

Fort Dorchester came about as close to winning a state **wrestling** championship as a team could without going home with the first-place trophy.

The Patriots, the top-ranked Class AAAAA team in the state rankings since the beginning of the season, had a 33-24 lead entering the final two weight classes of the S.C. 5A **Wrestling** Duals State Championship match Feb. 20 at Airport High School so they just needed to hold **Rock Hill** to 8 points or less in the last two bouts to claim the title. A pair of decisions simply wouldn't be enough for the Bearcats.

But **Rock Hill** won the final two classes by pin to take the score to 36-33 in the Bearcats' favor. **Rock Hill** was deducted a team point for unsportsmanlike conduct, but the Bearcats still pulled off a 35-33 upset over the Patriots.

"I'm still proud of our team," Fort Dorchester coach Andrew Young said. "We lost to a better team. Those guys were prepared and they went out there and got it done and we didn't. Hats off to them."

For more than a dozen seniors on this year's Fort Dorchester team, it marks their final shot at a team championship.

"I don't like to see those seniors go out like this, but they had an awesome career," Young said. "It's a bittersweet moment because while it's sad the way they are going out, they have the world in front of them so I'm excited to see what is next for them."

In the duals championship, Fort Dorchester earned bonus points in six weight classes, but so did **Rock Hill**. Fort Dorchester pinned opponents in two classes while **Rock Hill** pinned opponents in four classes.

Fort Dorchester won four of the first five weight classes to jump out to a 17-4 lead.

Fort Dorchester QuMari Jackson opened the **wrestling** with an 8-0 major decision in the heavyweight bout. Chandler Amaker then pinned his **Rock Hill** opponent in the 106-pound weight class for a 10-0 Fort Dorchester lead.

**Rock Hill's** Justin Beck claimed a 15-2 major decision at 113 to put the Bearcats on the board. The Patriots responded with a 9-5 decision by Joseph Brown at 120 and a 10-0 major decision by Jordan Aluyan at 126 for the 13-point Fort lead.

**Rock Hill** rallied, winning the next three weight classes. Bailey Wilkins won by technical fall at 132 and Andrew Simpson pinned his Fort opponent at 138. Then Michael Ramirez battled for a 2-1 decision over Fort D's Jaquan Hicks at 145 to give the Bearcats their first lead of the night.

Bonus points were exchanged in the next two classes. Fort Dorchester's Drew Parker won by technical fall at 152, but **Rock Hill's** Noah Reynolds pinned Johnathan Parker at 160. The pin was called with only one second remaining in the second period.

The Patriots regained the lead again when Dazjon Casto pinned his opponent at 170. Phaizon Myers won at 182 with a technical fall for the 33-24 cushion that had Fort fans on their feet cheering.

Unfortunately for those fans, the Bearcats closed the **wrestling** with a pair of second-period pins by Brandon Mills (195) and Zach Spicer (220) to clinch **Rock Hill's** 19th duals state championship.

Fort Dorchester has two state **wrestling** championships in school history, which were earned during the 2006-07 and 2009-10 school years under the leadership of head coach B.D. LaPrad. Young wrestled for three Summerville High School state championship teams, but he is still searching for his first team title as a coach.