully, but looking like a 160-pounder who somehow wandered onto the wrong mat. In the semis Taylor of Blair out muscled him, and that looked like a signal to go down and confront Hackett at 171#. Didn’t happen, and at the Beast he pinned the #1 ranked Bond in overtime in the semi-finals and then beat Taylor to get the Outstanding Wrestler award. He then blasted through the Powerade with no trouble whatsoever. Still, I thought we might see him at a more reasonable 171#.

I am reminded of the crucial battle for Peruvian Independence at Ayacucho in 1824. There the royalists outnumbered the rebels by nearly 2 to 1 and, in addition, had 14 cannons. As the battle was to begin, the commander of the rebel’s crucial right flank, General Cordova, rode upon his splendid white horse apparently to address the troops. He dismounted, drew his sword, and deliberately killed his own horse and then shouted to his men: “There lies my horse. I have now no means of escape and we must fight it out here together.” With that as inspiration his troops made the crucial breakthrough and routed the Spanish.

Well, Pucillo hasn’t shot his horse (well at least I hope he hasn’t), but he has certified at 189# so there is no turning back, but, maybe, that is the best choice. His skills as a small man have translated well at the upper weights (think Tommy Rowlands or Eddie Potokar), and he is an overwhelming favorite to win at this weight class.

It really is a great weight class. There are exceptionally good big men at every district, all with very good credentials. In a way Pucillo kind of ruins it, because he has taken the suspense out of the competition (at least for first place). Nevertheless, it'll be a pleasure to watch all these fine 189's hard at work.

There is an outstanding quartet of 189's at Firestone. Pucillo we have already discussed. Tymoszczuk has had an exceptional year. He has won titles at the CIT, Brecksville, and Dublin, and as far as I can ascertain, he is undefeated. He could be a finalist, especially since he is likely to be away from Pucillo. Caponi is a huge 189# - very tall with long arms. He has been getting better in a big hurry (Anthony Gary is probably teaching him some lessons), and is ranked much higher now than he would have been just a month ago. He was 3rd at Solon, 4th at Brecksville, and a strong 2nd at the CIT, losing to Tymoszczuk by a single point. Only a junior, he will be even stronger next year. State qualifier Griffin is up from 171# and was 2nd at Medina, also losing to Tymoszczuk. He is in line for one of the four qualifying spots, but the pairings look to be dicey. That would give Schindel or Hochstetler a possible opportunity.

District champ and state place winner Jason Cook is back at Goshen. He won three state bouts last year and has possible finalist potential. This year he was upset by Division III stalwart, Logan Brown, at the GMVWA, but has been successful in every other tourney. White qualified at 171# and drew Hackett in the first round and lost 6-3. Then wrestled very well in some close consolation bouts and ended up 5th. They should be finalists here with state alternate Bose and Hess having the best odds at capturing the two other state berths.

LaRosa and Brown head a very good and very deep Galion District. LaRosa was 6th last year at 160# and has jumped two rather large weight classes. Still, he took the title at Avon Lake, Marion Harding, and Cuyahoga Hts., while finishing 2nd to an out-of-state wrestler at the Top Gun. Brown was a district champ and state qualifier last year for Kansas Lakota in Division III. This season he was 2nd at Brecksville and 4th at the Top Gun. If Eastwood goes on a roll he might ride that wave of excitement. State qualifier Schwartz and state alternate Hammond are also here, as is the very athletic George. None of the boys are safe with Medrick, Blackburn and Kline in my ranking table and Lipstraw (Oak Harbor), Maxworthy (Buckeye), and Voll (Rocky River) also competing.

It's not quite as strong at Steubenville, but two state qualifiers lead the field. Neither Johnson nor Slupski has quite wrestled at peak form to-date, but I anticipate that they'll be in overdrive by tourney time. Bowman and state alternate McClintock are both solid, but Neptune and Scurlock lead a whole host of other challengers. This qualifying group will have to step it up when they get to Columbus.

215#

PROJECTED CHAMPION: JASON MARSHALL (GRAHAM)

Top Contenders

2	Nachtrab (Eastwood)	14	Gantz (Howland)
3	Bowersock (Beaver Local)	15	Whitten (Big Walnut)
4	Smith (Perkins)	16	Moore (Miami Trace)
5	Laracuenta (Trinity)	17	Lott (Ravenna)
6	Bovina (Indian Creek)	18	Pinzone (Padua)
7	Walker (Alliance)	19	Burton (Valley View)
8	Fruth (Napoleon)	20	Meyer (Columbus DeSales)
9	Williams (Watkins Memorial)	21	Snyder (Hillsboro)
10	Thurston (Teays Valley)	22	Gonzales (Paulding)
11	Currier (Orrville)	23	Khatib (Revere)
12	Turner (Brookville)	24	Spence (Benjamin Logan)
13	Randall (Girard)	25	Rodriguez (Willard)

Sometimes things take a little longer to happen than anticipated both in life and in wrestling. Watching Jason Marshall three years ago you might have guessed two, maybe three state titles. After all he was 4th at 189# as a freshman, and lost 11-10 to the mighty Villers in the consolation final. Still, events can occur in strange ways. As a sophomore at 215# he found himself competing with two state champs and finished 3rd, losing to Villers in the semi-finals. Then last year a football injury cause him to miss half the season and Dennis ended up at 215#--going undefeated and winning both the state and national championships, while Marshall was a state qualifier at 275#.

Well, this year it's Marshall's turn and he's making the most of it--winning at Graham, the GMVWA, and Ironman, the last in very impressive style, and finishing 3rd at the Beast, whose champion he defeated at the Ironman. Unless he is the victim of very bad luck, he should dominate since he is clearly the best 215-pounder in Ohio. His next big challenge won't arrive until the High School Nationals in late March.

While Marshall is a very heavy favorite, the battle for state placement will be fierce. The Galion District will send several wrestlers to Columbus with strong credentials. Nachtrab, a fine freestyle wrestler, was a semi-finalist at Brecksville (losing to Palmieri) and ended up 3rd, and followed that up with a hard won title at the Top Gun over a game Walker. Right with him is Smith, who won the SBC Duals and Tiffin, and was 3rd at North Canton, losing a one-point decision to Division I pick Simon. Fruth has jumped into the fray with a fine senior season, while Pinzone could get the last spot. Paulding will be represented by Gonzales who has past district experience and gave Smith a battle in last year's consolation round. Still, I thing it's Nachtrab and Smith, followed by a wide range of possibilities.

Perhaps the best district is at Steubenville. Bowersock was a district finalist last year and then won two state bouts, just missing placement. One of those wins was an overtime struggle over Laracuenta. He started slowly this year, but I think he'll be a high placer come February. State qualifier Bovina pinned Bowersock last year, but had little luck at Columbus. This season he was 2nd at Edison and Brooke, and is a very experienced competitor. Williams was runner-up at Medina and is a go-for-broke wrestler. He does not have a classic wrestling build, but he can be very dangerous. I can understand why he might be very difficult to wrestle the first time you see him. He had a solid chance of winning at Medina, but was out-conditioned by Marcellino. Thurston and Whitten are also very good and add in Meyer and Golden (Cambridge) and it will be a battle to qualify.

Marshall should have little trouble at Goshen. State alternate Turner returns and may be second best, but all four of last year's qualifiers were seniors. Turner was a district semi-finalist last year, but back-to-back losses thwarted his qualification hopes. This year he was 3rd at GMVWA, losing only to Division III choice, Joe Reamer. Moore might be one to watch with three district wins last year (after a first round loss to Dennis), and placement at the GMVWA. Oney Snyder, the Junior High State heavyweight champ, is at this weight class and his results continue to improve. He could make it to Columbus as a freshman.

There are a lot of possibilities at Firestone. The powerful Laracuenta was a state qualifier last year and has followed that up with a 2nd at the CIT and a 3rd at Southview. Walker has really progressed, with a 1st at Riverside and a 2nd at the Top Gun to Nachtrab--where he lost by a 10-8 score. He could be a state surprise this year. Currier, the state alternate, won at Wayne and Chippewa, and placed at the Top Gun and Wadsworth. He has been very consistent. Gantz lost his go-to-state bout to Laracuenta last year 8-7 and that's not a lot to make up. The mystery man is Randall, who beat Bowersock earlier in the year. It will be interesting to see how he performs at the district level. Factor in Lott, Khatib, a very consistent performer, and Weber, and this could be a shoot-out from the very first round.

Hvy.

PROJECTED CHAMPION: ROB HOLBERT (HOWLAND)

Top Contenders

2	Guhn (Clyde)	15	Viock (Willard)
3	Sharp (West Branch)	16	Purkiss (Ravenna)
4	Carpenter (Sheridan)	17	Brown (Defiance)
5	Radloff (Bellevue)	18	Barlow (Liberty)
6	Rankin (Miami Trace)	19	Wolf (Urbana)
7	Bird (Minerva)	20	Deighan (Padua)
8	Fennell (Perkins)	21	Reckman (Indian Hills)
9	Parker (Valley View)	22	Hinerman (Edison)
10	Hines (Indian Creek)	23	Corder (Harrison Central)
11	Schulte (Eastwood)	24	Sparks (University School)
12	Petrella (Steubenville)	25	Vuich (Rossford)
13	Hiles (Columbus DeSales)	26	Meier (Whitehall)
14	Beane (Chaminade)		

As I said in the Division I essay at this weight class, the Age of the Heavyweight ended early last March. We have fallen into a deep valley after scaling the heights the past three years and, indeed, it is a great year to be even reasonably good at this weight class. There are only three returning state qualifiers at 275# this year, one of whom (Holbert) placed 6th. This provides a real opportunity for those who have been manhandled by the Hoppel's, Fox's, and their colleagues the last three years to jump to the forefront. So far, however, nobody has performed in a manner that sets pulses pounding.

One of the major problems is that several of the major players at this weight class have wrestled a schedule that does not pit them against other top heavyweights. That makes it a guessing game at a weight class that is already notoriously difficult to forecast. I do believe that there are three principal possibilities – Matt Guhn, Rob Holbert, and Nathan Sharp.

Holbert was 6th last year, losing twice to Scott Neuenschwander. A big heavyweight, close to the weight limit, he moves well and has senior experience. He wrestles a schedule that, this year, has kept him from meeting many of the top contenders in Division II.

Sharp is nearly as big and is only a sophomore. He was a state qualifier, but lost both his contests on the opening night. He has tremendous potential and will likely be a dominant force during the next two years, unless next year comes early. He won at Riverside and the Dies, with few problems at either location.

