

MECHANICS

Positioning: Mechanics are, for the most part, positioning. The official is always in position to:

- 1 – stop action for potentially dangerous situations;
- 2 – properly view the action;
- 3 – make appropriate calls;
- 4- stop action for penalties when appropriate;
- 5 – call near falls and falls;
- 6 – be in the correct position to stop out-of-bounds situations.

The official always keeps an appropriate distance from the action. He is far enough away during times of action to allow for a good overall view. He always works to the “short side” of the mat, the side of the mat on which the wrestlers are closest to the out-of-bounds line. By assuming this position, not only does his physical presence encourage the wrestlers to stay in bounds, but it also gives him the ability to cut down the mat by decreasing the distance he must to follow the action. He positions himself in out-of-bounds situations so that he is at a distance and angle that allows him to determine control and evaluate the supporting parts of the wrestlers. Usually, he is observed straddling the out-of-bounds line; but, he knows that this may not be appropriate if he is concerned about a possible injury occurring due to action continuing onto the floor. When an out-of-bounds is imminent, the referee shifts his focus to the wrestlers’ supporting points.

When setting the wrestlers in the referee’s position, the official stands in front and slightly to either side of them. He maintains eye contact with both the timer and the scorekeeper.

When looking for a fall, the official positions himself in the front of the defensive man’s head and shoulders. If the view in front is obscured, he generally takes a view through the defensive man’s hips. The official keeps at least 3 to 5 feet away and never reaches in to touch the shoulders or to feel for the pin!

During injury time-outs, the official stands near the injured wrestler and monitors the situation.

Movement: Movement is related to both positioning and anticipation; therefore the official has the ability to keep up with the action at any speed. His movement always has a purpose; it places the official in the proper position at the proper time.

Anticipation: As a result of experience and knowledge, the official can foresee the potential of any action. Generally, “running” after an action is a result of poor anticipation. The official anticipates where the action will end and is in position when, or even before, the actions occur.

Since the safety of the contestants is our #1 priority, the official anticipates actions, situations, and holds that may be potentially dangerous or illegal. The official will not always stop the action, yet he is in a position to do so if necessary and close enough to verbally caution the wrestlers of a potentially dangerous situation.

Besides recognizing and anticipating potentially dangerous situations, the official also anticipates situations that may become emotional. In hotly contested matches, the official always knows preventative actions to head off any abusive or unruly activity.

Match Procedures: The official always follows the proper mechanics at the beginning, during, at the end of the match and throughout a dual meet or tournament.

When the wrestlers arrive in the center of the mat, the official gives him a quick visual check for proper equipment.

Before the match, the official completes his pre-meet duties covered in the case manual and handbook and checks with both the timer and scorekeeper to see if they are ready. When stopping the match, the official maintains visual contact with the wrestlers in case they do not respond to the sound of his whistle. In cases of extreme crowd noise or confusion, he maintains a position close enough to the wrestlers to enable them to hear the sound of his whistle easier. In extreme situations in which the wrestlers cannot or will not respond to the sound of the whistle, the official is ready to physically “tap” both wrestlers. The official quickly returns to the center of the mat from out-of-bounds, keeping his eyes on the wrestlers as they return to the center.

When setting the wrestlers in the correct starting position or when restarting them in the referee’s position, the official makes sure that the correct wrestler is down and in a stance that enables the offensive wrestler to assume a correct starting position on top.

SIGNALS

Visual: The official only uses the adopted National Federation signals. When awarding points, he holds up the hand with the appropriate colored wrist band high over his head and rotates it slowly so that the number of fingers may easily be seen at all angles. In each case, his hand comes up quickly and decisively as soon as the action warrants.

When signaling an out-of-bounds situation, the official throws his hands out to the side without hesitation. When there has been a situation that has taken the wrestlers out-of-bounds after they have first stepped out, he indicates that they were out-of-bounds by pointing to the line and then signaling no points.

When a wrestler is stalling the official calls it without hesitation. He indicates this by raising his hand with the corresponding colored wrist band high over his head with a closed fist and announces stalling publicly. When calling stalling, it is extremely important that the official visually and verbally explain to the offending wrestler why he is being called for stalling.

When asking a wrestler for his choice of position at the start of the 2nd or 3rd period, the official turns to the wrestler who has the choice and visually and verbally indicates his choices. He does this by asking something to the effect of "Your choice, top, bottom, neutral or defer" (this last choice is only asked in the 2nd period). At the same time he signals with the corresponding colored wrist band (palm open) up, down, neutral or defers. If the wrestler's choice is to defer, the official uses a crossing motion with his hands in front of his body (indicates defer) and then asks the other wrestler his choice of top, bottom, or neutral. He indicates with his colored disk who made the choice and what it is.

When calling a near fall, the official (when possible) counts out loud and simultaneously (palm open) moves his hand slightly upward from his chest to a fully extended position. When calling a fall, the count is silent and there is no visual signal. Once a fall has been established, he blows the whistle and slaps the mat.

Verbal: The volume, intonation and intensity of verbal signals communicate both information and confidence. The verbal instructions used by the official are only those adopted by the National Federation. He always knows the proper terminology and the appropriate time and place to use it. The official, in order to promote activity, offers such verbal comments as: "center", "action", and "contact".

Volume is generally dictated by the intensity of the match and crowd noise. In a fast paced match, the official often finds it necessary to increase the volume of his verbal signals in order to counter the difficulty the wrestlers will have in following the sound. In matches where crowd noise may interfere with the ability of the wrestlers and coaches to hear, the official increases the volume appropriately. The official knows that his overriding priority is to communicate with the wrestlers.

The official not only communicates information, he is also communicating his own authority, confidence, and self-assurance. Therefore, his intonation of verbal signals is in the form of stimulation and command; not in the form of pleading and questioning.

