

2017 Kentucky Middle School State Tournament Preview

It's that time of year again. What we've all been waiting for; State Championship time. 365 days of training for some of these kids. 4 months of grinding for them all. It comes down to this one weekend.

Another new venue for 2017 as construction at the Kentucky International Convention Center pushes us over to Broadbent Arena at the Fairgrounds. I haven't been in Broadbent for many years, since I used to go watch the Louisville River Frogs on the ice. Hopefully this spring-like weather continues for us and everything comes off without a hitch for the remainder of the post season.

For the first time in doing these write-ups, this preview is NOT based on my rankings. Mr. Duke has taken the reins and done a good job keeping us all up to speed on the top contenders at the middle school level. With that, I will use his rankings as a guide although I may deviate slightly; maybe. As we all know, these younger kids tend to be less consistent and crazy things can 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 perfect data to base rankings on for middle school. Trackwrestling is making it easier, but we still have some work to do. 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. That's why we wrestle the matches.

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) 2013 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: Tanner Spalding (Walton-Verona)

Contenters: Miller Brown (Oldham County), Jonathan Gilbert (Madison County), Rowdy Benner (Carr), Sebastian Vega (Ryle), Hunter Luttrell (Fairdale)

Returning state placers: None

Early round matches to watch: Round 1 Benner #4 vs. Luttrell #6, Round 1 Vega #5 vs. Adams #9, Quarters Spalding #1 vs. Benner #4, Quarters Gilbert #3 vs. Vega #5

Kid who might out wrestle their ranking: #11 Eric Simpson (N KY Saints)

2013 Flashback: 1st – Zach Holub (Turkeyfoot), 2nd – Shay Horton (Ryle), 3rd – Tom Ketchen-Carter (Campbell County), 4th – Carson Deckard (East Oldham), 5th – Gavin Brown (University Heights), 6th – Trevor Frietsch (Twenhofel), DNP – Zeke Escalera (Union County), Bradley Miller (EJ Hayes), Preston Mattingly (Apollo)

Spalding is the starting point of the Bearcat bonus point machine. He has pinned a ton of kids this season. How many pins will Spalding get in his first MS State tournament? Brown is young, but appears to be a top challenger for the gold. Likely semi match with Gilbert will be a challenge. Gilbert has dropped down in weight and will be a competitor against the entire field. Vega has the potential to score high placement points for the Raiders. His round 1 match with Adams is a huge factor in the club team race for both Ryle and Union. The winner has a good shot to place; the loser has an uphill battle to make the podium. Jenkins could also be a key factor in the McCracken team title hopes as they are very solid in the heavies, but need some point production in the lightweights. The loser of the Spalding-Benner match will cause problems in the consolations.

75 lbs.

Favorite: Spencer Moore (Walton-Verona)

Contenders: Olivia Messerly (Ryle), Nick Giompalo (Johnson County), Max Speaker (River City), Riley Johnson (Tigers), Joey Sander (Ryle)

Returning state placers: Spencer Moore (State Champion @ 70), Nick Giompalo (3rd @ 70), Riley Johnson (4th @ 70)

Early round matches to watch: Round 1 Speaker #4 vs. Ross #7, Quarters Messerly #2 vs. Johnson #5, Quarters Giompalo #3 vs. Sander #6, Quarters Speaker #4 vs. Walton #8

Kid who might out wrestle their ranking: #13 Aiden Sarno (North Oldham); I also like the chances of Lauren Walton (Carr) making the podium

2013 Flashback: 1st – Tanner Yenter (Campbell County), 2nd – Tylan Tucker (Woodford Co), 3rd – Clay Fitzhugh (River City), 4th – Sam Sisco (Graves Co), 5th – Zack Taylor (North Oldham), 6th – Gentry Deck (Madison Co), DNP – Aaron Brossart (Ryle), Gideon Adams (Union County)

