

2022 Ranger Report

Kentucky High School State Wrestling Championship Preview

Let's start the final weekend of the 2021-22 season with some gratitude. Let's be grateful that we were able to have a normal season with tournaments and fans regular competition. Yes, we still have this weird semi-state tournament, but as much as some folks don't exactly love the process it did give us some really good wrestling last weekend. We also should be excited about our new commissioner for wrestling at the KHSAA, Joe Angolia, who seems to be leading us into a new environment of making positive change to help the sport improve and grow in Kentucky. We are far from a perfect system, but I can confidently say Joe wants to continue to work to make reasonable changes that will move us forward in a positive way.

This has been an interesting season. I didn't go back to check, but it seems like the #1s held serve more consistently than in past years and really down to the #2s and #3s. Not sure what that means for this weekend; expect some surprises or expect things to go chalk. The same cannot be said for the team race. As I have said last summer I thought Ryle was poised to run away with the title. Even when they had a few changes in the lineup I still thought they had just too many horses to be beat. Then the champs came back into the picture. A couple upper weight returners have been huge both on the individual and team side of things. NOT SO FAST! Johnson Central, who I had written off when they lost Levid Rodriguez to transfer, jumped right into the conversation early in the season with a full 14 weights of solid competitors. But as the season wound down, the 8 billion time champs are coming into Winchester with the target on their backs. I do think both Johnson Central and Ryle have the horses to chase them down, but I also think Union County has enough of a cushion with their finalist potential guys, that it will take some underperformance on their end for anyone to catch them.

This will be a weird state tournament for me. The first in a long time without one of my boys competing and one that was supposed to be Spencer's senior year. No regrets because he is having a blast in Chapel Hill and I'm loving watching him. I will miss not sitting in the corner coaching them at the state tournament. But luckily I have a boatload of other great young men that I have had the pleasure of coaching all season and a ton of barn boys who work hard all summer that will fill that void as I watch them chase their dreams.

With that being said, let's try to be positive with the venue and atmosphere we have this weekend. We can all agree there are changes that need to be made to make this a first class experience for our kids. But we must realize it's not changing this weekend no matter how much we whine or complain. Make the most of it and enjoy the experience that we get to have.

Good luck to all!

106 lbs.

Favorite: Jayden Raney (8, Union Co)

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| 2. Sebastian Vega (10, Conner) | 9. Brock Gross (10, Larue Co) |
| 3. Jonah McCloskey (9, Simon Kenton) | 10. Kentrell Mayfield (8, Meade Co) |
| 4. Logan Brown (9, Caldwell Co) | 11. Steven Smith (12, Frederick Douglas) |
| 5. Roman Valera (9, Central Hardin) | 12. Shayne Stilts (9, DeSales) |
| 6. Ryan Smith (8, Johnson Central) | |
| 7. Logan Nance (9, Ryle) | |
| 8. Moses Navaro (11, McCreary Central) | |

Returning placers: None

Early round matches to watch: Round 1: #7 Nance v. #9 Gross (effective blood round match)

If rankings hold Cons 1: #11 S Smith v. #12 Cano

Kid who might out wrestle their ranking: WHO KNOWS??? The top dogs at 106 have pretty well established themselves in the pecking order. But with so many youngsters with minimal experience in this event, anything can happen. Don't be surprised to see chaos in the 4-8 spots.

Team title race implications: All of the top teams have potential to make the podium here, with the obvious advantage to Union. The question really comes down to how Smith and Nance finish. Can one of those guys pull an upset or two and score big points or does one get upset and drop points.

As usual, we don't have a lot of seasoned vets in the 106 field with no returning HS state placers. But that does not reflect on the talent in the field. I am only predicting two 8th graders to make the podium so this is not a middle school weight class. Raney is the clear favorite with a pin over the clear #2 in Vega. After a closer match in the regional finals, Vega widened the gap with a pin over #3 McCloskey at semi-state.

Very interesting that the quarters are lined up to have 1v8, 2v7, 3v6, 4v5. Not perfectly seeded, but I'll take that any day.

113 lbs.

