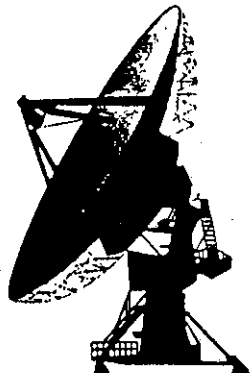


1995

# HIGH SCHOOL WRESTLING FORECAST

(24th Annual Edition)

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## 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 District is examined as to whom its representative 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 in late January, ending January 31, based on the information available at that time. It's kind of a snapshot in time, with a picture that will surely change in many ways by tournament time. Initially, the new weight certification rules seemed the perfect antidote to the endless jockeying of weight classes for wrestlers during the course of the season. While it has at least set a floor, we are now seeing more movement than in the past. That's because everybody certifies as low as they possibly can (there is no penalty not to do so), and then goes back to wrestling at the class where the ratio of performance to weight loss is optimal. The new weight certification rules have made switching of weight classes much simpler, so that I anticipate many changes from what is shown here. In fact, some of those moves may well be precipitated by information contained within this document.

Last year was such a fantastic recruiting year in Ohio, that even an above average year would pale in comparison. However, this is probably a senior class that, in total, might not be even average in terms of recruitable material. As always, there are some exceptional candidates such as O'Neill, Thatcher, Clement, Courtad, King, and Pariano, but there are few true superstars and there is a very evident lack of depth in the senior class. These things seem cyclical in nature, and the next peak may well occur in two years, when what looks to be an extraordinary sophomore class matures. At the powerful Ironman Tourney, for example, four of Walsh's six finalists were sophomores.

While the Division I team title is not in doubt, it will provide Walsh with the opportunity to demonstrate that this is one of the greatest collections of talent in Ohio history. At the same time, the team races in Division II and Division III should be outstanding, with at least five fine teams battling for the first place trophy.

One last item. It appears that each year, more and more coaches get this report. One thing that would really help me is if they would send me bracket sheets for tournaments that they enter -- particularly the Sectionals and Districts *this* year, and tournaments through mid-January of next year. This is a good way to get a report mailed to you when it is first prepared. My address is:

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## DIVISION I

103#

**PROJECTED CHAMPION: SHAUN SMITH (MASSILLON PERRY)**

### TOP CONTENDERS

- |                                    |                              |
|------------------------------------|------------------------------|
| 2. Wilson (Toledo Woodward)        | 15. E. Vennon (Pickerington) |
| 3. Forsyth (Walsh Jesuit)          | 16. Billow (Hudson)          |
| 4. Wilcox (Cincinnati Oakhills)    | 17. George (Westlake)        |
| 5. DiMichele (Garfield Heights)    | 18. Key (Vandalia Butler)    |
| 6. Eckles (East Liverpool)         | 19. Archer (Midview)         |
| 7. Kulczycki (St. Edward)          | 20. Baker (Toledo Start)     |
| 8. Linberg (Fairfield)             | 21. Lentz (Mentor)           |
| 9. Stickel (Gahanna Lincoln)       | 22. McCreery (Wadsworth)     |
| 10. Nettle (Massillon Jackson)     | 23. Byers (Hudson)           |
| 11. Hill (Princeton)               | 24. Boehringer (Harrison)    |
| 12. Roggeman (Sandusky)            | 25. Griss (Maumee)           |
| 13. Merrell (Mansfield)            | 26. Tracey (Cloverleaf)      |
| 14. McIntire (West Chester Lakota) |                              |

As is often the case, this is a weight class with an intriguing mixture of competitors and a substantial number of unknown quantities. It features the defending State Champion returning to 103# for his senior season, a Division II State runner-up last year, some solid junior and sophomore competitors, and at least four outstanding freshmen.

Tomazz Wilson, in something of a surprise, captured the state crown last year at this weight class, utilizing a combination of quickness and strength. It was as I said, a bit unexpected based on his four previous losses -- including 11-3 and 12-2 defeats at the sectionals and districts to Henderly. Yet, at Wright State he inched passed Brady in a tight 11-10 quarter-final bout and then won a very controversial 7-5 overtime thriller to the title favorite, Boerner, in the semis. In the finals, he controlled the apparently nervous Thompson and collected a third period fall for the championship. Ironically, Boerner pinned Henderly for 3rd place.

This year, Wilson is completely undefeated and will certainly be the favorite to repeat. If he does so, he will be the first big school wrestler to take consecutive titles at the lowest weight class since 1970 when Ron Angello won at 98#, after winning at 103# the prior year. The great Frank Romano twice won at 103# (in 1965 and 1966) and, but for a District upset his sophomore

year, would have won an unprecedented three straight titles at 103#. And, yet, despite two years of informative letters from Woodward coach Dan Smith, I'm looking for another upset here at 103#.

My choice is the rugged junior, Shaun Smith, 5th at the weight last season and champ at Perry, Medina and Franklin Hts. this year. Smith lost only three times last year -- twice to Boerner and once in double overtime to State runner-up Thompson, 2-1. While he and Wilson are an even match, I believe that Smith has less chance of being upset in earlier rounds. He has wrestled a much tougher schedule than Wilson and that may play a role as well.

As for the four freshmen. They are all going to be terrific. Kulczycki and Wilcox are probably somewhat more advanced than Billow and Merrell, but none of them can be overlooked. Kulczycki, a Cadet National champion, is, perhaps, a shade small this year, but he is a real "goer". He was 5th at both the Ironman and Medina -- losing to the likes of Forsyth, Smith, and Eckles -- but came back to win the CIT. He'll continue to get better as the year goes on. Wilcox, brother of the St. Xavier 140#, has been unbeatable in the Southwest. He crushed the field at the SWOCA including a 17-3 demolition of Vennon, and then won the giant GMVWA and St. Xavier tourneys with ease. He, too, was a great youth wrestler, but he has not met any of the tough upstate boys. However, he should go to Wright State as District champ. Merrell won easily at Marion Harding and the Gorman pinning 7 of his 8 opponents. Brother of State champion LeConte Merrell, he too is an untested product against the top-flight competitors. Billow, a product of Longwood Y, began the season at Hudson with four impressive wins including one over Brecksville champ Lentz. Since then he has been inactive while eventually transferring to Nordon. He will be a sectional surprise for someone.

The Mentor District is very crowded. Forsyth, who has struggled at times with the weight, was 2nd at both the Ironman and Medina (losing both finals by two points) and is marginally the best. His sectional also includes Division II State runner-up DiMichele, Byers and Billow, making for a very spirited competition even at that level. DiMichele has posted another excellent season after finishing 2nd last year, including wins over Kulczycki and Wrobel to name a few. He was upset by Nettle at Wadsworth and finished 3rd, but he could conceivably be a finalist once more. The Southview Sectional is also jammed with Kulczycki, District quarter-finalists Archer and George, and the enigmatic Alicea (Lorain Southview). Throw in Lentz and the 6-foot Bowling (Valley Forge) and it will be a real scramble for the four qualifying spots. The unbalanced sectionals -- so much at Southview and Garfield Heights and so little elsewhere -- could create a pairings nightmare, as well, with superior wrestlers eliminating each other in the consolations allowing less talented competitors to qualify.

Wilson should dominate at the Rogers District. While Stickel, Vennon, and Baker have District experience none of them have the firepower to match up with Wilson. Merrell, as mentioned, is an excellent freshman and Roggeman has some power moves but the battle here will be strictly for the last four qualifying spots.

Wilcox has, so far, been dominant in the Southwest, but will face much more challenging competition at tournament time. State qualifier Linberg has dropped to 103# as part of a downward shift ignited by Brad Wright and pushing the excellent Jason Roy (12-4) and Fairfield Inv. champ) out of the line-up. Linberg was 2nd at 112# at both the SWOCA and Fairfield and will be even tougher at 103#. He is certainly a candidate for a low place at Wright State. Also moving down to 103# is the dynamic Rico Hill who lost a 2-1 decision to Linberg in their go-to-state bout last year, after dropping another one-pointer to District champ Brady. He can go with anyone here. McIntire has had a very slow start, but the Lakota boys always show well in March and he has to be the favorite for that fourth qualifying spot. A second quartet of Key, Boehringer, Gray (Dayton Wayne), and Guillozet (Greenville) could make it uncomfortable for the top boys with Campbell (Tecumseh) and Ramirez (Fairmount) other possibilities.

The Perry District is generally not that strong, but at 103# that is clearly not the case. Smith, as discussed, is excellent, but it will not necessarily be clear sailing for him. Eckles was the state alternate at this weight last year, and was a solid 4th at Medina defeating McIntire 12-1 and Kulczycki 10-3, but getting decked by Forsyth. Nettle did not impress me at Solon finishing 3rd after a semi-final loss to Wrobel. However, three weeks later at Wadsworth he blitzed a solid field including state runner-up DiMichele, state 4th Balamenti, Tracey, and Tompkins winning the MVP in the process. Eckles defeated him 8-6 last year. Right behind this trio are Tracey, champ at Richmond Hts., district qualifier Caggiati (Barberton), who holds a narrow victory over Tracey, and the excellent McCreery, champ at North Canton and potentially a real factor here. Also possibilities here are Goss (New Philadelphia), Courtney (Timken), and Baringer (Howland).

112#

**PROJECTED CHAMP: TODD BOERNER (SOLON)**

TOP CONTENDERS

- |                                  |                                   |
|----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| 2. Doerrer (Hilliard)            | 15. Alexander (Springfield South) |
| 3. Metzger (Massillon Perry)     | 16. T. Vennon (Pickerington)      |
| 4. Henderly (Toledo Start)       | 17. Longood (Mansfield)           |
| 5. Bates (Chillicothe)           | 18. Davidson (Miami Trace)        |
| 6. Sanfilippo (Strongsville)     | 19. Grove (West Chester Lakota)   |
| 7. Connett (Madison)             | 20. Sharpley (Shaker Hts.)        |
| 8. R. Walters (St. Edward)       | 21. Welker (Howland)              |
| 9. B. Thompson (Walsh Jesuit)    | 22. McCampbell (Franklin Hts.)    |
| 10. Kennedy (Toledo St. Francis) | 23. Wandsnider (Harrison)         |
| 11. Wahoff (Fairfield)           | 24. Purdy (Carrollton)            |
| 12. Brady (Cincinnati Elder)     | 25. K. Walters (Norwood)          |
| 13. Gerome (Brush)               | 26. Copas (Marion Franklin)       |
| 14. Dubendorfer (Toledo Whitmer) |                                   |

This is a totally unpredictable weight class. Any number of those listed above could end up with the title, and there will be upsets galore. The reason is a relatively strong, very deep, and stylistically diverse set of competitors. Its a prognosticator's nightmare, and there's no reason to believe that the final resolution will be any clearer the day the State meet begins. This could be the most competitive weight class in any Division at Wright State, and the battles should be fierce from the very first round. Because of the deep field, a scorecard look at the key individuals might be useful.

At Mentor, there are at least seven contenders with State placement potential. Heading the list is 3-time State qualifier Todd Boerner. After a sixth place finish as a sophomore, he was the favorite last year at 103#. All went well until the State semi-finals when Boerner fell victim to Wilson in overtime, and undoubtedly the shabbiest officiated bout of the tourney. Now I know it's convenient and easy to blame the referees, but this was a bout where Boerner took all the shots and risks while his opponent did nothing but defend -- scoring both takedowns off Boerner's move. If we truly value aggressiveness, then we can't have bouts where one wrestler shoots 25 times and the other none, without some kind of reward for the risk-taker. Anyway, Wilson then took the title on Saturday while Boerner pinned Henderly for 3rd. This year, Boerner has lost twice at 112#, (to Metzger in OT and Walters on a late 4-point throw), and narrowly won his semi-final at the MWC -- which he won along with the Solon Tourney. He may be the favorite this year -- but it is by a much slenderer margin than last year.

State qualifier Sanfilippo has been perfect this year with his only close bout a 6-4 win over Sharpley in the Brecksville final. He was 2-2 at states last year losing close bouts to Henderly and Smith. He has not wrestled nearly the challenging schedule as Boerner, Walters and Thompson and that could be negative (and he has had recent injury problems too). However, he certainly is placement material, and making the finals would not be a major surprise. Connett is one of the finest wrestlers never to make the State tourney. If you want to talk about a litany of bad luck, see this guy. After an outstanding sophomore season and a sectional title, Connett lost to Boerner in the quarter finals, 6-2, and then lost his go-to-state match to St. Edward's senior, Bo Conner, 9-8. As a junior he took a 26-1 record and another sectional title to Mentor, but again lost to Boerner in the quarterfinals, 7-3, and dropped his go-to-state bout to Sanfilippo. Again, this year he has been terrific, but as we now well know, that is no guarantee.

Ricky Walters, a transfer from Lake Catholic, had a tremendous season last year -- finishing 2nd to state runner-up Thompson, 4-3 at the CIT -- before a knee injury ruined his State tourney chances. This year he started relatively slowly, but was 3rd at Medina with wins over Alexander, Vennon, and Boerner and then won the CIT. He'll be a factor here. And then there's Brent Thompson. Last year, he used an excellent regular season as a foundation to an absolutely sensational three weeks of tourney results. At the sectional, he whipped Horvath and Boerner (in overtime) for the title, and then at Mentor, defeated Gerome and San Fillippo (12-11 in 2 OT) before finishing 2nd to Boerner. At Wright State, he beat Linberg and Smith (both in overtime) and Henderly before falling to Wilson in the finals. This year so far has been a disaster. I don't ever recall a returning State finalist sporting a 2-7 record as Thompson currently does, but the schedule has been brutal, the outside issues difficult, and the luck all bad during this stretch. Bill Barger has won three State titles, at least in part, by correctly reacting to such situations and my guess is that by tournament time, Thompson will be a huge factor in the final resolution of this weight class. I've already listed five placement-capable wrestlers at Mentor and that does not include State qualifier Gerome, the very talented Sharpley, or the outstanding freshman Lou Iacaboni (Nordononia). All are excellent and would qualify in most other years. Here they are long-shots. Also potential dark horses are Hancock (Midview) and Nixon (Lorain Southview).

At Perry two competitors stand for above the rest of the field. State alternate (at 112#) Metzger has already won titles at Franklin Hts., Massillon Perry, and Medina and is totally undefeated this year. At the latter tourney he defeated Alexander and Boerner, both in overtime, Vennon by a point, and then crushed Fabian in the final. He is strong and experienced and can hit the big move. Bates, the other standout here, is a better athlete who just keeps improving. Last year he qualified 3rd out of Perry at 103# and then won two consolation bouts to grab a 6th place medal. Bates then spent the entire summer wrestling and gaining confidence and returns at 112# with an undefeated record, albeit against generally weak competition. Watch out for him. The rest of this District is not quite as strong. However, Davidson won three District bouts here last year at the weight and has qualifying potential. Welker and Purdy both have District experience, while Logan (Uniontown Lake) and Bartlett (Cuyahoga Falls) are long-shots.

The Rogers District closely parallels the rugged Mentor competition as it features a number of excellent participants. I've always liked State qualifier Doerrer, and was very much



surprised when he did not place at Wright State last year. He scores points in bunches against any level of competition and is particularly sharp on his feet. This year, so far all at 119#, he has won at the Gorman and Hilliard while finishing 2nd to Favaro at Medina -- a match with a very apparent size differential. He has several times in the past fallen victim to the unexpected upset. Henderly, 4th last year, also is a leading candidate to make the finals while State qualifiers Kennedy, Dubendorfer, and Longood also would seem to have placement potential at Wright State. However, the field is so good and so deep they many have trouble getting there. Kennedy was 3rd at the CIT losing only to Walters and defeating Brady 2-0 in the consolation final. State alternate, Vennon, has wrestled a tough schedule -- mostly at 119# and with mixed success -- and may beat out Longood or Dubendorfer for a qualifying spot. He was at 112# at Medina -- losing in the semi-finals 4-3 to Metzger and then getting walloped by Walters and eventually finishing 6th. Other possibilities are McCampbell, Copas, Thompson (Marion Harding), and Jacklin (Mt. Vernon). It will be a great competition here.

Like most of the other Districts, the Southwest is crowded with equally matched competitors, but, at perhaps a somewhat lower level. State qualifier and District champ Brady was impressive at the SWOCA but was only 4th at the CIT. He has defeated most of the local competition. He has not met, however, the wonderful freshman Wahoff, just down from 119#. He won the SWOCA at that weight and has but one loss this year. However, neither has met many of the tough upstate boys to see where they fit into the state-wide picture. Alexander is an intriguing possibility. He did not place at Medina, but his only two losses were to the highly rated Metzger and R. Walters -- and both were overtime heartbreakers. He is, otherwise, undefeated and, perhaps I've not rated him highly enough. Grove, Wandsnider, and K. Walters have all had some important successes while Dizon (Dayton Wayne) should not be overlooked. Cox (Sidney), Brannen (Xenia), and Mendenhall (Northwest) are real long-shots.

My original guess was that some of the 112's when faced with these enormously difficult District and State fields would opt to re-certify at 119#. However, at Mentor and Perry that alternative is not nearly as attractive because of the large number of 125's that certified at 119#. An exception may be at Rogers where 119# is clearly much easier.

119#

**PROJECTED CHAMP: FRANK FAVARO (WALSH JESUIT)**

TOP CONTENDERS

- |                                 |                               |
|---------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| 2. Nicholl (Westlake)           | 15. Bukky (Kilbourne)         |
| 3. Clark (Padua)                | 16. Brown (Middletown)        |
| 4. Balog (Medina)               | 17. Wentz (Kent Roosevelt)    |
| 5. Wright (Fairfield)           | 18. Duffey (Tiffen Columbian) |
| 6. Sheets (Westland)            | 19. Roark (Riverside)         |
| 7. Howard (Glen Este)           | 20. Evangelista (Geneva)      |
| 8. Roe (Marietta)               | 21. Newsom (Toledo St. John)  |
| 9. Carnes (Garfield Hts.)       | 22. Ma. Reckman (Milford)     |
| 10. Brooks (Princeton)          | 23. Horvath (Maple Hts.)      |
| 11. Turner (Cleveland Hts.)     | 24. Blaze (Toledo Whitmer)    |
| 12. Pieron (Fitch)              | 25. Middlebrook (Bedford)     |
| 13. Perry (Holland Springfield) | 26. Wong (Stebbins)           |
| 14. Myers (New Philadelphia)    |                               |

This weight class presents many of the same problems to the prospective forecaster as found at 112# -- the most pressing of which are the lack of an easily distinguishable front-runner and a powerful field that has had few individual match-ups to this point, because many of the top contenders have been up at 125#. At the same time, the four Districts are equally divided -- two with strong, deep fields and two that are only average. What is likely to be very important here, and at most other weight classes, is which competitors can secure District championships. During the past seven years in Division I competition, 79 of the 91 State champions were also District champions the previous weekend. That's an 86.8% result, and surely indicative of a highly significant relationship. During that same time frame, only 6 District runners-up and 6 District third-place winners went on that same year to State titles. No fourth-place District finisher has gone on to take the State title since 1987, when Robert Taylor (Lorain Southview) cruised to easy championship at 145# from a District fourth-place finish. Ironically, none of the three District qualifiers who finished ahead of him even managed to place. Clearly, a District champ enjoys a highly favorable success ratio and at least three factors are at work here -- the "superstars" win every meet, the District champs get the best seeding situation, and the District champs have the confidence and momentum heading into State action.

Gaining the District crown at Mentor will not be easy. My choice, Favaro, is a wrestler who for the past few years has lived in the shadow of great wrestlers like Musser, Johnson, Overholt, and O'Neill. Only a junior, he is already a two-time State qualifier who would have

placed last year except for the pairings, which saw him in the same quarter-bracket as Harris and Marchette. This year he was 3rd at the Ironman and won impressively at Medina and the CIT. He is a big 119# and will be tough to beat. Both Clark and Nicholl are also two-time State qualifiers, with the latter finishing 5th last year. They have also spent most of the year at 125#, with each posting a single loss at that weight. Also back are State qualifiers, Carnes and Roark, along with the powerful Turner and the experienced Horvath. And if that's not enough, there is the outstanding sophomore Middlebrook, the marvelous freshman Gino Iacaboni (Nardonia), and dark horses like Smith (Lorain Southview), and Bullard (North Olmsted). Some of these folks are going to quickly realize that 125# is a much more congenial location - and you'll see something of an exodus to that weight.

There is also a logjam at Perry, with seven good candidates battling for three qualifying spots. Again, it is likely that several of them will opt for 125#. The best of this group is the short, but extremely strong, Balog. Already a two-time State qualifier, he has lost in the quarter-finals each year. He lost to Favaro 15-9 in the Medina semi-finals, and is so strong he can never be counted out of a bout. Roe is also a two-time State qualifier, and he defeated Clark last year in a consolation bout, before losing to Nicholl 8-0. He has dominated competition in his part of the state and certainly has placement potential. Myers qualified last year at 112#, but will struggle to make it to Wright State again, and that's because State qualifier Pieron has been very solid this year, and has to be favored for that third berth. Right behind this quartet, are the Kenston runner-up, Wentz, and the poised and experienced Evangelista. I've selected Balog, Roe, and Pieron as my top three choices here, but the next trio will make it close -- unless they escape to 125#.

State placers Wright and Howard lead the way in the Southwest. Wright was 4th at 103# as a freshman, but the last two years has gone 0-3 at the state level. This is his last chance to place high and he has the tools to accomplish it. Howard was 6th in 1994, and his only loss this year was to Brooks at the SWOCA semi-finals, reversing an 8-6 win for Howard at last year's District. This year both should qualify and either could place. Brown, last year's State alternate at 119#, should get the last qualifying spot with State qualifier Reckman, Hostler (Elder), and Domrangchai (Beavercreek) as other competitors in the hunt.

At Rogers, the field is not nearly as strong. Sheets is a two-time qualifier who has twice missed placement by a single bout. He is a very large 119# who has won at Sandusky St. Mary, but was caught and pinned by Jake Perry at Rogers. I doubt that it will happen again. Behind him are the rapid fire Bukky, experienced Duffey, Newsom, and Perry. I've also listed Blaze with Layton (Toledo White), Pusey (Toledo Start) and Robertson (Mt. Vernon) as possibilities.

125#

**PROJECTED CHAMP: ADAM PLOUSE (WALSH JESUIT)**

TOP CONTENDERS

- |                                |                                  |
|--------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| 2. K. Contos (Maumee)          | 13. Hughett (West Chester)       |
| 3. Anderson (Pickerington)     | 14. Craiglow (Lancaster)         |
| 4. Cannon (Groveport)          | 15. Mark Reckman (Milford)       |
| 5. Janson (Cincinnati Moeller) | 16. Ross (Maple Hts.)            |
| 6. Walker (Howland)            | 17. Stephen (Toledo Start)       |
| 7. Pierce (Xenia)              | 18. Cika (Brunswick)             |
| 8. Je. Moore (Westland)        | 19. Zemla (Strongsville)         |
| 9. Steadman (Eastlake North)   | 20. Gilmore (Wadsworth)          |
| 10. McCreary (Marion Harding)  | 21. Zemla (Strongsville)         |
| 11. Kinser (West Carrollton)   | 22. Gilmore (Wadsworth)          |
| 12. Toyama (St. Edward)        | 23. Harris (Holland Springfield) |

Those sharp of eye will already have noticed that there are fewer ranked individuals at this weight class than in the preceding three. My feeling is that 119# wrestlers at both Mentor and Perry may see this class as a far easier path to Wright State, and that you will see an influx here at tourney time. Some natural candidates are boys who wrestled at 125# all year with good success and then dropped to 119# at certification time to keep their options open. Examples, and I'm certainly not trying to coach here but solely to speculate, might be folks like Smith, Roark, Evangelista and Wentz.

No matter. In my mind, it's strictly a two-man showdown for the top spot. I'm choosing the irrepressible Plouse, but there are no guarantees here (remember I picked him last year, too) -- as is often the case with Adam -- he was State Champ when I picked him 2nd, and 2nd when I predicted him to be State Champ. Plouse is probably the last of the breed that first brought fame and team titles to Walsh. The tough, cocky warriors who challenged the opposition both physically and verbally and who fed off the negative vibrations of the crowd. Even as a very undersized 103# pounder his freshman year, he somehow scrapped his way to the State Meet before getting pinned by Brad Wright. A finalist the last two years, he can take his second title if he remains motivated and trains hard for just seven more weeks. He will end his career with over 130 victories -- and who can forget the way he stalked off the mat after each of them. This year Plouse began the year with leg problems losing an overtime bout to Emili in the Elite Duals and finishing 4th at the Ironman. Even then, he beat two-time State champ Kyle Glecker in the consolations. Now healthy, he has dominated at both Medina and the CIT scoring points in batches and falls quickly at both.

If Plouse is to lose, Contos is the one with tools to make it happen. Already a two-time State qualifier, he has switched schools - moving from Toledo St. John to Maumee. He gave Jayne a much tougher bout than Marchette at Wright State last year losing a 5-2 semi-final contest, but crushing four other foes to finish 3rd. This year he is undefeated, wrestling a far weaker schedule than Plouse. He has had one narrow escape -- a last second 6-5 win over Arden -- while wrestling primarily at 135# and 130#. My feeling is that he will be razor sharp at Wright State and will beat a Plouse who is anything less than 100% physically and mentally.

At Mentor, Plouse will waltz to the title with or without an infusion of 119's. Steadman is probably next strongest with impressive wins at the Early Bird, Richmond Hts., and Kenston. He was upset in the first round at Mentor last year and never got a second chance. That shouldn't happen this year. After that, the field, as currently composed, is relatively weak with Toyama perhaps, next best. As I said, look for some current 119's to qualify here.

State alternative, Walker, heads a very weak field at Perry. I've listed a few possibilities but, again, qualification will be wide open with both 119's and 125's having good chances.

Janson, a State qualifier as a freshman last year, would seem to the best of a representative field at the Southwest District. His two State bouts were against Marchette and Harris, which undoubtedly gave him a first-hand taste of what it takes to win. He was a close 2-point loser to Wright for the SWOCA title, but finished 4th at the CIT, including a 22-7 loss to Plouse. Pierce may be right with Janson. Last year, he was a District semi-finalist at this weight before losing to 4-time State champ Wineberg and former State runner-up, Kyle Frederick. This year, he is currently 17-1 and should qualify easily. Kinser, Hughett, and Mark Reckman should battle for the last two spots with Zorb (Glen Este) and Plowman (Miamisburg) as other thoughts.