Moore, the returning state champ, is undefeated and has teched and pinned almost every match this season including the last 3 weeks against Messerly. The favorite should put up a lot of points for WV. The bottom side has some very interesting matchups with four of the top six ranked wrestlers in the state. Second ranked Messerly will have to navigate through the other returning state placers in Johnson and Giompalo to make the finals. Those will obviously be critical team points in both the club (Ryle) and school (Johnson) team standings. Giompalo and Johnson battled for 3rd place last year with Giompalo coming out on top. Could they have a rematch in the semis? The kids from Ryle will have a little to say about that. Speaking of the Ryle kids, with 3 wrestlers in the bracket, they could have to face each other to determine podium placements. A very interesting dynamic at this weight where we have two girls competing. And not just competing, but both are tough and could make the podium. Walton could score some important points for Carr if she is able to crack the top 6.

80 lbs.

Favorite: Isham Peace (Walton-Verona)

Contenders: Cole Thomas (Ryle), Jude Powell (Fairdale), Braedon Herron (River City), Nolan Banfield (Carr), Chris Begley (Madison County)

Returning state placers: Isham Peace (State Champion @ 75), Braedon Herron (2nd @ 70), Cole Thomas (3rd @ 75), Jude Powell (4th @ 75), Gabe Fortier (6th @ 75)

Early round matches to watch: Quarters Thomas #2 vs. Banfield #5, Quarters Powell #3 vs. Fortier #8 / Burkhardt #10

Kid who might out wrestle their ranking: #10 Noah Burkhardt (Ryle) – I think he wins in round 1 and possibly competes for a podium spot.

2013 Flashback: 1st – Blake Roth (Walton-Verona), 2nd – Jordan Hahn (Campbell County), 3rd – Nate Wheeler (East Oldham), 4th – Drew Johnson (North Oldham), 5th – Eddie Agulto (Christian County), 6th – Nicholas Dickerson (Calloway County), DNP – Brandon Miller (EJ Hayes)

The Bearcat train continues with another favorite in Peace. A defending state champ and multiple time finalist should also put up some bonus points that will be key in the club team race. The question is who will he face? Thomas has been the solid #2 all year, but if CWA wants to battle with the top clubs this year they need Banfield to come up big here. A big match with Thomas in the quarters could give them some momentum and help bring Ryle back to the field. Similarly, River City needs big points out of runner-up Herron to stay in reach of the top club teams. Another potential rematch of a 3rd place bout from last season could happen between Thomas and Powell in the semis. Last year it was a 1-0 nail-biter. We could see another tight battle with a spot in the finals on the line.

86 lbs.

Favorite: Jeffrey Kinley (Madison County)

Contenders: Luke Chapman (Carr), Matthew Meyer (River City), Trayce Eckman (Union County), Bryant Beane (Walton-Verona), James Jones (Tigers)

Returning state placers: Jeffrey Kinley (State Champion @ 80), Luke Chapman (3rd @ 75), Trayce Eckman (5th @ 75), Bryant Beane (5th @ 70), Matthew Meyer (6th @ 70)

Early round matches to watch: Quarters Beane #5 vs. Villums #7, Quarters Kinley #2 vs. Eckman #4

Kid who might out wrestle their ranking: #12 Cael Miracle (Taylor County)

2013 Flashback: 1st – Brady Wells (Campbell County), 2nd – Brock Whorton (John Hardin), 3rd – Adam Bender (Bluegrass), 4th – Tristan Garcia (Fern Creek), 5th – Micah Ervin (Union County), 6th – Nathaniel Lawrence (Elkhorn), DNP – Stiles Metcalf (Larue County), Clayton Boyd (Conner)

86 is one of the deepest weights at this tournament as evidenced not just by the fact that we have 5 returning state placers in the bracket, but mostly because there are a handful of kids who could win it all. Obviously you have to begin with the defending state champion in Kinley. Although Duke doesn't have him at the top of the rankings after dropping his regional final bout to Chapman, I will give the edge to the champ for now. Madison needs a repeat performance from Kinley to bring home a team trophy. This weight could create some huge ripples in the club team race if someone falls short of the podium in this tough bracket. Not only is there some history between Kinley and Chapman, but also many of the other contenders. Huge match in the quarters between Kinley and Eckman. If Eckman can pull the upset it would be huge for him and the team race. But the winner still has to get by Meyer before facing the top half winner. Yes, this is a tough bracket.

