

1. Restrictions Placed on Coaches at Corners.

In tournaments at which coaches are permitted on the corner of the mat, the restricted zone shall be defined by either a contrasting line marked on the mat with paint or tape, or a contrasting colored surface under the chairs (2-2-2). The restricted zone shall be no closer than five feet to the edge of the circle.

While not all state associations allow coaches to move to the edge of the mat during tournaments only, many do. But those state associations have found that coaches are creeping forward, presenting a potential hazard to themselves, wrestlers and referees. Some state associations have mandated a visible line to mark the restricted zone, with great results. That has now become the national standard. Either paint or tape should be used to mark the mat, or a distinctive colored pad may be used if chairs are allowed on the corner of the wrestling mat.

Situation 1: Team A's head coach is kneeling on the edge of the mat. As his wrestler is placed into a near-fall situation, the head coach drops to all fours, with both hands well in front of the restricted zone line. The assistant referee notices the infraction.

Ruling 1: Continue the wrestling action for the near-fall/fall decision. At the next stoppage, the assistant referee should report the coach's infraction to the referee. The referee should then penalize the coach for unsportsmanlike conduct and deduct one team point if it is the team's first offense.

Situation 2: Same facts as in Situation 1, except Team A's coach makes contact with the opposing wrestler, allowing his wrestler to escape the near-fall situation.

Ruling 2: The referee should stop the match, disqualify the coach for flagrant misconduct, deduct three team points and remove the coach from the premises.

2. Uniform to be Worn as Manufactured.

Following the lead of other NFHS Rules Books, the Wrestling Rules Committee adopted rule 4-1-5, which requires that uniforms shall be worn as intended and designed by the manufacturer.

Some high school programs have meager resources. Small wrestlers were given a size medium singlet and have had to tape the straps together to hold it up, or they may have been given a size large singlet and needed to cross the straps behind their neck to hold the garment in place. With the new rule, that is now illegal.

Situation: A wrestler wants to compete wearing the singlet backwards.

Ruling: Whether the singlet is backwards, has crossed or taped straps or is otherwise improper, the penalty is the same one penalty point is awarded to the opponent and the injury clock is started, allowing the wrestler to make the needed adjustments to bring the uniform into compliance. The uniform must be worn as intended and designed by the manufacturer.

3. Hair Rule Revised.

Rule 4-2-1 in the *NFHS Wrestling Rules Book* has been modified to address the length of a wrestler's hair.

The hair, in its natural state in the front, shall not extend below the eyebrows.

By adopting that language, the NFHS Wrestling Rules Committee gave rules support to what many referees have been doing for years.

As long hair is coming back into style, long hair is causing interruptions in the wrestling action. To put an end to those needless interruptions, the standard is now set.

The rule is not intended to allow wrestlers to slick back or grease their hair into compliance during the medical and grooming inspection and then come onto the mat.

4a. Skin Condition Rule Clarified; Documents Must be Furnished.

Two rules regarding wrestlers' skin condition were addressed by the NFHS Wrestling Rules Committee.

Written documentation of a communicable skin condition shall now be furnished at the weigh-in at the dual meet or tournament. The only exception would be if a designated, on-site meet physician is present and is able to examine the wrestler immediately after the weigh-in.

A contestant may have documentation from a physician only indicating a specific condition such as a birthmark or other noncommunicable skin conditions such as psoriasis and eczema, and that documentation is valid for the duration of the season.

Documentation

Veteran coaches know that wrestlers with questionable skin conditions need written documentation that the skin condition is not communicable. Two veteran coaches, meeting each other at a dual meet will spend a few minutes on greetings and small talk and then say something like, "Hey, I've got two wrestlers who look bad, but here are the papers showing they are *OK*." That way, the other coach isn't tempted to challenge the wrestler at the weigh-in. The coaches, as well as the wrestlers, bear some responsibility to provide that documentation.

According to Rule 4-2-3, written documentation of communicable skin condition shall now be furnished at the weigh-in at the dual meet or tournament. Notice that the phrase, "or prior to competition," has been removed.

In states where the referees do not conduct the weigh-ins the documentation must be given to the official when he arrives in the locker room to conduct his/her pre-meet inspection.

