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HIGH SCHOOL SPORTS

Meet the All-Area Boys Weightlifting Team

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USA TODAY NETWORK

The Volusia-Flagler area had eight boys weightlifters win individual state titles across all three classifications in 2026.

DeLand's Peyton McKenzie was the only one to win two of them, though, doing so at 238 pounds at the FHSAA Class 3A meet. He broke the state snatch record twice in the process, eventually beating the previous 290-pound record by 25 pounds.

Spruce Creek had the highest team finish of any local school with second-place finishes in traditional and Olympic weightlifting at the 3A level.

With 12 total spots that include eight state champions, the 2026 Volusia-Flagler All-Area boys weightlifting team was a competitive one. Here it is.

First Team

Brian Begnoche, Spruce Creek: Begnoche lifted 615 pounds to win the 199-pound Class 3A Olympic state championship. He also finished third in the state in the traditional category.

Todd Cutler, New Smyrna Beach: Cutler won a Class 2A 183-pound state title with a 585-pound Olympic score, and he nearly got a second trophy after finishing as the traditional runner-up by five pounds.

Matthew McFall, Flagler Palm Coast: McFall won an unlimited Olympic state title with a 660-pound lift, 70 pounds ahead of the next Class 3A placer. He also finished third in the state in traditional weightlifting.

Peyton McKenzie, DeLand: McKenzie was the only local weightlifter to win state championships in Olympic and traditional weightlifting. The 238-pounder posted a massive 775-pound combined traditional lift and a 685-pound Olympic score to become a dual state champion.

Anthony Nguyen, Atlantic: Nguyen won the Class 2A 238-pound traditional championship with a 740-pound combined lift. He triumphed behind an area-best 445-pound bench press.

Cody Strawser, Flagler Palm Coast:



Spruce Creek's Brian Begnoche lifts 260 pounds during the District 4-3A boys weightlifting meet. NADIA ZOMORODIAN/NEWS-JOURNAL

Strawser won the 129-pound Olympic state title with a 460-pound combined lift at the Class 3A meet. He finished as the traditional runner-up with a 485-pound score.

Second Team

Joseph Abrantes, Father Lopez: Abrantes recorded a 480-pound Olympic lift to win the Class 1A title in the 154-pound weight class. He was also a close runner-up in the traditional standings with a 550-pound total, five pounds short of first place.

Grant Chandler, Spruce Creek: Chandler was a 119-pound Olympic regional, district and Five Star Conference champion. He finished second in Class 3A in the same discipline with a 360-pound combined lift.

Maverick Grimm, Father Lopez: Grimm cruised to a 169-pound Class 1A title with a 525-pound lift, 60 pounds ahead of the runner-up. He finished third in traditional weightlifting at the state level.

Christian Jones, Spruce Creek: Jones

had a 730-pound traditional lift and 600-pound Olympic lift to win silver in both disciplines at the Class 3A state meet. He was a double champion at the regional, district and Five Star Conference meets.

Brison Sullivan, New Smyrna Beach: Sullivan won unlimited traditional and Olympic weightlifting titles at the regional and district levels. He placed top five in both disciplines at the Class 2A meet.

Jackson Vella, Spruce Creek: Vella won 139-pound traditional and Olympic gold at the regional, district and Five Star Conference meets. He finished third in traditional weightlifting at the Class 3A state meet with a 515-pound lift, and he placed sixth in Olympic weightlifting.

Honorable Mention

DeLand: Angel Alejandro, Jordan Ferrell, Gerald Logan, Jasson Van Horn

Father Lopez: Owen Albert, Aiden Suklan

Flagler Palm Coast: Marlon Alvarado, Joseph Casanova, Jackson Fedun, Landon Gates, Anthony Giacobbe, Alex

Huynh, Mathias Parker, Wendell Weaver

Mainland: Ray Tatro

New Smyrna Beach: Calvin Blount, Austin Hermosillo, Davin Mansfield, Micah Mehalko, Ethan Puckett, Trevor Schmettler

Seabreeze: Dean Hayes, Vincent Petersen, Guaronex Rivera Seise, Ronald Zimmer

Spruce Creek: Dikshant Acharya, Jeremiah Hall, Cesar Hernandez, John Kinzer, Quinn Lalchan, Kamari McCloud, Trevor McClure, John Wheeler, Logan White

Taylor: Tre Gaines

University: Magnum Rojas

Boys Weightlifting Coach of the Year
Connor Silvey, Spruce Creek: The Hawks were a machine in 2026, and there weren't many competitions where they didn't end up in first place. Spruce Creek won the Five Star Conference meet for the fourth year in a row to secure local bragging rights before winning district and regional titles with ease. And yes, the Hawks swept both disciplines in all three events. It translated to the Class 3A state meet as well, as Spruce Creek finished second as a team in traditional and Olympic weightlifting. The Hawks also crowned a state champion, Brian Begnoche, in the process, among several other podium finishers.

