

## Analyzing the Cream of the Crop *Ironman - Reno TOC - Beast of the East*

By Al Fontes



**T**he new year 2003 (2k3) is here, and each of the three elite tournaments, the Cream of the Crop have already taken place. Now that the dust has settled, which is the number one event in the nation? Well, It's not difficult to surmise each tournament's claim to being the number one tournament, the toughest of the land. Each has enough clout and prestige to make this claim. Nonetheless, one's perception of what is considered tough is a mere reflection of their environment, the level at which they compete; therefore, my own proclivities are well known, and often-detailed facts of wrestling lore. That being said, let's take a closer look at the best of the best.

For the past several years, the Beast of the East and Reno TOC has taken turns being the top tournament. More recently, the Ironman Invitational in Ohio has emerged back on the scene from the early nineties as one of the toughest small tournaments around. Without disappointment, each of the tournaments listed above proved once again why they are among the top tournaments in the nation. As mentioned in a previous article, I did not put a label on the number one tournament, the toughest in the nation. I wanted to wait for the final outcome of the three, and provide an analysis of each, to give a closer look. Before I even start, I think the commitment and spirit of each tournament organization to create and provide the opportunity to compete at such an event is awesome.

Of the three super tournaments, the Ironman Invitational in Ohio fields the



2002 Beast of the East's outstanding wrestler Mark Perry, 160 pound, Blair Academy, New Jersey, with Olympic gold medalist Brandon Slay and Delaware Governor, Ruth Ann Minner. Photo by Ken Correll.

smallest compliment of teams with less than twenty-five, compared to the Beast having seventy-nine and Reno TOC with an incredible one hundred. Per capita, it is the toughest two-day small tournament around. As tournament director Bob Preusse says, "the rubber meets the road early." He is absolutely correct, there is no refuge for an easy match, especially when you have the nation's number one team Blair Academy in your midst, along with St. Paris Graham, Ohio (#2), Great Bridge Virginia (#3), St. Edward, Ohio (#8), Massillon Perry, Ohio (#14), Milton, Wisconsin (#23), and Akron's St. Vincent-St. Mary, Ohio (#31). Add Walsh Jesuit, and other powerful Ohio teams, and you can

see why the rubber meets the road very early. To put it in more perspective, St. Vincent-St. Mary placed third at RTOC behind California power Poway, but only finished eighth at the Ironman. Much like the Beast and Reno, the Ironman fielded many of the nation's elite individuals ranked by various magazines, such as, *Wrestling USA Magazine*, *Amateur Wrestling News*, and *Wrestling International News Magazine* (WIN). I could spend more time breaking it down with statistics and analysis, but it is very obvious to the level of competition at which the Ironman provides. It's down right NAILS!

The Reno Tournament of Champions established in 1996 by tournament director Ross Aguiar and several of his business associates has been one of the premier events on the west coast and the country since its inception, and earned the top billing for several years. This year, there were not many of the nation's top ten ranked teams in attendance, as in years past, but the individual competition was very competitive. Pennsylvania powerhouse Easton (#4) easily won their third TOC team title, out distancing California's Poway (#27) by 105 points. Other national-



C.P. Schlatter, St. Paris Graham, Ohio, (black), defeated Seth Garvin, Homewood, Alabama. Photos by Robert L. Preston.

ly ranked teams in attendance were Clovis, California (#9), Timpanogos, Utah (#11), Vacaville, California (#13), Edmond North, Oklahoma (#29), St. Vincent-St. Mary, Ohio (#31), and Crater, Oregon (#39).

