
2016-17 POINTS OF EMPHASIS

The NFHS Wrestling Rules Committee and the NFHS Board of Directors believe there are areas of interscholastic wrestling that need to be addressed and given special attention. These areas of concern are often cyclical, some areas need more attention than others, and that is why they might appear in the rules book for consecutive editions. These concerns are identified as “Points of Emphasis.” For the 2016-17 high school wrestling season, attention is being called to: communicable skin conditions and skin checks, control, arm trap and sportsmanship. When a topic is included in the Points of Emphasis, these topics are important enough to reinforce throughout the academic year because they are not being given the proper attention.

COMMUNICABLE SKIN CONDITIONS AND SKIN CHECKS

Communicable skin conditions continue to be a major concern in wrestling, in part because of recent MRSA and Herpes Gladiatorum outbreaks. If a participant has a suspected skin condition, NFHS Wrestling Rules require current, written documentation from an appropriate health-care professional stating the athlete’s participation would not be harmful to an opponent. Cold sores are considered a skin lesion and are subject to the communicable skin condition rules.

The NFHS has developed a form that can be used for that documentation, and several state associations have adopted similar forms for use in their states. Regardless of the form used, it is imperative that ALL coaches perform routine skin checks of their wrestlers and require any wrestlers with a suspect condition to seek medical attention and treatment.

It is also imperative that ALL referees perform skin checks – or verify that skin checks have been done by a designated, on-site meet, appropriate health-care professional – as part of their pre-meet duties prior to EVERY dual meet and tournament. If there is a suspect condition, the wrestler or coach MUST present the proper clearance form at the weigh-in for any dual meet or tournament in order for the wrestler to be allowed to compete.

The only exception to the requirement of the proper clearance form would be if a designated, on-site meet, appropriate health-care professional is present and is able to examine the wrestler either immediately prior to or immediately after the weigh-in. The designated, on-site meet, appropriate health-care professional has the authority to overrule the diagnosis of the appropriate health-care professional who signed the proper clearance form presented to the referee at the weigh-in.

One of the keys to preventing the spread of communicable skin conditions is for coaches and referees to fulfill their responsibilities professionally. It is, however, only one of the keys.

The other and equally important key is proper prevention. While prevention can

be complicated, in most cases it only requires that a few basic steps be taken by ALL involved in the sport.

- Educate coaches, athletes and parents about communicable skin conditions and how they are spread.
- Clean wrestling mats daily with a solution of 1:100 bleach and water or an appropriate commercial cleaner.
- Maintain proper ventilation in the wrestling room to prevent the build-up of heat and humidity.
- Clean all workout gear after each practice including towels, clothing, head-gear, shoes, knee pads, etc.
- Require each wrestler to shower or use a body-wipe after each practice and competition. Do not share bars of soap. Use individual soap dispensers.
- Perform daily skin checks to ensure early recognition of potential communicable skin conditions.
- Refrain from sharing razors or other personal hygiene supplies.

Covering an active infection does not meet the requirements of the NFHS wrestling communicable skin condition rule for competitions. An active infection shall not be covered in practice either.

It is a coach's professional responsibility to ensure that skin clearance forms presented by his or her wrestlers are legitimate and reflect the athletes' true conditions. Coaches and referees all play a vital role in controlling communicable skin diseases. They must err on the side of what is best for the health of all involved in the sport when dealing with communicable skin diseases.

Referees are the last line of defense in keeping wrestlers with communicable skin diseases off the mat. The safety of all who step on a competition mat is at stake. Coaches must realize that referees would not be placed in a position to make difficult participation decisions if coaches would perform skin checks on all of their wrestlers each day.

NFHS Wrestling Rule 3-1-4a states that "Before a dual meet begins, the referee shall perform skin checks or verify that skin checks have been performed by a designated, on-site meet, appropriate health-care professional."

NFHS Wrestling Rule 3-1-5a states that "Before an individual, combination or team advancement tournament begins each day, the referee shall perform skin checks or verify that skin checks have been performed by a designated, on-site meet, appropriate health-care professional." The skin checks should take place by referees or a designated, on-site meet, appropriate health-care professional at weigh-ins whenever possible.

In reference to multiple-day competitions, communicable disease "skin checks" shall take place at weigh-ins each day. Checking skin on the first day only is not an acceptable practice regarding the communicable disease detection procedure.

NFHS Wrestling Rules 4-2-2, 3, 4, 5 are very specific concerning a contestant

who is suspected of having a communicable skin disease. It is the responsibility of the contestant, parents, coach and referee to identify a possible communicable skin disease and then have an appropriate health-care professional evaluate the condition if possible. Similarly, it is everybody's responsibility (coaches, referees, appropriate health-care professionals and tournament administrators) to ensure that all wrestlers are competing in an infection-free environment.

For more detailed information, refer to the "Skin Conditions and Infections" chapter in the NFHS Sports Medicine Handbook. Also, please refer to the following two NFHS Sports Medicine Advisory Committee (SMAC) documents: "General Guidelines for Sports Hygiene, Skin Infections and Communicable Diseases" and "Sports Related Skin Infections Position Statement and Guidelines." Both of these NFHS SMAC documents can be found on the Sports Medicine page on the NFHS website at www.nfhs.org.

CONTROL

Control is the very essence of the sport of wrestling. Simply stated, control occurs when an individual wrestler has gained control of his opponent in such a way that he or she has restraining power over them. A wrestler who has control over an opponent is in a position of advantage. Control has three phases – gaining, losing and changing. All three phases allow each wrestler an opportunity to score points. Wrestling is an extremely quick and fast-moving sport where control is gained, lost or changed in a matter of seconds. It is important that contest officials frequently hone their skills to be able to identify the various phases of control. Wrestling boasts specialists in various aspects of the sport. As one example, "takedown specialists" are known to accumulate points for taking their opponent to the mat frequently, not being able to get a fall or near fall but will use a strategy to outscore their opponent by means of repeated takedowns. The more familiar an official is with the various moves and maneuvers, the more valuable they will be to the young people they serve in this wonderful sport.

ARM TRAP

The rear-standing position with a trapped arm should be considered potentially dangerous and should be monitored very closely by the referee. Coaches, officials and competitors should be aware of the potential for injury in this situation if the defensive wrestler is returned to the mat and has no arm available to break his/her fall. Although a number of safe scoring opportunities may come from this hold, coaches, officials and competitors should must work together to educate and ensure that wrestlers are returned to the mat safely. Officials should pay special attention to the wrestler who is lifted off the mat with a trapped arm. In all situations, returning a wrestler to the mat in a controlled fashion should be one of the highest priorities.

SPORTSMANSHIP/GOOD SPORTING BEHAVIOR

When surveyed, young people have indicated that their primary purpose for participating is to “have fun.” Winning is further down the list of expected outcomes. The beneficial effect of activity/athletic participation is annually researched as a good and healthy experience and is a precursor for future success in life. We all have a vested interest and role in preserving the positive benefits that young people experience when playing high school sports.

Officials and coaches need to work together. Each match is another opportunity for coaches and officials to teach not only wrestling, but also model good sporting behavior as well. The positive values that are learned will serve the wrestlers long after their wrestling experience has concluded. Match situations typically provide a coach the opportunity to identify a teachable moment to reinforce good sporting behavior.