

2024 Ranger Report

Kentucky High School State Wrestling Championship Preview

I am not much of a movie guy, but for some reason as I have been working on this I keep thinking about Back to the Future and Star Wars: A New Hope. One big reason for that is after dealing with a few years of the effects of COVID, we are back to the Horse Park and the 32 man bracket. I know we many of us hated the 32 man bracket and the venue and complained for years, but I think a lot of that was us missing the Dungeon and comparing to those glory days. I hope we will have a little different perspective after being packed in a high school gym the last few years. GRC is an amazing facility, but it is a high school gym. It just is. Let's get back in the Horse Park this week and show our passion for the sport and our programs. We are also going to be experiencing the historic first KHSAA Girls State Championship. I have to admit I was on the fence for a long time about girls wrestling. Never considered encouraging my girls to participate and never thought I would. Nothing against it, I just wasn't sure where it was going and I definitely didn't want my daughters to be competing against the guys. Again, it was what it was. But with the KHSAA sanctioning the sport and then my program jumping in with both feet to support a new girls team, all of a sudden my daughter is into it and I'm coaching a girls team. And let me tell you it has been fantastic. Can't wait for Saturday. I hope we get a super rowdy crowd in there to cheer these girls on. They really are the future of building wrestling into a bigger and better version of what we all love.

Speaking of the girls, I don't have any breakdowns or commentary on that event. Two big reasons. First, just not enough hours in the. With my day job, family stuff, church, practice, and occasional sleep I just couldn't pull it off this year. Second, coaching our small group of girls, I wasn't sure I could be totally impartial. My boys rankings were born out of making sure it was objective and not focused on one part of the state or certain teams. It's a little too early for that just yet. As much as you may not like the girls ranking committee product, they are working on it and will get better. And third, I will add the coaches have a LONG way to go in getting results in the system. Coaches have to improve on that for any rankings to be meaningful. All that to say, maybe if I can recruit some help, I will get some girls stuff out next season.

On this report, I kept it short and sweet. The Thursday turnaround really got me. I'm getting older and need a little more of my sleep, so losing a full 24 hours to get this stuff done was impossible. A few random thoughts. My brackets are filled out based on my latest rankings and how the brackets were set at the time I printed them (and we know they will change).

Well, time is up. I need to post this. So no lengthy write-up this year. Maybe I will do a long thoughtful recap after my first girls state tournament. But my one parting word of wisdom for all the fans and particularly parents is this. Enjoy the moments. Going through Ryan's senior night tonight, I can tell you it will all be over with all too soon.

106 lbs.

Favorite: Jackson Wells (9, Harrison Co)

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| 2. Roman Valera (11, Trinity (Louisville)) | 9. Aluma Enwa (12, Great Crossing) |
| 3. Braxton Corbett (11, Union Co) | 10. Brycen Gray (9, Woodford Co) |
| 4. Luke Cornwell (9, Ryle) | 11. Wyatt Payne (11, Henderson Co) |
| 5. Henry Koller (10, South Oldham) | 12. Nathaniel Bueter (9, St. Xavier) |
| 6. Nathan Reusch (9, Simon Kenton) | 13. Case Simmons (7, Paducah Tilghman) |
| 7. Drake Wimsatt (9, Paul Dunbar) | 14. Ian Tucker (9, Wayne Co) |
| 8. Grayson Smith (9, Madison Central) | 15. Justin Klidzejs (10, Caldwell Co) |

Returning placers: Roman Valera 4th @ 106

Early round matches to watch: Round 2: #5 Cornwell v. #7 Enwa. Quarters: #1 Wells v. #3 Corbett, #2 Valera v. #5 Cornwell

Kid who might out wrestle their ranking: Luke Cornwell - I don't usually go with someone ranked this high as the "surprise" guy in the bracket, but he is talented enough to win the whole thing as the #5. He will have to navigate a tough path, but Ryle has been battle tested.

Team title race implications: This one is very interesting. At a weight class featuring a bracket full of underclassmen, 106 is most likely to have some variable results. But we also have a solid list of contenders at the top of the rankings (1-5) that each have a shot to win the title and each competing for teams coming to Lexington with high hopes. Cornwell is a key component for Ryle to make a run at PT; finishing 1st compared to 4th or 5th is huge in where they end the team race. PT has a big gap to close on UC, but if the youngster Simmons could get hot and make a big run to the podium (even a 6-8 spot) they could gain some momentum to make it a race.

