

## **2019 Ranger Report**

### **Kentucky High School State Wrestling Championship Preview**

It seems like only a few weeks ago since Dutch and I were lamenting the last trip for our boys to compete at Alltech. And here we are, already 365 days later. Fortunately, I am blessed to be able to sit in the corner for another son for a few more state tournaments. But man, the years just keep going by faster and faster.

One important thing to address up front. It was almost exactly 11 months ago that we lost one of the best to ever strap on a headgear in the Horse Park. Union County great Bryce Sheffer was taken from us way too soon. He was a dynamo on the mat and tremendous leader, example, and role model for kids around the state to follow. But even more importantly he was a great young man. As we sit in the arena this weekend take a few minutes to remember Bryce and ponder the memories you have of him. Enjoy the blessings in your life and don't take them for granted. Mike and family the Kentucky wrestling family is still thinking about you and praying for you.

So it's the final weekend of this 2018-19 KY high school wrestling season. This one has been quite a roller coaster. As we moved into the off-season there was a strong feeling that the state was down a bit after graduating such a large group of talented wrestlers. But we saw a number of kids compete well over the summer and fall, particularly at the IHPO Hoosier Open where the KY boys were more than competitive. This season has been especially difficult in the way of injuries. Across the state, from backups to state champs, there seem to have been so many injuries that many teams were competing shorthanded throughout the year. Some kids have battled back to give their best shot at the state championship, but I wouldn't be surprised if we see an abnormal number of injury defaults this weekend. I sure hope not, but I know there are a bunch of walking wounded wrestlers that may struggle to finish the event.

As we think back to the season kickoff with the All Star Classic, of the 26 HS wrestlers that competed 10 are currently ranked #1 or #2 including 5 wrestlers favored to be crowned state champions this Saturday. It is always enjoyable to see kids from all over the state come together to compete and showcase the best of our sport. This year we had the opportunity to give some special attention to female wrestling with a girls freestyle match. The KYWCA followed that up by sponsoring the first ever HS girls state championship. Great to see the sport grow and see new opportunities for girls in wrestling.

This time of year always brings up the seeding discussion. Following is a repost of last year's report. The following was taken from TheMat.com regarding seeding:

#### **Why Seeding Matters**

Every year, there is a lot of confusion as to how conference tournaments and NCAAs are seeded. Many coaches and athletes will tell you, "seeds don't matter" because what happens on the mat determines who advances, and to win it all you need to beat whoever's in your path. But in reality, seeds (and also rankings throughout the season in general) matter A LOT for at least four important reasons:

1. Because fans are entertained so much by rankings, they are automatically critical to the sport. Rankings and seeding (which is just a subset of rankings) are instrumental to drawing fan interest to any sport. I'd go as far as to say no other topic is debated more consistently and with as much fervor by fans as seeding/rankings--and this is for most major sports, not just wrestling. Rankings and in particular seeding make

it easier for the average fan to follow the sport, are often used as the basis for making predictions (which is the thing fans most like to do), and are a key input for bookmakers setting betting odds.

2. Rankings give major media outlets a general sense of which matches and athletes to cover to maximize fan interest.

Conference tournaments and NCAAs are among the hardest sporting events of any kind for media to follow. While it's nice that ESPN now covers the entire NCAA tournament online, a tiny percentage of fans see even 1/4 of that action. How the fan base broadly perceives the events is defined first and foremost by how the media covers these events.

3. Seeds provide an important incentive for teams and athletes to excel during the regular season.

Admittedly, this can be a double-edged sword, since every year, several coaches make line-up decisions by giving at least partial consideration to how rankings/seeding will be impacted, which can lead to "seed protection." But more often, there is a strong incentive to wrestle so as to build a body of work to maximize your chances for a high seed.

4. Not everyone is Logan Stieber or Alex Dieringer.

The notion of an "easier path" to the finals absolutely exists in reality. Not all the time, not for every weight, but to think otherwise is foolish. Not having to wrestle a pigtail, getting a bye, wrestling weaker guys to start the tournament with an easier early match (particularly important for the big weight cutters), being on the opposite side of the guys who are bad match-ups, etc. all matter. Also, not everyone's goal is to be an NCAA champion. I know Gable would skewer me for saying this, but there are LOTS of wrestlers who would absolutely "sign on the dotted line" for an 8th place finish before nationals. I certainly would've back in the day.

A couple interesting items we should watch out for this weekend:

- 1) Will Zane Brown get the MOW nod if he is able to become a 5-time finalist and win his 3rd title?
- 2) Who will win 182? We saw a number of kids move UP into the weight class after competing at 170 most of the season. Will it pay off or will they come up light?
- 3) REPEAT: Who will step up to win a wide open 195 weight class?
- 4) REPEAT/REPEAT/REPEAT: Can anyone hang with Union County? Broken record. They proved they were the best dual team in the state 2 weeks ago at Lindsey Wilson (even without the champ-champ dual) and this weekend they are the obvious favorites. Can Johnson Central hang them? Or can a team like Christian Co make a big step up after region and shock the world?
- 5) Kudos again to the KYWCA for continuing to work together and do what they can to make this the best event possible for all of the hard working kids around Kentucky.

Final rankings were posted previously. This document is predicted finishes based on the final rankings and the draw. The winner of each matchup in the bracket is based on rankings, not any sort of prediction as to who we think will win. As usual, I'm sure we missed our fair share of results (some coaches are really, really bad at keeping track up to date), so they are not perfect. They also do not reflect any scratches that have come in the last day or so. And even IF they were perfect rankings, upsets always happen on the big stage.

As always, this report takes hours and hours to pull together. No way for one person to get it all done. Thanks to Dutch for helping from Florida to get some of this completed. Special huge thanks this year really goes to my wife Amber who stepped up big time and did a lot to knock out some of the tedious steps in the process.

Good luck to all of the wrestlers! Enjoy this weekend; the days go by way too fast.

## Report Audit

### How the predicted individual champions fared?

	<u>12 Year Average</u>			<u>2018</u>	
	<u>#</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>#</u>	<u>%</u>	
Won title	9.4	67.3%	11	78.6%	
Finished 2 <sup>nd</sup>	1.9	13.7%	2	14.3%	
Finished 3 <sup>rd</sup>	1.8	12.5%	0	0.0%	
Finished 4 <sup>th</sup>	0.2	1.2%	0	0.0%	
<u>*Lower than 4<sup>th</sup></u>	<u>0.8</u>	<u>5.4%</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>7.1%</u>	
TOTAL	14	100%	14	100%	

\*total of 9 predicted champs have finished outside the top 4 in the last 12 years (2007 – Korey Shotwell Campbell Co 130 DNP, 2010 - Jake Lee Campbell Co 160 7th, Tyler Crow Meade Co 215 DNP, 2012 – Trevor Ford Desales 285 DNP, 2013 – Cody Stephens McCreary Central 106 DNP, Sam Preston Johnson Central 195 6th, 2015 - Hudson Heidorf Trinity 145 5th, 2017 - Landin Jones North Oldham 285 did not wrestle due to injury, 2018 - Braden Mulcahy Walton-Verona 182 DNP)

