

2016 Kentucky Middle School State Tournament Preview

Well, it looks like the weather is going to cooperate for us and allow everyone to make the trip to the new host site at the Kentucky International Convention Center in Louisville for the Kentucky Middle School State Tournament. While this is a much larger facility and more population centered, I will miss walking into the Montgomery County Arena this Friday night. Coach Dettwiller and his program were great hosts and helped the KSWA elevate our state championship to new levels. Thanks to everyone at Montgomery County for their years hosting a great tournament.

This preview is based on my final rankings and for fun discussion. With these young kids, crazy things tend to happen so it is impossible to accurately predict much. Also, as has been mentioned a few times, we are still far, far away from having good data to base rankings on for middle school. So there are likely a bunch of missed results that will undoubtedly impact predicted outcomes. They also do not reflect any scratches (missed weight, illness, dreaded skin conditions) that will come in the last minute. And even **IF** they were perfect rankings, upsets always happen on the big stage.

As I go through each weight class I cover the following items:

- 1) Favorite – my pick to win it all
- 2) Contenders – the next five or so ranked kids who I think have a shot to battle for the title
- 3) Returning state placers – state placers from last year
- 4) Early round match-ups to watch – big matches (top ranked or closely ranked kids) that happen in round 1 or 2 (quarterfinals)
- 5) Kid who might out wrestle their ranking – this one is tough, because I try to not out smart myself and pick against the rankings, but based on the way the bracket falls, I picked some kids who have a good shot to slide in a few spots higher
- 6) 2012 flashback – a look back at the kids who placed (or did not place) at each weight 4 years ago; this gives some perspective as to how those kids have progressed as most have moved on to high school and maybe provides a slight glimpse into the future

70 lbs.

Favorite: Spencer Moore (Walton-Verona)

Contenters: Braedon Herron (River City), Matthew Meyer (River City), Bryant Beane (ETC), Joey Sander (Ryle), Nolan Banfield (McNabb)

Returning state placers: Spencer Moore (3rd @ 70)

Early round matches to watch: Round 1 Sander #5 vs. Giompalo #7, Round 1 Johnson #9 vs. Sarno #8, Quarters Moore #1 vs. Beane #4, Herron #2 vs. Sander #5

Kid who might out wrestle their ranking: Collin Ross (Ryle)

2012 Flashback: 1st – Tanner Yenter (Campbell County), 2nd – Zach Holub (Turkeyfoot), 3rd – Brock Whorton (North Hardin), 4th – Isaac Pledger (River City), 5th – Jordan Sawyer (Fern Creek), 6th – Tylan Tucker (Woodford County), DNP – Gavin Brown (University Heights), Jacob Grandstaff (Conner)

Team title race implications: How many bonus points will Moore rack up? As the only returning placer and strong favorite, Walton-Verona will be looking for big points here. Beane is tough and will provide a challenge for Moore in the quarters. But there are potential hiccups for everyone as this weight became much deeper late in the season as multiple kids dropped for the post season. The light weights will be a battle ground for the club title as WV, River City, and Ryle all have top kids battling for placement spots. I expect a WV-River City final match-up here.

Moore was seconds from a spot in the final last year and looks to avenge that missed opportunity. A couple of returning state qualifiers as well as new faces to middle school are poised to earn one of those huge medals. River City and Ryle both have 2 good kids here; will be interesting to see how they navigate through the bracket and if head-to-heads impact team points. Regions 2 and 3 were both very deep and threw a slight kink in the bracket with Beane drawing Moore in the quarters. Moore has won both meetings this year. Sander also has a tough road to advance far into the bracket.

75 lbs.

Favorite: Isham Peace (Walton-Verona)

Contenders: Cole Thomas (Ryle), Devon Herron (River City), Cael Miracle (Taylor County), Jude Powell (Fairdale), Devin Armstead (East Oldham)

Returning state placers: Isham Peace (2nd @ 75), Cole Thomas (5th @ 70), Devon Herron (6th @ 70)

Early round matches to watch: Quarters Herron #3 vs. Miracle #4

Kid who might out wrestle their ranking: Noah Burkhardt (Ryle)

2012 Flashback: 1st – Ryan Moore (Campbell County), 2nd – Blake Roth (Walton-Verona), 3rd – Zac Brooks (Oldham County), 4th – Nate Wheeler (East Oldham), 5th – Clay Fitzhugh (River City), 6th – Tristan Garcia (Fern Creek), DNP – Micah Ervin (Union County), Nathaniel Lawrence (Elkhorn)

Team title race implications: Another weight where the club team battle plays out. Peace, the returning state runner-up at this weight, has been fairly dominant against Kentucky competition this year, so another spot where Walton expects bonus points. Miracle forfeited his regional final and ended up with a tough draw having Herron in the quarters. That sets up a great semi, likely with Thomas for those big team points for a state finalist.