The #1 guy coming into state is Wells who moved in over the summer. While he is 30-0 and a solid top pick for me, I don't think he has been tested quite like the group of challengers behind him. They have a really solid lightweight room, so I'm sure he will be ready to go. Right on his heels are two juniors, a little outside the norm at this weight. Valera is the only returning placer at this weight and jumped to the front of the pack once I saw him make the weight earlier this season. But he has been part of the rankers delight with Cornwell and Koller where they have beaten each other late in the season. So it is hard to definitively give any of those guys an edge over the others, but I do believe that any of them could walk away with the title. One additional wrinkle here will be Corbett; imagine that, Union Count with a tough lightweight coming out of nowhere. He does have a win over Cornwell and a loss to Valera. He is a junior and could benefit from the runaway team train, but if he slips, then maybe UC starts to come back to the pack ever so slightly. Another wild card is senior Enwa for Great Crossing. They need to pick up some extra team points to solidify the trophy spot and maybe the older 6 pounder can find them. I have him hitting Corbett in the blood round for a big time match to make the podium.

113 lbs.

Favorite: Kapela Joseph (12, Frederick Douglas)

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| 2. Christian Delos Santos (11, John Hardin) | 9. Zac Scott (8, Johnson Central) |
| 3. Clayton Badida (10, Conner) | 10. Dakota Phillips (12, Boyle Co) |
| 4. Osvaldo Menchacha (12, Harrison Co) | 11. Hayden Drexler (10, Oldham Co) |
| 5. Blaine Kimery (10, South Oldham) | 12. Aiden Ranburger (10, Daviess Co) |
| 6. Jake Ramsey (10, Apollo) | 13. Payton Elkins (11, North Hardin) |
| 7. Brennan East (9, Walton Verona) | 14. Jacob Cowan (11, Trinity (Louisville)) |
| 8. Jaxson Mayberry (10, Union Co) | 15. Henry Bueter (10, St. Xavier) |

Returning placers: Dakota Phillips 5th @ 106, Christian Delos Santos 6th @ 106, Clayton Badida 7th @ 106, Jake Ramsey 8th @ 106

Early round matches to watch: Quarters: #3 Delos Santos v. #4 Kimery

Kid who might out wrestle their ranking: Blake Murdock - last minute sub wrestling up a weight, doesn't sound like a good combination, but he is a scrapper. KY Extreme!

Team title race implications: This doesn't appear to be a weight with big team race impacts, but there is some potential with the youngster Scott and veteran Phillips looking like blood round finishers. If they can find their way to 1-2 more wins that could help vault their teams into the next tier of squads.

This weight class got a totally different look over the weekend. Returning state runner-up Birk did not compete at region and turned a weight that was likely a one man race into a wide open battle royale. Joseph at 42-1 now takes the reins as the favorite with his only loss to the aforementioned Birk (11-7). Can the senior bring home a first wrestling state title for Frederick Douglas? Delos Santos and Badida are both tough and capable of knocking off Joseph. And with the draw, Joseph could have to go through both guys to win it all.

120 lbs.

Favorite: Landon Evans (11, Ryle)

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| 2. Braydan Blevins (10, Simon Kenton) | 9. Madden Brown (10, Oldham Co) |
| 3. George Dennis (10, Harrison Co) | 10. Ethan Masters (10, Boyle Co) |
| 4. Utah Heady (10, Union Co) | 11. Joey Bratcher (10, Ohio Co) |
| 5. Ethan Davis (11, Grant Co) | 12. Jackson Stoner (9, Daviess Co) |
| 6. Ryan Smith (10, Johnson Central) | 13. Maalik Washington (12, Conner) |
| 7. Corbin Nance (10, Anderson Co) | 14. Kadham Alghanemi (10, Lafayette) |
| 8. Mason Gipson (9, South Oldham) | 15. Shayne Stilts (11, DeSales) |

Returning placers: Landon Evans 1st @ 113, Braydan Blevins 1st @ 106, George Dennis 2nd @ 106, Madden Brown 3rd @ 106, Utah Heady 5th @ 113, Ethan Davis 5th @ 120, Ryan Smith 6th @ 113, Corbin Nance 7th @ 113, Maalik Washington 7th @ 126

Early round matches to watch: Round 2: #2 Blevins v. #7 Brown.
Quarters: #1 Evans v. #3 Dennis [DON'T MISS THIS ONE].