Favorite: Jordyn Raney (8, Union Co)

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| 2. JaRi Campbell (11, Christian Co) | 9. Anthony Condi (9, Frederick Douglas) |
| 3. James Morris (9, Johnson Central) | 10. Nico Plumeri (11, Trinity (Louisville)) |
| 4. Mason Orth (11, Campbell Co) | 11. Kelton Bailey (10, Western Hills) |
| 5. Jayven Williams (8, Paducah Tilghman) | 12. Charles Young (8, Oldham Co) |
| 6. Ethan Davis (9, Grant Co) | |
| 7. Johnny Nance (10, Ryle) | |
| 8. Aydn Funkhouser (12, Harrison Co) | |

Returning placers: Jordyn Raney 1st @ 106, James Morris 4th @ 106, Mason Orth 6th @ 113

Early round matches to watch: Round 1: #6 Williams v. #10 Condi. Quarters: #2 Campbell v. #6 Williams, #8 Nance v. #3 Morris

Kid who might out wrestle their ranking: Plumeri had earned a fairly high ranking just a few short weeks ago, but his results the last couple weeks have him down at #11. If he returns to form I can see him on the podium

Team title race implications: Again all three contenders should have a kid on the podium with Union scoring massive point Nance could be a wild card as he has a chance to hit Morris in the quarters.

The first of 9 previous state champs in the tournament this year, Raney has been a force and appears on track for his second title. This group has a little more experience than we typically see in the lightest weights with 3 juniors and a senior in the mix for podium spots. I am going to show a little bias in a few spots and 113 is one of them. I will be rooting for my guy Ethan Davis to go on a big run here. An undersized 113 who wrestled up for his team, he has been on a roll this season and has a great shot to bring home a medal. And even though I hate Harrison County and never give their kids the credit they deserve, I have picked Funkhouser to make the podium.

120 lbs.

Favorite: TJ Meyer (9, Walton Verona)

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| 2. Breyden Whorton (10, Larue Co) | 9. Cole Harrod (11, Anderson Co) |
| 3. Hunter Jenkins (9, Union Co) | 10. Leydon Nelson (11, Harrison Co) |
| 4. Rider Trumble (9, Ryle) | 11. Carson Herbst (7, Madison Central) |
| 5. Collin Teutsch (11, Caldwell Co) | 12. Maalik Washington (10, Conner) |
| 6. Amari Hardin (11, John Hardin) | |
| 7. Patrick Meek (12, Johnson Central) | |
| 8. Mason Davis (12, Valley) | |

Returning placers: Breyden Whorton 2nd @ 106, Hunter Jenkins 3rd @ 113, TJ Meyer 5th @ 106, Rider Trumble 5th @ 113, Morgan Frederick 7th @ 106, Patrick Meek 8th @ 120, Hunter Luttrell 8th @ 113

Early round matches to watch: Round 1: #6 Hardin v. #7 Meek. Quarters: #3 Jenkins v. #5 Teutsch.

Kid who might out wrestle their ranking: Morgan Frederick - returning state placer had a tough season, but he has been here before so I wouldn't be surprised if he pulls off a couple wins

Team title race implications: Again all three teams have a medalist contender, but the key at this weight comes down to Jenkins and Trumble. Can one of those guys make a run to the finals? Or does one get upset and finish on the lower half of the podium?

120 is a very good weight class with 7 of the 16 wrestlers returning state medalists and a number of upper classmen battling for podium spots. But the youngsters are really tough here as the top 4 have seperated from the field. Meyer has wins over Whorton, Jenkins (2x), and Trumble (4x). Whorton took home silver last year and will come to Winchester determined to get gold. The semis at this weight will be a really, really good round.

126 lbs.

Favorite: Trayce Eckman (12, Union Co)

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| 2. Joey Sander (12, Ryle) | 9. Jason Holden (12, Campbell Co) |
| 3. Adam Williams (12, Johnson Central) | 10. Joe Lampe (9, Male) |
| 4. Rowdy Benner (10, Great Crossing) | 11. Parker McKee (12, McCracken County) |
| 5. Miller Brown (9, Oldham Co) | 12. Isaac Johns (9, Woodford Co) |
| 6. Andrew Lewis (12, Simon Kenton) | |
| 7. Colin Tucker (12, Wayne Co) | |
| 8. Tyler Lattin (10, Meade Co) | |

Returning placers: Trayce Eckman 2nd @ 120, Adam Williams 2nd @ 113, Miller Brown 3rd @ 106, Joey Sander 3rd @ 120, Joe Lampe 5th @ 120, Jason Holden 5th @ 126, Colin Tucker 6th @ 106

Early round matches to watch: Round 1: #5 Brown v. #8 Holden. Quarters: #3 Williams v. #4 Benner

Kid who might out wrestle their ranking: Miller Brown - while he isn't going in totally under the radar as a top 5 kid, but don't be surprised if he pulls off an upset to make the finals

Team title race implications: If the team race is tight late into the tournament this could be a fire matchup in the finals. With a 1-2-3 finish this may not look like it will impact the team race significantly, but the weight is pretty solid with 7 returning placers so an upset along the way for any of these guys is possible.