### Who won the individual state title?

	<u>12 Year Average</u>			<u>2018</u>	
	<u>#</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>#</u>	<u>%</u>	
Ranked 1 <sup>st</sup>	9.4	67.3%	11	78.6%	
Ranked 2 <sup>nd</sup>	2.4	17.3%	3	21.4%	
Ranked 3 <sup>rd</sup>	0.7	4.8%	0	0.0%	
Ranked 4 <sup>th</sup>	0.7	4.8%	0	0.0%	
<u>*Lower than 4<sup>th</sup></u>	<u>0.8</u>	<u>6.0%</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>0.0%</u>	
TOTAL	14	100%	14	100%	

\*total of 10 individuals won the state title who were predicted to finish outside the top 4 in the last 11 years (2007 - Darwin Perez Larue Co 130 6th, Derek Nickel Doss 215 6th, 2008 - Shane Parks Woodford Co 125 8th, Dakota Choate PRP 152 6th, 2011 - Thomas Buckman Union Co 189 6th, 2013 – Jorge Vega Fern Creek 106 5th, 2015 – Geordan Blanton Johnson Central 145 6th, 2016 - Grant Krueger Ashland Blazer 195 7<sup>th</sup>, 2017 - David Woods Calloway Co 195 13<sup>th</sup>, Bryan Pratt Meade Co 220 9<sup>th</sup>)

### Who placed?

	<u>12 Year Average</u>			<u>2018</u>	
	<u>#</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>#</u>	<u>%</u>	
Predicted Top 8	5.9	74.0%	6.1	75.9%	
Predicted 9 <sup>th</sup> - 12 <sup>th</sup>	1.1	14.3%	0.9	11.6%	
Predicted 13 <sup>th</sup> -16 <sup>th</sup>	0.5	6.3%	0.8	9.8%	
<u>Predicted below 16<sup>th</sup></u>	<u>0.4</u>	<u>5.4%</u>	<u>0.2</u>	<u>2.7%</u>	
TOTAL	8	100%	8	100%	

## How the predicted team champions fared and who placed Top 5?

2007

Predicted	<u>1<sup>st</sup></u>	<u>2<sup>nd</sup></u>	<u>3<sup>rd</sup></u>	<u>4<sup>th</sup></u>	<u>5<sup>th</sup></u>
Actual	Woodford Co. Union Co.	Union Co. Woodford Co.	Larue Co. North Hardin	Paul Dunbar* Fern Creek	Fern Creek Larue Co.

\*Paul Dunbar finished 8<sup>th</sup>

2008

Predicted	<u>1<sup>st</sup></u>	<u>2<sup>nd</sup></u>	<u>3<sup>rd</sup></u>	<u>4<sup>th</sup></u>	<u>5<sup>th</sup></u>
Actual	Union Co. Union Co.	Campbell Co.* Ryle	Ryle Woodford Co.	Trinity Trinity	Wayne Co. Wayne Co.

\*Campbell Co. finished 6<sup>th</sup>

2009

Predicted	<u>1<sup>st</sup></u>	<u>2<sup>nd</sup></u>	<u>3<sup>rd</sup></u>	<u>4<sup>th</sup></u>	<u>5<sup>th</sup></u>
Actual	Trinity Trinity	Ryle Union Co.	Campbell Co. Ryle	Union Co. Campbell Co.	Larue Co.* Johnson Central

\*Larue Co. finished 7<sup>th</sup>

2010

Predicted	<u>1<sup>st</sup></u>	<u>2<sup>nd</sup></u>	<u>3<sup>rd</sup></u>	<u>4<sup>th</sup></u>	<u>5<sup>th</sup></u>
Actual	Ryle Trinity	Trinity Ryle	Campbell Co* Union Co	Johnson Cen Johnson Cen	Larue Co Larue Co

\*Campbell Co finished 6<sup>th</sup>

2011

Predicted	<u>1<sup>st</sup></u>	<u>2<sup>nd</sup></u>	<u>3<sup>rd</sup></u>	<u>4<sup>th</sup></u>	<u>5<sup>th</sup></u>
Actual	Trinity Union Co	Union Co Trinity	Ryle Ryle	Larue Co Larue Co	Johnson Central* St. Xavier

\*Johnson Central finished 7<sup>th</sup>

2012

Predicted	<u>1<sup>st</sup></u>	<u>2<sup>nd</sup></u>	<u>3<sup>rd</sup></u>	<u>4<sup>th</sup></u>	<u>5<sup>th</sup></u>
Actual	Campbell Co Campbell Co	Larue Co Union Co	Union Co Trinity	Johnson Central* Larue Co	Trinity Simon Kenton

\*Johnson Central finished 6<sup>th</sup>

2013

Predicted	<u>1<sup>st</sup></u>	<u>2<sup>nd</sup></u>	<u>3<sup>rd</sup></u>	<u>4<sup>th</sup></u>	<u>5<sup>th</sup></u>
Actual	Campbell Co St. Xavier	Union Co Campbell Co	St. Xavier Union Co	Simon Kenton Woodford Co	Johnson Central* Simon Kenton

\*Johnson Central finished 14<sup>th</sup>

2014

Predicted	<u>1<sup>st</sup></u>	<u>2<sup>nd</sup></u>	<u>3<sup>rd</sup></u>	<u>4<sup>th</sup></u>	<u>5<sup>th</sup></u>
Actual	Union Co Union Co	Campbell Co Campbell Co	St. Xavier Trinity	Trinity St. Xavier	Woodford Co Woodford Co

2015

Predicted	<u>1<sup>st</sup></u>	<u>2<sup>nd</sup></u>	<u>3<sup>rd</sup></u>	<u>4<sup>th</sup></u>	<u>5<sup>th</sup></u>
Actual	Union Co Fern Creek	Trinity Union Co	Fern Creek Trinity	Campbell Co Campbell Co	St. Xavier* Oldham Co

\*St. Xavier finished 8<sup>th</sup>

2016

Predicted	<u>1<sup>st</sup></u>	<u>2<sup>nd</sup></u>	<u>3<sup>rd</sup></u>	<u>4<sup>th</sup></u>	<u>5<sup>th</sup></u>
Actual	Union Co Union Co	Oldham Co Woodford Co	North Oldham* Oldham Co	Campbell Co* Trinity	Trinity St. Xavier

\*North Oldham finished 6<sup>th</sup>, Campbell Co finished 7<sup>th</sup>

2017

Predicted	<u>1<sup>st</sup></u>	<u>2<sup>nd</sup></u>	<u>3<sup>rd</sup></u>	<u>4<sup>th</sup></u>	<u>5<sup>th</sup></u>
Actual	Union Co Union Co	St. Xavier St. Xavier	Walton-Verona Johnson Central	Woodford Co Woodford Co	Johnson Central Walton-Verona

2018

Predicted	<u>1<sup>st</sup></u>	<u>2<sup>nd</sup></u>	<u>3<sup>rd</sup></u>	<u>4<sup>th</sup></u>	<u>5<sup>th</sup></u>
Actual	Union Co Union Co	Walton-Verona* St. Xavier	St. Xavier Woodford Co	Madison Central* Johnson Central	Woodford Co Oldham Co