Kid who might out wrestle their ranking: Corbin Nance - has been competitive with a lot of the kids ranked ahead of him, so won't be at all surprised if he can pull off an "upset" or two.

Team title race implications: Another weight where Boyle is just outside the money spots. But this weight is really tough, so making that jump from the blood round to the podium is a big jump, and moving up the podium is a huge leap. While there are a few wrestlers from the top teams in the mix here, I feel like the top guys here are so solid that I don't see them moving much so I think the team point production is fairly predictable here.

This is one of the best weights of the tournament. So much talent and a number of good kids that I have worked a lot with in the off season. I will definitely be watching a lot of these matchups. We start with 2 returning state champions followed by a runner-up, a 3rd, and 5 (yes 5) more returning state placers. Such a good weight. I wish I had some stats handy on this, but I don't recall a weight with 9 returning state placers in it recently. And with 4 of them being top 3 it is even more impressive. Evans and Blevins had a battle in the region finals so that puts them on opposite sides this week. But the bracket gods were not very kind to Landon. His path could include #9 Gipson, #3 Dennis, and #4 Hea just to get to the rematch with #2 Blevins. That is brutal. If he pulls that off that could be your outstanding wrestler right there. All this and I'm not trying to pretend Blevins has an easy path on the top half. After a tough early round match against Brown he is likely to face the winner of a tough Smith-Davis quarter to return to the state finals. He will earn it, but not the gauntlet that Evans is facing. In the 32 man bracket, the quarters always provide drama. And I expect the Evans-Dennis match to be a great one. Set your track alerts for that one.

126 lbs.

Favorite: Jayden Raney (10, Union Co)

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| 2. Jayven Williams (10, Paducah Tilghman) | 9. Logan Brown (11, Caldwell Co) |
| 3. Jonah McCloskey (11, Simon Kenton) | 10. Carson Nance (8, Anderson Co) |
| 4. Rowdy Benner (12, Great Crossing) | 11. Aiden Zuniga (7, Taylor Co) |
| 5. Seth Page (11, Ryle) | 12. Gavyn Kinley (8, Madison Central) |
| 6. Anthony Condi (11, Frederick Douglas) | 13. Aeson Springer (10, Oldham Co) |
| 7. Evan Browning (12, Boyle Co) | 14. Colton Motta (10, South Oldham) |
| 8. Michael Smith (11, Scott) | 15. Mat Wasson (10, Harrison Co) |

Returning placers: Jayden Raney 1st @ 120, Jayven Williams 2nd @ 126, Anthony Condi 4th @ 120, Rowdy Benner 4th @ 126, Seth Page 5th @ 126, Jonah McCloskey 6th @ 120, Logan Brown 7th @ 120

Early round matches to watch: Round 1: #6 Condi v. #7 Brown. Quarters: #2 Williams v. #3 McCloskey, #4 Page v. #5 Benner

Kid who might out wrestle their ranking: Mat Wasson - going total homer pick here with Mat making a run all the way to a spot on the podium; there is a path.

Team title race implications: Raney has already shown the gap is large here and the only team point question is will he max out. Williams is not a lock to make the finals and if Page can find a way to outplace him, maybe Ryle can start to erase the gap in the team race. Another weight with a Boyle County wrestler on the fence. Their coaching staff may need some nerve pills or a stiff drink around that blood round.

Early in the season it looked like 126 was the weight of weights. Not surprising that a few guys went a different path rather than challenge Raney and the crew that was slated here. Still, 7 returning state placers including a couple finalist ain't too bad. Oh and the top dog is ranked top 10 in the country. Williams is back at the weight he made the finals at last year, this time trying out the other brother. McCloskey and Benner have put in a lot of work so it will be exciting to see where they land. Draws will dictate some of that, but sometimes the draw just provides you with great opportunities. Another exciting quarter to keep an eye on is Williams-McCloskey. One wrestler that could easily bust my bracket is Logan Brown. Although he is coming in ranked #7 he was 3rd at region (behind Raney and Williams). He will start off w #6 Condi (probably a toss-up match) with the loser facing a LONG road back.

132 lbs.