The individual competition was outstanding throughout the entire tournament. The finals were action packed from start to finish. More notable matches were at 112's with Brandon Tucker of Broken Arrow, Oklahoma, winning his first title after a placing several times prior. The 119-pound weight group was one of the more competitive, with California ace Chad Mendes of Hanford dominating the competition with his display of lightning quick takedowns. Each returning state champions from Central California, 125-pound competitors Gabe Flores of Clovis and Bakersfield's Nathan Morgan battled in a tight action pact final filled with numerous flurries and scrambles. After three solid rounds, Flores prevailed 7-6. At 130's, one of the nation's top juniors Angel Cejedo from Maryvale H.S. in Arizona beat California State Champion Troy Tirapelle of Clovis, another nationally ranked junior. The 215-pound weight group came down to the wire with Jared Villers of St. Vincent-St. Mary, Ohio winning a close match over defending TOC champion Chad Espinoza of Wooster, Nevada. After battling Nikola Dragovic of Rancho Buena Vista, California in very close semi-final, Chris Finn of Westmoore, Oklahoma, easily won in the finals with a quick pin to claim his fourth RTOC title, the first to accomplish this feat.

Other notable TOC champions were Alex Herrera (Bakersfield, CA), Mike Rodgers (Easton, PA), 2X Champion Charles Jones (Edmond North, OK), and Joe Williams (Calvary Chapel, CA) winning his second title in a brawl with Choctow, Oklahoma's Joel Flaggert. Keep an eye on sophomore Seth Ciasulli of Easton. The younger brother of Matt, last years MVP, Seth is definitely a force to reckon with. He dominated a talented field at 103's. Overall, the Reno TOC was an outstanding and very competitive event.

The Beast of the East is much what it sounds like, a Beast of a tournament. Vic Leonard, the director of this great event, and his staff have put together one of the top high school events in any sport, pitting much of the country's best teams and individuals together to battle for the right to be among the nation's elite. This year, the Beast celebrated its tenth anniversary, and was promised to be a barn burner of an event. It lived up to its status, and much more. This year's event featured teams from thirteen states, seven of which are ranked in the top 25 in the country. They include, national power Blair Academy of New Jersey (#1), St. Paris Graham, Ohio

(#2), Virginia standout Great Bridge (#3), Ohio's perennial power St. Edward (#8), Absegami, New Jersey (#7), Northampton, Pennsylvania (#12), and MacArthur of New Jersey at number twenty-two. Take into account the other great teams from Pennsylvania, the south, and much of the eastern seaboard, the level of competition is hard to fathom. Furthermore, thirteen teams are rated number one in their respective states, as well as national prep rankings.

The individual competition was awesome too. Fifty-three state & national prep champions were in attendance, as well as seventy-five state finalists, and ninety-eight nationally ranked individuals. Among these individuals were several standout participants ranked number one in the nation at their respective grade level. They include, Coleman Scott (Waynesburg), Matt Fisk (Wyalusing), Cameron Doggett (St. Paris Graham), Daniel Frishkorn (Great Bridge), Ryan Lang (St. Edward), Ryan Davis (Blair Academy), C.P. Schlatter (St. Paris Graham), Seth Garvin (Homewood), Mark Perry (Blair Academy), Zac Fryling (North Penn), Joe Dennis (St. Paris Graham), Patrick Bond (Great Bridge), Matt Koz (St. Edward), and


Jason Marshall of St. Paris Graham. Looking at the competition, it's enough to make you dizzy. It doesn't get much tougher than the Beast.

Now that you have had a few minutes to absorb the details of each of these great events, they are down right intense for the high school level. They are a prelude to the future stars of the NCAA and Olympic levels.


The writing was on the wall before the competitions even began. The Beast of the East with its overwhelming amount of competitive teams and individuals has gained back the label as the TOUGHEST HIGH SCHOOL TOURNAMENT IN THE NATION, the number one event. Congratulations to Vic Leonard and his staff for running an outstanding event. Following the Beast is the Ironman Invitational at number two, and Reno TOC at three.

In closing, I want to compliment each director and their support staff for putting the long hours and commitment to run the toughest tournaments in the land. It's your dedication, which makes high school wrestling what it is today. I want to personally thank Ross Aguiar for his hospitality and professionalism during my attendance


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at the Reno TOC. Overall, a job well done to everyone involved.

Already, I am hearing the Ironman is making plans to make their tournament even tougher next year. Stay tuned!