\*Walton-Verona finished 6th, Madison Central finished 8th

## 106 lbs.

**Favorite:** Cole Thomas (9, Ryle)

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| 2. Spencer Moore (9, Walton Verona)       | 14. Cory Joos (9, North Oldham)          |
| 3. Trayce Eckman (9, Union Co)            | 15. Maximus Beltran (10, Central Hardin) |
| 4. Nick Giompalo (8, Johnson Central)     | 16. Gabe Fortier (8, Larue Co)           |
| 5. Devin Armstead (9, Oldham Co)          | 17. Hunter Sproles (9, Cooper)           |
| 6. Jayden Frazier (9, McCracken County)   | 18. Chris Begley (8, Madison Southern)   |
| 7. David Griffith (10, Meade Co)          | 19. Colin Tucker (9, Wayne Co)           |
| 8. Matthew Meyer (10, St. Xavier)         | 20. Nolan Banfield (8, Montgomery Co)    |
| 9. Luke Chapman (9, Lafayette)            | 21. Aiden Roe (9, Central)               |
| 10. Jonathan Gilbert (8, Madison Central) | 22. Leland Reeves (7, Taylor Co)         |
| 11. July Soe (11, Iroquois)               | 23. Ashley Courtney (10, Woodford Co)    |
| 12. CeJay Vaske (11, Boone Co)            | 24. Cole Cecil (8, Bullitt East)         |
| 13. Luke Oliveros (8, South Oldham)       | 25. Riley Johnson (9, Caldwell Co)       |

**Returning placers:** Cole Thomas 3rd @ 106

**Early round matches to watch:** Round 2: #2 Moore v. #3 Eckman, #1 Thomas v. #9 Frazier, #6 Chapman v. #11 Meyer  
Quarters: #1 Thomas v. #8 Griffith, #4 Giompalo v. #6 Chapman, #7 Armstead v. #10 Gilbert

**Kid who might out wrestle their ranking:** Luke Chapman - with a 33-2 record on the season it's a little surprising to see Chapman not expected to finish on the podium, but an upset at region made his state run a little tougher. Wouldn't be at all surprised if Luke ends up in the top half of the podium finishers.

**Team title race implications:** Union and Johnson both expect high placers here. Eckman's state run includes a round 2 match with Moore. Giompalo has a more clear path to advance, but it is possible those guys hit on the back side which could be a huge day 2 matchup. Many of the contenders for a trophy have wrestlers in the mix at this weight, so any slip up could play right into the team race. Christian isn't expected to get points here, but if the youngster Hale can pull out a win or two it could help keep his team in the running.

Not out of the ordinary, 106 only has one returning state placer in #1 Cole "GameFace" Thomas, who took 3rd last year as an 8th grader. Cole will be looking to climb all the way to the top of the podium this year. Standing in his way will be #2 Spencer "Sasso" Moore who wrestled up at 113 last year. Spencer and Cole have a long history of matches since the pee-wee days. These two know each other well and expect to meet up again in a Saturday night show down. Spencer will have to contend with #3 Trayce Eckman in an early second round match. Eckman will look for the upset to provide Union with cushion for another state title. As usual, this weight class is full of underclassman looking to wrestle in the big show. Who will step up and make a name for themselves? Among those looking to make a name are middle schoolers Giompalo, Banfield, Gilbert, Oliveros, and Fortier who have battled through the middle school season (where Banfield had the upper hand) to now try their hand with the big boys.

## 113 lbs.

**Favorite: Brendan Pye (12, Scott)**

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| 2. Isham Peace (10, Walton Verona)     | 14. Mason Polston (9, Central Hardin)   |
| 3. Dalton Lawson (11, Johnson Central) | 15. Corey Westover (10, Larue Co)       |
| 4. Jeffrey Kinley (9, Madison Central) | 16. Tyler Armstead (12, Oldham Co)      |
| 5. Gage Fowler (10, Christian Co)      | 17. Yahir Menchaca (10, Harrison Co)    |
| 6. Isaac Thornton (9, Grant Co)        | 18. Kellen Dick (10, Wayne Co)          |
| 7. Morgan Sallee (11, Danville)        | 19. Xavier Rogers (10, Pike Co Central) |
| 8. Braedon Herron (8, North Hardin)    | 20. Gavin Ricketts (8, Union Co)        |
| 9. Joseph Morgan (12, Apollo)          | 21. Connor Helgeson (12, St. Xavier)    |
| 10. Trevor Villums (8, Male)           | 22. Brandon Bruner (10, Bryan Station)  |
| 11. Paul Perry (12, Valley)            | 23. Field Johnson (11, DeSales)         |
| 12. Andrew Vogeler (11, Sheldon Clark) | 24. Jakari Speaks (11, Moore)           |
| 13. Ashur Jones (9, McCracken County)  | 25. Gunnar Arnold (8, Ohio Co)          |

**Returning placers:** Brendan Pye 2nd @113, Gage Fowler 4th @106, Dalton Lawson 7th @113, Joseph Morgan 8th @113

**Early round matches to watch:** Round 2: #4 Kinley v. #7 Jones, #3 Peace v. #6 Morgan. Quarters: #8 Thornton v. #10 Herron, #4 Kinley v. #3 Peace, #5 Fowler v. #9 Sallee, #1 Pye v. #2 Lawson

**Kid who might out wrestle their ranking:** Morgan was a state placer at this weight last year, is a senior, and huge for the weight so don't be surprised to see him find his way high onto the podium

**Team title race implications:** This is a weight where the challengers have a chance to make up some ground on the champs. Johnson and Christian both have title contenders while Union has a youngster who has a tough opening round bout. That Union-Johnson round 1 match could set the tone for day 1 at state. On the fringe, both Walton-Verona and Madison Central have wrestlers who could push for big points and get their teams in the conversation.

113 has some young guys similar to 106, but also has its fair share of returning state placers. Leading the way is #1 Brendan Pye who lost in the finals last year to Deck. Pye will be looking forward to his return to the finals. Pye is coming into the state tournament with a perfect record of 25-0 and is looking for a storybook ending to his senior year. However, he will have to contend with #2 Dalton Lawson from Johnson Central in the quarters on Friday. Also in the quarters will be another exciting match up between #3 Peace v. #4 Kinley. This will bring me to my rant of please seed the state tournament.

## 120 lbs.

**Favorite: Preston Mattingly (12, Apollo)**

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| 2. Shay Horton (12, Ryle)                   | 14. Donovan Evans (11, Pleasure Ridge Park) |
| 3. Ethan Wells (11, Christian Co)           | 15. Nathan Ainslie (11, Henry Clay)         |
| 4. Bryant Beane (8, South Oldham)           | 16. Gus Roberts (8, Scott Co)               |
| 5. Austin Hedges (11, Trinity (Louisville)) | 17. Dylan Harkins (12, DeSales)             |
| 6. Sam Grandstaff (10, Conner)              | 18. Ruben Martinez (11, McCreary Central)   |
| 7. Devon Herron (9, North Hardin)           | 19. Ray Hamilton (12, Paducah Tilghman)     |
| 8. Bradley Miller (12, Taylor Co)           | 20. Matthew Moore (11, Union Co)            |
| 9. Trevor Frietsch (12, Simon Kenton)       | 21. Conner Sexton (11, Wayne Co)            |
| 10. Nathan Ohlmann (11, St. Xavier)         | 22. Tony Gerling (12, East Jessamine)       |
| 11. Jacob Cain (9, Johnson Central)         | 23. Dominique Collins (12, Western)         |
| 12. Dylan Walls (9, Caldwell Co)            | 24. Bryce Zumwalt (10, Harrison Co)         |
| 13. Isaac French (11, Bourbon Co)           | 25. Levi Stull (9, Meade Co)                |

**Returning placers:** Sam Grandstaff 1st @106, Brad Miller 3rd @120, Shay Horton 4th @113, Jacob Cain 6th @106  
Dylan Walls 7th @106, Devon Herron 8th @106

**Early round matches to watch:** Round 2: #2 Horton v. #6 Herron, #3 Wells v. #8 Frietsch.

Quarters: #5 Hedges v. #7 Miller, #2 Horton v. #4 Beane, #1 Mattingly v. #3 Wells, #9 Grandstaff v. #10 Ohlmann.