Guhn, substantially smaller, also qualified for Columbus last year and won two bouts, including a 6-2 decision over Sharp. He has won titles at Dublin, Clyde, SBC Duals,

and Franklin, while finishing 3rd at Bellevue. He has beaten Carpenter twice this year by identical 7-5 scores.

I think Holbert will win. He is big and strong, with more offense than many men his size. He worked hard in the off-season and I think that will pay off in the chill of February.

While Holbert and Sharp are the top two at Firestone, they must be wary of Bird. He has already won at Wayne, Coshocton, and Beaver Local, while finishing a strong 3rd at the Top Gun. Not quite as big as the top duo, he is still a formidable figure. The last berth is wide open, but my favorite for that spot is the consistent Xylon Purkiss. He has placed at the WRC, Cuyahoga Hts., and Brecksville. After him the conditions rapidly become chaotic.

Guhn, probably, emerges from the toughest district. As we have often seen, Galion appears to be the deepest of the four. The short Radloff does not appear to be overly athletic, but he is excellent at winning close bouts. He was a finalist at Brecksville after a series of close victories, and won at Avon Lake and Bellevue. He has a few clever little moves that he can score with, and then try to score on him--it isn't easy. Fennell lost a 3-2 bout with Guhn at the SBC Duals and won at Tiffin after finishing 4th at North Canton. He seems to be showing the rapid improvement among northwestern 275's. Schulte was at 160# last year and wrestles like a smaller man. He was 5th at Brecksville and 4th at the Top Gun. Brown was a finalist at Sylvania and 3rd at Perrysburg. He is one of Defiance's bookends--Foldvary at 103# and him--and has qualification hopes. Vuich and Viock have similar names, similar records, but are different in physique (Vuich is bigger). Don't forget Deighan who pinned Hiles at the CIT--he'll be one of the smaller heavyweights here.

Carpenter and Parker were the finalists at Medina and there could be a rematch at Goshen. Carpenter won that one with an early fall, and remains the favorite at this district. He has high placement potential. Parker has won at Carlisle, Edgewood, and Bellbrook, and moves well for a 260-pound wrestler. However, the somewhat smaller Cheyenne Rankin could ruin that reunion. He was an impressive 1st at the GMVWA and was a state qualifier two years ago. That fourth berth will be bitterly contested. Beane, probably right at the limit, went the furthest in last year's district (besides Carpenter) and might be nominally the favorite. Wolf, Baker (Tipp City) and Ickes (Circleville) are the other possibilities. Someone I don't know is Reckman. He is undefeated in the Cincinnati area, but with a schedule that does not appear to be severely testing. He needs to be checked out.

There is an element of disarray at Steubenville. Many of the best results have been generated by a wide variety of contestants. Hines is back from last year and has a golden opportunity to be successful. The freshman Hiles will be a force these four years, and it may begin next month. Petrella has won at Steubenville and Barnesville, while Hinerman was runner-up at Steubenville and Beaver Local. The qualifiers here will likely be first round underdogs at Columbus.

TEAMS

1. Graham This will be their 5th consecutive team title--by for the longest streak in Division II history. It will also be their 7th state team title--again the most in Division II history and alone in 4th place overall behind St. Edward (20), Maple Hts. (10), and Walsh (8). Hart, Doggett, Erwin, and Marshall must be accorded the favorite's role, while Thompson, Kyle, Boyd, Jordan, and Ransbottom can place. Forget about the St. Ed's debacle it's the state tournament that's important now.
2. Eastwood A marvelous program that in many years would be a strong favorite. However, the only way they can catch Graham is if there is a team-wide melt down in St. Paris. Nonetheless, this team should score over 100 points--and they're still young. Cubberly, Smith, and Llanas are the superstars, but each will have to pull an upset to win an individual title. They have so much excellent secondary scoring strength--Brown, Ramirez, Taylor, Shroyer, and Ulinski are all good, and the two freshmen, Eric Cubberly and Foster, are on the brink of excellence. They share a common trait with Graham--both were blown out by St. Eds.
3. Akron St. Vincent It'll be nip and tuck with Walsh for the third spot. Rohler is tremendous, one of the absolute best wrestlers in the state, but he'll be the underdog at either 152# or 160#. Kriebel has been excellent and has as good a chance as anyone to win at the rather weak 140# class. Caponi has seemingly blossomed, and Dean and McMullen are tough. It would be a feather in their cap if they can edge out Walsh.
4. Walsh Jesuit This is a team with two brilliant stars, but lacking the usual Walsh depth. Pucillo is a huge favorite, and Rella should win, but not easily. Keyes was a runner-up last year and they need him to produce that same late season magic this year.
5. Columbus DeSales The dominating Earley will get them off to a great start and then it's up to team depth to go to work. Hoppel, Burton, and, maybe, Amick can score at the state level, but they need Cormier and Lovell to reach peak form. There are a lot of opportunities here, they need to grab on to a few of them.

6. Willard Another team with great depth and many potential opportunities. The real question is whether they can, as a team, score at the state level. They have possibilities at every weight class between 112# and 160#, and need to cash in on some of them. If that doesn't happen, they won't be in the top ten.
7. Beachwood The brothers Lipp are both slight favorites and that is probably 50 points (under the old system). If Solomon can score, it would solidify this placement.
8. Bellevue This is a squad that requires solid performances from their big-time performers to reach this level. Both Pelton brothers have to score heavily, while Radloff needs to do his share. They need contributions from Malott, Gurley, and Baker.
9. Clyde The loss of Garcia and Martin puts this team's top ten chances in jeopardy. Guhn and Michaels have to step up big time at 275# and 130# for this to work out. Then add in the younger Michaels, Thurn, Aona, and Schwartz, and things could look a whole lot brighter.
10. Padua McLemore and Friery, still both juniors, have finalist possibilities and that is a lot of points. Help has to come from state qualifiers like Mitchell and Mack, or from the big boys like Tolson and Medrick. If a Deighan or Pinzone can surprise, so much the better.

Division III

This marks the 30th year of competition at the Division III level. It began in 1976, with eight man brackets and was contested at a location separate from the rest of the competition at Otterbein College. I think it has been an outstanding success recognizing outstanding wrestlers from smaller school who might otherwise be overlooked. At the same time, there has been a tremendous increase in the skill level of the participants--many of whom could compete successfully in any classification. The winner at 215# will become the 400th Division III state champion that began with Reggie Johnson, and has included four-time champions, future national champs, and some of the finest wrestlers in Ohio history. It would be an appropriate tribute, if, perhaps, the original group of state champions from 1976 be introduced and honored at this year's tournament.

This year, the meet will be enriched by the efforts of an excellent group of younger wrestlers. Both the sophomore and freshman classes are outstanding and their impact will begin being felt this year. Again, this year, there is increased geographical diversity as every area of the state now produces outstanding wrestlers.

103

PROJECTED CHAMPION: DANIEL KOLODZIK (MIAMI VALLEY)

Top Contenders

2	Sergent (Troy Christian)	15	Garrett (Madison Plains)
3	Evans (Delta)	16	Boney (Nelsonville York)
4	Freeman (Berkshire)	17	Ch. Clark (Union Local)
5	Opfer/Harrington (Sandusky St. Mary)	18	Schaefer (Chanel)
6	Terzigni (CVCA)	19	Reyna (Mountpelier)
7	Taylor (Elyria Catholic)	20	Householder (West Jefferson)
8	Carpenter (Madeira)	21	Riesz (Beallsville)
9	Savage (Carlisle)	22	Pezzin (Swanton)
10	Hall (Tuslaw)	23	Border (Caldwell)
11	Strickland (Bluffton)	24	Lewis (Seneca East)
12	Ju. Young (Norwayne)	25	Juzwiak (North Union)
13	Pope (Pleasant)		
14	Giesler (Elmwood)		

I think this could be one of the best fields, at this weight class, in Division III in some time. There are some savvy veterans returning and they'll be joined by a whole host of outstanding newcomers. The Southwest District, often seen as somewhat of a weak sister, has at least a half dozen high caliber boys competing for the four state berths, and every other district has top contenders at this weight. A complicating factor is that

there has been few match ups of the very best with Evans missing the early part of the year and Freeman and Opfer competing at 112#.

Important here, as it will be at most weight classes, is winning a district title. Many perceive the district final on Saturday evening as being anti-climatic, in the sense that both boys have already qualified for Columbus. Last year, every Division III state champ had won his district title the week before, and over the years, that ratio has hovered at around the 80% level. At this weight class, with such a crowded field, the benefit in a better pairing could be most significant.

This is clearly going to be a confrontation between some savvy, older wrestlers, like Evans and Freeman and a batch of brilliant young freshman like Kolodzik, Sergent and Opfer. I've gone back and forth as to whom will prevail without coming to any firm conclusion.

At any rate, I've gone with Daniel Kolodzik, the freshman from Miami Valley. This will either end up being one of my most inspired choices, or one that will invite laughter and embarrassment. Kolodzik, by the way, who is the Miami Valley team, is a two-time junior high state champ, with exceptional youth credentials. He opened the year with a sterling 2nd place effort at the Ironman, including a 10-0 win over St. Edward's Birt and decisions over Terzigni and Mitcheff. He was 2nd at the GMVWA to Sergent--not a good sign--and 3rd at the Top Gun--losing to Jamison, who he had beaten in the junior high finals last year. All his losses have been by one or two points and, in a normal year that record would assure you a Division III title. This is not a normal year.

The Xenia District has six great kids. Kolodzik, we've discussed. Right behind him are two other freshman: Sergent and Carpenter. Sergent, a junior high state runner up (to Colin Palmer), has been superb and his 4-3 win over Kolodzik will have to be reversed if Kolodzik wants that coveted district title. A tremendous mat wrestler, he is extremely dangerous in that position. Carpenter has only lost once and he will be a major threat to the top duo. State qualifier Strickland is back at this weight class and won most recently at Van Buren. Savage was a state qualifier at 112# last year (he couldn't beat out state runner-up Austin), but he, too, will be difficult to defeat. Factor in the excellent Boney, and it's quite a weight class. I would not be surprised if one or two of this group might head for the somewhat easier 112 # class.

I almost picked Evans. After all, he is the logical choice. Now a senior, he was 5th last year at this weight class, and has finally reappeared this year with impressive wins at Waite and Perrysburg. He was a district champ last year, but caught a tough fourth place finisher and got immediately dumped into the consolation bracket. I wonder if he is vulnerable to good wrestlers in the early rounds because of weight issues. Right behind him is the Sandusky St. Mary duo of Opfer and Harrington. Everyone assumed that Opfer would represent his school, but Harrington, still rather small, has been brilliant. I'm guessing he'll be the favorite at this weight class next year. At any rate, both are very good and one of them should easily qualify. The last two spots are wide open.