With the addition, there are three words that bear some additional explanation.

- **Designated.** That means the meet manager has brought in a physician to monitor the meet. The invitation to the physician may have been made via a letter. Under no circumstances should a parent who happens to be a physician and who is in the stands be considered the designated on-site physician.

- **Immediate.** The intent is that the physician is at the weigh-in, ready to examine anyone questioned by the referees. But physicians are busy people; the physician might have stepped out of the weigh-in room to take a phone call or consult on a diagnosis. As soon as that call or event is over, the physician can immediately examine the wrestler. Emergencies happen. Perhaps the physician was in or witnessed an auto wreck on the way to competition and will be delayed 10 minutes. That emergency should not overcome the intent of the rule as soon as the physician arrives on site after the crisis, the wrestlers will be examined.

- **Physician.** The only acceptable form in New York will be the NYSPHSAA wrestling communicable skin disease form. It must be signed by a M.D. or D.O.

4b. Documentation valid for season.

Wrestling parents have long had to contend with getting their children re-examined several times during the season, if their son or daughter has a skin condition such as a birthmark, psoriasis or eczema.

Now, with the wording in Rule 4-2-5, that might be a thing of the past.

A contestant may have documentation from a physician only indicating a specific condition such as a birthmark or other noncommunicable skin conditions such as psoriasis and eczema, and that documentation is valid for the duration of the season. *It is valid with the understanding that a chronic condition could become secondarily infected and may require re-evaluation.*

Calling to make the appointment, getting time off work and school to make the appointment and the payments for a quick examination added stress to wrestlers and their families. Although the piece of paper is not to be considered a cure-all; for instance, the documentation may refer to a birthmark on the shoulder, but a skin problem on both legs still needs an examination. Also, a skin problem in the designated area could be a communicable condition.

Situation: Wrestler A has psoriasis on two spots on his body. Prior to the wrestling season, a physician documented that condition and its locations on the wrestler's body. Later in the season, just prior to an important dual meet, Wrestler A sees red splotches on a third location on his body.

Ruling: Wrestler A, his head coach, the opposing head coach and the referee can confer and discuss the skin condition. Unless there is a designated, on-site meet physician, the final decision rests with the referees. It is important to err on the side of safety, as that infection could quickly pass through both teams.

5. One Pound Allowance for Cancellation.

Two changes to Rule 4-5-5 address situations in which a meet must be postponed for weather or other circumstances. When competitions are postponed for one calendar day or more for reasons beyond the control of the participating school(s), wrestlers shall be granted a one-pound additional weight allowance. Whether it is snow, tornado warnings, heavy rains with possible flooding or some other extreme weather event, delays will happen. Without the competition or ability to practice, it is hard for the wrestler to maintain match fitness. Recognizing that, the NFHS Wrestling Rules Committee felt a one-pound weight allowance was the proper remedy.

While they will happen far less frequently than poor weather, other unforeseen reasons will cancel school. Most school districts have a provision that if school closes early, athletes can neither practice nor compete that day. The rule change also remedies those situations.

Situation 1: School A is scheduled to compete against School B on a Wednesday. The day before the meet (Tuesday), School B does not have school because of snow. School B asks for the one-pound additional weight allowance for the Wednesday meet.

Ruling 1: That event has been on the calendar for months and the snow is "beyond the control of the participating schools." There will be an additional one-pound weight allowance. There is no need for a minimum of 48 hours advance notice in that case.

Proper notification necessary. If there is going to be an additional weight allowance, the schools need to know that information. In the past, they made one phone call and hoped everything worked out for the best. But there were problems if the right people didn't get the message.

Not getting the message about the additional weight allowance at least 48 hours in advance gives one team a significant advantage. If there was no notification, or if the notification came less than 48 hours of wrestling, then no weight allowance will be granted at the weigh-in.

As part of the rule change, the language "a minimum of 48 hours advance notice is required for the opponents" was added. "The acceptable person(s) to receive that notice shall be the head coach, principal or athletic director."

Rather than speaking with the school secretary, the student serving as an intern or whoever was in the office, schools need to go the extra step to make sure the message gets through.

