

High School Wrestling Rules Changes Announced for 2008-09

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Bob Colgate

INDIANAPOLIS, IN (May 1, 2008) - The National Federation of State High School Associations (NFHS) Wrestling Rules Committee emphasized risk minimization and standardized procedures to assist both coaches and referees through 16 wrestling rules changes for the 2008-09 school year. Rules changes were made by the committee at its April 5-7 meeting in Indianapolis and subsequently approved by the NFHS Board of Directors.

The time sequence for the offensive wrestler in assuming the offensive starting position was standardized with the addition of a note to Rule 5-20-5. First, the wrestler must set the knee(s) and feet. Second, the wrestler must place the palm of one hand on the navel. Third, the wrestler must place the palm of the other hand on or over the near elbow. Fourth, the referee shall pause momentarily before starting wrestling. This rule change is meant to provide consistency for coaches, wrestlers and referees. While each action is currently standard practice, there has not been a written sequence of those events in the NFHS Wrestling Rules Book.

"These changes provide further rules support based on interpretations," said Bob Colgate, assistant director of the NFHS and liaison to the NFHS Wrestling Rules Committee. "The clarifications make the rules easier to administer."

With an emphasis on sportsmanship, the committee approved two rules changes meant to encourage sportsmanlike conduct by wrestlers and coaches. An addition to Rule 6-7-1c6 states that an unsportsmanlike act that occurs at anytime during the match shall take precedence over the first points scored in the regulation match in determining choice of position in the ultimate tiebreaker. So the wrestler whose opponent has received an unsportsmanlike conduct penalty at any time during the match will now have choice of position in the ultimate tiebreaker.

In addition, a change to Rule 5-31-1 removes the penalty for coaches whose wrestlers report to the scorer's table not in proper uniform, not properly groomed, not properly equipped or not ready to wrestle.

The addition of Rule 7-1-5w makes a back flip from a standing position an illegal maneuver. The rule was added as an effort to minimize risk to all wrestlers.

"Any time you're dealing with risk minimization in wrestling, it's paramount," Colgate said. "Someone could have been seriously injured if we did not take that initiative."

The committee also addressed the issue of skin conditions. A revision to Rule 4-2-3 allows an on-site physician to examine a wrestler with a particular skin condition without a physician's release form immediately after the weigh-in. A new Rule 4-2-5 allows a physician's release form for a non-

communicable skin condition, such as a birthmark or eczema, to be valid for the duration of the season, with some stipulations.

The committee also approved the following rules changes:

- A change to Rule 2-2-2 clarifies the boundary for the restricted zone for coaches.
- A revision to Rule 4-1-5 requires the wrestler's uniform to be worn as intended/designed by the manufacturer. This change gives rules support to a previous NFHS interpretation.
- Rule 4-2-1 will state that a wrestler's hair in the front, in its natural state, shall not extend below the eyebrows.
- A change in Rule 4-5-5 allows for a one-pound weight allowance when a competition is postponed for one calendar day or more due to inclement weather or unforeseen circumstances. The head coach, principal or athletic director of the opponent must be notified in advance to be granted the one-pound weight allowance.
- A change to Rule 5-15-3 gives referees the option to stop a match if there is no action at the edge of the mat and to restart wrestling in the center of the mat.
- A new addition to Rules 5-25-6c and 7-6-6c provides rules support for the interpretation of stalling as "repeatedly creates a stalemate situation to prevent an opponent from scoring."
- In Rule 6-6-1, when the wrong wrestler is given choice of position at the start of the first 30-second tiebreaker in overtime, the opponent will be given the choice at the start of the second 30-second tiebreaker. Previously, this would have been considered bad time.
- In Rule 7-4-1, the committee further defined unnecessary roughness by including ". . . a forceful slap to the head or face, and/or gouging or poking the eyes."
- The committee also approved a new signal for referees to indicate when to start recovery time during a match.

The committee adopted four points of emphasis for the upcoming season, including grooming and medical checks, reporting to the scorer's table ready to wrestle, going out of the wrestling area, and referees' signals and mechanics.

Wrestling is the sixth-most popular program for high school boys in terms of participants, with 257,246 boys wrestling in 9,445 schools throughout the country. It is also gaining popularity among high school girls, with 5,048 girls participating in 1,227 schools, according to the NFHS 2006-07 High School Athletics Participation Survey.

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