

d3wrestle.com Ohio Athletic Conference Preview

Ever since Jason Miller came to Heidelberg, good things have happened to the team. The career wins leader for the Student Princes, Miller is in his sixth season as the head man in Tiffin. His team is ranked sixth in the latest NWCA poll and plans to defend its OAC tournament title after retaking the dual meet championship it lost to John Carroll last season. Ohio Northern finished second in the OAC regular season, one match better than John Carroll, the only other OAC team to break the .500 mark in conference and overall competition.

The conference has a good number of returning champs, as only Ryan Summers (John Carroll) and Bryan Kmetz (Baldwin-Wallace) were seniors last year. The champs at 125, 133, 141, 149, 157, and 174 all return, though Joe Pflug (Heidelberg) has moved up to 157 and Anthony Coleman (ONU) has followed suit and gone to 165. That leaves Penny, Pizzuro, Sanchez, and Plowman to defend their 2007 titles.

The OAC had four All-Americans last year in Pflug, Russo, Summers, and Kmetz, though only Pflug is back. He won the NCAA at 157 in 2006 before placing third last year at 149. He's 13-0 in very limited action this season. The rest of the weights shake out like this.

125 lbs.

The Favorite: David Penny, Ohio Northern

Top Challenger: Jared Hoxie, Heidelberg

Penny returns to defend his title from last year and has been either ranked or just on the edge for most of the year. He puts his 24-6 record on the line against Jared Hoxie of Heidelberg who sits at 27-13. Both are 4-0 in the OAC, but clearly have yet to wrestle each other and stand to have their first match in the OAC finals, barring an upset from the likes of Elie Naoum of John Carroll.

133 lbs.

The Favorite: Boomer Fechko, Heidelberg

Top Challenger: Adam Pizzuro, John Carroll

Pizzuro is another defending champion, and he carries a 21-11 record into action this weekend. Fechko is just 14-5, but has won the Petrofes and finished 2nd at Ohio Northern and the Sunshine Open. He also has a win over Hjerleid of Coe and Bartlett of Luther along with losses to Kolinski of UW-Lax and Northern of Cornell, who also defeated Pizzuro. Pizzuro was 2nd at the Citrus and RIT tournaments and was fourth at the tough Pete Willson Wheaton Invitational.

141 lbs.

The Favorite: Nick Sanchez, Heidelberg

Top Challenger: Dominic Spitalieri, John Carroll

Sanchez has now qualified twice to the NCAA tournament, but failed to place either time and is looking to improve upon that this year. He defeated Spitalieri on his way to a 3rd place finish at Wheaton and sits at #9 in the latest d3wrestle.com rankings. He also topped Bautista of Whitewater at the same event. Spitalieri won the Citrus, defeating Mulnix of Cornell and finishing ahead of Beshada of the Merchant Marine Academy.

149 lbs.

The Favorite: Zach Mizer, Heidelberg

Top Challengers: Daniel Mizener, John Carroll

Mizer has taken control of this weight class in the OAC and his biggest win to date is likely an 18-3 thrashing he delivered to Kein of Muhlenberg back in December, though he did stop Hall of Delaware Valley (#2 @ 141) 12-11 in a topsy turvy match. He also lost a tight 10-9 match to Kastel of Elmhurst. Mizener finished 8th at Wheaton and 3rd at Citrus along with a 4th place finish at RIT. This is yet another weight where the top two wrestlers have yet to meet.

157 lbs.

The Favorite: Joe Pflug, Heidelberg

Top Challengers: Dave Minner, Muskingum; Luke Miller, Ohio Northern

As stated previously, Pflug is a 2006 NCAA champ at this weight and a 2x All-American overall. He has all the tools, but is only sporadically in the lineup for the 'Berg. He has defeated Miller twice, however, and is as clear a favorite as there is in this tournament. Freshman Miller has been a strong addition to the Polar Bear lineup after a sixth place finish in Pennsylvania his senior year. He has topped 30 wins this season, placing at Ohio Northern, Midwest Classic, and Wheaton where he lost only twice to Katz of Elmhurst and defeated the tough Heisey of Elizabethtown. Minner has defeated Miller, however, and will hope to make his case for the OAC to take a wildcard here after he was 3rd at Little State, 6th at ONU (losing to Miller in the 5th place match), and 6th at Wheaton.

165 lbs.

The Favorite: Ian Rammel/Aaron Jonhenry, Heidelberg

Top Challenger: A.J. Coleman, Ohio Northern

Either Rammel or Jonhenry could appear here for Heidelberg, and either would be favored to win. Russo of Baldwin-Wallace started hot after an All-American turn last year, but he is no longer wrestling. Coleman was the champ at 157 last year and either moved up or was pushed up by Miller, as Coleman did wrestle some matches at 157 this season. Rammel was 7th at Wheaton, defeating Doan of Elmhurst along the way and topping Coleman in the 7th place match. The fact that he wrestled at Wheaton may be a good indicator of who the starter is here.

174 lbs.

The Favorite: Ben Plowman, Ohio Northern

Top Challenger: Steven Bagnowski, John Carroll; Matt Findley, Heidelberg; Jeremy Feador, B-W

There is a pretty significant difference between defending champ Plowman and everyone else at this weight, as there is no real standout challenger. Plowman is just 18-7, but he did place 7th at Ohio Northern. Coach Ron Beaschler is hoping he can turn it on for two more big weekends.

184 lbs.

The Favorite: Ben Adams, John Carroll

Top Challenger: Nick Allerdig, Mount Union

Allerdig is the only wrestler to make it anywhere on the latest d3wrestle.com rankings, but Adams has the 23-3 record with the win over Allerdig at the Wheaton Invitational. Allerdig has been in and out of the lineup with an 11-3 record. He has, however, defeated all but Adams in the. If Allerdig is back in the swing of things despite minimal competition, he could win here. Bizorik of Heidelberg and Scavuzzo of Baldwin-Wallace look to spoil the fun of the top two.

197 lbs.

The Favorite: Ryan Fogliano, Heidelberg

Top Challengers: Adam Lange, Mount Union; Jim Neumanitis, John Carroll;

Fogliano was upset in the finals of the OAC last year, missing a trip to Iowa by one match. He has come back strong this year in limited action, compiling a 12-1 record to go along with a steamrolling win at the Petrofes Tournament and a win over Moore of UW-Lax at the National Duals. His only loss was to Bonander of Luther. He's pretty far ahead of the rest of the pack, as the best individual record left belongs to Neumanitis at 9-8.

285 lbs.

The Favorite: Ryan Bowers, Heidelberg

Top Challenger: Derek Bendau, John Carroll; Adam Salyers, Wilmington

Bowers was the OAC wildcard last season, winning a match at the NCAAs. He is ranked 6th by d3wrestle.com and has wins over Laurent of UW-Lax and Corsello of Elmhurst along with Williams, the likely #1 seed in the Centennial. Bendau's big win is over NCAA falls leader Jake Taylor of Oswego, and he is unbeaten, though just 9-0.