Situation 2: A week before the tournament, the host head coach e-mails the seven other coaches that will participate in next weekend's tournament. Six of the seven coaches reply to that message, and the host coach phones the seventh coach on Wednesday to confirm the additional weight allowance.

Ruling 2: That is acceptable. Whether via phone, fax, email or some other form, the important fact is that the right people got notified.

A one-pound weight allowance was added in the event of a school closing due to inclement weather or unforeseen circumstances, where wrestling practice(s) cannot take place due to school policies. The rule change also makes it clear as to who should be notified when weight allowance is justified.

6. Correction of Errors Rule Changed.

If the wrong wrestler is given the choice of position at the start of the second period or at the start of the first 30-second tiebreaker in overtime, no rewrestling is necessary. That change, which appears in Rule 5-1-4, simply corrects something that was left out of last year's rules book.

Situation: The wrong wrestler is given the choice of starting positions to start the first 30-second tiebreaker. The error is discovered after that tiebreaker is over.

Ruling: Rewrestling is not necessary. The other wrestler gets the choice of starting position to start the second 30-second tiebreaker, with no option to defer. If a fall occurs during the first 30-second tiebreaker, the match would be over as the wrestler who was not given proper choice would have had the second 30-second tiebreaker for choice not bad time.

A wording change appears in Rules 5-1-4 and 6-6-1. What may seem as a minor alteration has large implications for correcting errors. Under the new wording, the opponent may be given the choice at the start of the third period. The word "may" has replaced "will."

That change was vital to fix the problem in which the wrong wrestler is given the choice to start the second period and then pins the opponent. The interpretation now has rule support and the fall stands, with no rewrestling.

7. Referee May Stop Match.

According to a change in Rule 5-15-3, the referee may stop the match if there is no action at the edge of the mat and one wrestler is out of bounds. That change goes hand-in-hand with guidance found in Rule 5-25-1 which states,

"Each wrestler is required to make an honest attempt to stay within the 10-foot circle and wrestle aggressively."

Wrestlers know the advantages of wrestling on the fringes of the mat, while referees hear the constant cries, "Hey, ref! Make 'em wrestle." With those opposing thoughts, the NFHS Wrestling Rules Committee wants referees to have the ability to stop a match when one of the wrestlers is out of bounds and nothing was happening and place the wrestlers back in the center of the mat for a restart.

Many referees have been doing that for years. They now have rules book support.

8. Offensive Sequence Modified.

To combat the growing problem of quick starts or "rolling" starts (or the slow hand to the navel by the offensive wrestler), the National Federation of State High School Associations (NFHS) Wrestling Rules Committee added a new note to Rule 5-20-5 for the 2008-09 season.

The high school rule now has similar language that the NCAA uses for restarts. The sequence for the offensive starting position is to set the knees and feet, then place the palm of one hand on the navel and then place the palm of the other hand on or over the near elbow. The referee shall pause momentarily before starting wrestling.

Now, all wrestlers and all referees will follow the same sequence. The change eliminates the slow hand to the navel.

See New Photos 31-33, page 69 in Rules Book.

Situation 1: Wrestler A, as he/she has done for the last three seasons, places the palm of one hand on the near elbow and then places the other palm on the navel.

Ruling 1: That would be an incorrect starting position. According to Rule 8-1-3 and the Penalty Chart, the referee would issue a caution to Wrestler A. If Wrestler A has already had two cautions throughout that match, it would be a one-point penalty awarded to Wrestler B.

Momentary Pause.

The Committee decided not to set a time limit regarding what is "momentary." Just as swimmers and track athletes must get used to the cadence used by their officials, wrestlers will have to adapt to what the referee is allowing.

It is important that referees note that the rule reads, "pause momentarily." Do not allow quick restarts or rolling starts. That puts the defensive wrestler at a competitive disadvantage. Be consistent within your restarts. Talk about that pause in your association meeting.

Situation 2: Once both wrestlers are set for the offensive starting position, the referee silently thinks, "One thousand one" before blowing the whistle and giving the visible signal to start the match.

Ruling 2: That is acceptable. Whatever tool a referee uses to ensure a momentary and consistent pause is to be employed.

