

2012: A New Year with New Dynamics

The 2011-2012 has been a season marked by three major “new” developments. The first is the establishment of new weight classes due to the OHSAA adopting the NFHS approved changes. As a result, there is one more upper weight this year at the expense of a middle weight. The impact of which is that there is going to be less depth in the upper weights, where what was previously three weight classes (171/189/215) is now captured in four weight classes (170/182/195/220). Conversely the lower-to-middle weights are going to be deeper than in the past – what was previously five weight classes (125/130/135/140/145) is now four classes (126/132/138/145).

The second change is the result of this being the first year for new divisions based on the enrollment counts taken in October 2010 of males in the Classes of 2012, 2013, and 2014. Most significantly is the removal of teams that finished second and fourth in Division III last year, look to be top ten teams in Division II this year, and would probably have been ranked first and second in Division III this year.

When combined with the slide-back suffered by state champions Chanel, and the end of the “Monroeville Four” era, the top four teams in Division III last year vacate. In addition, only three returning state champions are present in the Division III tournament – Jacob Danishek (Dayton Christian), Felipe Martinez (Genoa), and Mimmo Lytle (Swanton). Unfortunately, this means a Division III landscape that is as weak as we’ve seen going back approximately fifteen or so years (which takes us to the freshman year of icons such as Jared Opfer, Clark Forward, Anthony Carrizales, and Tommy Rowlands). However, in defense of those in the division, the top of the field is young, so things will be better next year – fifteen of the projected finalists (eight champs) are juniors or younger. None the less, for those in Division III, it represents a golden opportunity for individual and team glory.

The third change is that “redistricting” took place across all three divisions, and there are significant composition changes within all three divisions. In Division I, the composition of the two “northern” districts remains unchanged, though there were minor changes in the combo northeast/northwest district with some northeast teams being moved to northwest sectionals. An all-northeast district will again be hosted at Mentor; and there is a combined northeast/northwest district, two sectionals each, which will be hosted at Ashland University.

The significant change involves the allocation of sectionals in the Central and Southwest districts. Each will now have four sectionals, which is a change from previous when the southwest had five and the central three. The result is that Dayton teams will no longer split between the Hilliard Darby and Fairfield sites, all will go to Fairfield. From a competitive standpoint, that will bolster the talent in the Fairfield district, while the talent at Hilliard Darby drops off. Somewhat mitigating the drop at Hilliard Darby is the addition of three teams that combined for thirteen state qualifiers last year – Olentangy, Hilliard Bradley, and Canal Winchester (however, that is somewhat deceptive as those teams exited a Division II district tournament that lacked depth; while despite the Dayton sectionals taking back a relatively equal number of state qualifiers, more depth moves out of the Darby site).

Changes within district compositions in Division II caused the most reaction across the state. What remains the same is the combined Central/East district, now at Claymont, with two sectionals from each district; as well as the all Northeast district, now at Alliance, with four of the five northeast sectionals. However, from a competitive standpoint, the Claymont district, which performed below “expected value” last year (placers, two-and-outs, record, etc) lost three of its “core” teams.

The cause for chaos is the composition of the combined southwest/southeast site at Goshen. There used to be three southwest and one southeast sectional in this site. However, the southeast district picked up an additional sectional. As a result, the Goshen site will include both southeast sectionals and two of the three southwest sectionals. From a competitive standpoint, the concern is that the sectional going out of the Goshen district is the one that was its strongest (Tipp City), the one with St. Paris Graham in it. Last year, Graham qualified ten to state, and the other schools in that sectional qualified 15 more to state (only 56 total wrestlers exit for state from a district tournament). The Goshen site last year had the most wrestlers go two-and-out, as well as the least overall placers in Division II – and that was with the Tipp City sectional included.

Feeling the wrath of the change is teams that are in the northwest/northeast combined district tournament, now at Marion Coliseum. Previously it was three northwest sectionals and one northeast sectional. Now it is one northeast sectional (with a couple added northwest teams), two northwest sectionals (consolidated from last year's trio), and the previously mentioned Tipp City sectional from the southwest. This site last year had the least wrestlers go two-and-out, and the most wrestlers place of any district – now imagine how high quality a site this will be.

Division III felt the least change in terms of sectional/district composition, though the level of competition dynamic was previously discussed. The northeast district at Garfield Hts. remains the same with four northeast sectionals. The combined central/east/southeast site, now at Heath, has the same composition – two central sectionals, one east sectional, and one southeast sectional. The western half of the state is the one with changes. The all northwest district at Owens College now features four of the five sectionals, instead of four of six. The southwest/northwest district at Kettering Fairmont returns back to being three southwest sectionals and one northwest sectional, after two years of being two sectionals from each district.