92 lbs.

Favorite: Samuel Grandstaff (Walton-Verona)

Contenders: Devon Herron (River City), Lukas Colemire (Ryle), Dylan Walls (Tigers), Jacob Cain (Johnson County), Gavin Andreoni (Woodford County)

Returning state placers: Samuel Grandstaff (2nd @ 80), Devon Herron (2nd @ 75), Dylan Walls (4th @ 80)

Early round matches to watch: Round 1 Cain #5 vs. Baker #8, Round 1 Andreoni #6 vs. Thornton #7, Quarters Colemire #3 vs. Walls #4, Quarters Herron #2 vs. Andreoni #6/Thornton #7

Kid who might out wrestle their ranking: #10 Tyler Pyles (North Oldham)

2013 Flashback: 1st – Saul Ervin (Union County), 2nd – Konner Kraeszig (River City), 3rd – Ryan Moore (Campbell County), 4th – Joe Slone (Johnson County), 5th – Zane Brown (Shamrock), 6th – Jakob McClintic (East Oldham), DNP – Braden Mulcahy (Walton-Verona), Dalton Bell (Larue County)

Another Bearcat favorite and another who should score a lot of bonus points. After a runner-up finish a year ago, Sam is back to claim his title. The bottom side of the bracket is loaded with five of the top 7 ranked kids in the state. The quarterfinals should be interesting here, especially on that bottom half. Colemire from Ryle may not be a household name, but is a big part of the Raider lineup that is banking on solid points from their 92 pounder (and a number of placers). Herron, who was a runner-up last year, could be River City's highest placer and will be crucial to the team's success. I believe someone on the forum picked Cain to be the surprise in this bracket. I do like his draw to the semis so he has a good shot to take home some hardware and contribute to a Johnson County trophy run.

98 lbs.

Favorite: Jacob Grandstaff (Walton-Verona)

Contenders: Reece Goss (Woodford County), Gus Roberts (Carr), Michael Dodge (Ryle), Jayssen Hanson (River City), Ashur Jones (McCracken County)

Returning state placers: Jacob Grandstaff (2nd @ 86), Jayssen Hanson (5th @ 80), Eric Johnson (6th @ 86)

Early round matches to watch: Round 1 Roberts #3 vs. Straus #8, Quarters Dodge #4 vs. Elliott #7, Quarters Roberts #3 vs. Hanson #5

Kid who might out wrestle their ranking: #8 Zach Straus (Ryle)

2013 Flashback: 1st – Joey Roberts (Woodford County), 2nd – Connor Cambron (Fern Creek), 3rd – Mason Smith (Walton-Verona), 4th – Luis Regalado (Fort Campbell), 5th – Austin Cook (River City), 6th – Grant Hall (Central Hardin)

A fifth favorite for Walton-Verona in the first six weight classes. Jacob has already beaten most of the top contenders and looks to add a gold medal to his collection and get a lot of pins along the way. This weight was a mess in the seed meeting and is the first weight with the potential for a 1-2 matchup in the semis; although, I would argue Hanson is the second best at this weight. Another interesting draw for Ryle's Dodge. Ranked #4, he has a tough road to hold that spot on the podium. But his style is very difficult for kids to adjust to during the match and he will be a matchup issue for a lot of kids. #3 Roberts has a tough road to get back to that 3 spot on the podium with Straus in the opening match, then Hanson and a few other potential ranked opponents to get that bronze medal. CWA needs him to battle through that gauntlet.

105 lbs.

