

Introduction

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

For the first time since 2007, there will be no wrestler seeking to win their fourth state title in this year's state tournament. Among this year's senior class, there are a pair of wrestlers that have already appeared in three state finals: Cameron Kelly (Bellbrook), a 2012 state champion, and two-time defending state champion Jarred Ganger (Covington). However, the wrestler who has emerged as the best talent in the Class of 2015 is Kollin Moore (Norwayne), a two-time Division II state runner-up, who is after an elusive state title at 182 pounds. The future Ohio State Buckeye has been on fire this campaign, starting with a Super 32 Challenge runner-up finish ten days after his high school soccer season ended. Moore is undefeated on the season, and has been totally dominant.

The best wrestler in the state this season is a junior, Alex Marinelli (St. Paris Graham). The two-time state champion won the Walsh Jesuit Ironman in December, and is currently ranked number one nationally at 160 pounds. Joining Marinelli as a potential four-time state champion in the Class of 2016 is Tyler Warner (Claymont). In addition, there are many excellent underclassmen – among them is sophomore Kevin Vough (Elyria), who won the Walsh Ironman at 285 pounds.

There are just 14 defending state champions, which increases to 18 if accounting for previous year state titles. This is in the lower end of the range for recent years (2014 had 21 defending/previous champs, 2013 had 17, 2012 had 24).

Even if the top end individual talent is not overwhelming this year – only three individuals ranked among the top five in their weight class nationally from the InterMat rankings as of February 11th – the team talent is extremely impressive. The most recent national team rankings have seven Ohio teams ranked within the top fifty – four in Division I, just St. Paris Graham in Division II, and a pair in Division III.

The team race to watch – on and off the mat over the next month – will be in Division III between Fab50 members Delta and Dayton Christian. In Division II, St. Paris Graham is prohibitively favored to win its 15th straight state title in the individual tournament. The landscape in Division I has the potential to be rather wide open; however, St. Edward has the highest ceiling, as their depth is such that an "on" tournament (series) creates a semi-clean state title. Massillon Perry, should Phillips be able to compete, presents the strongest challenge to the Eagles; while three to five other teams could be in the hunt for either the championship or runner-up trophies.

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 ten 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)

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

2nd- 78, 3rd- 39, 4th- 19, 5th- 10, 6th- 2, 7th- 3, 8th- 3, 9th- 1, >10- 3

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 in each of the district tournaments, as one of the key points of interest heading into the post-season is who will qualify for the state tournament (four wrestlers in each of the four districts earn the distinction). 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 February 7th updating done after the weekend of wrestling ending February 14th (notably the state dual meet tournament). There is one more weekend left of wrestling in the regular season, with some conference tournaments populating the calendar. Given the timing of this report, results from the state duals of the past weekend 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 12th through March 14th.

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

All others ... there are no guarantees. As the TMQ column on Page2 of ESPN.com states, "All predictions guaranteed to be wrong or your money back!" (just kidding)

Best of luck on the remainder of the season, hope you all achieve the levels of success you wish for, and enjoy the reading!