

The **Ashley Ridge** wrestlers rallied Feb. 12 to upset **Hillcrest** and capture the school's first **wrestling** state title.

The Swamp Foxes defeated the Rams 27-26 at Dreher High School to claim the 2022 South Carolina Class AAAAA **Wrestling** Championship.

Ashley Ridge trailed by 11 points with only three bouts remaining, but earned a major decision in the 113-pound, 120-pound and 126-pound matches to edge out **Hillcrest**, which was the defending 5A champion and had been ranked No. 1 in the state all season.

"We fought back to win this so I'm just so excited for our kids," **Ashley Ridge** coach Stacey Woods said.

"**Hillcrest** is amazing. They are always winning state titles and they always battle. Like I told their coach, we were just happy we had a chance to compete against them. Win or lose, we could have walked out of here with our heads high, but our guys wanted to finish as state champion and we did."

Three days earlier, **Ashley Ridge** avenged a loss it suffered to Summerville earlier in the season, handing the Green Wave a 34-24 loss in the Lower State Championship to advance to the state-title match. Both Summerville and **Hillcrest** have multiple state **wrestling** championships under their belt but this year marks the first time **Ashley Ridge** finished on top. In fact, the **Ashley Ridge** Baseball Program is the only other athletic program in **Ashley Ridge** history to have captured a state championship.

"In the second round, we escaped Carolina Forest with a five-point win," Woods said. "Then we had to wrestle at Lexington and they are unbelievable. Then we had to go to Summerville so we came here battle tested. We've been resilient and that is how we finished this match so I have nothing but the upmost pride and happiness for the guys, all our coaches, Athletic Director Randall Tucker, Principal Brooke Matthews and for our parents."

Momentum in the championship match began to shift in the Swamp Foxes' favor beginning with the 195-pound class.

"At 195 we kept them to a decision," Woods said. "At heavyweight we kept them to a decision and they were probably expecting to get six points out of that because their guy is ranked the top heavyweight in the state. To not give an additional three points to that guy was amazing. That gave our smaller guys an opportunity and we are really solid down there. I'm excited that our kids finished what they started because we worked hard all year."

Ashley Ridge dropped a decision at 106, but then JJ Marsar and Justin Mata both earned a major decision to pull the Swamp Foxes within three points of the Rams. That brought Ben Singletary to the mat and he thrilled **Ashley Ridge** fans as he earned a 12-3 major decision to clinch the championship and improve the Swamp Foxes' duals record to 16-1.

"I knew three points weren't going to do it so I went for the tech," Singletary said. "I've been a little sick so my cardio isn't up to standard, but I was able to push through and get that major. We had contributions from everyone today so I'm just so proud of this team. We worked hard this year and it's nice to see that to pay off."

Lower State Final

The atmosphere for the Lower State match at Summerville was even more exciting than the one at the state title match. The Swamp Foxes battled in front of a rambunctious, standing-room only crowd.

During that match, Diamond, Marsar, Mata, Singletary, Moretti, Maralit, Grace, Christian Garland and Weston Eadie all won their class for the Swamp Foxes.

Summerville's Kyle Combs, Jacob Cotterill, Xavier Anderson, Ryu Brown and Mason Ayers all won their class.

The match was not without controversy as one of Summerville's top wrestlers was ahead in the 140-pound bout when he was called for an illegal slam. His opponent was injured on the move, which led to the match being called so the points went to **Ashley Ridge**.

Ashley Ridge 27, Hillcrest 26

132 - Trent Smith (H) dec. Mason Maralit (AR), 8-4

138 - Rocky Moretti (AR) fall Parker Cheely (H)

145 - Hunter Jagodzinski (H) dec. Connor Wilson (AR), 9-7

152 - Keith Grace (AR) dec. Ethan Ellinger (H), 3-2

160*- Thomas Snipes (H) fall Cade Branham (AR)

170 - Jackson Harms (H) dec. Weston Eadie (AR), 3-2

182 - Austin Kilgore (H) fall Jackson Diamond (AR)

195 - Tyreek Johnson (AR) dec. David Prince (H), 6-5

220 - Christian Garland (AR) dec. Benjamin Gooch (H), 9-2

285 - Jacoreyn Byrd (H) dec. Terrance (TJ) Wilson (AR), 6-2

106 - Tyler Grindstaff (H) dec. Emery Dalton (AR), 11-4

113 - JJ Marsar (AR) maj.dec. Coby Cortese (H), 12-2

120 - Justin Mata (AR) maj.dec. A'sahi Lomax (H), 17-3

126 - Ben Singletary (AR) maj.dec. Colton Holmes (H), 12-3

* minus one team point for **Hillcrest**