Demonstrative: This describes how the official carries out his actions rather than describing the actions themselves. It measures the forcefulness of his actions. This is often indicated by the speed at which the official makes his signals and the purposefulness of his actions. This indicates his level of confidence. There is a fine line between confidence and arrogance and the official always strives to maintain the highest level of professionalism.

Whistle: Since the sound of a whistle starts and stops all action, it should always be clear and precise. The official's whistle is loud enough for all involved parties to hear and is never faltering.

When starting the wrestlers, the sound of the official's whistle is coordinated with the movement of his hand, particularly in the case of matches involving hearing impaired wrestlers.

RULES APPLICATION

Understanding: The official has an excellent knowledge of the rules. He does not necessarily cite each rule by line and verse, but he knows each rule and when to apply it. He recognizes all infractions and knows the penalties for each and their sequence. Particularly in areas of potentially dangerous, dangerous, or illegal holds, the official instantly recognizes the situation and what action to take. He is able to translate the stated rules to the actions occurring on the mat. The official not only knows the literal interpretation of each rule, but also strives to know something about the intent, or why the rule was written. Intent deals mainly with the philosophy of the rule and an official knows something about the evolution and history behind a particular rule. He usually obtains these from attending clinics and working with the state rules interpreter.

Spirit: In cases where the action does not call for an exact translation of a rule, the official judges the situation on the basis on fair play and good sportsmanship. The “Spirit of the Rule” or “Rule of Good Sportsmanship” is used by the official.

Common sense and good judgment are essential parts in understanding the spirit of each rule. An example of such a situation and how the “Spirit of the Rule” might apply: a small child wanders onto the mat while action is underway. The official quickly decides many things: how much a distraction or disturbance the child created to either wrestler, how much of the hold or action was completed before he had to stop the match or would the hold or action have been completed under any circumstance. In this situation there can be no definitive answer. Each situation is taken on a case-by-case basis.

JUDGMENT

Determining Control: The determination of control can sometimes be difficult. The official determines this control in a decisive and consistent manner. In attempted escapes that go out-of-bounds or are not completely finished before the end of the period, the official makes a decision on control instantly at the out-of-bounds or as the period is terminated. He always applies good judgment.

In reversal or escape situations, the official focuses on the offensive wrestler and determines if he is able to maintain control over the defensive wrestler. He is looking for the defensive wrestler to establish neutrality or dominant control, rather than the offensive wrestler having lost control.

Consistency: Since judgment is the official's overt application or interpretation of the rules, the official is able to carry out that judgment consistently from the beginning of the match until the end or throughout a tournament. He mentally evaluates the criteria that must be met in order to make a call and uses the same evaluative procedure and criteria each time that call is made.

Edge of Mat: In situations that involve action along the edge of the mat, the official is able to position himself and determine out-of-bounds, who initiates the action, who hinders the action and who is using the edge to gain an unfair advantage and penalizes accordingly.

STALLING

Recognition: The official has an intimate knowledge, insight, and understanding into the sport of wrestling. He is therefore able to recognize the dynamics, philosophies, and tactics of stalling and insists that both wrestlers work to improve their positions, work for a pin, takedowns, escapes, etc.

It is rare for both wrestlers to be attacking equally. There is often an ebb and flow within a match. The official determines who is working harder, or even, who is working more sincerely.

He is able to recognize the difference between sincere effort and those actions that are meant to make the wrestler look busy or that are fake and is able to discern between a wrestler who is unable to execute a move and one that can execute but will not. Many officials wrongly call the inferior wrestler for stalling.

Consistency: The actions or inactions that would warrant a stalling call at the end of a match should also be penalized at the beginning. The official establishes a standard that is applicable throughout a match, dual, or tournament. Although the situations, pressures, and flow will vary, the criteria and application remain the same for the official.

MATCH CONTROL

Communication: Officials communicate information to all interested parties in a clear, precise, and efficient manner. The information is given in the simplest terms and in the shortest time possible.

With wrestlers, the official is direct and to the point. Wrestlers often have reduced capacity to understand complex instructions during a match. With coaches, he is unemotional and specific, yet he realizes that the coaches must understand the call and professionally gives the information to the coach to eliminate confusion.

The official communicates clearly and succinctly with both the time and scorekeeper. The official insures that his verbal and visual signals are the official ones and are always clearly understood. He is aware of situations that may cause confusion and when there is a need to clarify information with the head table and takes a minimal amount of time. The official does not look at the table when awarding points and always tries to keep the wrestlers between him and table when communicating to the table.

Poise: The official always keeps his composure, especially in difficult situations. He shows firmness in his application of the rules. He is not intimidated by coaching staffs, other officials or fans. In volatile situations the official remains calm, self-assured, and professional at all times. In dealing with highly emotional situations, the official remembers that he has the necessary authority to keep control of the situation and tries to keep a controlled dialogue. The official eliminates all parties that are not essential to the discussion.

In difficult situations on the mat, the official always collects his thoughts and makes a deliberate judgment. He makes these in a timely manner, but follows the philosophy that it is better to make the right decision rather than a rash one.

Flow: A match should flow smoothly and be well paced. The match should not be unduly interrupted with unnecessary stopping and starting. The official encourages the wrestlers to keep the action going and to improve their positions. He does not stop the action for minor problems and is sensitive to such stalling tactics as straggling back from out-of-bounds or pulling up one's socks. In cases of injury, the official maintains vigilance over the athlete's care and makes sure that he is treated for an injury. The official makes sure that time does not go beyond the time limit by indicating to the coach the amount of time remaining. When time is up, the wrestler must be ready to wrestle as if coming from an out-of-bounds situation.