Favorite: Dylan Preston (Carr Wrestling Academy)

Contenders: Conner Lee (Ryle), Scott Villums (Fern Creek), Thomas Hoppes (Larue County), JT Adams (McCracken County), Brennan Conrad (Twenhofel)

Returning state placers: Brennan Conrad (2nd @ 92), Conner Lee (3rd @ 98), Thomas Hoppes (3rd @ 92), Dylan Preston (4th @ 92), Scott Villums (5th @ 92)

Early round matches to watch: Round 1 Strom #7 vs. Dees #8, Quarters Hoppes #4 vs. Conrad #6, Quarters Lee #2 vs. Adams #5

Kid who might out wrestle their ranking: #9 Hal Holbrook (River City)

2013 Flashback: 1st – Bryce Sheffer (Union County), 2nd – Dylan Gray (Caldwell County), 3rd – Clayton Hanson (North Hardin), 4th – Michael Mattox (Harrison County), 5th – Garrett McCloud (Johnson County), 6th – Braden Wyatt (Bourbon County), DNP – Jacob Henley (East Oldham), Cameron Ward (River City)

Preston has been solid all season, including a win over the top 98 pounder Grandstaff at John Hardin and a major decision over Lee at the Bearcat Brawl. As the overall top seed, he is leading the charge this weekend for CWA. He will need to battle through a very tough bracket to bring home a title and boost his club into the team title race. Lee is another Ryle guy with big expectations who needs to score big team points. He battled through a solid region to earn the 2 spot in the bracket, but will have a challenge on his side of the bracket from Adams in the quarters and Villums in the semis. Villums, who is a top 10 ranked HS wrestler, hasn't competed much on the MS level, but will be a challenge for anyone. Similarly, Hoppes, who has seen a lot of HS varsity action, is ranked just outside the top 10 and will be prepared to make a run this weekend. The quarters at 105 will be worth watching; 4 solid matches. Strom could put WV over the top if he can contend for a medal and score much needed consolation points for the Bearcats.

113 lbs.

Favorite: Gideon Adams (Union County)

Contenders: Zac Cowan (Carr), Zach Pledger (River City), Quinten Cox (Union County), Eli Peyton (McCracken County), Carter Messerly (Ryle)

Returning state placers: Gideon Adams (2nd @ 98), Zac Cowan (6th @ 98), Zach Pledger (5th @ 98)

Early round matches to watch: Round 1 Pledger #3 vs. Peyton #5, Quarters Cox #4 vs. Messerly #6

Kid who might out wrestle their ranking: #11 Blayden Sexton (Johnson County)

2013 Flashback: 1st – Chance Oxford (Union County), 2nd – Trent Johnson (John Hardin), 3rd – Dallas Miles (River City), 4th – Collin Barrett (Campbell County), 5th – Brandon Leak (North Hardin), 6th – Ethan Gilbert (Woodford County)

We all remember the 2016 finals match between the Adams brothers. Well this year Gideon doesn't have to worry about competing against family to earn his title. This weight also begins a run of tough Union County wrestlers who will put up the majority of their team points. The Braves are typically known for their hammer light weights, but this team is loaded in the upper half. Cowan got the top spot in the bracket this weekend and has a great opportunity to put up significant points for CWA. On the flip side, Pledger may have the worst draw for a region champ in the entire tournament. Opening with #5 ranked Peyton is a huge match for both teams in the club and school team race. The loser of that bout will have to wrestle back to keep their team in solid contention. Messerly also has a tough draw to make the podium with Cox in his quarter.

121 lbs.

Favorite: Tom Ketchen-Carter (Campbell County)

Contenders: Dalton Russelburg (Union County), Kolbee Koepp (McCracken County), Caleb Wittry (Scott County), Rusty Craddock (Ryle), Jonathan Pittman (Woodford County)

Returning state placers: Tom Ketchen-Carter (6th @ 105)

Early round matches to watch: Round 1 Craddock #5 vs. Bruner #9, Quarters Wittry #4 vs. Craddock #5

Kid who might out wrestle their ranking: #9 Mathew Bruner (Oldham County)

