



Wrestling **Meeting Folder 2012-2013**

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National Federation Rule Changes

Rule Change #1: Random Draw Addressed

The random draw is the random selection of one of the 14 weight classes (15 in New York) to determine the order of weight classes for the dual meet. A random draw for championship final matches for an individual tournament, regular season and / or state high school championship series may be used for competition. The draw shall take place *immediately preceding* the weigh-ins and be supervised by the referee or other authorized person.

The weight class drawn will be the odd match and will determine which weight class will begin the dual meet with the other weight classes following in the traditional order.

Dual meet weigh-ins shall proceed through the weight classes beginning with the random draw selected weight class, continue through the weight classes, wrap around to the 106-pound weight class (99 pound weight in New York State).

Rule Change #2: Changes Address Uniforms

Rule 4-1-1a and a new Rule 4-3-5 affect what wrestlers may or may not wear.

A. Reference to a sleeveless shirt fastened at the crotch was eliminated, since such a garment has not been manufactured for several years.

B. A sleeveless or *short sleeved* T-shirt under the one-piece singlet is allowed if the referee approves. That shirt must be of a single, solid color unadorned with no more than one manufacturer's logo / trademark / reference.

C. Rule 4-3-5 Wrestlers may no longer wear wristbands, sweatbands or bicep bands.

Banning those items minimizes the risk for injury to the wrestler and the opponent. Properly reporting to the scorer's table wearing wristbands, sweatbands or bicep bands will be considered illegal equipment resulting in a technical violation.

Rule Change #3: Awarding Penalty, Near Fall Points

Additional language to describe the process when both near fall and penalty points are awarded has been added to Rule 5-11-2i.

When an imminent or near-fall situation is stopped due to defensive wrestler committing a technical violation, applying an illegal hold / maneuver, committing unnecessary roughness or an unsportsmanlike act which cannot be corrected and the referee is required to stop the match, the match will be stopped and a penalty point(s) shall be awarded in addition to the near fall points in accordance with other near-fall criteria.

Refer to casebook and manual page 24 situations e, f, g and h.

Rule Change #4: Stalling Penalty Increased

In an effort to help curb stalling, the National Federation of State High School Associations (NFHS) Wrestling Rules Committee has imposed an additional element to the penalty for stalling.

In addition to the two-point penalty, opponent will now have his or her choice of position on the next restart.

The change will appear in the penalty chart.

"This change resulted from the committee's desire to encourage wrestlers to wrestle aggressively by providing a greater incentive not to stall

Page 42, PENALTY CHART (*Stalling): *NOTE: The 2012-13 NFHS Wrestling Rules change dealing with stalling in the Penalty Chart is correct. For example, if the third penalty on Wrestler A, following the progression on the Penalty Chart happens to be stalling, Wrestler B is awarded two match points and will have the choice of position on the next restart. The choice of position on the next restart only applies if the third penalty (2points) is for stalling. When a stalling call results in a 2-point penalty being awarded, the opponent will have the choice of position on the next restart. Regardless of what the first two penalties were for. The choice of position on the next restart would be carried over to the sudden victory period in overtime if there is no restart prior to overtime. Stalling shall be penalized in accordance with the Penalty Chart. (7-6-2)

SITUATION 1 (7-6-2, Penalty Chart): Wrestler A is warned for stalling right after the first period has started. Later in the first period, Wrestler A is penalized for an illegal hold/maneuver and Wrestler B is awarded one match point (First Penalty). At the start of the second period, Wrestler A is penalized again for an illegal hold/maneuver and Wrestler B is awarded one match point (Second Penalty). Later in the second period, Wrestler A is penalized for stalling in the defensive position and Wrestler B is awarded two match points (Third Penalty). Wrestler B will now have the choice of position on the next restart since the two-point penalty was for stalling. (a) Before the second period ends, Wrestler A takes his/her second injury time-out. (b) Between the second and third periods, Wrestler A takes his/her second injury time-out. Wrestler B was to have his/her choice of position at the start of the third period.

RULING: In (a), Wrestler B will have his/her choice of position on the restart after the injury time-out plus Wrestler B will have his/her choice of position on the next restart after that. In (b), Wrestler B will have his/her choice of position at the beginning of the third period plus on the next two restarts – one for the two-point stalling penalty and one for the second injury time-out.

2012-13 NFHS Wrestling Case Book Clarifications:

Due to some last minute changes the 2012-13 Case Book will need to be edited. Please make the following changes to Page 52, Rule 7-6-2, Situation B and Pages 58-59, Situation I.

