

COLUMBIA The **Rock Hill** Bearcats took one last look Monday night at last year's headline that read: '**Rock Hill wrestling comes up short at Bearcat Invitational.**'

"Our kids have looked at it all year," said **Rock Hill** head coach Cain Beard. "Yesterday at the end of practice, we tore that down and said, "That's over and let's go win one."

And the Bearcats did just that by beating **Fort Dorchester** 35-33 for the 5A state **wrestling** championship at Airport High School in Columbia.

Last year, the Bearcats suffered a devastating loss, 240-235, to Eastside at the Bearcat Invitational.

This year's team was motivated by that memory and by last year's second-place finish in the state final.

Rock Hill senior Noah Reynolds was determined to make the most of his last opportunity to win a state championship. Reynolds and his teammates worked diligently by cutting weight and preparing for the state final all season.

"We were all crushed last year after losing in the (Bearcat Invitational) finals, there would be no other motivation to be winning a state finals than to lose it the previous year (to River Bluff)," Zach Spicer said. "Our coach put up pictures of us losing last year, he constantly reminded us and kept it fresh in our minds so that we would never forget it. And not forgetting that loss is what pushed us to come and get the win tonight."

Fort Dorchester secured an early lead Tuesday, but the Bearcats did not give up. There was a constant battle on the mat.

The Bearcats rallied with multiple takedowns and pins against the Patriots.

In the last two matches, the Bearcats got some favorable matchups after pinning **Fort Dorchester's** defending state champion at 160.

However, for Spicer, there was a surreal moment when the crowd roared and his teammates ran toward him with smiles on all of their faces. Spicer was able to fight through the opponent, lock up the cradle and pin him down. Spicer's victory put the Bearcats on top to stay, 35-33, against the Patriots.

"In that last moment, I couldn't even think," Spicer said. "It's so incredible. It's amazing. Just winning that match broke my heart, I started crying. Everybody started cheering me. It's just amazing, I couldn't really think about it, I just blacked out."

The Bearcats have now won 19 state **wrestling** championships, four of them under Beard's leadership.

"We had to deal with some adversity throughout the match," Beard said. "And we talked about the fact it was going to be a see-saw battle. We pulled it out at the end, just a great feeling for our kids to get to walk out like this."