This is an interesting weight to me as Spencer wrestled a lot of these guys over the last couple years; a couple in the state finals, a couple in the semis. Eckman won a title 2 years ago and has been the top dog all year. Sander has been battle tested and up to the test in a hammer schedule. Williams has been to the finals a couple times and come up short. Could the third time be the charm?

132 lbs.

Favorite: Cole Thomas (12, Ryle)

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| 2. Isaac Thornton (12, Walton Verona) | 9. Jeremiah Thomas (12, Conner) |
| 3. Jayden Frazier (11, Paducah Tilghman) | 10. Kyle Wojcicki (10, North Oldham) |
| 4. Jeremy Ray (9, Union Co) | 11. Caleb Barnes (10, Johnson Central) |
| 5. Riley Johnson (12, Caldwell Co) | 12. Petey Graham (9, Ohio Co) |
| 6. Gus Roberts (11, Great Crossing) | |
| 7. Leland Reeves (10, Taylor Co) | |
| 8. Charlie Tucker (12, John Hardin) | |

Returning placers: Cole Thomas 1st @ 126, Isaac Thornton 1st @ 132, Jayden Frazier 4th @ 126, Leland Reeves 4th @ 113, Caleb Barnes 8th @ 126

Early round matches to watch: Round 1: #8 Tucker v. #9 Thomas, #4 Ray v. #12 Barnes (UC v. JC)

Kid who might out wrestle their ranking: Leland Reeves - I may be a little skewed here by watching Reeves against my guy but he has been tough against some really good competition, so wouldn't be at all surprised to see him pull off an upset.

Team title race implications: The top teams are in tiers at this weight. Ryle has the favorite and safe major points. Union has opportunity for a top half placer, but a young guy will have to handle the pressure of the moment. JC isn't expecting big points here, but if Barnes can pull off one big upset in round 1 it could be huge for the team race.

One of the big individual storylines of the weekend is Cole Thomas seeking state title #4. He has been up to the challenge so far with 3 wins this season over #2 Thornton who is the defending champ at this weight. Two of those wins were by a single point. And I have to say they were exciting 1 point matches. Yes, the 1-0 match at the GMVWA was a really exciting match with lots of attacks. We don't expect anyone to block the paths of the two state champs, but there are a lot of interesting matchups in the field, so don't be surprised to see the favorites get pushed a little during the weekend.

138 lbs.

Favorite: Eli Peyton (12, Paducah Tilghman)

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| 2. Jonah Bowers (12, Campbell Co) | 9. Timmy Nichols (10, Caldwell Co) |
| 3. Jonathan Gilbert (11, Madison Central) | 10. Hunter Sproles (12, Cooper) |
| 4. Jameson Smith (12, Ryle) | 11. Nick Armentano (11, Great Crossing) |
| 5. Jacob Cain (12, Johnson Central) | 12. Andres Quintana (11, Owensboro) |
| 6. Cohner Mullins (12, Oldham Co) | |
| 7. Braedon Herron (11, North Hardin) | |
| 8. Max Speaker (10, St. Xavier) | |

Returning placers: Eli Peyton 2nd @ 132, Braedon Herron 3rd @ 126, Jonah Bowers 4th @ 132, Timmy Nichols 4th @ 120, Jacob Cain 5th @ 132, Jameson Smith 6th @ 138, Max Speaker 7th @ 120, Johnathan Bennem 8th @ 145

Early round matches to watch: Quarters: #3 Gilbert v. #4 Smith, #2 Bowers v. #5 Cain

Kid who might out wrestle their ranking: Nicholas Armentano - Great Crossing is very deep in the middle of their lineup so Armentano has been in and out of the lineup, but he is good enough to make a solid run. If I want to take an easy way out, I would take Kilburn who is ranked #24 but could get a win on the backside if Sproles is not healthy.

