

1987

A

One of the highlights of this classification appeared to be a frantic team competition involving up to eight teams. Now it seems likely that the outcome of this competition has already been decided by an administrative decision in terms of regional representation. The powerhouse Northeast squads (Cuyahoga Hts., Newbury and Richmond Hts.) will face a solid 18-team district and a strong 32-team regional for state qualification. The two qualifiers at each weight will really earn their state berths and a number of state-caliber boys will be left home. The equally powerful Eastern teams (Bridgeport and Cadiz), on the other hand, will be tested by 9-team districts and an 18-team regional. This obvious inequity will allow them to qualify far more wrestlers (as many as eight or nine each) and should virtually insure a one-two state finish. The regional format was advertised as a method which allows equal representation for all schools, and whatever methodology is currently being used ought, in this light, be re-examined.

Of equal concern is the system used to develop regional pairings. The formula should not pair first and third place district placers in the same half of the regional draw. Often these are the two best wrestlers thrown together in the semi-finals because of the imprecision of the district seeding mechanism. Of equal concern is the number of forfeits in the consolation finals as both boys strive to draw away from the district champ at the regional level. Double forfeits will not be an uncommon outcome should such a system remain in place.

98f

PROJECTED CHAMP: ~~CLARK McDANIEL~~ (WEST LIBERY SALEM) ①

TOP CONTENDERS:

- | | |
|---|-----------------------------------|
| 2. Borlin (Ottawa Hills) | 10. Weyrick (Bellaire St. John) |
| 3. V. Nguyen (Archbold) | 11. Tille (Ayersville) |
| 4. ④ Frohnappel (Bridgeport) | 12. McCauley (Wellsville) |
| 5. Colvin (Norwalk St. Paul) | 13. Roeder (New London) |
| 6. ② Gibson (Cadiz) | 14. Grau (Lockland) |
| 7. ③ Smith (Richmond Hts.) | 15. Gracefo (Cuyahoga Hts.) |
| 8. Fullman (Madeira) | 16. Rebar (Apple Creek Waynedale) |
| 9. Murdock (Liberty Center) | 17. Roynon (Carey) |
| | 18. Arnold (Waterford) |

McDaniel is one of the best 98-pounders in the Cincinnati-Dayton area regardless of classification and should overcome a lack of state experience to capture the state crown at this weight. Last year McDaniel was upset in the regional semis and missed a Columbus trip that many expected to lead to a placement medal. This year he should win the crown despite reasonably tough competition.

Perhaps, the weakest regional is McDaniel's own at Covington. He towers over the competition and should easily capture the title. I've listed Fullman and Grau as possible second choices, but there has to be stronger candidates than that. In any case the second place finisher will merely fill out the bracket sheet at Columbus.

Findlay, on the other hand, will be an extremely rugged regional at this weight. State qualifier Bollin is back and he looks better than ever. "A" Classic champ Nguyen is also strong and this pair will probably be McDaniel's stiffest competition. Nguyen, in particular, has made startling progress and could easily move ahead of Bollin. Right behind this twosome are a half dozen or so possible qualifiers. Heading my list are Murdock and Tille both of whom were shutout by Nguyen, but still may have upset potential. Core (Cory-Rawson) would have to be rated a real long-shot at this point in time.

The Eastern Regional at Dresden features three outstanding freshmen. Gibson and Frohnappfel head this list and are neck-and-neck in terms of the regional crown. A possible problem is that they, along with Weyrick, all exit the same district and seedings done strictly on record may put them in the same half-bracket there. Should that occur it may not be possible for the two best to qualify out of Dresden. Weyrick, another strong freshman, is solid and McCauley, just down from 105#, is a fourth contender. Should he win his district over the tough Arnold, it would give him a slight edge in the regional pairings.

The massive Northeast Regional at Lorain possesses many contenders for state qualification, but few, if any, for state placement. Colvin and Roeder both have regional experience but the former seems to have progressed further this year. He is marginally the favorite here. Smith was one match from state last year and his qualification would be a real boost for Richmond Hts. team chances. Gracefo, by the same token, would help Cuyahoga Hts. in the team race by garnering a state berth, but he probably is out-manned right now.

105

PROJECTED CHAMPION: ~~ANTON BURKETT~~ (WEST LIBERTY SALEM)

TOP CONTENDERS:

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|----------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| 2. ① Neikirk (Cardinal) | 10. Meier (New Albany) |
| 3. French (Newbury) | 11. Lyle (Bridgeport) |
| 4. ③ Long (Liberty Center) | 12. Drayton (Mansfield St. Peter) |
| 5. ② Heavilin (Cadiz) | 13. Mitchell (Gibsonburg) |
| 6. Guilford (Ayersville) | 14. Aiken (Arcadia) |
| 7. Rocha (Archbold) | 15. Northcutt (Batavia) |
| 8. Merryman (Shadyside) | 16. Miller (Fremont St. Joseph) |
| 9. Musgrave (Covington) | 17. Unkefer (Apple Creek Waynedale) |

This weight should be an exceptionally interesting one as it unfolds along the regional and state trail. There are a number of excellent wrestlers from all around the state and there are several "mystery" competitors whose performance cannot be easily projected. It will be fascinating to see how the final outcome works itself out.

My choice is last year's runner-up at this weight, Anton Burkett. This victory, however, will not be easily won since the competition this year will be, in total, far stronger than 1986. Burkett is a tall, not particularly strong, competitor with lots of experience and poise. He's down from 112# because he realizes that he has to be bigger than the other guy for his moves to work. This will be his third trip to Columbus, and that part should be easy because, again, his regional is weakest. Principal competition should come from state qualifier Musgrave and I don't see that as a serious problem, or from Meier, a state alternate in 1986.