9. Repeated Stalemates Can Result in a Stalling Call.

Wrestlers who build a lead over the first two periods have used their strength, skill and talents to earn that advantage over their opponents. But they often shift to unfair tactics to make sure they don't lose that lead.

New Rules 5-25-6c and 7-6-6c spell out it is stalling when either wrestler repeatedly creates a stalemate situation to prevent an opponent from scoring

There are several methods of creating a stalemate. All are subject to being penalized for stalling.

Coaches and wrestlers need to remember one important thing: Most referees have also wrestled. They have been in the same setting ahead by a point with less than a minute remaining. They have also been down two points going into the final period and frustrated by an opponent who stalls to prevent any points from being scored. And they have been frustrated by the referee who won't call it.

Coaches might feel frustration themselves. One referee might call stalling on the second instance of creating a stalemate situation; another might wait until the third. In looking at the dictionary definition of "repeatedly" while formulating the rules, the NFHS Wrestling Rules Committee found "many times" and "constantly," but did not find a numeric equivalent.

Situation 1: With four seconds remaining in the first period, Wrestler B creates a stalemate situation to fend off a takedown attempt. The referee does not call stalling. Later, with a one-point lead and 12 seconds remaining in the match, Wrestler B again creates a stalemate situation and is not penalized.

Ruling 1: In that referee's judgment, those widely spaced incidents were not repeatedly creating stalemates and that referee was correct in not penalizing Wrestler B.

Situation 2: Wrestler A has a two-point lead with a minute remaining in the third period. During three consecutive restarts, Wrestler B aggressively wrestles to score points, but Wrestler A gets into a stalemate situation as quickly as possible. The referee calls stalling on the second instance and awards a penalty point on the third incident.

Ruling 2: That referee felt that three situations, within a short time span, was worthy of the warning and penalty.

10. New Signal for Recovery Time.

A new signal has been added to the Rules Book page 82, #6. The signal is the same as an injury timeout except your finger points down.

11. Don't Penalize Coaches if Wrestler Isn't Ready.

Last year, NFHS Rule 5-31-1 included a penalty assessed to the head coach when a wrestler reported to the scorer's table and wasn't ready to wrestle. The NFHS Wrestling Rules Committee has removed the provision that the head coach will be penalized for unsportsmanlike conduct when a wrestler reports to the scorer's table not in the proper uniform, not properly groomed, not properly equipped or not ready to wrestle.

The intent of the rule is the same as last year's rule regarding a wrestler reporting to the scorer's table with shoelaces that are not properly secured.

Situation: Wrestler B properly reports to the scorer's table, but is not wearing headgear.

Ruling: The referee should assess one match point and start the injury clock while Wrestler B gets proper headgear. The head coach will not be penalized for unsportsmanlike conduct this year.

12. Sporting Behavior Has Overtime Rewards.

The NFHS will reward sporting conduct by using that as a guide to determine the winner in dual meets.

According to Rule 9-2-2a, if the score in a dual meet is tied, the more sporting team will win. Flagrant and unsportsmanlike penalty points are the first tiebreaker.

The NFHS wants to extend that concept, so during individual matches; there is a benefit to sporting conduct if the match goes as far as the ultimate tiebreaker. If a wrestler received an unsportsmanlike conduct penalty at anytime during the match, the opponent will have the choice of starting position during the ultimate tiebreaker. The unsportsmanlike conduct penalty is to supersede the first points scored in the regulation match 6-7-1c 6.

Situation 1: In the first period, Wrestler A scores the match's first points via a takedown. During the second period, Wrestler A is penalized for unsportsmanlike conduct. The match remains tied through the regulation match, the sudden victory period and both 30-second tiebreaker periods.

Ruling 1: Wrestler B gets the choice of starting position in the ultimate tiebreaker. Even though Wrestler A scored the first points of the match, the unsportsmanlike penalty takes away that advantage.

Situation 2: Same facts as in Situation 1, except that during the third period, Wrestler B is also penalized for unsportsmanlike conduct.

