



THE CALIFORNIA WRESTLER

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2023-2024 PRESEASON STATE RANKINGS

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Welcome to a new season!

For the preseason rankings, a ton of prep work takes place to aggregate and process all the data points – and I also cross-check with over 100+ coaches to ensure the accuracy of projected weights and line-ups. Starting ~December, the rankings are updated weekly, culminating in a final version (560 wrestlers) for the CIF State Tournament. The final ranking set is used to **seed the top 16** for each of the 40-person state brackets. This is completed with the full support of the CIF governing body.

As way of background, I've committed to the rankings at the state-level since 2011 and the resource I provide is readily available to the entire wrestling community. The rankings are also used by multiple national ranking platforms and dozens of college programs across divisions for their ongoing recruiting efforts. I'm happy to do it and – in face of just about everyone moving to monthly/annual subscription models – free of charge.

Don't worry too much where kids are positioned at the starting line – the rankings will be updated frequently so there will be significant moves up-and-down and across weights by mid-December. It's common to have wrestlers jump 20+ spots in a matter of a couple weeks.

In CA, there are 20,000 competitors and nearly 900 high school programs on the boys' side, which represents nearly 10% of the national total. In the rankings, I will list the top 40 wrestlers + a bunch of honorable mentions (HM). Across 14 weight classes, nearly 1,000 competitors are listed, which may seem like a large number but still less than 5% of the total wrestling population in our state. As the season progresses, more names will be added to the list. Competitors will be slotted at what I consider projected weights – the question I ask is: if there was a hypothetical state tournament to be held a month from now, where would each guy go?

I'll be the first to say rankings do not matter but I believe it's a good thing to have a centralized, data-driven resource that accurately tracks the state's top wrestlers. There's also a predictive nature to the rankings. Over the past five state meets, of the 560 eventual state medalists, 526 were top 12 seeds (93.9%) and 546 were top 16 seeds (97.5)%. Looking back the psat 10 state meets, 92.7% (1038 of 1120) of eventual state medalists were seeded/ranked in the top 12 and 96.8% (1084 of 1120) were in the top 16 on the final list.

Now the nitty-gritty. Seeding/ranking criteria tries to be consistent with those applied at most tournaments – among them: (1) head-to-head results (H2H), prioritizing most recent match-up if H2Hs are even; (2) returning state medalist or qualifier; (3) returning section medalist; (4) common opponents; (5) quality of tournament schedule. An important consideration is overall body of work as case-by-case discretion must be made when H2Hs conflict or are lacking or competitors move up-and-down in weight. This also places more emphasis on late-season or “big tournament” performance rather than rely purely on earlier results. For the preseason rankings, offseason results – Fargo, Super 32, as well as local/regional events, etc. – will be considered but not treated as formal “head-to-heads.”

The margins separating wrestlers outside the top 20-plus is very slim – so unless there’s compelling evidence to bump a wrestler higher, don’t be discouraged. In my opinion, little differentiates a #20 from a #35 or even HM. I try to maintain a good distribution across sections but the rankings will skew representation from more dominant ones (Central, Southern, Sac Joaquin). Finally, if a team has a quality “B” wrestler or if the starting spot is undecided between two state-level teammates, I will list both – however, the “B” will be “HM” even though he may be a top 20 competitor.

As a final word, unfortunately, I simply don’t have the capacity to produce a comparable girls’ state ranking. If there were 26 hours in a day, I certainly would give it a go. But with only 24, I can only do so much. There are folks who provide “official” state rankings and seeds for the gals so I must defer to their capabilities.

I welcome feedback, questions, or corrections at castateranker@gmail.com.