The competition, however, will really heat up at Findlay. At that location three real battlers will go all-out for two spots. Long, 4th last year, looked sharp at the Medina against big school competition, although he placed but 3rd at the "A" Classic. Somehow I see him making it to Columbus. Guilford, 3rd last year, beat Long any number of times in 1986 and may well continue that streak this year. He is a very strong wrestler in the clutch. Rocha beat both these boys in the "A" Classic and copped the Outstanding Wrestler Award as well. I don't think he can do it again although he was a state semi-finalist last year. In any case it really is a shame any of these boys will miss out, but the key efforts may well be at the district level since all three will compete together. Two distant long-shots would be Mitchell, a one-point loser to Long, and Aiken.

Two of our "mystery" wrestlers will appear at Lorain. Two years ago, French placed at 98#, and last season it was anticipated that he would be a strong candidate for that title. Health and weight problems kept him out of competition as Newbury won the team title anyway. This year he has competed sporadically at 112# but has now moved down to the lower weight. It will be interesting to see if he can regain his former stature after this long hiatus. Neikirk qualified last year at the "AA" level after a fine season. This season his results have not been as good including a 5th at Kenston. How he will perform at the "A" level is still to be determined although his ranking indicates that it should be rather well. Challenging these two is state alternate Drayton who has had a successful season including a solid 4th at the strong Gorman Inv. Should Neikirk or French stumble, this would be the wrestler most likely to take advantage of it.

In the East, state alternate Heavilin has been most impressive including wins over a number of big school rivals. He should dominate the regional, but the second spot is wide open. Merryman and Lyle are also possibilities although I favor the former because of his strong early season performance.

PROJECTED CHAMPION: ~~KYLE KERN (LIBERTY CENTER)~~

TOP CONTENDERS:

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|---|-----------------------------------|
| 2. Douce (Bluffton) | 9. Owens (Gibsonburg) |
| 3. Case (Cadiz) | 10. Hoffman (Fremont St. Joseph) |
| 4. Nguyen (Archbold) | 11. Haas (McComb) |
| 5. Abbruzzese (Grandview Hts.) | 12. Schott (Waterford) |
| 6. Misarra (Richmond Hts.) | 13. Rismiller (Versailles) |
| 7. Bond (Newbury) | 14. Wybensing (New London) |
| 8. Brown (New Albany) | 15. Dorner (Sidney Lehman) |

I really expected Bonaventura at this weight with the expectation of a third state title--although not without a terrific struggle from Kern. Now Kern makes the top of the list but in a nervous sort of way since he collects injuries like other people collect stamps. Right now, he is recovering from a wrist injury, but should (?) be ready well before tourney time. When he is healthy, he can be devastating, and while the score was deceptive, he wrestled very strongly against Hanson last year--finally finishing 3rd. Note that I've placed defending state champ Case 3rd here, not because he has wrestled poorly, but only because of my admiration for Kern and Douce.

That twosome will represent an extremely strong Findlay Regional. That would eliminate the fourth-ranked Nguyen who could qualify any place, but here. Douce beat him 6-4 at the "A" Classic and should do so again. Incidentally, Douce is a very gummy performer who will not be intimidated by anyone. Also on the outside will be State 3rd placer Hoffman and the improving Haas. Hoffman wrestled a great tourney at Columbus last year nailing down that 3rd place medal, but he just doesn't have the horsepower to escape this most difficult regional in 1987.

Defending state champ Case surprised a lot of people (particularly me) by winning the 98# title last year. He could well do the same thing this year. His record is one of continuing improvement and that type of result is one that has to be respected. His regional is not strong with only Schott of nearly comparable skill. No, Case's battles won't start till he reaches Columbus.

The Southwestern Regional features Case's toughest opponent last year, Tony Abbruzzese. This year, however, Abbruzzese missed most of the early season, and has had mediocre results since his return. Had he not established his credentials in 1986, he wouldn't make my Top Ten this year. However, you have to figure that he'll round into form in time to challenge state-wide.

State qualifier Brown, down a weight from last year, should be a factor at Covington, and, perhaps, even at Columbus. So far, however, New Albany competitors have not shone at recent regional and state meets. The Cincinnati-Dayton competitors at this regional are not imposing, although Rismiller and Dorner could be factors. The latter was a state alternate last year.

It originally looked like a three-man struggle at Lorain between Musarra, Bond and Grilley. All three have previous state experience with Bond grabbing a 4th last year despite losing the regional title to Musarra. Grilley, however, has moved to 119# leaving Musarra and Bond as strong favorites. Haas and Wybensingler would seem to be way behind this duo with little chance of qualification. The two qualifiers should have an outside chance at low places.

119

PROJECTED CHAMPION: ~~DAN HANSON~~ (RICHMOND HTS.)

TOP CONTENDERS:

2. ² ~~Bonaventura~~ (Grandview Hts.)
3. ³ ~~Myers~~ (Sandusky St. Marys)
4. A. Kern (Gibsonburg)
5. ⁴ ~~Boracevic~~ (Cadiz)
6. ~~Nye~~ (Edgerton)
7. Voisard (Versailles)
8. ~~Miller~~ (Waterford)
9. Grilley/Welch (Mapleton)
10. Hofstetter (Cardinal)
11. Marmie (Beallsville)
12. Thompson (New Albany)
13. Miller (Waterford)
14. ~~Miller~~ (Archbold)
15. Richardson (Wayne Trace)
16. Stoakes (Wellsville)
17. Prendergast (Mansfield St. Peter)
18. Fritts (Mariemont)

What was mere speculation in the 1984 report is now about to become a reality in 1987. Dan Hanson has to be a heavy favorite to capture his fourth state crown and in the process provide his family with a record 9th state title. And he should do it in the most dramatic of fashions by defeating Joe Bonaventura in the first-ever meeting of multi-champ opponents. One can only hope that this monumental match-up occurs in the finals since both boys have earned no less. As good as Bonaventura is, Hanson will beat him on his feet and be able to ride when necessary. I don't think it will be real close.