Team title race implications: 138 is the first weight where UC is not in the picture. Ryle and JC should score solid points here, but can either Smith or Cain make a big run to close the gap on the Braves.

Year in and year out, 138 is traditionally one of the toughest weights in the state. Given the top end talent at a few weights and the depth of a couple others, I don't know that 138 is there this season. BUT, with 8 returning state placers this weight is right up there with any other. When you expect two returning state placers to NOT place in this bracket it is probably pretty solid. Peyton took home silver last year and comes in as the favorite this year. I don't think he has seen the guys ranked #2-#5, so there are some unknowns heading into the weekend. Gilbert jumping up from 126 earlier in the season and looking really tough at semi-state 2 adds a wild card in the bracket. His health is my only concern.

144 lbs.

Favorite: Reece Goss (12, Johnson Central)

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| 2. Gavin Andreoni (12, Woodford Co) | 9. Hunter Creech (12, Simon Kenton) |
| 3. Malachia Harris (10, Moore) | 10. Rilen Pinkston (10, Highlands) |
| 4. Trevor Villums (11, Male) | 11. Ethan Sentelle (10, Great Crossing) |
| 5. Glenn Mayes (11, Union Co) | 12. Kevin Reyes (12, Southern) |
| 6. Chris Begley (11, Madison Southern) | |
| 7. Mason Schweitzer (11, Walton Verona) | |
| 8. Jasitin Kubwimana (11, Lafayette) | |

Returning placers: Reece Goss 4th @ 145, Gavin Andreoni 5th @ 138, Chris Begley 6th @ 132

Early round matches to watch: Round 1: #2 Andreoni v. #9 Creech, #7 Schweitzer v. #4 Villums, #5 Mayes v. #6 Begley
Quarters: #3 Harris v. #5 Mayes

Kid who might out wrestle their ranking: ABSOLUTELY ANYONE

Team title race implications: Ryle lost their guy Peace here in a very tough region 5 so no points for them. JC comes in with the favorite or at least co-favorite so should score big points. But don't count out Mayes for UC, he can compete with any of these guys.

144 may not have all the titles and medals, but this may be the most competitive weight in the entire tournament. It really stinks with Beane getting hurt. I remember what seems like a decade ago watching him and Spencer training like college kids. Hate to see him lose another season to injury. The way I see it, the difference between the top guys (Goss/Andreoni) and the lowest ranked guys in this bracket (Hutchison/Arnold), is less than any other weight. The "worst" guys here are coming in with records of 35-12 and 51-10. CRAZY. This may be the toughest bracket to predict the actual placers. Should be a lot of fun to watch. It does feel like Goss and Andreoni have separated ever so slightly from the crowd. But 3 through 8 (even 16) could be anyone in the field. This could be a weight where the attrition from semi-state might impact the results. A lot of guys got beat up last weekend. Health may be a determining factor.

150 lbs.

Favorite: Malachi Rider (10, Paducah Tilghman)

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| 2. Charlie McKune (11, Moore) | 9. Seth Davis (9, Johnson Central) |
| 3. Luke Oliveros (11, South Oldham) | 10. Colin Ross (11, Ryle) |
| 4. Micah Bowers (12, Campbell Co) | 11. Jaris Bloom-Doyle (12, Paul Dunbar) |
| 5. Justin Krebs (11, St. Xavier) | 12. Logan Dingus (11, Harrison Co) |
| 6. Matthew Ball (11, Larue Co) | |
| 7. Nolan Banfield (11, Woodford Co) | |
| 8. Owen Lamer (8, Taylor Co) | |

Returning placers: Malachi Rider 2nd @ 145, Justin Krebs 7th @ 145, Caeleb Jarvis 7th @ 132, Seth Davis 8th @ 138

Early round matches to watch: Quarters: #2 McKune v. #3 Oliveros

Kid who might out wrestle their ranking: Logan Dingus - grandson of the top man in my coaching hall of fame, Logan was on fire up until last weekend. If he is healthy and back to form he is definitely a podium kid

Team title race implications: Looks like this could be a wild card weight class in the team race. UC doesn't have a wrestler here, but Ryle and JC are not expected to score big. If Davis or Ross can put a few wins together it will be huge for the team race.

This is an interesting weight. Rider and McKune are the guys to beat here. Both previous runner-ups are looking for a title. Should be a fun match to watch. Slots 3-8 are totally up for grabs. Lamer is a young guy who is solid and could get on a roll. Also like to see PLD with a guy in the mix here. And contrary to what some people believe all 8 placers WILL NOT come from semi-state 1. Total nonsense. I do believe the best guys at the weight were out west. But SS2 has some solid kids who will have a say in how this bracket plays out.