Favorite: Jordyn Raney (10, Union Co)

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| 2. Leland Reeves (12, Taylor Co) | 9. Liam Gutierrez (11, Frederick Douglas) |
| 3. Kaygen Roberts (9, Boyle Co) | 10. Charles Smith (11, Central) |
| 4. Brock Gross (12, Larue Co) | 11. Brock Messer (12, Martin County) |
| 5. Cordion Abernathy (10, Conner) | 12. Trae White (10, Henry Clay) |
| 6. Jagger Irwin (9, Ryle) | 13. Braden Woolridge (10, St. Xavier) |
| 7. Andrew Pomeroy (10, Male) | 14. Travis Votel (11, Highlands) |
| 8. Jack Finley (12, Great Crossing) | 15. Dakota Ferguson (11, Johnson Central) |

Returning placers: Jordyn Raney 1st @ 126, Leland Reeves 1st @ 132, Kaygen Roberts 4th @ 113

Early round matches to watch: Round 2: #4 Gross v. #6 Irvin

Kid who might out wrestle their ranking: Trae White - no good reason except a gut feel that he is getting hot at the right time of year.

Team title race implications: Repeat 126 at the top. Boyle County has a young guy here, but expect big points. From the other end of the spectrum, Great Crossing has a senior here, but not one that has been in the spotlight. Making the top 8 is important to stay in the team trophy race.

This might be the weight that I have the least amount of confidence in my podium picks. Yes, the top 2 are locks with a couple returning state champs, one ranked top 10 in the country and the other won this weight 12 months ago. BUT after that, there are some good wrestlers, but I just haven't seen enough from them to know how they will perform on the big stage. Roberts is the exception taking home a 4th place medal at 113 last year. Moving up 3 weights doesn't seem to have any negative impacts on his results, but he will need to string together a number of tough wins to be 3rd.

138 lbs.

Favorite: Breyden Whorton (12, Larue Co)

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| 2. TJ Meyer (11, Walton Verona) | 9. Jacob Armstead (10, Oldham Co) |
| 3. Hunter Luttrell (12, Fairdale) | 10. Christopher Ferraro (12, Campbell Co) |
| 4. James Morris (10, Johnson Central) | 11. Logan Cantrell (11, Madison Central) |
| 5. Cofy Walls (12, Caldwell Co) | 12. Stephen Jackson (10, Corbin) |
| 6. Ethan O'Malley (9, Paducah Tilghman) | 13. Haydon Merrick (11, Christian Co) |
| 7. Luke Thomas (10, Union Co) | 14. Jonah Baysinger (12, Scott Co) |
| 8. Payton Durbin (12, Meade Co) | 15. Grayson Shelby (12, Ohio Co) |

Returning placers: TJ Meyer 2nd @ 120, James Morris 3rd @ 126, Hunter Luttrell 5th @ 132, Christopher Ferraro 8th @ 132

Early round matches to watch: Round 1: #3 Luttrell v. #8 Merrick. Round 2: #4 Morris v. #6 Thomas.
Quarters: #1 Whorton v. #4 Morris, #2 Meyer v. #3 Luttrell

Kid who might out wrestle their ranking: Jonah Baysinger - going with a senior here at a solid weight. One last run after a very good season.

Team title race implications: PT has a young stud jumping into the mix and scoring significant points for them here. JC also needs these big points from Morris to stay in touch of the trophy spots.

In 2022 Whorton and Meyer split matches with Breyden winning the all important state finals battle. After a year where Whorton missed state due to injury and Meyer lost a close match to Raney, here we are again with a chance at another round. Luckily the bracket gods put them on opposite sides so a championship replay is in their hands. Luttrell has had tremendous senior season and would like to spoil that party. He would see Mayer in the quarters. BUT NOT SO FAST! Luttrell has a tough one right out of the gate with #8 Merrick (not to be confused with my man Jakerion Merritt). This is a result of another hammer bracket in Region 1. A sneaky big match early in this bracket is Morris-Thomas in round 2. The loser will likely have a manageable, but tough road to placement. Losing either could be important for these teams.

144 lbs.