(Underlining shows additions; ~~strike through~~ shows deletions.)

Page 52, Rule 7-6-2 SITUATION B: Wrestler A is warned for stalling in the first period. In the second period, Wrestler A is penalized for an illegal hold and Wrestler B is awarded one match point. Later in the second period, Wrestler A is penalized for a technical violation for locked hands and Wrestler B is awarded one match point. In the third period, Wrestler A is penalized for stalling and Wrestler B is awarded two match points since this is the third penalty on Wrestler A. Wrestler B will now have choice of position on the next restart. ~~during the third period.~~

RULING: Correct. The choice of position on the next restart for Wrestler B can ~~cannot~~ be carried over to the sudden victory period in overtime. Stalling shall be penalized in accordance with the Penalty Chart. (Penalty Chart)

NOW READS:

The choice of position on the next restart for Wrestler B can be carried over to the sudden victory period in overtime. Stalling shall be penalized in accordance with the Penalty Chart. (Penalty Chart)

Pages 58-59, Rule 8-2-1 SITUATION I: Wrestler A takes his/her second injury time-out at the conclusion of the second period and his/her opponent (Wrestler B) already has choice at the beginning of the third period. Wrestler B will have choice to start the third period and will now also have the added choice at the first restart after the beginning of the third period. (a) After the third period has started, Wrestler B takes his/her second injury time-out and the match is stopped; or (b) during the third period there is no restart for Wrestler B, so does his/her choice on the first restart carry over to overtime?; or (c) Wrestler B takes the top position to start the third period. After the third period has started and the wrestlers go out of bounds, Wrestler B chooses the neutral position on the first restart.

RULING: In (a), Wrestler B will still get the choice on the restart. ~~Now~~ Then on the next restart ~~in the third period only~~, Wrestler A will get the choice. In (b), Yes, the choice of position on the next restart for Wrestler B can be carried over to the sudden victory period in overtime. ~~No, since there was no restart in the third period, Wrestler B does not get to carry over the choice to overtime. The choice on the first restart only applies to the third period.~~ In (c), This is permissible by rule and no escape point is earned by Wrestler A as this is a choice on the ~~first~~ next restart by Wrestler B.

NOW READS:

RULING: In (a), Wrestler B will still get the choice on the restart. Then on the next restart Wrestler A will get the choice. In (b), Yes, the choice of position on the next restart for Wrestler B can be carried over to the sudden victory period in overtime. In (c), This is permissible by rule and no escape point is earned by Wrestler A as this is a choice on the next restart by Wrestler B.

Rule change #5

No 'Loss of Choice After Second Injury Time-Out in Overtime

Rule 8-2-1h: If the second injury time-out is taken at the conclusion of the first 30-second tiebreaker period and the opponent already has the choice at the beginning of the second 30-second tiebreaker period the opponent would then have the added choice at the first restart after the beginning of the second 30-second tiebreaker period.

That provision was a rule change last year for the regulation match and will now apply to the overtime as well.

Rule Change #6

Tournament Advancement Clarified

Rule 10-2-9: States that if two wrestlers in the championship bracket simultaneously cannot continue the match due to both being disqualified for stalling or having their injury or blood time elapse, the wrestler who is leading in points at the time the match is terminated will continue in the consolation bracket. If the match is tied at the time of termination, neither wrestler will continue.

The committee recognized that it is impossible to have two losers continue in the consolation bracket, as there is only a spot for one wrestler. The new rule allows the wrestler who is leading at the time of termination to continue in the consolation bracket.

Rule Change #7

Tourney Bracket Format Revised

Rule 10-3-6 and 10-3-7: Tournament directors have more flexibility in conducting a smooth running competition that fits the unique needs of their particular tournament.

Previously those rules mandated how consolation matches were to be slotted. With the change, tournament directors have the option to start consolation rounds with contestants who were defeated by the winners of each first- round match or with contestants defeated by the winner of each quarterfinal match.

At the conclusion of the championship semifinals, the losers of all those semifinals *may* be cross-bracketed into the consolation semifinals.

How consolation matches are bracketed is *dependent on the tournament bracket follow plan that is used.*

Points of Emphasis:

Concussion, Slams, Wrestler Conduct and Weigh-Ins Highlighted Concussion Recognition and Management

The understanding of sports-related concussions has evolved dramatically in recent years. We have learned that young athletes are particularly vulnerable to the effects of a concussion. Although once considered little more than a minor "ding" on the head, we now understand that a concussion has the potential to result in short- and long-term changes in brain function, or in some cases, even death.