That 9th family title will eclipse the mark of eight held by the Jordan's, and also be the first time in state history that three brothers all have won two or more titles (Dan with four, Jim with three, and Tim with two). Adding in Tim's 3rd in 1979 gives the Hanson brothers ten state places second only to the Hoppels in the 1950's who captured 12 state places (including six titles). In some ways Hanson has had to handle more pressure than the two other possible four-timers since he was expected to be great from his first bout as a 9th grader. Through it all he has performed with great consistency and constant accomplishment. He has become a fine all-around performer with solid skills in every aspect of the sport.

Surprisingly, Hanson's regional at Lorain is loaded with fine wrestlers. Two-time state place winner Myers--including a runner-up performance to Hanson last year--should be the other qualifier. Should the unthinkable occur--Hanson and Bonaventura in the same half of the draw--Myers could be runner-up again, giving Hanson four state titles with only two different final-round opponents (Neikirk twice and Myers twice). Other solid entrants are Welch/Grilley, Hofstetter and Prendergast which doesn't make sense considering their chances of qualification. Therefore, don't be surprised to see some of these boys at other weights like 126# or even the very weak 132# class.

Bonaventura has already lost twice this year, but his skills and past record are outstanding. He will certainly make Hanson earn that fourth title unless doubts surface and he moves either up or down. His regional at Covington is weak with Voisard, Thompson and Fritts as principal competition. None threaten him. Other possibilities include Smith (Batavia) or Nutter (Covington), but the second qualifier whoever he is won't win a bout at Columbus.

State qualifier Kern and "A" Classic champ Nye head a relatively weak field in the Northwest Regional. Both should qualify comfortably against little more than token opposition although state alternate Richardson may have upset hopes. At the state level, pairings may well determine who is in line for a low place. I've favored Kern even though Nye upset him at the Classic, 8-6.

The Eastern Regional is not as strong as usual although state qualifiers Miller and Bozicevic may do better than expected. Both were first-round state losers who suffered early elimination and good pairings might give them a chance at those elusive low places. Marmie and Stoakes both had regional 4ths last year and unless they can construct a major upset, will be consolation round wrestlers in the regionals again this year.

126#

PROJECTED CHAMPION: TODD DEAN (LIBERTY CENTER)

TOP CONTENDERS:

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|---|------------------------------------|
| 2. ³ Adkins (Richmond Hts.) | 11. Miller (Apple Creek Waynedale) |
| 3. ¹ Beard (Columbiana) | 12. Summit (Carey) |
| 4. T. Burk (Bridgeport) | 13. Polzin (New Albany) |
| 5. Peck (Gibsonburg) | 14. Butler (Kirtland) |
| 6. Border (Caldwell) | 15. Villareal (Archbold) |
| 7. Woods (Wellsville) | 16. Markgraf (Hopewell-Loudon) |
| 8. Phillips (Fischer Catholic) | 17. Mack (Ayersville) |
| 9. Hiltibran (West Liberty Salem) | 18. Platfoot (Versailles) |
| 10. B. Raver (Licking Hts.) | 19. Bundy (McComb) |
| | 20. Bucher (Batavia) |

The strong and extremely physical Todd Dean is a narrow choice to triumph at 126#. This weight class should be very competitive with the last several rounds dominated by close one or two-point decisions. Dean, who was 4th last year, will find his main competition coming from the northeastern quadrant of the state. Adkins was very impressive at the Brecksville and he could out-slick Dean on his feet. Pearl, also 4th last year, is a little bit erratic, but on his good days, he can be close to awesome. Dean will probably have to defeat them both to take the crown.

Adkins and Pearl will, course, dominate the Lorain Regional which leaves the excellent Miller and Summit with no place to go. The former was an "AA" regional qualifier last year while the latter was 4th in the regional last year and would have a reasonable chance of qualifying most anywhere else. However, no hope at Lorain. Markgraf and Butler are two others who will also stay home.

Dean should have little trouble at Findlay unless Staley moves down from 132#. Otherwise Peck would appear to be the main threat--but it's a minimal threat since Dean has already beaten him 14-2. Villareal, Bundy and Mack are other possibilities for that second spot, but they may be as far behind Peck as he is behind Dean.

The Eastern Regional features, as so often happens, three worthy candidates for two spots. Todd Burk missed state qualification by a 12-11 semi-final loss last year, and stands poised to join his brother in the highest echelons of a weight class. Border is excellent, but wrestles such a weak schedule that it's difficult to know how prepared he'll be for the vigors of regional and state competition. Finally there is state alternate Woods who dropped a 7-6 semi-final, go-to-state match last year and may be prepared to move ahead of Border and, perhaps, Burk as well. The key clash should be between Wood and Border at the district level with the winner drawing away from the other two at the regional and, thus, having a clear shot at state qualification.

The Southwest Regional looked rather weak until Phillips moved down. As Kenny Ransey's workout partner for two years, he has to be tough, and he could do very well here.

PROJECTED CHAMPION: ~~STEVE DERNLAN~~ (WEST LIBERTY SALEM)

TOP CONTENDERS:

- | | |
|--|---------------------------------------|
| 2. ³ D. Burk (Bridgeport) | 9. Unkefer (Apple Creek Waynedale) |
| 3. DiFranco (Ledgemont) | 10. Briseno (Ayersville) |
| 4. Galloway (Sandusky St. Mary) | 11. Beadshaw (Lincolnview) |
| 5. Staley (Bluffton) | 12. Warren (Beallsville) |
| 6. Nery (Columbiana) | 13. O'Hara (Grandview Hts) |
| 7. ² J. Raver (Licking Hts.) | 14. Melcher (Elmore Woodmore) |
| 8. Duncan (Versailles) | 15. Sabo (Cadiz) |

This is a weight class that will be dominated by Dernlan and Burk, two classy juniors who have already made a mark for themselves at the state level. Burk, a two-time placewinner including a 2nd last year, is a very strong, conservative wrestler with great riding skills. Dernlan, 3rd last year, seeks to emulate his two-time state champion brother, and has the takedown skills to do it. I favor Dernlan not so much because of his early victory over Burk, but because of the hardening he has undergone because of a much more high-powered schedule. It's also interesting to note that he is the third West Liberty Salem wrestler I've favored showing the miracles that can be worked with a ten-man team.