Another potential champ is the very physical junior, Bryce Freeman. He was 6th last year at 103#, losing in the quarter-finals to eventual runner-up Austin. He has been at 112# --nearly beating Boing at Solon and winning handily at Kenston, but has finalist possibilities at this weight class. It's a solid district, although I don't believe any of them can seriously challenge Freeman. Young has had a super season, but does not wrestle a difficult schedule, while Hall and Taylor both won at Richmond Heights. Terzigni is also good--a Solon champ--and Schaefer will get better because that's what Chanel wrestlers do.

I've put Pope and Garrett in the top spots, but the Watkins District will be overmatched at Columbus. It's one of those situations where the weight class will be exciting and competitive, but the four qualifiers will struggle to achieve a low place the next weekend.

112

PROJECTED CHAMPION: DARREN BOING (CHANEL)

Top Contenders

2	Thome (Troy Christian)	15	Morris (Steubenville CC)
3	Guerra (Sandusky St. Mary)	16	Reed (Collins Western Reserve)
4	C. Lint (Cuyahoga Hts)	17	Abbruzzese (Ready)
5	Gulley (Tri-County North)	18	Jo. Young (Norwayne)
6	Hambrick (Jackson Milton)	19	Nelson (Madison Plains)
7	Bt. Freeman (Berkshire)	20	Brown (Newark Catholic)
8	Blanca (Edison)	21	Avila (Margaretta)
9	Thompson (Brookfield)	22	Stephen (Barnesville)
10	Scarberry / Van Sickle (Liberty Ct)	23	Pike (Greeneview)
11	Cz. Clark (Union Local)	24	Counts (Elyria Catholic)
12	Wilson (Malvern)	25	Gualtieri (West Jefferson)
13	Weirauch (Archbold)	26	Anderson (Bluffton)
14	Gambill (Miami East)	27	

The last two years the Northeast District has dominated the lower weights in Division III, but then fared far more poorly in the middle and upper classes. Last year, for example, they won five of the first six titles and none thereafter, and in 2003 won four of the first five and only two subsequently. There is reason to believe that this trend may well continue again in 2005. The Northeast District is well populated with excellent wrestlers in the first five weight classes, but is unlikely to be favored in many above that level.

The choice is a difficult one, but I chose Boing because of his consistency and strength of schedule. He won at Solon, beating Division I placer, Hardy, and at North Canton, while finishing 2nd at Brecksville. He was 3rd last year, losing only to Austin in the semi-finals. Thome has tremendous talent. He gave Lint a 9-8 scare in the quarter-finals (Lint's only close bout), but then quickly lost in the consolation round. His district loss to

Austin was much closer than Boing's loss to the same boy--and that is true with Payne Lint, as well. This year, he has been at 119# much of the time--finishing 2nd to the Kentucky State champ at the GMVWA--but certified here. There is no seeding at this class, so I think Boing might want to catch Thome before the finals.

There are five excellent contenders for the four berths out of Twinsburg. All but Freeman have previous state experience and he was the state alternate at this class last year. Lint was 4th at Brecksville, losing to Boing 3-1, but defeating the redoubtable Llanas (no easy task--just ask Aaron Hart). Hambrick and Thompson both won a state bout last year. I thought Hambrick looked sluggish at 119#, but should do better here. Thompson did not wrestle at Richmond Heights, but has been solid elsewhere. Freeman has missed almost the entire year to injury, but will be very big for this weight class. Last year, Lint beat him in the go-to-state bout. Three other solid performers, Young, Counts, and Martin (CVCA) are also at this district, but their hopes dimmed when Hambrick dropped and Freeman got healthy.

The situation at Fostoria is almost identical – five solid performers and four state invitations. Guerra has gotten off to a bit of a slow start, but like last year, I think he'll be the best this district has to offer--he'll also be the biggest of the 112's. He was 4th at 103# last year, despite 14 losses, and should be near the top again this year. Blanca, Scarberry, and Weirauch are all former state qualifiers with the first named having pinned Guerra earlier in the year. Scarberry will have to beat off VanSickle's challenge just to make the squad at this weight. I've always had a high regard for state alternate Reed and, this year he is likely to oust one of the previously mentioned four from a Columbus journey.

The next two districts are not quite as strong. There are three good candidates at Xenia, with the aforementioned, Thome, leading the way. Gulley is a bit of a mystery man since I get few of his results, but his past track record is excellent. Last year, he was 3rd at this district and then won two state bouts, defeating Clark and Froelich. Strength of schedule may inhibit his chances. The freshman, Gambill, third in the line, looks to be every bit as good as his elders. He beat Troy Opfer 10-0 in the state junior high semis and finished 2nd to the excellent Fields--now in Division I. The rest of this group is suspect. Those mentioned, plus Brigano (Clinton Massie), Van Atta (McComb), and Breezley (Blanchester), are all possibilities.

There is tremendous depth at Watkins, but I'm not seeing the up-top strength we see at the other three districts. There are a lot of possibilities, but no one looks like more than a low placer. State qualifiers Wilson, Brown, and Morris have all moved from 103# to 112#, and it has not been a real smooth transition for any of them. State qualifier, Clark, was a big surprise last year at 112#, and he might be the best at this location. I'm thinking that, perhaps, some of the boys who didn't make it last year will qualify this time and Stephen, Abbruzzese, and Nelson would seem to be the best candidates. I think that there will be fierce competition from the very first round, with many bouts not decided until the last seconds.

119 #

PROJECTED CHAMPION: MIKE WILSON (PLEASANT)

Top Contenders

2	P. Lint (Cuyahoga Hts.)	15	Evans (Madison Plains)
3	Opfer (Sandusky St. Mary)	16	Notte (Ledgemont)
4	A. Tinnel (Edison)	17	Foos (Fremont St. Joseph)
5	Wetzel (River Valley)	18	Kosky (Bellaire St. John)
6	Froelich (Ayersville)	19	Shubert (Oberlin)
7	Long (Miami East)	20	Runkle (West Salem Northwestern)
8	K. Gardella (Chanel)	21	Dodd (Shenandoah)
9	R. Cloran (Madeira)	22	S. Kayatin (Lima CC)
10	Jenkins (Berkshire)	23	Hively (South Range)
11	Austin (Carlisle)	24	Reyes (Belpre)
12	Dawson (Ready)	25	Shepherd (South Central)
13	McCullough (Delta)	26	Holt (Martins Ferry)
14	Eavers (Greeneview)	27	Toney (Mechanicsburg)

This is arguably the best weight class in Division III and it's headed by a quartet of superior performers. Each of the four has the ability to gain the top step of the awards pedestal and it will be fascinating to see which one of this foursome eventually prevails. It is a situation where, if we could run the tape of the State weekend over again, the results would very likely be substantially different. With Thome's defection to 112#, I don't foresee the Xenia District playing a major role in the outcome. And the pairing situation could prove lopsided. An unhappy possibility could put the Twinsburg champion in the same half bracket with the winner at Watkins, and the runner-up from Owens. That probability (one out of three) would give the Owens District champ an enormous advantage. Let's take a look at the top four contenders.

Payne Lint, now a senior, dominated the 103# class last year, surviving only one close tournament bout (with Thome) to take home the title hardware. He was just too big and too good as he fashioned an undefeated season, including a victory over the Division II finalist at Brecksville. This year, that size and strength advantage has dwindled on his two weight-class jump, and, as mentioned in the 112# Division II essay, history may not be on his side. Still, he won at Bellevue (over Tinnel) and Cuyahoga Heights, but was 4th at Brecksville, losing to the powerful Mitcheff by five and to Tinnel by two. He also defeated Opfer in a close bout in the consolation semi-finals. He defeated Wilson last year, so he holds victories over each of his primary opponents. He should win at Twinsburg and then it is up to the ever devious pairing gods.

Adam Tinnel--coincidentally there are brother combinations galore here with Clay Lint, Steve Wilson, Ryan Tinnel and Troy Opfer, all with placement hopes--is still only a sophomore, but is a special talent. Last year, he finished 4th at 112#, losing only to state champ Koballa and two-time state champ Wyant. A tough, gritty wrestler, he beat Division II state placer Myers, 10-2, to win at Edison, but lost narrowly to Lint in the

Bellevue finals. He was 3rd at Brecksville, defeating Lint in the process, but losing narrowly to Wilson. His few losses are always tough, narrow decisions that have the potential to be reversed the next time out.

A broken wrist sidelined Wilson at Sectionals and I'm convinced that my second choice last year would have been a finalist at 103#. Now a junior, he was runner-up at Brecksville, winning close decisions over both Opfer and Lint before running into a buzzsaw, named Mitcheff, in the finals. He is a strong six-minute wrestler and that makes him especially dangerous in the third period. His semi-final bout with Tinnel, 9-7, was a classic, and showcased his determination to win.

Opfer has become a real enigma. Always under extraordinary pressure to emulate his two older brothers (seven state titles), he has placed three years, but never been a finalist. My view is that he was never developed one takedown that he can call on when it's clutch time, and it has meant defeat in a number of close, hard-fought battles--that, and, maybe, he needs to relax more on the mat. Surprisingly, he has moved down two weight classes (he was not allowed, for health reasons, to cut weight last year), and he is likely to be the strongest of this top quartet. I've never successfully chosen the winner of any weight class in which he has participated. It won't be any easier this year. Oddly, the Opfer brothers have appeared at 11 state meets and won their final bouts each time (7 firsts, 2 thirds, and 2 fifths).

This weight class shouldn't be that difficult – should it? After all, every one of the top quartet was at Brecksville where they finished 2nd through 5th behind Mitcheff. They met each other four times--two of the bouts were decided by one point, the other two by two points. What it comes down to, are the pairings--as it so often does. Who wrestles whom, and when, will be a critical determinant. My choice is Wilson, who I think is the steadiest of the group, but, quite honestly, you could flip a coin and have about the same chances of being correct.

Lint, should dominate at Twinsburg. The younger Gardella, and Jenkins are next best, but they are a giant step behind Lint. Gardella got off to a great start at Solon, but has struggled since then. I think he'll bounce back. The fourth spot will be determined by who is having the hot weekend and can avoid the top boys early.

Tinnel and Opfer should be the class of the Fostoria District. Winning this district could be critical because, if the one in three probability arises, it would isolate this district's titleholder on one side of the bracket--an enormous advantage. State qualifier, Froelich, is also here and healthy, but I think he is five points behind the top twosome. Again, the last state berth is wide open.

