

Introduction

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

For the second straight year, there are a pair of wrestlers seeking to win their fourth state title at the state tournament. With this year's state tournament, it will be nine of the last ten where that is the case, as well as fifteen of the last seventeen years. Prior to last year, 27 wrestlers in all had reached the state tournament with three state titles in hand, all 27 took home a fourth. However, last year saw the first wrestler seeking a fourth title that failed to accomplish the feat; Tyler Warner (Claymont) was upset 6-4 in the Division II 120 pound semifinal by eventual state champion Seth Beard (Napoleon).

This year could see a similar event occur, as one of our three-time state champions has lost three matches this season, including a pair against contenders in his state tournament weight class. Kyle Lawson (Olentangy Liberty) has been beaten by potential state tournament rivals Nick Kiussis (Brunswick) and Cody Surratt (Wadsworth), the other loss was to defending Division II state champion Georgio Poullas (Canfield). Also on the milestone front, Kiussis is already a three-time state runner-up, and there has never been a four-time runner-up at the Ohio state tournament.

Eighteen returning state champions are slated to compete in the state tournament series this year, a number that increases to 21 if you count for titles won in a year prior to 2016. Relative to recent years, this is in the middle (2016 had 24 defending and/or previous state champions, 2015 had 18, 2014 had 21, 2013 had 17, and 2012 had 24).

There is more top end individual talent in Ohio than there was last year, with five individuals ranked among the top eight in their weight class nationally from the InterMat rankings as of February 8th. There is just one number one wrestler, Kaleb Romero (Mechanicsburg); Mitch Moore (St. Paris Graham) is third; Lucas Byrd (Cincinnati LaSalle), Zack Donathan (Mason), and Jaden Mattox (Grove City Central Crossing) are ranked fourth nationally; while Julian Tagg (Brecksville), David Carr (Massillon Perry), and Jared Campbell (St. Edward) are ranked fifth.

From a team race standpoint, Division I is positioned to have the best battle, though two-time defending state champion St. Edward is the somewhat favorite. Should the Eagles win this year, it would be three in a row, six in seven, and 19 in 21 years. Six other teams are nationally ranked: Elyria, Olentangy Liberty, Wadsworth, Mason, Brecksville, and Massillon Perry; along with Cincinnati LaSalle, who is just on the outside looking in. Division II is (yet again) the domain of St. Paris Graham, as the Falcons are prohibitively favored to win a 17th straight state title in the individual tournament. In Division III, nationally ranked Mechanicsburg is the favorite to win their first ever individual state tournament title.

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

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

2nd- 94, 3rd- 44, 4th- 21, 5th- 13, 6th- 4, 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 few weeks.

Please note that this report is a reflection of the information acquired based on wrestling through the weekend ending February 4th, with publication done on February 11th, 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 – which was especially the case in 2016 (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 9th through 11th.

*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!