**Kid who might out wrestle their ranking:** Jacob Cain - he was a state placer last year at 106, but moving up 2 weights and with Johnson not having many in-state matchups, he could be undervalued at number 11. If he can punch his ticket to the podium that will go a long way to help his team close the gap on Union.

**Team title race implications:** An interesting weight where Union isn't expected to score significant points, but only Christian has a wrestler in the mix for a title. But X and Johnson have wrestlers who are slated just off a podium finish. Getting through that blood round is where the points start to add up; making the jump from 10/11 to a 6/8 placement could play a key role in determining the order of team finish.

Highlight from last season as someone talked a bit much online -

This was a highly debated weight class back to early November with some bold predictions. And I quote:

"I'll go on and predict the finals at 120 will be Storck and Cagen Wallace, another fine young man whose father I actually like. If I'm wrong, I'll eat my crow. If it comes to fruition it'll be a hell of a match not to mention a real matchup."

"Storck will wrestle at 120 this season. Sorry to shake up the rankings again! But whoa 7th at 126??? Pretty sure he's beaten the majority of those kids ranked above him there if not all of them. But hey, you have your agenda! Watch for him in the finals at State. And thank you for your hard work! Let the comments begin haha"

120 is a very lopsided bracket. You have the 2,4,5,6, and 7th ranked wrestler on the top half. While the #1 Mattingly sits alone on the bottom with the only state champ in the bracket (Grandstaff), Sam will be looking for another Cinderella run to repeat as state champion. Horton will have to get past #4 Beane in the quarters and #3 walls in the semi. Horton has been a top wrestler for years and will look to wrap up his career with a state title. Can he navigate the top half of the bracket and take down Mattingly in the finals? I know the Northern Kentucky Mafia will be pulling for Shay with his jet black hair and orange headband. This bracket should be fun to watch.

## 126 lbs.

**Favorite: Thomas Deck (11, Madison Central)**

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| 2. Sam Bacon (12, Union Co)              | 14. Micah Bowers (9, Campbell Co)            |
| 3. Seth Lutes (11, Scott)                | 15. Hunter Butler (11, Meade Co)             |
| 4. Thomas Hoppes (10, Larue Co)          | 16. Samuel Ramirez (12, Apollo)              |
| 5. Gavin Andreoni (9, Woodford Co)       | 17. Gabe Bobay (11, North Oldham)            |
| 6. Victor Zamora (11, Whitley Co)        | 18. Cohner Mullins (9, Oldham Co)            |
| 7. Migdoel Ocasio (12, Simon Kenton)     | 19. Jack Probus (11, Ohio Co)                |
| 8. Eli Peyton (10, McCracken County)     | 20. Jack Raymond (12, Lafayette)             |
| 9. Ryan Bellucci (11, St. Xavier)        | 21. Jalin Polin (11, DeSales)                |
| 10. Jarrett Sanders (11, Ashland Blazer) | 22. Troy Wooten (12, Fort Knox)              |
| 11. Jayden Webb (11, Johnson Central)    | 23. Andrew Rutledge (12, Montgomery Co)      |
| 12. Montrail Porter (12, Central)        | 24. Jackson Church (9, Trinity (Louisville)) |
| 13. Truman Galusha (12, Scott Co)        | 25. Leshawn Simmons (11, Holmes)             |

**Returning placers:** Thomas Deck 1st @113, Sam Bacon 2nd @126, Gavin Andreoni 5th @106, Seth Lutes 6th @126, Thomas Hoppes 6th @113, Migdoel Ocasio 8th @120

**Early round matches to watch:** Round 2: #2 Bacon v. #9 Galusha, #4 Hoppes v. #6 Ocasio, #8 Zamora v. #10 Bellucci, #1 Deck v. #7 Peyton. Quarters: #2 Bacon v. #4 Hoppes, #1 Deck v. #3 Lutes.

**Kid who might out wrestle their ranking:** Ryan Bellucci - St X always shows up ready to roll at the Horse Park. If St X is going to make a run at a trophy they need kids like Bellucci to surprise us all.

**Team title race implications:** This is the first of Union's big guns. If they are able to put 6 in the finals they will be tough to beat. Bacon has a solid quarter matchup with Hoppes, so definitely not an easy road to Saturday night. Andreoni, who missed most of the year due to injury, came back late in the season and has been solid. A run by him could put Woodford back in the hunt for a trophy.

Can you say loaded bracket? The top 4 guys will meet each other in the quarters. Can #3 Lutes find a way to slow down #1 Deck, who has been on a mission this year and looking for his second straight title? Can the baconator get past #4 Hoppes? These will be some of the best quarters this weekend. Pay attention to #5 Andreoni, whom has a beautiful draw to the semi. That being said, he will have #1 Deck looking to take down the black and yellow. Hopefully Rusty will be able to stay behind the coaches line during this match. Maybe Max can give his little brother some words of wisdom prior to the match. Max knows something about winning a state title.



## 132 lbs.

**Favorite: Chase Yost (11, Woodford Co)**

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| 2. Gabe Adams (11, Union Co)                    | 14. Logan Tuggle (10, Boyle Co)        |
| 3. Jakerion Merritt (11, Christian Co)          | 15. Trevor Justice (11, Southern)      |
| 4. Zach Cowan (10, Madison Central)             | 16. Ethan Futrell (10, Trigg Co)       |
| 5. Jacob Grandstaff (10, Conner)                | 17. Marquelle McDaniel (12, Central)   |
| 6. Sheridan Willoughby (12, Bourbon Co)         | 18. Agali Radzhapov (12, Moore)        |
| 7. Blue Fletcher (9, Johnson Central)           | 19. Brennan Caron (11, Ashland Blazer) |
| 8. Jabin Hite (11, Larue Co)                    | 20. Sergio Morales (12, Newport)       |
| 9. Layne Siebert (12, Scott)                    | 21. Peter Mark (12, Central Hardin)    |
| 10. Rickey Garcia (12, John Hardin)             | 22. Allan Friend (12, Paul Dunbar)     |
| 11. Jonathan Phillips (9, Trinity (Louisville)) | 23. Christian Potter (10, Lafayette)   |
| 12. Scotty Villums (10, Male)                   | 24. Atorian Cook (12, Fern Creek)      |
| 13. Malachi Rider (7, McCracken County)         | 25. Anthony Kopp (10, Dixie Heights)   |

**Returning placers:** Chase Yost 2nd @138, Gabe Adams 2nd @120, Jakerion Merritt 4th @132, Jacob Grandstaff 7th @120, Sheridan Willoughby 8th @126

**Early round matches to watch:** Round 1: #1 Yost v. #6 Rider (YES ROUND 1). Round 2: #3 Adams v. #4 Cowen. Quarters: #9 Willoughby v. #5 Grandstaff, #10 Hite v. #3 Adams, #8 Fletcher v. #1 Yost, #7 Siebert v. #2 Merritt

**Kid who might out wrestle their ranking:** Rickey Garcia - senior on his last run at the Horse Park. Rickey has been around a lot of good role models over the years at JH so he knows how to get it done.