Wilson seems clearly the best at Watkins. However, Wetzel was 6th at 112# last year and he should challenge that top quartet whenever they meet. He'll get his chance with Wilson at the district level and with the others one week later. The rest of the contenders as this district will battle for the last two spots, but will struggle to get even a low place at Columbus.

The Xenia District is not likely to create much uproar at the state meet. State qualifier, Long, is at this weight, and Cloran is a solid performer. I'm thinking that with those exceptions, they'll be outgunned in what will be a most difficult bracket sheet.

125

PROJECTED CHAMPION: ADAM KOBALLA (CHANEL)

Top Contenders

2	Mt. Blonairz (Tinora)	15	Ch. Tucker (Martins Ferry)
3	R. Tinnel (Edison)	16	Pendlebury (Waynedale)
4	Lemaster (Caldwell)	17	J. Foley (Worthington Christian)
5	Hermes (Sandusky St. Mary)	18	Campbell (Dayton Christian)
6	Pike (Greeneview)	19	B. Skoff (Bellaire St. John)
7	Steiner (Waynesville)	20	Hall (Genoa)
8	Hamilton (Rootstown)	21	Prickett (Monroe Central)
9	Lee (Elmwood)	22	Chasteen (Black River)
10	A. Kayatin (Lima CC)	23	Bechtel (Academy)
11	Ellis (Grandview Hts)	24	Zolman (Northmor)
12	Taylor (Elyria Catholic)	25	Carosielio (Wellsville)
13	Grigson (Northwood)	26	K. Cloran (Madeira)
14	Penix (River Valley)	27	Skaggs (Jackson Milton)
		28	McNutt (Tusky Valley)

This looks like a two-man battle, but with the proviso that solid long-shot possibilities also exist. What makes it especially interesting is that the two principal contenders are very different and a clash of styles and, perhaps, philosophy, is a very real possibility. In fact, there are clear dissimilarities that should make their meeting a fascinating one to watch.

State champion, Koballa, is now a junior, but he has already put some impressive numbers on the board. A two-time state qualifier, he won both his district and state finals by defeating three-time state placer, Oliver Gray, in overtime. Emerging from the powerful Chanel squad, he has maintained their tradition of developing superb lower weight wrestlers. This year, he won handily at Solon and defeated one of West Virginia's best to triumph at North Canton, but went 2-2 at the Ironman, suffering narrow losses to Sulzer and Pierson. He was outstanding at Brecksville, losing only to Cubberly, a youth rival, in the final. He has excellent techniques, is good on his feet, and knows how to win the close bouts. He'll have several of that variety at Columbus. He may be a shade small for this weight class by February.

Bloniarz was 3rd last year at this weight class, losing a one-pointer to eventual champ, Hamed, in the semi-finals. That was his only defeat in a 50-1 season, where he was rarely pushed. Again, this year, he has been outstanding losing only in the Medina semi-finals to an out-of-state wrestler, while finishing 3rd. Now a senior, he is very

strong and quick, and, in my mind, a more athletic competitor than any of the top wrestlers here.

There is an interesting comparison. Bloniarz took 3rd at Medina, with a 10-5 decision over Pierson, while Koballa lost to that same opponent, 8-5. That's an eight point differential in Bloniarz's favor, but I'm still forecasting Koballa as the eventual champ. Wrestling is not mathematics – well, not completely at any rate, and I think the tougher schedule and more varied workout partners will result in a close Koballa victory. This is a seeding situation, so assuming they are district champs, they would not meet until Saturday evening--when Bloniarz will be huge.

There appear to be two other placement possibilities at the Twinsburg District. State qualifier, Hamilton, looked exceptionally good at Richmond Heights and Chippewa and should be a factor here. Neither of his championship bouts went the distance. Taylor is, surprisingly, down from the 130#, where he went 1-2 at the district level. Since he has competed mostly at 135#, it's difficult to slot him at this lower weight since there is no performance measure available. The last berth is wide open. I've rated Pendlebury, Chasteen, and Skaggs, but a Drdek (Brooklyn) or Cowgill (Berkshire) are possibilities as well.

Bloniarz probably faces the sharpest district competition. Both Tinnel and Lee are former state placers with good track records. Tinnel was 3rd last year at 119# and gave Scaletta his only close battle, losing 4-1 in the semis. Koballa and Tinnel were in opposite halves of the bracket at Brecksville and did not meet, as Koballa was 2nd and Tinnel 7th. Lee placed two years ago at 103# and is a savvy veteran who can be tough to beat. He is just down from 130#. Hermes was a state qualifier at 112# last year, but has had an injury plagued start so far. However, he took Tinnel into overtime before losing and will be fresh at tourney time. If he can stay healthy, he could be a huge factor in Columbus. Should any of this quartet falter, the excellent Grigson, or, maybe Hall, will quickly step in.

The Xenia District seems to follow the same pattern as Twinsburg and Fostoria-- that is three relatively solid looking qualifiers with a fourth wide-open state spot. Pike and Steiner met at both the district and state level with each winning once. I think Pike may, however, have moved ahead of Steiner, based on the results so far, with both having reasonable placement chances. Kayatin (like Pike) won two state bouts last year, but was behind both of the above at the district level, where Steiner whipped him 9-2. The fourth spot will likely fall to Campbell, the younger Cloran or Holmes (Spencerville). All in all, the Xenia District will send a very competitive quartet to Columbus.

The Watkins District is chaotic. There are, perhaps, ten possibilities with only state placer, Lemaster, standing out. He was 5th last year, losing 1-0 to twice runner-up, Gray, in the quarter-finals. This year, I have him winning at Barnesville and Shadyside. He should win this district. After that, much will depend on the pairings with wrestlers of every kind competing. State alternate Ellis is certainly a possibility and I like the freshman, Chase Tucker, who was a junior high finalist last year. He seems to be

showing rapid improvement, as does another freshman (and younger brother), Bryan Skoff. These two will be dangerous by district time. Also, look out for the senior, Foley, from Worthington Christian--he was two points from state qualification last year.

130

PROJECTED CHAMPION: BRAXDON SCALETTA (CUYAHOGA HTS)

Top Contenders

2	A. Gardella (Chanel)	15	Harnett (Brookfield)
3	Nicola (Bellaire St. John)	16	Windom (CVCA)
4	Andrews (New Albany)	17	Z. Schalk (Hopewell-Louden)
5	Shindledecker (Lima CC)	18	Keuterman (Versailles)
6	Young (Nelsonville York)	19	Furbee (Shadyside)
7	Dobereiner (Waterford)	20	Snyder (Lake)
8	Rupp (Archbold)	21	Moss (Sherwood Fairview)
9	Hall (Tuslaw)	22	Gettman (Jackson Milton)
10	Hoover (Richmond Hts)	23	Ware (Martins Ferry)
11	D. Hill (McComb)	24	Robbe (Batavia)
12	Magers (Barnesville)	25	Sturgill (Crooksville)
13	Estrada (Fremont St. Joseph)	26	Albanese (Fairbanks)
14	Stapleton (Carlisle)	27	Fletcher (Reading)
		28	Vogepohl (Genoa)

The first four weight classes in Division III are all highly competitive with no "sure shot" winner. That changes here at 130# with state champion, Scaletta, a heavy favorite. That's not to say he is upset proof like Jagers last year or Schlatter, but a Nicola or Gardella would have to wrestle the match of their life to beat him. As he said himself, the only one who could cause him to lose is himself.

Scaletta is one of the strongest 130's in the state with a short, powerful physique designed for domination. He has great, penetrating shots and good quickness to finish them. He was 3rd as a freshman, 2nd as a sophomore, and then ran roughshod over most of his competition in winning at 119# last year. He had the fastest final round fall since 2002 (Koel Davia at 275#), and has looked equally good this year. His only close bout was at the Brecksville where the funky Friery took an early lead, but then succumbed to the relentless Scaletta. He'll be very tough to beat again this year.

The biggest threat to Scaletta is an old adversary who he is likely to see three more times. Last year, Gardella lost to Scaletta in both the sectional and district final. At the state meet, Gardella was pinned in the first round after having constructed an 8-0 lead. He then won four consolations before finishing 5th. This year, he was 2nd at Solon (to Division II pick, Lipp), 3rd at Brecksville, and an easy champion at North Canton. State qualifiers, Hall and Hoover, are the other top choices at Twinsburg, but there is a good depth at this district. Windom, Gettman, and Hartnett all have opportunities here.

Ochwat (Garrettsville Garfield) certified at this weight class after spending the early part of the year at 135#. Strategically, it seems a suspect move, so I will rate him at 135#.

Nicola, now a junior, is still waiting to blossom. Somehow, I anticipated that his teammate and classmate, Joe Skoff, would trail Nicola in accomplishments. Instead, Skoff has already been a state finalist, while Nicola has had some bad breaks and has not yet placed. I'm thinking that this may be his time. He should lead a Watkins District that features two other state qualifiers (Andrews and Magers) and has good depth. Andrews, just a sophomore, would seem to have placement potential, while Magers is more of a long shot. Besides, those rated Fox (Newcomerstown) and Bortz (Steubenville CC) could be factors here.

The Xenia District is again very crowded. I've put Shindledecker in the top spot with Young and Dobereiner (who defeated Andrews, Shindledecker and Stapleton (twice), last year) close by. However, they are in no way assured qualification. The very strong duo of Stapleton and D. Hill will be quality threats along with Keuterman, state qualifier, Fletcher, and the younger Robbe. It is a very deep field, but in the end, no one stands out as anything more than a middle-to-low placer.

It's rather unusual to find the Northwest District as something of a "weak sister" at any weight class – but it looks to be true here at 130#. State alternate, Rupp, is a possibility. But, quite honestly, I was scrambling for names at this weight class. Estrada, the Northwood champ, is also good, but there is opportunity galore here for the risk-taking wrestler.