2013 Flashback: 1st – Geordan Blanton (Johnson County), 2nd – Bryan Holden (Campbell County), 3rd – Ryan Woodward (Walton-Verona), 4th – Corbin Ryder (Fort Campbell), 5th – Kaleb Clark (Twenhofel), 6th – Johnny Lee (Meade County), DNP – Lucas Carrillo (Oldham County)

Interesting weight. With only TKC as a returning state placer (and previous state champ), it appears as though 121 is not extremely deep. Tom, who was a HS state placer last season, is the clear favorite here and is one of just a handful of kids for Campbell County trying to score high end points and get them a team trophy. Russelburg has been tough all year and is the likely pick for a finals opponent for Tom, but after that who knows. I know it sounds like a broken record, but Ryle needs each of these kids to battle through the bracket and make the podium. Craddock is just one of that long list, but has some solid opponents standing in his path to a medal. With a wide open weight like this, Lauer could score some icing points for WV and get them over the hump.

130 lbs.

Favorite: Zane Drury (Anderson County)

Contenders: Joel Hatchett (River City), David Conner (McCracken County), Stephen Little (Union County), Jackson Belk (Ryle), Tristin Brown (Larue County)

Returning state placers: None

Early round matches to watch: Round 1 Conner #3 vs. Fuller #10, Round 1 Little #4 vs. Simpson #9, Quarters Little #4 vs. Belk #5

Kid who might out wrestle their ranking: #9 Jerry Simpson (Fairdale)

2013 Flashback: 1st – Jared Branch (Fern Creek), 2nd – Odeh Eqal (Tates Creek), 3rd – Diion Leavell (Christian County), 4th – Nathan Prosser (McCreary County), 5th – Patrick McKinney (Shamrock), 6th – Richard Risner (McNabb), DNP – Derrick Smallwood (John Hardin)

130 may be the biggest mystery of the day. The top seed Conner pulled off the upset of Little at region after a close loss the week before at district. Not sure why, but I am feeling a regional rematch in the finals and the first state champion for McCracken County wrestling. But who knows. Hatchett is wrestling well and has a fairly clear path to Conner in the semis. On the bottom half we have a HUGE battle with #4 Little - #5 Belk. This could set some momentum in the club team race, but really just sets the stage at this weight class as the winner should face #1 ranked Drury in the semis. A wrestler to watch out for is Simpson. He has been around for a while and is very solid; he could sneak up on any of these guys. While I am predicting a finals appearance by Little, given his tough draw/path (Simpson, Belk, Drury), I would not expect much in the way of bonus points from him.

140 lbs.

Favorite: Payne Carr (Union County)

Contenders: Brayden Giannone (Carr), Brandon Gibson (Walton-Verona), Thomas Boone (Larue County), Jack Latherow (Ashland), Hunter Vlach (McCracken County)

Returning state placers: Payne Carr (1st @ 121), Brayden Giannone (1st @ 105), Brandon Gibson (2nd @ 130)

Early round matches to watch: Round 1 Vlach #6 vs. Cundiff #8, Quarters Gibson #3 vs. Boone #4, Quarters Latherow #5 vs. Vlach #6/Cundiff #8

Kid who might out wrestle their ranking: #9 Kurtis Karr (Wayne County)

2013 Flashback: 1st – Max Andreoni (Woodford County), 2nd – Blake Gamble (Johnson County), 3rd – Jacob Bratcher (Fern Creek), 4th – Malik Cunningham (Trigg County), 5th – Avery Buckman (Union County), 6th – Griffin Dulak (Larue County), DNP – Kadin Kulmer (Shamrock)

This may be the weight class with the most top end talent in the event. Two returning state champions and a runner-up. Carr, the state champ at 121 last season, has spent most of the season with the HS and has earned a top 6 ranking there. But at 126. Is he a 140? I don't know; I believe he is at this weight to help the team take a title back to Morganfield and should score some bonus points along his path. Giannone was also a state champ last season, at a tough 105 weight class. Yes, a 4 weight class jump. But both of these guys are tough and will be hard to beat. Gibson was a state finalist at 130 last year and is a solid 140 pounder. He does have a tough path with #4 Boone in the quarters before a rematch with Giannone in the semis (Giannone won 5-0 at the Bearcat Brawl). The order of finish with these guys will obviously impact the club team race. Cundiff, the River City regional champ here, has a tough opening round match against #6 Vlach. If he can make the most of his seeded position (#4), that would be huge for River City. While the top 4 guys here are proven competitors, I think the last couple spots on the podium are up for grabs. Those points could be key in the school team race.

