

# Qualities of a Professional Official

Fall 2013

# Qualities of a Professional Official

- ▶ This presentation is a compilation of advice given over the years to wrestling officials.
- ▶ By no means is this an all-inclusive list of things to do and not do.
- ▶ Each official should review this annually as a reminder of characteristics of a professional official.

# Philosophy of Officiating

- ▶ Integrity – the foundation of officiating philosophy. It is comprised of three principles
  - ***Fairness*** – the ability to understand, interpret and apply the rules equally and without prejudice to all participants
  - ***Focus*** – the ability to give your undivided attention to the action before you
  - ***Poise*** – the ability to enforce and communicate the rules with dignity and respect to the participants, coaches and fans in a manner that projects courtesy and confidence

# Preparedness

- ▶ A Command of the Rules Book
  - Study it regularly
  - Know where to find the answer when necessary
  - Use proper mechanics consistently
- ▶ Good Physical and Mental Condition
- ▶ Proper Uniform and Equipment
- ▶ Organized and Committed

# Preparedness

- ▶ **Study** – Read the rules regularly throughout the season. If a situation arises that causes you to question your call, or someone else's call, look it up! Don't leave unanswered questions in your mind.
- ▶ **Dialogue** – Discuss rules and situations with other officials. Listen to what they have to say and develop a better sense of understanding. Share a ride to meetings and events. This is a great opportunity to learn.
- ▶ **Develop a procedure** – Consistency is vital in being a good official. Develop procedures to follow before, during and after competition.
- ▶ **Practice makes perfect**– The teams practice, the coaches study and conduct practices, and so should the official.

# Using the Rules Book & Case Manual

- ▶ **Rules Book vs. Case Manual** – The rules book should be your main point of reference for all rulings. Most of the rules are clear and to the point. However, words on a piece of paper can rarely cover every conceivable situation. Therefore the case manual is used to provide example of how rules are applied in “real time”. In rare cases, where there is a contradiction between the two, the rules book reigns supreme.
- ▶ **Compare Apples to Apples** – When using the case manual as a tool it is important to make sure that you are comparing similar situations. There is always a temptation to read more into the rule, or for a coach, wrestler or even an official to put their own “special spin” on a rule. Remember, as an official it is your job to enforce the rule, whether you agree with it or not.

# Dress for success

- ▶ Proper attire speaks volumes about your *Integrity*
- ▶ Grooming – neat and clean
- ▶ Uniform – clean, pressed and free from rips, snags and stains. Looks new or like new.
- ▶ Equipment – Whistle, wrist bands (on proper arms) flip disc, draw kit. All kept clean and in working order.

# Dressing for disaster

- ▶ You never get a second chance to make a first impression
- ▶ If you look sloppy, one can only assume that you will officiate the same way
- ▶ Poor grooming shows a lack of attention to detail.
- ▶ Good officials focus on details

# Professionalism

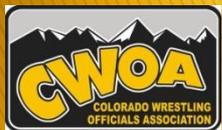
- ▶ Properly Applies and Renews Annually
- ▶ Completes Testing Obligations and Tournament Application Procedures in a Timely Fashion
- ▶ Arrives On Time or Early to Scheduled Events
- ▶ Properly Dressed and Equipped
- ▶ Treats Student Athletes, Coaches, Meet Workers and Administration with Respect
- ▶ Administers the Rules in a Consistent Manner at All Times
- ▶ Conduct on the Mat Exhibits a Professional Attitude
- ▶ Actively Participates in Local Association Activities
- ▶ Seeks to Mentor Young Officials when Appropriate
- ▶ Aspires to Leadership Roles when Opportunities Arise
  - Interpreters
  - Clinicians
  - Supervisors

# Personality

- ▶ Cordial Without “Chumminess”
- ▶ Approachable Without “The Shield”
- ▶ Enjoys His/Her Vocation
- ▶ Firm and Fair
- ▶ Understands a Wrestling Match is Not About the Official
  - The Best Official is One That is Hardly Noticed
- ▶ Gracious for the Opportunity to Work and Positively Contribute to the Sport

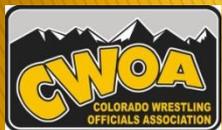
# Communication Skills

- ▶ **Knowledge is Power** – Know the rule book. It is a near impossibility to communicate a ruling if you don't have all the facts.
- ▶ **Seek first to understand, then be understood** – All too often we speak before we fully understand what is being asked. When a coach requests a conference, don't assume you know what his question is. Always ask and let him state his question completely. After you are sure of what he is requesting, make your ruling and give your answer.
- ▶ **Never argue with a fool** – They will drag you down to their level and then beat you with experience. With Knowledge of the rules, Authority to enforce, and Understanding of the situation, an argument should rarely occur. Remember it takes two to argue, if you stay above the fray you will maintain your integrity.