135

PROJECTED CHAMPION: JOSH FALK (BLUFFTON)

Top Contenders

- | | | | |
|----|----------------------------------|----|------------------------------|
| 2 | J. Skoff (Bellaire St. John) | 15 | Tomaino (Jackson Milton) |
| 3 | Terry (New Albany) | 16 | Barga (Versailles) |
| 4 | J. Gambill (Miami East) | 17 | Howe (Northmor) |
| 5 | Gombash (Delta) | 18 | Hickin (CVCA) |
| 6 | Mk. Blonairz (Tinora) | 19 | Madden (Swanton) |
| 7 | Sendelbach (New London) | 20 | Arreola (Fremont St. Joseph) |
| 8 | Seebach (Caldwell) | 21 | Jones (Martins Ferry) |
| 9 | Ochwat (Garrettsville Garfield) | 22 | Dotson (Liberty Center) |
| 10 | DeCapua (Richmond Hts) | 23 | Wyse (Grandview Hts) |
| 11 | Levy (West Liberty Salem) | 24 | Shepherd (Fairless) |
| 12 | Moomey (Collins Western Reserve) | 25 | Lopez (Patrick Henry) |
| 13 | Schultz (Archbold) | 26 | Cataldo (Wellsville) |
| 14 | Brown (Carlisle) | 27 | Beam (Cardington) |

We have never had a father/son combination where each won three titles (and unless a faithful reader points it out, never one where a father/son were both just multiple winners). At any rate, that barrier may be broken with the emergence of Josh Falk. Last year, as a freshman, he went 43-3 and finished 5th at 140#. This year, competing at 135#, he is a slight favorite to win his initial state title. Many will remember his father, Mark, a three-time champ also at Bluffton, and the heart of their 1981 state championship team. This Falk, perhaps, a shade smaller, has equivalent talent and that same personal energy that translates into victory. It is no coincidence that the once dormant Bluffton program has been revitalized under Jeff Kleman and, once again, features a Falk. Hopefully, as an omen, it should also be noted that three times, I predicted Mark Falk to be champion and was never in error.

Falk's job will be a demanding one, and it will start right at the district level. Gambill, second in that fine brother combination, qualified at this weight class last year and won two state bouts--including one over Bloniarz. He as 2nd at the GMVWA and gave Kyle a good match in the final before losing 3-0. Levy and Brown also made it to Columbus--both at 125#--with Levy winning once. I like both of them, but I gave Levy the nod based on his 5th place finish at Medina where he was a semi-finalist. Right behind this group are Barga, state alternate, Hemmelgarn(Coldwater), and Crowley (Madeira). They'll have to pull an upset to qualify.

Falk will also face a strong challenge from the Watkins District. Skoff was a surprise runner-up at 119#, wrestling three excellent bouts before running into the Scaletta buzzsaw. He is now up three weight classes, but it has not been a problem. He dominated the field at Marion Harding and also won titles at Barnesville and Bellaire St. John. Right behind him are state qualifiers Terry and Seebach. They finished 4th and 6th, respectively at 125# last year, with Terry holding the edge with a win in their face-to-face meeting. I think, however, that I may have rated Seebach a shade too low. After all, he was the OW at Shadyside, winning the title with a decision over Andy Mousetis, and lost at 140#, only to state champ, Clay Tucker, at Barnesville. The last state ticket is very available. I've listed four possibilities, with Aberegg (Beallsville), another possibility.

There will also be plenty of challengers coming out of the Fostoria District. State qualifiers, Blonairz, Moomey and Gombash, are both solid. Gombash got a 6th at 130#, and, recently, dropped to 135# this year, nailing down a runner-up spot at Perrysburg. Moomey won a state bout last year, and, he, like Falk, has moved down one weight class to 135#. Still, I rate Sendelbach slightly above them, based on his strong performance at 140#. If he can get comfortable at this weight, he could be very dangerous. That's my top quartet, but there is another foursome nearly as strong. I especially like Schultz and Madden, but Dotson and Arreola are also strong. Add in Lopez, Okorowski (Lake), Smith (St Wendelin), and Basting (Huron), and it's a prescription for chaos from the very first round of districts.

The Twinsburg District is, rather unusually, the weakest of the four. Ochwat, who, I believe, will, in the end, select this weight class, and DeCapua would appear the class

of the weight. Both are returning state qualifiers who got a win in Columbus. Interestingly, Ochwat is up one weight class, while DeCapua is down one. I didn't think DeCapua looked very good, while placing only 6th at Richmond Heights. He looked a little sluggish and sloppy on his feet and Sendelbach, for example, took full advantage. However, his narrow 5-3 loss to my Division II choice pick, Kevin Lipp, and a runner-up finish at Kenston, suggests a late season drive for a state place. After this duo, I'm not seeing much that'll scare the rest of the state.

140

PROJECTED CHAMPION: CLAY TUCKER (MARTIN'S FERRY)

Top Contenders

2	Dierkes (Jackson Milton)	15	Fout (Madison Plains)
3	Wilson (Pleasant)	16	Wright (Troy Christian)
4	Bockmore (Wellington)	17	Melko (Bellaire St. John)
5	Lanham (Middletown Madison)	18	Hook (River Valley)
6	Burcher (Indian Valley)	19	Packer (Reading)
7	Bodenbender (Liberty Center)	20	D. Foley (Worthington Christian)
8	Coleman (Fremont St. Joe)	21	Grilley (Hillsdale)
9	J. Hill (McComb)	22	Owens (Dixie)
10	Reer (Collins Western Reserve)	23	Peoples (Northmor)
11	Dillon (Brookfield)	24	Urling (Fisher Catholic)
12	Welfle (Norwalk St. Paul)	25	Thatcher (Loudonville)
13	Sowers (Mohawk)	26	Long (Lake)
14	Runkle (West Salem Northwestern)	27	Smithberger (Monroe Central)

Last year, Clay Tucker had the kind of season you dream about. He finished 46-0 and captured the state title in, perhaps, the most competitive weight class in Division III. Now a senior, he has moved up two weight classes without missing a beat, and seemed primed to repeat. Yes, there would be some tough competition to conquer, but after three state placements, Tucker seems more than able to handle the pressure and the unexpected. He looked to become the first Martins Ferry wrestler in history to win multiple titles. Then, rather surprisingly, Dierkes, who I was told would not budge from 145#, certified at this weight class. I think it's a great strategic move and suddenly Tucker has an opponent of virtually equal stature.

Dierkes was 2nd at 140# and his go-for-broke style won me over. He had a 16-11 win at the district level and won 18-0, 18-3 and 17-12 before losing his only bout of the year to three-time champ, Shearer 16-7. He is, again, undefeated this year, winning big at Richmond Heights with a 17-8 major over Braden in the finals. Assuming they are both district champs (a reasonable guess), these two would not meet until the finals. My guess is that Tucker, better on the matt, and an excellent rider, will slow the Dierkes Express down, and capture his second state title.

It should be noted that Jackson Milton, under Dave Tomaino, has become a powerhouse team located in a part of the state that rarely emphasizes wrestling. It is heartening to see programs like this build and become competitive with the very best in the state.

The real threat to the top duo is the exceptional freshman, Steve Wilson. Unseeded at Brecksville, he opened with three lopsided decisions and then was brilliant in defeating state qualifier, Grant Hoppel, by technical fall. He lost a 9-7 semi-final battle to the state third-placer in Division I, Mikey Davis, and then pinned Division I state placer, Sean Stevenson, in the consolations. It was a tremendous performance.

The Watkins District is very crowded. I believe we may see some of this group at 145# where this district is much weaker. State qualifier, Burcher, won a bout at Columbus, but everyone here (even Tucker), will have to be very careful. State alternate, Fout, Peoples (one bout from Columbus), Hook, and Melko are all good wrestlers with district experience. However, Urling, Herron (Tusky Vally) and Waite (Shenandoah) are also viable candidates. Like I said, you might see some of this group at 145#.

Dierkes should have it slightly easier at Twinsburg. State qualifiers, Bockmore and Dillon, are both excellent, but a half step behind Dierkes. After them, there is a chasm to the next group of contenders for that last spot. I like Bockmore a lot. After a second round loss at Medina, he won four tough consolation bouts against quality opponents and then gave the excellent Straughn a tough battle before losing. Also, watch Dillon--a clever mat wrestler with lots of experience. He will be able to beat some of my top ten if he gets an early lead. Grilley probably had the toughest district pairing last year. He caught four-time state champ, Jaggars, in the first round and then after a consolation win, drew eventual state runner-up Kyle Huss.

My view is that there are four solid candidates for state tickets at Fostoria. State qualifiers, Bodenbender and Coleman, are solid and the flashy Reer and solid Welfle, are also good. I think all of them can score at the state level, and one would expect several placers, as well. The one obstacle could be district pairings, since Reer and Welfle exit the same district. That might open a spot for a Sowers or a Long.

We've kind of come full circle by the time we get to Xenia. There are many solid, state choices at Watkins, four at Fostoria, three at Twinsburg, and now, two at Xenia. I like both Lanham and Justin Hill at this district, but after that, it's very wide open. Hill qualified two years ago at 125# finishing 5th--losing to Tucker in the process. He missed out last year, but he looked great at Richmond Heights, winning at the toughest weight class. Lanham went two and out at Columbus last year at 145#, losing one of those bouts to Bockmore. Down a weight class, he should place. It's slow going, after this top two.

145 #

PROJECTED CHAMPION: JAMISON MOSS (DELTA)

Top Contenders

2	Hoff (Liberty Center)	15	Heasley (Worthington Christian)
3	Baum (Sandusky St. Mary)	16	Bilyeu (Beallsville)
4	Ison (Batavia)	17	Miller (Garaway)
5	Bernholt (Versailles)	18	Klaus (Mechanicsburg)
6	Braden (Norwalk St. Paul)	19	Nester (Seneca East)
7	Wiseman (Jackson Milton)	20	Scavuzzo (Woodridge)
8	Bogucki (Reading)	21	Overfield (North Union)
9	Tice (Brookfield)	22	Fatica (Richmond Hts.)
10	Nedolast (St. Wendelin)	23	Bowers (Dayton Christian)
11	Soldat (Cuyahoga Hts)	24	Hickin (Waterloo)
12	McCort (Bellaire)	25	Yinger (Alder)
13	Lasch (Collins Western Reserve)	26	Smith (Barnesville)
14	Boso (Amanda Clearcreek)	27	Heyob (Clinton Massie)

I wrote earlier that 119# was probably the best weight class in Division III. But after re-examining this 145# competition, I may have been a little hasty in that assessment. This time, we are blessed with a quartet of terrific competitors. What we have here is a returning state champ and wrestlers who finished 3rd, 4th, and 6th last year. Three of these boys, all of them from the Owens District, return at this weight class with the other, moving up from 135#, joining them. It also creates a potential pairings nightmare with a lop-sided bracket that features everyone but the Owens champ in half a bracket. There also exists the possibility that Moss, Hoff, or Baum might opt for the slightly easier 152# class.

My choice, as it was last year, remains with Jamison Moss. He is one of the quintessential big match competitors at the district and state level. A three-time district champion, he was a runner-up at Columbus as a sophomore and then won at this weight class last year. He generally loses a handful of bouts prior to the last two weeks of the season, but has consistently come through when the chips are down. Last year, Hoff beat him in the sectional final, but then fell 11-3 at Districts. Moss, with the better pairing, went on to win his first state title (and Delta's 12th).