Ruling 2: Since both wrestlers exhibited unsportsmanlike conduct during the match, the choice of starting positions reverts back to the first points scored during the match. Wrestler A would have the choice of starting position.

13. Back Flip is an Illegal Maneuver.

A renamed section and a new rule will appear in the 2008-09 *NFHS Wrestling Rules Book*. Rule 7, Section I, has been renamed Illegal Holds/Maneuvers. That action was needed to include Rule 7-1-5w. According to the change, a back flip from the standing position is illegal.

The NFHS Wrestling Rules Committee saw several video clips of wrestlers going through contortions to get out of holds, such as using a back flip. The Committee was unanimous in agreeing that was dangerous, not only to the wrestler performing the back flip, but with swinging legs, arms and strong momentum, dangerous to the wrestler who had a hold on the now-flying opponent.

One point will be awarded to the opponent for such an infraction.

"Any time you're dealing with risk minimization in wrestling, it's paramount," said Bob Colgate, NFHS Assistant Director and liaison to the Wrestling Rules Committee. "Someone could have been seriously injured if we did not take that initiative."

Situation: Wrestler A performs a back flip to get out of Wrestler B holding his right leg.

Ruling: The referee shall stop the match and award Wrestler B one penalty point for Wrestler A's illegal maneuver. The restart will be from the advantage position or neutral position, depending on the situation prior to the illegal maneuver.

14. Face Slap, Rough Acts Must Be Penalized.

With no doubt, wrestling is a tough sport. Bruises, scrapes, cuts, bloody noses and more are part and parcel of everyday wrestling. But the action does not have to be brutal.

In a move to take some of the unneeded brutality out of high school sports, the NFHS Wrestling Rules Committee altered Rule 7-4-1 to note that unnecessary roughness involves a forceful slap to the head or face and / or gouging or poking the eyes.

In cases of unnecessary roughness for instance, a forceful slap to the forehead when the competitors are in the neutral position the referee should stop the match and award one penalty point to the opponent. Recovery time may be needed for the opponent to "regain his senses." Referees retain the option to penalize the more serious offenses as flagrant misconduct.

Referees aren't given instruments to measure how many pounds-per square-inch such a blow generates, but the *Random House College Dictionary* defines forceful as "Full of force, powerful, vigorous ... acting or driven with force."

Most wrestling is fair and sporting. So, are there times when referees can expect to see forceful slaps? An opponent may want to show last year's district champ "who's boss" in the early moments of a match. In their first varsity match since coming up from the sub-varsity, the opponent may want to "welcome the newcomer" to the big time. A wrestler who falls behind by half a dozen points and gets frustrated, taking that frustration out on the winning wrestler.

Wrestlers who feel unjustly penalized by a referee know to hold their tongue toward the referee, but tend to take out their irritation on the opponent.

Referees should look for body-language clues and gauge the tenor of the match. While it may be impossible to prevent forceful slaps, they should be penalized.

Editorial and other Changes.

- Rule 3-2-2 Clarified that the assistant scorers are also responsible for circling first point(s) scored in the regulation match.
- Rule 4-2-4 Added the word “designated” to the description of the on-site meet physician.
- Rule 5-15-2b Added the words “is considered to be” for further clarification of the defensive wrestler’s shoulder of scapula as supporting points.
- Rule 5-16-3 Added an “(s)” to supporting point(s) for clarity.
- Rule 5-22-1 Further defined “Random Draw” based on the 2007-08 rules change.
- Rule 5-28-1 Deleted “Except for the false start or incorrect starting position” from description of Technical Violations.
- Rule 6-2-2 Clarified the proper reporting sequence as determined by the pre-meet dish toss in a dual meet.
- Rule 6-6-6 The words “will be made” were added for clarity in describing how the referee will communicate to the opposing coach on a rules explanation.
- Rule 7-4-3 Deleted the words “It would include, but” from the describing of flagrant misconduct.
- Rule 8-1-6 Added the words “an individual” before tournament to further clarify that any contestant disqualified because of flagrant misconduct I an individual tournament is not entitled to any points earned in that tournament.
- Rule 8-2-1 Clarified that time required to treat a preexisting medical condition or illness is also counted as injury time.
- Rule 8-2-8 Revised current rules language on bleeding and blood on uniforms.
- Photo #2 Added more detail to the description of the photo on what is a legal hair style by rule.
- Photo #3 Added a new photo of a legal hair style.
- Photo #31-33 Added three new photos to show the new time/position sequence for the offensive starting position.
- Photo #57 Added a new photo to illustrate an illegal front headlock without an arm encircled.
- Photo #84 Added more detail to the description of an illegal back bow by application.
- Photo #89 Clarified the rules reference as 7-2-2.