As mentioned, Miracle will have to run a gauntlet to place high this weekend. Not sure if he was injured or what, but the region runner-up starts the day with Burkhardt who just keeps advancing. Burkhardt has placed 3rd at both district and region behind the top 2 ranked kids in the state. The winner of that match gets Herron (only ranked #3) and another win for Thomas in the semis. But overall a fairly balanced bracket considering. If we get a Peace-Thomas final, that will be 4 of the last 5 weekends for these two going head-to-head in a final (Peace 3-0).

80 lbs.

Favorite: Samuel Grandstaff (Walton-Verona)

Contenders: Dylan Walls (Tigers), Jayssen Hanson (River City), Jeffrey Kinley (Madison County), Jake Cain (Martin County), Luke Chapman (Carr Wrestling)

Returning state placers: Samuel Grandstaff (2nd @ 70), Jayssen Hanson (3rd @ 75)

Early round matches to watch: None

Kid who might out wrestle their ranking: Jeffrey Kinley (Madison County) – as the overall #1 he is set to make the finals and a re-match with Grandstaff, which he won at Woodland Wildcat Duals.

2012 Flashback: 1st – Brady Wells (Campbell County), 2nd – Konner Kraeszig (River City), 3rd – Saul Ervin (Union County), 4th – Ian Creech (Walton-Verona), 5th – Zane Brown (Shamrock), 6th – Joey Roberts (Woodford County), DNP – Jakob McClintic (East Oldham)

Team title race implications: Another possible WV-RC final as the only returning state placers, but both Grandstaff and Hanson have formidable matches to get there; Kinley and Walls took the top seeds. Madison County didn't bring a big team, so they need max points out of each kid to take home a trophy and as a #1 Kinley is a key. If WV gets a couple wins to start the night off momentum could be on Grandstaff's side.

You might wonder why Grandstaff remains the favorite. Since I have seen that match and know the details behind the medical issue, I am giving Samuel the benefit of the doubt. Plus, Kinley lost to Chapman this year who Samuel has beaten on multiple occasions. The bottom half has the #1, #2, #5, and #6 wrestlers; so slightly heavy giving Kinley and Hanson a clearer path to the semis.

86 lbs.

Favorite: Thomas Deck (Madison County)

Contenders: Jacob Grandstaff (Walton-Verona), Nathan Ohlmann (River City), Matthew Moore (Union County), Kayden Graham (Carr Wrestling), Dedrian Jones (Meade County)

Returning state placers: Thomas Deck (State Champ @ 75), Jacob Grandstaff (2nd @ 80), Matthew Moore (4th @ 75), Nathan Ohlmann (6th @ 75)

Early round matches to watch: Round 1 Graham #5 vs. Walls #7, Quarters Grandstaff #2 vs. Moore #4, Graham #5 vs. Ohlmann #3

Kid who might out wrestle their ranking: Dedrian Jones (Meade County)

2012 Flashback: 1st – Bryce Sheffer (Union County), 2nd – Clint Chaffee (Ryle), 3rd – Austin Cook (River City), 4th – Matthew Fallon (Woodford County), 5th – Jacob Dodd (Wayne County), 6th – Michael Mattox (Harrison County), DNP – Connor Cambron (Fern Creek), Clayton Hanson (North Hardin), Braden Mulcahy (Walton-Verona)

Team title race implications: Another Madison County kid here and one that should rack up some major bonus points. But we also have highly ranked WV, RC, Union County, and Carr Wrestling kids battling for that spot in the final with Deck. How those battles play out and how the kids who lose rebound in the consolations will be huge in the team race.

Very bottom heavy bracket with #2-#5 down there. This gives the returning state champ a top half that he should dominate. Grandstaff and Ohlmann should have tough quarterfinal matches to earn the chance at each other in the semis. Deck has beaten Grandstaff twice this season; is the third time the charm? Also, will WV or Madison County have the momentum coming off the 80 final?

92 lbs.

