

2015 Middle School state championship preview

Okay, my last few weeks as President of the KSWA and the joys of running the middle school state tournament, so why not make it the first year of doing a tournament preview. We started doing a list a couple seasons ago and moved up to rankings, so why not another step up. Roth and Lantman helped me keep my sanity with the KSWA, and Dutch helped with a lot of the color commentary below. ENJOY!!!

70 pounds

As much or maybe more than usual, this group of little guys is highly competitive. I always enjoy looking back at these 70 brackets years down the road in awe as we see how so many of these boys progress and so many of these kids win championships in later years. Since I have a personal interest in this brackets this year with my 5th grader battling to make the podium, let's pick a random past bracket to review and compare (these are shown for all weights). How about 2011, four years ago when his older brother was a 5th grader:

Champion: Corey Jacobs (Elkhorn)
Runner-up: Blake Roth (Walton-Verona)
Third place: Saul Ervin (Union Co)
Fourth place: Ryan Moore (Campbell Co)
Fifth place: Toby Siddens (Moore)
Sixth place: Nick Wise (Oldham Co)
Did not place: Tanner Yenter (Campbell Co), Joey Roberts (Woodford Co), Michael Mattox (Harrison Co)

I see this bracket playing out very similarly to that 2011 group (which won a total of like 9 MS state titles). You have a rather dominant favorite who with size on his competitors and a long line of contenders who have beat up on each other all season trying to navigate their way through the bracket to get a chance to battle Grandstaff (5th last year) in the finals. This weight is so deep that many of these boys will be challenged from the opening round, but here are my predicted placers:

Finals: rematch from Bearcat Brawl, Woodland, District, and Region of Samuel Grandstaff (Hawks) and Spencer Moore (Walton-Verona)
Third/Fourth place: Blaine Frazier (Taylor Co) and Cole Thomas (Ryle)
Fifth/Sixth place: Brayden Brown (Union Co) and Devon Herron (North Hardin)

75 pounds

2011 results (another deep group that won a bunch of MS titles, including a 4-timer):

Champion: Bryce Sheffer (Union Co)
Runner-up: Jake Burroughs (North Hardin)
Third place: Brady Wells (Campbell Co)
Fourth place: Michael Martin (Walton-Verona)
Fifth place: Jack Fallon (Woodford Co)
Sixth place: Stiles Metcalf (Larue Co)
Did not place: Zane Brown (Shamrock), Tristan Garcia (Fern Creek)

While this weight isn't as deep as 70, the kids at the top are very tough. You have 2 returning state placers from last year's 70 bracket; Peace was 3rd and Deck was 6th. I think the top few kids have consistently proven themselves and should move on as expected. The final few spots on the podium will definitely be up for grabs. This is also a weight class that could have a major impact on the team races for both school and club divisions. Here are my predicted placers:

Finals: rematch from Bearcat Brawl of Thomas Deck (Madison Co) and Isham Peace (Walton-Verona)
Third/Fourth place: Jayssen Hanson (North Hardin) and Scott Villums (Fern Creek)
Fifth/Sixth place: Michael Dodge (Ryle) and T Armstead (East Oldham)

80 pounds

2011 results:

Champion (82): Derek Wiley (Conner)
Runner-up: AJ Bindner (North Oldham)
Third place: Chance Oxford (Union Co)
Fourth place: French Golden (Ryle)
Fifth place: Konner Kraeszig (River City)
Sixth place: Dylan Gray (Caldwell Co)
Did not place: Trent Johnson (North Hardin), Austin Cook (River City), Danten Rice (Shamrock)

Our first returning state champion will be at 80, where Escalera looks to continue his run and get the potential Union parade of champions started. I see a huge gap after the top 3 at this weight; the Grandstaff/Deckard match should be exciting and the highlight match of this bracket prior to the finals. Here are my predicted placers:

Finals: Zeke Escalera (Union Co) and Carson Deckard (East Oldham)
Third/Fourth place: Jacob Grandstaff (Hawks) and Thomas Hoppes (Larue Co)
Fifth/Sixth place: Landon Lenhart (North Oldham) and Blue Fletcher (Johnson Co)

86 pounds

2011 results (a couple of high school titles already out of this group with more likely to come):

Champion (89): Logan Erdman (Ryle)
Runner-up: Tucker Hurst (Woodford Co)
Third place: Ben Barton (Shamrock)
Fourth place: Dalton Putty (University Heights)
Fifth place: Jorge Vega (Fern Creek)
Sixth place: Tyler Ward (Apollo)
Did not place: Dallas Miles (River City)

