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Thirty-five Randolph County wrestlers have qualified for the 2021 State Championship Tournaments. Saturday, those athletes and hundreds more will meet at various locations around the area for the culmination of a wrestling season which, like other sports seasons this year, have been shortened but will conclude with the title State Champion awarded to wrestlers in 14 weight classes in each of the four classifications (1A, 2A, 3A and 4A).

Unlike previous years, the 2021 Championships will be a one day event. Another big difference is that the championships will not be held in the Greensboro Coliseum for the first time in several years. Instead, three different Triad-area high schools will host Championships Saturday with 2A wrestlers at Wheatmore High School and 3A championships at Eastern Guilford. Glenn High School in Kernersville will host both 1A and 4A championships.

Wheatmore and Providence Grove each hosted four basketball championship games in March and Wheatmore was called upon again to host the finals in 2A wrestling. Warriors coach Philip Yarbrough says the governing body, the NCHSAA, will actually be running the tournament while the challengers for Wheatmore have been in the short window of preparation time. He expects the 2A championship matches to be an enjoyable event for the student-athletes as it usually is.

Four Warriors will be contending for titles on their home mats Saturday. "Wrestling in a familiar environment is always better than not," according to Yarbrough, but "once a wrestler reaches the semi-finals, location goes out the window."

Senior Seth Miller had a runner-up finish at last week's regional event in the 132 weight class. He will be joined by juniors Cameron Hinson at 126 and Perry Welch at 170 with freshman Trey Swaney wrestling at 120.

Coach Jonathan Ruiz at Providence Grove thinks holding the championship at a high school might ease some nerves but the two Patriots who qualified for the event have both been there before. Senior David Varner has a 19-0 record and will look to better his third place finish in 2020. "David is a three time state qualifier, while Brooks Freeman is a two time qualifier. Both have worked hard since last year and both are looking to cap off their season with success at the state tournament."

Asheboro qualified six wrestlers for the 3A Championships at MPC opponent Eastern Guilford High School. Three will be making their first trip to the final match. "As far as the familiar venue for states I think it definitely does help with our younger state qualifiers" says Blue Comets coach Wes Berrier. "Sometimes going into a big venue like the Greensboro Coliseum

for the first time can definitely put a wrestler in sort of a shock and awe situation.” Berrier, like many other coaches, tries to participate in tournaments held in large venues during a normal season but that wasn't possible in 2021.

Regardless of location or seed or record, “It comes down to who wants it the most,” according to Berrier. “We did have two outstanding wrestlers who missed winning the regionals by a couple points with senior Trevor Goldston at 145 and junior Logan Lambeth at 170.” Goldston, a senior, and Lambeth, a junior, both carry 20-1 records into the tournament. They will be joined by seniors Elijah Hildreth and Cruz Parral, junior Luke Lambeth and sophomore Xavier Santos.

Uwharrie Charter Academy sends 12 wrestlers to the 1A Championship Saturday at Glenn High School including defending champion Heaven Fitch (Sr) at 106. This will be the third time to states for Fitch. Four others will experience it for the second time: senior Drew Shelton, sophomore Grayson Roberts (3rd place in 2020), junior Doug Bowles (3rd place in 2020) and senior Cameron Clark experienced the finals last year before the COVID-19 shutdowns began. Making the trip for the first time will be seniors Austin Kennedy, and Lucas Wright; juniors James Boling, Byan Lackey and Jaden Marion; and freshmen Jack McArthur and Jaden Maness.

The Eagles are also regular participants in tournaments at larger venues during a normal year as are the Providence Grove Patriots. Coach Ruiz points out that the shortened season meant that “no big tournament was held this season so it's hard to tell how good other kids really are in the brackets, regardless of their records. We just have to be ready to go every single match come Saturday.”

Two Eastern Randolph wrestlers qualified for Saturday's title match: Juniors Jonathan Watson and Elijah Schenkel will be wrestling at Wheatmore.

Randleman senior Luis Garcia will be making his third appearance at the 2A Championship. Garcia placed 6th in 2020. Junior John Gilmartin will be at Wheatmore for his first finals.

Seven Trinity Bulldogs qualified for the State Championship tournament. Returners from 2020 include seniors Aaron Ortega-Perez (24-1), Alex Minish (23-0), Sebastian Talent (22-1) and Ayden Prevatte (25-1) along with juniors Chris Grubb (21-2) and David Makupson (26-0). The newcomer is freshman Spencer May (22-2). Both Minish (5th) and Makupson (4th) placed in the 2020 tournament.

The 2021 State Wrestling Championships are Saturday with 9 o'clock start times for 2A at Wheatmore, 3A at Eastern Guilford and 4A at Glenn. 1A matches will also be at Glenn High school starting at 11 am.