Dernlan's regional is exceptional. Raver placed at the strong North Canton Tourney and is my choice for the second qualifying spot. Duncan, however, is also a fine competitor from recently "AA" Versailles where he qualified for Columbus at this weight. He certainly could upset Raver. Both O'Hara and Kimmel (Covington) are solid entries, but they have no chance here. Look for a couple of these boys to certify at the weaker 126# or even at the shallow 138#. At any rate, this is an exceptionally strong and interesting regional.

Burk, on the other hand, will dominate his regional. I've had to search even for possibilities and, so far, have come up with Sabo and Warren. Whoever qualifies will find Columbus a harsh and inhospitable place indeed. This is a spot where Cadiz could pick up an extra qualifier basically because this regional is so small.

DiFranco is a quantum jump behind the top two boys, but he could record his second 3rd place finish in as many years. He is likely to be the only Ledgemont qualifier thus ending a long streak as a top five team. State qualifier Galloway should be the second state entrant from this regional, and he had some impressive outings this season. State qualifier Nery, just down from 138#, has had a good season and could challenge any of three above

mentioned boys. He wrestled an incredible first-round state bout last year ending up in an 8-8 stand-off and then getting pinned in the overtime. If it comes down to just Nery and Galloway for the state spot, I think Nery might well win because he matches up so well with him. Like Covington this will be another fierce regional.

Surprisingly, the Findlay Regional doesn't seem that strong. State qualifier Staley has been effective and has beaten other local hopefuls like Briseno and Melcher. Bradshaw, at little Lincolnview, has lots of experience and could edge out Briseno for that second spot. It will be interesting wrestling, but the outcome is unlikely to have much effect at the state level.

138#

PROJECTED CHAMPION: BRAD GIFFIN (CADIZ)

TOP CONTENDERS:

- | | |
|--------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| 2. ② Stopar (Cuyahoga Hts.) | 10. Mendoza (Gibsonburg) |
| 3. Moran (Versailles) | 11. Alloway (Bergholz Springfield) |
| 4. Rowe (Edgerton) | 12. Radcliffe (New London) |
| 5. Scheid (Bridgeport) | 13. Hoover (Elmore Woodmore) |
| 6. ④ Zehe (Kirtland) | 14. Musser (Delphos St. John) |
| 7. Royse (New Albany) | 15. Troiano (Carey) |
| 8. Williams (Toledo Northwood) | 16. Stevens (Newark Catholic) |
| 9. Suvak (Newbury) | 17. Day (Cincinnati County Day) |

This is pretty much of a nondescript weight class that is unlikely to set one's pulse pounding. Many of the names will appear unfamiliar to most, but nonetheless there is likely to be a series of crowd-pleasing, high-scoring bouts that should capture a certain level of attention. The wrestler likely to do the bulk of the scoring is Brad Giffin, runner-up at this weight last year, and a narrow choice to cop top honors in 1987. His crucial bout last year was with local rival Russ Scheid who he narrowly defeated 8-7 to make the state tourney. At that point he snapped up the regional title with a shutout and then cruised to the state finals before losing. Scheid returns at this weight and should challenge Giffin at the district, regional and state level this year. They should brush aside other challenges like Alloway and Benzo (Stanton), but since Scheid has missed part of the season and Giffin is improved, he continues to wear the favorite's mantle.

Both Eastern regional qualifiers will be surely tested by Stopar, 3rd at 132# last year. An excellent rider, Stopar could upset Giffin if he can capture the early takedowns. I was impressed with his efforts at Brecksville losing only to "AAA" runner-up Andrassy--and aggressively riding him the entire second period. Zehe is a workmanlike competitor back at the "A" level,

and with Nery's defection to 132#, he should be the favorite for the second qualifying berth. Both he and Stopar will face a myriad of challenges as this weight class is crowded with possible contenders. This includes regional place winners such as Suvak, Workman and Radcliffe--any of whom could upset Zehe, but probably not Stopar. Also with possibilities are Troiano, the "A" Classic runner-up and Legando (Sandusky St. Marys), although their hopes are substantially dimmer.

The Findlay Regional is again relatively weak with the elongated Rowe the principal state placement contender. Rowe, a returning state qualifier at this weight, reached the semi-finals where he then dropped two bouts by a combined score of 29-3. I never dreamed he'd be back at 138# this year (a good guess might have been 167#), but he won the "A" Classic with impressive style with but one close bout. The second qualifying spot is wide open, although, Williams has been accorded a slight favorite. Musser, though is the one to watch as he seems to wrestle to the level of his competition as witnessed by an overtime one-point loss to Rowe.

Moran heads a very thin Southwestern group. As a freshman, he qualified at 126# in "AA" last year, and just recently won the prestigious Wayne Invitational. Still improving it will be interesting to see what he can accomplish at this weight. His ranking may well be far too high or it may quickly become apparent that it is several spots too low. Royse came on well last year, and has been even better this year. However, it is basically by default that he gets the nod as second choice at this regional. The other competition just seems very weak--that is unless some of those excess 132's re-certify upward, or if Stevens is stronger than anticipated.

