

Observerland wrestling from page C1

what they're supposed to do, we'll do OK," Salem coach Greg Woohuk said, adding he's sure the Rocks are not the favorite.

"CC is always a tough tournament team, and they're empowered throughout their lineup. We always look forward to being somewhere in the top three or four."

The Rocks gave the Shamrocks a scare in a team dual tournament Saturday, but host Catholic Central came from behind to win the meet, 48-36.

"They were way ahead of us until about 152," Rodriguez said. "Then we started making the turn there and caught up with them. Our heavyweight locked it up. Aaron Parr pinned his opponent to win the match."

Plymouth Canton, ranked No. 3 behind CC and Salem, seems the most likely candidate to break the stranglehold those teams and Stevenson have on the title.

The Chiefs, who beat Salem in dual, have placed in four of five tournaments to date and continue to get better, according to coach John Domnick.

"I think we have a real chance at winning it all," he said. "A number of competitive teams and star kids will be performing. We certainly have to wrestle well to do it, but we'd like to be first and take home the (championship) trophy."

"It's within our grasp; whether we can pull it off, we'll have to wait and see. We've wrestled enough competition that our guys are ready to go toe-to-toe."

Six reigning individual champions will be back to either defend their titles or try to win again in a different weight class.

Stevenson has two of them, including senior Josh Gunterman, who was the co-most valuable wrestler in the lower weights after winning at 112. He's 22-0 and ranked No. 1 at

that weight again this year.

"He's grown up quite a bit and is wrestling much more aggressively this year," Stevenson coach Joel Smith said. "This is his last year as a Stevenson Spartan; he has a goal in mind, and he's working every day toward it. With every match, he gets better."

The 152 division includes two of the area's best, Stevenson's Imad Kharbush and Livonia Churchill's Mike Carter.

Carter (25-1) is ranked first and Kharbush (26-2), who is questionable due to a bruised ankle, second. Carter won the 145 title last year, and Kharbush was the 135 champion.

"I took (Carter) a while to adjust to the heavier weight, but he's coming along now and doing pretty well," Churchill coach Marty Altounian said, adding Westland's Jeff Wolfgang will be a factor, too.

The other four state champs are Wayne Memorial's champs — Wayne Memorial's Jeff Usher and CC's Mitch Hancock, who was at 118, 140 and 152, respectively, and have moved up one weight this year.

Hancock is 27-0 and has wrestled much of the season at 171, but he has switched weights with sophomore Ryan Rogowski, who was No. 1 at 160.

"(Mitch) is focused; he's really on fire," Rodriguez said, adding Hancock is the "man to beat this year," not just in Observerland but the state. Hancock has beaten the wrestler who defeated him in the state finals last year, Rodriguez added.

"Rogowski has a good sparing partner. He has Mitch to work with, and that doesn't hurt you any. He's a hard worker in his own right. He's going to give people fits, more so next year. He's just starting to grow."

Six wrestlers who were runners-up last year will be competing again, too. They are (with

1999 weights in parentheses) Farmington's Brian Brinden (275), CC's Chris O'Hara (103), Canton's Greg Musser (125), Glenn's Jeff Albrecht (130), Stevenson's Mike Falzon (140) and Clarenceville's Kalen McPherson (215).

CC senior Jeff Wheeler is No. 1 at 135, and sophomore Jay Abshire is a contender at 140. Senior Sean Bell (145) is hurt and won't wrestle Saturday.

"(Wheeler) is just starting to shine and believe in himself," Rodriguez said. "He found himself this year with his technique; he has great shots. He's going to be tested by this boy (Steve Denndrinos) from Salem, though."

Canton has eight individuals in the weekly rankings, including senior Kyle Pitt, who is 26-0 and No. 1 at 163. Musser, a sophomore, has a 22-5 record, and senior Jon Pocock (140) is 22-0.

"The only bad day (Pitt) had is when he major decisioned someone," Demenski said. "Other than that, he's just gone through everyone."

"Jon is a very strong wrestler and, although he has some obstacles, he'll have to overcome, he could take first."

"Everybody on our team can place. There are some weight classes we're not going to have a real strong showing but, really, all can place."

Garden City, which finished third last year, is fifth in the area rankings and, with eight wrestlers among the top five at their weights, is a contender to earn another team trophy. The Cougars are 11-1 in duals.

"If we wrestle well, we'll go top five, maybe," Garden City coach Dave Chiola said, adding the Cougars will be without 103-pound Scott Massey, who is away on a school field trip. "I haven't seen (CC), but other people tell me they're pretty solid and they're going to be tough to

beat."

"This is one of my favorite tournaments, because all the coaches know each other well and it's good, friendly competition. I look forward to it every year."

Garden City's Pat Say (119), Vinnie Zoccoli (125) and Josh Fee (140) have more than 25 wins apiece, as does Massey. Brandon Templeton (135) and Craig Medos (171) have over 20 each, and Brian Reed (130) might surprise some people, according to Chiola.

Stevenson's Falzon has a 23-6 record, John MacFarland (171) 22-4 and Bill Bullock (119) 20-11. The Spartans might be minus heavyweight Dan Hine, who also has a bruised ankle.

"To upset CC, we're going to have everything going in the right direction," Smith said. "That's a perfect day."

"This tournament is won and lost in the consolation finals. That brings up a lot of points when you have guys placing third and fourth."

"I would think we can finish in the top three. We're shooting for February. We try to peak then and that's the way we train. If we're lucky to be in the top three, that's a bonus."

Salem's team has sufficiently recovered from a recent bout with ring worm to be a factor in the tournament, according to Woohuk.

"From the original onset, we still have some kids out," he said. "We can't even have them in the room. We got two back who haven't been in the room for two weeks."

The Rocks are led by Ron Thompson and Josh Henderson, who are ranked first at 119 and 140, respectively. Thompson is 20-3 and Henderson 18-5. Rob Ash, who is second at 125 behind former Salem wrestler John Mervyn, is 24-1. Mervyn competes for Livonia Franklin now.

Garden City coach Jeff Wheeler is No. 1 at 119 and 140. Brian Reed (125) and Rob Ash (140) are the most valuable wrestlers.

The 152-pound Kharbush

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3. Jeff Albrecht (Glenn)	3. Jeff Albrecht (Glenn)
4. Mitch Hancock (Wayne Memorial)	4. Mitch Hancock (Wayne Memorial)
5. Mike Falzon (CC)	5. Mike Falzon (CC)
6. Brian Reed (Salem)	6. Brian Reed (Salem)
7. John Mervyn (Franklin)	7. John Mervyn (Franklin)
8. Rob Ash (Salem)	8. Rob Ash (Salem)
9. John Pocock (Canton)	9. John Pocock (Canton)
10. Jon Abshire (Redford)	10. Jon Abshire (Redford)
11. Kyle Pitt (Canton)	11. Kyle Pitt (Canton)
12. Brian Thompson (Salem)	12. Brian Thompson (Salem)
13. Jeff Thompson (Salem)	13. Jeff Thompson (Salem)
14. Matt Radley (CC)	14. Matt Radley (CC)
15. John MacFarland (Salem)	15. John MacFarland (Salem)
16. Mike Falzon (Salem)	16. Mike Falzon (Salem)
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