

### *d3wrestle.com Midwest Regional Preview*

Delaware Valley has the longest trip to the Midwest Regional at Wabash this year and has yet to face most of the teams in the tournament, but they are still the favored team with a talented roster that hopes to defend their 2007 Regional title and win their second championship since joining the region last season. The Aggies have five wrestlers in the d3wrestle.com top ten and three more holding down contender and honorable mention slots.

Challenging the #4 ranked Delaware Valley squad is #27 Olivet with defending national runner-up Kyle Vanderhyde and #3 ranked Jason Brew as well as Mount St. Joseph, led by new coach Casey Stouffer and 2x All-American Elliot Spence, now down at 149 after two years at 157. Case Western reserve has a few wrestlers with finals potential including 2007 qualifier David Manoogian at 141 and Drew Gardella at 149. Also worth mentioning is Tri-State University, now in their first year of NCAA postseason competition.

Four champions return to this region, though only 2 of those at the same weight where they were victorious a year ago. Eracleo Vallejo of Manchester will defend his 125 lb. title, as will the previously mentioned Vanderhyde at 174. Spence drops to 149, while 184 lb. champ Daron Cruickshank moves down two weights from 184 to 165.

#### **125 lbs.**

The Favorite: Eracleo Vallejo, Manchester

Top Challengers: Chris Sheetz, Delaware Valley; Steve Austin, Mount St. Joseph; Kyle Labrecque, Olivet

Vallejo's motor is always running and he keeps the pressure on his opponents for seven straight minutes. An All-American last year, he holds the top spot in the NWCA rankings. He pounded OAC favorite Penny at Ohio Northern and defeated Austin at the Monon Bell Duals. Sheetz is also ranked in the top ten and has a win over Struthers of Wartburg to go along with a title at the Sunshine Open. Labrecque and Austin have had close matches, with the most recent going to Labrecque at the Mid-States.

#### **133 lbs.**

The Favorite: Eric Meyer, Mount St. Joseph

Top Challengers: Brandon Clemmer, Delaware Valley; Thomas Pompei, Tri-State; Mario Sullivan, Millikin; Jeffrey Langdon, Thiel

Meyer is 37-5 with a finals appearance at Wheaton and a Mid-States championship win over Pompei along with a Little State win over Sullivan. He sits just outside the d3wrestle.com top ten. Clemmer has fought all year for the starting spot with teammate McCann and appears to have won the spot as the season wore on. He was 3<sup>rd</sup> at York and is 22-7. Sullivan is a good athlete with big move potential, but he fell to Pompei in the Mid-State semifinal.

**141 lbs.**

The Favorite: Dan Hall, Delaware Valley

Top Challenger: David Manoogian, CWRU; Nick Garber, Waynesburg; Matt Palladino, Manchester

Hall is a three time national qualifier who took last season off while Ricky LaForge made the 141 lb. national final for Delaware Valley, but he has returned strong to sit at #2 in the national rankings. He has big wins over McKray of Wartburg and Grawin of Luther. He's the favorite for sure here, but Manoogian is talented and coming off a 2<sup>nd</sup> place finish at Wheaton where he defeated Sanchez of Heidelberg along with Palladino. His only D3 loss is a tiebreaker loss to Bautista of Whitewater. Garber and Palladino are the next step down, with Palladino 7<sup>th</sup> at Wheaton and Garber is back after a long injury layoff and fresh off Outstanding Wrestler honors at the PAC.

**149 lbs.**

The Favorite: Elliot Spence, Mount St. Joseph

Top Challengers: Vince Tucker-Lahar, Olivet; Drew Gardella, CWRU; Jesse Harrington, Delaware Valley

Spence is the favorite, but the going will not be easy in the bracket for any of the top competitors. Spence won at Wheaton, Ohio Northern, and Mid-States, while placing 2<sup>nd</sup> in the Midwest Classic and Little State. Both losses were to non-D3 wrestlers. Harrington is likely the next best here, as he is also ranked in the top ten and has a lot of big wins as well as an OT loss to #1 ranked Naig of Wartburg. Gardella is unconventional and tough to wrestle with wins over Gin of Messiah and Mizer of Heidelberg, while Tucker-Lahar has had an up and down freshman year with big wins to go along with head-scratching losses.