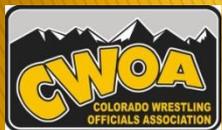
# Tips for good communication

- ▶ **It's not what you say, it's how you say it.** Be aware of your tone and inflection when you speak. Sarcastic, trivialized or condescending remarks can instigate, rather than ameliorate the situation
- ▶ **Be a good listener** – Heed the old adage of having two ears and only one mouth. Listen twice as much as you talk. Make eye contact and allow them to finish their thoughts
- ▶ **Use the five second rule** – When confronted in a situation, often times the first response that comes to mind is not always the best. After hearing what the other party has said, wait five second before letting go of your words. Once gone, you can never get them back.
- ▶ **Chose your words carefully** – It might save you from having to eat them later.
- ▶ **Be brief and be on your way** – Make your explanation and get back to the mat. If you have been listening and understand the question, discussing the matter more will probably not change your mind.



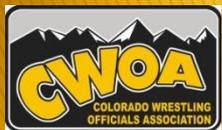
# Discussions with Coaches

- ▶ Coaches have set rules and guidelines that they must follow. They also must adhere to a code of ethics and are role models for their athletes. It is the role of the official to make sure that the rules, ethics and conduct are adhered to by the coach and his staff.
- ▶ Some coaches have “reputations” (either fact or fiction) of abusing the rules, berating officials, etc. It is important for each official to form their own opinion and judge each coach by the action or offense that presently occurred.
- ▶ If a coach needs to speak to the official during the match, he must do so at the head table. Follow the rules of good communication. Enforce the misconduct rule if necessary (if judgment is questioned or if alleged misapplication of the rule is correct).



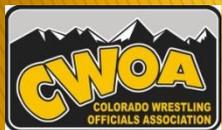
# Climbing the Ladder

- ▶ **Getting to the top** – Most officials have an idea of what level they would like to achieve. Set a goal and work toward that achievement.
- ▶ **Get on the mat** – Few things are as important as experience. There are a number of ways for officials to get time on the mat
  - For new officials, help another official by offering to do his JV match
  - Volunteer at the local high to do challenge matches or scrimmages
  - Volunteer to officiate freestyle matches during the off season. (while most of these offer little to no money, the experience is worth it)
- ▶ **Get involved** – Volunteer to serve in CWOA
- ▶ **Get evaluated** – Have someone take the time to evaluate your performance on the mat. Video tape yourself and see if you look as good as you think you do.



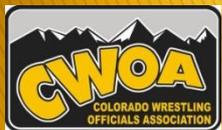
# Rookie Mistakes

- ▶ **What you should know** – The most important thing to know is that every official at one time was a rookie. These “rookie mistakes” are listed not to belittle the new official but to enlighten you . Hopefully, reading these will prevent you from making the same mistakes as those that came before you.
  - **Wrist bands on the wrong hands – Green Right – Red Left** (hint: green has five letters...Right has five letters. )
  - **Too Close** –Rookie referees think “the closer, the better”. Not true. Get back and see the whole picture.
  - **Free Move if opponent locks hands** –Coaches make this mistake too. When a wrestler locks his hands, the defending wrestler is allowed to finish the move in progress! Not start a new move. If there is a move in progress, let them wrestle, as soon as a new move is initiated, stop the action and penalize the offending wrestler.