Points of Emphasis.

1. Grooming and medical checks.

Rule 4-2: The referee is required to visit each locker room to meet with the wrestlers in order to determine the legality of all equipment, protective pads, taping etc. Because of the number of pre-meet responsibilities, it is necessary to proceed in a businesslike manner that demonstrates to both coaches and wrestlers the efficiency with which the referee will administer the rules on the mat. There is absolutely no excuse for not getting into the locker rooms to take care of the necessary pre-meet duties.

Wrestlers are to be inspected in the uniform in which they will compete. They are required to remove their warm-ups. They are not required to lower their shoulder straps unless the official has specific concerns. Anyone being required to wear a hair cover will be inspected while wearing it.

Inspection should take place outside the view of spectators.

2. Going out of the wrestling area.

Rule 7-3-1: There are too many situations in which wrestlers use the edge of the mat in order to get out of a situation, when, in fact, they should be penalized for going out of the wrestling area.

The following three guidelines are sometimes helpful;

1. Is the wrestler who seems to be fleeing in jeopardy of being scored on?
2. Did he or she cover a great distance?
3. Was there a change in direction?

If one or more of these guidelines apply you may have a fleeing the mat situation.

Keep in mind it may sometimes appear that the wrestler is going out of bounds intentionally when in fact he is going in the logical direction of travel to get away from or counter his opponent. In these types of situations a referee must determine if that is the direction a wrestler would go regardless of his position on the mat and his proximity to the boundary line.

3. Reporting to the Scorer's table ready to wrestle.

In dual meets wrestlers shall report to the Scorer's table and be prepared to then go directly to the center of the mat, to begin the match. They should not report to the table and then return to their team bench. This could be considered delay of the match.

4. Referees' Signals and Mechanics.

Signals work best when they follow a certain order. Giving signals in the proper sequence is an important aspect of being a good referee.

Flashback: 2007-08 Rule Changes

In addition to studying the new rules for 2008-09, referees should reacquaint themselves with the changes made for the 2007-08 season.

Neutral position (5-20-6) An offensive wrestler may request a neutral position restart by signaling his or her desire to a referee. Even though the defensive wrestler is awarded an escape if the offensive wrestler utilizes the option, the alternative still might prove advantageous to many participants.

Last year many Officials were overly officious in penalizing for stalling when the wrestlers failed to inform them of their intention to give the escape to their opponent in a timely manner. Stalling should only be called in these situations when it is obvious to the official that the delay in informing him was done for the sole purpose of gaining a rest period.

Tournament draw (1-1-2) Tournament directors have the option to institute a random draw for the championship final matches in an individual regular-season or state championship tournament series. Previously, that option existed only in dual meets.

Gray shirts (3-1-1) Referees are afforded a choice in attire, as a gray shirt with black pinstripes is allowed. The referee's uniform consists of a short-sleeve knit shirt, with alternating black and white one-inch stripes; gray with black pinstripes; or an event provided shirt common to all referees at that event. All referees for the competition must be dressed the same way.

Injury time-outs (8-2-1) Pertains to the use of injury time-outs during a match. The existing rule was lengthened substantially by the addition of seven new exceptions. (For the sake of brevity, those seven exceptions will not be listed here.) These exceptions can be found in the 2008-09 Rules Book, on pages 43 and 46. A third injury time-out shall terminate the match. The opponent shall be declared the winner by default.

Fixing errors (6-6-4a-1 and 5a-1)

Wording reverted to that found in the 2005 rules: A scoring error by the timekeeper, scorer or referee can be corrected as long the wrestler or coach remains in the mat area. A scoring correction does not need to be made before the start of the next period.