145

PROJECTED CHAMPION: ~~TOP CONTENDER~~ (FREMONT ST. JOSEPH)

TOP CONTENDERS:

3RD AT 138

- | | |
|--|-------------------------------------|
| 2. ¹ Hodous (Cardinal) | 11. Swank (Mechanicsburg) |
| 3. ² Johnson (Elmore Woodmore) | 12. Albers (Versailles) |
| 4. Johnson (Cadiz) | 13. Nihart (Edgerton) |
| 5. K. Drobnick (Cuyahoga Hts.) | 14. Albright (Jewitt-Scio) |
| 6. Tolson (Waterford) | 15. ³ Sears (Bridgeport) |
| 7. Bendle (Bergholz Springfield) | 16. Cole (New London) |
| 8. Keller (Liberty Center) | 17. Sowers (Covington) |
| 9. Boehm (Licking Hts) | 18. Edwards (Bluffton) |
| 10. Gates (Stanton) | 19. Profitt (Williamsburg) |

This is one of those weight classes that has a number of fine wrestlers, but I just can't picture any of them on the awards stand receiving the 1st place medal. I've finally settled on Lupica, but I'm still not sure that I've got it right. Somehow, no matter who wins the crown, it will come as a surprise to me--even if it is Lupica.

Lupica and Epling should dominate the Findlay Regional. Lupica was 4th last year at 138# and has won several strong tournaments this season. He'll need to be very good just to win his regional over "A" Classic champion Epling--who missed state qualification last year by just one point. These boys are very close overall and they could meet three weekends in a row at season's end. Behind them are Nihart--who has not wrestled in over a month-- and Keller, runner-up to Epling at the "A" Classic. Dark-horse candidates are Edwards, Mack (Evergreen) and Con Wyse (Archbold).

Hodous has been a very impressive wrestler this year, and could be a finalist. However, he must escape from a very difficult regional where upsets will not be uncommon. All of the Cardinal wrestlers will be unknowns since they completed in "AA" last year, so it's difficult to be sure of where they'll stand at the "A" level. Drobnick, 4th two years ago, but sidelined most of last year by injury should be the other qualifier and could well place. There will be a myriad of wrestlers trying to unend this top twosome. Included in this category are Cole, who has the best shot at such an accomplishment, Dudash (Columbiana), Caddell (Clearview) and Plues (Mapleton).

The Eastern Regional also contains a number of possible qualifiers that must be pared down to the fortunate two. At the top of the list is state 4th placewinner Johnson, who, frankly, did not impress me that much. However, you cannot argue with solid achievement. Right behind him is the very under-rated Tolson who has defeated some top-notch wrestlers this year. He was a state alternate last year, and looks ready to scale much higher peaks in 1987. However, Bendle has also been excellent and he will not be easily defeated. All three of this trio has placement potential--the trick will be to get to Columbus. A second trio of Gates, Albright and Sears are nearly as good so this will be a real dynamite regional. So good and deep, in fact, that overall it will compare favorably to the state bracket.

That bears no resemblance to what we'll find in the Southwest. Nobody there would seem to have much hopes of even the lowest state place, and the qualifying duo will luck to win one bout in total. Boehm and Swank are the two I currently favor, but Albers could beat out the latter boy. Sowers and Profitt are long-shots.

PROJECTED CHAMPION: ~~PAUL COFFLAND~~ (CADIZ)

TOP CONTENDERS:

- | | |
|-----------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| 2. Porter (Cardinal) | 11. Rehman (Versailles) |
| 3. Foston (Bridgeport) | 12. Robson (New London) |
| 4. Tammerine (Liberty Center) | 13. Pasiuk (Bergholz Springfield) |
| 5. Kreiner (Archbold) | 14. Ishmael (North Baltimore) |
| 6. Myers (Sandusky St. Marys) | 15. Gentile (Grandview Hts.) |
| 7. Kreffer (Arcadia) | 16. Iddings (Covington) |
| 8. Beidelshies (Hopewell-London) | 17. Briseno (Ayresville) |
| 9. Ewers (Montpelier) | 18. E. Drobnick (Cuyahoga Hts.) |
| 10. Roth (Seneca East) | 19. Shelton (Batavia) |

Three years ago Paul Coffland burst upon the wrestling world as a 98# freshman competing in "AA" for the first time. He upset John Purcell--considered nearly unbeatable at the time--and then lost a hard-fought final to another freshman, Erik Burnett, by an 8-6 margin. How their careers have diverged from that point. Burnett remains unbeaten from that point, and already owns three state titles going for his fourth at 112#. Coffland, however, suffered a season-ending injury as a sophomore, and then began to grow--and grow. Today he has to be rated the favorite for his first state title eight weight classes higher than his near miss three years ago.

While the championship road won't be easy, 155# is not exactly top-heavy with superior talent either. One of the best is in Coffland's own district and regional represented by the strong Orlando Foston. One of the most intimidating looking wrestlers around Foston was not impressive at last year's state meet and looked particularly bad on his feet. However, his record this season has been exceptional and he will be a tough competitor for anyone. One advantage he'll have is being away from Coffland. A third very strong entrant here is Pasiuk who could be a tourney surprise.

Chip Porter is the third Cardinal wrestler I've rated second, and it remains to be seen if they can justify those lofty projections. However, he has both the tools and experience to excel although he, too, is in a very strong and very deep regional. Qualification out of Lorain at this weight will mean an exceptional individual performance. Roth was a state alternate last year and won the recent Van Buren Invitation. He is up three weight classes. Beidelshies was also a state alternate in 1986 only at this weight, and looked awesome until he stumbled at the Van Buren. Myers, too, was a state alternate at 145# last year and the trend here is clear. This regional is loaded with boys who were frustrated just inches short of state qualification last year--a group that understands what it takes to win, and what it means to lose. Also at this weight is "A" Classic champ, Robson, who upset the much higher-ranked Tammerine. I may be rating this boy way too low.

