

Fort Dorchester 30,

Summerville 29

The only lucky break **Fort Dorchester** caught was winning the opening coin flip. From there, the Patriots fought for every small advantage they could muster and earned their way to their first Class AAAA Lower State **wrestling** championship.

Competing on its home floor in front of an evenly split crowd of about 1,000 on Friday night, **Fort Dorchester** knocked off district rival and three-time defending state champion Summerville, 30-29, to advance to today's state championship match.

The Panthers will face **Hillcrest**, a 26-24 winner over **Fort Mill**, at Lugoff-Elgin High School at 6 p.m.

With hundreds of **Fort Dorchester** fans celebrating their victory on the **wrestling** mat, Patriots coach B.D. LaPrad looked more relieved than overjoyed, maybe because his top-ranked team has yet to win the big trophy.

"We'll take 10-15 minutes to enjoy this and then start getting ready. I'm really happy for the kids. They worked hard for it. They responded every time to what they were asked to do," he said. "I can't say enough about Summerville. They've represented our area with class and competitiveness through the years. I hope we'll go to state and represent our community the same way."

This was the second time in three years that the Patriots and Green Wave met for the Lower State title, but in 2005 the Patriots were a team on the rise that upset several playoff opponents. This time, **Fort Dorchester** took nobody by surprise and entered Friday's match as a slight favorite. The Patriots, however, had to guard against a Summerville team that was extra motivated to avenge a loss near the end of the regular season.

"It made us more intense," Patriots

senior Mel Capers said. "Summerville's a good team. We knew we had to perform at our best to beat them again. The momentum of winning early carried on. We all did good. Everyone did their job."

One of the keys to the match was the way **Fort Dorchester** was able to garner bonus points for quality victories early and limit losses at other key spots.

Senior Gerald Jenkins, a takedown artist, was expected to win the opening bout at 125 pounds, but he took his opponent down right to his back for a second-period pin and a 6-0 team lead.

Over the next few matches, Seiji Borja and Brent LaChance each picked up 4-3 decisions, and the Patriots had a 15-6 lead before hitting a critical point after six bouts.

The night had already started well when the Patriots won the coin flip that gave them control over what happened at the 160-pound weight class, where Summerville's Christian Johnson is ranked first and Patriot Mel Capers second. **Fort Dorchester** would be able to send Capers to the 171 bout.

Christian Johnson easily outclassed Kenoth Johnson but was unable to pin him. He could only earn five team points for a technical fall. Capers then faced Edwin Soto and picked up four points for a major victory and a 19-11 lead with six bouts remaining.

Summerville battled back as Willie Thomas picked up a pin a 189, and though Andre DeWeese lost against defending state champ Robert Quinn at 285 he saved the team two points by not getting pinned. Chris Grimes then pinned Rodney Scott at 103 to slice the Patriots' lead to 27-23 with two bouts left.

Patriots freshman Sonny Bugarin put an end to the rally and clinched the championship with a decision over Bryce Lowell.

Fort Dorchester forfeited the final bout and the celebration began.

Class AAAA Lower State Championship

FORT DORCHESTER 30, SUMMERVILLE 29

103-Grimes (S) pin Scott; 112-Bugarin (FD) dec. Lowell; 119-Ashby (S) by forfeit; 125-Jenkins (FD) pin Stanley; 130-Borja (FD) dec. Collins; 135-Dallas (FD) dec. Braecklein; 140-Oliver (S) dec. Gotter; 145-LaChance (FD) dec. Grooms; 152-Porter (S) dec. Tucker; 160-C.Johnson (S) tech. fall K.Johnson; 171-Capers (FD) maj. dec. Soto; 189-Thomas (S) pin Scales; 215-Nixon (FD) maj. dec. Montjoy; 285-Quinn (FD) maj. dec. Deweese.

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