Default (6-4-4)

Any coach or contestant has the prerogative to default a match at any time by informing the referee. That minimizes the risk for forcing a wrestler to return to the mat in order to default.

Braces (4-2-6)

Wrestlers with braces or other special orthodontic devices must wear a tooth and mouth protector.

POE'S

Prevention of communicable skin conditions, correction of errors, stalling and sportsmanship were identified as points of emphasis for the 2007-08 season.

Corrections to the Case Book and Manual.

1. Rule 3-1-4, Page 10: Delete “the head coach of wrestler A has a team point deducted for unsportsmanlike conduct as he has already verified that all of his wrestlers are properly equipped and ready to wrestler.
2. Rule 4-1-1, Page 11-12, Situation B: 10th line down delete “the head coach of team A is also penalized for unsportsmanlike conduct”.
3. Rule 4-1-1, Page 12, Situation C: **Delete** “and the head coach A is also penalized for unsportsmanlike conduct”.
4. Rule 4-2-1, Page 13, Situation B: After the words earlobe level **Add** “and in front the hair shall not extend beyond the eyebrows”.
5. Rule 4-2-4, Page 16, Situation A: **Delete** “start of competition” and replace with “completion of the weigh-in”.
6. Rule 4-3-3, Page 18: **Delete** “the head coach of wrestler A is also penalized for unsportsmanlike conduct”.
7. Rule 4-5-5, Page 21, Situation F: at the end of the first line change the word “match” to “meet”.
Page 22, Situation F: in the first line change the word “match” to “meet”.
8. Rule 5-11-1, Page 22: In the third line it now reads “a leg behind the leg of A” it should read “a leg behind the head of A”.
9. Rule 5-11-4, Page 25, Situation C: In the third and fifth line change the word “combination” to “situation”.
10. Rule 5-14-2, Page 26, Situation B: At the end of the paragraph **Add** “as well as 1 additional stoppage point for the defensive wrestler committing an infraction during a pinning situation”. Rule 5-11-2f-i.
11. Rule 5-14-2, Page 26, Situation C: Same change as above.
12. Rule 5-16-1, Page 28, Situation A: In the second line Replace the word “remain” with the word “finish”.
13. Rule 6-6-6, Page 40, Situation C: First word in the eighth line Replace the word “day” with the word “event”.
14. Rule 6-6-6, Page 42, Situation H: **Delete** “and the Head Coach penalized”.
15. Rule 7-4-2, Page 48-49, Situation B: In the last line it should read a “three point deduction” not a “two point deduction”.
16. Rule 8-1-1, Page 53, Situation B: In the tenth and eleventh line **Delete** “the Head Coach is also penalized for unsportsmanlike conduct and one team point is deducted from his or her team score”.
17. Rule 8-1-1, Page 53, Situation C: This ruling is incorrect. The match is started once the wrestler properly reports to the Scorer’s table. This match is obviously started which is evidenced by the fact that the wrestler’s opponent is already ahead in the match 1 to 0. Rule 5-13, describes a forfeit “when the opponent for any reasons, fails to appear for a match”. In the above situation the wrestler has not failed to appear and therefore this should be considered a default. The Rules Book definition is “a default is awarded when one of the competitors is unable to continue wrestling for any reason”.

Communication Begins with the Right Signals.

By, Bob Whitaker

Wrestling referees must have the ability to instantly and properly recognize the action taking place on and off the mat. Equally important is the ability to inform everyone about your interpretation of what just occurred. Using authorized signals, you must tell scorers, timers, coaches and spectators how many points were scored or what action you penalized. Practice your signals until they are clear, mechanically perfect and automatic.

Use the authorized signals as described and pictured in the NFHS Wrestling Rules Book. Non-standard signals should not be used for obvious reasons they cause confusion. For example, using your thumb to signal a point is an international signal. However, using your index finger is the only acceptable way to signal one point by NFHS rules.

Your position on the mat enhances your ability to communicate properly. Poor positioning inhibits clear signaling. That creates confusion for the scorer and timer. That is especially true when multiple points are scored. During a flurry of intense action, you must be in control of your emotions and display all points in the proper manner. It is also important for you to control your emotions when withholding a signal until the correct time.