Finally, we have another state alternate, Russell, who was bounced in the regional semi-final by state champion Mike McKeon. In total, Porter must face four boys who placed 3rd in the regionals plus several others with solid credentials. Qualification here could be so tough that the states will seem anti-climactic.

Much the same type of blood bath will occur at Findlay. Tammerine, Kreiner, Kieffer, Ishmael and Briseno are all excellent and, of course, state qualifier Ewers also returns. Here's the way I sort it out. Tammerine is consistently tough to beat and looks to have the best chance of qualification. Kreiner and Kieffer, both just down from 167#, should probably battle for the second spot, but that will be complicated by the experienced Ewers. However, Ewer's record so far in 1987 has not been all that impressive. Ishmael, only a sophomore, has made rapid progress, but he's still a year from Columbus. Briseno could pull a major upset, but I think not two or three, so he looks more likely to fill the role of "spoiler" rather than qualifier. The regionals at this weight certainly seem to define parity.

The exception to all this frantic activity will be at Covington. Nobody there made my top ten and the qualifiers are likely to end up as first-round hamburger. Rethman and Iddings were early favorites, but Gentile's two weight class reduction and quick improvement could see him garner a Columbus berth.

167#

PROJECTED CHAMPION: ~~JUDD SMITH~~ (CUYAHOGA HTS.)

TOP CONTENDERS:

- | | |
|--|--|
| 2. ① Burlenski (Bridgeport) | 10. Box (Evergreen) |
| 3. Spiegel (Fremont St. Joseph) | 11. Kiehl (Versailles) |
| 4. ③ Miller (Cadiz) | 12. Rohrer (Waterford) |
| 5. Heiss (Cardinal) | 13. Clouse (Tiffin Calvert) |
| 6. ④ Yoor (Columbiana) | 14. McCort (Beallsville) |
| 7. Snodgrass (Van Buren) | 15. Brammell (Grandview Hts.) |
| 8. Boundy (Batavia) | 16. Burket (Ayersville) |
| 9. Leppelmeier (Edgerton) | |

This would seem to be a struggle between two exceptional juniors both of whom were state runners-up as promising sophomores. My favorite, Judd Smith, is an excellent athlete, particularly good on his feet. He can beat Burlenski, but only if he wrestles takedowns with him and keeps mat wrestling at an absolute minimum. Smith is small for the weight and so it will be to his advantage to draw Burlenski before the finals, and when Burlenski still has to worry about making weight. He will give away a lot of size if they meet Saturday night after Burlenski has been able to eat all day. Burlenski has outstanding poise and seems never to get flustered. He must be better on his feet to beat Smith, but his size and strength may wear Smith down and make him vulnerable in the third period. Burlenski has to be in good enough shape to take advantage of it if he is to win.

Joining Smith in Columbus representing the Lorain Regional will be either Heiss or Yoor. Smith beat Yoor by six points last year and that margin, probably, remains about the same today. Heiss was an "AA" district champ at 138# last year and has just returned to the line-up. He'll do up three weight classes is like much of my Cardinal analysis this year, problematical. Clouse was runner-up at the "A" Classic, but how he'll match up with Yoor or Heiss is probably not very well. Right now he would have to be rated the underdog. McKinney (Hopewell-Loudon) is a real long-shot from this area.

Burlenski is likely to be challenged only in a perfunctory way in his regional. The real battle will be for the second spot and it should feature three contenders. Miller would seem to have the best shot with his rapid improvement this year. In my mind, he has moved ahead of Rohrer and McCort who have not faced nearly as stern competition, although they both have better records than Miller.

The Findlay Regional is confusing. Spieldenner and Snodgrass seemed well ahead of the competition until Snodgrass stumbled badly at the Van Buren Invitational. Now Spieldenner stands alone with Box and Leppelmeier ready to topple Snodgrass. The two qualifiers certainly have opportunities for a low state place, but will not challenge Smith or Burlenski.

The Southwestern Regional is particularly weak. Bundy and Kiehl were my original choices, but Brammell seems to be making rapid progress. Look, perhaps, for him to upset one of the other two and capture a state berth. None of the other regional qualifiers will much care what duo qualifies. What they'll hope for, instead, is a first-round match-up with them.

175#

PROJECTED CHAMPION: ~~JEFF EDMONDSON~~ (NEWBURY)

TOP CONTENDERS:

- | | |
|--|-----------------------------------|
| 2. Taylor (Covington) | 10. Muffler (Cuyahoga Hts.) |
| 3. ② MacLellan (Richmond Hts.) | 11. Gibson (Cadiz) |
| 4. ③ Willeman (Evergreen) | 12. Schultz (Archbold) |
| 5. Grisez (Versailles) | 13. Winston (Mansfield St. Peter) |
| 6. Krall (Edgerton) | 14. Shull (Fisher Catholic) |
| 7. White (Licking Hts.) | 15. Lyon (Montpelier) |
| 8. ④ Romey (Bergholz Springfield) | 16. Roth (Bellaire St. John) |
| 9. Frank (Stryker) | 17. Reineck (Fremont St. Joseph) |

This will be a weight class that should be resolved by a series of hard fought, narrowly decided bouts. For the most part the top boys have not competed with one another and, in fact, have met few common opponents. This makes predictions based solely on logic difficult to develop, and make them more art form than science. My choice is Jeff Edmondson, 2nd last year by one point, and a quality competitor. This flies in the face of recent past

performance which saw MacLellan win their recent dual meet encounter. MacLellan has wrestled at 167# most of the year but the struggle to make weight was just too difficult. Now at 175#, he'll feel better and that, in the past, has translated into better performance. Still, I think Edmondson will beat him in the state finals because he'll get more aggressive each time they meet (district, regional, and, possibly state) and that will ultimately mean victory. State qualifier Muffler will be left out in this struggle, and may well move, as he did last year, to the more congenial 185# class. Winston has shown substantial improvement, but cannot match up with the top two here.