This should be a fight from top to bottom. With Brown, another Union County returning state champ, and Mattingly being the heavy favorites. Mattingly was also a state placer last year along with Frietsch and Ballinger who were state runner-ups. Brown has to be the most technical of the group while Mattingly is massive for this weight class (ironic given that he was a 70 pounder last season). I see Brown and Mattingly in the finals. I also believe that Lee will keep Ryle's title hopes alive with a high placement. The Lee family knows how to wrestle. I would say the semi-finals will be fun to watch. Here are my predicted placers:

Finals: rematch from Union County, Bearcat Brawl, District, and Region of Gavin Brown (Union Co) and Preston Mattingly (Apollo)
Third/Fourth place: Connor Lee (Ryle) and Tristan Ballinger (East Oldham)
Fifth/Sixth place: Trevor Frietsch (Twenhofel) and Tyler Hudgins (Harrison Co)

92 pounds

2011 results:

Champion (96): Hudson Heidorf (North Oldham)
Runner-up: Jake Erdman (Ryle)
Third place: Jerimiah Kline (Trigg Co)
Fourth place: Geordan Blanton (Johnson Co)
Fifth place: Brady Emerson (Oldham Co)
Sixth place: Trey Woodley (McNabb)
Did not place: Jeremy Henehan (Woodford Co)

Carter, the third returning champ in a row (80-86-92) should find himself in the finals. However, the Giannone-Wilson winner in the semis could provide an interesting match, but I have to give Carter the edge. On the other side with Jacobs, Adams, and Pye will have a war battling to make the finals. I believe all three of the guys place in the top 4. None of these matches will be easy. Also Streine can be dangerous. Let's see who wants it the most. Here are my predicted placers:

Finals: rematch from NKAC, District, and Region of Tom Ketchen-Carter (Campbell Co) and Brendan Pye (Woodland)
Third/Fourth place: Gabe Jacobs (North Oldham) and Gabe Adams (Union Co)
Fifth/Sixth place: Mason Wilson (Union Co) and Brayden Giannone (Carr Wrestling Academy)

98 pounds

2011 results:

Champion (103): Caleb Austin (Christian Co)
Runner-up: Robert Smith (Union Co)
Third place: Nathan Thompson (River City)
Fourth place: Bobby Poynter (Moore)
Fifth place: Bryan Spahr (Campbell Co)
Sixth place: Elijah Owens (Summit View)
Did not place: Angel Vasquez (Five Star)

98lbs and 105lbs should be the brackets everyone paid the high price admission for. I like Wheeler on his side of the bracket. He will have a tough road getting past Siebert, not to mention Miller who is good enough to win it. Very solid kids. On the other side Deck should face Horton in a tough semis match. Horton might have some extra fire due to last year's disappointment at state, but Deck is a hammer. Deck and Wheeler is too close to call. This should be a low scoring affair, but will be a battle to the end. Here are my predicted placers:

Finals: Gentry Deck (Madison Co) and Nate Wheeler (East Oldham)
Third/Fourth place: Bradley Miller (EJ Hayes) and Shay Horton (Ryle)
Fifth/Sixth place: Layne Seibert (Woodland) and Austin Grant-Hall (Christian Co)

105 pounds

2011 results:

Champion (110): John Shirkey (East Oldham)
Runner-up: Keegan Duncan (North Oldham)
Third place: Andy Wilson (Conner)
Fourth place: Dylan West (Larue Co)
Fifth place: David Rich (Ryle)
Sixth place: Trevor Edmondson (North Hardin)
Did not place: Alex Wright (Bourbon Co)

Like 98, this is one of the toughest brackets at state. With so many of these kids having high school experience, they should be fun to watch. After watching Insko wrestle this year he looks prepared to roll to the finals. Most of us believe that Yost will make it also. Yost will have a tough out getting past Boyd. The semi with those two should be interesting. Insko and Yost have split this year. I say Insko sneaks bye Yost for the title. Both kids are solid and could challenge for placement at the high school state tournament. Maybe they will get the chance to settle the tie breaker in the finals. However Powers, Andreoni, Boyd, and Wallace might have other plans. Here are my predicted placers:

Finals: rematch from Woodford County and Union County of Jake Insko (Apollo) and Chase Yost (Woodford Co)
Third/Fourth place: Clayton Boyd (Conner) and Wyatt Andreoni (Woodford Co)
Fifth/Sixth place: Allen Powers (Moore) and Chase Wallace (John Hardin)

