

Chapin and **West-Oak** expected things to be close in Saturday's Class 3A state championship match at Dreher High.

It was down-to-the-wire, winner-take-all close.

West-Oak claimed its first state championship since 1994, the first in the dual-match playoff format era, with a 31-27 victory against the Eagles. **Chapin** took its first lead of the day, 27-26, on a decision by Eric Bidinger at 125 pounds, but the Warriors received a clinching, 22-8 win from sophomore Bill Sexton in the 130 finale.

"I just tried to stay relaxed and focused as the match came down to the end," said Sexton, who is ranked No. 7 at the weight by scmat.com.

"My teammates kept coming up to tell me they had confidence in me. I was a little nervous at first, but then I settled down."

Sexton finished the dominant performance with eight takedowns, but put Brown on his back only one time.

The real difference in the match was not in the last bout. The outcome hinged on six bouts that featured top-three wrestlers in those weight classes. **West-Oak** prevailed in all but one of the matches.

The biggest blows for **Chapin** came at 135, 145, 152 and 103. Nate Polly and Scott Swindell, both ranked No. 1, dropped decisions at 135 and 152. Third-ranked Cody Brundage fell at 145 and second-ranked Chandler Owens was upset at 103 by unranked Tim Rogers.

"We put our studs up against their studs, and they swung the match in their favor right there," **Chapin** coach Logan Kubik said.

"They got some close wins that could have gone either way. I'm proud of the way the kids kept battling and came back to take the lead, but bottom line was we didn't win enough of those key toss-up matches."

West-Oak, on the other hand, had no stumbles of note. Phillip Kern (No. 1 at 171) and Randy Warren (No. 2 at 160) won as expected, while No. 3 Nick Bower nipped Polly 5-4 in the 135 opener on a third-period takedown and No. 3 Matt Westbury beat Swindell 10-8 in overtime.

"We put our best kids against their best kids, and we got more than maybe we expected" Warriors coach Jeff Jordan said.

"We've been in close, tough matches all season, so we were ready for this. We knew it was going to be this close. It was all down to the team that made the fewest mistakes."

Trailing 18-3 after **West-Oak** won five of the first six bouts, the Eagles received a huge boost on back-to-back pins by Ryan Moore (189) and Brandon Owens (215), followed by another pin by senior star Stuart Hope (119).

Still, it wasn't enough.

Chapin finished with a 25-3 duals record, and is 0-2 in state title bouts. **West-Oak** completed its at 36-0.

135 – Bower (W) dec. Polly 5-4. 140 – Chase Owens (C) dec. James 8-5. 145 – Wellborn (W) dec. Brundage 8-5. 152 – Westbury (W) dec. Swindell 10-8 OT. 160 – Warren (W) dec. Stevens 9-1. 171 – Kern (W) dec. Lawrence 19-4 (technical fall). 189 - Moore (C) pinned Severence 2:52. 215 – Brandon Owens (C) pinned Smith 4:31. 285 - Taylor (C) dec. Kirk 4-1. 103 – Rogers (W) dec. Chandler Owens 7-5. 112 – Croney (W) dec. Smigelski 18-3 (technical fall). 119 - Hope (C) pinned Dickert 0:47. 125 - Bidinger (C) dec. Kern. 130 – Sexton (W) dec. Brown 22-8 (technical fall).