A concussion is a type of traumatic brain injury that interferes with normal brain function. It occurs when the brain is rocked back and forth or twisted inside the skull as a result of a blow to the head or body. What may appear to be only a mild jolt or blow to the head or body can result in a concussion.

"Any contestant who exhibits signs, symptoms or behaviors consistent with a concussion (such as loss of consciousness, headache, dizziness, confusion or balance problems) shall be immediately removed from the match and shall not return to competition until cleared by an appropriate health-care professional." The common signs, symptoms and behaviors of concussed athletes may be found in Appendix B in the 2012-13 NFHS Wrestling Rules Book.

Given that concussed athletes often show a variety of signs, symptoms or behaviors of concussion, the NFHS Sports Medicine Advisory Committee (SMAC) strongly believes that referees must be empowered to immediately stop the competition, and start injury or recovery time, thus protecting these contestants from potential further injury. Continued participation in any activity following a concussion can lead to worsening concussion symptoms and a prolonged recovery, as well as increased risk for further injury to the brain, and in some cases, death.

Neither referees, nor coaches, are expected to "diagnose" a concussion, as that is the job of a medical professional. Referees must use their best judgment when observing the signs, symptoms and behaviors of a possible concussion, but are not being asked to render what could be perceived to be a medical opinion. The well being of the athlete is of paramount concern during any athletic contest. Referees, coaches and administrators must make all efforts to ensure that athletes with a suspected concussion do not continue to participate.

The referee is not responsible for the on-the-mat evaluation or management of the contestant after injury or recovery time has been started. The responsibility of further managing the athlete with a possible concussion falls upon the head coach, appropriate health-care professional or other individual designated by school administrators. If an appropriate health-care professional at mat-side determines that the contestant HAS NOT suffered a concussion, the contestant may return to competition, unless his/her injury or recovery time has expired. If there is not an appropriate health-care professional available to evaluate the contestant with a suspected concussion, each school's administration is urged to develop specific policies and procedures regarding how such a situation should be handled. The NFHS SMAC strongly affirms that coaches SHOULD NOT be making return-to-competition or practice decisions involving an athlete with a suspected concussion. Please see the "NFHS Suggested Guidelines for Management of Concussion in Sports" at www.nfhs.org for further information.

The referee does not need written permission for an athlete to return to competition nor does the referee need to verify the credentials of the appropriate health-care professional. Ensuring compliance with the Suggested Management Guidelines is a health and safety issue and is the responsibility of the head coach and school administration, NOT the wrestling referee.

Suggested Concussion Management

1. No athlete should return to play (RTP) or practice on the same day of a concussion.
2. Any athlete suspected of having a concussion should be evaluated by an appropriate health-care professional that day.
3. Any athlete with a concussion should be medically cleared by an appropriate health-care professional prior to resuming participation in any practice or competition.
4. After medical clearance, RTP should follow a step-wise protocol with provisions for delayed RTP based upon return of any signs or symptoms.

The suggested guidelines for concussion management fall outside the realm of meet management, but are clearly a health and safety issue for coaches and administrators. These guidelines should also be applied to all practices and workouts. The position of the NFHS SMAC is that no athlete should return to competition or practice on that same day after suffering a concussion. Studies have shown that the adolescent brain does not recover quickly enough for an athlete to return to activity in such a short time.

If an athlete returns to activity before he or she has fully healed from a concussion, there is a risk for a repeat concussion. A repeat concussion that occurs before the brain has had time to recover from the first concussion can slow recovery or increase the possibility of long-term problems. In rare cases, a repeat concussion can result in severe swelling and bleeding in the brain that can be fatal.

If you suspect that a participant has a concussion, follow the "Heads Up" 4-step Action Plan:

1. Remove the athlete from play.
2. Ensure that the athlete is evaluated by an appropriate health-care professional.
3. Inform the athlete's parents or guardians about the possible concussion and give them information on concussions.
4. Keep the athlete out of play the day of the injury and until an appropriate health-care professional says they are symptom-free and gives the okay to return to activity.

