

## **Introduction**

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

Unlike the previous four seasons, there is no wrestler in position to win their fourth state title next month. In addition, only Bryce Hepner (St. Edward) is even going for his third state title. This will mark the sixth time in 21 years where no three-time state champion will be competing in the state tournament.

In the 1999 state tournament, Jared Opfer (Sandusky St. Mary's Central Catholic) became the ninth wrestler to achieve the distinction of winning four high school state titles in the Buckeye State. In the 20 years since, 23 additional wrestlers have won their fourth state title; most recently it was Dylan D'Emilio (Genoa), who achieved that feat last year.

Last year's state tournament had a rather low total of returning state champions, just 16 in the field; a number that was stretched to 19 when counting for those that won in previous seasons. On the other hand, this year's state tournament is expected to feature 20 defending state champions, with four others that have won titles in a previous season.

As of the rankings published on February 12<sup>th</sup> by InterMat, there are 23 Ohio high school wrestlers within the top 20 of their weight classes nationally. In addition, there are two Ohio residents attending National Prep schools whom are nationally ranked (Cernus at Wyoming Seminary, Pa. is ranked at 113, while Bryant at Hudson WRA, Ohio is ranked at 145).

There is a nationally ranked wrestler in 12 of the 14 weight classes, with only 106 and 132 bereft a ranked wrestler from Ohio. However, only three wrestlers in total are ranked top five nationally: Victor Voinovich (Brecksville) is No. 5 at 145, Padraic Gallagher (St. Edward) is No. 3 at 160, and Nevan Snodgrass (Kettering Fairmont) is No. 4 at 170. Another observation is that 19 of the 23 ranked wrestler compete in Division I, with six big-school weight classes featuring multiple nationally ranked wrestlers.

In something of a rarity here in Ohio, all three divisions are projected to have a team race that will not be decided until the final day, and possibly even into the championship matches. St. Edward enters as a very slight favorite in Division I to win a fifth consecutive state title, which would be their ninth in the last ten years, and 21 in the last 23. This year's primary challenger is Elyria, which finished as runner-up to the Eagles in 2015 through 2017; the Pioneers have scored above 90 points in the last five state tournaments, including a program-record 143 last year when they finished third in the standings.

In Division II, St. Paris Graham has won the individual tournament each of the last 19 years, and the Falcons have 21 overall in this event. The 123.5 points they amassed in last year's state tournament was the second-lowest team point total in this 19-year run, only the 114.5 scored in 2001 were less. Furthermore, last year's 36-point difference between first and second was the lowest in the course of their streak. This year's two direct challengers, Aurora and Louisville (teams that finished second and third last year in the individual tournament) exit the absolutely stacked Alliance District, one that features four additional teams that finished top nine at state last year.

While in Division III, there looks to be a three-team battle for the title, with two of those teams never having won a team trophy in the individual state tournament. Milan Edison was champion in the dual team state tournament in 2017 and runner-up last year, but has never finished higher than third on the individual side – which they have done in three of the last five years (2015, 2018, 2019); Legacy Christian’s highest finish as a program was their seventh place finish last season. On the other hand, Troy Christian won the individual state tournament four times in a seven-year stretch (2007, 2008, 2009, and 2013), and have been on the board for three consecutive seasons (2017-7<sup>th</sup>, 2018-4<sup>th</sup>, 2019-5<sup>th</sup>).

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)  
2018 – DI 9/14, DII 8/14, DIII 7/14 (TOTAL = 24)  
2019 – DI 6/14, DII 8/14, DIII 9(or10)/14 (TOTAL = 23 or 24)

Where were the other champs ranked? (note this may not be perfect):  
2<sup>nd</sup>- 121, 3<sup>rd</sup>- 60, 4<sup>th</sup>- 23, 5<sup>th</sup>- 16, 6<sup>th</sup>- 7, 7<sup>th</sup>- 3, 8<sup>th</sup>- 3, 9<sup>th</sup>- 2, 10<sup>th</sup> – 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 8<sup>th</sup>, though the research actually started on February 2<sup>nd</sup>. Publication was done on February 15<sup>th</sup>, 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. It is also important to note the impact of the JakesWrestling database, without which a report of this meticulous nature could not be completed.

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 13<sup>th</sup> through 15<sup>th</sup>.

\*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!