Favorite: Hunter Jenkins (11, Union Co)

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| 2. Isaac Johns (11, Woodford Co) | 9. James Barragan (11, McCracken County) |
| 3. Micah Thompson (10, Boyle Co) | 10. Parker Maynard (8, Martin County) |
| 4. Luke Knight (11, Anderson Co) | 11. Adyn Laird (11, Fort Campbell) |
| 5. Tyler Lattin (12, Meade Co) | 12. Elijah Lacefield (11, Male) |
| 6. Deacon Heisler (10, Campbell Co) | 13. Lucas Koher (12, Madison Central) |
| 7. Amari Williams (12, Paducah Tilghman) | 14. Ben Woosley (10, Simon Kenton) |
| 8. Alex Sauss (12, Bullitt East) | 15. Logan Hein (12, Harrison Co) |

Returning placers: Hunter Jenkins 3rd @ 132, Isaac Johns 4th @ 138, Micah Thompson 6th @ 126

Early round matches to watch: Round 2: #4 Knight v. #5 Lattin, #3 Johns v. #7 Williams, #6 Heisler v. #8 Barragan. Quarters: #1 Jenkins v. #4 Knight

Kid who might out wrestle their ranking: Parker Maynard - going opposite at 144 and taking the middle schooler, who is 34-1, to take advantage of a solid draw and take home some hardware.

Team title race implications: Jenkins is a clear favorite here with solid points for UC. I do believe this is a weight where PT could make a move. Williams is a placer, but the question is how high can he go? He hits Johns in round 2 in a match that could set the tone of the team race for the rest of the tournament.

When was the last time I got halfway through this report before I mention anything about a wrestler from either Woodford County or Campbell County? Crazy. Just goes to show how hard it is to stay near the top, but also a testament to the work being done by a lot of programs around the state to catch up to those teams. At the beginning of the season I thought this weight was all about Johns. He showed some vulnerabilities losing to Knight early in the year. He got it back later, but I still think #2-#5 are fairly comparable. In the first really unbalanced bracket, Johns doesn't have to face anyone else in the top 5 on his side of the bracket. Now to make the most of it. Also note, back up a paragraph, if Williams can find a way to win that second round matchup, he could turn that into huge team points.

150 lbs.

Favorite: Miller Brown (11, Oldham Co)

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| 2. Kyle Wojcicki (12, North Oldham) | 9. Jacob McDonald (12, Taylor Co) |
| 3. Rider Trumble (11, Ryle) | 10. Westin Brown (12, Larue Co) |
| 4. Timmy Nichols (12, Caldwell Co) | 11. Keegan Bishop (10, Covington Catholic) |
| 5. Ayden Lehman (12, Trinity (Louisville)) | 12. Brandon Gist (11, Valley) |
| 6. Clayton Shaddix (11, Great Crossing) | 13. Jacob Wolfe (12, Frederick Douglas) |
| 7. Jeremy Ray (11, Union Co) | 14. Braedan Kelley (11, Madison Southern) |
| 8. Bryce Dennemann (12, Campbell Co) | 15. Judah Carey (10, Boyle Co) |

Returning placers: Miller Brown 2nd @ 138, Jacob McDonald 5th @ 138, Jeremy Ray 7th @ 138

Early round matches to watch: Round 2: #2 Wojcicki v. #5 Ray, #1 Brown v. #7 Shaddix.

Quarters: #1 Brown v. #3 Trumble

Kid who might out wrestle their ranking: Bryce Dennemann - I think at least 2 northern ky guys get on the podium at this weight and Dennemann could be one of them.

Team title race implications: The order of finish between Trumble, Lehman, and Shaddix could make the trophy battle interesting. 2 of those 3 are slated to go through Brown.

A lot of interesting turns of events last weekend. Trumble returns to 150. Wojcicki gets the "upset" in the regional final. Was it a blip on the radar or a chink in the armor? We will find out as Brown has put himself in a spot now where he has to run a gauntlet (similar to Evans at 120) with #11 Williams, #7 Shaddix, #3 Trumble, #4 Nichols, to make the final and get that rematch with #2 Wojcicki. OUCH!!! Can he do it? Absolutely. Will it be tough? Absolutely. Another OW worthy performance.

157 lbs.