Hoff remains his sternest test. Still, only a junior, he was 3rd last year, losing the chance to defeat Moss when he dropped a close 6-5 semi-final bout. This year, he has again, defeated Moss and won handily at Hudson with all falls. Very powerful, he must guard against looking ahead for Moss, while ignoring other competitive opponents. His ability to ride is unequalled by any of the other wrestlers here.

Baum is the wild card. Now a senior, he was 4th last year at this weight class and 3rd in that crowded Owens District. However, during those two weekends, he lost to Moss, 3-1, and Hoff, 3-2, suggesting that he has just about closed the gap. This year, he moved to 152# for the Ohio Duals, losing in double overtime to Hill, and was 5th at Brecksville.

If St. Mary's builds team momentum during the tourney process, he could very easily win it all (at either this weight class or the next).

Finally, the forgotten man in this quartet is Jacob Ison--6th last year at 135#. A semi-finalist at that weight, he drew Jagers in the semi-finals, and never quite recovered to win again. This year, he was outstanding at the Division I dominated SWOCA at 145#, winning a major decision in the finals. All those boys from the Northwest District, looking to pummel one another, need be wary of this competitor from the southwest.

Obviously, with Moss, Hoff, and Baum all at Fostoria, there is little margin of error for the rest of the competitors. The clear fourth is Braden who is very good. He was 2nd at Richmond Hts, losing only to Dierkes after getting a late start, due to football. The pairings should work out with Moss and Hoff in one sectional and Braden and Baum at another. That leaves three wrestlers--state alternate, Nedolast, Lasch, and Nestor--with serious issues. They could probably qualify at any other district, but it will take a major upset to do so here. Unfortunately, 152# is not a lot easier, so there isn't much there either.

I also see three sure qualifiers out of Xenia. We've talked about Ison, but Bernholt may be just as good. You may remember him as a good little man, who placed at 6th at 112# two years ago. Well, that model has been replaced with a strong 145# version that won the GMWVA and should place here. Watch out for him. The excellent Bogucki, a state qualifier, at this weight last year, has lost only twice and was 2nd at the SWOCA. There, he lost a 14-3 final to Ison. The last state berth might well go to Klaus.

Three seems the lucky number at this weight class, and the Twinsburg District is no exception. Wiseman, Tice, and Soldat seem to stand out in this otherwise weak district. None has had previous state experience and only Soldat made it to districts last year. Wiseman, however, has made great strides including a nice win at Richmond Heights at 152#. Tice is also solid, while Soldat has battling injury problems. After this trio, it's difficult to ascertain who are even the major contenders for that last state berth.

It is even more confusing at Watkins, where I'm not seeing very much at all. Former state alternate, Miller, looks to be a player here, along with Bilyeu (who defeated him), Overfield, Heasley, and the like. A wrestler with the best upset potential is probably McCort, who would seem to have a strong upside. What you can anticipate, in my judgment, is a migration of some of the excellent 140's who might be left out at that crowded weight class in this district. Look for one or two of them to be qualifiers out of this district.

152 #

PROJECTED CHAMPION: JEREMIAH HALL (LIBERTY CENTER)

Top Contenders

2	Stuckey (Archbold)	15	Warren (Martins Ferry)
3	Mages (Reading)	16	Lopez (Genoa)
4	Gallik (Northmor)	17	Sanger (Holy Name)
5	Frollini (Shadyside)	18	Marshall (Edison)
6	Bostleman (Otsego)	19	Bajzel (Cardinal)
7	Hatfield (Hillsdale)	20	Ziegler (Mechanicsburg)
8	Robison (Greeneview)	21	Poole (Ursuline)
9	Hogue (Brookfield)	22	Neff (Waynedale)
10	Hines (Barnesville)	23	Osterman (Grandview Hts.)
11	Donley (Lima CC)	24	Paxton (Waterford)
12	Blanton (Sandusky St. Mary)	25	Mohney (Nelsonville York)
13	Chapman (Hopewell Loudon)	26	Inks (West Jefferson)
14	Shockey (Bluffton)	27	Layne (Fairland)

Liberty Center has a dynamite group of middleweights, beginning with Dotson at 135# and extending through Bodenbender, Hoff, and Jeremiah Hill at 152#. Last year, Hill finished 4th at this weight class, losing to the eventual champ, Baldrige, in the semi-finals, by three points, after winning his district title. This year, he remains undefeated, including the title at Hudson. A powerful wrestler, he will, nonetheless, face tough competition in his own district from Stuckey and, possibly, Baum--although I have rated him at 145#. At the Ohio Duals, these two went into the 30-second tiebreak with Hill eventually prevailing. It may be his exceptional riding ability that will become the key component of his title quest. If he can ride a Stuckey or a Mages--turn them or at the least tire them--he will be the favorite to win.

Like 145#, this could be an all Fostoria District final. Hill's toughest competition is likely to come from conference foe, Stuckey. The winner, I believe, will be the one who can impose his will on the opponent. If Hill can make it a mat contest, he will win, whereas, Stuckey, will want to go on his feet. Should Baum compete at this weight class (though I am assured he will not), it would add a complicating factor. As it is, the state qualifier and Waite champion, Sli Bostleman, would seem to be the third choice out of this area. However, he is not safe as there are a multitude of fine wrestlers right behind him. Juan Lopez seems to have an erratic schedule of appearances, but on good days, he is very good. Blanton and Marshall are both solid and could be factors here. Both just missed placing at Brecksville. Chapman has been successful at some of the smaller school tournaments, while Ross (St. Wendelin) or Jameson (Collins Western Reserve) could pull an upset. We might also see one or two of the 145's work their way up to this class.

One of the most surprising scores I've seen this year was Derek Mages' win at the 152# final at the SWOCA. He beat the excellent Popham, 5-1, vaulting himself into the mix at

this weight class. Three years ago, he was a district qualifier at 103# and last year a state alternate at 135#. Clearly, he has strong upside potential at this weight.

Somewhat behind Mages are two contenders from the Northwest--state alternate, Shockey, and the experienced Donley. They may be surprised by the Bellbrook champion, Robison, who has come on strong in the last few weeks. Last year, he lost a first round district bout 25-18 and then was eliminated by Donley. That might not be the outcome this year. There are a lot of contenders at this district, but beyond Mages and, maybe Robison, I'm not sure they can win at the state level.

Last year's consolation finalists at the Watkins District at 145# now look like the top duo at 152#. In that bout, Gallik prevailed 8-6 and won one state bout, while Frollini won two. Gallik was a freshman qualifier who went into the district with 14 losses, but wrestled extremely well. He has, again, started slowly this year, 5th at Marion Harding, for example, but one can anticipate a late season rush once more. Frollini was one bout from state placement, but an old adversary, Hunkler, defeated him again. This year, he won at St. Clairsville and Shadyside and was 2nd at Barnesville to a West Virginia opponent. There is a big drop-off after these top two with, perhaps, Hines or Warren next best. Besides, those rated a Rossiter (Shenandoah), Milhoan (Malvern), or Brader (Worthington Christian) might be factors.

The cupboard is pretty much bare at Twinsburg. State alternate, Hatfield, should lead the way with Hogue, perhaps, second best. Most of the contestants are boys who are only placing (rather than winning) at local tournaments. One mystery wrestler will be Ken Sanger. At Holy Name two years ago, as a freshman, he nearly qualified for state action. Now a junior, he has recently reappeared at Lutheran West and could be a real factor at the district and, maybe, even the state level. I may have rated him too low here, but I haven't seen enough results to make firm determination.

160 #

PROJECTED CHAMPION: JOHN WEAKLEY (CVCA)

Top Contenders

2	Purdue (Genoa)	15	Smith (North Union)
3	Mack (Tinora)	16	Bodey (West Liberty Salem)
4	Estep (Collins Western Reserve)	17	Marter (Woodbridge)
5	Olds (Sandusky St. Mary)	18	Hastings (West Salem Northwestern)
6	Shannon (Bluffton)	19	Sulek (Bellaire)
7	Foote (Cuyahoga Hts)	20	Rogers (Cardinal)
8	Craft (Dixie)	21	Snell (Batavia)
9	Reed (Crestview)	22	Schwab (Clinton Massie)
10	Rozum (Jackson Milton)	23	Swick (Dayton Jefferson)
11	Stewart (New Albany)	24	Kinzy (Beallsville)
12	T. Stoll (Edison)	25	Albright (Indian Valley)
13	Smith (Barnesville)	26	Yearly (Reading)
14	Schafer (West Jefferson)	27	Roeder (Waynedale)

Last year, Division III had an abundance of good, big men in all of the five upper weight classes. Thobaden, Davia, Reichard, Whelan, and Hickey are some of the superior wrestlers that dominated these weight classes. What was very noticeable then and is even more so, today, is that there were a huge proportion of seniors. Only one of the ten finalists was an underclassman (Dye) and only 4 of the 30 placers return this year. Even the brackets were senior dominated, none more so than at 160#, where only a single junior, sophomore, and freshman, made it to States. This provides tremendous opportunities for those who remain and for newcomers with excellent skills. The problem is sorting out those with placement potential from the rest. It's particularly difficult at 160# where there is no obvious choice.

Surprisingly, the two top contenders would appear to be a pair of improving sophomores. The first of these is the quick and powerful John Weakley. He was 2nd at Solon (on an illegal slam), 4th at the rugged Ironman and 1st at the Top Gun. Last year, he was a state qualifier, but appeared tentative and lost twice --once to Estep. I don't expect that to happen again, now that he has experienced the Schott. You'll like watching him since he is aggressive and loves to score. The other sophomore is the very talented Nick Purdue. His story is not dissimilar to Weakley's. A sectional champ, he easily made it to the district semi-finals and then lost a pair of one-point decisions (one to Hill) and was a state alternate. This year, he has moved it up a level, losing only to Popham by two points at Waite. Both of these boys are going to be huge factors, not only this year, but the next two, as well.

Purdue will be at, by far, the most difficult district. He cannot afford to stumble since there are a half dozen state quality wrestlers lurking in the bracket sheet. All of them are rated on the left half of the ranking table. With seven possibilities for four spots, you might eventually see some leakage to the far easier 171# class. I thought Mack looked

very good finishing 5th at Medina and 3rd at Perrysburg. He started the year at 189#. State qualifier, Estep, won two state bouts last year (including one over Weakley) and won at Tiffin this year. Stoll won at Richmond Heights and has a win over Estep, as well. He was not as successful at Brecksville. As a backup, Olds won the SBC last year, and has the potential to beat anyone here. Studer is another competitor showing great improvement, including a 3rd at 171# at the GMVWA. Reed missed state qualification by two points last year and won at 171# at Crestview. This is a very strong district and will test Purdue--and everyone else.

