

2015 OHSAA State Wrestling Dual Team Tournament Preview

By Josh Lowe

Though the state wrestling team tournament is a relatively new event – in just its third year – the dates of the regional playoff rounds and the state finals are an anticipated part of the wrestling calendar. This event crowns a state champion solely based on dual meets and creates the presence of a team spirit that further engages fans across the state. Each of last year's three team state champions (Massillon Perry, St. Paris Graham Local, and Delta) went on to win the individual tournament; St. Paris Graham Local and Delta were repeat champions in the team state tournament.

The differences between the team tournament and individual series, as well as the regionalized format of the dual meet event, showed in last year's standings. While four of the top five teams in the Division I individual event – and six of the top eight – were team state finals participants, the other two qualifying teams finished outside of the top 20 in the standings at the Schottenstein Center.

The top four spots of the Division II individual tournament standings, along with another top 10 position, were occupied by dual state participants; conversely two of the other qualifying teams did not finish in the top 40 of the standings. On the other hand, Division III saw just the team state finalists (Delta and Dayton Christian) and one other team finished in the top 10 at the individual tournament. In fact, four of the other five team state qualifiers finished outside the top 25 at the Schott.

Four of the state qualifying teams in Division I return for a third straight year – Brecksville-Broadview Heights, Lakewood St. Edward, Marysville and Massillon Perry; Mason returns for a second straight year. In Division II, four of the state qualifying teams return for a third straight year – Lexington, St. Paris Graham Local, Toledo Central Catholic and Urichville Claymont; Parma Padua Franciscan is making back-to-back appearances, while Hamilton Ross made the team state tournament in 2013. On the other hand, just two squads in Division III are making a third consecutive appearance – Delta and Massillon Tuslaw; and Dayton Christian is the only team making a second appearance, as they return for a second-consecutive year.

Division III

Two-time defending team state champion Delta has earned the top seed in the Division III tournament for a third straight year. The Panthers are led by three wrestlers who placed third at the individual state tournament last year: Drew Mattin (106), Jake Spiess (120/126) and Jesse Beverly (152/160). Additional returning place-winners include Dustin Marteney (138), Ryan Patchin (170/182), Devon Richards (220) and Chance Vellor (285). Their quarterfinals opponent is eight-seed Sycamore Mohawk, which is in its state dual meet debut despite returning just three wrestlers who won even a match at last year's individual district tournament.

Dayton Christian, the returning runner-up to Delta in both the team and individual state tournaments, is the second seed. The Warriors are led by returning state champion Logan Lacure (145), returning state runner-up Hunter Bray (126) and 2013 state runner-up Andrew Hoskins (160). Other state placers include Michael May (120) and Nick Vestal (152), while Tommy Hoskins (113) and David Carr (138) are high-impact freshmen. Their opening match is against seventh-seed West Lafayette Ridgewood, which returns two state qualifiers – Colton Bethel (106) and Kelly Barthallow (285). Over the last 10 years, the Generals have qualified a wrestler to individual state just four times and have only three combined individual wins at the Schott in that time.

Kirtland joins Ridgewood and Mohawk as teams not seeded first in their sub-regional to advance to the Division III team state finals. The Hornets are the sixth seed, after rallying back with pins in the last three bouts of their regional final against 2014 state team tournament participant Rootstown. The Hornets are led by returning state qualifiers Evan Francis (138) and Clayton Davidson (160). They draw fellow state tournament debutant Mechanicsburg, the third seed. The Indians are led by returning state champion Kaleb Romero (152) and also feature returning state placer Joe Ziegler (145). They have four top six finishes within the last eight individual state tournaments, including a fourth place finish last year.

To round out the quarterfinal pairings in Division III, 2013 team state runners-up Massillon Tuslaw earned the fifth seed and will face fourth seed Milan Edison. The fifth-seed Mustangs are led by state placers Shane Johnston (106) and Chance Marthey (145/152); while team state tournament debutant Milan Edison is led by returning state place-winners Evan Cheek (126), Brady Barnett (132), and Jacob Worthington (195)

Division II

In Division II, two-time defending champion St. Paris Graham Local is again the top seed and a clear favorite. The Falcons have also won the individual state tournament in 14 consecutive seasons. They are led by two-time state champion Alex Marinelli (160); another pair of state champions in Eli Stickley (120) and Kyle Lawson (152); along with 2013 state champion Eli Seipel

(126) and three other returning state place-winners. In the quarterfinal round, the Falcons face state tournament debutant New Lexington, the eighth seed. Andrew Spicer (120) is the lone returning state qualifier for the Panthers, who have not finished in the top 60 of the last five individual state tournaments (17th in 2007 is their best finish in the previous 10 years).