152 lbs.

Favorite: Noah Duke (Ryle)

Contenders: Seth Slayton (Tigers), Levid Rodriguez (Johnson County), Allen Elam (Union County), Tony Ormelas (Woodford County), Will Smithers (Woodford County)

Returning stat placers: Noah Duke (1st @ 130)

Early round matches to watch: Round 1 Elam #4 vs. Smithers #6, Quarters Duke #1 vs. Elam #4/Smithers #6

Kid who might out wrestle their ranking: #12 David Wallace (McCracken County)

2013 Flashback: 1st – Casey Cornett (Turkeyfoot), 2nd – Isaac Nichols (North Hardin), 3rd – Trequan Taylor (Christian County), 4th – Drew Pompilio (Twenhofel), 5th – Blake Denny (EJ Hayes), 6th – Josh Hill (North Oldham)

This weight is all about Duke. Similar to Carr, he has been very successful at the HS level and is right outside the top 10. So it is hard to imagine him not scoring massive points here en route to his second title. The question comes in how will the others finish? The bottom half has #2 Slayton and #3 Rodriguez, so we can expect a good 1v2/3 match in the finals. In my mind, the largest impacts to the team race are Rodriguez and Elam. Can they finish 3/4 as they are ranked or will one or both come up short or finish higher? Will be interesting to see it play out.

168 lbs.

Favorite: David Bodenbender (Ryle)

Contenders: Ethan Tomerlin (Fort Campbell), Brandon Richmond (Campbell County), Darius Moore (Union County), Branson Smith (Martin County), John Paredes (Tigers)

Returning state placers: David Bodenbender (2nd @ 140), Ethan Tomerlin (3rd @ 152), Brandon Smith (3rd @ 140), Everett Marret (6th @ 168)

Early round matches to watch: Round 1 Paredes #6 vs. Marrett #8, Quarters Bodenbender #1 vs. Moore #4, Quarters Tomerlin #2 vs. Richmond #3

Kid who might out wrestle their ranking: #9 Blake Fox (East Oldham)

2013 Flashback: 1st – Seth Hille (Holmes), 2nd – Leo Smart (Woodford County), 3rd – Zach Phillips (North Hardin), 4th – Ray Karl Irving (EJ Hayes), 5th – Heath Lutrell (Union County), 6th – Calloway Mills (Bourbon County)

Returning state runner-up Bodenbender gives Ryle a second projected champ. While the bracket is fairly balanced, the quarter match against Moore puts Union in a similar position as 152. Wrestlebacks will be key at these weights to put up team points. I'm also anxious to see a Tomerlin/Smith semi after all the talk during the seed meeting. Bikakis from Twenhofel looked solid at regions pushing Bodenbender to the limit; he can be a spoiler in that bottom half. #9 Fox from East Oldham is one of the lower ranked seeds. Can he take advantage of that seeded position to make the podium?

190 lbs.