157 lbs.

Favorite: Devon Herron (12, North Hardin)

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| 2. Carter Messerly (12, Ryle) | 9. Carter Akers (12, Prestonsburg) |
| 3. George Feree (11, Trinity (Louisville)) | 10. Bryce Dennemann (10, Campbell Co) |
| 4. Trey Cranfill (11, Oldham Co) | 11. Donovan Taylor (12, Conner) |
| 5. Brandon Burchett (10, Fairdale) | 12. Logan Castle (10, Johnson Central) |
| 6. Alex Hall (12, South Oldham) | |
| 7. Hal Holbrook (12, St. Xavier) | |
| 8. DeAmdrell Mattison (11, Central) | |

Returning placers: Devon Herron 1st @ 138, Carter Messerly 2nd @ 152, George Ferree 2nd @ 126
Brandon Burchett 6th @ 160

Early round matches to watch: Quarters: #2 Messerly v. #5 Holbrook, #3 Ferree v. #4 Cranfill.

Kid who might out wrestle their ranking: Donovan Taylor - he has taken a couple losses, but coming into the year he was expected to be a high placer. Let's see if the senior goes out on a high note.

Team title race implications: Ryle has a leg up here and no UC wrestler. Messerly has a tough path to get back to the finals, but his schedule has prepared him for a grind. Castle could surprise a few people and could be a big key for JC to make up some ground on UC.

Herron is one of the bigger favorites going for his third title at 49-0. The Messerly-Ferree semi is intriguing; both guys were finalists last year with Messerly up less than a weight class and Ferree up over 4 weights. Cranfill is a bit of an unknown for me. Oldham County always wrestles an interesting schedule with lots of out of state matchups so it is sometimes harder to gauge exactly how good they are at times. This weight in general is interesting as you look at the guy making the top 12. Teams like Central, Prestonsburg, and Fairdale (although they were much improved as a total team) are good to see.

165 lbs.

Favorite: Brayden Giannone (12, Lafayette)

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| 2. Jeffrey Kinley (12, Madison Central) | 9. Joshua Strayer (10, Great Crossing) |
| 3. Jude Powell (11, Fairdale) | 10. Freddy Scarborough (11, Oldham Co) |
| 4. Jonathan Phillips (12, Trinity (Louisville)) | 11. Benicio Mariscal Carter (12, John Hardin) |
| 5. Gavin Ricketts (11, Union Co) | 12. Isaiah Murphy (11, Fern Creek) |
| 6. Zack McCourt (10, Johnson Central) | |
| 7. Joseph Bikakis (12, Simon Kenton) | |
| 8. Caleb Duke (10, Ryle) | |

Returning placers: Zach McCourt 3rd @ 160, Jeffrey Kinley 4th @ 152, Jude Powell 6th @ 152
Brayden Giannone 8th @ 160

Early round matches to watch: Quarters: #2 Kinley v. #6 McCourt, #4 Phillips v. #5 Ricketts

Kid who might out wrestle their ranking: Josh Strayer - had a tough semi-state, but had a number of really good wins prior to that. Assuming he returns to healthy form he could upset the apple cart.

Team title race implications: One of those weights where the kids for the top teams slot into mid range placer spots. But Ricketts starts with my dark horse wrestler, McCourt has a tough draw, and Phillips is in the Ricketts/Strayer quarter.

After COVID derailed his season last year, Giannone is back and ready to take home another gold. He has a couple hard fought wins over Kinley already. And for the record, Kinley has been an animal this year. I remember Jude Powell as the string bean kid who occasionally came in to scrap at ETC with Spencer and Beane. Not the case any more. I hate to mention it because then I am tempted to go back and look at the other weights, but this is a bracket with a bunch of kids with some really good parents that I like. Although I am quite disappointed that Marika Kinley didn't help me manage my emotions last weekend. Just kidding.

175 lbs.