The one loaded District is at Rogers. Contos has already been discussed, but Anderson and Cannon are both first rate. Anderson, only a freshman, is a tremendous prospect. In his varsity debut, he lost a semi-final bout to Brad Wright by only two points, and at Medina was a finalist, beating two State qualifiers before losing 18-12 to Plouse in the finals. He is very impressive. Cannon, a State alternate at 130#, certified at 125# this year, and I think it's a savvy move. His chances of being a finalist here are far higher. A good District performance (2nd or 3rd), will put him on the other half of the bracket from Contos, and if Plouse draws into that same side (a 1/3 probability), Cannon and Anderson could conceivably battle it out for a title round appearance. Moore and McCreary are also very good and factoring in Stephen, Jeansonne (Perryburg), Brunton (Gahanna Lincoln), and Mossing (Toledo St. Francis) makes for an excellent District competition.

130#

**PROJECTED CHAMP: SONNY MARCHETTE (WALSH JESUIT)**

TOP CONTENDERS

- |                                   |                                     |
|-----------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| 2. Bryant (Hilliard)              | 15. Childress (Massillon Jackson)   |
| 3. Frederick (Milford)            | 16. Riley (Valley Forge)            |
| 4. Franz (Lebanon)                | 17. Seitz (Tiffin Columbian)        |
| 5. Zak (St. Edward)               | 18. Fox (Princeton)                 |
| 6. Rings (Marysville)             | 19. Chilbert (Beavercreek)          |
| 7. Mees (Sandusky)                | 20. Sobochan (Eastlake North)       |
| 8. McCourt (Holland Springfield)  | 21. Pierce (Midview)                |
| 9. Sommer (West Carrollton)       | 22. Groll (Oregon Clay)             |
| 10. Roche (Cincinnati Oakhills)   | 23. Ludwig (East Liverpool)         |
| 11. Ji. Moore (Westland)          | 24. Palone (Glen Oak)               |
| 12. Potter (Troy)                 | 25. Fausnight (North Canton Hoover) |
| 13. Gulbrandson (Dublin)          | 26. Riolo (Strongsville)            |
| 14. Broshear (Cincinnati Moeller) | 27. Lineberry (New Philadelphia)    |

The last time a team won three consecutive weight classes was in 1988 when St. Ignatius won at 152#, 160#, and 171# with the Collins twins and Mike Buddie. Walsh could do it here and they almost did it one better last year when they won at 140#, 145#, and 160# while finishing 2nd at 152# -- a truly amazing feat.

There are really two types of wrestlers. The 99.9% who work hard, do their best, and win with a consistent, steady strategy of grinding out points and keeping the other guy from scoring as many. And then, there are those few who transcend that strategy by a spirit, a charisma, a touch of genius that make us remember them far longer than any of the rest. They may do it with speed and grace, or with irresistible power, or by wrestling right at the edge of disaster. Whatever it is, there seems to be fewer of them all the time, as the sport becomes more scientific, more rigorous, and maybe more confining. In a way, that was the beauty of the Ironman Tourney where so many of the wrestlers who make us catch our breath were brought together at one time. Sonny Marchette isn't quite there yet, but he's close. Only a sophomore, he has that spark -- so difficult to kindle -- that puts together a series of moves that become unforgettable. That final round fall at the CIT over Steinmetz, that wins not only the title, but MVP award, despite a marvelous performance by Thatcher, shows the power of that style.

At any rate, Marchette should take the title here -- with perhaps one difficult bout. Bryant, Frederick, and Franz are excellent, but still a healthy Marchette should win after finishing 2nd to Jayne at 119# last year. He is undefeated against Ohioans, and the big wins at the Medina and the CIT shows he's ready. His Mentor District will be little challenge. Zak, probably 2nd best, has just had scope surgery but should be ready to match up well with all but Marchette here. After that, it's wide open.

The Perry District is very non-descript. I struggled to find even four names to place in my top 25 listing. That's not to say there's not an undiscovered nugget somewhere at this weight, but you will want to draw into this set of qualifiers for first round action.

There is, however, some excellent depth at both Rogers and Dayton. At the latter, former State runner-up Frederick, will try to bounce back from a somewhat disappointing junior season. Disappointing only in the sense that after a great sophomore year, which saw him place 2nd at 119#, he finished 3rd behind Wineberg and Rockey at 125# in District action and then lost his only State match in the first round. At 135# this year, he was 3rd at the SWOCA losing an overtime thriller in the semis, and then won three additional tourneys to move to an 18-1 record. Franz also had a somewhat disappointing junior year, after a State-qualifying sophomore year. After compiling a brilliant 24-0 record up to Districts, he was upset by Sheridan in the 2nd round and then lost a 6-5 decision to Frederick and failed to make Wright State. They should both place this year. I've rated eight Southwest wrestlers in my first twenty choices with only four qualifying. Assuming, and that can be a tough word, two spots to Franz and Frederick that leaves a real donnybrook for the last two berths -- including two returning State qualifiers (Sommer and Roche). I would expect that some of this group may well migrate to the far easier 135# class -- giving people like Shanklin (Fairfield) or Chiarmonte (West Chester Lakota) an outside shot at one of these two weights.

The Rogers District is also deep and rugged and all five qualifier exiting that tourney will be tough. The big shock is that State placer (at 135#), Bryant, moved all the way down to 130# at certification time. If he can make that weight and still wrestle well, he could be difficult even for Marchette. He has been campaigning mostly at 145# and 140# with good success -- except for a 5th place finish at Medina (where as I read -- "reputations go to die"). Division III State champ Kline looked bigger and more physical in beating him in the semis, perhaps part of the reason for the drop. State qualifiers Rings and McCourt are also here along with rapidly improving Mees. While he may not have the past credentials as some others here, he has really impressed based on this year's performance.

135#

**PROJECTED CHAMP: BRAD CLEMENT (ST. EDWARD)**

TOP CONTENDERS

- |                                 |                                  |
|---------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| 2. Heskett (Walsh Jesuit)       | 14. Bryant (Colerain)            |
| 3. Feeney (Dublin)              | 15. Obee (Maumee)                |
| 4. Ciero (Eastlake North)       | 16. Sudo (Cleveland Hts.)        |
| 5. Steele (Holland Springfield) | 17. Feldman (Cincinnati Moeller) |
| 6. Boucher (Mt. Vernon)         | 18. Krieger (Fitch)              |
| 7. Hatfield (Fremont Ross)      | 19. Root (West Chester Lakota)   |
| 8. Palmer (Wapakoneta)          | 20. DiCola (North Canton Hoover) |
| 9. Clark (Franklin Hts.)        | 21. Hart (Greenville)            |
| 10. Douglas (Massillon Perry)   | 22. Bartee (Barberton)           |
| 11. Ianaggi (North Royalton)    | 23. Samu (Howland)               |
| 12. Gibbs (Uniontown Lake)      | 24. Davis (Xenia)                |
| 13. Mignona (Willoughby South)  | 25. Lynch (Tiffin Columbian)     |

During the past two years, Brad Clement, the outstanding senior from St. Edward, has lost but one bout while winning a pair of CIT and Medina titles, and the prestigious Ironman championship as well. Unfortunately, that one defeat was the biggest upset of the State finals round when Jeff Hickin scored two reversal points in the last few seconds to win an 8-7 thriller. Hickin hit an early five-point move, but Clement closed the margin, and late in the 3rd period, took Hickin to his back for the three points that gave him the lead. Jeff Blatnick, Olympic gold-medalist and telecasting the finals with Mike and me, immediately said, "Don't try and pin him -- just hold him there." And for 15 seconds that, too, seemed to be Clement's strategy, but whether for needed team points (St. Ed's was still mathematically in it at that time), or whatever Clement tried to rearrange his position, and the excellent Hickin re-rolled in a flash for the State title. This year, Clement has been at 140#, but just didn't seem to be hitting his good shots like I remembered him doing last year. This did not really hinder his record of wins, but it may have been a factor of size -- he is just a bit small for 140#. At 135#, he'll be even better.

I well remember a conversation with Howard Ferguson, the late St. Edward's coach, after his team had won their first two team titles. He talked about his goal of winning more team titles than Maple Heights, and then the discussion took a turn to the number of individual titles. At that time, Maple Hts. had about 39 State champs while every other school that still wrestled was nowhere near that total. Howard kept saying if we were to win two or three titles every year, we



probably wouldn't catch them until the 21st century. Well, Howard wasn't wrong often, but the year 2000 could well come in 1995. A state crown for Clement would tie these titans of the mat with 42 titles apiece. Next best, is the long-since destroyed Cleveland West, alma mater of Vince Matteucci, who with his help, won 28 titles.

The Mentor District is not particularly deep, but the top trio are superb. Clement, of course, is a 3-time State placer, who must certainly be rated as one of the best in Ohio. Heskett, only a sophomore, is a superstar in the making. A State qualifier as a freshman last year, Heskett is even better this year. His only losses were to two senior legends -- Cadet World Champion. Eric Guerrero, from California, and the nation's #1 senior prospect Scott Angle -- and he dominated at the CIT and Medina. He'll be away from Clement in the State draw and they could easily meet as finalists. Ciero, 5th at 135#, also returns and his physical strength and experience must be surmounted. He won two overtime bouts at Wright State to reach the semi-finals before losing a two-point decision to Krysty. He is excellent in close, low-scoring bouts. There is a major chasm between these three and everyone else at this District, and since all three exit different sectionals, the pairings should be good.

State placer, Feeney and State qualifiers Steele, Boucher and Palmer make for an exceptional weight class at Rogers. I have assumed that Bucher and Harris, whom I'll discuss at 140#, will compete there despite initial certification at 135#. Should they also appear at this weight, this would be an absolutely brutal competition. Feeney, now a junior, is a real factor here, although it is still unclear how well he would fare against Clement and Heskett. He took the District title last year, and then reached the State semi-finals before falling back to 5th. This year he has been winning very impressively -- and beating some good competition, as well. Steele, Boucher, and Palmer were a combined 0-5 in State competition and will be overmatched against the top echelon. Clement beat Boucher 20-5 last year. However, they all have place potential. Hatfield and Clark were both Sectional champs last year who lost tough Quarter-Final District bouts and failed to qualify. Both have two tourney titles this year. If you throw in Obee and Lynch into this mix, it is clear that only the toughest will survive here.

Both the Perry and Dayton Districts are overmatched at this weight class. Bryant, the putative best out of the Southwest, lost an 18-8 decision to Clark (rated 6th best at Rogers) in the SWOCA final giving an indicator of the relative quality difference between the two areas. Chandler and State qualifier Gibbs lead the Perry District, but again it would be a real stretch if any of this group place.

140#

**PROJECTED CHAMP: BRAD HARRIS (PICKERINGTON)**

TOP CONTENDERS

- |                                    |                                 |
|------------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| 2. Bucher (Toledo Rogers)          | 15. Simms (Princeton)           |
| 3. Kest (Toledo St. John)          | 16. Willis (Grove City)         |
| 4. Merrill (Fremont Ross)          | 17. Charters (Marysville)       |
| 5. Mike Reckman (Milford)          | 18. Nieman (Grove City)         |
| 6. Rawlings (Walsh Jesuit)         | 19. Cramer (Cincinnati LaSalle) |
| 7. Veres (Bedford)                 | 20. Kinsey (New Philadelphia)   |
| 8. Briner (West Carrollton)        | 21. Zywiec (Normandy)           |
| 9. Alvarez (Fairborn)              | 22. McGregor (Gahanna Lincoln)  |
| 10. Dimitris (Brecksville)         | 23. Randolph (Beavercreek)      |
| 11. Conrad (North Ridgeville)      | 24. Mallah (Toledo Woodward)    |
| 12. Swinford (Belmont)             | 25. Kaufmann (Wadsworth)        |
| 13. Steadman (Eastlake North)      | 26. Kenney (Fitch)              |
| 14. Wilcox (Cincinnati St. Xavier) | 27. DeFina (Geneva)             |

Both of my top choices have certified at 135#, but I believe they'll wrestle here because this is where they have the best chance of winning it all. I've agonized for days (actually I have better things to worry about) over which to select since there are few common measuring sticks. Hesitantly, tentatively, I've opted for Harris based more on intuition and hunch rather than on any fact-based methodology.

Harris, a junior, placed 6th at 103# as a freshman after losing a close bout to Plouse in the semi-finals. Last year, he beat Favaro in the first round at 119# and then wrestled an absolutely brilliant match against Marchette. He lead the whole way until an untimely time-out gave Marchette a chance to regroup, grab two quick takedowns and win 9-8. His season ended with a 37-4 mark. At Medina this year, he twice took Clement down and led three minutes into the bout when he suddenly "ran out of gas" (like someone suddenly hit the "Off" switch) and lost 16-9. Medical examination apparently has since diagnosed and treated the ailment causing the stamina issue, and, if so, Harris going full bore for six minutes will be an intimidating sight. Interestingly, Pickerington, despite some excellent teams, has never had a State champion.

Bucher, a two-time state qualifier, placed 4th last year as a junior winning his first 34 bouts of the season before eight takedowns by Clement in the State semi-finals put an 18-8 end to the string. He is again undefeated this year, although he had a 7-6 scare in the Rogers Final from Merrill. My thought is that Harris may be just a shade better on his feet should these two meet at both District and State finals.

The Rogers District is definitely where it's at given the present composition of the weight class. State qualifiers Kest and Merrill are right behind my top pair, and they both have impressive credentials. Kest caught my eye at the CIT last year getting to the finals and making Johnson go the full six minutes to beat him. He won one bout at Wright State and this year was undefeated until Clement dumped him 11-4 in the CIT finals. He beat Steele to take the GMVWA in one his impressive wins. Merrill can go with any of these competitors and should place. This quartet stands out in bold relief compared to any of the other Districts, but the second foursome of Willis, Charters, Niemann, and McGregor is also strong and the wrestling at Rogers will be tough from the quarter-finals on.

Two-time State qualifier Mike Reckman, the eldest of the three Milford starters by that name, leads the way at Dayton. He stands at 14-1 now -- the only loss an 8-2 defeat at the hands of Harris in the SWOCA finals. State qualifier Briner was hammered 17-9 by Kest in the first round last year, but remains a strong threat for a placement medal. He was 3rd at the GMVWA losing only to Steele and he has that senior experience to draw upon. Alvarez qualified as a freshman at 140# last year -- a most unusual accomplishment - by defeating three currently rated wrestlers at this class in Wilcox, Swinford and Randolph. He has lost twice early this year, but projecting a normal improvement curve should vault him close to placement territory. I've rated five other contenders here indicating the depth that can be found in this District at 140#.

The two Northeast Districts can send in total up to seven qualifiers to Wright State at each weight class, and in the recent past, that group has dominated championship action. Last year, ten champions and eight runners-up emerged from these two Districts -- far more than one would expect from mere proportionality. In fact, 24 of the last 39 champs (since 1992) are Northeast District products. That's why it's so surprising that neither District really has a credible threat to win here. This is especially true at Perry, where I anticipate Seryak competing at 145#. Without him, the cupboard is truly bare at that District.

At Mentor, I've rated State qualifier Veres, Rawlings, and Dimitris in my top ten, but it would be an enormous surprise were any to emerge as finalists. Veres has not seemed as sharp this year, and I think Rawlings may have passed him. Rawlings was 3rd at the CIT at 145#, and failed to place only after losing a last second 6-4 bout to state runner-up Mengerink. If he ever realized how good he could be, he would step up a few notches. Dimitris, after a fine junior season, lost his chance for tournament glory when felled by mononucleosis. Now in Division I, he has won several smaller tourneys and finished 3rd at Brecksville (he was defending champ) -- all at 145#. In a highly motivated mode he could easily be a District finalist. Conrad is my choice as the fourth qualifier after a fine season. Besides the sophomore Steadman and Zywiec, I believe Marcellino (St. Edward) now finally at 140#, Keller (Midview) and, maybe, Connett (Madison) can be factors here.

145#

**PROJECTED CHAMP: BILL HANEY (STRONGSVILLE)**

TOP CONTENDERS

- |                                |                                   |
|--------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| 2. Deering (Madison)           | 15. Ross (Fremont Ross)           |
| 3. Seryak (Wadsworth)          | 16. Misciagna (Cuyahoga Falls)    |
| 4. Harris (Shaker Hts.)        | 17. Colbert (Princeton)           |
| 5. Zaborowski (Maumee)         | 18. Lightfoot (Pickerington)      |
| 6. Tucceri (Euclid)            | 19. Scott (Padua)                 |
| 7. Magistrelli (Maple Hts.)    | 20. Percifull (West Carrollton)   |
| 8. LeBeau (Miami Trace)        | 21. Saxton (Defiance)             |
| 9. Frohnapfel (Groveport)      | 22. Paden (Howland)               |
| 10. Chandler (Massillon Perry) | 23. Duplay (Nordonia)             |
| 11. Gray (Valley Forge)        | 24. Hrovat (St. Edward)           |
| 12. Babinec (Milford)          | 25. Pickens (Sandusky)            |
| 13. Rodgers (Hamilton)         | 26. Mastroianni (Gahanna Lincoln) |
| 14. Cook (Brunswick)           | 27. Montgomery (Princeton)        |

At first glance, this would seem to be one of the easiest weight classes for an erstwhile forecaster. After all, as one of only two juniors in the entire 145# State field last year, Deering took home the runner-up medal and then watched every other placer graduate. In addition, he swept through the three weekends of tourney action with only two defeats -- both to 3-time champ Clint Musser. Still there are problems. The 145# class was very weak last year (most weren't anxious to meet Musser), and Deering has wrestled an almost invisible schedule as a 152-pounder making it difficult to discern his progress. At the same time, he apparently has had some physical problems as well.

That's why I am going against the grain yet again in picking Haney -- down from a State appearance at 152# last season. Last year, Haney defeated State runner-up Groudle in the Districts 8-3, and in State action ended up with a horrible draw and no wins. Haney is just a very fine athlete -- tremendous in football -- and really stretching out his wrestling ability. He has been excellent at 152# all year -- losing only to Knaze in the Brecksville finals. He defeated Deering in the dual meet, and while 145# is probably a tough cut, it could well payoff in a State title.

Another great choice might be the long-shot Harris. This is simply a superior athlete who many believe has come into his own during his senior season. He is currently 18-0 with Brecksville and Richmond Hts. titles and loves being on his feet. His big drawback is lack of

experience. He has only wrestled just over 50 varsity matches and has never even made it to the District level (injured last year). If Haney's problem might be weight cut, Harris' might well be wrestling his own match in pressure situations. But there is no question in my mind that Harris can wrestle with absolutely anyone here.

All three of these wrestlers exit the Mentor District and add two-time State qualifier Magistrelli, and State qualifier Tucceri, and you have five of the top seven boys in the state. Perhaps, one of them will move to 152#, but it won't be much easier there or maybe, this will be one of the best competitions of all 14 weight classes at Mentor. That's because this quintet is backstopped by at least another half dozen excellent competitors. Gray missed States after losing in overtime to Boross while Cook was one step back on the consolation ladder losing to Gray. Both are very good. Scott beat Gray at Brecksville and was 2nd at the CIT. Duplay and the young Hrovat are wrestlers who score heavily, and they will be extremely dangerous in terms of pulling off a major upset. A big question mark is Ricky Arnold (Walsh Jesuit) who injured his shoulder wrestling in the semi-finals at the Ironman. If he can put it all together in the next six weeks, he will be a major threat.

There are five State caliber performers at Perry. Two-time State qualifier Seryak leads the way. It is my impression he will wrestle here even though he did certify at 140#. He could easily be a finalist. LeBeau is a point-scoring machine who wrestles a lot of high scoring bouts. He was 3rd at GMVWA (losing a 9-8 semi), and 1st at Beavercreek, beating the excellent Jeff Forward 19-14. Like Gray, he lost his go-to-state bout in overtime last year to Shawn Wentz -- who then took a 3rd at Wright State. Chandler won at Medina and should grab the 3rd spot, but Paden and Misciagna are both tough, the latter being very difficult to score against.

Both of the other Districts are substantially weaker. Zaborowski certainly has placement potential coming out of Rogers after his 5th place finish at 140# last year in Division II. I was impressed both with his 12-4 decision over Yates in winning at Tiffin this year, and his victory over the excellent Steele at the Rogers Invitational. Frohnapfel has been a steady performer these past few years while Ross can be excellent as witnessed by his MVP trophy at the Mal Mackey. I also liked what I saw of Lightfoot at Medina and am surprised that he doesn't win even more. Saxton was 24-6 last year, but was quickly eliminated at the District level. As always, Defiance wrestles an incredibly weak schedule, poor preparation for the rigors of tourney action. However, Saxton may be talented enough to overcome this inexplicable obstacle. Hamel, 5th at the CIT, is likely to find his way to this weight class where he could be a factor.

At Dayton, there is not much brewing with Babinec, probably the best in the area. Rodgers and Colbert are potential qualifiers, but this district will suffer at Wright State.

152#

**PROJECTED CHAMP: KEVIN BOROSS (SOLON)**

TOP CONTENDERS

- |                                 |                                    |
|---------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| 2. Braxton (Westerville South)  | 15. H. Fitch (East Liverpool)      |
| 3. Oney (Alliance)              | 16. Newman (Westland)              |
| 4. Hollo (St. Edward)           | 17. Zupancic (Walsh Jesuit)        |
| 5. Deubel (Maple Hts.)          | 18. Clement (Fairmount)            |
| 6. Horrigan (Maumee)            | 19. Archer (Groveport)             |
| 7. Easter (Centerville)         | 20. Humphrey (Beavercreek)         |
| 8. Johnson (Thomas Worthington) | 21. Chiles (Lima Sr.)              |
| 9. B. Haley (Dayton Wayne)      | 22. Massoah (Massillon Jackson)    |
| 10. Lomas (Geneva)              | 23. Strickland (Pickerington)      |
| 11. B. Greenspan (Shaker Hts.)  | 24. Peters (Cincinnati St. Xavier) |
| 12. James (Akron Springfield)   | 25. Prusnek (Padua)                |
| 13. Hill (Fairfield)            | 26. Williams (Meadowdale)          |
| 14. Funk (Mansfield)            |                                    |

We didn't see the real Kevin Boross at the end of last year as he struggled to State qualification with a shoulder so injured that many times he looked as if he were wrestling with only one arm. Still, he did qualify out of Mentor -- quite a feat even for the healthy -- and missed by an overtime loss from placing. This year at the Comet Classic, Boross, now a junior, looked pretty awful finishing 4th, but since then he has won very impressively at the Midwest Classic and Medina, beating both Hollo and Fitch easily. He looks ready to take it all this year.

As discussed at 145#, there may be some competitors there who will move up to 152#, but they will not find the going easy. Hollo, also a junior, is now getting comfortable at 152# and his results are beginning to show it. He was 3rd at the Ironman losing to the eventual champ 7-5, and then finished 2nd at Medina to Boross -- winning 3 bouts by fall. At the CIT, he was 3rd losing to Watson -- in a bout where they counted Watson's back points. Right behind is the young Deubel whose only loss was a one-pointer to Haney at Brecksville. Behind this trio is Ben Greenspan who has lost twice to Watson, and also to Haney in overtime. He can qualify, but he'll have to win some of the close bouts that have so far eluded him. I don't see much depth here, but Zupancic could be a factor (Watson beat him 5-4), if like Greenspan, he can win the close ones. So many of his losses (Watson, Fitch, Avers, Keglovits, etc.) have been by one point. Perhaps, Jones (Shaw) or one the excess 145's will also be a factor here.

There are some potential placers at Perry. Oney, a State qualifier at this weight last year, is a tough hombre. Groudle beat him by 3 points in the first round in a tough bout, and he then lost in OT in the consolation round. This year, he beat Boross at Solon before dropping a one-pointer to Knaze in the finals. He seems in super shape and he provides a rugged six minutes for everyone. Lomas has been injured most of the year (ankle), but he was the State alternate at this District last year. The real imponderable is whether he'll be battle ready by tourney time. OVAC runner-up Fitch and James can score at this level, but they'll be long-shots to place if they get to Wright State. Massaoh, DiTullio (Fitch) and Mitchell (Uniontown Lake) are other possibilities.

My feeling is that Braxton may be the best pure athlete at this class. He was a 5th place qualifier out of this District last year, where he then proceeded to knock off the District champ (in a first round pairing I hate to see) at Wright State. While he failed to place, he still impressed. He began this year by pinning Horrigan at the Rogers Invitational, and has accelerated ever since. Horrigan was a Division II District Champ at Galion last year, and has been outstanding this year -- losing only to outstanding people like Braxton and Swanbeck. The rest of the District is filled with journeyman wrestlers who battle for the three qualifying spots behind Braxton and Horrigan. It promises to be a wide open affair with all those listed having good opportunities to qualify with Gibson (Findley), Cannon (Clay), Smith (Gahanna Lincoln), and Kreilick (Fremont Ross) as other contenders.

Again, it's difficult to get excited about the candidates emerging from Dayton. Easter would seem to be the best of this crew, while Haley has put up some good numbers so far this year in the Southwest -- although two of his three losses were at Franklin Hts. to Deubel and Archer. My anticipation is that some relative unknowns are likely to impact the final results here. Another important issue would be the condition of Hill's shoulder.