Two-time team state runner-up Uhrichsville Claymont is the third seed at this year's event. The Mustangs needed an overtime decision from Jared Aubiel (285) in order to qualify for the state team tournament this season, as they outlasted Canfield 29-27. They are led by two-time defending state champion Tyler Warner (120) and also have returning state placer Lane Peters (126) along with state qualifiers Chandler Golec (132) and Nate Gray (220). They draw sixth seed Parma Padua Franciscan, which returns after losing 48-15 to Perry in last year's state quarterfinal round. The Bruins are led by two-time state placer Kyle Kaminski (145), returning state runner-up Tony Decesare (113) and returning state placer Paul Petras (126).

The second seed is Toledo Central Catholic, which has advanced to the team state semifinals the previous two seasons before losing to Graham. The Irish are led by defending state champion Nate Hagan (145), returning state runner-up Josh Mossing (152), as well as returning state placers Josh Venia (106/113) and J'Quan Fisher (285). They draw seventh-seed Hamilton Ross, which made the team state tournament in 2013; in that year's event, the Rams upset Cuyahoga Falls CVCA 31-30 on criteria in the opening round. Individually Hamilton Ross returns just one state qualifier, Aaron Cox (120).

Rounding out the quarterfinal matchups in Division II is the four vs. five match between Akron SVSM and Lexington. The fourth-seeded Irish are in their debut team state tournament, after beating two-time team state participant Perry 41-25 in the regional final. They are led by two-time state place-winners Garrett Carter (132) and DreK Brumley (220). The Minutemen are seeded fifth for a second straight year, after earning the fourth seed in 2013; losing to Toledo Central Catholic in the quarterfinals on both occasions. They are led by returning state placers Bailey Faust (195) and Nate Temple (285).

Division I

The defending champion in Division I is Massillon Perry. However, the Panthers are seeded second this year. They are led by three returning state runners-up – Jake Newhouse (120), Jose Rodriguez (126) and Nick Steed (145) – along with returning state place-winner Jason Spencer (132). Their first round opponent is a fellow three-time state tournament participant in Marysville, which is led by three-time state placer Taleb Rahmani (152) and returning state qualifier Alex Sepeda (160). This is a rematch of a quarterfinal from 2013 when the teams were similarly seeded second and seventh, Massillon Perry winning that one 49-24.

Last year's team state runner-up, Brecksville-Broadview Heights, is the third seed, which means that a semifinal rematch of the previous year's state final is possible; the same scenario happened last year with Massillon Perry beating 2013 state champion Lakewood St. Edward in the semifinal. The third-seeded Bees are led by three-time state placer Austin Assad (126), returning state placers Jarrod Bronstrup (106/113) and Justin Demicco (138), along with 2013 state placer Sonny Lucas (145). They draw team state tournament debutant Cincinnati Elder, which is the sixth seed in the opening round. The Panthers advanced to state with a 37-31 victory over two-time state team tournament participant Cincinnati Archbishop Moeller in the regional final; however, they only have one wrestler in the lineup with state individual tournament experience.

This year's top seed is Lakewood St. Edward, which is led by returning state placers L.J. Bentley (126) and Parker Knapp (220), as well as returning state tournament participant Hunter Ladnier (132). They draw the eighth-seed Lancaster in the opening round, who is in their state team tournament debut. The Golden Gales are led by state placer Tanner Miller (145), who is their lone wrestler with state tournament experience.

Rounding out the state team tournament participants are Elyria, which is in its state tournament debut, and Mason. Elyria, the fourth-seed, makes its initial appearance in the team state event after finishing as regional runners-up last year; however, the Pioneers were 10th in the individual tournament last year, their highest finish since taking sixth in 2009. They are led by returning state runner-up Ben Darmstadt (182) and returning state placer Kevin Vough (285). Mason is seeded fifth for a second straight year and features a pair of returning state placers in Zack Donathan (106/113) and Patrick Kearney (113/120).