Favorite: Carson Deckard (River City)

Contenders: Blue Fletcher (Johnson County), Jack Cummings (Shamrock), Brennan Conrad (Twenhofel), Michael Dodge (Ryle), Scott Vilums (Fern Creek)

Returning state placers: Carson Deckard (3rd @ 80), Blue Fletcher (4th @ 80), Brennan Conrad (5th @ 86)

Early round matches to watch: None

Kid who might out wrestle their ranking: Michael Powell (Woodland)

2012 Flashback: 1st – AJ Bindner (River City), 2nd – Tyler Holub (Turkeyfoot), 3rd – Trent Johnson (North Hardin), 4th – Mason Smith (Walton-Verona), 5th – Dylan Gray (Caldwell County), 6th – Bryan Holden (Campbell County), DNP – Brandon Leak (North Hardin), Dakota Lillie (Campbell County), Mikey Klein (Fern Creek), Dallas Ochenbein (North Oldham)

Team title race implications: This is a spot where River City makes a move ahead on the team front. With the top ranked wrestler, they should really outscore the other club teams here. Ryle is the next club with a contender and Dodge hits Deckard in the quarters. Johnson County will make their push for a school title here with Fletcher.

Another heavy bottom half with #2, #3, #4, and #6 this could be a dramatic half bracket to follow. The depth on this side may limit Fletcher's bonus potential as well. A side note, for lighter weights, doesn't it seem like Conrad and Fletcher have been around for decades? I expect both to return to the podium this year in a competitive weight class.

98 lbs.

Favorite: Gabe Adams (Union County)

Contenders: Landon Lenhart (North Oldham), Zach Pledger (River City), Connor Lee (Ryle), Gideon Adams (Union County), Hunter Butler (Meade County)

Returning state placers: Gabe Adams (3rd @ 92), Connor Lee (4th @ 86), Landon Lenhart (5th @ 80), Hunter Butler (6th @ 80)

Early round matches to watch: Quarters Pledger #3 vs. Gabe Adams #1, Lenhart #2 vs. Gideon Adams #5, Lee #4 vs. Butler #6

Kid who might out wrestle their ranking: Zac Cowan (Carr Wrestling)

2012 Flashback: 1st – Mikey Meyer (Walton-Verona), 2nd – Chance Oxford (Union County), 3rd – Dallas Miles (River City), 4th – Christian Downing (Summit View), 5th – Tanner Cochran (North Oldham), 6th – Spencer Jacobs (Fern Creek), DNP – Jordan Monroe (Walton-Verona)

Team title race implications: Now that we get to the middle part of the lineup the Union County hammers come out. The Adams brothers will be strong here and although only one will score team points the other will limit other team's point scorers. Lenhart will pace North Oldham's group of solid, consistent performers. Pledger got a tough draw for RC as he will face Gabe Adams in the quarters; he must wrestle back for River City to keep pace in the team race. I guess there has been some chatter about the seeding here, but the bottom line is the seeding is what it is. The coaches discussed it and it is no worse than if they did a random draw. Lee didn't get a free ride with Butler in the quarters and possibly Lenhart in the semis. Tough weight.

Most of the excitement here is around the top teams. But a big match in my mind as I look over the bracket is Powell-Cowen. I think that winner makes the podium and the loser comes up just short.

105 lbs.

Favorite: Tom Ketchen-Carter (Campbell County)

Contenders: Brayden Giannone (Carr Wrestling), Cauy Wallace (Wayne County), Dalton Russelburg (Union County), Dalton Lawson (Johnson County), Ethan Wells (University Heights)

Returning state placers: Tom Ketchen-Carter (State Champ @ 92), Morgan Sallee (6th @ 98)

Early round matches to watch: Round 1 Wells #6 vs. Phan #7, Quarters Wallace #3 vs. Russelburg #4, Semis Ketchen-Carter #1 vs. Giannone #2

Kid who might out wrestle their ranking: Jack Calvery (River City)

2012 Flashback: 1st – Logan Erdman (Ryle), 2nd – Brady Emerson (Oldham County), 3rd – Jeremiah Kline (Trigg County), 4th – Geordan Blanton (Johnson County), 5th – Grant Farwick (Ryle), 6th – Brad Krebs (Campbell County), DNP – Derek Wiley (Conner)

Team title race implications: Not nearly as many team implications here, especially with the kids who chose to focus on high school. Giannone could give Carr Wrestling a big boost by holding his ranking and finishing in the top 3. Lawson as well can improve Johnson County's chances at trophy with his draw and finishing high on the podium. We will see how Russelburg stacks up in the quarters as he hits Wallace.

