

85th Annual Baseball State Tournament Preview



The 2012 OHSAA state baseball tournament marks the 85th year of the championships, bringing 16 teams to Huntington Park in Columbus with hopes of capturing a championship trophy.

Only four of the final 16 schools have ever won a state championship – those schools are Cincinnati Archbishop Moeller in Division I, Columbus St. Francis DeSales in Division II, Wheelersburg in Division III and Minster in Division IV. Five teams are making their first trip to the state tournament. In Division I Westlake and Massillon Perry are in their first final four, in Division II Wapakoneta and Division III Fredericktown and Orwell Grand Valley.

Division I

Westlake (23-6) ranked 19th, is in its first state tournament after defeating Cleveland St. Ignatius and Ashland in its region. The Demons have scored 31 runs in five tournament games and are led by senior pitcher Ben Neumann (5-0) and senior third baseman Andy Haders (.341 AVG).

Opposing Westlake in the semifinal will be **Massillon Perry (21-10)**, which is also making its first state tournament appearance. The Panthers defeated Hudson and Chardon in the regional tournament to advance. Senior pitcher Jake Flounders has accumulated 47 strikeouts while posting a record of 6-1, while senior Sam Mathie leads the team in hits, runs scored and doubles while toting a .387 batting average.

The second semifinal in Division I pits the No. 1 and No. 2 ranked teams in the state against each other.

Grove City (26-2) moved on from the regional to the state tournament by defeating Lewis Center Olentangy, 11-1 and Lewis Center Olentangy Orange, 7-4. Finishing the season ranked number-one in the coaches' association poll, the Greyhounds return to Huntington Park after losing in the semifinal last year to eventual champion Liberty Twp. Lakota East. Grove City is in the state tournament for the fourth time in school history.

Number-two ranked **Cincinnati Archbishop Moeller (24-5)** enters the state tournament after senior pitcher Brian Burkhardt delivered a no-hit 3-0 victory against Cincinnati Anderson in the regional semifinal. The Crusaders then outlasted Greater Catholic League rival Cincinnati Elder, 6-4 in the regional final. This marks the ninth time Moeller is in the state tournament having won titles in 2009, 2004, 1993, 1989 and 1972.

Division II

Recording the most wins in school history **Millersburg West Holmes (23-6)** advanced to the state tournament by defeating second-ranked Cambridge 6-1 in the district final and fifth-ranked Richmond Edison 3-1 in the regional final. The Knights are led on the mound by junior Gabe Snyder and sophomore Dillon Baird with earned run averages at 1.00 or lower. West Holmes is in the state tournament for the first time in four decades after making in 1966.

Sixth-ranked **Wapakoneta (24-5)** will face West Holmes in the state semifinal after defeating No. 1 Defiance 6-1 in the regional final. The Redskins, making their first state tournament appearance, have only allowed three runs in five tournament games, while scoring 29. Wapakoneta is led by junior pitcher Johnny Crawford, who is 8-0 on the season with 66 strikeouts and a 0.29 ERA.

In the second matchup returning a state champion, No. 4 **Columbus St. Francis DeSales (24-6)** has made its way back to the state tournament by defeating Bellefontaine 8-7 in 11 innings and Cincinnati Wyoming 3-0 in the regional. After having no seniors on the championship team in 2011 the Stallions have 12 on this year's roster. DeSales is making its seventh state tournament appearance and also won a title in 1979.

Mentor Lake Catholic (19-10) will oppose DeSales after defeating Tallmadge and Canfield in the regional tournament. The Cougars are led offensively by senior catcher Lou Peterlin (.493 AVG) and junior Jake Courtot (.400 AVG) and on the mound by senior Joey Samuele (8-2). Lake Catholic is making its second state tournament appearance, the other coming in 1987.

Division III

Seventh-ranked **Wheelersburg (28-2)** has made it back to Columbus after falling in the state semifinals a year ago. The Pirates defeated Piketon, 3-0 and St. Clairsville, 10-9 in the regional to return. Throughout the course of the season Wheelersburg has delivered 17 shutouts against opponents, including three during the tournament. This is the fifth state tournament appearance, and third in a row, for the Pirates. Wheelersburg finished as runner-up in 2010 and won a title in 1996.

Newcomer to the state tournament, **Fredericktown (23-4)** will take on Wheelersburg in the first semifinal. Ranked 19th, the Freddies defeated Cincinnati Madeira and Hamilton Badin in the regional tournament en route to winning a school high 23 games. Fredericktown is led offensively by three-time All-Ohio outfielder Matt Smith. The junior enters the state tournament hitting over .500 for the season.

No. 2 **Orwell Grand Valley (30-1)** appears in the second semifinal game, making its first state tournament trip. The Mustangs have scored 10 or more runs in 23 of their 31 games entering the state tournament, totaling 362 runs for and only 76 runs allowed. Grand Valley is led by senior Mitchell Lake who is 7-0 as a pitcher and hit .574 with 44 RBI, along with fellow senior Adam Moodt, 6-1 record pitching, .483 average and 41 RBI.

Opposing Grand Valley is **Lima Central Catholic (21-8)**. The Thunderbirds are making their second state tournament appearance having reached the final four previously in 1997. LCC advanced to Columbus after defeating Milan Edison and 12th-ranked Carroll Bloom-Carroll in the regional tournament.

Division IV

Defiance Tinora (27-3) ranked No. 3, is making its second state tournament appearance in as many years, marking the only two times the Rams have made it to the final four. Tinora did so by dispatching of Gibsonburg, 9-0 and Lepisc, 10-2 in the regional tournament. The Rams have scored 10 or more runs 16 times this year, while posting eight shutouts.

Tinora will face defending state champion and No. 13 ranked **Minster (24-6)**. The Wildcats come to the state tournament having defeated South Charleston Southeastern Local and Sidney Lehman Catholic in the regional. Minster returns with senior pitcher Austin Knapke who picked up both the semifinal and final game wins en route to last year's title. The Wildcats also finished as runners-up in 2003.

In the second semifinal, No. 10 ranked **Berlin Hiland (25-4)** advanced to Columbus by defeating Lucasville Valley and Newark Catholic in the regional tournament. The Hawks have outscored opponents 65-12 during their tournament run. This year marks Hiland's third trip to the baseball state tournament, collecting runner-up finishes in 2008 and 2000. The Hawks' baseball team carries four players who also won a basketball state title in 2011 and 2012. They are seniors Luke Burch and Dylan Kaufman and sophomores Todd Ropp and Jordan Yoder.

Hiland will meet 11th-ranked **Cuyahoga Heights (24-4)** in the semifinal. In making the state tournament for the second time, the Redskins shut out 2011 state runner-up New Middletown Springfield 11-0 in the regional semifinal and Attica Seneca East 9-0 in the regional final, two of 12 shutouts on the season. Cuyahoga Heights had previously made the state tournament in 1976 finishing as runner-up.