Weakley will not have nearly those kinds of issues at Twinsburg. Still, with three of the top boys at Fostoria not qualifying, a Foote or a Rozum will have placement opportunities. Foote lost an overtime go-to-state bout in the 30-second tie-breaker and should qualify this time. Rozum lost an overtime bout to Stoll in the Richmond Heights final, but needs to have a better district this year. Rogers might be the surprise here, if he doesn't end up at 152#.

The other two districts are not particularly strong. Stewart would seem to be the best at Watkins, but there are not a lot of wrestlers with advanced district experience. Smith just down from 171# is another top choice, but I'm struggling to find any more. I think there will be some names on the Watkins state qualification sheet that will seem unfamiliar to the vast majority of us.

Xenia is a bit stronger. Shannon placed 6th at 152# last year, including wins over Tripp, Bugner, and Bryant. This year, he has won several tournaments and will be a factor in trying to better last year's placement. Craft qualified at this weight class last year and was a very close 2nd at Edgewood. He'd like a better state pairing, which saw him last year drawing state champion Whelan in the first round and the 3rd place winner immediately, thereafter. The last two spots are wide open.

171 #

PROJECTED CHAMPION: JUSTIN TRIPP (CVCA)

Top Contenders

2	Keck (Jackson Milton)	15	Policastro (Brookfield)
3	Wettengel (Belpre)	16	Kirian (Mohawk)
4	Strickland (Greeneview)	17	Minshall (Jonathan Alder)
5	Hale (Stryker)	18	Rochon (Madeira)
6	Urbina (Archbold)	19	Urcheck (Rootsdown)
7	Meiring (Delta)	20	Smith (Madison Plains)
8	Bevington (Cardinal)	21	Underwood (Cardington)
9	Lewis (West Liberty Salem)	22	B. Uhlenhake (Coldwater)
10	Hershberger (Garaway)	23	Zerkle (Shenandoah)
11	McSurley (Clinton Massie)	24	Wilson (Dixie)
12	Kelly (Waynedale)	25	Beisner (Versailles)
13	Riedy (Sandusky St. Mary)	26	Border (Ridgewood)
14	Herbert (Middletown Madison)	27	Ball (Amanda Clearcreek)

I am an avid reader of mysteries, particularly those that use sophisticated methodologies to solve crimes. In the novel, Twisted, a young statistically oriented intern teases out startling information from seemingly mundane data. This is a talent that is desperately needed to reach a reasonable conclusion at this weight class. No doubt, I am missing the obvious, but I have been totally stymied in my search for a viable candidate. The wrestler with the best credentials is clearly Dan Tarver. I, pretty much, overlooked him last year, confusing him, in part, with another 171 pounder with the same last name. He was undefeated in the regular season--lost to state champion Dye at Districts, and then lost an overtime semi-final struggle to Lichty at States, eventually finishing 4th. He would seem an easy choice, but it is not to be. Tarver has missed virtually the entire year, due to a leg injury and then hurt it again, just before venturing competition. If he returns at all, it will be at Sectionals and it will be at 189#. That likely means chaos at 171#.

My choice is the powerful Tripp, shortly to be discussed in more detail. He is experienced, consistent, and healthy--the last qualify particularly valuable at this weight class. If Wettengel shows up at 100%, he is likely to be Tripp's top threat.

It seems to me that the Twinsburg District is the strongest--surprising since only two underclassmen were in the district bracket last year. Tripp, now a junior was a state qualifier at 152# and it was in his 11th grade year that brother, Chris, took a state title two years ago. He was 2nd at Solon, losing only to the extremely good, Stewart of Detroit Central Catholic. I was impressed with Keck at Richmond Heights. It was a strong field and yet, he easily beat Urcheck, Kelley, and Policastro. And, as it turns out, all three of them are also possibilities for state berths. Kelley, in particular, was a state alternate last year, winning four district consolation bouts. The one wild card is

Bevington, who certified at 171#, but has generally competed at 189#. He won two district bouts at 189# last year and should be a real factor at this weight class.

The Xenia District may be nearly as good--depending on Wettengel. The big senior has missed the entire season to this point, but he did certify at 171#. Last year, he dominated this district including a 14-0 win over McSurley. A 17-11 quarter-final loss at States seemed to blunt his momentum and he did not place. At full strength, he could be a finalist. State qualifier, Strickland, is also here, as is state alternate, McSurley. This is a pretty good trio and it is augmented by a group of strong competitors. I like Lewis to qualify, and certainly people like Herbert, Beisner, Rochon or Uhlenhake could beat any of the top people here. I'm not sure that Lewis might not be second best, only to Wettengel and that Herbert, who was slammed on his way to a possible state berth last year isn't third best. On the other hand Beisner comes from a storied program and both Rochon and Uhlenhake have upset potential.

Rather surprisingly, I'm not seeing that much at Fostoria, but, again, I haven't factored in the possibility of 160's moving in this direction. State alternate, Hale, Urbina and Meiring, have put up the best numbers and are high probability qualifiers. The freshman, Kirian, is a real threat, but his time to rule this district is still a year away. Now that Dye has opted for 189#, Riedy will compete here. He is part of that trio of upper middleweights--Blanton, Olds, and Riedy--who are a talented, but unproven quantity.

Parity is the rule of the day at Watkins, with a lot of folks that we haven't, up to now, heard much about. Whoever qualifies, it seems unlikely that they will be a high impact force at Columbus. It would seem that Lahmers, Minshall, and, maybe, Hershberger, are the top trio, but there is little certitude here.

189 #

PROJECTED CHAMPION: SPENCER DYE (SANDUSKY ST. MARY)

Top Contenders

2	Jones (Westfall)	15	Steigerwald (Kirtland)
3	Porter (Berkshire)	16	Ross (Clinton Massie)
4	Yoder (Martins Ferry)	17	Toth (Cardinal)
5	Fox (Margaretta)	18	Ballenger (Pleasant)
6	Dowe (Brooklyn)	19	K. Uhlenhake (Coldwater)
7	Groff (Sandy Valley)	20	Nester (Grand Valley)
8	Haubert (Mohawk)	21	Horvath (Genoa)
9	Brown (Covington)	22	Engeldinger (Tusky CC)
10	Schnittger (Lutheran West)	23	Washington (Malvern)
11	Tarver (Lake)	24	Hooper (Manchester)
12	Rice (West Jefferson)	25	Heater (Elmwood)
13	O'Brien (Lima CC)	26	Davis (Versailles)
14	Reichard (New Albany)	27	Ishmael (North Baltimore)
		28	Sneary (Allen East)

Should he compete at anywhere near his past performance level, Spencer Dye will be a strong favorite to win his second state title. Still, we have yet to see him on the mat, as he seems plagued by injury, distracted by football scholarships, and said to be suffering from disinterest in the rigors of wrestling (or at least practice). Who can say? Last year, he was 54-2 and his run through the state tournament process bordered on brilliance. He has always been one to seek scoring opportunities and he wrestles a style that can only be admired. He had three falls at Columbus--including one in the finals--and remains a real crowd pleaser. Here's hoping (at least all of us except the current 189# contenders), we see a healthy, motivated Spencer Dye one last time at the state meet.

Last year, in the chaos of the final hours of preparing this report, I inadvertently left David Jones' name off the ranking grid. The text discussed his possibilities, but his ranking at 7th was lost. He proved to be even better than that, by finishing a strong 5th, losing a quarter final squeaker by one point and then losing to his nemesis, Wright, by fall for the second straight week. Should Dye be in less than top form or over-confident, one would expect that Jones might stand the best chance of capturing the state title. He now dominates his district competition and will prove to be a handful for those coming from other parts of the state.

There appear to be four clear-cut choices for state qualification at Fostoria. Dye, if healthy, should dominate. State qualifier, Haubert, and state alternate, Fox, are very good and should have little trouble with the qualification process. Fox won at Tiffin and Sylvania Southview, while Haubert just entered the lineup when Kirian and Studer moved down. He'll be fresh at tourney time. That leaves Tarver, who would be ranked much higher, if it seemed he would be at 100%. The trio of Horvath, Ishmael, and

Heater, would have the best chance to qualify if Tarver is still out. Even with Tarver, we may have pairings issues because of the sectional breakouts.

Jones will also see some good competition at Xenia. State qualifier, Brown, is back and he won the mammoth GMVWA at this weight class. He may be a top four type competitor. State alternate, O'Brien, has been effective all year and he'll be competing with Uhlenhake, Ross, Sneary, and Davis for those last two spots. However, I would not be surprised if Curtis (Mechanicsburg), Lukacs (Dixie) or Fey (Blanchester), grab a state ticket.

There are three wrestlers at Twinsburg and all have the potential to nail down a high state place. Porter was the state alternate at 171# last year, losing on a very controversial disqualification in his go-to-state bout. This year, he was 2nd at Solon and 1st at Kenston--both tournaments with many Division I and II squads. He has finalist potential. Dowe was one bout from States last year and has been at 215# much of this season. If he retains the strength and power I saw him exhibit at that weight at 189# he'll be very difficult to beat. Schnittger, also a state alternate (189#), is a bit of an enigma. He was a state qualifier as a freshman, but hasn't been back since. Last year, he was a district semi-finalist and then lost a pair of one-point bouts (4-3 and 1-0). This year, he dominated at Richmond Heights and has been solid in dual meets. However, he still has a penchant for the occasional mistake--deadly at the top level of competition. Still, he erases many of them with his pinning ability. That leaves one opening for about five or six contenders. The lanky, Steigerwald, might be a possibility--3rd at Richmond Heights and 1st at Southview--while Nester, a finalist at Richmond, is another thought. However, Hooper, Toth and Kilbel are almost equally as good.

Former state placer, Yoder, heads the Watkins District. A late starter, I thought he might head toward 171#, but that has not been the case. He was pinned once at this new class, but has rebounded with a bushel basket of wins. State alternate, Groff, caught a break last year when he replaced an injured wrestler and went 1-2 at Columbus, including a win over Brown. Rice and Reichard are also good, while Washington, Engeldinger, and Ballenger are other possibilities.