Wallace has been tearing it up at the high school level this year. We haven't seen a lot of Wayne County kids participate in our post season the last few years, so it is great to see Wallace and what he can do. Ketchen-Carter is a returning state champ and also wrestling very, very tough at the high school level is the prohibitive favorite. Although I've heard some great things about Giannone; should be an interesting semi. I was REALLY, REALLY looking forward to a Tom-Zeke battle here. But with the regional tournament reschedules, Zeke was forced to choose between HS state duals and regionals. Unfortunately for us fans, he is focusing on HS at this point. And what would this have looked like if Yost was in the mix as well. WOW!!!

113 lbs.

Favorite: Austin Grant-Hall (Christian County)

Contenders: Seth Lutes (Woodland), Trevor Pogue (Union County), Morgan Martin (McNabb), Mason Wilson (Union County), Zack Higdon (Fairdale)

Returning state placers: Seth Lutes (4th @ 105), Austin Grant-Hall (5th @ 98), Zach Higdon (6th @ 92)

Early round matches to watch: Quarters Pogue #3 vs. Martin #4

Kid who might out wrestle their ranking: Sammy Elliston (Conner)

2012 Flashback: 1st – Robert Smith (Union County), 2nd – Bryan Spahr (Campbell County), 3rd – Hudson Heidorf (North Oldham), 4th – Kyrie Glover (Holmes), 5th – Chance Collins (University Heights), 6th – Ben Barton (Shamrock)

Team title race implications: Christian County is very, very tough in the upper half with a number of kids who compete at the high school level. Grant-Hall leads the way here and should score some bonus. Union County again has a couple tough kids at this weight and should get them back in the team race.

This should be a good preview of a potential blood round match at the high school state tournament. Grant-Hall and Lutes both are in that range at the high school level. Should be a great match-up. Grant-Hall ranked #1 beating Ketchen-Carter early in the year, but I know Lutes has put in the time and hard work and got the #1 seed. After the Union County kids and Martin from McNabb, I see this as an open weight where a number of kids could take those last few spots on the podium.

121 lbs.

Favorite: Payne Carr (Union County)

Contenders: Jakerion Merrit (Christian County), Jaydon Streine (Walton-Verona), Tristan Brooks (Woodford County), Jackson Grimsley (Taylor County), Seth Slayton (Tigers)

Returning state placers: Jaydon Streine (2nd @ 92), Payne Carr (4th @ 98)

Early round matches to watch: Round 1 Brooks #4 vs. Slayton #6, Quarters Streine #3 vs. Grimsley #5

Kid who might out wrestle their ranking: Jalin Montgomery-Jone (Elkhorn)

2012 Flashback: 1st – Keegan Duncan (North Oldham), 2nd – Angel Vasquez (Five Star), 3rd – Cameron Cole (Christian County), 4th – Michael Eldridge (Woodford County), 5th – Colton Cooper (Summit View), 6th – Jeremy Henehan (Fern Creek), DNP – Sam Griffith (Johnson County), Elijah Allgeier (River City), Jordan Kidwell (Cooper)

Team title race implications: The final Union County hammer, Carr is the favorite and has a draw to put up big time points. Streine has a tough draw with Grimsley (they split this season) in quarters and Merrit in semis, but his style is deadly and can end a match in the blink of an eye. Merrit continues the upper weight onslaught from Christian County. Interesting matchup for him in quarters with Pierce. Slayton could surprise some people here and put Tigers in the battle for a trophy.

Not much exciting outside the team race.

130 lbs.

Favorite: Noah Duke (Ryle)

Contenders: Daulton Mayer (Campbell County), Brandon Gibson (Walton-Verona), Zlatko Skulijan (Hopkinsville), Levid Rodriguez (Johnson County), Cameron Coleman (Christian County)

Returning state placers: Noah Duke (2nd @ 105)

Early round matches to watch: Round 1 Green #7 vs. Fink #9, Quarters Mayer #2 vs. Skulijan #4, Gibson #3 vs. Rodriguez #5

Kid who might out wrestle their ranking: Eric Green (Pike County)

2012 Flashback: 1st – David Rich (Ryle), 2nd – John Reitnauer (North Oldham), 3rd – Dylan West (Larue County), 4th – Avery Buckman (Union County), 5th – Max Andreoni (Woodford County), 6th – Santo Biddix (Shamrock), DNP – Andrew Bailey (Cooper)

Team title race implications: Most of the season I've had these same 3 guys at the top. And since they come out of the same region they are separated. That appears to give Ryle and WV the chance to score good points here. But the bracket is a funny thing and could impact some team scoring. Rodriguez begins the Johnson County upper weight run and has to produce for them to keep pace with Christian County. Speaking of Christian County, Coleman has a bear of a draw, but if he can out-place Rodriguez it would be huge for the team.