113 pounds

2011 results:

Champion (117): Jon Belk (Ryle)
Runner-up: Michael Grandstaff (Conner)
Third place: Caleb Ray (River City)
Fourth place: Terrell Roberts (Harrison Co)
Fifth place: Sean Burke (Shamrock)
Sixth place: Liam Mitchell (Woodford Co)

This bracket will make you scratch your head. Don't know who the top kid will be. I believe Kelsay and Fuller could be the front runners, but you never know. Funny things happen at state tournaments. My guess is whomever makes the fewest mistakes takes home a title. Here are my predicted placers:

Finals: Jared Kelsay (Twenhofel) and Jack Fuller (Apollo)
Third/Fourth place: Billy Pride (Union Co) and Marshall Royce (North Oldham)
Fifth/Sixth place: Conner Patterson (Ryle) and Trey Barber (Woodford Co)

121 pounds

2011 results:

Champion (124): Tyler Frankrone (River City)
Runner-up: Jackson Oxford (Union Co)
Third place: Cameron Bryant (Moore)
Fourth place: Carson Axtell (Oldham Co)
Fifth place: Jordan Metts (Elkhorn)
Sixth place: Austin Phillips (Anderson Co)
Did not place: Cole Overman (Central Hardin)

This one will be fun with 3 undefeated wrestlers, who have a good deal of HS mat time. Based on what we have seen from Brown at the high school level, this looks like his title to lose. Plus, I think he has placed at MS state 27 times (Ha Ha Ha). However, there is an Ervin in the mix. They have been known to win a few titles and Micah has wrestled a very tough varsity schedule as well. Lawrence, Deckard, Wyatt, and Murrer should battle out for placement as well. The outcomes of these battles should give us some insight as to how these kids will perform in the HS post season. Here are my predicted placers:

Finals: matchup of kids who will contend for a high school state tournament medal of Zane Brown (Shamrock) and Micah Ervin (Union Co)
Third/Fourth place: Nathaniel Lawrence (Elkhorn) and Jackson Deckard (East Oldham)
Fifth/Sixth place: Ronan Wyatt (Woodford Co) and Mannie Murrer (Covington Catholic)

130 pounds

2011 results:

Champion (131): Dominic Lampe (River City)
Runner-up: Kenneth Sells (Christian Co)
Third place: Christian Ricketson (Union Co)
Fourth place: Ryan Woolf (Ryle)
Fifth place: Tinker Reidling (North Hardin)
Sixth place: Alex Burke (Shamrock)
Did not place: Mikey Smith (Moore)

A number of these wrestlers have high school experience. McClintic lost a close one last year in the semis. He has looked tough this year; I believe he is on a mission to make it to the finals this year. Hoffman, Hall, and Farfsing will battle to do the same. I think French and Mayer sneak in for a placement as well. Here are my predicted placers:

Finals: Jacob McClintic (East Oldham) and Keegan Hoffman (Fern Creek)
Third/Fourth place: Griffin Hall (Taylor Co) and Caleb Farfsing (Twenhofel)
Fifth/Sixth place: Ethan French (Bourbon Co) and Daulton Mayer (Campbell Co)

140 pounds

2011 results:

Champion: Johnny Meiman (Ryle)
Runner-up: Adrian Mills (North Hardin)
Third place: Bradley Martin (Larue Co)
Fourth place: Jacob Patterson (Oldham Co)
Fifth place: Sam Gnadinger (Oldham Co)
Sixth place: Tyler Dix (Meade Co)
Did not place: Lucas Miozza (Shamrock), Casey Cornett (Turkeyfoot)

This should be an interesting 4-horse race with an interesting 4/5 match between Jenkins and Begley. I see the regional champs as a step above the crowd and should advance to the semis, with the exception of that 4/5 match. From there it is anyone's game and we will see who is more prepared to win on the big stage. Mulcahy has one loss this season which he avenged a few weeks later. Lucas has spent majority of his time at high school with much success. Once again another Ervin in the mix. How many Ervin's are there? Call me a homer but I take Mulcahy in the finals with Lucas/Ervin. Here are my predicted placers:

Finals: Braden Mulcahy (Walton-Verona) and Jack Lucas (Bulldog)
Third/Fourth place: Sam Jenkins (North Oldham) and Matthias Ervin (Union Co)
Fifth/Sixth place: Tyler Norton (Fairdale) and Chris Atkinson (Taylor Co)

152 pounds

2011 results:

Champion (150): Eli Matthews (Campbell Co)
Runner-up: Bradley Miller (Crosby)
Third place: Mason Ray (Larue Co)
Fourth place: Jack Dorn (Ryle)
Fifth place: Aaron Fulton (Ohio Co)
Sixth place: Dalton Geoghegan (North Oldham)

Jackson, who placed 4th at this weight last year, is the favorite here. After Jackson the field is unproven, so I can see any number of kids making their way to the podium. Starrett and Williams could have a huge impact for their teams if they step up this weekend. Here are my predicted placers:

Finals: Joe Jackson (Johnson Co) and Zach Chandler (Bulldog)
Third/Fourth place: Noah Paige (Central Hardin) and Tanner Starrett (Campbell Co)
Fifth/Sixth place: Caleb Berquist (Oldham Co) and Kenyon Drayton (Christian Co)

168 pounds

2011 results:

Champion (165): Jacob Warwick (Conner)
Runner-up: Alex McIntosh (Oldham Co)
Third place: Elijah Miller (Woodland)
Fourth place: Robert Metz (Campbell Co)
Fifth place: Kohl Dodd (Fern Creek)
Sixth place: Shawn Whittinghill (Moore)
Did not place: Garrett Chandler (Fern Creek)

Probably the most wide open weight for 2015. Without a returning state placer it is hard to determine a true favorite here. Region 4 appears to be bringing the strongest group and I anticipate a regional rematch in the finals. Maines and Marchal will be key wrestlers; can they score big team points that determine club team placements. Here are my predicted placers:

Finals: Matt Horn (Johnson Co) and Chase Blanton (Harrison Co)
Third/Fourth place: Josh Valentine (Central Hardin) and David Satterly (North Oldham)
Fifth/Sixth place: Andrew Marchal (Shamrock) and Noah Borders (John Hardin)

190 pounds

2011 results:

Champion (185): Tommy Underwood (North Hardin)
Runner-up: Austin Weird (Fairdale)
Third place: Rodney Rednear (Wayne Co)
Fourth place: Zach Mayton (Daviess Co)
Fifth place: Jake Adams (Ryle)
Sixth place: Nathan King (Johnson Co)
Did not place: Cole Sherman (Union Co)

Our final returning state champ, Kulmer won at 168 last year. With no returning state placers, this bracket has a bunch of kids looking to make a name for themselves. Kulmer is the prohibitive favorite at 190. But I am anxious to see who comes through the other side. Both Horn and Chambers have amazing records coming in, but Kulmer will present them with a challenge they likely have not faced so far this season. Here are my predicted placers:

Finals: Kadin Kulmer (Shamrock) and Andrew Chambers (Bardstown)
Third/Fourth place: Alex Horn (Johnson Co) and Tim Rolf (Campbell Co)
Fifth/Sixth place: Logan Deasel (McCracken Co) and Marcos Cardenas (Moore)

240 pounds

2011 results (these guys have been pretty successful on the high school level):

Champion: Raynel Brown (Union Co)
Runner-up: Tevin Toler (Christian Co)
Third place: Matthew Davis (South Oldham)
Fourth place: David Carr (Walton-Verona)
Fifth place: Brandon Johnson (Turkeyfoot)
Sixth place: Charlie Roarx (Larue Co)
Did not place: Landon Young (Five Star)

With only 1 returning state placer, Pierce at 190, I think the podium spots are up for grabs. I haven't personally seen many of these kids, but Pratt appears to be that monster kid that shows up each year at state and is fairly dominant. I hope we can get a couple of these big boys to participate on Team KY this year. Here are my predicted placers:

Finals: Bryan Pratt (Meade Co) and Cody Melton (Moore)
Third/Fourth place: Markus Green (Christian Co) and Ben Jennings (Anderson Co)
Fifth/Sixth place: Chandler Watkins (Ryle) and Jordan Akihary (Madison Co)

TEAM – CLUB

I think this tournament is all about Union County. They have so much depth to go along with their top end talent. But, as we saw last weekend, anything can happen when all the chips are pushed into the center of the table. My money is on them. But I think Ryle will push them for a club title, with Walton-Verona and Shamrock close behind based on the performance of a few high quality kids.

TEAM – SCHOOL

This should be an exciting battle that will have a number of coaches checking trackwrestling all day to keep up with the scores. East Oldham seems to be the front runner, but North Oldham performed particularly well this past weekend. Add to that the fact Madison, Johnson, Campbell, and Woodford all have multiple kids with placement potential. I can see this race coming down to the finals putting extra pressure on some young kids.