**157 lbs.**

The Favorite: Jason Brew, Olivet

Top Challenger: Ryan Herwig, Delaware Valley

Brew has come on strong after suffering a season ending injury last season causing him to miss the regional. Now at 157, a better weight for him, he has been on a tear this year placing at Eastern Michigan and winning at Wheaton and Ohio Northern. He has two wins over Milz of UW-Lax and a loss to Pflug of Heidelberg in their dual to go along with a win over Verschoor of Buena Vista and a convincing loss to Wernimont of Wartburg. Herwig was a wildcard selection for the tournament last season, and he is just 17-11 this year on the tough Aggie schedule, but he was 2<sup>nd</sup> at York and Sunshine. He has, however, had lapses, including a match against Messiah's Bressler where he was called for stalling five times in the third period to lose by disqualification.

**165 lbs.**

The Favorite: Daron Cruickshank, Olivet

Top Challengers: Tyler Goble, Rose-Hulman; Greg Miele, Delaware Valley

Cruickshank was the regional champ at 184 last year, but dropped to a more natural 165 this season. He has defeated Goble for one of Goble's 4 losses on the year. Cruickshank has done well this year with wins over Rammel, but losses to Lunde of Concordia and Doan of Elmhurst. He is the favorite here and is capable of beating most anyone on the right day. Miele is 16-10 with a 5<sup>th</sup> place finish at York. Mosier of Wabash is worth mentioning here as well with his win over Goble at the Monon Bell Duals.

**174 lbs.**

The Favorite: Kyle Vanderhyde, Olivet

Top Challenger: Nick Kraus, Tri-State; Eric Monday, Washington & Jefferson

Vanderhyde had a great NCAA tournament, making it all the way to finals last year before falling to the outstanding Chelf in the finals. This year, Vanderhyde has missed a lot of time with an injury, but he came on strong to make the final at Wheaton before closing the gap with Chelf to a 6-5 loss. He won the Mid-States, defeating Kraus in the finals and is primed for another big run at the NCAA tournament. Kraus is an unorthodox wrestler who was 3<sup>rd</sup> at Ohio Northern but DNP at Wheaton before falling to Vanderhyde at Mid-States. Monday is 28-12 with a 2<sup>nd</sup> place showing at the Citrus.

**184 lbs.**

The Favorite: Mike Wilcox, Delaware Valley

Top Challenger: Louis Posa, Tri-State; Chad Craft, Mount St. Joseph

Wilcox showed up in a big way after transferring from Gloucester Community College this season. He has 2 wins over Gotreau of Augsburg and championships at York and Sunshine. He is ranked at #2 by both the NWCA and d3wrestle.com. Posa is a likely #2 seed over Craft, who he beat in the last tiebreaker at the Mid-States after placing 4<sup>th</sup> at Wheaton. Craft is, however, 28-11 this year.

**197 lbs.**

The Favorite: Joe West, Delaware Valley

Top Challengers: Joey Yurisich, Olivet; Pat Truster, Mount St. Joseph; Alex Fleet, Tri-State

This weight could go a lot of ways. West is 19-9 with championships at Central Jersey and York and a 2<sup>nd</sup> place finish at Sunshine. Beyond West, there hasn't been a lot of consistency. Truster is fresh off a 3<sup>rd</sup> place finish at Wheaton but lost to Fleet of Tri-State in the finals of the Mid-States. Fleet has a losing record this year but two wins over Truster. Truster has beaten Yurisich who has pinned Fleet. Johnson of Wabash also has two wins over Truster. This weight looks like it will come down to whoever has the best day on Saturday.

**285 lbs.**

The Favorite: Kyle Bilquist, Delaware Valley

Top Challenger: Bob Gavlak, CWRU; Rob Arnett, Wabash; Sean Misko, Olivet; Josh Brewer, W & J

Bilquist is ranked #2 and sits as a clear favorite at 285. He is 24-1 with no D3 losses this year and wins over Laurent of UW-Lax and Borchers of Wartburg to his credit. Gavlak is 11-2 in limited action with both losses coming at Wheaton where he defeated Misko of Olivet. Misko does have a win over Arnett, but Arnett should not be counted out. Also in the mix is Brewer who currently is tied for 7<sup>th</sup> in Division III with 16 falls.