160#

**PROJECTED CHAMP: SCOTT OVERHOLT (WALSH JESUIT)**

**TOP CONTENDERS**

- |                                    |                                 |
|------------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| 2. Hinton (Cincinnati Oakhills)    | 13. Riley (Akron Springfield)   |
| 3. Coleman (Westland)              | 14. D. Haley (Dayton Wayne)     |
| 4. Angelos (Mansfield Madison)     | 15. Sanders (Massillon Jackson) |
| 5. Welsh (Solon)                   | 16. Karmansky (Geneva)          |
| 6. McDaniel (West Chester Lakota)  | 17. Blalock (Madison)           |
| 7. Barnett (Groveport)             | 18. McCartney (Toledo Whitmer)  |
| 8. Contos (St. Edward)             | 19. Shollenbarger (Fairfield)   |
| 9. M. Fitch (East Liverpool)       | 20. Swemba (Toledo St. John)    |
| 10. J. Greenspan (Shaker Hts.)     | 21. Jones (Holy Name)           |
| 11. Salmon (Worthington Kilbourne) | 22. Beach (Amelia)              |
| 12. Brockhoff (Colerain)           | 23. Tormasi (Delaware Hayes)    |

Early in the year, defending State Champion, Scott Overholt, carried the Walsh team with some extraordinary performances. At the Elite Duals, he pinned all three opponents, paving the way for victory, and at the Ironman he was dominant, winning the title and providing Walsh with one of their two champions. Then at Medina, he conquered a very strong field defeating Contos, Welsh, Schroeder, and Ebbert -- probably the most difficult path for any of that tourney's fourteen champs. All this on top of a 37-1 State title year last season, which confirmed his place as one of the top wrestlers in Ohio. He is a solid favorite to repeat, but he certainly is not a sure thing in the manner of a Musser or a Johnson last year. Should he lose focus, there are people listed here who could pull the upset.

One of those, at Mentor, is Welsh -- the Midwest Classic Champ -- who has a style that punishes mistakes and is difficult to play catch-up against. His 6-3 loss to Overholt was certainly competitive, and he should have the advantage of being away from Overholt at Wright State. Last year, he suffered a major blowout at the Sectional and never made District action. That won't happen in 1995. Contos is a real puzzle. Last year, as a freshman, he missed State qualification at 145# by a single bout. He has a powerful physique, good quickness, and nice moves, but he isn't any better this year -- maybe, even a step back. I saw him wrestle a great consolation bout at the Ironman -- everything clean and quick -- and he looked devastating. But he also gets pinned a lot, often it seems, off throws or elementary mistakes. He'll have to get into a "zero defects program" if he wants to place. Josh Greenspan, the twin brother of the 152#, is intense and hard working. A champ at Richmond Hts. and Brecksville, he never quits and often out-conditions opponents. The biggest problem may be a horsepower issue when facing an Overholt or a



Contos. Strategy-wise Overholt, Welsh, and Greenspan all exit the same Sectional. That could cause pairing difficulties at Mentor.

Defending Dayton District champ, Hinton, returns at this weight class. He missed State placement by a single point, and this should be a breakthrough year for him. He is 18-1 this year, with three tourney titles. His only loss was to the exceptional Division II competitor, Matt Hamill, who we'll discuss later. McDaniel, is probably second-best here, and has placement potential. He was 2nd to Huber at 171# in the SWOCA and probably could go at either weight. Welsh dropped him 9-2 at the Medina, and it remains to be seen how much of that differential can be made up by March. The rest of the field at this District will likely struggle at the State level.

There are at least three top-flight contenders emerging from the Rogers District. Coleman was 5th at 160# last year, losing only to Overholt (10-7) and Nelly. This year, he has lost to McGhee, Davis, and Ziegler, while failing to win three consecutive tourneys. Still, he had 8 losses last year, but came on strong at season's end. Expect the same this year. Angelos was a District Champ and state qualifier -- after missing the early part of the season. He certainly surprised me and I expect many others, as well. He has been just as tough this year with some epic battles with Division II State place-winner Wegesin. Barnett has placement potential while Salmon, McCartney, Swemba, and Ashton (Perrysburg) are long-shots.

OVAC runner-up, Matt Fitch, heads up the tightly bunched Perry District. He was a District semi-finalist last year, and his strong showing at the OVAC confirms his continued progress. At Medina, he had the misfortune to draw Welsh in the first round, losing by a 12-4 margin. Sanders, Riley, and Karmansky all have district experience with each developing some good credentials during the year. Riley was a finalist at Firestone, Brecksville and Coventry, but he's had people like McGhee and Bailey to beat for titles. Karmansky is at this point undefeated, although not really yet tested schedule-wise, while Sanders was a steady placer at 171#, who should be even better at 160#.

171#

**PROJECTED CHAMP: JAMIE GROUDLE (WALSH JESUIT)**

TOP CONTENDERS

- |                                   |                                     |
|-----------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| 2. Huber (Pickerington)           | 12. Johnson (Winton Woods)          |
| 3. Gilmore (Toledo Rogers)        | 13. Lindsey (Toledo St. John)       |
| 4. Files (Toledo Woodward)        | 14. Smith (Princeton)               |
| 5. Aldrich (East Liverpool)       | 15. Klespies (Hudson)               |
| 6. Czarnecki (North Royalton)     | 16. Kaeser (Harrison)               |
| 7. Wilson (Dayton Wayne)          | 17. Smith (Wadsworth)               |
| 8. Zoller (Eastlake North)        | 18. Bondurant (Akron Springfield)   |
| 9. Boiselle (Holland Springfield) | 19. Barnhorst (Cincinnati Oakhills) |
| 10. Turner (Fostoria)             | 20. Johnson (Lancaster)             |
| 11. Todd (Worthington Kilbourne)  | 21. Moye (Lorain Southview)         |

This is one of the weakest classes I've seen in Division I during the 1990's. Except for the Rogers District, every other district is way down in terms of talent and depth. Not only that, it's unlikely that the 160# Division -- not particularly strong itself -- will send many candidates scurrying up to the weight class. It's a golden opportunity, but I'm not sure who can take advantage of it.

My choice is the least heralded of the Walsh senior stars, Jamie Groudle. He does not possess the athleticism of an O'Neill, the power of an Overholt, or the blinding speed of a Marchette, but he wins with a combination of great intelligence, conditioning, and tenacity. Last year, at 152#, he was a second-round District loser, but came back to win four consolation bouts (including an absolutely critical 5-4 win over State placer Bodiford in his go-to-State bout) to qualify for Wright State. There, with a marvelous draw, he took three decisions before losing in the finals. He scored 18 team points and Walsh edged out St. Edward by 12 1/2 -- his unexpected performance won the team title. And, again, at the Elite Duals, he and Overholt won critical bouts for victory. His only tourney title has been at Medina where he pinned Aldrich and finished ahead of Huber.

At Mentor, Groudle will be joined by the highly unorthodox Czarnecki, and the consistent Zoller. Czarnecki is a great pinner and can put anybody on their back. One has to wrestle a mistake-free match to win -- as Hamway did at Wadsworth -- or risk a sudden fall. Zoller was champ at Richmond Hts., the Early Bird, and Kenston, with his only loss to Division II Sharpe -- which he avenged, 14-2, at Richmond Hts. After that, it's a wide-open field with

almost everyone else a contender. Nick Ebert (St. Edward) would almost certainly have been the favorite for that last qualifying spot until knee problems forced him to give up the season.

The powerhouse district is at Rogers. They'll qualify five out of this tournament, but it's likely eight or so of the best sixteen 171's compete in this District. Several, in fact, may eventually decide to move up to 189#, but all those who qualify will likely have good placement opportunities at Wright State. Huber, defending District champion at 160#, placed 4th last year at Wright State, and leads the pack. He toyed with the ideas of competing at 160#, but has remained at this weight where his only loss was to Zerkle in the Medina semi-finals. Right behind him, here are State qualifiers Gilmore and Files who have had some close personal battles, too. Files missed placement by one bout last year and he has the raw power to defeat anyone in the field. Gilmore has been a strong performer since his sophomore year and this is his last chance. State qualifier, Boiselle, is also back and along with Todd and Turner, form the top six as I currently see it. Boiselle was champ at Massillon Perry, but was hammered by Files at the Rogers Invitational 19-8, and was 4th at the GMVWA (he has defeated Gilmore, however). Todd has been at 189# most of the year with good success - except at Medina, while Turner was a Division II State qualifier last year. He has been a consistent finalist all year. That puts State qualifier Lindsey, Andrews (Marysville), and Blamer (Hilliard) in real jeopardy and they all are quality performers. Lindsey has struggled this year finishing 4th at the CIT, and 7th at the GMVWA, but remember, last year he brought 12 losses to the district and still qualified.

At Dayton, the field is crowded, but rather undistinguished. There are no returning State qualifiers, and only three returning wrestlers with District experience. I've rated Wilson, Johnson, and Smith as marginally the best here, but in fact, any of those ranked are at about the same level. Additional possibilities are DeWeese (Greenville), Larkin (Cincinnati St. Xavier) and Garrison (Fairfield).

It is much the same story at Perry. OVAC runner-up Aldrich has had a fine year which also included a 4th at Medina. He lost only to Groudle (by fall) and Huber (9-5) at that meatgrinder. Behind him are the listed Smith, Bondurant, and Johnson, but folks like Heid (North Canton) and Demmo (Fitch) are other thoughts.

189#

**PROJECTED CHAMP: JOE O'NEILL (WALSH JESUIT)**

TOP CONTENDERS

- |                               |                                |
|-------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| 2. Root (West Chester Lakota) | 14. Grigsby (Tecumseh)         |
| 3. Harrison (Euclid)          | 15. Jones (Maumee)             |
| 4. Thompson (St. Edward)      | 16. Aaron (Sandusky)           |
| 5. Martin (Beavercreek)       | 17. Cornell (Fitch)            |
| 6. Cotugno (Pickerington)     | 18. Kirkpatrick (Greenville)   |
| 7. Henson (Dublin)            | 19. Bruno (Lancaster)          |
| 8. Hendricks (Wadsworth)      | 20. Lynch (Holy Name)          |
| 9. Barnett (Solon)            | 21. Tackett (Westland)         |
| 10. Smith (Grove City)        | 22. Patterson (Fairmount)      |
| 11. Lane (Eastlake North)     | 23. Santosuosso (St. Ignatius) |
| 12. Steed (Alliance)          | 24. Cunningham (Toledo Scott)  |
| 13. McKown (Toledo Whitmer)   | 25. Anderson (Dayton Wayne)    |

The most anticipated bout at the giant Medina Invitational was the semi-final match-up between two-time Illinois State runner-up Ryan Root, now at West Chester Lakota, and former State runner-up Joey O'Neill. The early rounds had proved that these were two exceptional wrestlers (Root had already signed with Penn State) both with tremendous physical talent and vast experience. Except for inexplicably goofy seeding, this should have been the final. What a surprise! O'Neill ripped Root to his back in the first 30 seconds and with a ferocious onslaught led 9-1 after the first two minutes. Root, obviously in shock after such unexpected treatment, had the top position to start the second period, but was quickly reversed and pinned in the first 14 seconds of that period. Certainly, they should meet again -- possibly in the State final -- and this time I would expect a closer bout. The Lakota people, I know, feel that first move set in motion a chain of events that led to a far more one-sided outcome than the two ability levels would suggest. They believe that next time Root will win -- certainly a possibility that cannot be overlooked.

Both O'Neill and Root are super. However, they are small 189's and both certainly could have wrestled at 171# were there some compelling need. There are a number of very large and very good 189's who could also play a role at this class. At Medina, for example, Martin kept his second bout with Root close (he had lost 11-4 previously) and was defeated by a 3-2 margin. It was not that Root looked in any real danger of losing, but one-point bouts, however analyzed, still provide the loser with hopes the next time. Root and Martin lead the Dayton District with Grigsby and Kirkpatrick probably next best. Grigsby, in particular, is solid, having missed State action by one bout last year.

O'Neill is, clearly, not upset proof. Fickell had him pinned -- at least most people thought so -- at the CIT, and it took a last second five-point move for O'Neill to pull out that 13-9 win. The Lakota people were there and they'll remember Fickell's headlock. With O'Neill at Mentor are State qualifiers Thompson and Harrison. Thompson was 3rd last year winning five State bouts by a total of 12 points. Short, very strong, and defense-oriented Thompson is the antithesis of O'Neill and this stylistic disparity could create problems for my top choice. Thompson has been hobbled all years by injury which should leave him fresh for tourney action, but certainly behind his goals in terms of technical improvement. Harrison is also very good. The All-State running back has the ability to snag a high place and should O'Neill and Root fall into the same half, either he or Thompson could be a finalist. Barnett needs a reasonable draw to qualify, but he is probably 4th best here. He flirted with 215# at Medina contemplating escaping this logjam by moving there, but he now seems set at 189#.

Junior National place-winner, Hendricks, was upset in the first round of Districts last year and never got back in. This year, he easily won at Wadsworth and North Canton, but he has not really matched with any of the top boys. He's very good, but still something of a question mark. Steed is a competitor you have to be wary of meeting. A big move pinner, he can create havoc among the top seed contenders. He was the one who took Hendricks out last year, and then quickly lost in the next round. Cornell, Bruno, and perhaps, Bernhardt (Wooster) are possibilities for qualification.

As has often been the case as we have scrolled through these weight classes, it's a crowded field at Rogers. State qualifiers Cotugno and Henson return -- each with a string of good performances this year. Actually, I like Henson better, but Cotugno has won their head-to-head match-ups. Neither has yet beaten the very top boys. Cotugno has been TF'ed by both Root and Sheeler and lost in OT to Thompson, while Harrison has twice defeated Henson. State qualifier Smith is a step behind this duo although Cotugno eked out a 6-5 squeaker over him at last year's District. The peripatetic Jones, now at Maumee, and McKown are also solid, but Aaron has had a good season at Sandusky and could be a surprise qualifier. Besides those listed, also watch for Willer (Fremont Ross), Cunningham (Toledo Scott), Johnson (Defiance), and Carney (Toledo Rogers).

215#

**PROJECTED CHAMP: JEFF KNUPP (WALSH JESUIT)**

TOP CONTENDERS

- |                                    |                                    |
|------------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| 2. Ward (West Chester Lakota)      | 13. Magill (Chillicothe)           |
| 3. Beiting (Cincinnati St. Xavier) | 14. Studt (Cincinnati Elder)       |
| 4. Mondalek (Dublin)               | 15. Purdy (Elida)                  |
| 5. Jones (Wadsworth)               | 16. Cotter (Marysville)            |
| 6. Kessler (Vandalia Butler)       | 17. Black (Princeton)              |
| 7. Cottrell (Hilliard)             | 18. Fackler (Hilliard Springfield) |
| 8. Johnson (Lorain Southview)      | 19. Saggese (Sylvania Southview)   |
| 9. Bittinger (Kent Roosevelt)      | 20. Menefee (Cleveland Hts.)       |
| 10. Clark (Sylvania Northview)     | 21. Stewart (Massillon Jackson)    |
| 11. Keaton (Miami Trace)           | 22. Hageman (Westlake)             |
| 12. Scott (Shaker Hts.)            | 23. Padgett (Fairfield)            |

A recent article in the Toledo Blade pointed out the consistent drop-off in wrestling participation in Ohio during the past few years. This is not a trend those who love the sport want to see, and the new weight classes proposed by the National Federation will undoubtedly exacerbate this problem. Poor regulation is as bad for sports as it is for business, and I was thrilled to see the OHSAA listen to their customers and keep the old weight classes. My hope is that irresistible pressure from fans, coaches, and administrators will reverse this idiocy and that the middle weights, where most boys compete, will keep their normal complement of weight classes. As for the 215# class, I thought the OHSAA by using this opportunity as an experimental year, took the appropriate action. So far, however, I would conclude preliminarily that this is not a weight class we need at the high school level. It has increased the forfeit problem and has not to my knowledge gained additional participation for the sport. Many of the top contenders here certified at 189# (or could have), and in all three school classifications, this weight class is very weak.

My choice at 215# is the sensational Jeff Knupp. Last year, as a 14-year-old freshman, he was a State semi-finalist at 189# before eventually finishing 6th. This year he won the Ironman, Medina, and CIT defeating the wrestler I have rated second and third. A relatively small 215# (aren't they all) he relies on quickness and great technique to win, but his greatest weapon is his intelligence and indomitable will. Certainly that was on display many times the past few months. I talked about a team having three consecutive individual champs earlier, but in the somewhat unlikely case Overholt, Groudle, O'Neill, and Knupp were to win, it would be an almost unprecedented accomplishment. Only once, in 1951, has it occurred and at that time

Cleveland West had four consecutive champs (Pogue, Matteucci, Darienzo, and Palmieri), and had John Morabito taken 1st instead of 2nd, they would have had seven consecutive champs. Two teams have come close. The 1969 Maple Hts. squad had three successive champs (Hicks, T. Milkovich and Calendar) and then had Dale Brooks lose 14-8 in the finals. And last year, had Groudle defeated Deubel, Walsh Jesuit would have accomplished that feat.

Knupp should have reasonable clear sailing at the Mentor District. Johnson is probably the major threat with the Brecksville champ Scott also in the running. Johnson was 2nd at DeSales and 3rd at Brunswick losing a 4-3 semi-final squeaker to Mondalek. Scott is undefeated and may be moving up to a higher level than suggested by his 15-14 mark at 189# last year. One wrestler expected to challenge Knupp was All-State linebacker Bob Birt (St. Edward). A summer-only wrestler, he had beaten Knupp at the Ohio Free-Style despite no past varsity experience, but injuries and setbacks have finished him for the year.

Ward and Beiting, like Knupp, certified at 189# but will compete here. Knupp defeated both by 3 points and that is not an unassailable margin. The Ward match, in particular, was unsatisfying because the officiating played a major role in its outcome. Each boy has just the one loss, and the one away from Knupp could be a finalist. Ward missed the last half of the 1993-94 season, but has not missed a beat on his return, while Beiting missed State qualification by a single point. Kessler, also one bout from State, is a good third choice -- his lopsided loss to Division II Schmidt, however, gives one pause.

No one at Rogers has previous State experience, but all of those listed have had some solid successes this year. Mondalek has been a solid steady performer while Cottrell and Clark (both certified at 189#) will likely compete here, as well. My guess is the boys with a "hot hand" will win at the District since no one seems to have any substantive experience or physical advantage.

At Perry, the newcomer, Jones, has cut quite a swath through the competition. He has been a pinning machine running roughshod over opponents. The Wadsworth champ, he must have been behind Hendricks and Robinson last year, but he has certainly made up for lost time. Handle with care. There are some other nice 215's here. Keaton, Magill, and Bittinger are all good performers, and have the ability to qualify. Keaton, at Heavyweight, was a finalist at the GMVWA, and has dropped for tourney time. Sylvester (Massillon Perry) is one other candidate besides those ranked who has qualification chances -- which could well be a major plus in Massillon Perry's team hopes.

## HVY

### PROJECTED CHAMP: DAN KING (ST. EDWARD)

#### TOP CONTENDERS

- |                                     |                                   |
|-------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| 2. Uloho (Meadowdale)               | 14. Dritz (Dublin)                |
| 3. Kerschner (Ashland)              | 15. Lovell (Akron Springfield)    |
| 4. Bebko (Padua)                    | 16. Goforth (West Chester Lakota) |
| 5. Upshaw (Dayton Wayne)            | 17. Craddock (Medina)             |
| 6. Kreider (Cloverleaf)             | 18. Bell (Midview)                |
| 7. Orr (Cincinnati Northwest)       | 19. Grooms (Holland Springfield)  |
| 8. Tamburro (Geneva)                | 20. Bailey (Princeton)            |
| 9. Matalaka (Gahanna Lincoln)       | 21. Nader (Lakewood)              |
| 10. Millisor (Delaware Hayes)       | 22. Thomas (Howland)              |
| 11. McCann (Milford)                | 23. Norris (Findlay)              |
| 12. Roby (Massillon Perry)          | 24. Greenfield (Maple Hts.)       |
| 13. Adams (Cleveland John Marshall) | 25. Hopkins (Hilliard)            |

Dan King had a great year in 1994, winning several major tourneys including the Mentor District, and then taking a solid 3rd at Wright State -- losing only to the incomparable Angles. This should be his year, but there are not guarantees in wrestling, especially in the Heavyweight class. Last summer, he placed 4th in the Junior Nationals and he won the prestigious Ironman title with little trouble. His only loss was in the Medina finals when Division III choice Courtad took him down, and then after a referee's position start caught him making an awkward sit-out and pinned him. It was probably a good, although painful reminder, of the vagaries at Heavyweight, and the 260 pound King will certainly be doubly tough now.

The rest of the field is not as strong as originally anticipated. The mammoth Stephens (Bedford), who King defeated 8-5 to win the District, broke his ankle and will miss the entire season. The equally enormous Coleman (Cuyahoga Falls), who King defeated 4-2 last year signed a football letter to Syracuse and has decided to sit out this year. At the same time, the talented Cheyenne Myers (Pickerington) has also succumbed to injury. However, there still remain some serious challenges for King.

Three top contenders emerge from the Dayton District. The massive Uloho was a 5-1 King victim in the State quarter-finals and he is healthy. Weighing in right at the 275# limit, he is currently 16-0 with 12 falls. Right behind him is Upshaw who has but a single loss, and won the Wayne Invitational when Uloho was forced to forfeit. Right beside this duo, is the excellent Orr who won the SWOCA with an easy decision over Goforth. Somewhat smaller than the top



two (about 240#) he is a step quicker to compensate. McCann, Goforth, and Bailey are behind this top trio and must fight for but one berth unless they can pull the big upset.

At Mentor, King's only serious challenger is likely to be Bebko. The latter is big with good defensive skills, and make solid use of his normal weight advantage. King defeated him 4-1 in the CIT semi-finals, but he won the Brecksville with all falls. There is a huge falloff after this twosome. Adams is the best chance for the Cleveland Senate to grab a State qualification spot, and his skills have been immeasurably strengthened by Hall of Fame coach Gene Gibbons -- who has always had a great touch with big men. Bell, Greenfield, and Nader (and isn't that a great name for a Cleveland heavyweight), are the other contenders, but only King and Bebko have a chance for State placement. Tyla (Walsh Jesuit) with the right pairing has a chance here -- a Sectional title would be an important catapult to the State.

There will be outstanding competition at Perry (now that Coleman has taken early retirement). State qualifier Kreider leads the way, but there are six tough boys contending for three spots. What makes forecasting difficult here is that they have taken turns defeating each other. The key element here will be the draw and its impact on the final results. My guess is that Kreider, Tamburro, and Roby have the best qualification chances but Lovell has been very good lately, and Craddock is a dangerous pinner. Whoever qualifies will be dangerous opponents at Wright State.

The Rogers District is not strong. The one exception is Kerschner who won the Ashland, Wadsworth, and Gorman with relative ease. He stands well above everyone else here with Matalka, perhaps, second best. While the competition behind Kreider should be spirited and close, it will not be conducted at a particularly high level.

## DIVISION I TEAMS

1. **WALSH** -- Not many teams are given an opportunity to prove that they are one of the greatest of all time, but Walsh has just such a situation. If they can maximize their enormous potential at the State Meet, they will set new records in any number of categories. The question is not whether they will repeat as champs, but whether they have the discipline and the focus to create a new legend to be remembered far into the future of Ohio wrestling.
2. **ST. EDWARD** -- An excellent team that has been hampered by injuries all year. Still, King and Clement should be champs with Thompson, Hollo, Zak and Walters as potential point scorers. The big plus will come from a Kulczycki who just keeps getting better and better, and a Contos who suddenly puts everything together.
3. **WEST CHESTER LAKOTA** -- Root and Ward should both be finalists and McDaniel could score heavily at the right weight class. The need to get McIntire in synch and hope that Grove, Goforth, Hughett, and Clark can help. The younger Root, at 135#, also could be a factor.
4. **SOLON** -- Again, as last year, this is a team that has to be mistake free and healthy to make the Top Five. Boross, Boerner, and Welsh are solid point-scoring threats, while Coach Di Giovanni must carefully calculate the best place to put Barnett.
5. **MAUMEE** -- A team with some new faces that could elevate this team into the Top five. Kevin Contos is the linchpin of the team, and is likely to be a finalist. Obee, Zaborowski, and Horrigan are good middleweights, while Jones could be an added bonus at 189#. The real issue is whether the middleweight can score at the Division I level.
6. **MASSILLON PERRY** -- They start off with a real bang in Smith and Metzger, but need help in the middleweights from Chandler and Douglas, and from Roby and Sylvester at the end of the lineup. Like most Division I teams, there's no margin for error.
7. **PICKERINGTON** -- A very solid dual meet team with some outstanding individuals, too. Harris, Huber, and the freshman, Anderson are all excellent and Cotugno, Lightfoot, Strickland, and the Vennon brothers could help.
8. **DUBLIN** -- The team has no real center in that no one is a sure finalist. However, Feeney, Henson, and Mondalek can compete at the top levels and there are three or four other possibilities.
9. **TOLEDO WOODWARD** -- This is pretty much a two-man team with Wilson and Files, but they are a great pair to start with. Their other hopes -- like Mallah and Mitchell -- are long shots.

10. **HILLIARD** -- Doerrler and Bryant are both outstanding, but it remains to be seen if they can compete at 112# and 130#. If so, and Cotter, Blamer, or Hopkins can help, they can justify this Top Ten rating.
  
11. **MILFORD** -- A team that needs to kick it in gear at the State level. Frederick, McCann, Babinec and a full battalion of Reckmans give them a lot of chances to do well, but some of these folks need to start winning at the State level.

## DIVISION II

103#

### **PROJECTED CHAMPION: JIM HOLMES (RAVENNA)**

#### TOP CONTENDERS

- |                                  |                             |
|----------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 2. Balamenti (Trinity)           | 14. Hess (St. Paris Graham) |
| 3. Ream (Springfield NW)         | 15. Ulmer (Sheridan)        |
| 4. Tompkins (Coventry)           | 16. Jennings (Clyde)        |
| 5. Cooper (Buckeye)              | 17. Mackesey (Indian Lakes) |
| 6. Novario (Twinsburg)           | 18. Lemasters (Cambridge)   |
| 7. Frederick (Vermillion)        | 19. Daniels (Field)         |
| 8. Stroupe (Springfield Shawnee) | 20. Yates (Big Walnut)      |
| 9. Sessley (Beechcroft)          | 21. Johnson (Loveland)      |
| 10. Kovach (Firelands)           | 22. Marsh (Indian Creek)    |
| 11. Schuster (Olentangy)         | 23. Rollison (River Valley) |
| 12. Rossiter (Buckeye Local)     | 24. Smith (Vincent Warren)  |
| 13. Loemker (Swanton)            | 25. Lewis (ASV)             |

I always hate it when every piece of evidence, every fact, points to one wrestler -- except for one result that makes me stop and pause. The selection of Jim Holmes fits that exact pattern. Last year in Division I, he was a State qualifier winning two bouts and failed to place only because of a 13-11 overtime loss to Bates. His 12-1 win over Kennedy was particularly impressive. This year, he was devastating at Solon pinning Wrobel in 74 seconds in the final, and that's been pretty much how it's gone the entire year. So what's the problem? Well it's just one bout -- an 8-2 loss to Byers at the Kenston final. It just doesn't compute -- was he sick, did he get hurt, or what? Now, there's an element of doubt in my mind, but I still think Holmes is the best, and thus my choice.