**Team title race implications:** Another weight where most of the major players have a dog in the fight. This is an exciting group of wrestlers who will have us on the edge of our seats beginning Friday, but I'm afraid health could play a major factor in how this plays out. Hopefully, the health factor doesn't significantly impact the team race as well. Team scores will make the back side of this bracket even more intense.

132 is extremely loaded with experienced guys. Starting at the top with #1 Yost who already has one title and looking for another. He will have to battle a young guy "Why so Blue" in the quarters and then the #2 Merritt in the semi. The top half of the bracket is set up nicely for a Grandstaff v. Adams semi.

## 138 lbs.

**Favorite: Gentry Deck (12, Madison Central)**

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| 2. Jake Insko (11, Apollo)                 | 14. Kolby Koepp (9, McCracken County)    |
| 3. Jordan Bates (12, Boyle Co)             | 15. Carter Messerly (9, Ryle)            |
| 4. Trevor Pogue (11, Union Co)             | 16. Darian Camery (11, John Hardin)      |
| 5. Anthony Pierce (11, South Oldham)       | 17. Eric Green (11, Pikeville)           |
| 6. Dakota Starcher (12, Pike Co Central)   | 18. Dmitrius Butler (12, Holmes)         |
| 7. Ty Lehman (10, Trinity (Louisville))    | 19. Joseph Akemon (10, Bourbon Co)       |
| 8. Zach Pledger (10, St. Xavier)           | 20. Justin Chavez (12, Lafayette)        |
| 9. Dylan Preston (10, Woodford Co)         | 21. Elijah Phan (10, Male)               |
| 10. Mannie Murrer (12, Covington Catholic) | 22. John Lowe (11, Franklin Co)          |
| 11. Reece Goss (9, Johnson Central)        | 23. Matthew Hendricks (10, Bullitt East) |
| 12. Joel Hatchett (9, Fern Creek)          | 24. Tisen Moore (9, Scott)               |
| 13. Carson Deckard (11, Oldham Co)         | 25. Trent Jackson (11, Moore)            |

**Returning placers:** Gentry Deck 3rd @132, Jake Insko 4th @126, Carson Deckard 4th @ 120, Mannie Murrer 4th @132, Zach Pledger 5th @120, Dylan Preston 6th @120, Anthony Pierce 6th @138, Jordan Bates 7th @132

**Early round matches to watch:** Round 2: #7 Starcher v. #3 Bates, #9 Deckard v. #4 Pogue, #2 Insko v. #10 Preston. Quarters: #1 Deck v. #8 Pledger, #3 Bates v. #4 Pogue, #2 Insko v. #6 Lehman.

**Kid who might out wrestle their ranking:** Mannie Murrer - different year, same answer. Murrer wrestled tough here last year coming out of the same #10 predicted finishing spot and took home a 4th place medal. He is a strong kid who has missed some time this season, but has been hot of late with a Region 6 title; look out for him.

**Team title race implications:** 138 is a weight where only Madison Central has a top contender. But that does not mean this weight won't be important in the team race. It takes a team effort to win the title and Pogue's gap on the rest of the team title field, or lack of a gap, could play a role in how tight the battle is later into the consolation rounds on Saturday.

138 does not win the traditional hardest bracket at the state tournament award this year. For the last few years this has been the bracket to watch. However, that's not to say its not loaded with talent. We believe that 3 guys have a legitimate shot of winning this weight. The favorite would have to be #1 Deck. Gentry and his brother have been tearing it up this year. I met his dad once and he said "All they do is win". Looks like this is the year that could happen. However, #2 Insko might not feel that way. My hope is that they meet in the finals and Insko is still rocking the corn rows from the All-star event. I have been living in sunny Florida and have not seen him since. I will be disappointed if he cut them off. We can't count out #3 Bates who is 44-4 this year and will most likely see Insko in the semi-finals on Saturday morning. Should be a fun bracket and maybe we will hear the DJ Khaled's song "all i do is win" if Gentry makes to the finals Saturday night. Good luck to all the great wrestlers.

## 145 lbs.

**Favorite: Nate Wheeler (12, St. Xavier)**

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| 2. Payne Carr (10, Union Co)                  | 14. Chas Fudold (11, South Oldham)      |
| 3. Nathaniel Lawrence (11, Franklin Co)       | 15. Jackson Grimsley (11, Taylor Co)    |
| 4. Daylon Stafford (12, Sheldon Clark)        | 16. Clay Karsner (12, Boyle Co)         |
| 5. Alex Rivera (12, Moore)                    | 17. Gabe Jacobs (11, Oldham Co)         |
| 6. Diontae Rone (12, Holmes)                  | 18. Neil Aldridge (11, Christian Co)    |
| 7. Tristen Spalding (11, Walton Verona)       | 19. Tyler Ritchie (11, Madison Central) |
| 8. Brent Hudgins (12, Harrison Co)            | 20. Jayden Watson (11, Whitley Co)      |
| 9. David Conner (10, McCracken County)        | 21. Justin Smith (11, Bullitt East)     |
| 10. Ronan Wyatt (12, Woodford Co)             | 22. Azariah Saunier (10, Lafayette)     |
| 11. Sammy Elliston (11, Conner)               | 23. Connor Geise (9, Meade Co)          |
| 12. Simon Powell (11, Fairdale)               | 24. Bladen Sexton (9, Johnson Central)  |
| 13. Landon Lenhart (11, Trinity (Louisville)) | 25. Cameron Isaacs (12, Seneca)         |

**Returning placers:** Alex Rivera 2nd @145, Nathaniel Lawrence 3rd @145, Landon Lenhart 5th @126, Payne Carr 5th @132, Nate Wheeler 6th @132, Ronan Wyatt 7th @145, Daylon Stafford 8th @132

**Early round matches to watch:** Round 2: #7 Rone v. #6 Conner, #2 Carr v. #4 Rivera, #8 Spalding v. #3 Lawrence  
Quarters: #5 Stafford v. #6 Conner, #1 Wheeler v. #10 Wyatt, #9 Hudgins v. #3 Lawrence

**Kid who might out wrestle their ranking:** Diontae Rone - the senior from Holmes wrestled very well to win his regional title. It's been a few years since we saw a kid from Holmes make a run, but this one has a chance.

**Team title race implications:** St. X makes a run seemingly every year at the Horse Park. And 145 will be a key weight for that run. Wheeler is the clear favorite and his draw is set up for a lot of bonus potential. Carr, on the other hand, has to run the gauntlet just to get to the final and earn the point total Union is expecting. Aldridge also got a killer draw, but Christian really needs him to stay in the hunt.