**Cream of the Crop final results**

**Beast of the East**

Newark, Delaware  
December 21st & 22nd  
University of Delaware  
Bob Carpenter Center

**Team (top 10 out of 79)**

1. Blair Academy: 244.00
2. St. Edward: 222.50
3. St. Paris Graham: 196.00
4. Absegami: 170.00
5. Northampton: 167.00
6. Great Bridge: 163.00
7. Johnson City: 108.00
- 8T. Bald Eagle Area: 106.00
- 8T. North Penn: 106.00
10. Massillon Perry: 105.00

**Individual**

- 103**
1. Lance Palmer-St. Edward (OH)
  2. Travis Blasco-Blair Academy (NJ)
  3. Chris Neidermeier-Waynesburg
  4. Matt Lantz-Cox
  5. Andrew Gold-Mt. St. Joes
  6. Andrew Flegler-Nazareth
  7. Aaron Hart-St. Paris Graham

8. Tim Dogmantis-Northampton
- 112**
1. Troy Nickerson-Chenango Forks
  2. Coleman Scott-Waynesburg
  3. Jordan Frishkorn-Great Bridge
  4. Mike Rowe-DeMatha
  5. Matt Fisk-Wyalusing
  6. Robert Shyver-Parkersburg
  7. Billy Stenack-Northampton
  8. Brett McCurdy-Germantown
- 119**
1. Cameron Doggett-St. Paris Graham
  2. Mark Bogart-Blair Academy
  3. Jeff Schell-Bloomsberg
  4. Christian Smith-Western Branch
  5. Brandon Rader-Parkersburg
  6. Nick Bridge-Absegami
  7. Drew Headlee-Waynesburg
  8. Mikey Bryan-Juniata
- 125**
1. Brandon Hardy-Western Branch
  2. Brian Welch-Hodgson
  3. Jason Johnstone-Massillon Perry
  4. Robbie Preston-Blair Academy
  5. Clint Shirk-Bald Eagle Area
  6. Andy Boyd-Oxford
  7. Tony Curto-Wilson
  8. Joe Walker-Great Bridge
- 130**
1. Daniel Frishkorn-Great Bridge
  2. Ryan Bridge-Absegami
  3. Jay Morrison-Whitehall
  4. Josh Zupancic-Walsh Jesuit
  5. Jacob Frerichs-St. Paris Graham
  6. Joey Ecklof-Northampton
  7. Ed Labatch-Wilson
  8. Adam Frey-Blair Academy

- 135**
1. Ryan Lang-St. Edward
  2. Rudy Rueda-DeMatha
  3. Gregg Ramano-Blair Academy
  4. Donny Ooton-Great Bridge
  5. Cody Burdett-Mountain Crest
  6. Mark Fisher-Bald Eagle Area
  7. Bob Flegel-Absegami
  8. Derrick Knapp-Parkersburg
- 140**
1. Charlie Agozzino-St. Edward
  2. Trevor Chinn-Canandaigua
  3. Kalen Knull-St. Paris Graham
  4. Greg Hagel-Blair Academy
  5. Kevin Pietropinto-Mayfield
  6. Steve Anceravage-Bloomsburg
  7. Mike Walters-Massillon Perry
  8. Dave Clemens-Dayton-Carroll
- 145**
1. Ryan Davis-Blair Academy (NJ)
  2. Jeff Eckloff-Northampton
  3. Brandon Becker-Kingsway
  4. Jarrod King-Connellsville
  5. Zack Shanaman-Pingry
  6. Travis Kovach-Massillon Perry
  7. Joe Sacco-Johnson City
  8. Mike Pucillo-Walsh Jesuit
- 152**
1. C.P. Schlatter-St. Paris Graham
  2. Seth Garvin-Homewood
  3. Josh Glenn-Johnson City
  4. Taylor Letters-Shaler
  5. Thomas Cuppernell-Canandaigua
  6. Scott Fisher-Colonial Forge
  7. Billy Haydt-Northampton
  8. Mack Lewnes-Mt. St. Joes



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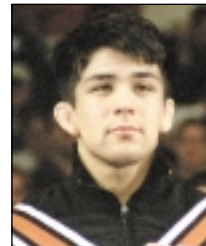
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