As always, Firestone is loaded. Balamenti was 4th last year, with both losses at Wright State to the excellent Tucker. This year, he seems to be wrestling not to lose and the results have not been all that might have been expected. He did not place at Wadsworth --although a defensive pin did not help -- and he was curiously passive against Kulczycki in the CIT finals. My guess is that he'll bounce back by tourney time. Tompkins transferred from Mogadore to Coventry and has been a whirlwind -- finishing 1st at the Dies and Coventry and 2nd at Franklin Hts. (to Smith) and Wadsworth (to Nettle). Cooper is a terrific little freshman. I thought he was sensational at Medina defeating Frederick, McIntire, Vennon, and Eckles and losing only to

Forsyth. On a hot weekend he could win it all. State qualifier, Novario, has been injured and then wrestled at 112# while Mihalko has done well for Twinsburg at this weight. He will be a factor here -- perhaps better than I've rated him. Kovach, Daniels and Lewis are all good but may have trouble at this crowded weight. Kovach, in particular, is right on the edge of stardom. A problem for Lewis is that Novario, Cooper, Tompkins, and Daniels are all in his Sectional -- a very serious problem. In fact, bad pairings could eliminate one of the higher rated boys automatically.

Ream, a State qualifier, knocked off Fairview Park's Legarth last year and coupled with Gibbs' loss immediately afterward, put a fatal dent in their team hopes. He has been at 112# most of the year, but will drop at tourney time. Along with Stroupe and Hess, they will represent the Southwest area well. Hess narrowly lost to Kulczycki 9-7 at Medina and has a great future. Mackesey is right there, too, as witnessed by a 7-6 loss to Hess in the finals at Graham.

The Jefferson District is not particularly strong and will probably suffer during the first round at Wright State no matter who qualifies. I originally felt the same way about the Harding District, but now I'm not so sure. Frederick was crushed by Cooper 12-2, but his other results are so good that might be just another fluke. Sessley has lots of experience while Schuster has had some great results -- for example, 3rd at GMVWA losing only to Wilcox. Jennings could be a real plus for Clyde's team chances.

112#

**PROJECTED CHAMPION: LEVI SPURLOCK (BELLEVUE)**

**TOP CONTENDERS**

- |                               |                                       |
|-------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| 2. Birch (Medina Highland)    | 14. Hellickson (Olmsted Falls)        |
| 3. Fabian (Oak Harbor)        | 15. Thomas (Beechcroft)               |
| 4. Joltin (Liberty)           | 16. Coe (Ravenna)                     |
| 5. McClanahan (Coventry)      | 17. M. Everhart (Springfield Shawnee) |
| 6. Smith (Lexington)          | 18. Varney (Kenston)                  |
| 7. Resor (Norwalk)            | 19. Hernandez (Wauseon)               |
| 8. Legarth (Fairview Park)    | 20. Callahan (Meadowbrook)            |
| 9. Smith (Athens)             | 21. Schlaegel (St. Paris Graham)      |
| 10. Harmon (Clement NE)       | 22. Burkhart (Morgan)                 |
| 11. Brooks (Watkins Memorial) | 23. Corbiere (Firelands)              |
| 12. Johnson (Claymont)        | 24. Blaylock (Preble Shawnee)         |
| 13. Dickson (Indian Lakes)    | 25. Clemons (Hillsboro)               |

The Division II and Division III defending 103# State champs will both be at this weight class along with the other Division III finalist. Also present will be at least eight other State qualifiers making for an exciting contest. To add to the fun, there are major style differences and a long history of results for some of the combatants. Let's try and sort it out.

Spurlock, after a solid season at 112# last year, dropped to 103# and soon caught fire. After finishing 2nd to Fabian at the Sectional, he blazed through District including 3-point wins over Smith and Fabian (in the final). At States, it got even better, scoring double figures in every bout until the final, where he pinned DiMichele. This year, again at 112# but this time to stay, he has been formidable (pinning for titles at Bellevue and Avon Lake) except at Oak Harbor where Fabian once again beat him, 7-5.

Like Spurlock, Joltin appeared to materialize out of nowhere last year. Wrestling in a part of the State where results are severely under-reported he came to the District with a 28-0 record against suspect opposition. He blazed through the Cuyahoga Hts. District with 3 falls and a 20-2 TF in the final. Again, at States, he cruised to the finals where Birch slowed him down (his forte) and Joltin barely escaped with the title, 3-2. Now in Division II, he has wrestled basically the same regular season schedule with the same unblemished result.

Birch, after his 2nd place finish, has wrestled a much tougher schedule than either of the defending champs. At Medina, he defeated Grove, Walters, and Vennon, but lost a semi-final heartbreaker to who else, Fabian. Ahead the entire way and basically controlling the bout, he

surrendered a five-point move at the end to lose 7-5. Boerner then defeated him in the consolations as well. Clearly, Fabian has played a central role in this drama and will likely continue to do so. He is certainly beatable, but he seems to give Spurlock problems and Birch and Joltin must face those same issues. My feeling is that Spurlock will take the title, but it won't be the cakewalk it was last year. He'll probably be away from Fabian and he may have too much firepower for Joltin. The real issue may turn out to be Birch.

Besides Joltin and Birch, there are two other outstanding performers at Firestone. McClanahan has been brilliant all year and he certainly has finalist potential. I would not be surprised to see -- shades of yesteryear -- a Highland vs. Coventry showdown at this weight. Somewhere, the great Highland coach of their State championship teams, Jim Florian, is smiling. Legarth tends to get overlooked because of his nosedive at State and 3rd place finishes at Solon and Brecksville. He should do far better this year. I've listed some other fine performers at this weight, and all are good, but I was particularly impressed by the sophomore Coe at Solon. Also, keep an eye on Watson (Benedictine), the Brunswick Champion, and Alcantar (Girard).

The competition will be just as tough at Harding. Spurlock and Fabian head the bill, but Smith, a State alternate last year, is not that far behind the top duo. He won at Tiffin and was a one-point loser in the Gorman final. Resor, the OW at Edison, should also qualify after making the District semi-finals at this weight last year. The last spot is really wide open with State qualifier Brooks, Thomas, Hernandez, and Wall (Hamilton Twp.) worthy candidates.

State qualifiers, Smith and Johnson, head the field at Jefferson. I like Smith the better of the two, but both will struggle to place. Callahan, who Johnson eliminated in their go-to-state bout, has to be the favorite for the 3rd spot, although there will be plenty of competition for it.

The Dayton District looks to be the weakest of the four. Harmon won several small tourneys this year, but his most impressive result was a strong 3rd at the SWOCA. State qualifier, Dickson, is also back after a 38-4 sophomore season. He dominated at Graham and I may not have rated him high enough in this listing. The question will be his ability to handle the tough Northern boys from Firestone and Harding. Everhart missed most of last year, but has come back strong this season and is one of a series of fine lightweights at Springfield Shawnee.

119#

**PROJECTED CHAMPION: JASON LAMSON (CLYDE)**

**TOP CONTENDERS**

- |                                    |                                 |
|------------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| 2. Baughman (Coshocton)            | 15. Jordan (Ravenna)            |
| 3. Stough (Coventry)               | 16. Dixon (West Holmes)         |
| 4. Ramos (Wauseon)                 | 17. Hicks (Springboro)          |
| 5. Ewing (St. Clairsville)         | 18. Skelding (Marlington)       |
| 6. Felty (Teays Valley)            | 19. C. Miller (Hillsboro)       |
| 7. Seibert (Claymont)              | 20. Grant (Beechcroft)          |
| 8. Jacobs (St. Paris Graham)       | 21. Bragga (Athens)             |
| 9. Mowrer (Triway)                 | 22. Leskovec (Girard)           |
| 10. L. Moore (Springfield Shawnee) | 23. Kenney (Loveland)           |
| 11. Stopperich (Twinsburg)         | 24. Dickson (Port Clinton)      |
| 12. Wright (Carlisle)              | 25. Bartley (Ravenna Southeast) |
| 13. Neiding (Vermillion)           | 26. Robinson (Bellevue)         |
| 14. Skarupa (Norwalk)              |                                 |

This short paragraph is kind of like warning labels on medicine or cigarettes -- intended to make sure the author and the reader have the same understanding. Between 119# and 145#, there has been an epidemic of wrestlers certifying at all kinds of unexpected places. For example, one wrestler who has been at 135# all year, is now certified at 125#. A call to his coach indicated that there was a 90% chance he'd actually be at 130#, but they were keeping their options open. Therefore, I have a 10% chance of ranking him at the wrong weight class, even though I have what amounts to complete knowledge as this is written. Clearly, I can't call everyone, so I tend to rate folks where they certify (since I don't wish to be seen as coaching someone else's team) unless there is a compelling reason to place them somewhere else. So expect to see wrestlers at weight classes different than you see here.

It seems to me it's Jason Lamson time. Now in his third brilliant season, this senior from Clyde is due to take home an individual State title. As a sophomore, he entered the State Meet at 35-0 and moved to the semi-finals before losing to eventual champ Workman and finishing 3rd. Last year, he came to Wright State again undefeated at 36-0, but lost to DeShon in the quarter-finals, and did not place. Again, this year Lamson is unbeaten -- only 3 losses in 3 years and all in the State Meet. There are a lot of threes on this page and if the third time is indeed the charm how can Lamson lose?



Well, actually, I guess there are a few ways. After all, defending State champ Brian Baughman returns, and he has publicly disclosed his renewed efforts to keep his crown. So far it's worked as he remains undefeated and on track for a second title. And just remember how he won his first one in, perhaps, the most dramatic battle of the final round. Baughman had won two one-point victories on his way to the Finals (Stough and DeShon), but was a heavy underdog to the senior Fratta, who had defeated defending champ, Workman. Fratta grabbed a big early advantage, but Baughman came back to cut the lead to 13-11. With 10 seconds (or less) to go, Baughman dropped Fratta to his back for four points at the buzzer to win. High drama, indeed, and a Baughman-Lamson final would be perfect.

Both boys exit from very tough Districts. At Harding, Lamson will be challenged by at least two others with top honor aspirations. Ramos was 3rd last year at Wright State, winning five bouts in all. It matched his District performance and he was especially impressive in wins over Workman, DeShon, and Tucker. This year he won at Rogers (over the tough Perry) and Oak Harbor and is presently undefeated. State qualifier, Felty, lost to Lamson in overtime last year and has tested himself around the state this season. At Medina, he finished 3rd, splitting a pair of bouts with the very tough Balog. There is a big drop-off after this trio, although Neiding could well be a factor at Wright State.

Currently, there are at least 10 good wrestlers certified at 119# in the Jefferson District. I have made the assumption that three of them who have been at 125# all year will, on reflection, remain there at tourney time. That trio is Lemley, Woomer and Queen who I'll discuss at 125#, and I would not be surprised several others here opt to follow that same route. Should everyone choose to compete at 119#, some exceptional wrestlers will miss out on these three qualifying spots. Even as it is, Baughman will face State qualifiers Ewing, Siebert, Dixon, and Bragga, along with the excellent Miller and Mayle (Morgan) as well. One wrestler who will severely test Baughman for the District title is two-time State qualifier Ewing, who was 5th last year at this weight. This year at 125# up to now, Ewing is completely undefeated and won not only the OVAC title, but the OW, too. Right behind him is another two-time State qualifier, Eric Siebert, who was 2nd at Barnesville to Division III pick Lamont Tucker and a strong 5th at Medina, losing only to Doerrler and Balog.

Only Stough would seem to have strong placement chances for those competing at Firestone. The stocky sophomore is a slam-bank competitor with tremendous power. Even when he loses -- which isn't often -- it's a terrific bout. State champ Baughman was lucky to escape with a 7-6 first round win at Wright State and Lamson did not escape a 4-3 defeat. Stough ended up 5th, but will likely do far better this year. I was very impressed with his 7-6 win over the above-mentioned Balog to win the Dies Championship. Very unusually, the rest of the Firestone is pretty much non-descript and will challenge, at best, for a low place.

State qualifier, Jacobs, leads the Southwest contingent, and he has a tough defensive style that gains a lot of scoring low-scoring wins, and produces occasional falls off opponent's mistakes. He was a District champ last year, but ran into tough quarter bracket, losing to eventual State champ Caruso (who came out of his District as a 3rd). He was a semi-finalist at Medina, but fell to 6th losing to Doerrler, Felty, and Siebert. He was the champ at Graham,

defeating the tough Division III star Creech. Freshman Luke Moore made the finals at the Midwest Classic before losing to Justin Turner, and currently stands at 17-2. The rest of this group is not nearly as strong.

125#

**PROJECTED CHAMPION: MIKE PHILABAUM (CANAL FULTON NORTHWEST)**

**TOP CONTENDERS**

- |                                   |                                   |
|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| 2. DeShon (ASV)                   | 15. Lensman (St. Paris Graham)    |
| 3. Arden (Clyde)                  | 16. Tomasetti (Galion)            |
| 4. E. Moore (Springfield Shawnee) | 17. Patrick (Tipp City)           |
| 5. Gibbs (Fairview Park)          | 18. McClung (Olentangy)           |
| 6. Burkhard (Olmsted Falls)       | 19. Doyle (Buckeye Local)         |
| 7. O'Donoghue (Bay)               | 20. Glover (Bethel-Tate)          |
| 8. Perry (Ontario)                | 21. Parrish (Buckeye Valley)      |
| 9. Lemley (Beaver Local)          | 22. Queen (Jackson)               |
| 10. Luther (Hamilton Ross)        | 23. Sheffield (Loveland)          |
| 11. Clemons (Hillsboro)           | 24. Grant (Dover)                 |
| 12. Woomer (Vincent Warren)       | 25. Ketchem (Ashatabula Edgewood) |
| 13. T. McArthur (VASJ)            | 26. Eger (Watterson)              |
| 14. Tartt (Warrensville Hts.)     |                                   |

This is a weight class with plenty of depth, but no pre-eminent competitor who stands out above the crowd. It's likely that any of a half-dozen or so of those listed could win -- much like the 119# class last year where many of these same boys then competed. As you recall, Dom Caruso and Pitilabaum met for the State title after battling the previous week for 3rd place at their District. Much the same could happen here with the "hot hand" probably the crucial determinant. It is also a geographically well-rounded field with contenders from all four districts.

My choice is two-time State place-winner, Mike Philabaum, who lost that State title bout to Caruso after having beaten him the weekend before. Philabaum started the year at 130#, and received a wake-up call at Barnesville where Roskovich rocked him 8-1 in the finals. Now at 125#, he stepped forward at the Dies, knocking him off top rival DeShon 3-2. To win, Philabaum has to maintain real focus because his many close bouts require a mistake-free six minutes. During the past 12 months, that approach has led to victories over folks like Kavulis, Burkhard, Arden and DeShon.

The Firestone District is excellent. DeShon was 3rd last year at 112# and this former Walsh wrestler was 2nd at Wadsworth (to Carnos, 6-5) and 3rd at the CIT losing only to Clark this year. There is very little to choose between Philabaum and him, and like last year, District results could be reversed at the State level. A trio of dynamite Southwest Conference wrestlers lie in ambush for this top duo. Two-time State qualifier, Gibbs, has pinned in all three of his State bouts, but he can beat anyone here. His upset of the highly rated Nicholl confirms his ability to pull the big upset, and if he's the one who has the hot weekend, he'll win easily. Gibbs has some nice takedowns and can score from the top, and his added muscle make him a real threat here. State qualifiers Burkhard and O'Donaghue do not match Gibbs' firepower, but they are more consistent. Both have vast experience and top-heavy winning records, and have been battle-hardened in a conference filled with outstanding middleweights. Behind this quintet are McArthur, the explosive Tartt, and Ketchum, all with records normally good enough for qualificaiton. One major issue is that Gibbs, Burkhard, O'Donaghue, Tartt, and McArthur all compete at the same Sectional which will start the weeding out process early.

Arden was 5th last year at 119# and will be a strong threat here. However, he has been inconsistent losing some matches (like Fremont St. Joe) he would have been expected to win, and then beating the outstanding Kevin Contos in everything but the score in a narrow one-point loss at Tiffin. His two State losses last year were both by a single point. There is a new, improved version of Jason Perry. A State qualifier last year, he is now a bigger, better version who has legitimate State placement hopes. He was was an easy winner at the Gorman. After this duo, the last three spots are wide open.

Depending on the migration from 119#, the field at Jefferson could range from normal to substantially tougher than normal. State qualifiers, Woomer and Lemley, are both solid while Clemons made the semi-finals at Medina before falling to 6th. What this group hasn't demonstrated is the ability to win at Wright State. I like the outstanding sophomore Doyle and I think he could well be a factor at this District. Grant and Raymond (Indian Valley) are probably a step behind the top boys, but certainly have upset potential.

I've always thought highly of Ethan Moore. Two years ago at Wright State, he beat Philabaum and Fratta in the first two rounds in making the semi-finals before dropping to 6th, and losing to Philabaum in the battle for 5th. Last year he again won 2 State bouts -- including wins over Carnes and Burkhard, but failed to place. He has the talent to win it all. This year, for example, he was 2nd at the Midwest Classic and has not lost to an Ohio wrestler. Watch for him. State qualifier Luther is a solid second choice in the Southwest but there is a big gap in talent after him. He qualified at 130# last year, but has dropped a weight class this year.

130#

**PROJECTED CHAMPION: SHAWN BRISTOW (AVON LAKE)**

**TOP CONTENDERS**

- |                                   |                                |
|-----------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| 2. Steinmetz (Lake Catholic)      | 15. Ruehling (Canal Fulton NW) |
| 3. DeTray (Oak Harbor)            | 16. Schehl (Meadowbrook)       |
| 4. Kavulis (VASJ)                 | 17. Poff (Little Miami)        |
| 5. Short (Olentangy)              | 18. Plouse (ASV)               |
| 6. McGinnis (Springfield Shawnee) | 19. Armstrong (Claymont)       |
| 7. Seipel (St. Paris Graham)      | 20. Cummins (Indian Lake)      |
| 8. Cooper (Buckeye)               | 21. Porter (Bellaire)          |
| 9. S. Marder (Twinsburg)          | 22. Montgomery (Rossford)      |
| 10. Will (Watterson)              | 23. Goings (Paulding)          |
| 11. Curnutte (Norton)             | 24. Humphries (Hamilton Ross)  |
| 12. Smith (Columbus St. Charles)  | 25. Caris (St. Mary's Mem.)    |
| 13. Hockenberry (Cambridge)       | 26. Lyons (Tipp City)          |
| 14. Wobser (Perkins)              |                                |

This should be an exceptional weight class with an abundance of explosive, state experienced wrestlers. In fact, it is such a strong competition, that I would anticipate that some of this group may ponder a move upward to the far easier 135# class. Again, the Firestone District is loaded and the competition just to get to Wright State will be ferocious.

My choice is the slam-bang junior Shawn Bristow who finished 4th last year at 125#. Bristow is a scorer who racks up an enormous number of points in a big hurry. He is a pleasure to watch, although I doubt his competitors find it so. He won handily at Avon Lake and his only loss was a titanic battle with Division I place winner Feeney at Brunswick, which he lost 12-10 in overtime. A State semi-finalist last year, he has to be a very narrow favorite to go all the way in 1995.

Right behind is the powerful and very physical Steinmetz. Last year, he was probably best situated to go at 125#, but with State Champion Haverdill firmly ensconced there, he ended up at 130#. No problem. After a first round loss at Wright State to eventual runner-up Walker, he ended up 5th with a last round overtime win over Shawn Marder. This year, he beat Burkhard to win at Kenston, and was 2nd at the CIT to Marchette. A Bristow-Steinmetz matchup would cause sparks to fly. Kavulis is yet another very aggressive competitor. Only a junior, he is a former State qualifier who missed much of last year for various reasons. He, too, is very physical, a scorer, and somebody who is always looking for back points. Only an injury last year

prevented a second trip to Wright State, but when healthy, this boy is dynamite. He was 3rd at the CIT behind Marchette and Steinmetz. State qualifier, Cooper, was a Medina finalist last year, but lost there this year to DeTray and Seipel to finish 4th. Steinmetz beat him 5-4 at States last year but Cooper is very tough. He won the Buckeye and Dies tourneys with ease. Yet another outstanding wrestler is the puzzling Sean Marder. He has apparently all the tools and that coupled with his wide experience should lead to overwhelming success. So far, however, that consistency has eluded him, and he looks almost tentative when I see him. And yet, he beat Bristow at last year's District and was the only wrestler to give State Champ Haverdill a battle losing 6-4 (no one else scored more than a point from Haverdill). Still, he failed to qualify out of Firestone, losing 3 bouts on Saturday, although all to excellent people. If he ignites, no one here is safe. Also listed are Curnutte, Ruehling, and C. Plouse, all of whom are solid performers, but likely overmatched in this arena.

DeTray, should he compete here, is the biggest threat to the Northeast District boys. He was 6th as a sophomore, and while he did not place last year he participated in one of the more memorable bouts at Wright State. Wrestling the State Champ Pariano, he dominated much of the match and twice turned Pariano with what were borderline back situations, but scored with neither. Paciano's 4-3 win was terrifyingly close to championship elimination, and there their paths diverged -- Pariano taking his second title and DeTray failing to place. This year, DeTray is every bit as tough -- and that's the operative word. He was 2nd at Medina losing 17-10 to Marchette and has won most everything else. While the rest of the field at Harding is crowded, only Will and Short have placement opportunities -- with Short being the one to watch, in particular. He won two bouts at Wright State last year while competing at 135#, and may do even better here at 130#.

State qualifier Hockenberry leads a depleted Jefferson District, but even he is somewhat suspect after a 4th place finish at the OVAC, including losses to Division III Jefferis and Porter. State qualifier Schehl was 5th at the OVAC also being shut out by Porter and he may trouble returning to Wright State. This set of qualifiers, whoever they may be, are not likely to cause much consternation at Wright State.

The story is somewhat different at Dayton. Takedown expert McGinnis defeated Seipel in overtime at last year's District as he qualified for the State meet. Once there he was surprisingly upset by Schehl and quickly eliminated. He should do much better this year after a strong 4th place finish at the Midwest Classic. Seipel is also a State qualifier and he and McGinness remain very close. Seipel was 3rd at Medina losing only to Marchette (18-3) and defeating Cooper for 3rd. At Graham he dominated, and except for McGinness, should do so at this District.

135#

**PROJECTED CHAMPION: DANA MARDER (TWINSBURG)**

**TOP CONTENDERS**

- |                                |   |
|--------------------------------|---|
| 2. Pusateri (Columbus DeSales) | 15. Studer (Shelby)                     |
| 3. Bowersock (Beaver Local)    | 16. Richter (Perkins)                   |
| 4. Ribelin (Ravenna)           | 17. Sawyer (ASV)                        |
| 5. T. Miller (Oak Harbor)      | 18. Conniff (Eaton)                     |
| 6. Myers (University School)   | 19. Felts (New Richmond)                |
| 7. Long (Paulding)             | 20. Eisenmann (Avon Lake)               |
| 8. Odon (Olmsted Falls)        | 21. Seiler (Napoleon)                   |
| 9. Pleger (Watkins Memorial)   | 22. Weinfurtner (Athens)                |
| 10. Sowers (Lemon Monroe)      | 23. Fisher (Bellevue)                   |
| 11. Crozier (Bellaire)         | 24. Schneider (Dover)                   |
| 12. Baumann (Springfield)      | 25. Richer (Wauseon)                    |
| 13. Ray (Norton)               | 26. Jon McGinness (Springfield Shawnee) |
| 14. Lute (St. Paris Graham)    |   |

After the extravagantly talented weight classes at 119#, 125#, and 130#, there is a major drop-off in both quantity and quality here at 135#. One always hears that nature abhors a vacuum and that rule generally is obeyed in wrestling matters as well. It would not surprise me if several of the excellent 130's move up to challenge this relatively ordinary group.

However, as it currently stands, no one really stands out as a potential champ. Each contender has some evident flaw that probably ought to disqualify him from the topmost rung. And, yet, there is some real skill and experience at this class and the competitor with probably the best mixture of those traits is Dana Marder.

Marder has compiled an incredible record for someone without dominating physical strength. He is a three-time State place winner who wrestles an amazing number of close bouts -- and win a startlingly high percentage of them. I see him as an outstanding clutch wrestler who wins all the bouts where favored and a good number where he might be considered the underdog. The powerful Ribelin is a solid second choice here while State qualifier Myers is also likely to be a factor. The erratic Odon could qualify while Ray was strong at the Dies and could get the fifth spot.

Pusateri is an interesting case study. He has been at 145# most of the year with a forays at 140#. At the higher weight, he was the CIT champ and also won at DeSales. He was at 152#

to win the Wolfpack, but certified at 135#. Is that low weight a real possibility? It is, if he wants to make a real run at a State title. He can't beat the upstate boys at 140# and may be just a bit small for the really good 145's. A 125# wrestler last year, he will be a very strong contender at 135#, again, if that weight is consistently attainable. Tait Miller was a State semi-finalist at this class last year before falling to 6th after being TF'ed by Singleton. Somehow, he has not been quite as successful this year and so I've not rated him as highly as in my initial listings. Still, he cannot be overlooked. The rest of the field at Harding is strictly journeyman oriented without any particular flair. One exception might be Long, who won three District bouts last year -- none of which went the distance.

Two-time State qualifier, Bowersock, certified at 130#, but has been at 135# all year where he has had outstanding success. Considering the competitive forces at each class, he may well find this to be the more congenial location. He won the giant OVAC title, and was a solid 3rd at Medina, losing only to Heskett and defeating Division I State qualifiers Palmer and Zak. Everyone else currently at this District is way behind.

There is not much at the Dayton District either. No one there would seem to have State placement promise and the three qualifiers will be eagerly sought as first round opponents. I've ranked, albeit toward the bottom, six possibilities with Nartker (Dayton Carroll) and Kelly (Kenton Ridge) as other thoughts.