Favorite: Lane Kiser (10, Trinity (Louisville))

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| 2. Noah Duke (12, Ryle) | 9. Caden Rodriguez (11, Meade Co) |
| 3. Dalton Matney (8, Johnson Central) | 10. Ethan Montgomery (9, Boyle Co) |
| 4. Paxton Ervin (12, Union Co) | 11. Jacobie White (12, Harrison Co) |
| 5. Spencer Redwine (12, Paducah Tilghman) | 12. Logan Julian (10, Tates Creek) |
| 6. Colin Walls (12, Caldwell Co) | |
| 7. John Bronson (12, Frederick Douglas) | |
| 8. Brady Allen (11, St. Xavier) | |

Returning placers: Noah Duke 1st @ 170, Lane Kiser 3rd @ 170, Spencer Redwine 5th @ 182

Early round matches to watch: Not much I like in the early rounds here

Kid who might out wrestle their ranking: Logan Julian - no real reason, just throwing a dart on this one

Team title race implications: This weight has all the top teams grouped at 2-4. But Ryle holds a trump card in Duke being the only one of the group who I think can win the bracket. The others need to hold serve here and not lose points by getting upset and falling to a low placement.

Duke was probably one of the biggest sure things coming into this season. Kiser showed he can compete and actually won the match. Can he repeat that performance? We will see. Wouldn't it be an amazing story if Matney made a crazy run to a title and those points put JC over the top to a team title? That's a big ask for the 8th grader, but he is darn good. I know I know. I didn't pick White to pin everyone in the bracket. Sorry. Just the way it goes.

190 lbs.

Favorite: Stephen Little (12, Union Co)

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| 2. Chase Price (11, Johnson Central) | 9. James Stegman (11, St. Xavier) |
| 3. Wade Mettling (11, Oldham Co) | 10. Willie Rodriguez (10, Covington Catholic) |
| 4. Trey Fleek (12, Ryle) | 11. Marcus James (9, Taylor Co) |
| 5. Jimmy Mooney (9, Paducah Tilghman) | 12. Aiden Gill (11, Simon Kenton) |
| 6. Luke Hyden (9, Walton Verona) | |
| 7. Conner Lambert (11, Larue Co) | |
| 8. Hunter Lehrke (12, Southern) | |

Returning placers: Stephen Little 1st @ 182, Chase Price 3rd @ 182, Conner Lambert 6th @ 195

Early round matches to watch: Quarters: #3 Mettling v. #5 Mooney

Kid who might out wrestle their ranking: Willie Rodriguez - young guy who really came on this year

Team title race implications: If there is such thing as a sure thing, UC has it here. JC and Ryle both have guys that can compete, but Price got the more favorable spot in the bracket. Little is likely to put up a LOT of bonus as well to extend that Union County lead.

As I said Little is essentially a lock. Nationally ranked and headed to Arkansas Little Rock, he has proven to be the pound for pound best kid in the state. Price is a big, strong kid (imagine that from a JC upper weight), but I'm not sure what to expect in that potential Price-Mettling semi. Very interesting to see two freshmen at 5-6 at this man's weight. But Mooney and Hyden have earned it. Also can't forget James down there in the blood round too. A lot of young talent at this weight.

215 lbs.

Favorite: Uriah Virzi (10, Paducah Tilghman)

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| 2. Corinthian Seals (12, Union Co) | 9. Jahvon Frazier (10, Bryan Station) |
| 3. Jackson Geilear (12, Woodford Co) | 10. Sam Rayburn (12, West Carter) |
| 4. Jesse McCoy (12, Johnson Central) | 11. Geoffrey Johnson (12, Holmes) |
| 5. Austin Silva (11, John Hardin) | 12. Austin Ellis (11, Meade Co) |
| 6. Rocky Whitehead (12, Madison Southern) | |
| 7. Joel Hatchett (12, Fern Creek) | |
| 8. Cooper Elliston (12, Conner) | |

Returning placers: Jackson Geilear 4th @ 182, Uriah Virzi 5th Rocky Whitehead 5th @ 195, Joel Hatchett 7th @ 195

Early round matches to watch: Quarters: #2 Seals v. #3 Geilear (WOW!)

Kid who might out wrestle their ranking: Cooper Elliston - how can you pick anyone else in this group. He made a magical run back in 2020 and hopes to repeat it for his senior year.

Team title race implications: Nothing for Ryle here and UC has potential for big points. That quarter match will be huge in the team race. Now that I think about it, the bracket gods didn't do any favors for Seals. To win a title he will have to go through #3, #4, and #1. Ouch.

