

Area sends strong cast of wrestlers to state tournament

by Brent Feeney, Sports Writer
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CHAMPAIGN – East Alton-Wood River, Civic Memorial, Alton, Roxana, Granite City and Triad wrestlers will be taking part in this weekend's IHSA State Individual Wrestling Tournament at State Farm Center at the University of Illinois in Champaign-Urbana. The tournament begins today and runs through Saturday.

Here's a look at each wrestler's first-round matchups:

CLASS 1A

East Alton-Wood River's Drew Sobol, a senior, will be taking part in his fourth straight state tournament this year at the 106-pound weight class. Sobol, with a record of 41-2, meets Coal City's Brandon Stimad, a sophomore, in the opening round; he has a record of 17-12 for the year. Sobol reached the tournament by winning the championship in last week's Vandalia Sectional with a 44-second pin of Ethan O'Linc of Monticello.

Senior Zac Blasioli of EAWR enters the 132-pound class with a record of 32-1 for his fourth straight state tournament and takes on senior Zach Westlund of Poplar Grove North Boone in the first round. Westlund enters the tournament with a record of 27-6. Blasioli qualified for state by pinning Harrisburg's Kody Cavander in 3:56.

Two wrestlers will vie for the title at 285, EAWR's Jon Wright and Roxana's Brett Nyswonger. Wright, a senior, takes a 25-9 mark onto the mat when he meets Leroy's Alex Lamont, a senior, in the opening round; Lamont brings in a record of 37-6 into the tournament. Nyswonger, a senior, sports a mark of 38-5 on the year and will meet Knoxville's Ricky Cantu, a senior with a 36-3 mark on the season.

Nyswonger reached state with a second-place finish in Vandalia, while Wright took fourth in Vandalia; the top four wrestlers in each class advanced to the state tournament.

CLASS 2A

Civic Memorial's Brandon Carpenter is the Eagles' only representative in this year's tournament; he takes a 35-3 mark into the tournament's 195-pound class against Chicago Agricultural Science's Zian Rosario, a junior, who has a 36-8 mark on the season. Carpenter reached the tournament with a second-place finish in last week's Mascoutah Sectional.

Triad sends two wrestlers to the tournament, freshman Will Hilliard at 120, who has a 27-6 mark going into the tournament; he meets Oak Forest's Brandon Muselman in an opening-round bout. The Knights' other wrestler is freshman Garrett Bakarich at 126, who meets up with Harvard's Joshua Fiegel in the first round; Fiegel, a senior, enters the tournament with a mark of 41-3 on the year. Both wrestlers finished fourth in the Mascouath Sectional to qualify for the state tournament.

CLASS 3A

Alton's KeOntay Holmes is the Redbirds' lone representative at the tournament; he'll be in the 182-pound class and brings a record of 35-10 into his first bout against senior Lee Fuller of Hoffman Estates Conant. Fuller has a record of 20-4 this year. Holmes finished second last week in Normal to qualify for the tournament.

Granite City's Kyle Thompson, a senior, keeps the Warriors' tradition of having a representative at the state tournament intact at 195, bringing a record of 36-8 into the tournament against Lake Zurich's Kyle Fleming, a senior with a 29-7 record this year. Thompson won his class to qualify for the state tournament.

Action on all six mats at the tournament will be live-streamed at ihsa.tv throughout the weekend; today's first-round live-stream begins at 1 p.m.; the finals begin at 5:30 p.m. Saturday. Real-time results will also be available at www.trackwrestling.com.