Very bottom heavy again here with #2-#5. I think that will make it tougher to pull off the upset in the finals as Duke has an easier road to the final. But Skulijan is the X-factor. Don't know much about him; Zlatko could throw some major kinks in the works. INSERT A LITTLE NON-OBJECTIVE COMMENTARY HERE!!! Along with Lutes at 113, Mayer and Gibson are a couple kids who I have worked with a lot and hope to see them do well this weekend. Hope to see them go at it in the semis knowing that one will be in the state finals and both have made the podium.

140 lbs.

Favorite: Nathaniel Lawrence (Elkhorn)

Contenders: Brandon Smith (Martin County), David Bodenbender (Ryle), Joe Fernandez (Christian County), Eli Bergquist (Oldham County), John Paredes (Tigers)

Returning state placers: Nathaniel Lawrence (2nd @ 121)

Early round matches to watch: None

Kid who might out wrestle their ranking: Hunter Lattin (Meade County)

2012 Flashback: 1st – Jackson Oxford (Union County), 2nd – Tyler Frankrone (River City), 3rd – Casey Cornett (Turkeyfoot), 4th – Ben Leaton (East Oldham), 5th – Keyven Sells (Christian County), 6th – Kobe Perry (Christian County)

Team title race implications: This is an interesting weight with seemingly little team race impacts. Unless we see some upsets, only Ryle is poised to score significant points here. But with only Lawrence a proven commodity in this bracket anything could happen, so maybe that statement will be totally wrong.

Broken record here we come... Bottom heavy with #2, #3, #5, #6. This is fairly important at a weight that truly is up for grabs after Lawrence. He has proven to be the stud here, but I don't know that anyone else is clearly ahead of anyone else.

152 lbs.

Favorite: Colin Stevens (Trigg County)

Contenders: Ethan Tomerlin (Fort Campbell), Will Horschler (John Hardin), Dillon Talmon (Ryle), Ben Geisenhoff (Oldham County), Tyler Patton (Wayne County)

Returning stat placers: Colin Stevens (6th @ 130)

Early round matches to watch: Round 1 Richmond #7 vs. Cantlon #8, Horschler #3 vs. Akemon #9, Quarters Horschler #3 vs. Talmon #4, Tomerlin #2 vs. Geisenhof #5, Patton #6 vs. Richmond #7

Kid who might out wrestle their ranking: Tyler Patton (Wayne County)

2012 Flashback: 1st – Johnny Meiman (Ryle), 2nd – Isaiah Lawson (Hopkinsville), 3rd – Max Emerson (Oldham County), 4th – Ben Thome (North Oldham), 5th – Seth Hille (Holmes), 6th – Dalton Parr (Central Hardin)

Team title race implications: Another weight with not much team title impact on the surface. But again Ryle with a chance to build some solid points in their bid for the title. Cantlon could be an X-factor for River City in gaining some valuable team points.

Where Region 3 had the big dogs at 130, Region 1 is stacked here at 152. I could see 3 of the 4 semi-finalists coming from Region 1. But we can't talk about 152 without mentioning Ronnie Shackelford. Heading into the post season he was the #1 guy after bumping up from 140, but was not allowed to compete at the region due to a skin condition. Tough, tough situation for a kid I coached for years and who wrestled and grew up with both of my boys.

168 lbs.

Favorite: Niko Bussell (Christian County)

Contenders: Bryce Tackett (Johnson County), Everett Marrit (Anderson County), Cody Kramer (N KY Saints), Travis Wells (Central Hardin), Andrew Maupin (Elkhorn)

Returning state placers: Niko Bussell (5th @ 168)

Early round matches to watch: Round 1 Leicht #7 vs. Maupin #6, Quarters Bussell #1 vs. Marret #3

Kid who might out wrestle their ranking: Andrew Maupin (Elkhorn)

2012 Flashback: 1st – Alex McIntosh (Oldham County), 2nd – Grant Krueger (Ashland Verity), 3rd – Nathan King (Johnson County), 4th – Sam Anderson (Elkhorn), 5th – Angel Silva (Christian County), 6th – Cobe Calhoun (River City), DNP – Collin Portman (North Oldham)

Team title race implications: Bussell has been a beast this year and appears to be in a position to put up huge points for Christian County. But Johnson County has Tackett as well who could put up a bunch of points. Anderson County needs Marret to battle through this bracket, including a quarter match with Bussell, to keep them in a fight for a team trophy. With the chaos I expect in this bracket, Cobb from Ryle could score some important team points.

