

Wrestling Points of Emphasis - 2024-25

BY NFHS ON September 24, 2024 | WRESTLING, RULES

The NFHS Wrestling Rules Committee and the NFHS Board of Directors believes 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 2024-25 high school wrestling season, attention is being called to: Stalling and Stalemate, Dangerous Maneuvers and Holds, Proper Terms: Default, Medical Forfeit, Forfeit, Referee’s Duties and Imminent Scoring. 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 needed.

Stalling and Stalemate

The act of stalling is an intentional act(s) of avoiding aggressive wrestling. The emphasis of stalling is reinforced by the numerous rules and assignment of its own penalty chart to penalize inactive behavior by a wrestler. The referee warns the offending wrestler(s) and if continued, subsequent penalties are invoked. However, a stalemate is considerably different. Both wrestlers are aggressively wrestling and are interlocked in a position other than a pinning scenario, in which neither can improve their respective position(s). The referee stops the match and wrestling shall resume from the center of the mat.

Dangerous Maneuvers and Holds

In the purest form of wrestling, two similar-sized athletes use their strength, guile, ability and repertoire of moves to control and dominate their opponent. NFHS rules have always made moves and maneuvers that intentionally injure or punish a wrestler illegal, and work on removing them from our sport. Some moves, maneuvers and holds are starting to filter down to our level from other influences that are not education-based athletics. The NFHS disapproves of any move, maneuver or hold that intentionally injures limbs, joints, penetrates any body cavities or renders a wrestler unconscious. Allowing those techniques to infiltrate into our sport is irresponsible, dangerous and in certain jurisdictions illegal.

No one wants to drive any students out of the sport. If parents are not confident that their children are in a well-managed risk environment, then they will not let them participate. That would be devastating to a sport that we have already seen a trend of declining participation numbers. We need to do everything possible in our schools to attract more students and retain them in our programs. Eliminating questionable moves, maneuvers and holds is the first place to start. Regardless of your role as either coach or referee, you must work together to keep certain techniques out of our sport.

Wrestling is one of the oldest sports in the world. The benefits of participating are phenomenal in developing high school students to better understand their bodies, appreciate discipline, be self-reliant and develop toughness that will be a life skill that they will use their entire lives. Let us direct our attention to preserving our sport for many more generations to come.

Proper Terms: Default, Forfeit, Medical Forfeit

In the purest and simplest form, a default is awarded when a wrestler is unable to continue

wrestling for any reason. The match has started and they cannot continue to wrestle anywhere during the match. The opponent wins and the defaulting wrestler receives the loss. A forfeit is when an opponent fails to appear for a match for any reason. Their opponent shall be present in a legal uniform on the mat, ready to wrestle. The forfeiting wrestler takes a loss on their record and is out of competition. With the introduction of the new category of Medical Forfeit, if the forfeiting wrestler cannot wrestle due to an injury or illness that occurred during the tournament. The wrestler remains in the tournament if possible (moving down to the consolation bracket) and does not take a loss on their record. This entire designation is determined by the tournament director after consultation with the on-site appropriate health-care professional and the coach of the injured or ill contestant. All three actions cease wrestling for different reasons and have unique consequences.

Referee's Duties

The role of the referee is an integral part of the sport of wrestling. The essence of the sport is based upon the interpretation, judgment and execution of the rules. The referee has the authority to make rulings based upon their high school experience and mastery of the NFHS Wrestling Rules. Besides rule expertise, the referee has other important duties to ensure that all participants have a fair opportunity to compete in a space that limits their physical risks. In addition to skin checks and grooming, reviews with scorers and timekeepers, checking the legality of special equipment, uniforms, pads and taping, the referee is responsible for making sure the mat, mat areas and their markings are compliant with the rules. The referee conducts an inspection by walking around the area and visually making sure that the facility is in a reasonably safe condition. The referee is the protector of the competitors from rule compliant uniforms, equipment to appropriate mats. The role of the referee is unique and extremely valuable for all the participants, coaches and supporters.

Imminent Scoring

Imminent scoring is typically referred to a situation where one wrestler is on the verge of scoring point(s). This is because either one of the wrestlers is in a position to score a takedown, reversal, escape or near-fall, all available methods to scoring points in a wrestling match. The term "imminent" implies that the scoring opportunity is immediate or very close to happening. The term is often used by coaches and participants to describe a crucial moment in a match where a wrestler has a clear opportunity to score points and take control of a match.