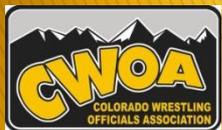
# Rookie Mistakes

- ▶ **Locking Hands** – is a technical violation, not an illegal hold
- ▶ **Starting a bout with your back to the scorer's table** – Always face the table and make eye contact with the timer before starting a match
- ▶ **Who's on top?** – After an out of bounds, injury or blood time, you forget who was on top. The best remedy is to make a mental note as soon as you stop the match, then handle the situation. If that didn't happen, go to the table and check the score sheet. If you still can't figure it out, swallow your pride, and ask the wrestlers or coaches. They'll know, and hopefully, you'll never make that mistake again.
- ▶ **Calling a pin as you are sliding to the mat** – It takes two full seconds to earn a pin. In most cases, it will take less than that to slide to mat, let alone the fact that as you are sliding down you are rarely in the position to properly view and count the fall.



# Rookie Mistakes

- ▶ **Stopping a match to Penalize Stalling** – The only time you stop a match for a stall penalty or warning is when the offensive man is the offender while they are down on the mat.
  - Example: if the bottom man is stalling, DO NOT STOP
  - If top man is stalling, Stop the match
  - If one or both are stalling in the neutral position DO NOT STOP
- ▶ **Wrestling vs. Officiating**
  - A common mistake for young officials is to think that because they were good wrestlers that automatically, they are going to be good officials. That will only be true if they chose to put the same time, effort and energy into officiating as they put into wrestling.



# Rookie Mistakes

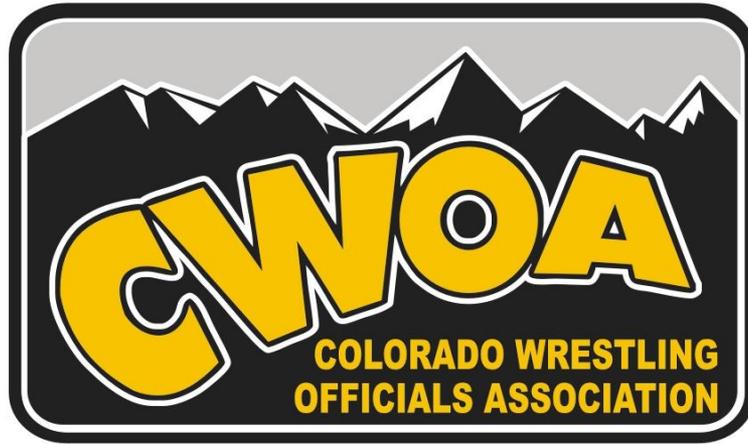
- ▶ **Calling a Stalemate when the top man is pinning**
  - Yes, an official admitted to stopping a match because the wrestlers were all “knotted up” even though the offensive man had the defensive man on his back. The official later admitted that they got caught up in the moment and when neither wrestler appeared to be willing to move, the official stalemated the action. Bottom line – stalemates and stalling are never called when a wrestler has his opponent on his back.
- ▶ **Coaching Wrestlers**
  - A referee, while looking for a fall, holds his thumb and index finger apart indicating to the coaches, wrestlers and crowd, how close the pin was to occurring. Later, when questioned the official said that the wrestler on top asked “Come on! He’s not pinned? How much farther does he have to go?”

# Veteran Tips

- ▶ Learn from their experience
  - Always show up at least 30 minutes before the scheduled start time. Allows time for team meeting and groom check. Let's coaches know you are prepared and professional.
  - Invest in an extra whistle, arm bands, and flip disc. Put them in the glove box of your car. You never know when you'll need them.
  - Carry an extra, clean shirt and black pants. Ripping the seam of your pants in the first match of a dual meet could mean a long and embarrassing night.
  - Carry nail clippers and keep your own nails trimmed
  - Wrestling shoes are for wrestling. Few officials can stand on a mat all day without good arch supports. Get a good pair of walking shoes.

# Veteran Tips

- ▶ Table help can make or break you as an official. Treat them well, establish a good rapport and communication with them. Remember, they are usually volunteers and get paid nothing for their help.
- ▶ Prior to the start of a match or tournament, avoid sitting with one specific team or coach. While your conversation may be just casual, others may perceive favoritism.
- ▶ In your gear bag, carry aspirin (for the occasional headache), deodorant, hand wipes or antibacterial like Purell, contact lens solution (if you wear contacts), Visine, Roloids or any other personal item that you might use on a regular basis. Stores like Target and WalMart carry “Travel Size”.
- ▶ The rule allows for “**reaction time**” i.e., during takedowns or when bringing an opponent back to the mat. A good way to be consistent in calling “reaction time” is for the referee to observe the situation and say in his mind “REACTION TIME”.



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