I've been saying this about Uriah since he was little. Well, I don't know if he was ever actually little. It is crazy that he is only a sophomore. But he has the strength to not just compete, but actually win this bracket. This weight has a solid group of 8 or 9 guys that are very dangerous, so it won't be easy. But his path will be much more manageable than mentioned above for Seals.

285 lbs.

Favorite: Branson Smith (12, Martin County)

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| 2. Dashaun Stevenson (12, Holmes) | 9. Nic Russell (12, Lafayette) |
| 3. AJ Harvey (12, Christian Co) | 10. Skyeler Tallent (11, Boyd Co) |
| 4. Carter Guillaume (10, St. Xavier) | 11. Cole Sherill (10, Caldwell Co) |
| 5. Isaac Meyer (12, Oldham Co) | 12. Gabriel Kays (10, Trinity (Louisville)) |
| 6. Stephen Whitehead (11, Madison Southern) | |
| 7. Davis Pike (12, Union Co) | |
| 8. DJ Riggins (10, Taylor Co) | |

Returning placers: Branson Smith 1st @ 285, Carter Guillaume 6th @ 220

Early round matches to watch: Round 1: #6 Pike v. #8 Russell. Quarters: #1 Smith v. #6 Pike

Kid who might out wrestle their ranking: Skyeler Tallent - big, big heavyweight who can do some athletic things on the mat

Team title race implications: Huge loss for Ryle last week when Marshall didn't advance. Adkins for JC isn't expected to score a lot, but I wouldn't count him out. UC appears to have the only major point scorer here, but his draw is BRUTAL.

Branson Smith won the title last year and came back to add another to his trophy case. He beat #2 Stevenson last weekend at SS2, but hasn't faced any of the other major threats. It's heavyweight so anything can happen and likely will. Christian County has been one of the most consistent heavyweight producing teams in recent history so look out for Harvey. He is very likely to throw a wrench in the rematch plans. A number of young guys at this weight have also been very good all season. The sophomore crop (Guillaume, Riggins, Sherill, Kays) has been really good and should make the 285 weight class very interesting over the next couple seasons.

Team Champions

Favorite: 1. Union Co (5 finalists, 4 champs, 11 total placers)

2. Johnson Central	(2 finalists, 1 champ, 10 placers)	14. Simon Kenton	(3 placers)
3. Ryle	(4 finalists, 1 champ, 10 placers)	15. Christian Co	(1 finalist, 0 champs, 2 placers)
4. Paducah Tilghman	(3 finalists, 3 champs, 7 placers)	16. Moore	(1 finalist, 0 champs, 2 placers)
5. Oldham Co	(0 finalists, 0 champs, 5 placers)	17. North Hardin	(1 finalist, 1 champ, 2 placers)
6. Walton Verona	(2 finalists, 1 champ, 4 placers)	18. Lafayette	(1 finalist, 1 champ, 2 placers)
7. Trinity (Louisville)	(1 finalist, 1 champ, 3 placers)	19. Conner	(1 finalist, 0 champs, 2 placers)
8. Campbell Co	(1 finalist, 0 champs, 3 placers)	20. Madison Southern	(3 placers)
9. Caldwell Co	(4 placers)	21. Great Crossing	(2 placers)
10. Woodford Co	(1 finalist, 0 champs, 3 placers)	22. John Hardin	(3 placers)
11. St. Xavier	(6 placers)	23. Fairdale	(2 placers)
12. Larue Co	(1 finalist, 0 champs, 4 placers)	24. South Oldham	(2 placers)
13. Madison Central	(1 finalist, 0 champs, 2 placers)	25. Martin County	(1 finalist, 1 champ, 1 placer)

No it's not a broken record. Just wrestling in Kentucky. While it is definitely not a forgone conclusion, I think Union will win another team title with a comfortable margin of victory. They have battled through a very tough region, a deep semi-state, and now appear to be poised to again show they are the best team in the state. Johnson Central stepped up big time at semi-state getting all 14 kids to the big dance, so they have the most bullets. But I'm just not sure they can get quite enough top end scorers to keep up with UC. They might still have some Matney magic saved up for this weekend. That would be a pretty amazing story to pull it off in Coach Matney's honor. If you asked me back in the summer, I would have picked Ryle without question and thought they had a ton of room for error. Even after a few roadblocks popped up, I thought they had enough talent to get over the hump and win it. But I didn't account for the champs doing what they seem to do every year now and put too many top guys on the mat to overcome.