### 140#

#### **PROJECTED CHAMPION: DREW PARIANO (FAIRVIEW PARK)**

#### TOP CONTENDERS

- |                             |                           |
|-----------------------------|---------------------------|
| 2. Hartzler (Orrville)      | 14. Schnittker (Perkins)  |
| 3. Tomcik (Norton)          | 15. Hankee (Kenston)      |
| 4. Reuss (Bay)              | 16. Chandler (Brookside)  |
| 5. Barton (Kings)           | 17. Ma. Taylor (Dover)    |
| 6. Stewart (ASV)            | 18. Stover (Bellfontaine) |
| 7. Weeks (Watterson)        | 19. Ray (Hamilton Ross)   |
| 8. Ivory (Hamilton Twp)     | 20. Hollins (Cambridge)   |
| 9. Burkholder (Wauseon)     | 21. Boval (Olentangy)     |
| 10. Bowyer (Beaver Local)   | 22. Cooke (Ontario)       |
| 11. Frey (Roger Bacon)      | 23. Sells (Louisville)    |
| 12. Ratliff (New Lexington) | 24. Miller (Lexington)    |
| 13. Workman (Olmsted Falls) | 25. O'Leary (Loveland)    |

Whew! At last a weight class with a clear-cut favorite. Drew Pariano will be shooting for his third State title and will be a solid choice here although not one without some substantial obstacles. It doesn't seem possible, but this will be the seventh consecutive year a Pariano (Tony or Drew) will have placed, and should Drew win, the fifth consecutive one of them nails down a State title. Drew has not lost since Haverdill beat him in the District final two years ago, and he has any number of great victories. His major decision over Andres at last year's State Dual Meet was the one point which made the difference, and his upset win over Grucella two years ago at Wright State was electrifying.

While Pariano is the favorite, he may have to survive some real battles -- as he did against DeTray last year. The wrestler to watch is the slam-bang junior, Shane Hartzler. He has come extremely close to some enormous upsets. Last year, he dropped a 15-14 decision to State Champ Jesse Denholm and this year, lost 13-11 to Clement and 12-10 in overtime to Pariano. While he has won some of the tremendously entertaining shootouts (12-10 against State runner-up Mengerink), he needs to be more consistent against lesser opposition. His loss to Short last year at Wright State was a stunner. Nevertheless, watch this athlete perform and let the opposition, no matter how good, beware.

The Firestone District has some other contenders as well. Tomcik is first-rate and won at the Dies and Norton, and was 6th at that brutal 140# Medina weight class. He won five bouts, but lost to Clement (my 135# pick), Harris (my 140# pick), and Bryant (2nd at 130#) by a 5-4 margin. Reuss is down from 145# and he'll be tough here away from the big 145's like Waskiewicz. There are some other interesting possibilities. Stewart has been a consistent high placer, while Hankee and Chandler both have State ability. Workman, who made enormous strides during the past year, has had some great matches -- like the win over Ciero and Hankee - but has been inconsistent, too. He could play a key role in the resolution of the class at the District level.

All of the three remaining Districts are much weaker. At Harding, Weeks would seem strongest, but Stewart defeated him at the CIT. However, he is a returning State qualifier with good experience and solid skills. Ivory is somewhat unknown but he missed State qualification by the margin of a takedown last year. The darkhorse for the District title might be Jay Burkholder, who has done well wrestling a difficult schedule. He lost to DeTray in OT at Oak Harbor and is 16-3 overall.

State qualifier Barton heads a weak field at Dayton. It's difficult to know exactly where to rate him, since he wrestles an almost invisible schedule as far as I am concerned. He did have an impressive District last year and this season won at Madeira. Frey, 14-1, against better competition may have surpassed him, but that is still unclear.

Bowyer and State qualifier, Ratliff, are the leading candidates out of Jefferson, but they have not done well in big tourneys of late. Bowyer failed to place at the OVAC, while Ratliff lost two successive heartbreakers at Medina to average wrestlers. I may just have seen them at the wrong time.



145#

**PROJECTED CHAMPION: CHAD LONG (CLYDE)**

**TOP CONTENDERS**

- |                                  |                                  |
|----------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| 2. Waskiewicz (Twinsburg)        | 14. DeFranco (Fairview)          |
| 3. Atkins (Olmsted Falls)        | 15. Mi. Taylor (Dover)           |
| 4. Hildebrand (Eaton)            | 16. Kerchenski (Kenston)         |
| 5. Josh Burkholder (Wauseon)     | 17. Olberding (Clermont NE)      |
| 6. Finck (New Lexington)         | 18. Cornish (Buckeye Local)      |
| 7. Todd (Bay)                    | 19. Hageman (Buckeye)            |
| 8. Vanderpool (Claymont)         | 20. Davis (Paulding)             |
| 9. Jacobs (Urbana)               | 21. Valentine (Columbus DeSales) |
| 10. Ma. Hill (Steubenville)      | 22. Laughlin (Carlisle)          |
| 11. Wilks (Minerva)              | 23. Lara (Ravenna)               |
| 12. Fullerton (St. Paris Graham) | 24. Montgomery (Rossford)        |
| 13. Cochrane (River View)        | 25. Stumpf (Galion)              |

This is probably a somewhat unorthodox choice, but I am always partial to the great athlete. Last year as a freshman, Long was a District finalist at 135# losing to two-time State placewinner Ian Fultz, 4-3, for the title. However, at Wright State apparent first round jitters cost him a one-point bout and eliminated him. This year -- after an All-State year at football -- he's back with a 22-1 record and titles at Edison, Fremont St. Joe, Clyde, Tiffin and the SBC Duals, and just getting better all the time. He'll be a definite underdog to State runner-up Waskiewicz, but by year's end he may well be the better boy.

The Harding District does not have great depth, but it's up-top strength is good. Besides Long, I like the solid junior Josh Burkholder -- younger brother of the 140-pounder. Despite three District wins last year, he failed to reach Wright State finishing with a 28-6 record -- excellent for a sophomore at 145#. This year, he has been at 152#, but I anticipate that he and Barajas will switch weight classes at tourney time. The rest of this field is pretty uneventful.

Last year was a Cinderella kind of event for Waskiewicz. He failed to make the finals at Kenston, Hudson, or Solon, and then finished 4th at his Sectional. Nonetheless, he struggled to a 5th place District finish, winning his last gasp go-to-state bout 6-4. He then beat State placers Byers, Fultz, and Decembly to reach the finals, and had defending champ Singleton on the ropes before losing 13-9. He would have been the first ever District fifth-round placer to win a State title. This year, he did win at Kenston and Hudson, but has struggled with weight and injury

much of the year. I'm wondering whether lightning will strike twice in the same place. Right with Waskiewicz is another of the fine Atkins brothers from Olmsted Falls. This one was smaller than the others, but he has grown both in size and ability during the past 12 months. He lost to Waskiewicz, 4-3, at Kenston, and while certified will likely compete here. His one-point District loss to Cooper last year kept him from Wright State, but that is unlikely to happen this year. He was 1st at Avon Lake over the redoubtable Seth Didion, and lost only to McGhee at Wadsworth. He was 3rd at Clyde, however, behind Didion and Milligan. He should qualify. Wilks does not look like the classic wrestler, but he wins -- and a lot while DeFranco is going to surprise a lot of people at the District (and, perhaps, State) level.

Butch Hildebrand went to Wright State at this weight class last year, but drew defending State champ Dustin Harris in the first round and the elder Tomcik in the consolations. It did not make for a totally pleasurable experience, but it's not likely to happen again, especially since Hildebrand should go into the pairings as champ. He is undefeated this year, and really hasn't been challenged in the results I've seen from Edgewood and Wayne. Josh Jacobs lost a 12-11 barnburner to State qualifier Barton last year, and never was able to get all the way back for 3rd. He should be much more a factor this year based on his strong performance at Graham. That leaves State qualifier Fullerton, Olberding, and Laughlin to battle for the last berth. Fullerton was 4th at Graham and was unable to compete at Medina. He may be vulnerable.

I was much impressed with Finck at Medina where he placed 3rd, scoring boatloads of points in every bout with his aggressive technique. He'll face tough competition. Vanderpool also looked good at Medina, and he beat the OVAC champ Riser at Barnesville. Hill was 3rd at the OVAC but he, too, can score big and collects a lot of falls as well. Taylor and Cornish are also excellent but may be a step below the top trio. It will be a good competition here, and each of the three qualifiers will be good enough to win at the State level.

152#

**PROJECTED CHAMPION: JOHN MCGHEE (COVENTRY)**

**TOP CONTENDERS**

- |                                   |                               |
|-----------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| 2. Knaze (Fairview Park)          | 15. Avers (Oak Harbor)        |
| 3. Boggs (Perkins)                | 16. Evans (Beechcroft)        |
| 4. Mi. Hill (Steubenville)        | 17. Smarella (Indian Creek)   |
| 5. Watson (Benedictine)           | 18. Neitenbach (Buckeye)      |
| 6. S. Didion (Bellevue)           | 19. Marling (Bellaire)        |
| 7. McFarland (Marlington)         | 20. Wallace (Franklin)        |
| 8. Trombley (Alter)               | 21. Yates (Clyde)             |
| 9. J. Reuss (Bay)                 | 22. C. Hagan (Kenston)        |
| 10. Hall (Urbana)                 | 23. Rhodes (St. Paris Graham) |
| 11. Rassman (Paulding)            | 24. Apperson (Morgan)         |
| 12. Hegedish (Twinsburg)          | 25. Shewmaker (River Valley)  |
| 13. McDowell (Cincinnati Purcell) | 26. Fox (Columbus DeSales)    |
| 14. Stehura (Jefferson)           |                               |

This is going to be an absolutely fabulous competition. The assembled field is loaded with great wrestlers -- most of whom are aggressive scoring machines. There is a lot of experience, a lot of tournament championships, and a lot of quick falls wrapped up in the competitors, and the best is yet to come.

Let me repeat from last year, that John McGhee is one of those rare wrestlers who is wonderful to watch. Virtually every bout is an adventure that sticks in the memory long after most others are forgotten. He doesn't seem to worry much about the score, but remains intent on putting his competitors on their back even if it requires enormous risk. Tremendously inventive, he's always looking for some new way to get his opponent looking at the lights. It seems to work. As a freshman, he won 36 consecutive bouts and the Division III 135# championship. Last year, he went 38-3 with a bad knee, but when it really counted, he gained revenge on Shamblin (2nd in National High School tourney) 9-7, for his second title. Like I said, you remember both his wins and losses including such favorites as his wins over Lewis (26-15), Judd (24-16), the Littleton classic (14-14, 6:33 OT), and Fowler (16-13) and his losses Musser (16-11) and Shamblin (5-4). This year, it's been more of the same with the 13-11 win over Watson that had the crowd booing the officials. We need more like him to grow our sport, but for now it's time to see if he can win three in a row.

It won't be easy. Knaze is a three-time State qualifier who finished 3rd and 4th the last two years. A wonderful athlete -- All-State wide receiver -- he has the quickness and strength to combat McGhee. So far, however, McGhee has defeated him twice -- at the District semis (7-3) and the State semis (8-5). Knaze, at least to my eyes, has not looked quite as sharp this season, but he may well be gearing up for that last big push toward a State title that he well deserves. Watson has made a quantum jump this year in terms of overall performance. Something of a surprise State qualifier last year, he drew State Champ Bailey in the first round and got decked. This year, he nearly beat McGhee, but still remains inconsistent. He has lost to SWC opponents Gantz (Avon Lake) and Todd, but has also posted some big wins. He won't be muscled, but he needs to get out better from underneath. McFarland dusted Watson 14-7 last year on his way to the District runner-up trophy and he may well be rated too low in this document. He was 2nd at Wadsworth to McGhee (17-6) after beating Division III State runner-up Berquist in the semi-finals. And let's not forget Jeff Reuss, who at 160#, was 2nd at Clyde and Wadsworth, and 1st at Avon Lake. He won two District bouts last year.

That's my top five at Firestone, but they are by no means assured of qualification. The gutsy Hegedish was a State qualifier last year, and he has all the heart in the world. He just doesn't quit and his win over my Division I choice, Boross, was an example of his tenacity. Also at this weight, is the dangerous Neitenbach, the excellent Stehura, and Colin Hagan. And don't forget Gantz (Avon Lake) who defeated Watson 8-0 and McClennan (University School). What a District.

The competition will also be fierce at Harding. State qualifier Boggs is a dangerous junior who gets a high percentage of falls. His performance at the tough SBC Duals was outstanding and augments an already successful season. He'll be right there looking for finalist possibilities. Seth Didion was the District runner-up at 145# last year, but lost to Knaze 13-4. This year, he won at Bellevue and Oak Harbor, but has lost to Boggs in the dual meet 15-8. Rassman was the State alternate last year, losing to Boggs 11-8 for the last State spot. Whether he has kept up with this top group is still unanswered since Paulding wrestles something of an out of the way schedule. State placer Evans, who was not overly impressive at Medina, and Avers are my favorites for the last two spots. Yates is likely to be at 152# and he is an interesting case. Originally slated for 140#, when the Clyde upper-weights dropped, he could not make the weight and is now at 152#. He had three tourney runner-up finishes when at 145#, but may struggle at the high weight.

Hill leads a strong group at Jefferson. A State qualifier last year, he won the OVAC in impressive fashion as seems ready for State tourney success. Behind him are Smarella and State qualifier, Marling, with Apperson and Hancock (Indian Valley) waiting in the wings. However, at Wright State, the only one to really watch is the powerful Hill.

There is a quartet of fine wrestlers competing at Dayton. It's headed by State qualifier Trombley, who finished 2nd to Watson at the CIT. State qualifier Hall also returns with McDowell and the improved Wallace right behind. I've also listed Rhodes, but Eulrich (Indian Lake), Scott (Dayton Carroll) and Eastes (Wilmington) are also possibilities.

160#

**PROJECTED CHAMPION: NEAL BAILEY (RAVENNA SOUTHEAST)**

**TOP CONTENDERS**

- |                                  |                                  |
|----------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| 2. Hamill (Loveland)             | 15. Ziegler (Wauseon)            |
| 3. Bergen (Olmsted Falls)        | 16. Thom (Perkins)               |
| 4. Wegesin (Galion)              | 17. R. O'Donaghue (Bay)          |
| 5. Smith (Napoleon)              | 18. Black (Teays Valley)         |
| 6. Riley (Marlington)            | 19. Borer (Clyde)                |
| 7. J. Didion (Bellevue)          | 20. Weber (Alter)                |
| 8. King (Cambridge)              | 21. Rodenbaugh (Medina Highland) |
| 9. P. Tartt (Warrensville Hts.)  | 22. Wervey (Kenston)             |
| 10. Roy (Columbus DeSales)       | 23. Atkins (Steubenville)        |
| 11. Taylor (Swanton)             | 24. Brightman (New Richmond)     |
| 12. Brown (Cincinnati - Purcell) | 25. Lamar (Indian Lakes)         |
| 13. Donehue (Dover)              | 26. McGuirk (Lake Catholic)      |
| 14. Murphy (Hillsboro)           |                                  |

You'd think that after you'd been a three-time State placer and are the defending State champ, things would get easier, but for Neal Bailey that is not likely to be the case. He was, last year, the beneficiary of good fortune which kept from his path most of the best 152's during the State Meet. He was able to focus his attention on the powerful Flanagan who he did beat, 14-8, to fulfill the promise first seen during his brilliant freshman season. This year, Bailey will have a tougher, deeper field to navigate, but he remains the favorite. He has had injury problems during the early part of the year, but has bounced back with his usual results. At the Dies, he had 4 first period falls before winning a 16-3 final. However, he was cradled to a tough near fall situation which should give folks like Hamill hope.

Speaking of Hamill he continues to get better. Both he and Bergen certified at 152#, but I think on further analysis they'll stay here where the title rests with beating just one other superstar, Bailey. Hamill was 4th last year, losing to Bergen 12-11, but worked hard all summer with great results. He has destroyed everyone in the Southwest while compiling a 75% fall ratio. His pinning ability may keep him fresh for Bailey and their battle could be a titanic one. The rest of that Dayton District is substantially weaker and should be no factor in the hunt for places.

As usual, Firestone offers a wide variety of excellent competitors. Bergen, despite beating Hamill, finished 5th last year, but is also undefeated this year. Bailey beat him 6-2 in the District semi-finals, which is not an insurmountable advantage to overcome in twelve months.

Bergen took the Kenston title, but struggled in the semi-finals with McGuirk, 10-8. Two-time State qualifier Riley has followed exactly the same pattern each year - a win, a loss, a win, and then a loss shutting the door on placement. Both times that last loss was Kurtt Peters, since graduated. Tartt is a powerful competitor who should reach Wright State, but State qualifier Rodenbaugh is on the bubble. Old hands like Wervey and Walker (Keystone) are right behind him, and newcomers O'Donaghue and McGuirk may be even better. The latter, in particular, has begun to shine with an 11-2 record and a solid 8-4 win over Hollo.

It's also a jam-packed field at Harding. Wegesin was 5th last year and Smith 4th as they both return to this weight class. In one of the strange coincidences that seem to abound in life, Wegesin defeated Smith 15-14 in the District finals and then lost to him by the same 15-14 score in the State consolation semi-finals. Both have done well this year, but Wegesin was upset by Didion, and Smith has lost at 171#. Right behind them are Didion and Roy with Taylor, the early favorite for the fifth qualifying spot. But, again, this is a deep and abundantly talented field, and the pairing may well be crucial -- particularly through the consolation rounds.

T. J. King has dominated the Eastern District in much the same way Hamill has done in the Southwest. He rolled through the OVAC winning the final 14-3 over a game Matt Fitch. State qualifier, Donehue, has moved from Newcomerstown to Dover without missing a beat. He won at Smithville and St. Clairsville, and may be the first wrestler to challenge King when they reach the District. Murphy is my choice for the third spot with Atkins close behind. Beiting (Jackson) and Rhett Peters (Claymont) are probably another step behind.

### 171#

#### **PROJECTED CHAMPION: JUSTIN CHAGNON (CLYDE)**

#### **TOP CONTENDERS**

- |                                    |   |
|------------------------------------|---|
| 2. Fickell (Columbus DeSales)      | 13. Zurcher (Claymont)                  |
| 3. Funk (Olmsted Falls)            | 14. DeLuca (Norwalk)                    |
| 4. Zerkle (St. Paris Graham)       | 15. Lewe (Springfield NW)               |
| 5. Sheeler (Field)                 | 16. Nassar (Cleveland Central Catholic) |
| 6. Petereit (Olentangy)            | 17. K. Heath (St. Clairsville)          |
| 7. Brucklemyer (Ravenna Southeast) | 18. Pankiewicz (Canfield)               |
| 8. Turner (Bellevue)               | 19. Klitz (Lemon Monroe)                |
| 9. Wacker (Firelands)              | 20. Fair (Vermillion)                   |
| 10. Newman (Steubenville)          | 21. Keller (Roger Bacon)                |
| 11. Seals (Carlisle)               | 22. Trekal (Buckeye Local)              |
| 12. Abram (New Lexington)          | 23. Miklavcic (Buckeye)                 |

This is an absolutely wide open weight class which could be won by as many as a dozen of those listed here. It is the weight class I have probably spent more time and analyzing and agonizing over than any other and yet have come to no real conclusion. I have even considered whether some of the top 160's would be better off here than "banging heads" with Bailey. This indecision is not because of an overabundance of outstanding contenders, but is, in fact, because there are a number of potentially outstanding boys -- all of whom have very similar credentials to this point in their career.

My top pick is Justin Chagnon, the fast-improving upperweight star from Clyde. Chagnon was 31-5 last year and won a bout at Wright State in the first consolation round. Now a junior, he stands 20-0 winning four tourneys, although he has not faced a lot of the top contenders. One exception was his win at Clyde, where he beat Turner, 13-4. One of his major plusses is his consistency, which sees him perform at a high level week after week. That is what will win it here -- a steady, grinding pace.

My second choice, Mike Fickell, also is at Harding which should help the State pairings. As a freshman, Fickell pulled an enormous upset defeating Todd Haverdill in the first round at 119#, and probably costing Lake Catholic the team title in the process. Last year at 140#, he again reached Wright State, but lost early and often, and was quickly eliminated. This year, he is starting to reach Luke-size, spending most of his time at 189#. He has those big legs and hips which are such wonderful wrestling weapons. Ironically, his most impressive bout was a loss at the CIT finals. There he headlocked O'Neill to his back (probably pinning him, in reality), and built up a big lead only to see O'Neill catch him in the end and win 13-9. State qualifier, Petereit, has looked very good and has strong placement potential while Turner and DeLuca are a step behind. DeLuca is a tenacious competitor who'll give most 171's problems.

Funk, too could be a finalist. He was very impressive at Kenston, beating Hampton in overtime and then defeating West Virginia star, Davidson, in the finals. Sheeler, a transfer to field from Uniontown Lake, is also very good. Of course, it doesn't hurt that he has Adeniyi-Bada as a workout partner. He won the Dix, the Dies, and Mogadore, and was 4th at 189# at Medina. Brucklemyer, also a State qualifier, is 3rd best here -- losing to Sheeler in the final at the Dies. He could be a very important factor at this weight. The rest of the field at Firestone does not match up well with those top boys.

Zerkle qualified for Wright State as a freshman 171-pounder -- a most impressive feat. He has the look of a State champion, and this, I suppose, could be the year. However, I may be a little early with that, although he should take the Dayton District title. His only loss was in the Medina finals to Division I State runner-up Groudle, 9-5. I was much impressed with his semi-final win over the veteran Huber. This boy is a real comer. Seals heads the rest of a pretty much non-descript District.

Newman hammered Aldrich 12-4 to win the OVAC and jump up to the first spot on my Jefferson District list. Both Abram and Zurcher also have State-type credentials, although none of them look like they could place here.

189#

**PROJECTED CHAMPION: BEN HAMPTON (RAVENNA)**

**TOP CONTENDERS**

- |                               |                               |
|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| 2. Belli (Columbus DeSales)   | 12. Thorley (Norwalk)         |
| 3. Freeman (Claymont)         | 13. Franks (Canton South)     |
| 4. Ayres (Lake Catholic)      | 14. Pittman (Bellefontaine)   |
| 5. Chasteen (Hamilton Ross)   | 15. Dohse (Ravenna Southeast) |
| 6. Bair (St. Paris Graham)    | 16. Ceccoli (Oak Harbor)      |
| 7. C. Heath (St. Clairsville) | 17. Spuriel (Steubenville)    |
| 8. Clark (Carlisle)           | 18. Kunar (Salem)             |
| 9. Mustake (Beaver Local)     | 19. Dobyngs (Kenton River)    |
| 10. Garrabrant (Big Walnut)   | 20. Ray (Bellevue)            |
| 11. Campbell (Galion)         | 21. Storm (Fairview Park)     |

This looks to be a four cornered battle for the top spot with everyone else well behind this top quartet. The draw could well be unbalanced with Hampton and Ayres both exiting Firestone which could mean that three of the top four would be on one side of the draw. Let's take a look at the top four in a little more detail.

Hampton, a Division I State qualifier, is ferociously strong and a heavy duty pinner. He suffered only three losses last year including a 9-6 defeat at the hands of Harrison in the State Meet. This year he crushed everyone at Solon, pinning the solid Barnett in less than a minute in the finals. His only defeat was to Funk in the semi-finals at Kenston where he lost a 6-4 overtime decision in a down-tempo bout. His great pinning ability should minimize his mat team and leave him fresh for meeting with the other top contenders. Ayres, 4th last year at this weight, had a sensational State tourney. Coming in with seven losses, he defeated Wallick in overtime and then upset defending State runner-up Jordan, also in overtime, 9-7. This was one of the more surprising upsets in the tourney. After getting caught and pinned in the first minute of his semi-final, he came back to defeat Chasteen, 18-6, before losing to Belli by two. This year, he was injured early on and he missed almost the entire season after surgery. However, he will return before Sectionals and the major issue will be his effectiveness level at that time. The rest of the Firestone District is light years behind this duo.

Belli, after losing his District final to Cominsky, also caught fire at the State Meet. He won five bouts to finish 3rd, losing only a 10-8 overtime thriller to eventual State runner-up McKinney. He, too, beat Jordan and ended up with the 3rd place medal after defeating Ayres 6-4. This season he has spent most of his time at 215# with solid success -- including a 26



second pin over Lorain Southview's Johnson, in the DeSales final. He will be used to wrestling big, strong competitors like Hampton. Again, the remainder of the Harding District is not likely to grab anything more than a possible low place.

The fourth contender, Freeman, is perhaps, the most dangerous of them all in any one particular match-up. A prolific pinner, he is armed with a set of unorthodox and fiendish pinning holds that snap up the unwary in virtually no time at all. At his District last year he had four first period falls -- probably a record. Then, at the State Meet, he opened up with falls in 32 seconds and 87 seconds before losing a heartbreaking 6-4 overtime bout to eventual champ Krug. He eventually ended up 5th. This year he won at Barnesville and had 3 falls at Medina -- although O'Neill defeated him 13-8 in the quarter-finals. His District also has State qualifier Mustake who beat Garrabant and Spuriel last year, and was 2nd to the improving Heath at the OVAC. Both these boys have placement potential.

Dayton has the only well-balanced District led by State placer Chasteen. He was 5th last year, but Ayres did defeat him 18-6 in the consolation semi-finals. Bair looked excellent at Medina reaching the finals before being TF'ed by O'Neill. Clark, Pittman, and Dobyns should contend for that last State berth.