Favorite: Michael Leicht (Campbell County)

Contenders: Zach Russell (Johnson County), Andrew Sanders (Wayne County), Dominic Barnard (Calloway County), Connor Lambert (Larue County), Nautica Bonds (McCracken County)

Returning state placers: Michael Leicht (4th @ 168)

Early round matches to watch: Round 1 Bonds #6 vs. Stephenson #8, Round 1 Leicht #1 vs. Pike #10, Quarters Russell #2 vs. Lambert #5, Quarters Sanders #3 vs. Barnard #4

Kid who might out wrestle their ranking: #9 Elijah Lalli (South Oldham)

2013 Flashback: 1st – Hunter Ruber (Walton-Verona), 2nd – Garrett Lawrence (River City), 3rd – Justus Williams (Madison County), 4th – Kjawuan Major (Christian County), 5th – Chance Orr (Paducah Tilghman), 6th – Seth Anderson (McCreary County), DNP – Landin Jones (North Oldham)

Leicht, the only returning state placer at 190, is one of my favorite kids on the mat this weekend not wearing blue. Great family and great kid. I still remember him blowing up defensive linemen and opening up huge holes for Spencer to run through in youth football. I will definitely be rooting for Michael to get that gold this weekend. With no other returning state placers, the field is wide open for kids to make a name for themselves. And with no Ryle, WV, or River City kids in the bracket, this is a chance for #10 ranked Pike and Union to gain some ground, but it will likely have to come through the consolations given his tough draw. Also another #9 ranked wrestler is seeded as Lalli puts himself in a position to make the podium.

240 lbs.

Favorite: Cameron Willis (Johnson County)

Contenders: Kaleb Walley (Scott County), Neil Hendrickson (Union County), Ian Hughes (Twenhofel), Hunter Arthur (Campbell County), Kenny Walter (Woodland)

Returning state placers: None

Early round matches to watch: Round 1 Hendrickson #3 vs. Hutchinson #10, Quarters Willis #1 vs. Arthur #5, Quarters Walley #2 vs. Hendrickson #3

Kid who might out wrestle their ranking: ANYONE

2013 Flashback: 1st – Colton Kearns (Conner), 2nd – Charles Priddy (Fern Creek), 3rd – Lance Nunez (Apollo), 4th – Colby Culver (Calloway County), 5th – Ben Fooks (Bourbon County), 6th – Andrew Varble (Woodford County), DNP – Airin Spells (Purchase Area Pounders), Bryan Pratt (Meade County)

As usual, at heavyweight we have to mention a kid from Johnson County. Year in and year out they bring solid big guys and quite often kids that compete for a title. This is one they are counting on for big points and since it is heavy, they can probably expect lots of pins as well. I also expect Union to gain some big points here from Hendrickson, although he will have a tough quarterfinal as he will get a 2-3 matchup against Walley. Our only seeded wrestler who is unranked is Shunnarah from South Oldham. I don't know anything about this kid, but it is heavyweight, so anything can happen and he may go from unranked to hero by the end of the night. Ryle and WV have kids at the weight, but it is hard to predict points for them. Any points they score could be critical in the team race.

Team Champions

Club Favorite: Ryle (2 favorites, 11 placers)

Contenders: Walton-Verona (5 favorites, 7 placers), Union County (2 favorites, 8 placers), Carr Wrestling (1 favorite, 7 placers), River City (0 favorites, 7 placers), Tigers (0 favorites, 4 placers)

School Favorite: Johnson County (1 favorites, 5 placers)

Contenders: McCracken County (0 favorites, 6 placers), Campbell County (2 favorites, 4 placers), Madison County (1 favorite, 3 placers), Woodford County (0 favorites, 4 placers)

Similar to last year, this is a classic battle of the numbers of Ryle versus the hammers of Walton-Verona. Last year the quantity of River City won out as the Bearcats had a couple hiccups and the RC kids wrestled up to their potential. Union County always brings their fair share of studs to state, but it is a bit surprising to see them in the upper half of the lineup like this team. Carr Wrestling Academy has grown into a solid team in just a few years. With the potential to put half of the weight classes on the podium, they will be challenging for a team trophy.

In the school division it also looks to be a very tight race. Campbell doesn't have much in the way of numbers, but have a few studs who can put up a lot of points. McCracken County is bringing a busload of kids and some that are looking to surprise everyone. But the favorite up front is Johnson who has the experience and potential for high placers in the upper weights to have a slight edge. Don't count out Madison County with a few super talented kids that should keep them in the hunt all day.