Favorite: Malachia Harris (12, Trinity (Louisville))

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| 2. Rilen Pinkston (12, Highlands) | 9. Aidan Cook (11, East Jessamine) |
| 3. Owen Lamer (10, Taylor Co) | 10. Tony Leader (10, Boyd Co) |
| 4. Bryant Faucett (12, Bullitt Central) | 11. Menelik Neal (11, Dupont Manual) |
| 5. Gavin Becker (10, South Oldham) | 12. Lucas Hutchison (12, Madison Central) |
| 6. Ethan Sentelle (12, Great Crossing) | 13. Jaimen Carey (12, Boyle Co) |
| 7. Reese McGill (12, Oldham Co) | 14. Callen Schmidt (10, Ryle) |
| 8. Abe Fletcher (10, Union Co) | 15. Jayden Morris (11, Paducah Tilghman) |

Returning placers: Malachi Harris 2nd @ 150, Owen Lamer 4th @ 165, Ethan Sentelle 4th @ 150, Rilen Pinkston 6th @ 150, Reese McGill 7th @ 144, Bryant Faucett 8th @ 165

Early round matches to watch: Round 2: #2 Pinkston v. #4 Faucett. Quarters: #2 Pinkston v. #5 Becker, #3 Lamer v. #6 McGill

Kid who might out wrestle their ranking: Ethan Sentelle - yeah he is ranked to place, but I think the bracket sets up well for him to slot in a number of spots higher than his ranking.

Team title race implications: This is a spot where Boyle County can make up some points. Carey has been really good a year, but this bracket has some funky pairings. So a couple of tough customers will be heading to the consolations early and may result in some chaos on the backside. PT has a guy lurking on the outside here that may be able to into contention.

After finishing just short of a title, Harris is back to try to take that next step. While we have 3 of the 8 placers from 150 last year in this bracket, we also have 2 of the 165 placers who dropped down this season. Pinkston has looked really strong this season building up a record of 39-0 and hoping to bring Highlands their first state wrestling championship. That Pinkston-Faucett match in round 2 could be fun. And the back side looks like a long and bumpy road. See referenc chaos above.

165 lbs.

Favorite: Dalton Matney (10, Johnson Central)

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| 2. Jake Dowdy (11, Union Co) | 9. Max Speaker (12, St. Xavier) |
| 3. Aiden Butler (12, Great Crossing) | 10. Tyler Kennedy (11, Walton Verona) |
| 4. DJ Wilson (10, Paducah Tilghman) | 11. William Gallagher (12, Highlands) |
| 5. Tristin Millett (12, Oldham Co) | 12. Ethan Caldwell (12, Anderson Co) |
| 6. Carson Hearbst (9, Madison Central) | 13. Creed Williams (12, North Oldham) |
| 7. John Jackson (11, Boyd Co) | 14. Dylan Walls (12, Bullitt Central) |
| 8. Ben Turner (11, Cooper) | 15. Bradley Laughner (12, Larue Co) |

Returning placers: Dalton Matney 2nd @ 165, Aiden Butler 2nd @ 157, DJ Wilson 5th @ 165, Max Speaker 5th @ 150

Early round matches to watch: Round 2: #4 Dowdy v. #7 Speaker, #5 Millett v. #6 Jackson.
Quarters: #1 Matney v. #2 Butler

Kid who might out wrestle their ranking: this weight is a total mystery to me. I can't even make a guess.

Team title race implications: JC has gone through a lot of adversity and injuries. This is their shot at a real bright spot for both individual and team success. From the team perspective, we will have a #1 v #2 battle in the quarters here as Matney and Butler could hit early. This could set the tone for both teams to make a run or slide back.

This weight is a little like 132, where I have a bad feeling I am going to miss a few here. With only 4 returning state placers, there is plenty of new blood at this weight. But they have mostly been roller coasters or a couple kids with limited results against known top competition. Dowdy is from Union so we know he will be ready to roll against anyone but I don't know what we will get from Hearbst, Jackson, or Turner. And while Speaker has plenty of experience at state I get a sense that he isn't 100% for this run. Then we are back to a group of kids who need to prove it. Should make for an exciting backside because I think anything could happen, unless you are parents or coaches of these kids.

175 lbs.