Boys Weightlifter of the Year

Peyton McKenzie, DeLand: McKenzie won the Class 3A Olympic and traditional titles in the 238-pound weight class, and neither were particularly close. McKenzie secured the Olympic title with a 685-pound lift that was 25 pounds heavier than any weightlifter lifted at any weight in any classification. That was thanks to a 315-pound snatch that broke his own previous FHSAA record of 300 pounds set minutes earlier on his second of three attempts. A 370-pound clean and jerk clinched the title and set him up for the traditional title as well, which he secured with a 405-pound bench press. His traditional total combined for a monster 775 pounds, 75 clear of his nearest competitor.

Meet the All-Area Beach Volleyball Team

Chris Vinyl
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USA TODAY NETWORK

New Smyrna Beach remained atop the Volusia-Flagler beach volleyball standings in 2026.

The Barracudas posted a 15-6 record, won a district championship and charged to the regional finals without dropping a match against area competition. They were one of only two local clubs to make the FHSAA playoffs, and they sat 24th in the final state rankings of the spring.

DeLand joined New Smyrna Beach in the postseason as a wild-card qualifier. The Bulldogs set a new program high mark for victories in a season with 10 and ranked 65th in the state. Spruce Creek rounded out the local group of top-100 programs in 98th.

Let's check out the All-Area list.

First Team

Grayson Bridgewater and Taylor Fonseca, DeLand: As the Bulldogs' Line 1 pairing, the senior captains spearheaded the playoff lineup, speeding to a 10-6 record.

Unity Buker and Savannah Toler, New Smyrna Beach: The seniors locked down the Line 2 spot for the regional finalist Barracudas, going 15-6.

Kate Collins and Laika Parnell, New Smyrna Beach: Collins and Parnell went 13-3 together at Line 4. Parnell also posted a 5-0 record with Jasmine Mahoney.

Mollie Hale and Paige Taylor, New Smyrna Beach: Hale and Taylor had the second-best record of any Barracudas duo — and any duo in the area — nothing a 15-3 mark at Line 3.

Bailey Jones and Teagan Lux, New Smyrna Beach: After playing together as Line 4 partners as sophomores two years ago, Jones and Lux reunited as a top duo this season. They led all local players in wins with a 17-4 record.

Taylor Ralston and Peyton Smith, Flagler Palm Coast: Ralston and Smith contributed to the Bulldogs' first .500 finish in program history. They cruised to a Line 4 record of 11-3 with wins over

DeLand and Spruce Creek, the highest-ranked local teams they played.

Second Team

Addison Clark and Emily Thornton, DeLand: The seniors compiled an 8-4 record at Line 2 for the postseason-qualifying Bulldogs.

Emma Cronje and Jane Pellett, Spruce Creek: The juniors were the Hawks' winningest duo. They finished 12-7 in Line 5 action.

Nathan Cullom and Lillian VanDeusen, DeLand: Cullom and VanDeusen suited up mostly at Line 4 but also jumped to Line 3 on occasion. They collected a 10-3 record and did not lose in districts or regionals.

Bella Evans and Kaylynn Evans, Atlantic: The twins, who are headed to Erskine to play collegiately, served as the Sharks' Line 1 duo, helping them to a 7-8 overall mark and their first district finals appearance.

Annabelle Gentry and Bristol Watts, Spruce Creek: As the Hawks' Line 1 pairing, Gentry and Watts put up a 9-10 record, including a 9-4 tally against Volusia-Flagler area competition.

Jasmine Mahoney and Della McLaughlin, New Smyrna Beach: Mahoney and McLaughlin rounded out the Barracudas' starting lineup. They finished 7-5 together at Line 5. Mahoney also added five wins with Parnell at Line 4.

Honorable Mention

Atlantic: Kylee Franklin, Harmony Sirju

DeLand: Kendall Ezell, Emma Forand, Paige Partin, Mackenzie Sanchez

Flagler Palm Coast: Haley Sobin, Brie Sproul

Seabreeze: Alex Dingman, Lilli Litz

Spruce Creek: Ayah Dandan, Elly Doidis, Bella Johnson, Myla Solose, Rayelin Watts, Evelyn Webb

Beach Volleyball Coach of the Year
Jonathan Cunningham, New



DeLand's Addison Clark (3) hits over the net against Horizon during the Region 1-3A quarterfinals on April 29, 2025. DAVID TUCKER/NEWS-JOURNAL

Smyrna Beach: The Barracudas had seven new starters this year, but under Cunningham's tutelage, the results stayed the same. New Smyrna Beach captured its fifth consecutive district title and blazed to the regional finals. It beat all of its local opponents 5-0.

Beach Volleyball Pair of the Year

Bailey Jones and Teagan Lux, New Smyrna Beach: As the Barracudas stayed undefeated in the area and made another playoff trip, Jones and Lux led the charge.