

Introduction

Thank you for taking the time to read the *State Tournament Predictions Report*. As I embark on year number thirteen – 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 twelve years have went in predictions, as well as the current landscape in Ohio high school wrestling.

Last year ended a stretch of seven straight years, and 13 in 14, where there was a wrestler seeking to win their fourth state title at the state tournament. This year there are a pair. One is Alex Marinelli (St. Paris Graham), who has unequivocally been the best wrestler in Ohio for the last two seasons. He is ranked as the No. 3 overall national prospect in the Class of 2016, and is a two-time champion of the Walsh Jesuit Ironman. The other is Tyler Warner (Claymont), whose state tournament journey has been murkier over the years, though it's ended atop of the podium on all three occasions.

Arguably the second best wrestler this year in the Buckeye State, behind Marinelli, is returning state champion Matt Stencil (Oregon Clay). The 220 pound wrestler is 31-0 as of the writing of this report with all wins coming by pin (28) or forfeit (3). The Junior Nationals double All-American, and 2014 Cadet Nationals double champion, has seen his prospect ranking improve to being within the top 15 overall in the Class of 2016.

The presence of 22 returning state champions, which increases to 24 if you count those titles won in a year prior to 2015, is a rather high number relative to recent years (2015 had 18 defending and/or previous state champs, 2014 had 21, 2013 had 17, 2012 had 24). That reflects last year's relatively weak senior class, and also the individual talent present in the Buckeye State this year across all grade levels.

There is more top end individual talent in Ohio than there was last year, with five individuals ranked among the top five in their weight class nationally from the InterMat rankings as of January 27th. That number is tied for fifth most among any state, with California; leading the way are Pennsylvania, New Jersey, Minnesota, and Illinois (California also has five). There is also no number one wrestler; David Carr (Massillon Perry) and Marinelli are ranked second; Ben Darmstadt (Elyria), Stencil, and Kevin Vough (Elyria) are ranked third.

From a team race standpoint, Division I is the one to follow, as three nationally ranked teams anchor the field: St. Edward, Elyria, and Olentangy Liberty; presuming all components present, Brecksville could make a dent into that top three as well. Division II is the domain of St. Paris Graham, as the Falcons are prohibitively favored to win a 16th straight state title in the individual tournament. Within Division III, nationally ranked Delta is the favorite, with an interesting battle for second between southwest district teams Mechanicsburg and Dayton Christian.

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 twelve 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)

Where were the other champs ranked? (note this may not be perfect):
2nd- 86, 3rd- 41, 4th- 19, 5th- 11, 6th- 2, 7th- 3, 8th- 3, 9th- 2, 10th – 1, >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 month.

Please note that this report is a reflection of the information acquired based on wrestling through the weekend ending January 23rd, with updating done after the weekend of wrestling ending January 30th. Most of the Division I report was written Tuesday through Thursday, Division II was written Friday through Sunday, while Division III was written Sunday and Monday. Minor edits made towards end for major developments (i.e. weight class changes in DI and DII) from the January 30th weekend.

There are two more weeks left of wrestling in the regular season, most notably including the regional level of the state duals, conference tournaments, and the state duals on the calendar. Given the timing of this report, results from the initial regional layer of the state duals from this past week may or may not be captured in the ordinal rankings and/or commentary.

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 3rd through 5th.

*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!