Favorite: Lucas Ricketts (10, Union Co)

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| 2. Joshua Strayer (12, Great Crossing) | 9. Ben Hall (10, Paducah Tilghman) |
| 3. Marcus James (11, Taylor Co) | 10. Lucas Hughes (12, Cooper) |
| 4. Caleb Duke (12, Ryle) | 11. Late Lawson (12, Boone Co) |
| 5. Brandon Burchett (12, Fairdale) | 12. Jax Crowe (10, Boyle Co) |
| 6. Logan Robertson (12, South Oldham) | 13. Jacob Noon (11, Trinity (Louisville)) |
| 7. Logan Dingus (12, Harrison Co) | 14. Sam Mullins (12, Madison Central) |
| 8. Harrison Smith (12, Covington Catholic) | 15. Wyatt Peterson (11, Larue Co) |

Returning placers: Brandon Burchett 3rd @ 165, Lucas Ricketts 4th @157, Seth Davis 4th @ 175, Josh Strayer 5th @ 175, Caleb Duke 6th @ 175, Marcus James 7th @ 190

Early round matches to watch: Round 2: #6 Burchett v. #8 Hall. Quarters: #1 Ricketts v. #5 Dingus, #2 James v. #4 Duke

Kid who might out wrestle their ranking: Seth Davis - not sure if he is 100% healthy, but when the previous #1 ranked wrestler is now sitting at #18 it is safe to say he could outperform that number.

Team title race implications: Last year I told a few folks they had to catch the Strayer-Duke match for pure wrestling entertainment. No clue who is going to win, but you can guarantee action and likely lots of points on the board. Will we get a chance to see it this weekend? Maybe. Would love it to be in a meaningful match where their teams are in a tight race.

Interesting that we have another weight where a placer from a higher weight has dropped down and is a major player. Ricketts has wrestled a hammer schedule and came out 32-4 and is the favorite in my book. But I would not be at all surprised if a number of these guys knock him off. From the quarters on he is going to be tested as he could face #5 Dingus, #2, James, before a final with #3 Strayer. I'm interested to see how the James-Duke quarter plays out. I want to say it will be one to make sure you catch, but I could also see it developing into an OT-rideout 2-1 type of match. Either way, that bottom half of quarters is pretty solid.

190 lbs.

Favorite: Lane Kiser (12, Trinity (Louisville))

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| 2. Uriah Virzi (12, Paducah Tilghman) | 9. Riley Burton (10, Spencer County) |
| 3. Logan Castle (12, Johnson Central) | 10. Jesse Shaddix (12, Great Crossing) |
| 4. Josh Soeder (12, Oldham Co) | 11. Brock Sexton (10, Harrison Co) |
| 5. Travis Steiber (11, Ryle) | 12. Chase Bailey (11, Conner) |
| 6. Jackson Burger (11, Boyle Co) | 13. Daniel Jaso (11, St. Xavier) |
| 7. Darien Allen (10, Dupont Manual) | 14. Cael Green (12, Lafayette) |
| 8. Jostyn Zayas (12, Southern) | 15. Zach Russ (12, Highlands) |

Returning placers: Uriah Virzi 1st @ 190, Lane Kiser 2nd @ 190, Logan Castle 6th @ 157, Travis Steiber 8th @ 190

Early round matches to watch: Round 2: #2 Virzi v. #6 Burton, #7 Burger v. #8 Jaso.
Quarters: #1 Kiser v. #3 Castle

Kid who might out wrestle their ranking: Cael Green - a couple weeks ago a little birdie told me he was going to be a bracketbuster. We will see really soon.

Team title race implications: Lots of team race impact here at the top of 190. While the top 2 have separated from the pack, I think all of the spots from 3 on are up for grabs. So JC, OC, Ryle, Boyle County, and even Great Crossing could be battling for critical points here.

Another spot where the bracket gods were kind. One of the best state finals matches last year is lined up to happen again this year and Kiser and Virzi are on opposite sides and are heavy favorites to make the final. Now once they get there who knows what is going to happen. I don't have a recollection of their entire history, but I do know that their rivalry has gone back and forth with Uriah winning the big one last year and helping propel his team to a title as well. I won't pretend to have a clue how this one will go, all I know is that Lane won the last one, so he is ranked #1 at the moment. Once we leave the arena on Friday night who knows which will be standing on top. But I am pretty sure we will enjoy watching it play out as fans.

215 lbs.

