

2007-2008 Rule Changes

Wrestling Rules Changes Aim for Clarity

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INDIANAPOLIS, IN (April 16, 2007) -- In its ongoing effort to improve high school wrestling rules, the National Federation of State High School Associations (NFHS) Wrestling Rules Committee adopted several rules changes during the group's annual meeting March 25 and 26 in Indianapolis.

Although many of the changes focused on clarifying existing rules, the most notable change offers wrestlers an entirely new option. New Rule 5-20-5a allows an offensive wrestler to request a neutral position restart by signaling his desire to a referee.

"Most of the changes deal with clean-up and rule support, but the new rule regarding the neutral position start is a significant change," said Dave Gannaway, chair of the NFHS Wrestling Rules Committee.

Even though the defensive wrestler is awarded an escape if the offensive wrestler utilizes this option, the alternative still might prove advantageous to many participants.

"It gives wrestlers another possible choice from the offensive position," said Bob Colgate, NFHS assistant director and liaison to the rules committee.

Another new rule, 1-1-2a, gives tournament directors an additional option, allowing them to institute a random draw for the championship final matches in an individual regular-season or state championship tournament series. Previously, this option existed only in dual meets.

"This change would create a more consistent format for individuals to go along with team tournaments," Colgate said.

Rule 3-1-1 affords referees a new choice in attire, permitting them to wear a gray shirt with black pinstripes.

Most of the other modifications made by the committee could be classified as clarifications. Perhaps the most extensive change was made to Rule 8-2-1, which pertains to the use of injury time-outs during a match. The existing rule was lengthened substantially by the addition of seven new exceptions.

"Anytime you have a short rule, people can read into it," Colgate said. "We had a lot of states doing something different. Hopefully, now everybody will be on the same page."

The committee altered Rules 6-6-4a1 and 5a1, reverting to wording in the 2005 rules book, which specified that a scoring error by the timekeeper, scorer or referee can be corrected as long

the wrestler or coach remains in the mat area. No longer must a scoring correction be made before the start of the next period.

Rule 5-31-1 has been adjusted to penalize the head coach if a wrestler reports to the scorer's table and is not in proper uniform, not properly groomed, not properly equipped or not ready to wrestle.

"Head coaches should be accountable," Colgate said. "They need to have their athletes ready to compete as specified by the rules."

Rule 6-4-4 now specifies that any coach or contestant has the prerogative to default a match at any time by informing the referee.

The remaining rules changes made by the committee deal with protecting the physical health of wrestlers. The committee approved a new rule, 4-2-5, which requires wrestlers with braces or other special orthodontic devices to wear a tooth and mouth protector. The committee clarified Rule 4-2-3, which now states that a wrestler with a suspected communicable skin disease must have a physician fill out an approved form from either the NFHS or a state association affirming that the athlete's participation will not be harmful to any opponent before the participant in question is allowed to wrestle.

Prevention of communicable skin conditions was one of the chief points of emphasis issued by the committee for the 2007-08 season.

Correction of errors was another point of emphasis, as well as stalling.

"Stalling could be a point of emphasis every year," Colgate said. "It's really a work-in-progress."

The committee's final point of emphasis was sportsmanship, another aspect of athletics the NFHS frequently focuses on.

"The intensity and contact in wrestling often lead to things getting heated," Colgate said. "Sportsmanship has been improving, but it's still something we need to work on in the sport of wrestling."

Wrestling ranks sixth in popularity, according to the 2005-06 NFHS High School Athletics Participation Survey, with 251,534 boys participating last year. It ranks eighth for boys in school sponsorship, with 9,744 schools offering wrestling. An additional 4,975 girls in 1,081 schools are involved in wrestling.

About the National Federation of State High School Associations (NFHS)

The NFHS, based in Indianapolis, Indiana, is the national leadership organization for high school sports and fine arts activities. Since 1920, the NFHS has led the development of education-based interscholastic sports and fine arts activities that help students succeed in their lives. The NFHS sets direction for the future by building awareness and support, improving the participation experience, establishing consistent standards and rules for competition, and helping those who oversee high school sports and activities. The NFHS writes playing rules for 17 sports for boys

and girls at the high school level. Through its 50 member state associations and the District of Columbia, the NFHS reaches more than 18,500 high schools and 11 million participants in high school activity programs, including more than 7 million in high school sports. As the recognized national authority on interscholastic activity programs, the NFHS conducts national meetings; sanctions interstate events; produces publications for high school coaches, officials and athletic directors; sponsors professional organizations for high school coaches, officials, spirit coaches, speech and debate coaches and music adjudicators; and serves as a national information resource of interscholastic athletics and activities. For more information, visit the NFHS Web site at www.nfhs.org.