The real surprise might be at the Southwest Regional. Taylor and Olson are a dynamite upper-weight duo for Covington and both would place. Taylor will be strong at this class as will Wayne Invitational champ Grisez who is a first-class pinner. This regional is very strong at 175#. White, who placed at North Canton, and Shull will have problems here, and I look for them to test their skills at 185# instead. Taylor, who was the regional champion last year, lost by one point to the state 3rd place finisher and he may surprise both Edmondson and MacLellen if they concentrate too much on each other.

Willeman placed at the "AA" level last year and he has to be the favorite at Findley. However, he has not wrestled a taxing schedule this year, and he will face substantial challenges here. The trio of Krill, Frank and Schultz were top finishers at the "A" Classic, and they have pretty much dominated the smaller tournaments in that area. They were all regional qualifiers last year with Frank and Schultz placing. Still, I think Krill has the best chance of earning that second state berth based on recent successes. There is no question that the competition will be very close and he seems to have had good success in those type of bouts. A long-shot is state alternate Reineck who will have his hands full with this competitor.

The Eastern Regional is weak and may present Cadiz with the opportunity to grab an extra qualifying spot. Romey has had an outstanding season and has to be the favorite to take the regional title. He tied 12-12 state third-placer Dowling wrestling up a weight at 185#. The second spot is really wide-open with Gibson or Roth as good a choice as any. They would have no chance of qualifying anywhere else.

185#

PROJECTED CHAMPION: MIKE VARGO (BRIDGEPORT)

TOP CONTENDERS:

- | | |
|--|--------------------------------------|
| 2. <u>4</u> <u>Reighard</u> (Liberty Center) | 9. Manns (Carey) |
| 3. <u>Olson</u> (Covington) | 10. Atkins (Madeira) |
| 4. <u>Stemen</u> (Delphos St. John) | 11. Glaze (Ashland) |
| 5. <u>2</u> <u>Dowling</u> (Wellsville) | 12. <u>Mannard</u> (Fisher Catholic) |
| 6. <u>Dahlhausen</u> (Newbury) | 13. <u>Wurm</u> (Tiffin Calvert) |
| 7. <u>3</u> <u>Yonker</u> (Gibsonburg) | 14. Dye (Montpelier) |
| 8. <u>Brenneman</u> (Cardinal) | |

This is a weight class that will be totally dominated by state champion Mike Vargo whose victory string will probably be somewhere in the 60's by state tourney time. Last year Vargo pulled out a last gasp 10-9 victory over Brian Beechuk in as close a bout as you'll see. This year, he'll probably win all of his bouts on falls as the competition is just not there this year. It would be far more interesting to see him competing with the Millers and Holmans in Ohio at his present level of development.

Vargo and Dowling, 3rd last year at 175#, should be their respective district champs, finish 1-2 at the regional, and then journey to Columbus. Dowling mystified me last year. He got destroyed 16-0 TF in the first round at State and then beat two former state place-winners in the consolations for his 3rd place. Will the real Eric Dowling please stand up? Since there is absolutely nobody else in the Eastern Regional, Dowling can wrestle either way and qualify, but at Columbus it will be interesting to see which Eric Dowling will appear.

Reighard and Stemen are long-time rivals who qualified together out of the Northwest last year. At that time, Stemen seemed a mite better, winning the regional and a bout at Columbus. Reighard may have turned that around winning the "A" Classic by a comfortable 5-1 margin. Both of these boys could place and both could be upset by the rapidly Younger who fought a tough battle with Reighard already this year. State alternate Dye is also at this weight, but he probably isn't good enough to beat out this trio.

Olson is also a strong candidate as a place winner. He dropped an 18-10 thriller to Stemen last year, but he has come on strong in his home area. He'll dominate that Covington Regional and could be a finalist with the right pairing. He'll have absolutely no trouble with Atkins and/or Maynard who'll fill out the Columbus bracket sheet.

Dahlhausen was a 167#er who ate like crazy last year so he could wrestle heavyweight---the only spot open on that state championship Newbury team. Lo and behold, the weight class was so weak that his speed and mobility brought him a regional runner-up trophy, and eventually, a state 4th place medal. It isn't likely to happen again. Currently he is certified at 175# and he'll probably end up at 185#. It'll be a struggle to qualify and a battle to place, but experience and poise at the upper weights can pay off--and Dahlhausen has both. Brindza, now at 175#, will undoubtedly be at 185# and should grab the second spot. His erratic record, though, leaves him vulnerable. Manns and Glaze were both regional qualifiers last year and they both have upset potential. I particularly like Manns but he'll have to be at his best to have any hope of a state berth.

HVY.

PROJECTED CHAMPION: ~~JOHN SLOBODA~~ (MARION PLEASANT)

TOP CONTENDERS:

- | | |
|--|--------------------------------------|
| 2. ⁽³⁾ Roe (Elmore Woodmore) | 9. Gore (Seneca East) |
| 3. Harp (Liberty Center) | 10. Grimm (Stanton) |
| 4. ⁽¹⁾ Ferguson (Bellaire St. John) | 11. Cogswell (Pioneer North Central) |
| 5. Carlin (Stryker) | 12. Rospert (New London) |
| 6. Skaggs (Shadyside) | 13. Woodard (Sarahsville Shenendoah) |
| 7. Bostick (Mechanicsburg) | 14. Hoar (Licking Hts.) |
| 8. ⁽⁴⁾ Schaeffer (Apple Creek Waynedale) | 15. Clark (Columbiana) |

Generally speaking, the "A" heavyweight division is not noted as being either strong or deep. Occasionally, there are outstanding individuals like a Dennis Loushin or "Boog" Nye, but oftentimes 185's choose this weight as an easy way to qualify. That is, again, pretty much the case this year with a few good individuals and a number of major question marks.

