

Cain Beard walked around the **Rock Hill** Bearcats **wrestling** room at practice Thursday afternoon. He resembled a bulldog looking for someone to bite while shouting instructions to his kids working on holds.

"Come on guys," Beard said. "They (Hillcrest) carried us at least three times last night. We have to do better than that if we want to win the state championship."

Taped to the wall behind Beard was an handwritten duals bracket on two white sheets of construction paper. It was crude, but served its purpose. The Upper State bracket was on one, the Lower State on the other. Each round was filled in with the winners.

But the round that has yet to be filled in comes at 6 p.m. Saturday. That's when the No. 1 Bearcats (32-2) travel to Ridge View High School and wrestle the No. 2 **Fort Dorchester** Patriots (24-1) for the Class AAAA state championship. **Rock Hill** got there last season, but lost 35-31 to Summerville, **Fort Dorchester's** biggest rival.

Beard thinks it could be a different story this year. Not because the Bearcats beat **Fort Dorchester** earlier this season, but because he's in his second year and his players have bought into what he preaches. And no, Beard is not as bad as his bark.

"I don't think we were mentally ready to win it last year," Beard said. "Getting back to the championship has been our goal since our first practice. The kids know what expect. They are at the point where we need to be to win it."

That one year of growing gave the Bearcats experience and confidence. The team has seven seniors, with capable, young wrestlers starting at the other seven weight classes.

The Bearcats have three wrestlers ranked No. 1 in the Class AAAA state poll - Weston Beck at 112 pounds, Chad Beck at 140 and Josh Tuck at 171.

"Being No. 1 in the state means nothing at this time," Tuck said. "Our team is No. 1 too, but until we beat **Fort Dorchester** and get a state championship ring, we haven't done anything.

"The hardest thing about **wrestling** goes on off the mat. You have to maintain your weight and you can't lift weights because it adds bulk. I stay away from sweets and fast food burgers during the season, and don't mess them one bit."

So do the Beck brothers. Chad is a senior and Weston is a sophomore, as is his twin, Seth, who wrestles at 119. They have an older brother, Travis, who was an individual state champion.

Weston said none of the three active Bearcats would dare walk into their house with a bag of candy or chips. That is a no-no, and the others, he said, would attack the offender and take the bag away.

"It gets kind of funny," Weston said. "During the season, if one of us walked to the refrigerator, the other brothers are looking to see what he's after. In a way, that's how we look after each other.

"Cutting weight is the hardest thing to do in **wrestling**. And I think **wrestling** is the hardest high school sport. You're one-on-one on the mat. Everybody is counting on you and you don't want to let them down."

Losing doesn't happen often when Beard's top three are on the mat. He said he expects them to win 98 percent of the time, and it's a comfort to know if the opponent gets on a run, those three will stop it because of where they are in the lineup.

And when those three win, it has a way of motivating those who wrestle behind them.

South Carolina has two state tournaments. Saturday's will crown a team champion. The other, coming up later this month, crowns individual champions in each of the 14 weight divisions, which run from 103 pounds to 285.

At last year's individuals tournament, Weston and Chad Beck won state championships. Their goal was for Seth to win, too, so they would be the first three brothers to win at the same state meet.

The other Becks worked hard to motivate Seth, who finished second last year.

Tuck didn't wrestle well at last year's qualifying tournament and failed to reach the state meet. This year, he's throwing opponents around like rag dolls.

"There are plenty of teams here at **Rock Hill High**, but I've decided to stick with **wrestling**," Tuck said. "We've got good coaches, a rich tradition and we are like a big family.

"Even with seven senior starters, the team will be good next year. We have guys who can step in to replace our seniors and get the job done. But our focus is on Saturday."

Chad agreed that the next task is the only match he's thinking about. Even though **Rock Hill** has a win against **Fort Dorchester** this season, the match will still be intense.

"You can bet it will be intense," he said. "We'll have to wrestle well in every weight class. They are a different team since we beat them.

"They've added some people to their starting lineup, but so have we. Saturday seems like a long way off. I'm ready to go right now."

Rock Hill has won 15 state championships, the last in 2000. **Fort Dorchester**, which opened in 1993, won in its only trip to the finals in 2007.

By 8:30 Saturday night, one team will add another.

Barry Byers 329-4099

* What: Class AAAA **wrestling** state championship

* Who: **Fort Dorchester vs. Rock Hill**

* Where: Ridge View High School

* When: 6 p.m. Saturday

* Tickets: \$6

* Directions: Take 1-77 south to Columbia. Get off at exit 27, Blythewood Road. Turn left at the top of the ramp, then go until the road ends. Turn left onto Main Street (U.S. 21). Look for Langford Road on your right less than 1/10 mile. Go right and stay on Langford about four miles. Turn right onto Hard Scrabble Road, and the high school will be approximately 3.5 miles on the right.

* Probable starting lineups:

Rock Hill Fort Dorchester

(Individual state ranking in parenthesis)

103 Kenny Porter (3) Brent Barfield

112 Weston Beck (1) Clement Metrejean (4)

119 Seth Beck (3) Sonny Bugarin (2)

125 Jake Grav (4) Alex Reddinger (6)

130 J.T. Charette (9) Wesley Dallas (1)

135 Rashard Durham (7) Michael Young (3)

140 Chad Beck (1) Seiji Borja (2)

145 Chase Ballard (13) Rodney Scott (12)

152 Dominique Jenkins (9) D.J. Ford (3)

160 Alan Hanson (10) Alex Bugarin (12)

171 Josh Tuck (1) Keyson Flores (8)

189 Duran McDonald Geno Porter (4)

215 Reuben Velazquez Adrian Stewart (2)

Hwt. Torree Fair T. J. Walker

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