Is this the year for #1 Nate Wheeler? He has been a legitimate contender every year and has come up short. Our feeling is that he has the tools to pull it off, if he can get past the pressure of knowing it's his last shot at a title. However, #2 Carr will be looking to improve from his 5th place finish last year where he beat Wheeler. As we all know, Union County knows how to prepare a wrestler. #3 Lawrence is probably the most athletic wrestler in the bracket and very dangerous. We don't think this bracket is a lock for anyone considering you have guys like #5 Rivera, #6 Rone, and #7 Spalding. Who will step up to the challenge and earn the elusive state title?

## 152 lbs.

**Favorite:** Tom Ketchen-Carter (10, Campbell Co)

- |                                     |   |
|-------------------------------------|---|
| 2. Brayden Giannone (9, Lafayette)  | 14. Cole Nance (10, Anderson Co)              |
| 3. Isaiah Newberry (12, Moore)      | 15. Cameron Baker (10, Apollo)                |
| 4. Bryce Moberly (11, North Oldham) | 16. Brendan Corley (11, Trinity (Louisville)) |
| 5. Wyatt Andreoni (12, Woodford Co) | 17. Edwin Chilton (12, Central Hardin)        |
| 6. Jakob McClintic (12, Oldham Co)  | 18. Cole Wilson (12, Meade Co)                |
| 7. Jimmy Kraeszig (12, St. Xavier)  | 19. Bryson Fields (11, Bryan Station)         |
| 8. Tyler Hudgins (11, Harrison Co)  | 20. James Nash (12, Bullitt East)             |
| 9. Dalton Russelburg (10, Union Co) | 21. Kevonni Young (11, Hopkinsville)          |
| 10. Griffin Hall (12, Taylor Co)    | 22. Cade Cunningham (10, Simon Kenton)        |
| 11. Keegan Hoffman (12, Fern Creek) | 23. Ethan Huffman (12, Boone Co)              |
| 12. Kurtis Karr (10, Wayne Co)      | 24. Zeke Hatfield (12, Ohio Co)               |
| 13. Kyle Mardis (12, Newport)       | 25. Oscar JT Adams (8, Christian Co)          |

**Returning placers:** Tom Ketchen-Carter 2nd @132, Wyatt Andreoni 4th @152, Jakob McClintic 6th @145

**Early round matches to watch:** Round 2: #1 Ketchen-Carter v. #5 Moberly, #2 Giannone v. #7 Kraeszig, #9 Hudgins v. #10 Mardis. Quarters: #6 McClintic v. #8 Russelburg, #1 Ketchen-Carter v. #3 Newberry, #2 Giannone v. #9 Hudgins

**Kid who might out wrestle their ranking:** Dalton Russelburg - Union often gets on a roll at the state tournament and Russelburg could be the beneficiary and make a run to a high placement.

**Team title race implications:** With no real advantage here for any of the top teams, my out wrestle prediction above could blow the team race out of the water. Russelburg could be a big player in the team title race.

#1 TKC is the favorite and looking to return to the state finals once again. He has been on a mission this year. We have a young new face with #2 Giannone looking to make his name in the high school ranks. Most of the depth behind these two wrestlers are all upper classman. We also have another Andreoni looking to bring another state title back to Woodford County. He has been know to get some big wins. We also should not forget about #6 Jakob "Squid" McClintic. Jakob has one last shot and hopefully he will wrestle to his potential. Good luck to all the guys.

## 160 lbs.

**Favorite: Zane Brown (12, Male)**

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| 2. Stephen Little (9, Union Co)        | 14. Charlie Hancock (12, Franklin Co)         |
| 3. Will Baber (12, Bourbon Co)         | 15. Jon Gaudin (12, Trinity (Louisville))     |
| 4. Cameron Coleman (11, Christian Co)  | 16. Travonne Warren (11, Fern Creek)          |
| 5. Ron Shackelford (11, Campbell Co)   | 17. Rictor Morgan (11, Simon Kenton)          |
| 6. Everett Marret (10, St. Xavier)     | 18. Jarred Phillips (12, Wayne Co)            |
| 7. Thomas Boone (10, Larue Co)         | 19. Nick Stapleton (10, Johnson Central)      |
| 8. Damien Calderon (12, Oldham Co)     | 20. Brayden Cundiff (10, Atherton)            |
| 9. Myles Nelson (12, North Hardin)     | 21. Blaise Morris (12, Trinity (Whitesville)) |
| 10. Brandon Gibson (10, Walton Verona) | 22. Hunter Vlach (10, McCracken County)       |
| 11. Cody Foster (11, Ryle)             | 23. Randy Kinser (10, Sheldon Clark)          |
| 12. Kolby Coburn (10, Ashland Blazer)  | 24. Zane Drury (10, Anderson Co)              |
| 13. Joey Stuart (12, Madison Central)  | 25. Seth Steen (10, McCreary Central)         |

**Returning placers:** Zane Brown 1st @152

**Early round matches to watch:** Round 2: #1 Brown v. #4 Coleman, #2 Little v. #9 Nelson.

Quarters: #1 Brown v. #3 Baber, #6 Boone v. #5 Shackelford

**Kid who might out wrestle their ranking:** Damien Calderon - although he has fallen in the rankings the last few weeks, Calderon has a nice draw in the brackets and if he rounds back into form this weekend he should make the podium

**Team title race implications:** Another Christian County wrestler with a killer draw, hitting 2x champ Brown in round 2. It is imperative for him to battle back. On the other hand, winning that region 1 final set Little up nicely to advance deep in the bracket. Marret has been hot of late; don't be surprised if he scores big points for X.

With only one returning state placer, lets just say Zane "Train" Brown is the man to beat. We have watched Zane live in the finals since 8th grade and this year should be no different. Zane doesn't make a lot of mistakes and has concrete hips. May we suggest if you take a shot, it better be at an angle. Our guess is that he wraps up his high school career with another state title. Good luck to one of the last original ETC guys. That being said, this will be an opportunity for some new guys to get a taste of standing on that podium for the first time. Will the pressure get to the less experienced guys or will someone step up and make a statement? This will be one of the toughest brackets to predict.

## 170 lbs.

**Favorite: Micah Ervin (11, Union Co)**

- |                                      |  |
|--------------------------------------|--|
| 2. Clayton Boyd (12, Conner)         | 14. Jackson Geilear (9, Woodford Co)     |
| 3. Joe Jackson (12, Johnson Central) | 15. Arthur Yah (12, Fern Creek)          |
| 4. Seth Slayton (10, Caldwell Co)    | 16. Kashiku Hutcheson (10, St. Xavier)   |
| 5. Jared Kelsay (12, Scott)          | 17. Kenyon Drayton (12, Christian Co)    |
| 6. Klemmer Nicodemus (11, Ohio Co)   | 18. Sean Lohden (11, Bullitt East)       |
| 7. Jerry Simpson (10, Fairdale)      | 19. Brenden Wester (12, Male)            |
| 8. Jackson Deckard (12, Oldham Co)   | 20. Xavier Martindale (12, South Oldham) |
| 9. Jack Fuller (12, Apollo)          | 21. Jack Latherow (10, Ashland Blazer)   |
| 10. Elijah McCune (11, Meade Co)     | 22. Kyle Nash (12, North Oldham)         |
| 11. Trenton Cantlon (11, DeSales)    | 23. Sam Kelly (11, Prestonsburg)         |
| 12. Andrew Sanders (10, Wayne Co)    | 24. Jack Lehman (11, Central Hardin)     |
| 13. Collin McGlone (12, Boyle Co)    | 25. Trey Fleek (9, Ryle)                 |