215#

## **PROJECTED CHAMPION: BANDELE ADENIYI-BADA (FIELD)**

### TOP CONTENDERS

- |                             |                               |
|-----------------------------|-------------------------------|
| 2. Belaney (Salem)          | 13. Treat (Bellevue)          |
| 3. Pennington (Vermillion)  | 14. Hans (Louisville)         |
| 4. Cominsky (Buckeye Local) | 15. Huart (Dayton Carroll)    |
| 5. Cummins (Springboro)     | 16. McNair (Lexington)        |
| 6. Schmidt (Eaton)          | 17. Dobies (Benedictine)      |
| 7. Pallinger (Avon Lake)    | 18. Polakowski (Little Miami) |
| 8. Frye (Dover)             | 19. Woodruff (Clyde)          |
| 9. Rayburn (Whitehall)      | 20. Fafrak (Twinsburg)        |
| 10. Lane (Wauseon)          | 21. Perras (Millbury Lake)    |
| 11. Affolter (Claymont)     | 22. Wortman (Mason)           |
| 12. Conroy (Chardon)        | 23. Smith (Jackson)           |

Adeniyi-Bada would seem to be one of the surest winners in Division II. He is the defending State champion at 189# and has compiled a long string of successes this year -- broken only by an overtime loss to Knupp in the Medina finals. It was a loss, in my mind, more

occasioned by fatigue than anything else and was, perhaps, a warning signal in terms of conditioning. Interestingly, Adeniyi-Bada finished 4th in his District after forfeiting the consolation finals. He then ripped through the first two rounds at State before winning two-point bouts in both the semi-finals and finals. This year, he had four falls at Medina before losing to Knupp and he has not pushed by many this year.

For a weight class that is new, the field at Firestone is relatively strong. In addition to Adeniyi-Bada, both Belaney and Pallinger should have good placement chances. Belaney, a State qualifier at Heavyweight last year, was just too small to go against some of the enormous big men that you find at States. However, he may find 215# somewhat discomfiting because he has developed a style that works best against heavier, slower opponents. Still, once the adjustment is made, it should be a relief avoiding the 270# behemoths. Pallinger just keeps getting better. This year, he won at Avon Lake and Brunswick (over Mondalek) on his way to a perfect 16-0 record. He'll be a bit of a small 215#, but his skills elevate above most of the competition. Conroy is a big, strong wrestler who'll win a lot of low scoring bouts while Dobies, Hans, and Fafrak will lead the charge for the last spots.

Cominsky, also a returning State qualifier, is another of those superior athletes who excel in all sporting activities. He was the lucky soul who Adeniyi-Bada caught first at Wright State and succumbed by a 15-2 margin. That is not indicative of his skills. He was 3rd at the OVAC at Heavyweight (they didn't have a 215# class), splitting one-point bouts with the 275#, Blackburn. Cominsky, a tall, rangy competitor, should be a natural at 215# and could well place. His colleague at that District will be the pin-happy Frye, who won easily at Smithville with all first period falls. This is a wrestler to watch because he can erase his mistakes with a quick fall. The top contenders will have to be very wary of his skills. Affolter should be the third qualifier with little else behind him.

Pennington heads a very average 215# class at this District. He won two District bouts at 189# last year, but has had a dominating year so far at 215#. He won handily at Galion and Bellevue, and his only two losses were at Medina -- the first on a fall against Adeniyi-Bada. State qualifier (at Heavyweight) Rayburn also returns and should be second best here. The rest of this District is pretty much populated with workmanlike performers who are going to struggle against the top group around the state.

There are two intriguing candidates emerging from Dayton. State qualifier Cummins lost to Adeniyi-Bada in the quarter-finals, 14-8, and then took Cominsky into overtime before losing again. He won handily at Edgewood and would seem to be best here. Schmidt has lost to Cummins three times in the past two years and also dropped a bout to Huart. However, he is explosive as a 19-7 the win over Division I, Kessler, at Wayne amply demonstrated. Huart should get the third spot, with Polakowski the other main contender.

## HVY#

### PROJECTED CHAMPION: JOHN KELLEY (COLUMBUS DE SALES)

#### TOP CONTENDERS

- |  |                                     |
|--|-------------------------------------|
| 2. Lehman (Hubbard)                      | 13. Jones (South Point)             |
| 3. Cowsette (Cleveland Central Catholic) | 14. Mehok (Claymont)                |
| 4. Yates (Kenston)                       | 15. Farris (Bellevue)               |
| 5. Lauvray (Warsaw River View)           | 16. Dunn (Taylor)                   |
| 6. Stoner (Napoleon)                     | 17. Brewer (Lemon Monroe)           |
| 7. Pence (Ravenna Southeast)             | 18. Bernower (Marlington)           |
| 8. Gasier (Jefferson)                    | 19. Musser (Clyde)                  |
| 9. Koprass (Edison Consolidated)         | 20. Walsh (Roger Bacon)             |
| 10. Akers (Benjamin Logan)               | 21. Buday (Norwalk)                 |
| 11. Blackburn (Indian Creek)             | 22. Cain (Olmsted Falls)            |
| 12. Speakman (River Valley)              | 23. Klopfleisch (St. Mary Memorial) |

Unlike Division I and Division III where the choice at Heavyweight is obvious, the Division II picture is very unclear. Part of the reason for that, is that many of the top contenders have wrestled insulated schedules with little activity outside their own particular geographical area. Another factor has been generally inconsistent results, where good wrestlers suddenly have a poor tournament result, making you scratch your head in wonderment. As is so often the case in Division II, this year the title hunt is truly wide open.

Early in the season, John Kelley, the precocious 245# sophomore from Columbus DeSales, seemed a relatively straightforward pick. A District champ and State semi-finalist last year, he appeared to have all the requisite tools to win. But then a 5th place finish at the CIT allowed substantial doubt to creep into the analysis -- especially since Kelley wasn't losing to King and Cowsette, but to Division III Peters and Bebko. I've decided to write it off as an aberration and stick with Kelley, but it cannot help but encourage the competition.

The Harding District is not strong. It had been made weaker by the fact that Stoner was not going to compete, but suddenly his name has appeared once more. A small heavyweight with good mobility, Stoner should be a real factor not only at the District level, but at Wright State, as well. After this top duo, the field is wide open. I've listed Speakman, Farris, Buday, Klopfleisch and Musser, but the latter boy continues to have injury problems which could short circuit his chances.

The District with the most top-to-bottom strength is at Firestone. Should Kelley not respond at States, the eventual champion is likely to come from this District. All five of my top choices could conceivably wear the crown and all have excellent chances of placement. The mammoth Lehman wrestles an out-of-the-way schedule which makes it particularly difficult to judge his progress. Last year, he was District runner-up to eventual State champ, Jarina, but then was eliminated by an unexpected first round fall. Cowsette is deceptively good. A fine athlete, he, too, is a returning State qualifier who this year won the Dies (over Pence) and was 2nd at the CIT [to King]). Yates is also a Wright State alumni, and like the other two, it was one bout and out for him, as well. He was 2nd at Solon and 1st at Kenston, and at 270# he matches up in size with everyone, and he is substantially quicker than most. Pence and Gasier also have good credentials but are, perhaps, a shade behind my top trio. Pence was 2nd to Cowsette at the Dies while Gasier was a semi-finalist at Medina before losing to King on a flagrant misconduct. It prevented me from seeing him meet some of the strong heavyweights in the area.

Lauvray was a State qualifier as a sophomore, but last year was eliminated by a pair of 2-1 losses including one in overtime. This year, he's back at the Jefferson District as the favorite -- although the field is a tightly bunched one. Also involved are the Steubenville transfer Kopras, who has been excellent wrestling for Edison. He reached the OVAC semi-finals before losing to West Virginia champ Underwood. Blackburn, a State qualifier last year, also returns. He was one of the competitors who beat Lauvray last year. He was 4th at the OVAC, getting pinned in the other semi-final by Achebe. The sophomore, Jones, from South Point, is an upcoming star who may not be totally ready for the good heavies that will be here. Since South Point wrestles a lot of West Virginia teams, it's difficult to know how he'll fit in here. The big mystery, though, is Mehok. A State qualifier two years ago, he missed all of the last two seasons with injuries -- including knee surgery. Whether this massive 270-pounder can come back is still not clear -- but if he's healthy and they can flake most of the rust off of him, he could be an immense force. But that's not all. Not ranked but still very dangerous are Grayson (Vincent Warren), Holt (Steubenville), and Ogden (Buckeye Local). A very fine field.

Exactly the opposite is true at the Dayton District. I struggles to find even a short list of possible contenders. Whoever qualifies will find the trip to Wright State will be a short one in both distance and time.

## DIVISION II TEAMS

1. **CLYDE** -- This has been a Top Ten team for more than half a decade, but if they're going to win it all, this has to be the year. The competition will be fierce and close but Lamson, Long, and Chagnon are a very solid core trio. If Arden delivers his normal excellent performance and people like Jennings, Borer, Woodruff or Musser can contribute they should take home that first team title. A huge question mark is Yates' performance at 152#. If he does well, that will shut the door on everyone else.
2. **COLUMBUS DE SALES** -- A sleeper team that should shine at Wright State. Their upper weights of Roy, Fickell, Belli, and Kelley are first-rate and should score a boatload of points. If you factor in the excellent Pusateri and get help from Fox or Valentine, they could defeat anyone. More than any other team, the critical factor is to get everyone to exactly the right weight class.
3. **TWINSBURG** -- A great performance at Wright State vaulted them into second place last year, and it could happen again. They return Waskiewicz, Hegedish, Novario, the Marder brothers and Stopperich. The absolutely key element is to get Waskiewicz and Shawn Marder maximizing their skills at tourney time.
4. **FAIRVIEW PARK** -- Pariano and Knaze are sure to be big scorers, and both could be State champions. However, unlike last year, Gibbs and Legarth have to score State points and somebody (DeFranco, Preto, Storm) have to have a "hot hand" and contribute at States.
5. **COVENTRY** -- The incomparable John McGhee leads the way but 152# is not an easy weight class. He should probably win, anyway, and score a lot of bonus points as well. Then it's up to the lightweights and Tompkins, McClanahan, and Stough are all potentially heavy scorers. If everything went just right, and some of the top teams stumble, they could be in the hunt.
6. **OLMSTED FALLS** -- Another team that could be State team titlists without an uncommon amount of good fortune. Hellickson and Burkhard are solid lightweights while Odon, Atkins, Workman, Bergen, and Funk are tough in the middle. Like DeSales getting everybody at the optimal weight class is critical.
7. **RAVENNA** -- A young team getting better who'll probably be in Division I after this year. Holmes is my choice at 103# and Hampton at 189#, so there are a lot of points right there. Ribelin is very good while Lara and Jordan are tough, and Coe is an outstanding sophomore.
8. **ST. PARIS GRAHAM** -- A team that does not have sure scorers and will have to depend on a team approach. State qualifiers Bair, Zerkle, Seipel, Jacobs, and Fullerton all return with Hess, Lensman and Lute as possible helpers. The primary issue is whether this group can move up from being District scorers to being State scorers.

9. **BELLEVUE** -- To make the Top Ten Levi Spurlock has to repeat as champion while the Didion brothers and Turner have to chip in. Other possibilities like Farris, Ray, Fisher, and Robinson are long-shots.
10. **CLAYMONT** -- Freeman should score heavily at Wright State with his pin-oriented style and Vanderpool, Johnson, Seibert, and Armstrong could really help. I also like Zurcher and believe he could be a key element in their team success. Mehok is a huge (in more ways than one) question mark who could move this team into the Top Five by scoring well in the weak Heavyweight class.
11. **BAY** -- The brothers O'Donaghue and Reuss in combination with Todd could put this team back on the scoreboard at Wright State after a long absence. It will have to come from this quintet because there's nobody else.
12. **LAKE CATHOLIC** -- A healthy Ayres and a successful Steinmetz could score close to 40 points for this rebuilding team. After that, it's potluck with perhaps, one of the upcoming stars able to contribute.

## DIVISION III

### 103#

#### **PROJECTED CHAMP: JUDE SCHMIDT (SANDUSKY ST. MARY)**

#### TOP CONTENDERS:

- |                              |                                    |
|------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| 2. Burnett (Elyria Catholic) | 14. Roby (Martins Ferry)           |
| 3. Kreiner (Archbold)        | 15. N. Creech (Milton Union)       |
| 4. Huxel (Perry)             | 16. Cross (New London)             |
| 5. Beyer (North Union)       | 17. Yonker (Manchester)            |
| 6. Wrobel (Chanel)           | 18. Gray (Columbia Station)        |
| 7. Crane (Utica)             | 19. C. Kline (Mapleton)            |
| 8. Miller (Reading)          | 20. Johns (Lima Central Catholic)  |
| 9. Zoloty (Independence)     | 21. Fillpovich (Bellaire St. John) |
| 10. Fairbanks (Woodmore)     | 22. Bright (Dixie)                 |
| 11. Mesenburg (Edison)       | 23. Gerak (Streetsboro)            |
| 12. Trostle (Miami East)     | 24. Christy (Liberty Union)        |
| 13. Horney (Liberty Center)  | 25. Roberts (Nelsonville York)     |

This should prove to be a most interesting competition. There are a surprising number of wrestlers who remained at 103# this year instead of making the normal progression to 112# or even 119#, which provides substantially more experience than we usually find at this weight. And there are several new faces who are likely to add additional strength to an already strong field.

My choice is the sophomore, Jude Schmidt, who finished a strong 5th after missing the final round by a whisker. Schmidt, a district 3rd, reached the semis at Wright State facing the state placer, Birch. So close was the contest that they entered the 30 seconds overtime with Schmidt down. Birch rode him out to make the finals. This year Schmidt has been hammering everybody, rolling up big scores and dominating. His confidence has to be sky-high, and he'll be very tough to beat.

Kreiner is the only wrestler near Schmidt's level at the Fostoria District. He defeated Schmidt, 10-8, in the District semi-finals, but I don't think he can replicate that feat. Kreiner has been at 112# much of the year, but dropped to 103# for the "A Classic, which he won in a fairly close bout over Fairbanks. He missed State placement by one bout last year. The rest of the field probably does not have State placement potential.

Schmidt's most vigorous challenger is likely to be the sensational freshman, Scott Burnett. The younger brother of four-time champion Eric, he has burst on the high school wrestling scene with a real bang. He won major tourneys at Avon Lake and Tiffin and suffered his only loss, 4-2, to Kulczycki at the CIT. He may be just a shade smaller than Schmidt, but their match-up will undoubtedly be highlight reel material. Three other 103's stand out at Cuyahoga Hts. -- all with substantial experience. Wrobel has been at 103# all year and he has gotten much stronger since last season. He beat the excellent Nettle in the Solon semis while taking a 2nd place there and then was 2nd at North Canton and 4th at Wadsworth. Huxel and Zoloty have both been at 112# all year, but will be high impact items at this lower weight. Huxel slaughtered Division I state champ Tomazz Wilson last year 13-3, but could not get out of the Cuyahoga District. Watch for him. There are a boatload of journeyman 103's below this top quartet. Besides the four I've ranked -- don't forget Firebaugh (West Salem Northwestern, Mast (Cardinal) and Hallis (CVCA).

State qualifiers Beyer and Crane stand out at Jefferson. Each was a quarter-finalist and could well do better this year. Beyer, in particular, has had an outstanding winning several tourneys in dominating fashion. Crane was a rather small 103# last year and Schmidt crushed him 18-3 in the quarters. After this duo only the senior, Roby, has made much of an impression on me. He has a tough cut to this weight so he may be "running down" after a great start.

Miller and Trostle are returning state qualifiers out of Dayton, but this district traditionally struggles at the Division III level. Miller may prove an exception here, but he has some convincing to do first. Currently he is 15-0 with 11 falls in his own area, but how that will transfer to a state wide context is still suspect.



112#

**PROJECTED CHAMP: LAMONT TUCKER (MARTINS FERRY)**

TOP CONTENDERS:

- |                                    |                              |
|------------------------------------|------------------------------|
| 2. E. Anderson (Bellaire St. John) | 14. Lopez (Woodmore)         |
| 3. J. Creech (Milton Union)        | 15. Cecil (Elyria Catholic)  |
| 4. Cunningham (Delta)              | 16. K. Timbrook (Hicksville) |
| 5. Walz (Ayresville)               | 17. Meyer (Reading)          |
| 6. Cullen (Margaretta)             | 18. Hall (Columbus Academy)  |
| 7. Chernett (Beachwood)            | 19. Kirby (Madeira)          |
| 8. Hoffman (Fremont St. Joseph)    | 20. Firem (Chanel)           |
| 9. Kasarda (Streetsboro)           | 21. Darr (Crestview)         |
| 10. Stover (Brookville)            | 22. Johnson (Triad)          |
| 11. Stange (Bishop Ready)          | 23. Beetham (Cadiz)          |
| 12. Willis (New Albany)            | 24. Bein (Batavia)           |
| 13. Thomas (Perry)                 | 25. Jefferis (Bainesville)   |

I chose Tucker to win the Division II state crown at 103# last year, but eventual champ Spurlock proved too tough in the semi-finals taking him out 11-6. It was Spurlock's closest bout and Tucker finished 3rd -- one spot above his placement as a sophomore. Now Martins Ferry has dropped to Division III, and Tucker has one final chance to win it all. That loss to Spurlock was his only defeat in the last two years, and he has wrestled some rough competition. At the recent OVAC he took the title at 119# by defeating two-time West Virginia state champ, Jason Taylor, a competitor who split two sensational matches with Luke Workman at Kenston, and who won the 119# title there this year with ease. Tucker is very, very good, and should take the title in this, his senior year.

The one big stumbling block will be in his own district. Eric Anderson was State 103# champ two years ago and last year was 3rd at 112# after an 8-7 semi-final upset by Ralph. I'm not sure whether Anderson will choose to compete here at his certified weight or move to 119# where he would certainly be a top contender, as well. Earlier this year at Bellaire St. John, he took Tucker into overtime before losing 4-2. He won the OVAC at 112# while Tucker took the title at 119# as Ohio, incidentally, swept all 13 OVAC weight classes. Should they both be at 112# they'll be in opposite halves which would set up some finale. There is a lot of good talent below those two that will be overshadowed by their individual battle. State qualifiers Willis, Beetham, and Jefferis are here along with the excellent Hall, Stange, and Abbott (Beallsville). It will be a real donnybrook for the last two spots.

The Cuyahoga Hts. District is not as strong as we generally see. Kasarda and Chernett are both former state qualifiers with good credentials. However, Kasarda qualified two years ago and then was eliminated at districts last years by Mescan and Ralph -- the two state finalists at this weight. Kasarda can't draw that unlucky a pairing again, and should qualify easily. I may not have rated him high enough at this time. Chernett got the last qualifying spot at 103# last year -- and after a first round loss to Cullen, swept all the way to the consolation finals before losing to Cullen again, and finishing 4th. In that run he beat Willis, Hoffman and Schmidt. After these two there is a chasm that is likely not to be bridged by the remainder of the field. The experienced Thomas and the freshman Cecil are possibilities for the last two spots with Firem, Triscari (Cuyahoga Hts.) and Gancarz (Jackson Milton) as other thoughts. Missing here is former State 3rd place winner, Terry English, of Rittman. Rittman is not listed on my team rosters and so they may have dropped the sport. As to where that leaves English, I do not know.

Creech, 6th at 103#, heads the Dayton District. He is an excellent wrestler who could be a potential finalist although to do that he would have to defeat either Tucker or Anderson. He was 2nd this year at the GMVWA and has won several smaller tournaments. He is far ahead of the remainder of the field at this district.

As is generally the case, the Fostoria District has half a dozen potential place winners. Cunningham was the District runner up at this weight, but lost a one-point heartbreaker to state runner-up Nightengale in the first round and then dropped a close bout in the consolations. He was 3rd at the GMVWA, but dropped an 11-1 decision to Creech in the semi-finals. Walz was 5th last year after finishing behind Cunningham at districts. A 4.0 student, he combines an analytical approach with good athletic ability to win. He lost to Anderson in the consolation semi-finals 4-1 last year. He won the "A" Classic over Lopez and was champ at Stryker, as well. He and Cunningham should be close. Cullen was 3rd at 103# last year and apparently made several efforts to return to that weight without success. It shouldn't be a problem since he'll do very well at 112#. He has had some early season losses, but won the SBC duals in impressive fashion including a victory over Fabian. Hoffman, also a state qualifier, always seems to start the year in great fashion and again did so this year with the MVP at Northwood. Throw in Lopez and Timbrook and you have six good competitors trying for five spots.

119#

**PROJECTED CHAMP: BOB TUCKER (MARTINS FERRY)**

**TOP CONTENDERS:**

- |                              |                                   |
|------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| 2. Ralph (Chanel)            | 15. Flora (Brookville)            |
| 3. Myers (Manchester)        | 16. Cacchio (Bishop Ready)        |
| 4. Nightengale (Wellsville)  | 17. Donahue (Bellaire St. John)   |
| 5. Lopez (Genoa)             | 18. Wilson (Waynedale)            |
| 6. Kern (Liberty Central)    | 19. LaCure (Greeneview)           |
| 7. Timmons (Lakota)          | 20. Zizzo (Triad)                 |
| 8. Marion (Wellington)       | 21. Pugh (Waterford)              |
| 9. Dunstan (Elyria Catholic) | 22. Gray (Mississinawa Valley)    |
| 10. Hirt (Reading)           | 23. J. Grime (Archbold)           |
| 11. Springer (Milan Edison)  | 24. Schron (Chagrin Falls)        |
| 12. Ford (Delta)             | 25. Davis (Utica)                 |
| 13. Fein (Beachwood)         | 26. Odenweller (Delphus St. John) |
| 14. Gibson (Northmor)        |                                   |

I originally thought that two-time State champ Kyle Gleckler would participate at this weight class -- especially since he certified here. However, it now seems certain (whatever that may actually mean that he will compete at 125#. That leaves the door wide open for any number of potential competitors to win it all here. We may even some 112's decide that they would rather compete here than battle Lamont Tucker.

However, they'll face another Tucker obstacle at this weight. I don't know if cousins have even won back-to-back titles in the same year, but it could happen here. Bob Tucker has been at 125# much of the year with solid success. He lost an overtime bout to the excellent Ewing in the OVAC and Barnesville finals and devastated the field to win at Bellaire St. John. A District champ and Division II State qualifier last year, I rate his chances just a little higher than anyone else in the field -- and a closely matched group it is.

State runner-up Nightengale will challenge Tucker at Jefferson as well as at Wright State. He was 2nd to Anderson at 103# in 1993, and then lost to Anderson in the consolation finals to finish 4th at 112# last year. He always seems to be at his best in State level competition, and this year should be no exception. It should be a plus that MacKinnon transferred to Wellsville, providing Nightengale with a good workout partner. Now that Gibson has moved back to 119#, he should be a clear choice for one of the two remaining State berths.

Five return State qualifiers pepper the 119# lineup at Cuyahoga Hts. State 112# runner-up Ralph returns for his sophomore year after a terrific debut last season. After an early district loss, he breezed through four consolation bouts to reach Wright State. Entering that meet with nine losses, he squeaked by the excellent Lopez and the defending State champ Anderson before losing to the powerful Mescan. Again this year Ralph has had a few shaky moments. He was champ over a weak Solon field, but was 2nd at North Canton and 6th at Wadsworth after a consolation round injury. Healthy now, he'll play a major role at this class.

There are some strong contenders at Fostoria, too. There are five potential placers -- all of whom are rated in my top twelve. Lopez was 6th last year at 112# and as I mentioned missed beating Ralph by a single point. This year his high point was defeating Division I Duffey to win at Genoa to go along with his Southview title. Kern has come on strong in his sophomore year, after having won two District matches as a freshman. He was 2nd at 125# at Hudson including a 12 point win over Stopperich and also won handily at the "A" Classic. He'll bear close watching as the season progresses. Timmons is down a weight class and has won at VanBuren, Northwood, Fremont St. Joe, and the Mackey. He is poised in my opinion, to move to the next level -- which would mean at least a place finish at Wright State. Springer, down from Division II, is a tough competitor. He won at Bellevue and should be able to compete with any of this group. Two-time State qualifier Ford is still getting comfortable up two weight classes, but has substantial talent. His 14-2 loss in the first round was a real puzzle, and he has yet to win at the State level. I've also listed Odenweller and Grime but Sawmiller (Spencerville) and Weltle (Sandusky St. Mary) are at that same level.

Its a nice competitive group at Dayton. State qualifier Hirt won a bout at States last year, and should do at least as well this year. He is 17-2 so far with at least two tourney titles this year. Right behind him are State alternate Flora and LaCure with Zizzo, Gray and Lathan (Madeira) another step behind. Except for Hirt this group could well struggle with the qualifiers from other areas.

125#

**PROJECTED CHAMP: KYLE GLECKLER (EVERGREEN)**

TOP CONTENDERS:

- |                                    |                              |
|------------------------------------|------------------------------|
| 2. Muzykoski (Licking Valley)      | 13. MacKinnon (Wellsville)   |
| 3. Fry (Manchester)                | 14. Hall (Northmor)          |
| 4. Cochrane (Milan Edison)         | 15. Miller (Brookville)      |
| 5. Lewis (Union Local)             | 16. Robb (Barnesville)       |
| 6. Tonsing (Aurora)                | 17. Hector (Elyria Catholic) |
| 7. Sachs (Lakota)                  | 18. Winkler (Hannibal River) |
| 8. Tierney (Lima Central Catholic) | 19. Idell (Oakwood)          |
| 9. Hopkins (Delta)                 | 20. Marlowe (Woodmore)       |
| 10. Gregovich (Williamsburg)       | 21. Campbell (Reading)       |
| 11. J. Smith (Sandusky St. Mary)   | 22. Schuster (Oberlin)       |
| 12. Joyce (Chanel)                 | 23. Beal (Wickliffe)         |

The overwhelming favorite at this weight class will be Kyle Gleckler. As a freshman he was 6th at 112# and then as a sophomore he pulled his monumental Bo Wilkovich upset and took the title at 119#. As a junior he repeated at 119# taking a 5-3 final from Zeid. This year he apparently will be at 125#, and will face some vigorous competition. He has won everything except for his 5th place finish at the Ironman, where he was pinned by MVP Emili, and lost also to Plouse. His biggest problem may be a balky shoulder which could hamper him in the last few tough matches.

The Fostoria District has a large group of State qualifiers waiting to ambush Gleckler. Cochrane was a Division II State qualifier last year, but it was one bout and out at Wright State. He has been a high placer at every tourney entered. The sophomore Sachs is a real "comer". In fact, Lakota has a great group of young lightweights who, next year, should be pushing that squad toward a team title. Sachs qualified at 112# last year and got bounced by State champ Mescan, but then lost to placer Luke Walz by only 2 points. This year he was 3rd at Fremont St. Joe, 2nd at Clyde and champ at the Mackey and Van Buren. Like Timmons, he's looking for a breakthrough win. Hopkins and Jeff Smith are also returning state qualifiers who have been less visible this year. They both have placement opportunities here. Marlowe, Koch (Crestview), and Adams (Hicksville) are at a separate, lower level than the top quintet. The real wild card is Tierney who like many of the Lime Central wrestlers runs hot and cold. If he has a torrid set of weekends he will push everyone.

