

Introduction

Thank you for taking the time to read the *State Tournament Predictions Report*. As I embark on year number fifteen – for which I have record – of doing this in some way, shape, or form ... let's take a quick look back at how the first fourteen years have went in predictions, as well as the current landscape in Ohio high school wrestling.

For a third straight year, there are multiple wrestlers seeking to win their fourth state title at the state tournament. On this occasion, the number is three, one in each division: David Carr (Massillon Perry) in Division I, Mitch Moore (St. Paris Graham) in Division II, and Tommy Hoskins (Legacy Christian Academy) in Division III.

Prior to 2016, 27 wrestlers in all had reached the state tournament with three titles in hand, all 27 took home a fourth. However, in that year, Tyler Warner (Claymont) was upset in the state semifinal 6-4 at 120 pounds in Division II; Alex Marinelli (St. Paris Graham) did win his fourth title at 170, also in Division II. Last year also had two wrestlers enter the state tournament after a fourth state title, Kyle Lawson (Olentangy Liberty) was denied by Cody Surratt (Wadsworth) in the quarterfinals at 160 pounds in Division I, losing a 3-2 decision; while Kaleb Romero (Mechanicsburg) scorched through the Division III bracket at 170 pounds to ascend to the top of the podium for a fourth title.

Also in the hunt for fourth state finals match appearances are Jaden Mattox (Grove City Central Crossing) in Division I and Rocky Jordan (St. Paris Graham) in Division II. Mattox was champion in 2016, but fell short in 2015 and last year in a champ vs. champ match with Carr; while Jordan was runner-up as a freshman before winning the last two years.

Twenty returning state champions are slated to compete in the state tournament series this year, a number that increases to 22 if you count for titles won in a year prior to 2017. Relative to recent years, this is in the middle (2017 had 21 defending and/or previous state champions, 2016 had 24, 2015 had 18, 2014 had 21, and 2013 had 17).

As of the rankings published on February 7th by InterMat, there are 37 Ohio wrestlers within the top 20 of their weight classes nationally. It includes at least one wrestler in every weight class from 106 through 195, while no wrestlers are ranked at either 220 or 285. Two wrestlers are presently ranked first in the country, Jacob Decatur (CVCA) at 106 and David Carr (Massillon Perry) at 152. Ryan Thomas (St. Paris Graham) is ranked third at 160, Rocky Jordan (St. Paris Graham) and Jared Ball (Hilliard Darby) are ranked fourth nationally at 170 and 195, while Julian Tagg (Brecksville) and Jaden Mattox (Central Crossing) are ranked fifth at 120 and 160.

The team titles in each individual division have a clear favorite. St. Paris Graham is prohibitively favored to win their 18th state title in a row, and 20th in total. The only question in Division II is the final margin of victory, if it's by a factor of three, and how many of the next teams in the standings it takes to equate to the Falcons' point total. In Division III, last year's state runner-up returns all of its state tournament points, and is a runaway favorite; the only question is which team can emerge to take second. While Division I has a solid favorite in St. Edward, though it will likely be the closest margin of victory between first and second, along with an interesting battle of the second place trophy spot. There is a challenge pack that includes four other nationally ranked teams (Cincinnati LaSalle, Brecksville, Wadsworth, and Massillon Perry)

One of the obvious purposes for writing this report is to predict (hopefully correctly) who wins the state title in each of the 42 weight classes (14 in each of the three divisions). Let's see how that has played out over the last thirteen years.

2004- DI 8/14, DII 10/14, DIII 10/14 (TOTAL = 28)

2005- DI 9/14, DII 9/14, DIII 3(or4)/14 (TOTAL = 21 or 22)

2006- DI 10/14, DII 9/14, DIII 7(or8)/14 (TOTAL = 26 or 27)

2007- DI 10/14, DII 8/14, DIII 9/14 (TOTAL = 27)

2008- DI 9/14, DII 8/14, DIII 9/14 (TOTAL = 26)

2009- DI 12/14, DII 9/14, DIII 9/14 (TOTAL = 30)

2010- DI 9/14, DII 10/14, DIII 10(or11)/14 (TOTAL = 29 or 30)

2011- DI 8(or9)/14, DII 8/14, DIII 11/14 (TOTAL = 27 or 28)

2012- DI 11/14, DII 10/14, DIII 7(or8)/14 (TOTAL = 28 or 29)

2013- DI 9/14, DII 9/14, DIII 9/14 (TOTAL = 27)

2014- DI 9/14, DII 9/14, DIII 9/14 (TOTAL = 27)

2015- DI 5/14, DII 10/14, DIII 13/14 (TOTAL = 28)

2016- DI 7/14, DII 8/14, DIII 10/14 (TOTAL = 25); note: DI and DII each had one case where projected champ did not make weight at sectional, and the second-ranked kid won the title

2017 – DI 7/14, DII 10/14, DIII 9/14 (TOTAL = 26)

Where were the other champs ranked? (note this may not be perfect):

2nd- 107, 3rd- 45, 4th- 21, 5th- 13, 6th- 5, 7th- 3, 8th- 3, 9th- 2, 10th- 2, >10- 4

Each weight class breakdown starts with an ordinal listing of the top 16 wrestlers. Following that ranking, is a listing of the top five (or more) wrestlers at each of the district tournaments; note that four wrestlers at each district tournament site, of which there are four per division, earn state tournament qualification. Then, finally is the commentary, which provides an analysis of the weight class as a whole, the top wrestlers in the weight class, as well as some relevant and/or tangential commentary. After each weight class is presented in the division, a team ranking is presented based on a formula that is intended to replicate scoring at the state tournament.

In addition to being an attempt to accurately predict the champion (and those towards the top) of each weight class, there are two other primary objectives in the creation of this report: (1) an attempt to accurately gauge the composition of each district tournament weight class (2) to provide fans an informative, yet entertaining, read on what to expect in the state series over the next few weeks.

Please note that this report is a reflection of the information acquired based on wrestling through the weekend ending February 3rd, with publication done on February XX, so the dual team state championship rounds are not captured. There is a week left of wrestling in the regular season, though it not one in which every team has a competition scheduled.

Also, remember that come the state series, it is a new season. The rankings and summaries carry the value of understanding where one person sees things at this point in time, and also an entertainment factor. However, as the writer of this report, I feel it is important to state: (1) there are matches to be wrestled for a reason (2) it is the upsets, the unexpected, and the thrillers that define state series wrestling (3) if I was somewhat perfect, there would be a different line of employment for me (i.e. psychic or bookie).

These are two predictions that I guarantee to be correct:

*The state tournament will be staged at Value City Arena on the campus of Ohio State University March 8th through 10th.

*42 wrestlers will be crowned as champions, 14 weight classes across 3 divisions.

All others ... I can make no guarantees. Best of luck on the remainder of the season, hope you all achieve the levels of success you wish for, and enjoy the reading!