The top candidate for the championship is John Sloboda who was a "AA" regional champ at 185# last year and came within a point of placing at Columbus. He is not one of those slow-moving behemoths that we have often seen in "A", but is a quick, mobile heavyweight albeit not particularly big. He'll face tough competition from certain areas of the state, but most of the best kids are about his size so he'll not be overpowered by some 275#er. His regional is weak with the journeyman Bostick appearing to be his qualifying mate. However, those small Cincinnati schools occasionally have hidden a reasonable heavyweight and that could be the case this year. Another possibility might be Hoar if only by default.

The Findlay Regional undoubtedly has the most heavyweight depth. Roe was a regional champ and state qualifier at 185# last year losing to Reighard in the first round. He had no trouble at the "A" Classic hammering state qualifier Harp 10-3 in the finals. He should be a finalist at this weight. Harp, despite the one-sided loss, is still my second choice and if Sloboda and Roe are bracketed together could slip into the finals. Carlin is a good third choice here, but has lost to the top two boys. Cogswell had a regional 4th at this weight last year, but may not be able to compete. Pioneer North Central disbanded their squad early in the season due to lack of numbers and whether Cogswell will compete as an individual is problematical.

Ferguson, a state alternate at 175# last year, has wrestled some of this year at 185#. However, with Vargo and Dowling in his regional, he has smartly opted for heavyweight where his odds are considerably better. He'll do well at this class and, I believe, he has passed Skaggs as best in that area. Skaggs, 3rd at 185# in 1986, has not had the same good fortune at heavyweight, but should safely qualify. The next best two are Grimm and Woodard and they are way, way behind my top two picks here.

At Lorain the cupboard is almost bare. Schaeffer was 4th at the Smithville Invitational and competed with some success in "AA" last season. Gore won the recent Van Buren Invitational and was a regional qualifier in 1986. This is the best I could find with Rospert and Clark well behind my top two. I wouldn't be surprised to find Dahlhausen here although, he will probably qualify just as easily at 185#. He may, however, see an easier state placement at heavyweight since he pinned Harp last year.

TEAMS

1. BRIDGEPORT -- Their big rival in what should be a scintillating battle is neighboring Cadiz. This gives added importance to district and regional action since they can't go head-to-head at States until the final round. Bridgeport has three potential finalists in Vargo, Burlenski, and D. Burk. Crucial contributions can be made by Foston and T. Burk who need to qualify and score at Columbus. The key figures, though, may well be the freshman Frohnappfel at 98# and the unlucky Scheid at 138#. Of course, if Lyle or Sears can qualify, things could be much easier.
2. CADIZ -- This is a team that may be just a shade short of Bridgeport despite a little more depth. Case, Giffin and Coffland are potential finalists while Heavilin and Miller should capture a low place. However, Johnson and Bozicevic may disappoint and both Gibsons are long-shots to score. Get strong performances from them and Bridgeport may be clutching the 2nd place team trophy.
3. LIBERTY CENTER -- A team that has an erratic profile and a history of injuries. Still Kern and Dean look like titlists with Long, Tammerine and Reighard as placers. Get a strong performance from Harp and have Murdock or Keller pull some upsets and they'll be challenging the two river schools.
4. WEST LIBERTY SALEM -- We are not talking about a lot of depth here, but three champions can score a lot of points. Hiltibran could help, but if the big three have problems, there is no back-up aid.
5. RICHMOND HTS. -- That big Lorain Regional will hurt them because it will steal away their depth. Still Hanson should win and MacLellen and Adkins will place. They need points from Smith, Musarra or anybody else that can help.
6. CARDINAL -- A mystery team that could be 3rd or 30th. Neikirk, Hodous and Porter should all score heavily, but they'll need more than that. Somehow they have to get Heiss, Brindza and even Hofstetter to pitch in-- but how the latter can qualify in that murderous regional weight class seems impossible.

7. CUYAHOGA HTS. -- Stopar and Smith should be finalists and, perhaps, pick up some bonus points on the way. They have to get help from Ken Drobnick and hope for some of the rest to create a small miracle.
8. NEWBURY -- The defending champs have their work cut out for them. Crucial will be coaching decisions that put Edmondson and Dahlhausen at the best weights and solid motivation that gets Bond and French into top form. Should all that work out, they could move up a few spots.
9. SANDUSKY ST. MARY -- Myers and Galloway need good pairings at both the regional and state level and the larger Myers somehow has to successfully run the gauntlet at 155#. Given that and help from Conry, Smith or Legando, they'll be a top ten team again.
10. ARCHBOLD -- A lovely dual meet team that may fall apart at the regional level. They have excellent lower weights in the two Nguyens, Rocha, Furko and Villareal, but all of them face strong regional competition. Upperweight help from Kreiner and Schultz is a must.
11. VERSAILLES -- A team that I may seriously be under-estimating. They have been out of "A" for five years and with a new regional who can tell what will happen. Moran, Duncan and Grisez are their stars but they have good team depth. If they hit everything just right, they could challenge for the top five.
12. FREMONT ST. JOSEPH -- Another team that could rise well above their projected level. Spieldenner and Lupica look solid, but it's all question marks after that. State qualifier Hoffman will have regional problems while Miller and Reineck are real long-shots.
13. EDGERTON -- A team with many hopes and, probably many disappointments. Nye and Rowe are their top stars with Krill and Leppelmeier as hopefuls. Nihart must return strong, and somebody else, like Carlin, has to get hot.
14. GRANDVIEW HTS. -- Bonaventura should be a finalist somewhere, but Abbruzzes finish strongly for them to move up. While Gentile or Brammell could qualify, it's hard to see them scoring at the state level.
15. ELMORE WOODMORE -- Epling and Roe could be finalists and that's a lot of points. But help has to come from Hoover and Melcher for more to happen.