While the Fostoria District has some solid wrestlers the two top threats to Gleckler are Muzykoski and Fry. Muzykoski, in particular, needs to be considered. Last year he opened the season with 44 consecutive wins before losing a 4-2 District final to eventual champ Kinzel.

Then at Wright State he lost a semi-final battle to Tompkins and finished 4th. I was very surprised that he came back for his junior year at 125#, but he has been perfect once again to this point. Right behind is State placer Jim Bob Lewis who was 4th at 119#, losing to Gleckler, 5-1, in the semi-finals. This year he has been 2nd at Bellaire St. John, and 4th at Barnesville and the OVAC. Not quite the level of performances we might expect, but Lewis has always been good late in the season. Right behind this duo is the improving Hall who has come down to 125# after an impressive set of successes at 130#. He recently defeated the excellent Jason Perry.

The other major threat is the aggressive Fry. A transfer from Coventry, he failed to qualify in Division II losing to state champion Haverdill and the brilliant Bristow. This year he was the champion at Smithville, Chippewa, St. Vincent and 2nd at the Dies to Aaron Cooper. At Medina he was a semi-finalist -- losing to Keaton Anderson -- and finished a strong 3rd overall. He is a scorer and Gleckler and Muzykoski will need to be at the top of their game to beat him. State qualifier Tonsing also returns and he again, will be an important factor in Aurora's team chances. The rest of this weight class is not likely to worry most of the state field.

The Dayton District doesn't figure to play much a role at Wright State. Gregovich might have low placement potential, but no one here is likely to keep the good boys awake at night with worry.

130#

**PROJECTED CHAMP: BRIAN ROSKOVICH (BRIDGEPORT)**

TOP CONTENDERS:

- |                                      |                                  |
|--------------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| 2. Grubach (Chanel)                  | 15. Jefferis (Barnesville)       |
| 3. Murdock (Evergreen)               | 16. Zizzo (Triad)                |
| 4. Davlin (Sandusky St. Mary)        | 17. Reineck (Fremont St. Joseph) |
| 5. Jones (Utica)                     | 18. Lonz (Norwalk St. Paul)      |
| 6. Kessen (Lima Central Catholic)    | 19. Wiederhold (Blanchester)     |
| 7. Yonikus (Lakota)                  | 20. Sies (New Albany)            |
| 8. Hahlen (Jackson Milton)           | 21. Froehlich (Coldwater)        |
| 9. Ingrahm (Streetsboro)             | 22. Riggerbach (Smithville)      |
| 10. Clifton (Jonathan Alder)         | 23. Ruhl (Northmor)              |
| 11. Martin (West Salem Northwestern) | 24. Sanders (Miami East)         |
| 12. A. Kline (Mapleton)              | 25. Contreras (North Baltimore)  |
| 13. Jed Grime (Ayersville)           | 26. Farrell (Brooklyn)           |
| 14. Snyder (Mechanicsburg)           |                                  |

This is a weight class that needed Sherlock Holmes since two of its most important elements were shrouded in mystery. It also boasts a field of great depth with every district having more wrestlers with state credentials than qualifying spots.

The first mystery dealt with defending State champ Tom Tye. My records showed only one tournament performance and then I drew a blank. Apparently, he is no longer at Summit Country and probably will not participate this year. That means that Brian Roskovich, a three-time State placer who won yet another OVAC title this year, is my top choice. Last year he was 3rd at 119# and finished with a 40-2 record. I think he has the style that can beat anyone, especially if he can get an early lead. He is a tremendous rider and can turn from the top position. He's had a sensational four-year career and the only thing left undone is a State championship.

The other mystery was Ethan Grubach. For the past two years he has been an outstanding wrestler at VASJ, but apparently is anxious to transfer to Chanel. As often happens in such situations, red tape of some kind interfered, and of this writing Grubach has not yet appeared in the Chanel line-up. Under the assumption that he will eventually wrestle at 130#, he will provide with tremendous impetus for a State team title. Last year his three tourney losses were to the boys who finished 2nd, 3rd, and 4th in the Division II State tourney. Again, assuming he is in good form he is potential finalist at this weight class.

There are some good-looking wrestlers at Dayton despite the absence of Tye. Snyder was a State qualifier at 135# last year and apparently will move down to 130#. He is a pinner who is always looking for the quick fall. Also here is State qualifier Zizzo who has been outstanding again this year winning a number of smaller tourneys. Right behind this top duo are a threesome of Wiederhold, Bright, and Sanders who are also very good. My expectation is that several of these may move up to the far weaker 135# by Sectional weekend.

Roskovich also has some tough competition at the Jefferson District. State qualifier Jones was one win away from placing at 130# last year, and has spent most of this year at 135#. Jefferis also looked good losing in the OVAC final by just 2-0 to Roskovich. He was a state qualifier at 112# last year but has spent much of this year at 135#. Clifton was 6th two year ago but did not place in 1994. While I saw his name early in the year he has not wrestled recently so his status is unclear. Nevertheless should he compete he will be an important factor at this district. Sies and Ruhl are two experienced seniors whose perseverance could pay off in a state berth.

At Cuyahoga Hts., Grubach (if he is there) will be met by some good competitors. State qualifier Hahlen surprised some people with a great District performance last year, finishing 3rd and losing only to Tonsing. This year he has been a power in the Youngstown area and should be looking for State placement points this year. We talked at 119# about cousins winning State titles in adjacent weights and I guess it could happen here with Aaron and Corey Kline -- but this combination has far higher odds. Nonetheless, this Kline has shown great improvement, with a title at Black River and a 2nd at Hillsdale and Tri-West. State qualifier Martin, like Jefferis, was also at States at 112# and has gone up three weight classes with little loss of effectiveness. Not ranked but contenders are Walker (Manchester) and Ridenour (Perry).

State place winner Davlin may have won the team title for Sandusky St. Mary last year with his huge 5-3, first round win over Tonsing. That led to a 3rd place finish for Davlin while Tonsing went two and out. Right behind him is the dynamic Kessen who like the little girl with the curl can be very good (and, sometimes, otherwise). He was 5th at the CIT, but won the "A" Classic easily and was a strong 3rd at GMVWA. State qualifier Yonikus and Grime are also placement material and Reineck could be a surprise here. Nice solid group, as usual at Fostoria.



135#

**PROJECTED CHAMP: COREY KLINE (MAPLETON)**

TOP CONTENDERS:

- |                                   |                                  |
|-----------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| 2. Wrobel (Chanel)                | 14. Curvall (Summit Country Day) |
| 3. Jason Forward (Archbold)       | 15. Brumbaugh (Miami East)       |
| 4. Partlow (Shenendoah)           | 16. Marcin (Aurora)              |
| 5. Saif (West Salem Northwestern) | 17. Wasiniak (Norwalk St. Paul)  |
| 6. Waites (Brookville)            | 18. Lacy (Hannibal River)        |
| 7. Horvath (Tuslaw)               | 19. Abbott (Delta)               |
| 8. Aiello (Bishop Ready)          | 20. Shaw (Perry)                 |
| 9. Blanton (Sandusky St. Mary)    | 21. Heator (Evergreen)           |
| 10. Logsdon (Fremont St. Joseph)  | 22. Walp (Springfield NE)        |
| 11. Boyd (Lima Central Catholic)  | 23. Padgelek (Martins Ferry)     |
| 12. Amrose (Northmor)             | 24. Sowles (Hicksville)          |
| 13. Woodland (Grandview Hts.)     |                                  |

During the past three years Corey Kline has been one of the shining lights in Division III wrestling. He was State runner-up as a sophomore and then won it all last year at 135#. He isn't one to artificially protect his record. You'll find him at the Top Gun and Medina, and he is a finalist there just as he is in all the smaller tourneys Mapleton wrestles. He will deservedly be a heavy favorite at this weight, but there is more than enough good competition to keep him interested. The only people who have defeated him in the last two years have been State finalists (Silverstein, Denholm, and Clement) so it will take a super quality effort to upset him. Perhaps his most impressive win this year was at 140# when he thumped the excellent Division I wrestler Josh Bryant 10-2. It proved to me once again how good he really is.

There are three potential obstacles standing between Kline and a second individual title. One of them, Wrobel, is also at Cuyahoga Hts. and should be away from him in the draw at Wright State. Wrobel was 3rd at States last year at 130# after a District runner-up finish. He came on strong at the end of last year after losing seven times before Sectionals. This year he has been champ at Troy, Solon, and North Canton and was 2nd to Ianaggi at Wadsworth. One potential plus for Wrobel is that his coach, Graham Coghill, is excellent at seeing opponents' weak points. For example, Wrobel lost to Skoczen at sectionals and districts, but took his measure at States. This year he could see Kline at districts and at Wright State. Behind this duo are two other State qualifiers -- the always pinning Saif and the relatively unknown Horvath. Neither won a bout at States last year. However, both have good skills. Saif, for example, has won at Hopewell-Loudon, Chippewa, and Black River, but Kline defeated him 10-4 at the

Tri-West. Last year Wrobel defeated him 17-7 in the District semi-finals. Horvath was 3rd at the Dies after winning early at Hillsdale.

A second possible problem for Kline is returning State qualifier Jason Forward. Forward won two bouts at Wright State last year and has built on that base by winning the "A" Classic with 3 falls. Now that Murdock has gone to 130# the rest of this district is not particularly strong. Blanton, Logsdon, and Boyd are certainly better than average, but they are not threats not the front-runners. I've also listed Wasiniak, Heator, Abbott and Sowles for the last spot with Boger (Sherwood Fairview) and Dangler (Woodmore) as potential opportunists. Two potential sidelights might be the emergence of Abbott -- who I ranked #19 -- into a higher level of achievement as he continues to improve. Interestingly, here is the possible emergence of Quaintance (Lakota) at this weight, after being at 103# last year. The excellent Lakota lightweights will force him to go that high just to make the team, and he will have to beat out Schultz (Lakota) if that it is to happen.

The third obstacle to Kline could well be the Eastern District star, Jake Partlow. He and his teammate "Boogie" Holstein, both certified at 130#, but I expect Partlow here and believe Holstein may well choose 140# as his most comfortable niche. Partlow is tough. Last year he was a District runner-up and State qualifier at 130#. This year he "bombed" State qualifier Jefferis 17-6, to win at Barnesville, and was a finalist at Medina before losing to Heskett. He lost a one point heartbreaker in the OVAC semis, but came back to defeat the West Virginia State champ for 3rd. The group behind him is not a particularly distinguished one, and will struggle at Wright State.

Unless I've totally overlooked someone, the competition level at Dayton may not be quite as high as elsewhere around the state. One exception is Wes Waites who was 30-8 last year at 140#. In district action he won two bouts and his two losses were 12-11 (to state qualifier Biribilas) and 14-13 (to Quinn). He has again performed at a high level this year and certainly cannot be overlooked for a place. Like Tye, Curvall wrestles very few bouts that I read about in Ohio. So, again, he is something of an unknown. He may be far better (or worse) than rated here. However, someone who until recently worked out with Tye on an everyday basis surely must improve very quickly to survive. I do know he won the Conner (Kentucky) Invitational and the Reading Invitational with a 11-9 victory over rated Division II wrestler Felts.

140#

**PROJECTED CHAMP: CORY ELLSWORTH (BRIDGEPORT)**

TOP CONTENDERS:

- |                                |                           |
|--------------------------------|---------------------------|
| 2. Jeff Forward (Archbold)     | 14. Wisener (Lincolnview) |
| 3. Berry (Newbury)             | 15. Bentley (Johnstown)   |
| 4. Brush (Elyria Catholic)     | 16. Burden (Oakwood)      |
| 5. Gilbert (Belpre)            | 17. Sax (Milan Edison)    |
| 6. Holstein (Shenendoah)       | 18. Juszli (Manchester)   |
| 7. Risner (Versailles)         | 19. Barnes (Blanchester)  |
| 8. Bomer (Lakota)              | 20. McAuley (Chanel)      |
| 9. Pilarczyk (Cardinal)        | 21. Brodman (Carey)       |
| 10. Hite (Norwalk St. Paul)    | 22. Kagey (Liberty Union) |
| 11. Hostetler (Tuslaw)         | 23. Copeland (Brookville) |
| 12. Whelan (Sandusky St. Mary) | 24. Wurm (CVCA)           |
| 13. Quinn (Miami East)         | 25. Finfrock (Covington)  |

This should be one of the most interesting and competitive weight class in the Division III competition. There are all kinds of intriguing competitors clustered here, with a half dozen being able to provide good reasons why they might be possible winners. One other plus is that all four districts have strong contenders here and we can expect some high level wrestling from the quarter-finals onward.

My choice is someone who certainly was not at the top of my pre-season lists. And yet, Corey Ellsworth has wrestled so brilliantly that he just cannot be overlooked for the top spot. A State qualifier last year he ended up 4th after splitting two bouts with Jeff Forward -- someone he may well see much more of again this year. Those two bouts still puzzle me. Ellsworth won the championship round 11-6, but got massacred in the consolation final 20-6. This year he won in a 90-second final at Bellaire St. John, and took 54 seconds to win the final at Barnesville. And then at the OVAC he opened with four falls including one over the redoubtable Holstein, and then defeated West Virginia State champ Cliff Ward. That is MVP material -- although he didn't get it there. But he did win it after taking the title at the 28-team New Lexington Tourney. Right now, he has to have momentum and confidence riding with him.

However, Forward cannot be overlooked. That 20-6 win sticks in my mind and, quite frankly, Jeff has been at the top of this list several times as I update it week-to-week. More of a point scorer than Ellsworth, he has lost twice at 145#, once to State runner-up Mengerink at the "A" Classic and once to the high-powered LeBeau, 19-14, at the Beavercreek final. The third meeting of this twosome could well be for the State title.

Ellsworth will exit an excellent district. State qualifier Gilbert dominates in the Southeast and he is certainly good enough to place. After a convincing first round win at Wright State over Baden he lost a one-pointer to eventual State finalist Chad Rosin. Gilbert's big problem is a dearth of solid competition, but he does benefit from having Grimm and Chevalier as workout partners, and this district should toughen him up for Wright State. Holstein is also a returning State qualifier and we may find him anyplace between 130# and 145#. He did win two bouts at States last year, and was a semi-finalist at 145# at Medina while finishing 4th. Bentley is the best the Central District has to offer at this weight, and he'll fit right in with the no-holds barred competition.

After Forward the competition drops off precipitously at the Fostoria District. Next best is probably State qualifier Bomer who returns at this weight class but his results leave that designation open to question. While he has placed in five tourneys this year he has won none and was 5th at Van Buren in a field substantially less difficult than the upcoming District. Hite, Whelan, Wisener, and Sax are all good possibilities here, but pairings are likely to be crucial. One to watch for is Wisener who was a State alternate at this weight last year. He was solid in winning at Van Buren. Besides Brodman, long shots here are Dorley (Lima Central Catholic), Studenka (Evergreen) and Kill (Delphos St. John).

The sophomore Berry returns at 140# after a 28-6 freshman season. A fine football player he has loads of ability and the return of the wily Cliff Radie as coach will undoubtedly help him. Right with him is state qualifier Brush who was so impressive most of the year. He could well be at 145# this year, but I've rated him at his present certification weight. He caught my eye at last year's CIT where he finished a strong 3rd. He built that into State qualification at Districts, and ended with a 6th place finish at Wright State after making the semi-finals. This year he won at Avon Lake and Columbia, but was 4th at Tiffin and 5th at the CIT, all at 145#. The rest of the field is a clear step behind the top twosome, but, I think, Pilarczyk and Hostetler have placement chances as well.

Risner returns to the weight class where he was District champ last year. He won one bout at Wright State before losing twice -- one on a fall to Berry. He was 3rd at Graham, losing a close bout to the excellent Jacobs. The rest of the groups is also very competitive with Quinn and Burden, not missing State action by much last year. An apparent no-show at this competition will be State qualifier Hunt (Covington), who apparently will wrestle no more this year.

145#

**PROJECTED CHAMP: NICK MENGERINK (CAREY)**

TOP CONTENDERS:

- |                                      |                                  |
|--------------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| 2. Lester (CVCA)                     | 13. Sedivec (Elyria Catholic)    |
| 3. Riser (Martins Ferry)             | 14. Games (Brookville)           |
| 4. Kelly (Milton Union)              | 15. King (Wickliffe)             |
| 5. Flynn (Aurora)                    | 16. Kirian (Mohawk)              |
| 6. Penrod (Archbold)                 | 17. Jacks (Johnstown Northridge) |
| 7. Boucher (Newark Catholic)         | 18. Emerson (Waynedale)          |
| 8. Bouch (West Salem Northwestern)   | 19. Dick (Reading)               |
| 9. Jake Davlin (Sandusky St. Mary)   | 20. Hampton (Hicksville)         |
| 10. Patthoff (Lima Central Catholic) | 21. C. Roskovich (Bridgeport)    |
| 11. Grimm (Belpre)                   | 22. Goodpaster (Deer Park)       |
| 12. Sintobin (Delta)                 | 23. Holmes (Seneca East)         |

This is not one of the stronger weight classes in Division III. It is possible that several of 140#'s may opt to participate here, although, in most cases there does not seem to be clear strategic reasons to do that.

My choice is the 130# State runner-up last year Nick Mengerink. This a wrestler, who by next year will be an eagerly sought senior as he arcs upward on the learning curve. Last year as a sophomore he made it to the finals before being shut out 3-0 by Tye. Now in a real growth spurt he is a tall, wiry, 145# with excellent ability as he gains in strength. Mengerink crushed Jeff Forward, 9-3 in the "A" Classic final at this weight, and won easily at Van Buren, Carey, and Hopewell-Loudon. The interesting bouts were at Medina, where Mengerink, perhaps unwisely, made the tough cut to the brutally tough 140# class. Here he lost to my Division I choice Harris, 4-2, and the wickedly tough Hartzler 12-10 in overtime.

Mengerink should dominate the Fostoria District. State qualifier Penrod currently at 152#, returns with wins at the "A" Classic and Beaver creek, and he looks to be second-best here. However, I don't see him as a real challenge to Mengerink. After that things get real nebulous with people like Patthoff, Jake Davlin, and Sintobin as possibly part of the qualifying mix. Kirian, a recent winner over Patthoff has interjected himself into this tangle finishing 2nd at VanBuren -- the same spot he finished at Hopewell-Loudon. He was injured at the "A" Classic and did not place. He lost a District OT bout to Milligan last year which provides a good read on how good he can be. Missing from all of this is State quarter-finalist Cory Smith (Sandusky St. Mary), who was injured in early January and will miss the rest of the season. It is a testament to

the depth of Sandusky St. Mary -- a school with 93 boys in the top three grades -- that they can replace him with the caliber of a wrestler like Jake Davlin.

Mengerink's toughest competition could well be Lester, who finished 3rd at this class in 1994. A third place District winner at Cuyahoga Hts. after an 18-9 loss to Miller, he went to Wright State and was most impressive. He won four consolation bouts -- three times scoring in double figures. This year he was a wild card entry at 152# in the Ironman Tourney and finished a very credible 4th, and then won the Dies at 145#. The question is whether he can handle Mengerink's somewhat unorthodox style. Right behind him is State qualifier Flynn who recently defeated Division II State runner-up Mike Waskiewicz. This could be an excellent class for Flynn not only for individual placement, but also in terms of the team competition. I would also place Bouch at the same general level as Lester and Flynn, but after that the last spot is wide open. I've also listed Sedivec, King, and Emerson, but Wright (Columbia Station) and Wondolewski (Chanel) are right in that same category.

Kelly is the other Division II State qualifier who'll be competing here and he will be a rugged foe. He won two bouts at Wright State missing placement by a single win. This year he was 3rd at Graham and 4th at the GMVWA -- both in tough weight classes while winning two smaller tourneys. The rest of the district is nowhere near his level with those listed plus Kueneke (West Liberty Salem) as marginally better than everybody else.

152#

**PROJECTED CHAMP: SHAWN EBBERT (CARDINAL)**

**TOP CONTENDERS:**

- |                                  |                                 |
|----------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| 2. Berquist (Chanel)             | 14. Helwig (Licking Valley)     |
| 3. Miller (Pymatuning Valley)    | 15. Ganzhorn (Aurora)           |
| 4. Milligan (Lakota)             | 16. Bisel (Northmor)            |
| 5. Davis (Sandusky St. Mary)     | 17. Conforti (Oakwood)          |
| 6. Chevalier (Belpre)            | 18. Wine (Clearfork)            |
| 7. Baden (Archbold)              | 19. Kinnison (Martins Ferry)    |
| 8. Ehrenbeit (Chagrin Falls)     | 20. Bergman (Versailles)        |
| 9. Giebel (Streetboro)           | 21. Sprow (Ayersville)          |
| 10. Reineck (Fremont St. Joseph) | 22. May (Shenendoah)            |
| 11. Fry (Indian Hills)           | 23. Wohleber (Columbia Station) |
| 12. Speelman (Edgerton)          | 24. Pedroza (Tinora)            |
| 13. Kirkendall (Blanchester)     | 25. Clark (Springfield NE)      |

There is a bit of risk in choosing Ebbert to win here at 152#, not because his skills are questioned, but because he still may choose to compete at 160#. However, I believe a careful analysis will indicate that this is probably the optimal weight class -- at least from a strategic viewpoint -- for him. Ebbert was at exactly the right class last year as he copped the Cuyahoga Hts. District at 160#, and then ripped through the State Meet winning both his semi-final and final by a 10-5 margin. This year he has wrestled a tough schedule. He was a semi-finalist at the Ironman -- losing in overtime -- and ending up 4th. Then at Medina he beat Risner 7-5 in the semis before losing -- in a battle of State champs -- to Overholt in the much anticipated final. He killed a weak field at Toledo Waite with four successive falls. This is a dynamite district. Not only is Ebbert here, but so is State qualifier Miller who was 3rd at Medina, State runner-up Berquist and State qualifiers Giebel and Ehrenbeit. In addition, Ganzhorn and Wohleber could also be factors here. You've got to believe that Berquist and Miller will join Ebbert on his way to Wright State, that Giebel and/or Ehrenbeit might move up to 160#. Watch for Ganzhorn who has the ability to beat very good people.

The participants at Fostoria should provide for a deep and evenly matched field. State qualifiers, Milligan, Davis, and Baden are very closely matched and will probably take turns beating one another as the rest of the season unfolds. Davis, for example, was essentially a substitute who wrestled brilliantly to reach Wright State last year, and who this year has had some significant successes. He was the OW at the Panther Classic with wins over Division I state placer Coleman and Division I state qualifier Angelos. And, yet, he lost 9-1 to Wineman at Fremont St. Joe. Go figure. Baden was a State qualifier as a freshman and has won the "A"

Classic and Beavercreek this year at 160#. Reineck handled Milligan at Van Buren and, perhaps, deserves a higher rating. With this field, he'll have plenty of chance to prove it.

Chevalier, like Ebbert, could be moving down from his State qualification weight of last year. Like Baden he was a freshman qualifier -- and he won two bouts at Wright State and missed placement by a single point. I think that he could surmount the geographic handicaps on his wrestling progress, and become a dominating State wrestler. He won't need to be nearly that good to defeat the rest of the field at this district.

Two State qualifiers Fry and Kirkendall head a relatively strong Dayton District. they both have had excellent success in their own area, but have yet to show that they compete on anything like even terms with those qualifiers from other districts. In general, the Dayton Division III District has struggled at the State level. Last year 5 of their 39 qualifiers placed and they compiled an overall record of 29-50. That may begin to change -- as it already has in Division I and Division II -- this year.



160#

**PROJECTED CHAMP: JOSH SCHROEDER (AURORA)**

TOP CONTENDERS:

- |                                     |                               |
|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| 2. Swanbeck (Huron)                 | 13. Hudson (Malvern)          |
| 3. Risner (Tiffin Calvert)          | 14. Venrick (Springfield NE)  |
| 4. Stephen (Barnesville)            | 15. Palomo (Margaretta)       |
| 5. Osborne (Dixie)                  | 16. Leahy (Evergreen)         |
| 6. Stull (Lima Central Catholic)    | 17. Miller (Versailles)       |
| 7. Thompson (Licking Valley)        | 18. Rosser (Nelsonville York) |
| 8. Legros (West Salem Northwestern) | 19. Overmyer (Woodmore)       |
| 9. Jenison (CVCA)                   | 20. Reeb (Springfield CC)     |
| 10. Jackam (Berkshire)              | 21. Miltner (Wickliffe)       |
| 11. Pack (New London)               | 22. Bostleman (Archbold)      |
| 12. Piwinski (Avon)                 |                               |

Two of last year's unsuccessful choices go head-to-head at 160#. Schroeder was my first choice at 145# and until the last few minutes of the season it looked like a great one. He rolled through the District and dominated during the first three rounds at Wright State. Then in the finals against Ryan Slack, he got a couple of quick take downs for an early lead, and at that point, for some reason things started to go wrong. At the end of regulation the tenacious Slack had tied the bout at 9-9, and then quite surprisingly, took Schroeder down to win the title. Maybe, it was too easy in the early minutes and Schroeder lost a little edge off his intensity. Now a junior, he still can win two titles and I think he will. Schroeder is a pleasure to watch. He has the moves, the style, and the speed that set him apart from almost all of his competition. This year his only loss was to defending Division I State champ, Scott Overholt, by a 6-5 score in the semi-finals. It was an interesting bout. Schroeder took most of the shots and was the more aggressive boy. But, twice, inexplicably he stopped his movement, and both times Overholt took him down. Maybe, there was just 5 seconds where Schroeder wasn't pushing ahead, but those 5 seconds cost him the bout. No one here in Division III, however, is likely to severely challenge him.

I chose Swanbeck at 160# -- a weight class that was somewhat depleted at that time -- but Ebbert moved up from 152# and beat him 10-5 in the semis with Swanbeck eventually finishing 4th. He has competed at both 160# and 171# with great success, and can go with anyone here except Schroeder. He does have the best chance anyone here of pulling the kind of huge upset it would take to beat Shroeder, but the probabilities are vanishingly small.