Visualize the exceptional referees. Those referees rarely have major problems, discrepancies or conferences with coaches. Is it by accident? No, it is their confidence that makes their signals clearly understood. Those referees don't attract attention to themselves and therefore doesn't become the attraction. The information that they supply with their signals allows the attraction and attention to stay with the wrestlers and the action on the mat.

Common complaints.

Timers and scorers commonly complain about a few things: points missed because referees unintentionally hide their signals with their own body or face, that referees' fingers are held too close together and questions about whether the wrestler scored two or three points.

Fall points are probably the most abused signal. I use the term "abused" because most referees count much too fast in near-fall situations. The most common error is the perception that the wrestler has a five-count when barely three seconds have registered on the clock. That is especially frustrating for coaches and spectators who can clearly see the clock and the referee making the count. I'll cover one tip to help correct that problem later in the article.

Too often, referees feel that they must turn to face the scorer to signal points earned. That is especially true when awarding near-fall points. True, there are times you can get away with turning your back on the action and nothing happens. However, that small void in attention has probably caused a problem in most referees' careers. They quickly became aware that they were the only person in the gym that didn't see what just happened and it wasn't good!

Flamboyant referees create different problems when they get excited during a flurry of action. Their loss of control and excessive displays of emotion cause the wrong signal to be shown. When that occurs, it creates larger problems. Already flustered, they have to respond to the criticism and have to take the point away and correct the mistake. Maybe they have to give the point to the opposite wrestler.

To do that, referees must stop the match, sort out their mistake and explain their call. That causes unnecessary swings of emotion with the participants, coaches and spectators. All that is done in a tense atmosphere, often accompanied by hurtful comments.

Some suggestions might help you achieve the common goal of referees signaling consistently throughout the match. During your training years, learn to communicate signals clearly by using the pictorial pages in the *NFHS Wrestling Rules Book*. Make your signals crisp and clear. Get your arm up so that it is visible to the scorer's table. Lock your elbow when counting seconds. Hold your fingers apart when signaling points. Slowly rotate your wrist once or twice it's easier for scorers, timers and coaches to differentiate the called signal as they see it from the proper angle.

You already know that when near-fall situations occur, sometimes it's almost impossible to make a visual hand count. As mentioned above, try locking your elbow on each count. You'll be surprised that it actually takes a full second to extend your arm, lock your elbow and return your hand to your chest. Repeat that sequence until the near-fall situation ends or you reach a five second count. That's the tip needed to prevent you from getting to five while the clock shows three seconds elapsed.

Keep the number of points earned (two or three), on your fingers on the mat until the near-fall situation ends. Then, without turning away from the wrestlers, hold the scoring arm up and over your head. Using that procedure helps cut down the common error of counting too quickly. To help you break the habit of turning toward the scorer's table, do some self-talk. Choose an object on one wrestler and focus on it while you signal the points to the table. Say to yourself as you prepare to signal, "I'm going to watch the defensive wrestler's headgear until I bring my arm down." It may take several matches to break the habit, but soon you will gain the confidence that the scorer's table will see your signals without you having to look at the scorer.

Practice in front of a mirror. That's the low-tech version. See how you appear each time you use a hand signal. Are your signals crisp and clear? Go through each sequence of signals as they might occur in a match. Stop the match. Start injury clock. Start blood clock. Start recovery clock. Those are four distinct signals. Pause between each one to allow the scorer's table to clearly understand what you are trying to convey.

Anticipate a flurry of points and practice how you would show points scored by both wrestlers. Green near fall, three points. Red reversal, two points. Out of bounds. Neutral position restart. Those are four distinct signals. One-handed signal with the left hand. One-handed signal with the right hand. Two handed signal to show out of bounds. Another two handed signal to show the neutral restart position. As you practice in the mirror, ask yourself, "Do I look professional? Am I sloppy?"

If you have the availability of a friend and a video camera, ask the friend to film a match or two. You might be surprised to see how others perceive you because now you see yourself as others see you. To make that filming more effective, have the friend do it at random intervals throughout an all-day tournament. That way, you'll never know when the camera is on you.