**Returning placers:** Micah Ervin 2nd @170, Jared Kelsay 5th @170, Clayton Boyd 6th @160

**Early round matches to watch:** Round 2: #5 Jared Kelsay v. #1 Ervin, #10 Deckard v. #9 McCune, #8 Fuller v. #7 Nicodemus, #3 Boyd v. #4 Slayton. Quarters: #1 Ervin v. #6 Simpson, #2 Jackson v. #9 McCune

**Kid who might out wrestle their ranking:** Jack Fuller - not sure what to say about this one; just a gut feeling

**Team title race implications:** One of the top pound-for-pound wrestlers in the state, Micah should put up major points for Union. Huge showdown with Jackson in the semis that could tip the scales in the team race if an upset occurs.

170 has thinned out a little over the last few weeks. A few top guys (Duke and Stevens) decided to move on to greener pastures in hopes of winning a state title. With Micah sitting at number one you can understand why. Stevens actually wrestled two tough matches against Ervin, but just couldn't pull out the victory. Duke on the other hand apparently made 170 all year and all of sudden had a huge growth spurt and couldn't make the weight after the 2 pound allowance. Seems a little strange, but maybe the move will pay off. #2 Boyd has been holding his own all year and has grown into a man. Can he pull off the upset and win this bracket? #3 Jackson is a very experienced wrestler that has a puncher's chance. Finally, don't forget about #5 Kelsay.

If you can remember last year he took a couple losses, but managed to win the award for the most pins in the shortest amount of time award. He has had a few ups and downs this year, but usually comes to Lexington looking to compete.

## 182 lbs.

**Favorite:** Noah Duke (9, Ryle)

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| 2. Daulton Mayer (11, Walton Verona)      | 14. Carter Riley (11, DeSales)                |
| 3. Colin Stevens (11, Trigg Co)           | 15. Hunter Lattin (11, Meade Co)              |
| 4. Chase Blanton (12, Harrison Co)        | 16. Caleb Stone (9, Madison Southern)         |
| 5. Antonio Abren (12, Christian Co)       | 17. Darius Moore (10, Union Co)               |
| 6. Levid Rodriguez (9, Johnson Central)   | 18. Cameron Bixler (12, Anderson Co)          |
| 7. Andrew Marchal (12, Atherton)          | 19. Brandon Richmond (10, Campbell Co)        |
| 8. Sam Jenkins (12, North Oldham)         | 20. Warren Naberhaus (12, Covington Catholic) |
| 9. Randall West (12, Belfry)              | 21. Joseph Box (11, Pleasure Ridge Park)      |
| 10. Mason Hall (12, South Oldham)         | 22. Ben Lanham (11, Nelson Co)                |
| 11. Trevor Reynolds (12, Madison Central) | 23. Matt Oliver (11, Taylor Co)               |
| 12. Uriah Virzi (7, McCracken County)     | 24. Aubrey Gatewood (12, St. Xavier)          |
| 13. Ben Rush (10, Boyle Co)               | 25. DJ Bernabe (12, Woodford Co)              |

**Returning placers:** Colin Stevens 3rd @160, Chase Blanton 4th @ 182

**Early round matches to watch:** Round 1: #5 Abren v. #9 West. Round 2: #4 Blanton v. #10 Hall, #5 Abren v. #7 Marchal. Quarters: #1 Duke v. #3 Stevens, #6 Rodriguez v. #8 Jenkins, #2 Mayer v. #5 Abren

**Kid who might out wrestle their ranking:** Randall West - I know he is not from a traditional power program and he has a miserable draw, but I think he can make a run on the backside

**Team title race implications:** In what turned into one of the deepest weights in the state, Abren and Rodriguez have to battle through to a top 5 finish. These two guys will go a long way in determining the order of finish between their teams.

With a ton of late season weight changes, 182 has become one of the deeper and more wide open weights in the state. Every round will be nail-biting matches in this bracket. My bet is if we wrestled this bracket a hundred times we might get about 4-5 different winners. BUT, only 1 will be the state champ this year. Will it be someone who changed weights? Will it be one of the proven veterans? Or will a young guy get his first HS state title and do it in a tough weight?

## 195 lbs.

**Favorite:** Benjamin Deprest (12, St. Xavier)

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| 2. Matthew Horn (12, Johnson Central)   | 14. Caleb Berquist (12, Oldham Co)       |
| 3. Braden Mulcahy (12, Walton Verona)   | 15. Patrick Dumire (12, Valley)          |
| 4. Tony Ornelas (10, Woodford Co)       | 16. Colton Morrow (12, Wayne Co)         |
| 5. Branson Smith (10, Sheldon Clark)    | 17. Jesus Avila (11, Fort Campbell)      |
| 6. Tyler Norton (12, Fairdale)          | 18. Nathan Tate (12, Male)               |
| 7. Brandon Vera (12, Bryan Station)     | 19. Jacob Thompson (12, Scott)           |
| 8. Ben Bush (11, Central)               | 20. Dakota Brooksbank (10, Simon Kenton) |
| 9. Chandler Miller (11, DeSales)        | 21. Elijah Calloway (11, Union Co)       |
| 10. Logan Deasel (11, McCracken County) | 22. Conner Lambert (8, Larue Co)         |
| 11. Michael Leicht (10, Campbell Co)    | 23. Larry Ritchie (12, Harrison Co)      |
| 12. Marcos Cardenas (12, Moore)         | 24. Cameron Brown (11, John Hardin)      |
| 13. Michael Elkins (12, Christian Co)   | 25. Patrick Netherton (12, Bullitt East) |

**Returning placers:** Ben Deprest 2nd @195, Matthew Horn 3rd @195, Logan Deasel 6th @195, Branson Smith 7th @182, Patrick Dumire 8th @220

**Early round matches to watch:** Round 2: #9 Bush v. #4 Ornelas, #2 Horn v. #8 Miller

Quarters: #10 Deasel v. #5 Smith, #1 Deprest v. #7 Norton, #6 Vera v. #4 Ornelas, #2 Horn v. #3 Mulcahy

**Kid who might out wrestle their ranking:** Marcos Cardenas - 4th place finish in the regional sets him up for an uphill battle, but he has shown some flashes this season and I see a lot of opportunity in this bracket

**Team title race implications:** Deprest has a nice draw, similar to his teammate Wheeler, in order to put up some bonus points. #2-#4 will battle it out on the bottom side of the bracket. That said, Horn has to navigate that side for Johnson to keep pace with Union.

This is a weight that has baffled me most of the season. The top guys have been pretty steady, aside from the injury to Kulmer, but outside the top 3 the rankings have been a revolving door. Even though we have a number of returning state placers, expect the unexpected here. So many of the contenders are spread across every corner of the state so there aren't as many head to heads as we usually see.



