

After losing seven all-state wrestlers from last season's Class 4A state championship team, few in the **Hillcrest wrestling camp** expected a repeat, especially in a rematch with No. 1 **Lexington**

But the Rams from Simpsonville pulled it off Saturday at Dreher, scoring a 27-26 decision over the Wildcats in a dramatic title match.

**Lexington** heavyweight Joey Perrotta was a 5-4 winner in overtime in the final bout of the match, tying the score at 26. **Hillcrest** was declared the winner on the sixth tiebreaker – the most technical falls. The Rams had one five-point win, **Lexington** none.

"This year was so much better because nobody expected this again and there was no pressure at all," **Hillcrest** coach Tommy Bell said. "Last year, we had all the pressure of being the favorite, and winning it was almost a relief."

Bell said the key wins were by first-year varsity wrestlers Grant Snyder (120) and Joel Madak (145).

"Those guys had their ups and downs this season, but they came up big tonight and made it happen for us. We had a game plan coming in, but we knew some things would have to go our way to have a shot. **Lexington** is better than us, and I'm not afraid to say that. They are more experienced and very tough, but we got it done."

**Lexington** knew what it was facing entering the final two bouts — needing two pins. Nate Meagher obliged at 220, and Perrotta, who came up so big earlier in the week in wins against Fort Dorchester and White Knoll, pulled out a win over Justin Boozer, but it was not quite enough.

"We knew after 195 what the scenario was likely going to be, and we had some time to go over the situation with Justin," said Bell. "He had to understand that if he lost by a regular decision, it would be the difference. But it was tough for him to just give up points and lose, so that dragged it out and made everybody a little nervous."

The Rams finished with a 21-2 record.

**Lexington** (30-3) will have to wait for another season to claim its first state championship.

"I'm not frustrated; it just wasn't meant to be," Wildcats coach Derek Strobel. "The guys all wrestled good, wrestled tough and I'm proud of them. We only lose three seniors, so we expect to be back here next year."

There were three overtime matches, and one decision by a single point. The teams split the four thrillers. The best was at 182, where **Hillcrest's** Bronson Delgado scored a 4-3 overtime win against Joe Degenova thanks to an escape with one second to go.

"There were a lot of close ones, and we lost a couple of swing matches," Strobel said. "In a match this close, it can all come down to the smallest margin of error."

106: Jackson Myers (L) dec. Alex Roberts 5-1. 113: Andy Szalwinski (L) dec. Sean Hogan 9-0. 120: Grant Snyder (H) dec. Blake Risinger 6-2. 126: Cody Bonham (L) dec. Jeremy Higgins 3-1. 132: Devin Horgan (H) dec. Russell Taylor 15-0 (technical fall). 138: Walker Barfield (L) dec. Nate Coy 5-0. 145: Jopel Madak (H) dec. Brandon Shepherd 8-4. 152: Caleb Brack (L) dec. Cheldon Dogan 13-5. 160: Ellison Sanders (H) pinned Alex Mayrides 3:47. 170: Landon Sayegh (H) dec. Dacus Fenchel 8-1. 182: Bronson Delgado (H) dec. Joe Degenova 4-3 OT. 195: Matt Errington (H) dec. Andrew Carnes 7-6. 220: Nate Meagher (L) pinned Jamar Goddard 1:19. 285: Joey Perrotta (L) dec. Justin Boozer 5-4 OT.