215 #

PROJECTED CHAMPION: JOE REAMER (MOHAWK)

Top Contenders

2	Patton (Berkshire)	15	C. Kilbel (Woodridge)
3	Girlie (Ayersville)	16	Caudill (Spencerville)
4	VanSickle (Liberty Center)	17	Soland (Bellaire)
5	Nowlan (Bluffton)	18	Taylor (Blanchester)
6	Keiser (Versailles)	19	Dillinger (Sandusky St. Mary)
7	Horn (Shenandoah)	20	Tenney (Norwayne)
8	Carr (Northmor)	21	Tutie (Black River)
9	Taynor (Swanton)	22	Parks (Ursuline)
10	Oswalt (Coldwater)	23	Usilton (Fisher Catholic)
11	Gerritsen (Hopewell Loudon)	24	Langmeier (West Jefferson)
12	Zeyer (Martins Ferry)	25	Bacci (Independence)
13	Endicott (Plymouth)	26	Nelson (Miami East)
14	Davis (Grandview Hts.)	27	

Earlier, at 160#, there was a discussion about the relatively few underclassmen who participated at the state meet from 160 pounds on up. A partial exception was at 215#, where seven underclassmen made the trip to Columbus, although none of them placed and in total, the seven won but one bout in the championship bracket and that was only because two of them were paired together in the first round. All seven return at this weight class and they are joined by two state alternates. Thus making for a field deep in previous state experience, but so far, lacking in high quality results. The winner, as mentioned earlier, will be awarded the 400th state title since the inception of the Division III classification.

This is one of those weight classes where there is no high probability choice. I would guess that no one would be rated at more than 10 to 15 percent with, perhaps, five or six folks at that level. I believe that Fostoria is the high-powered district here, so my choice is Joe Reamer--the wrestler that I have top-rated in the Northwest. He was one of those seven state qualifiers at this weight and beat Patton in the consolation round for his only victory at states. Now a senior, he has the strength and guile to tiptoe through what will be a loaded district and state bracket. He was 2nd at the GMVWA, losing only to my Division II choice--the awesome, Marshall. He might stumble once at the district level, but he's my best hope for winning at Columbus.

His district is very tough. Two-time state qualifier, Girlie, returns and the big junior is always a threat. He's been battling Northwest District 215's for three years, so he knows the ropes. VanSickel has been tough--beating Nowlan and winning big at Hudson. A state alternate last year, his rapid improvement could mean a finalist appearance. Former state qualifier, Taynor, cannot be overlooked and he would be the popular choice for the fourth state berth. Still, Gerritsen has wrestled everyone tough, losing in overtime to Keiser and by 10-6 to Girlie. That's a terrific quintet with only four

able to qualify and the excellent Endicott and Dillinger probably in just the wrong weight class.

If the Fostoria District doesn't produce the champion, than it is possible he could emerge from Xenia. The two best wrestlers there have wildly different styles. State qualifier, Nowlan, is a pinning machine with lots of first round falls. He nailed Keiser at last year's district and had two falls at the state level before losing a 14-11 shootout in his placement bout. Keiser, on the other hand, wrestles a lot of one-move, low scoring matches. He also won two bouts, one in overtime and the other 3-2. He is tough to beat. State qualifier, Caudill and Oswald, are also very good and have placement potential. Nelson, a strong contender if healthy, is returning from ACL surgery and may not be at 100%.

There is really only one high place contender at Twinsburg. Patton, woefully undersized, somehow wormed his way into a state appearance last year, but went "two and out" at Columbus, including a hard fought 10-7 loss to Reamer. This year, bigger and stronger, he could be a finalist. He was 2nd at Kenston and 3rd at Solon and will be one of the quicker 215's at States. There is not much state placement potential behind him, but it will be a spirited battle for the three open spots.

State qualifier, Horn, qualified last year, but then was unable to participate at Columbus. He's won this year, a lot of bouts by big scores, but his most impressive victory was an overtime thriller at Barnesville. There, he beat Williams--a finalist at Medina--in overtime to take the title. Carr was a state qualifier last year and gave state placer, Bachna, an excellent battle before succumbing 8-6. Then, Nowlan, as is his modus operandi, caught him early and won by fall. Carr looks to be best out of the Central District. He was 3rd at Marion Harding and very good everywhere else. After this duo Zeyer, Davis, and Soland, are top possibilities for the last two spots, but there are plenty of other challengers. Watch out for Zeyer now that he has a healthy Yoder as a workout partner. It should be interesting.

Hvy.

PROJECTED CHAMPION: RYAN BOWERS (FAIRLESS)

Top Contenders

2	Haslam (Hannibal River)	15	Homan (Coldwater)
3	Ruffer (Archbold)	16	Dillinger (Johnstown Monroe)
4	Wade (Chanel)	17	Salyers (Mechanicsburg)
5	Taylor (Swanton)	18	Ellsworth (Grand Valley)
6	Michel (Shenandoah)	19	Doty (Bluffton)
7	Stuff (Northmor)	20	Mobley (Norwayne)
8	Stocker (Norwalk St. Paul)	21	Tahy (Elmwood)
9	Harding (West Jefferson)	22	McCloe (Fenwick)
10	Dye (Carey)	23	Rankin (Elyria Catholic)
11	Laughman (Miami East)	24	Hughes (Wellington)
12	Seifert (Warren JFK)	25	Stewart (Brooklyn)
13	Griffiths (Wayne Trace)	26	Hamsher (Sandy Valley)
14	Oliver (Versailles)		

Now that Koel Davia has graduated, there are significantly more options open to the wrestling prognosticator (not good). Again, as has been pointed out earlier, the state bracket was heavily weighted with seniors--although that is not the unusual at this class. There are four returning state qualifiers, but only one who won a bout at Columbus.

Again, this year, we have significant differences in weight and body type. This can create stylistic mismatches that lead to surprising upsets. Last year, for example, the much smaller Ewing, gave Davia significant problems by using his speed to stay away from Davia early and then looking to out-condition him in the third period. We'll see more of this in 2005.

My top choice is yet another wrestler who is just returning from injury. Ryan Bowers is a mammoth heavyweight with significant skills. Last year, he had five district falls in a total of less than 4 ½ minutes, but severely injured his elbow in the process. He made a brave attempt to wrestle at States, but lost a one-point decision in the first round and then had to forfeit his consolation bout. Again, this year he has missed most of the early season with injuries, but returned with a big win at Canal Fulton. To win, he'll need to remain healthy and combat the slowdown tactics of some of the other top contenders.

One of the interesting aspects of this weight class will be to chart the progress of the sophomore, Cameron Wade, from Chanel. He opened the season at 215# and did not place at Solon, and then got hurt at the Ironman. The next week, he moved to the heavyweight class and suddenly, life has gotten a lot better. He won at North Canton and was a strong 3rd at Brecksville, losing only to eventual champ, Kowalski. He certified at 215#, but I think we'll see him here. He uses his speed and agility to stay away from the big men, wearing them down, and winning a close, low scoring bout. His

last three wins at Brecksville against three high quality opponents were 3-1, 3-2, and 2-1. He could give Bowers fits at the Twinsburg District--and beyond. After this duo, there is a steep drop-off to seven tightly bunched heavyweights. I've listed all but Phifer (Berkshire) and their qualification chances are all about equal. All but Mobley are in the 255 to 265 pound range, and it will be pretty much the luck of the draw to see who qualifies.

Haslam was 4th last year after finishing 3rd in this district. He'll be the favorite at Watkins and he has earned that designation. Right at limit weight wise, he has good movement and a variety of pinning combinations. Six of his seven district and state wins were by fall (the other was 10-0), but, by the same token, all of his losses were first period falls, too. It's kind of pin or be pinned. Michel, Stuff, and Harding are probably the next best with the Stuff losing to Haslam last year on a quick fall. However, all three of them are susceptible to upsets with Dillinger and Hamsher, the strongest possibilities to achieve that end.

I think Ruffer, now a junior, has finalist potential. He placed at the Ironman and has been a consistent winner now for two years. He heads a district that has four strong state candidates. State qualifier, Dyer, is in that group, as is Taylor and Stocker. Taylor is the smallest of the quartet, while the (dare I say) the stocky Stocker is near the upper limit. Each has had substantial success this year. For example, Stocker had five falls at Richmond Heights, while Dyer had all pins at Woodmore. This group should do well at Columbus. I've also listed Griffiths and Tahy with Moehlman (Collins Western Reserve) and Bentz (Mohawk) as other candidates.

The group emerging from Xenia is likely to be much weaker. Homan is a returning state qualifier in the smallish mode, as is Laughman, as well. Salyers, Doty and Oliver are my other top candidates, but expect some upsets here. My guess is that this group will struggle in the first round at States.

TEAMS

1. Sandusky St. Mary This would be their fourth consecutive title, fifth in six years, and sixth overall--all unprecedented at the Division III level. They'll win it on depth, with Dye their only likely state champ. However, they should score at the first four weight classes and at 145# and 189#. Critical contributions would help at 152#, 160# and 171#. Baum and Opfer could be finalists and, if so, they'll go over 100 points.
2. Chanel An always tough team with four state team titles and six runner-up trophies. They do not have much depth, but Koballa, Gardella, Boing, and, maybe, Wade, can score a lot of points. There is no backup here if the top four falter, so they need an error free tourney.
3. Liberty Cenger The heart of the team is between 135# and 152#, including possible finalists in Hoff and Hill. However, VanSickle and Scarberry could help out and, perhaps, another of the big men, as well.
4. Cuyahoga Hts. The two Lints (Payne and Clay), and Scaletta should score in the neighborhood of 60 points and, some years that might get you a trophy. If Soldat, Foote, or Rosenlieb can score, they have a shot at second place.
5. Delta Another basically four-man team. Evans and Moss are possible finalists and Gombash should score heavily at 135#. If Meiring can score at 171#, this team could move up.
6. Berkshire The Freeman twins at the first two weight classes need to score heavily and get help from Porter and Patton at the opposite end of the scale. Perhaps, Jenkins or Cowgill could chip in, too.
7. Tinora This is the second team where twins will play a critical role in team scoring. In this case, Matt and Mark Bloniarz are both good with the latter boy a possible champ. They've got to get Mack to the optimal weight class, but it's a mystery as to where more points could be generated.

8. CVCA A team on the rise with two potential stars. It's asking a lot of Weakley and Tripp to win, but they both have the ability to do so.
9. Jackson Milton A team that seems to get better every year. Dierkes could be a champ and there are a wide range of other possibilities-- Hambrick, Gettman, Wiseman, Rozum, and especially, Keck. If everything went just right, they could move up.
10. Bluffton Falk should score a lot of points, but he'll need help from Nowlan, Shannon, Shockey, Doty, and possibly, Anderson. If a couple of these boys hit it big, we're talking top five.