

Today's state championships

At Lugoff-Elgin High School

Class A

Chesterfield vs. Bamberg-Ehrhardt, 11 a.m.

Class AA

Walhalla vs. Loris, 1 p.m.

Class AAA

Eastside vs. North Myrtle Beach, 3:30 p.m.

Class AAAA

Hillcrest vs. Fort Dorchester, 6 p.m.

By Dawn Byers

Herald correspondent

LUGOFF - Decisions, decisions, decisions.

Friday's Class AAAA Upper State championship **wrestling** match was full of little decisions, and at the end of the evening, the last decision resulted in disappointment for the **Fort Mill Yellow Jackets**, who lost 28-26 to **Hillcrest**.

Between the No. 3 ranked Rams and the fifth-ranked Jackets, only two pins were recorded. The night's final match was forfeited to **Fort Mill** senior Michael Quinzi, ending his career with a hollow victory. The remainder of the matches were decisions.

The starting draw was at 152 pounds, which featured **Hillcrest's** No. 1 ranked Taylor Lance. Lance outlasted Mac Wells and posted a 3-0 lead for the Rams. A mid-second period pin by **Hillcrest's** Matt Devita put the Rams up 9-0, but **Fort Mill** got on the board quickly with a win by 171-pounder Max Simmons. Unfortunately for the Jackets, four more matches would be taken by the Rams before they got back into the mix.

Adding three points at a time, **Fort Mill** began its comeback with a lopsided victory by No. 1 ranked John Green at 112 pounds. Green, who kept the pressure on **Hillcrest's** Zack Moore, scored one the night's three major decisions by adding on a quick near-fall at the close of the third period. The Jackets would post four more wins - from James Brotemarkle at 119, Brandon Feix at 125, Cody Melton at 130 and Daniel Cruz at 135.

But the rally wasn't enough to get the Jackets a win. Michael Devita, at 140 pounds for the Rams, came on strong and put the cap on the Jackets' hopes, when he posted a 5-0 victory against **Fort Mill's** Chad Bonner.

"Chipping away with three points doesn't get you far enough," **Fort Mill** head coach Chris Brock said. "We won a lot of matches, but no pins. It wasn't the best draw for us at the start, but we showed a lot of heart in the comeback."

Though clearly dejected, Brock - whose Yellow Jackets have knocked on the door of the championship round five times - told his wrestlers he was "moving ahead" and that they should as well.

"You were tough even in losses and we will all make changes for next year," Brock told the group after the match. "I didn't think we would be here at the first of the year, but we are and we will get there."

Hillcrest head coach Tommy Bell, an assistant under Brock for four years before taking the **Hillcrest** job three years ago, was beaming with delight for his team. **Hillcrest** faces **Fort Dorchester**, a 30-29 winner over defending state champ Summerville, today at 6 p.m. for the state championship.

"I am still close to (**Fort Mill**), but I am back home and I am emotional about **Hillcrest** now," Bell said. "We are going to celebrate for about five minutes and then get ready for **Fort Dorchester**. We are ready to take our shot."

Between them, **Hillcrest** (22-3) and **Fort Mill** (25-3) had eight wrestlers ranked among the top three in the state in their weight classes. All but one - No. 2 at 130 pounds Aaron Petry, who lost in an upset by **Fort Mill's** Melton - won their matches. Melton, a junior, said he was glad about his accomplishment but disappointed with the overall outcome.

"I felt good when I got off the mat, but this is really disappointing, " Melton said. "We have come this close so many years. But I am fired up now for next year."

In the night's other matches, North Myrtle Beach bested Hilton Head 42-33, Loris knocked off Cheraw 40-32, Walhalla edged Crescent 34-26, and Eastside spoiled its opponent and host's Lugoff-Elgin's dreams with a 36-32 win.

HILLCREST 28, FORT MILL 26

(Starting draw was 152 pounds)

103 - Colin Horgan (H) dec. Colby Hice, 6-2. 112 - John Green (FM) maj. dec. Zack Moore, 12-1. 119 - James Brotemarkle (FM) maj. dec. Matt Garrett, 11-3. 125 - Brandon Feix (FM) dec. Tommy Cotton, 6-5. 130 - Cody Melton (FM) dec. Aaron Petry, 2-0. 135 - Daniel Cruz (FM) dec. Martin Taylor, 7-2. 140 - Michael Devita (H) dec. Chad Bonner, 5-0. 145 - Michael Quinzi (FM) forfeit. 152 - Taylor Lance (H) dec. Mac Wells, 13-6. 160 - Matt Devita (H) pin Mike Medema, 2nd. 171 - Max Simmons (FM) dec. Andrew Parker, 4-2. 189 - Sean Gaffney (H) dec. Cody Cunningham, 5-3 OT. 215 - Dustin Ledford (H) maj. dec. Thomas Vaughn, 14-6. Hwt. - Matt Broad (H) pin Garrett Passatore, :25 1st.

Records: **Fort Mil** 25-3; **Hillcrest** 22-3