Favorite: Jack James (11, Paducah Tilghman)

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| 2. Cole Sherill (12, Caldwell Co) | 9. Lincoln Miller (12, Larue Co) |
| 3. Luke Hyden (11, Walton Verona) | 10. Joaquin Solis (12, Great Crossing) |
| 4. Drew Stearman (12, North Oldham) | 11. Mac Darland (10, Lexington Christian Academy) |
| 5. Jahvon Frazier (12, Bryan Station) | 12. Tucker Roth (11, Pleasure Ridge Park) |
| 6. Diego Peltier (12, Madison Central) | 13. Michael Williams (12, Moore) |
| 7. Dakota Blacklock (12, Ohio Co) | 14. Devin Allen (10, Dupont Manual) |
| 8. McKay Payton (12, Central Hardin) | 15. Neal Wright (10, Bullitt Central) |

Returning placers: Jack James 3rd @ 175, Luke Hyden 4th @ 215, Jahvon Frazier 5th @ 215

Early round matches to watch: Round 2: #2 Sherill v. #3 Hyden. Quarters: #1 James v. #6 Blacklock

Kid who might out wrestle their ranking: Mac Darland - young guy at a new program, but he has been very tough all year. Would be good to see LCA take home a medal.

Team title race implications: This weight doesn't appear to have any impact on the team race. Possibly if Solis can get hot, then maybe he gives Great Crossing some surprise points, but his draw isn't easy.

Coming into the season I was convinced PT had a really bad logjam in their upper weights. I poked and prodded the coaches to try to get some info out of them as to how it would all play out. Well in the end, they have figured it out and have an upper half as good as we have seen in a while. I was a little skeptical of James jumping up this high, but he has proven himself and earned the #1 spot. The pecking order has been pretty clear as we entered post season with Sherill and Hyden at 2-3 ahead of the pack. Those two will get reacquainted real quick as they meet in round 2. As mentioned above, after a short stint a few years ago, LCA is back and already has a kid ready to compete for a podium spot. Darland has been solid all year with some really good wins, but also had some tough losses as you expect from a young guy at the upper weights and a young team. He should be right there battling for a shot at some hardware.

285 lbs.

Favorite: Carter Guillaume (12, St. Xavier)

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| 2. Stephen Whitehead (12, Madison Southern) | 9. Cole Christian (12, Ashland Blazer) |
| 3. Jimmy Mooney (11, Paducah Tilghman) | 10. Emmanuel Ndayamba (12, Moore) |
| 4. Colton Lewis (10, Pleasure Ridge Park) | 11. Jacob Wilson (12, Great Crossing) |
| 5. Paul McClure (11, Boyle Co) | 12. Jean Louis Mokweke (11, Henry Clay) |
| 6. Peyton Mayo (9, Frederick Douglas) | 13. Austin Cummings (10, Union Co) |
| 7. Jake Hedy (12, Larue Co) | 14. Drew Ferguson (10, Pikeville) |
| 8. Gabriel Kays (12, Trinity (Louisville)) | 15. Elijah Burriell (10, Jeffersontown) |

Returning placers: Cater Guillaume 1st @ 285, Stephen Whitehead 2nd @ 285, Jimmy Mooney 3rd @ 285, Colton Lewis 6th @ 285, Paul McClure 7th @ 285

Early round matches to watch: Round 2: #2 Whitehead v. #8 Kays. Quarters: #3 Mooney v. #5 McClure, #2 Whitehead v. #6 Mayo

Kid who might out wrestle their ranking: Jacob Wilson - going with the KY X angle again; this kid wrestled really hard for us this off season and won some matches on grit and determination. Might just do the same this weekend.

Team title race implications: Seems like the upper weights don't have as much team drama. But PT does have some points to protect here at a weight where there can be some chaos.

Not sure how to approach this one. The bracket gods gave us the potential for a rematch of the finals at heavy as well. Based on how that match went, I hope both guys show up with a determination to create more action and scoring. None of us want stalling calls to be a deciding factor in any match, especially in the finals. Lewis came out of nowhere last year and was in the conversation for being a freshman heavyweight state champ. He has taken a couple losses this year and seems to be in the next tier, but he has the potential to disrupt things.

Team Champions

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

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

No, it's not groundhog day, but it sure feels like it. Another year with Union County atop the team standings. Last year we saw an exciting team race with Paducah Tilghman breaking the UC run of titles. But it appears to be a short break as Union comes to the horse park as the heavy favorite; quite possibly a 50 point cushion in the final tally. PT is a solid pick to finish as runner-up, with Ryle, Great Crossing, and Trinity battling it out for the final trophy spots. Boyle County could sneak into that race if they can push an extra wrestler onto the podium or find a way to push a couple guys a couple steps higher on the podium. While there isn't much intrigue in the race for the team title, it is great to see fresh teams get in the mix like Great Crossing and Boyle County battling for team trophies.