Although rare, there are some situations in which you may need to call 911 and activate the Emergency Medical System (EMS). The following circumstances are medical emergencies:

1. Any time an athlete has a loss of consciousness for any duration. While loss of consciousness is not required for a concussion to occur, it may indicate a more serious brain injury.
2. If an athlete exhibits any of the following: decreasing level of consciousness, looks very drowsy or cannot be awakened, have difficulty in getting their attention, irregularity in breathing, severe or worsening headaches, persistent vomiting, or any seizures.

The signs, symptoms and behaviors of a concussion are not always apparent immediately after a bump, blow or jolt to the head or body. In fact, they may develop over a period of a few hours. An athlete should be observed following a suspected concussion and should never be left alone.

Athletes must know that they should never try to "tough it out" if a concussion is suspected. Teammates, parents and coaches should never encourage an athlete to "play through" the symptoms of a concussion. In addition, there should never be an attribution of bravery to athletes who do play despite having concussion symptoms.

The risks of such behavior must be emphasized.

The definition of "appropriate health- care professional" must be determined by each member state association and/ or school district with respect to state laws and local preferences. Such individuals should be knowledgeable in the evaluation and management of sports- related concussions and may, depending on controlling law, include MDs, DOs, nurse practitioners, physicians' assistants, neuropsychologists and certified athletic trainers.

For further details, please see the "NFHS Suggested Guidelines for Management of Concussion in Sports" at www.nfhs.org.

Slams

Slams are extremely dangerous and every attempt must be made to remove them from wrestling. It is the responsibility of wrestlers, coaches and referees to avoid slams. Wrestlers must return opponents to the mat safely after a lift and must realize a slam may be called on wrestlers in the neutral, top or bottom position.

Which wrestler's knees hit the mat first is irrelevant in determining whether or not a slam has occurred. The key is whether or not a wrestler is returned to the mat unsafely due to the overuse of force. Coaches bear the responsibility of teaching their wrestlers to return opponents to the mat safely and instructing their wrestlers not to perform lifts for which they are not adequately skilled. They must never intentionally bring an opponent to the mat with excessive force. When possible, referees must attempt to prevent slams by reminding wrestlers of their responsibility to return opponents to the mat safely from any position. Referees shall stop the wrestling action to avoid an imminent slam whenever possible. Referees must call slams without delay. It is not acceptable to determine whether a wrestler is injured by a slam before making the call. Intentional attempts to injure a wrestler by a slam shall be called flagrant misconduct.

Wrestler Conduct

In recent years, we have witnessed the emergence of more and more profane language during the heat of scholastic competition. With the availability of cable television and the Internet, which are featured with profanity; and professional sports stars using inappropriate verbiage in public, many young athletes feel that swearing is just part of the game. Such unseemly language from wrestlers shall not be tolerated and shall be penalized.

The NFHS has always stressed that extracurricular activities are an extension of the classroom and, therefore, part of the educational process. What is unacceptable in the academic setting must not be permitted in the athletic arena. Thus, coaches must view the wrestling room as an extension of the classroom, stressing the use of proper language during workout sessions and actual competition. Coaches and referees must be at the forefront in promoting good sportsmanship, which includes eliminating profanity among the athletes. They are commissioned with the responsibility to discipline such inappropriate language, which has no place in the classroom or in the athletic arena.

Weigh-In Procedures

Weigh-In procedures in New York State differ greatly from the National Federation. Refer to the *Program of Wrestling* pages 11 and 12. Additionally the National Federation provided the following information, which does apply in New York.

If a school has any female wrestlers, it is the responsibility of that school to notify opponents that special accommodations shall be needed to verify the weight of any female participant(s) in private. All female wrestlers are required to weigh in wearing a suitable undergarment that completely covers the breasts, buttocks and groin area. The procedure to use for weighing in female wrestlers is to have a female weigh the female participant(s) in private. The female performing the weigh-in shall be someone authorized to conduct a weigh-in. The ultimate responsibility rests with the school for which the competitor is wrestling. If, however, the school with a female wrestler(s) is traveling and has assurance from the host school that an authorized female will be provided for weighing in female competitors, there will be no requirement to bring a female from the visiting school. If the host school cannot or does not wish to provide someone to monitor the weigh-in, it is the responsibility of the female's school to bring a female with them to handle this duty.

All wrestlers weighing in must meet the grooming standard, which requires the hair to meet certain length and abrasive standards (Rule 4-2-1). It cannot be assumed that the competitor's hair meets the standard if it is not in its natural state. All competitors must meet this standard or wear an appropriate cover. This cover must be worn to the weigh-in for the referee's approval and then removed prior to stepping on the scale. Facial hair must also adhere to the NFHS Wrestling Rules Book standard. If the competitor chooses not to meet the standard, the facial hair may also be covered with a rule-appropriate face cover. Also, checking for long fingernails is a must in order to reduce the possibility of injury to competitors.

