

Looking at a 19-0 deficit after losing the opening five matches, Rock Hill coach Cain Beard still liked his team's chances against Hillcrest in the Class-AAAA Upper State dual championship on Wednesday night.

The Rams, the defending Class-AAAA state champs, got four decisions and a pin to score the first 19 points of the match before an enthusiastic crowd at the Hillcrest High School gymnasium.

"After the 132-pound match, I felt that we were still a few points ahead where I thought we would be at that point," Beard said. "But then, we gave up an upset and that pretty much changed the entire complexion of the match."

Hillcrest went on to successfully defend the Class-AAAA Upper State title with a 34-30 victory, earning a shot at defending the state championship this Saturday against the winner of Lexington-White Knoll lower state matchup.

Following the 19-0 hole, the Bearcats did grab three of the next four, including a pin-fall victory by Seth Swoope over Hunter Boyles in the 160-pound division. That cut the deficit to 25-12.

However, the Rams broke the Rock Hill momentum with Nick Kilgore scoring a 5-2 decision over AJ Walker at 170, and Bronson Delgado pinning Cody Childers at 182. Hillcrest led 34-12 at that point, giving them more than enough to clinch victory with three matches remaining.

Jonathan Schavey, the Bearcat 195-pound ace, made the score more respectable with a pin over Matthew Errington in the first period, and Cameron Bell and Mitchell Jeter got forfeit victories at 220 and heavyweight, respectively, to end the match.

Ram coach Tommy Bell said that Rock Hill is very effective on their feet, so the key was to keep the Bearcat wrestlers on the mat.

"Rock Hill is always known for what they can do on their feet. They are very good at takedowns," Bell said. "We just wanted to stay neutral with them on their feet, and maneuver quickness and agility when the wrestlers were grabbing down on the mat.

"Our strength is what we can do from the top position, and we took advantage of that tonight."

Bell added that the upper state title was particularly sweet after losing seven all-state players from last year's state championship squad. Hillcrest now owns a 20-2 record going into Saturday's finals.

"That is just a testament of the hard work that these guys have put in during the offseason," he said.

Beard tipped his hat to Hillcrest for a hard-fought victory, but also took time to reflect on the accomplishments of a 30-7 season.

"Going 30-7 is an accomplishment within itself; we were able to set the school record for number of wins in a season; we have several young guys who will be back with us and we will work hard to get back at it next season."

HILLCREST 34, ROCK HILL 30

106 Alex Roberts (H) dec. Devon Faile (RH), 13-0

113 Sean Horgan (H) dec. Nick Steinberg (RH) 10-6

120 Grant Snyder (H) dec. Luke Walker (RH), 7-0

126 Jeremy Higgins (H) dec. Austin Threatt (RH), 7-2

132 Devin Horgan (H) pinned Robert Douglas (RH), 2nd period

138 Bishop Ashley (RH) dec, Darrell Owens (H), 16-6,

145 Joel Madak (H) pinned Robbie. Haselrig (RH), 3rd period.

152 Robert Miills (RH) dec. Nick Timbers (H), 11-5.

160 Seth Swoope (RH) pinned Hunter Boyles (H), 2nd period.

170 Niegel Kilgore (H) dec. AJ Walker (RH) 5-2.,

182 Bronson Delgado (H) pinned. Cody Childers, 2nd period.

195 Jonathan Schavey (RH) pinned Matthew Errington, 1st period.;

220 Cameron Bell (RH) won by forfeit.

285 Mitchell Jeter (RH) won by forfeit.