The Cuyahoga Hts. District is very weak behind Schroeder. Many of the top threats certified at 152#, and their first inclination will be to stay there. However, an analytical approach

might draw a different conclusion. If your goal is to be State champ, then 152# is the best place -- although Ebbert is no treat either. If your goal is to qualify, and perhaps, place, then 160# might be best because the District competition is far weaker -- and if you finish 2nd or 3rd you wouldn't have to watch for Schroeder until the finals. What this all means is that Jennison, Legros, and Jackam are likely to discover other contenders for qualifying berths at Cuyahoga Hts. than those listed here.

The Fostoria District is divided into two unequal parts. At the top are three returning State place winners, all of whom have had excellent seasons this year. I've talked about Swanbeck, but Risner was 3rd at this weight in 1994, defeating Swanbeck 8-6 in the consolation finals -- and avenging a District defeat on default. Risner won the "A" Classic over Stull, and was the CIT champ with a convincing victory over Swemba. At Medina, Ebbert and Welsh both beat him by two points as he finished 5th. He has had a great career including State qualification as a freshman and State placement as a junior. Stull was a semi-finalist last year at 145# and ended up a strong 5th. His first loss was to Schroeder, 16-4. Stull has been sharp this year winning at Van Buren, and finishing 2nd to Risner at the "A" Classic, 4-3. He has, I believe, certified at 152#, but my feeling is that his chances for a high place are likely to be better here. The remaining contenders here are at a much lower level than the top three, and the two other qualifiers will have little chance of State placement.

District runner-up Jayson Stephen returns at this weight, and should collect a middle place this year. He won his first State bout last year, but then showed a weakness against vowels, and lost to Ebbert and Eisel. He was 3rd at the OVAC losing an overtime semi-final to Fitch. He would seem to have only one major challenger here, the powerful Thompson, just down from 171#, who won two District bouts last year. Thompson roared through the field at New Lexington and may be on a collision course with Stephen. The third qualifying spot is wide open.

Osborne was 5th last year at 160# and this boy puts people on their back. He had two quick falls in winning his District, and then won four State bouts with two quick falls (1:37, 0:37) and two lopsided decisions (18-5, 14-6). Swanbeck outscored him 14-11 in the consolation semi-finals. He's one of those wrestlers you see in the Southwest who get a lot of quick falls and so you assume the competition is weak. Then he goes to the States, and does the same thing against everybody else. It's more of the same this year winning, for example, the Edgewood title with a final round fall in 44 seconds.

171#

**PROJECTED CHAMP: ROSS THATCHER (BISHOP READY)**

TOP CONTENDERS:

- |                                |                                |
|--------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| 2. Hamway (Chanel)             | 15. Cassidy (Newark Catholic)  |
| 3. Eisel (Delta)               | 16. Adams (Mechanicsburg)      |
| 4. Scally (Sandusky St. Mary)  | 17. Crosier (Barnesville)      |
| 5. Wallen (Brookville)         | 18. Clark (Columbia Station)   |
| 6. To. Courtad (Aurora)        | 19. Seyer (Cardinal)           |
| 7. Cramer (Monroe Central)     | 20. Celek (Fremont St. Joseph) |
| 8. Allen (Waterloo)            | 21. Limberios (Margaretta)     |
| 9. Je. Speelman (Edgerton)     | 22. Collins (New London)       |
| 10. Dempsey (Delphos St. John) | 23. Butzer (Tuslaw)            |
| 11. Goodman (Newbury)          | 24. Wellman (Ayresville)       |
| 12. Barrett (St. Bernard)      | 25. Mann (Blanchester)         |
| 13. Durbin (Covington)         | 26. Lewis (Hillsdale)          |
| 14. Cooper (Union Local)       |                                |

While Schroeder would seem to dominate a currently weak weight class at 160#, Thatcher stands alone at the very tough 171# division. Thatcher is already a two-time State champ, so it says a lot when I tell you he's moved to a higher level in the past 12 months. He is easily the best 171-pounder in the state and along with O'Neill and Root, one of the three best upper weight prospects in Ohio. In fact, he may be the most gifted of them all. He defeated Division I State runner-up Jamie Groudle 11-1 in the CIT finals, and really hasn't had a close bout all year. He missed the early weeks with a slight shoulder problem, but he seems healthy now. As with many of the seniors who have competed at the highest level almost from the start of their high school career, it's a touch sad to see them move off the high school scene. But then, how exciting it is to open a copy of Amateur Wrestling News and marvel at their collegiate exploits.

Re-reading the last paragraph makes it sound like Thatcher stands alone here, but that is not true. While it would be an enormous surprise if he did not take his third title, there are many excellent wrestlers scheduled to compete here. Beyond that, this may turn out to be a very pivotal class in terms of the team competition. Chanel, Aurora, Sandusky St. Mary, and Delta, all have wrestlers in my top six choices. The key, of course, is to be away from Thatcher, but that will be a matter of chance, since none of the four exit the Jefferson District. Instead, two are at Cuyahoga Hts., and two at Fostoria. That means being a District champ is important, because it doubles your chances of avoiding Thatcher.

At Cuyahoga Hts., Hamway is clearly the leading figure. He was 4th last year at 171#, losing twice to the graduated Overmyer. He is just so consistent that he has to be the leading candidate to meet Thatcher in the finals. This year, he has won at Troy, Solon, North Canton, and Wadsworth, defeating some excellent wrestlers in the process. For example, his 10-1 win over Czarnecki was most impressive. Courtad drew State champ Ebbert in his first Sectional bout and didn't even make it to Cuyahoga Hts. This year, he is 17-2, including titles at Aurora and Hudson, with his only two losses at Medina -- to State runner-up Groudle and Abram. District semi-finalist, Allen, returns and is probably third best. He was the PCL champ last year -- a most unusual accomplishment for a Waterloo wrestler. Goodman, one bout from State qualification last year, is my fourth choice here, but both Clark and Seyer are very good. This district is deep with Butzer, Lewis, and Morse (Pymatuning Valley) also possibilities. When we see how weak 189# is at Cuyahoga Hts. (and throughout the state), you'd have to wonder if at least a couple of these nine wrestlers might consider such a move.

At Fostoria, Eisel and Scally also face a deep District, although probably not quite as accomplished as the one at Cuyahoga Hts. Eisel was a 4th place District qualifier who turned that opportunity into a 6th place finish at States. This year, he has been very good. He won the GMVWA with victories over Wallen (6-4) and Petereit (6-4), and was 2nd to Files (4-3) at Toledo Waite. He may have improved the most, of the top boys. Scally, also a State qualifier, has been another competitor that keeps getting better. He was 1st at the Panther Classic and 2nd at Fremont St. Joe, with one of his losses a close 3-1 defeat to my Division II choice Chagnon. Speelman and Dempsey are experienced wrestlers who can score points in large batches. Speelman won the "A" Classic over Dempsey, with a 17-16 win in a tourney that saw Dempsey score 16 points in three consecutive bouts, and win only two. Speelman also pinned Dempsey to win at Wayne Trace, and these two clearly will not put you to sleep with one of those 2-1 bouts. The 5th spot is wide open with Celek, Collins, Limberios, Wellman, and Busch (North Baltimore) all possibilities.

Thatcher will dominate at Jefferson, but State qualifier Cramer also returns, and he can be a factor. Hamway beat him 9-6 in a consolation round last year. He won at Bellaire St. John, but was only 4th at the OVAC, losing to Crosier in the consolation finals in overtime. There'll be a real scramble for all of the places, but the first one.

District champ and State qualifier, Wallen, returns to this weight class at Dayton which feature three State qualifiers and a State alternate. Wallen lost two straight at Wright State, but his close bout with Eisel at GMVWA indicates he's ready for top level competition. Barrett, another State qualifier, also returns as does Adams, who went to Wright State at 160# last year. These two are vulnerable as Durbin has shown real improvement. Barrett beat him out for the last State spot last year, but it will be much closer in '95. Both Mann and DeGlow (Dayton Christian) are behind this top quartet.

189#

**PROJECTED CHAMP: NEAL HARVEY (COLUMBIA STATION)**

TOP CONTENDERS:

- |                               |                               |
|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| 2. Tate (Licking Valley)      | 12. Miller (Newbury)          |
| 3. Mitsch (Carey)             | 13. Chapman (Margaretta)      |
| 4. Reynolds (Elmwood)         | 14. Ashburn (Perry)           |
| 5. Ehram (Delta)              | 15. Stephens (Malvern)        |
| 6. Cooper (Miami East)        | 16. Mt. Castle (Brookville)   |
| 7. Ridgeway (Independence)    | 17. Dobson (Martins Ferry)    |
| 8. Buehrer (Archbold)         | 18. Stuckey (Blanchester)     |
| 9. Boyle (St. Thomas Aquinas) | 19. Schultz (Chagrin Falls)   |
| 10. Vanderhorst (Covington)   | 20. Beckman (Seneca East)     |
| 11. Luke (Montpelier)         | 21. Montana (Steubenville CC) |

What we seem to have here is oscillating weight classes with 152# very strong, 160# relatively weak (except for Schroeder), 171# very strong, and 189# quite weak. As discussed in last year's report, there is inevitably a "smoothing" process that tends to even out the average difficulty of weight classes. If that process is still at work, we may well see some new faces here who have abandoned the 171# class.

As it is, there is certainly no clear-cut favorite to succeed two-time State champ Keith Capizzi, so I've selected yet another Columbia Station 189-pounder, as I did with Kyle Rutledge two years ago. Harvey is a returning State qualifier, who last year at 171# parlayed a 4th place District finish into a semi-final appearance before dropping down to 6th, after a close loss to Bollas and an overtime defeat by Hamway. This year he stands 20-1, losing only in the Brunswick finals to the powerful, Division I Harrison by a 4-3 mark. Clearly to win the title, Harvey will have to be wrestling at peak efficiency, and will need to navigate through a number of close bouts.

The Cuyahoga Hts. District as presently constituted is not strong. Former State qualifier Ridgeway returns, but Harvey handled him 13-1 during the first week of the season. After that, it's a wide open field with little to choose from a myriad of contenders. This dilution of talent is probably inevitable during the introduction of a new weight class. Most top heavyweights in Ohio (but, certainly, not all) weigh upwards of 240#, so few of them will drop to 215#. That means that wrestlers who returned after a successful year last season, now had two weight classes to choose from -- and this, without doubt, reduced the normal talent level we've come to expect at 189#.

Rocky Tate is yet another of a group of brothers who have starred at Licking Valley High School. The most famous of these was older (and much bigger ) brother Jeremy -- a two-time heavyweight State champion now at Ohio State. But this Tate is also very good. As a sophomore at 171# he compiled a 34-5 record, but was ousted from District competition on a 9-8 consolation loss. This year he would appear to stand far above the field at this district, as he has mowed down opponent after opponent in the Columbus area. Nobody else here has really caught my eye. The Ohio River Valley boys like Dobson, Montana, Hupp (Bridgeport), and Basford (Shenendoah), have taken turns beating each other, but do not look strong enough to win much out of their geographical area. The Central District competitors like Troiano are also suspect, while in between Stephens seems best. Like Cuyahoga Hts., there isn't much here.

That same song can also be sung in the Southwest -- one relative standout and not too much else. Brad Cooper was District finalist last year, and entered the State Meet with a 37-4 record. However, Mitsch defeated him in the first round, and after Achebe pinned Mitsch, it had turned out to be a short trip for Cooper. This year he has been a major cog for the fine Miami East team. He was 2nd at Graham, losing only to Medina tourney runner-up, Bair, by a 4-2 count, and has won several smaller tourneys. His principal competitor should be senior, Todd Vanderhorst, who after missing much of last season, was the State alternate at this weight class. Both his District losses were to Dobyons -- who has moved up to Division II. Mt. Castle, a wonderful name, would seem to be third-best, but is at least one respectful step behind the top duo.

As is generally the case, the field is far more crowded at Fostoria. State qualifier, Mitsch, has spent some time at 215# before moving down to 189#. He was upset in the "A" Classic final, and was also a runner-up at Hopewell-Loudon. Reynolds also qualified at this weight class last year -- losing to Mitsch, 10-7, in the consolation finals. This year he was 2nd at Northwood, and is one of a fine series of upper weight wrestlers at Elmwood. Ehram had really come on during the last six weeks or so, but then suffered an injury right before the Toledo Waite tourney. A big question is whether he'll be even able to compete by Sectional time and, if so, whether he can re-establish the momentum he had so clearly gained recently. He could be a critical element in Delta's team chances. Last year he was a State alternate -- losing his last qualification chance to Scally. This year a healthy Ehram figures to do much better than that. Another hot wrestler recently has been Buehrer, who defeated Mitsch 6-5 to win the "A" Classic. A 13-9 performer last year, he seemed strictly a "background" wrestler at Archbold until this recent flurry. If he continues this kind of performance, he could be the source of some unexpected team points for Archbold.

215#

**PROJECTED CHAMP: CHIN ACHEBE (STEUBENVILLE CENTRAL CATHOLIC)**

TOP CONTENDERS:

- |                                    |                                 |
|------------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| 2. Stevenson (Columbus Academy)    | 13. Bowe (Elmwood)              |
| 3. Berry (West Salem Northwestern) | 14. Mirolo (West Jefferson)     |
| 4. Kristof (Cardinal Stritch)      | 15. Wolf (Reading)              |
| 5. Reed (Licking Hts.)             | 16. Renner (St. Thomas Aquinas) |
| 6. Smith (Streetsboro)             | 17. Everhart (Mohawk)           |
| 7. Schlatter (Delta)               | 18. Evans (Johnstown Monroe)    |
| 8. Williams (Miami East)           | 19. Wonderly (Hicksville)       |
| 9. Gianfragna (Kirtland)           | 20. Marshall (Versailles)       |
| 10. Thomas (Martins Ferry)         | 21. Diaz (Hicksville)           |
| 11. Bakr (Chagrin Falls)           | 22. Trout (Arcadia)             |
| 12. Deter (Hillsdale)              | 23. Johnson (Dayton Christian)  |

One of the potentially most exciting match-ups at the entire State tournament could occur at this weight class. Both Achebe and Stevenson are dynamite performers who are relatively unknown throughout much of the state. My guess is that they will dominate this 215# class and provide some real pyrotechnics in the final round on Saturday. Since they both exit the same district, that match-up would seem almost guaranteed based on past performance.

Achebe is a tall, powerful wrestler with tremendous mobility. Last year, as a junior, he wrestled only 14 bouts during the regular season, but was the OVAC champion at 189#. He then raced through the District with devastating effect, his closest bout a 10-3 decision over returning State qualifier Jeremy White. At the State Meet, he finished 3rd registering 3 falls, but lost to Kotora on a quick, under-a-minute fall in the semi-finals. He looked terrific. This year at 215# he has been untouchable, but at the OVAC he was forced to wrestle at Heavyweight since West Virginia does not recognize the 215# class. No problem. He opens with four falls, and then upsets defending OVAC and West Virginia heavyweight champ, Underwood, in the finals. He is an outstanding prospect.

Stevenson is an All-State football player who wrestled at heavyweight last year, and had some great match-ups with Jeremy Tate. He was 2nd to Tate in District action, losing 4-0 for only his third loss -- all to Tate. At the State Meet, he hooked up with Courtad (then a 220-pounder) in the quarter-finals in a classic battle. When it was over, Courtad had escaped with a 10-9 victory, but it left both of these warriors totally exhausted. Courtad ended up in the finals with Tate while Stevenson dropped to 5th. This year Stevenson apparently missed the

early weeks of the season, but he's back and certified at 215# (although he has wrestled at Heavyweight). It should be a tremendous battle.

Also at Jefferson is Reed, who was a District qualifier at Heavyweight last season, and who has been a superior 215-pounder this year. He was champ at Hamilton Twp. and Bishop Ready, and 2nd at Licking Hts. to Division I contender, Cottrell. The excellent Thomas has only lost to Achebe at 215# while winning at Barnesville, and finishing 2nd at Bellaire St. John. That's an outstanding foursome and leaves out Mirolo, Evans and Blattler (Hannibal River). It should be an outstanding competition.

The Cuyahoga Hts. District has good depth and should provide a couple of placers at the State Meet. Berry was a successful heavyweight with several tourney wins and a 26-5 record last year, but was a first round District victim. This season at 215#, he was champ at Hopewell Loudon, Black River, and Tri-West, but Deter did upset him at Chippewa. He should do very well here. Smith may be just as good. He was a District semi-finalist at 189# last year, and missed State qualification by a single point. This year he was a big winner at Hudson over Bittering, and a solid 5th at the Top Gun. Gianfragna has been the runner-up in all of this tournament action, and this experienced junior will be a factor here. He needs a breakthrough win to move to the next level. Bakr and Deter both are fine wrestlers who could do well here. Deter and Berry have probably met five times in the last few years, and Deter has won close to his share. Renner and Mattson (Newbury) are other possibilities. No matter who qualifies, this will be a fairly strong contingent.

That will not be the case at Dayton. Williams is a returning qualifier (at Heavyweight) who lost to Stevenson 17-7 at Wright State. This year he swept through the Graham Invitational with a 21-second semi-final pin, and a quick default in the finals. After him, however, the cupboard is pretty much bare, and the other two qualifiers will struggle mightily against the Jefferson and Cuyahoga Hts. qualifiers.

The picture is very unclear at Fostoria. Kristof, early on, seemed strongest with a 2nd at Northwood and a title at Oak Harbor, but some of the other 215's appear to be catching up. The sophomore, Schlatter, was the champ at Perrysburg by pinning Fackler, and lost a close 4-3 bout to the powerful Files at Toledo Waite. This is an upcoming star who can only get better. He probably will struggle even for a low place this year with the likes of Achebe and Stevenson around, but for the next two years he is going to be a major factor. After this duo, all is confusing. I've listed Bowe, Everhart, Wonderly, Diaz and Trout, but they are all at a somewhat lower level than the top two. Other hopefuls are McGee (Monroeville) and Stacklin (Seneca East).



HVY#

**PROJECTED CHAMP: TIM COURTAD (AURORA)**

TOP CONTENDERS:

- |  |                                 |
|--|---------------------------------|
| 2. Bates (Elmwood)                       | 14. Young (Licking Hts.)        |
| 3. Russell (Bellbrook)                   | 15. Gilmore (Versailles)        |
| 4. Higgs (Columbia Station)              | 16. Rose (Streetsboro)          |
| 5. Cameron (Brookville)                  | 17. McGill (West Liberty Salem) |
| 6. Bowman (Lakota)                       | 18. Scott (Otsego)              |
| 7. Mechling (Black River)                | 19. Jarrett (Shadyside)         |
| 8. Angelica (Steubenville Central Cath.) | 20. Young (Springfield NE)      |
| 9. Bitar (Mansfield St. Peter)           | 21. Steen (Carey)               |
| 10. Peters (Lima Central Catholic)       | 22. Busdeker (Woodmore)         |
| 11. Ellis (Ledgemont)                    | 23. Murgatroyd (Woodbridge)     |
| 12. Meadows (New Albany)                 | 24. Tule (Archbold)             |
| 13. Estell (Amanda Clearcreek)           | 25. Trent (Sandy Valley)        |

It's strictly no contest at this weight class. Tim Courtad is very easily the best here, and probably the most prohibitive favorite in all 42 weight classes. Courtad was the State runner-up last year, losing to Jeremy Tate in the finals. This year he has pinned everyone he has wrestled -- and the vast majority of those in less than a minute. And this is not some cupcake schedule but includes titles at Aurora, Hudson, and Medina. For example, at Medina, he pinned Mechling in 36 seconds in the semis, and then nailed King in 64 seconds. King, 4th in the Junior Nationals and a heavy duty favorite in Division I, was taken down and then got caught making a slow sitout. There are rumors that Stevenson might not go at his certified 215#, but challenge Courtad. If so, that will be a mistake. Last year in their great 10-9 bout, Courtad and Stevenson were both about the same size at between 215 and 220 pounds. This year Courtad is a solid 258#, probably 35 pounds more than Stevenson, and is still every bit as quick.

State qualifier Higgs and Mechling back up Courtad at Cuyahoga Hts. and they both have State placement potential. I like Higgs a little better since he is so difficult to wrestle against. He holds a 9-5 win over Mechling, and extended Courtad into the 2nd period in their dual meet. Ellis and Rose will apparently fight it out for the fourth qualifying spot with Murgatroyd having an outside chance.

The Fostoria District looks to be dominated by the B-hemoths -- Bates, Bowman, and Bitar. All are close to the 275# limit and all have some solid experience. Bates and Bowman were both losing semi-finalists in last year's District, but qualified for Wright State through the consolation brackets. Bowman had a horrible draw getting dusted by Courtad in 62 seconds, and

then losing to Stevenson in first round consolations. Bates had no better luck meeting Tate in the first round and then losing to Rickard. There's no way they could get two such ugly draws in 1995. This year Bates has breezed through relatively weak opposition, including wins at Evergreen and Toledo Waite. Bowman has faced tougher competition winning at Fremont St., Joseph, Sylvania Southview, and the Mackey, while finishing 2nd to Farris at Clyde. Bitar was pinned by Bowman at Districts last year, and was 2nd at the Gorman losing to the powerful Kerschner. Peters has come on strong with a very strong 4th at the CIT including an overtime loss to Bebko. He could be a real threat to the big boys. After that it's wide open and I've listed three or four possibilities, but that is by no means an exhaustive list.

Russell will be a threat to the upstate boys. He pinned his way through the Dayton District and then won four bouts at State to finish 3rd. His only loss was a technical fall against Tate, who hit him with that slick little tilt three or four times. Russell did beat Higgs and Stevenson on his way to third place. Just like last year, Cameron is second-best again. Russell pinned him in the District finals and Cameron lost to Angelica in the first round. This year Cameron did a nice job at the GMVWA, finishing 4th after losing two very close bouts. The remainder of this district is much weaker.

One of the ironies of the new 215# weight class is Jason Angelica. Here is a returning State quarter-finalist with excellent skills, whose major problem last year was being outweighed by 60 or 70 pounds. This year he is up to 214#, and potentially a major threat at this new weight class, except for one kind of important impediment -- Chin Achebe. So Angelica will now really be one of the smallest heavyweights this year, but underestimating him could be lethal. He has already won titles at Bellaire St. John's and Madonna, but did not compete at the OVAC because Achebe wrestled there with no 215# class. The rest of this district will not stack up well with any other district except Dayton at Wright State.

## **DIVISION III TEAMS**

1. **CHANEL** -- This team wrestled brilliantly, far above expectations last year, and captured the 2nd place trophy with 71 points -- only 3 1/2 points from first place. They return all 71 points in Ralph, Wrobel, Berquist and Hamway, and have apparently added the exceptional Grubach as well. In addition, the little Wrobel, Joyce, and McAuley may be ready to help as well. It will be probably a very close competition, but Chanel is the only team that could run away with it. The key is great performances again from Berquist and Ralph.
2. **AURORA** -- Schroeder and Tim Courtad are an almost sure 50+ points, and no other team has such a huge core point value. However, to win the title, Flynn, Tonsing and Tom Courtad have to be big contributors, and that is far more problematic. The key will be to put Flynn at exactly the right weight class and maybe, get help from a Ganzhorn. If Chanel stumbles even slightly, this team will be right there.
3. **ARCHBOLD** -- The problem for Archbold is that they have no sure winner -- no one you can count on for 25 sure points. However, they have a solid lineup with, perhaps, more opportunities than anyone else to score points. Kreiner should score heavily at 103#, but the real heart of the team are the great middle weights from 130# to 152# . Both Forward boys have finalist potential, while Baden, Penrod, and Grime have solid skills and lots of experience. An added bonus that could give them the title is if they can score with Buehrer or Tule.
4. **SANDUSKY ST. MARY** -- They return 6 State qualifiers, but lost their main men, Rosin and Capizzi, to graduation. Still Schmidt is the favorite at 103#, while Davlin, Davis, and Scally have the look of place winners. Losing Cory Smith hurt, but Jeff Smith, Jake Davlin, and Blanton could compensate with top flight performances.
5. **MARTINS FERRY** -- Two champs can score a lot of points (see Aurora write-up), and the Tucker cousins are both favorites -- though Bob is only narrowly so. The key elements to challenging Chanel and Aurora are a great tournament for Riser and point scoring from Roby, Thomas, and Kinnison.
6. **DELTA** -- Another team with lots of opportunities to score, but they have to be at 100% efficiency to move up. Cunningham and Eisel need to be in the top three, while Ehram has to be healthy. If Schlatter can score in the 215# class that will a plus, but the real key is a motivated Ford, a point-scoring Hopkins, and Sintobin at the right weight.
7. **EVERGREEN** -- Gleckler, Murdock, and Bates are the nucleus of this team and could conceivably score up to 60 points. That, in itself, would put them in the top five, and if Leahy, Heator or Wyse could chip in, they could challenge almost anyone here.

8. **LAKOTA** -- A team that is still a year or two away from the very top levels, but perhaps they will ignite a little early. The weight classes between 119# and 140# are filled by excellent underclassmen, including Timmons, Sachs, Yonikus, and Bomer. If you add in Milligan at 152# and Bowman at heavyweight, this team could easily be in the Top Five.
9. **BRIDGEPORT** -- This is pretty much a two-man team, but Roskovich and Ellsworth are exceptional. The question is, where can you find more State points on this team? The answer is that it's unlikely there will be any more scorers unless Jones or Hupp go ballistic. A possible surprise could be a healthy Chad Roskovich.
10. **LIMA CENTRAL CATHOLIC** -- A team that always seems to fool me, and somehow I can never get a steady bead on them. The three lightweights Tierney, Kessen, and Boyd are erratic, but each is a potential point-scorer. Stull and Peters could be contributors while Pathhoff and Johns are possibilities. I'm sure I'll be surprised again.
11. **LICKING VALLEY** -- This is another team with a strong nucleus of Muzykoski, Tate, and Thompson, but looking for one more point-scorer. If Helwig, Ogilbee or Wolford could help, they'll move up.
12. **BISHOP READY** -- Thatcher is a sure champ and this team has scoring chances with Aiello, Stange, and Cacchio. Still it could come down to only Thatcher and the Top Ten dream will evaporate.