## 220 lbs.

**Favorite: Mathias Ervin (11, Union Co)**

- |                                       |  |
|---------------------------------------|--|
| 2. Niko Bussell (11, Christian Co)    | 14. Chandler Watkins (12, Ryle)            |
| 3. Bryan Pratt (12, Meade Co)         | 15. Lane Ezel (12, Madison Southern)       |
| 4. Alex Horn (12, Johnson Central)    | 16. Matt Mooney (10, McCracken County)     |
| 5. Brandon Fields (12, Bryan Station) | 17. Joseph Fisher (11, Letcher Co Central) |
| 6. Wyatt Jones (12, Male)             | 18. Logan Stephens (12, McCreary Central)  |
| 7. Colby Stratman (12, DeSales)       | 19. Justin Wilson (11, Fort Campbell)      |
| 8. Tyler Edwards (12, Southern)       | 20. John Hulette (11, Scott Co)            |
| 9. Allen Anderson (12, Moore)         | 21. Reginald Whyte (10, Central)           |
| 10. Nathan Watson (12, Scott)         | 22. Sam Floyd (11, Bardstown)              |
| 11. Marc Varella (12, Oldham Co)      | 23. Zach Watson (9, Walton Verona)         |
| 12. Jonathan Gregory (12, Wayne Co)   | 24. Jeremiah Shulze (9, Woodford Co)       |
| 13. Casey Rauch (11, Campbell Co)     | 25. Kyler Lee (11, Central Hardin)         |

**Returning placers:** Mathias Ervin 1st @195, Bryan Pratt 2nd @ 220, Alex Horn 4th @ 220, Niko Bussell 5th @195

**Early round matches to watch:** Round 2: #9 Edwards v. #10 Watson, #6 Jones v. #2 Bussell.

Quarters: #8 Anderson v. #5 Fields, #1 Ervin v. #9 Edwards, #2 Bussell v. #4 Horn, #3 Pratt v. #7 Stratman

**Kid who might out wrestle their ranking:** Allen Anderson - after seeing Moore roll at the state duals, I'm thinking at least one individual will carry that momentum into the state tournament

**Team title race implications:** Similar to 195, here we have returning state champion Mathias with a draw to put up significant points on his way to the finals. On the other side Bussell and Horn will hit in the quarters and need to get by Pratt to meet Mathias. Another huge weight in the team battle.

Mathias was a slight surprise Ervin state champ last season. And all he did was bulk up a ton (literally!) on his way to an Ironman placement at 220. Another solid favorite, but one with formidable competition. The bracket gods dumped all the top competitors onto the bottom half, so they will have to fight their way to a chance to face the returning state champ. This weight does have a lot of senior experience. So I wouldn't expect as many surprises here.

## 285 lbs.

**Favorite: Byron Pierce (12, Johnson Central)**

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| 2. Tucker Shelton (11, Larue Co)              | 14. Ian Hughes (10, Simon Kenton)               |
| 3. Dejuan Watkins (11, DeSales)               | 15. Pierce Haines (12, Danville)                |
| 4. John Stone (11, Ashland Blazer)            | 16. J'Quaye Effinger (11, Valley)               |
| 5. Jalen Benson (12, Franklin Co)             | 17. Brandon Pruitt (12, Pikeville)              |
| 6. Cody Melton (12, Moore)                    | 18. Jo Jo Pruitt (11, North Bullitt)            |
| 7. Esmond Morris (12, McCracken County)       | 19. Israel Tshiunza (10, Frederick Douglas)     |
| 8. Blake Young (11, Oldham Co)                | 20. Dashaun Stevenson (9, Holmes)               |
| 9. Markus Green (12, Christian Co)            | 21. Michael Manning (11, Covington Catholic)    |
| 10. Tate Morris (12, Taylor Co)               | 22. Samuel Tomah (12, Spencer County)           |
| 11. Giovanni Watson (10, Bryan Station)       | 23. LaQuann Williams (10, Trinity (Louisville)) |
| 12. Derek Hager (11, Madison Central)         | 24. Jeremy Nichols (12, Fern Creek)             |
| 13. Briar Roberts (12, Trinity (Whitesville)) | 25. Davis Pike (10, Union Co)                   |

**Returning placers:** Byron Pierce 1st @ 285, Jalen Benson 5th @285

**Early round matches to watch:** Round 2: #8 Green v. #9 T. Morris, #1 Pierce v. #10 Young, #3 Watkins v. #4 Stone, #7 E. Morris v. #5 Benson. Quarters: #8 Green v. #6 Melton, #2 Shelton v. #3 Watkins

**Kid who might out wrestle their ranking:** Derek Hager - I was impressed with him earlier this season and although he hasn't run his way up the rankings this year, I think he can win some matches at the Horse Park

**Team title race implications:** Theme for the upper weights, defending state champ Pierce has a nice draw to put up max points to the finals while #2-#5 battle it out on the bottom side. Green can be another key contributor to Christian to keep them in the hunt for a top 2 finish.

Defending state champ Pierce looks to be the first to go back-to-back in a long while (GOO can give us the exact last time a heavy won 2). Looking to stop that run is a tough young buck in Shelton who comes to Lexington undefeated. If this turns out to be the last match of the night I hope the crowd sticks around to see the big boys battle because I expect this to be a good one.

## Team Champions

**Favorite: 1. Union Co (6 finalists, 2 champs, 8 total placers)**

2. Johnson Central	(2 finalists, 1 champ, 8 placers)	14. Moore	(3 placers)
3. Christian Co	(1 finalist, 0 champs, 6 placers)	15. Campbell Co	(1 finalist, 1 champ, 2 placers)
4. St. Xavier	(2 finalists, 2 champs, 6 placers)	16. Male	(1 finalist, 1 champ, 2 placers)
5. Madison Central	(2 finalists, 2 champs, 4 placers)	17. Conner	(1 finalist, 0 champs, 3 placers)
6. Walton Verona	(3 finalists, 0 champs, 5 placers)	18. DeSales	(2 placers)
7. Ryle	(3 finalists, 2 champs, 3 placers)	19. Meade Co	(2 placers)
8. Woodford Co	(1 finalist, 1 champ, 4 placers)	20. South Oldham	(2 placers)
9. Scott	(1 finalist, 1 champ, 3 placers)	21. Trinity (Louisville)	(2 placers)
10. Oldham Co	(5 placers)	22. Franklin Co	(2 placers)
11. Apollo	(2 finalists, 1 champ, 2 placers)	23. Bourbon Co	(2 placers)
12. McCracken County	(3 placers)	24. Sheldon Clark	(2 placers)
13. Larue Co	(1 finalist, 0 champs, 4 placers)	25. Boyle Co	(1 placer)

Union County comes to Lexington as the favorite and in great position to 4-peat. I do believe they have some cushion in the team race, but Johnson Central and Christian County will put up a fight. Johnson Central has a complete team with kids competing for titles and medals from top to bottom in their lineup and can definitely push Union. Christian County came up short at the Region 1 tournament, but in a deep state tournament may have a chance to chase them down if the things fall right. St X shows up ready to roll at state year in and year out. They don't appear to be quite as deep as usual, but they have a lot of firepower so I wouldn't count them out. The next 4-5 teams all have a shot to jump up and take home a trophy. Yes, even Woodford County. Despite all of the injuries and issues that have kept them down most of the season, when all is said and done they will have a chance to battle for a trophy finish.