After the top 3 and Kramer, I think this weight is pretty wide open. These top few weight classes are where we usually see a lot of surprises with kids coming out of the woodwork; often from a Johnson County or North Oldham.

190 lbs.

Favorite: Devin Johnson (Johnson County)

Contenders: Logan Deasel (McCracken County), Anthony Coffey (North Oldham), Thomas Hurt (Scott County), Devin Sanders (Wayne County), Nolan Hedges (Anderson County)

Returning state placers: None

Early round matches to watch: Round 1 Coffey #3 vs. Hedges #6, Quarters Deasel #1 vs. Hurt #4

Kid who might out wrestle their ranking: Colton Maines (Walton-Verona)

2012 Flashback: 1st – Brett Graziani (Campbell County), 2nd – Aaron King (Johnson County), 3rd – Conner Sherman (Union County), 4th – Garrett Chandler (Fern Creek), 5th – Seth Watkins (Johnson County), 6th – Seamus Sallee (Danville Bate)

Team title race implications: This could be a big weight for the school teams. Big potential semi matchup between Johnson and Coffey. Hedges is tough for Anderson as well, but has a gauntlet of a draw. Maines and Stratman order of finish could be key in the club race.

Deasel has been around forever and this could be his year. But again Johnson is that big guy coming out of the woodwork.

240 lbs.

Favorite: JT Daniels (Newport)

Contenders: Derek Hager (Madison County), Cameron Willis (Johnson County), Ben Jennings (Anderson County), Curtis Dailey (Walton-Verona), Tucker Shelton (Larue County)

Returning state placers: None

Early round matches to watch: Quarters Daniels #1 vs. Willis #3, Hager #2 vs. Dailey #5

Kid who might out wrestle their ranking: Tyrelle Love (South Oldham)

2012 Flashback: 1st – Tucker Mueller (Twenhofel), 2nd – Landon Young (Five Star), 3rd – Gunner Slone (Johnson County), 4th – JJ Mendez (Bourbon County), 5th – Coltyn Kearns (Conner), 6th – Taylor Widmer (Apollo), DNP – Cole Sherman

Team title race implications: Another very important weight for Madison County. The tough part is it is heavyweight where ANYTHING can happen and usually does. Dailey gives WV really the only club wrestler to score here. Could be important points. Taylor has a really tough draw, but Christian County could use that head-to-head with Willis of Johnson in round 1.

Finally up to the big boys. A lot of guys with really good records here and guys with a lot of high school experience. I've seen Daniels a few times this year and he is really tough. But who knows what will happen in the final match at the Convention Center.

Team Champions

Club Favorite: Walton-Verona (3 favorites, 7 placers)

Contenders: River City (1 favorite, 6 placers), Ryle (1 favorite, 6 placers), Union County (2 favorites, 5 placers), Carr Wrestling (0 favorites, 3 placers), Tigers (0 favorites, 3 placers)

School Favorite: Christian County (2 favorites, 5 placers)

Contenders: Johnson County (1 favorite, 6 placers), North Oldham (0 favorites, 2 placers), Madison County (1 favorite, 4 placers), Anderson County (0 favorites, 3 placers)

We have a number of teams with a similar number of kids expected to make the podium with Walton-Verona having a slight edge in top placing wrestlers. Union County was hit hard this season with HS defections (Escalera, Micah Ervin), injuries (Matthias Ervin) and moves (Gavin and Brayden Brown) so for them to be in the conversation is pretty impressive. And even with smaller numbers they are in the conversation; I expect them to take a trophy home. But they just lost too much so I expect them to be a step behind the top club teams. Ryle and River City are bringing numbers and with numbers comes opportunity to build up points. Can the Bearcat high placer potential overcome the quantity? We will see. The young Carr Wrestling club is fighting for a trophy with their first MS team. Great to see the sport grow and get organized in the Lexington area. As for the school teams, Christian County and Johnson both look formidable, but North Oldham is always sneaky and manages to build points with their consistent numbers and solid wrestlers. Madison has top quality as well and will be right in the hunt. A surprise team this year is Anderson County, who brings a ton of talent in the upper weights.