

## Introduction

Thank you for taking the time to read the *State Tournament Predictions Report*. As I sit here in my tenth year, for which I have record, of doing this in some way, shape, or form – it would be negligent on my part not to discuss the current landscape of high school wrestling in Ohio.

An obvious part of that landscape for just over 40 years prior to this one was the presence of Brian Brakeman, and his annual *Brakeman Report*, a forecast of the upcoming state tournaments. However, this year, he has decided to call it a career and not write his annual report. There are not words that can appropriately describe his impact in creating interest in the state tournament series, and educating the Ohio fan-base about the landscape of each weight class. In addition to his report was his passion and involvement in placing the sport of wrestling on television, starting with broadcasts on WVIZ in the 1980s and 1990s, through today with his involvement in Cable Nine telecasts that sometimes get picked up by Sports Time Ohio. It is my hope that this service is continued.

Keep in mind, that when Brian started over 40 years ago, there was no internet (heck, the average computer was as big as the home office space in which I write this report today). Further complicating things was the fact most high school programs schedules involved a collection of dual meets and maybe a couple tournaments, certainly none providing the cross-section of teams that we see in today's wrestling landscape. It was an amazing work, a true labor of love. Not just the ordinal ranking process, but the tying it together with stories, history, and analysis.

When I started my journey as a fan of high school wrestling, the Brakeman Report was required reading. Even around 15 years ago, we were in the extreme infancy of the internet, and just starting to see events featuring a cross-section of teams throughout the state. As my journey into this sport deepened, I started reading the report with a more critical eye, even taking to predicting who Mr. Brakeman would pick as projected state champions.

It is with that background I started writing my year-to-year work. I figured that if I was to view the Brakeman Report with a critical eye, it would be only fair to engage in a similar process, and have my viewpoints face scrutiny. The process of my report is rather similar to the Brakeman Report, but somewhat different. As with the last couple of years, the ordinal ranking portion of the report goes 16 deep, which is how many wrestlers compete in the state tournament (8 placing per weight class).

Following the ordinal ranking is a list of the top five (or more) wrestlers within each district, as one of the key interest points 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.

As always, the mission of this report is three-fold: (1) an attempt to accurately predict the state champion and those towards the top of each weight class (2) an attempt to accurately gauge the composition of each district tournament weight class (3) to provide fans an informative, yet entertaining, read on what to expect in the state series over the next month.