

Who could be the best in high school wrestling? Start with these 18.

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The high school wrestling season is here, only five months after the previous COVID-19 season concluded. Last season saw 27 area grapplers qualify for the NCHSAA state tournament. How many will qualify this season? Will anyone compete for a state title?

Here is a look at local wrestlers to be on the watch for this season leading into the regional and state tournaments in mid-February:

Tyler Cowell, Swansboro: The sophomore went 17-8 at 120 pounds last season. He was fourth in the 3-A East Regionals and advanced to states.

Adrian DeSousa, Dixon: The senior was a state 2-A qualifier last season at 160, ending 14-8 and falling in the semifinals of the East Regionals.

Bryston DeSousa, Dixon: The senior was 14-7 at 170, advancing to the second round of the 2-A state tournament after being the East Regional runner-up.

Carter Duhon, Southwest: The junior was the 106 East 2-A Regional runner-up and finished 16-4 after a first-round state defeat.

Dejon Fifer, White Oak: The senior was fourth at 152 in the East 3-A Regional and advanced to the third round of the state tournament. He will wrestle at 160 this season.

Isaac Gawronski, Swansboro: The senior wrestles at 126 after he went 31-2, won a Coastal 3-A Conference title and won the East Regional at 113. He advanced to the quarterfinals of the state tournament. He entered with a 101-33 overall record.

Landon Gray, Croatan: The senior finished 18-5 and advanced to the second round of the 182 East Regional.

Drache Gooch, White Oak: The senior was third in the 145 East 3-A Regional last season.

Landon Horne, Southwest: The senior was 13-6, finishing fourth in the 126 2-A East Regional and falling in the first round at states.

Jeremiah Jones, Southwest: The junior was third in the 152 East 2-A Regional. He finished 14-4 after falling in the first round at states.

Blake McCabe, Croatan: The senior was 13-8 and wrestled in the second round of the 170 regional tournament.

Jensen Miller, Southwest: The sophomore was fourth in the 132 East 2-A Regional, finishing 16-4 after a first-round state defeat.

Josh Novak, Southwest: The senior ended 12-4, advancing to the second round of the 113 East 2-A Regional

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and in the semifinals of the regional.

Raheem Rainey, Jacksonville: The sophomore will wrestle at 132 this season after he went 16-6 overall and 1-1 in

the NCHSAA 3-A East Regional 126-pound tournament last season.

Cody Raymond, Croatan: The senior went 18-6 and advanced to the second round of the 145 2-A tournament after he finished second in the East Regional. He was the Cougars' only non-senior to wrestling in the state tournament.

Jason Rodriguez, Southwest: The

junior was the 170 East 2-A Regional champion. He finished 19-3 after advancing to the second round of the state tournament.

Eli Simonette, Croatan: The senior was 9-6 and advanced to the second round of the 160 East 2-A Regional.

Theo Yager, Swansboro: The junior wrestles at 152 after he was 27-6, won a

conference title, placed fourth in the East Regional and qualified for states at 138 last season.

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