Finally, the wrestlers must be free of any communicable skin conditions (Rule 4-2-3). The wrestler must weigh in wearing no more than a suitable undergarment. This will expedite the visual skin inspection by the referees or appropriate health-care professional. If a questionable skin condition is present, coaches must provide appropriate documentation, as directed by their state association, from an appropriate health-care professional as to the clearance of the condition. Each state association sets the requirements for timeframes and forms used to satisfy this rule. The competitor must be clear of any communicable skin conditions in order to compete.

Flashback: 2011-12 Rules Changes

While current-season rule changes receive a deserved amount of attention, it is easy to forget the changes that were implemented the previous season.

Here is a review of changes approved by the NFHS Wrestling Rules Committee for 2011-12 and some have been revised for 2012-13.

Weight Classes

The Federation adopted 14 weight classes as follows: 106 (pounds), 113, 120, 126, 132, 138, 145, 152, 160, 170, 182, 195, 220 and 285. New York State added an additional weight class of 99 lbs.

The last wholesale shift in weight classes occurred in 1988, when the lowest weight class was increased from 98 to 103 pounds. The only other changes since then were in 2002, when the number of classes went from 13 to 14 and the 215- pound weight class became mandatory, and in 2006, when the 275-pound class was increased to 285 pounds.

Multi-Team Dual Meets and Team- Formatted Tournaments

Definitions for individually bracketed tournaments, dual-meet/ team-formatted tournaments and combination tournaments were added.

Individually bracketed tournaments are a series of matches in each of the NFHS weight classes in which each member of the team advances independently on the bracket based on that individual's results.

Dual-meet or team-formatted tournaments are a series of matches in each of the NFHS weight classes in which advancement and/ or results are based upon the team's collective results.

Combination tournaments are a series of matches in each of the NFHS weight classes in which individuals initially move from round to round as a team (pools) or advance based on team results culminating in the wrestlers placement on an individual bracket with advancement from that point based on individual results.

Boundary Lines

The boundary line is inbounds. Previously, wrestlers were out of bounds if they were touching any part of the 2-inch-wide line, which marks the wrestling area. When the area enclosed by the 10-foot circle and the inbounds area of the mat are of contrasting colors, the 2-inch line may be omitted.

Referees' Jurisdiction

Meet referees have the opportunity to complete required reports or other administrative duties even though their jurisdiction is over. The meet referee(s) maintain administrative responsibilities for the meet through the completion of any required reports or correspondence in response to any action occurring while the referee(s) have jurisdiction. State associations may intercede in the event of unusual incidents after the referee(s)' jurisdiction has ended or in the event that a meet is terminated prior to the conclusion of the regulation meet.

Administrative duties for meet referee(s) may need to continue after the meet to document actions which occur during the meet. State associations may continue to develop and implement policies that allow for review of unusual incidents that occur while the meet referee(s) have jurisdiction or after the meet.

Starting the Match

In dual-meet competition, the wrestlers must be ready to go to the scorer's table immediately when called by the referee. The wrestler to be sent to the scorer's table first, who then cannot be withdrawn or replaced without being disqualified and the weight class being awarded to the other wrestler by disqualification if there is one, shall be determined by the pre-meet disk toss. Once the second wrestler has properly reported to the scorer's table in proper sequence, as determined by the pre-meet disk toss, neither can be withdrawn or replaced without disqualification and the weight class awarded by disqualification.

Rule 11 Added

Material in a newly created Rule 11 is devoted to situations related to dual-meet and team-formatted tournaments.

Event administration is responsible for establishing weigh-in times within the guidelines prescribed in Rule 4-5. If however there is a difference in the time that teams begin competition, weigh-ins for the teams starting later may be adjusted in relation to the later starting time.

Failure to verify entries by a stipulated deadline or by the completion of weigh-ins for that team shall result in disqualification from a tournament. If a stipulated deadline has not been predetermined, the deadline shall be the completion of weigh-ins for each team.

All uncontested weight classes in a team's line-up due to not having a wrestler entered in that weight class shall be recorded as forfeits.

In dual-meet/ team-formatted tournaments, team points will be scored as in dual meets. Therefore an uncontested weight class will be scored as a forfeit the same as in dual meets.

In a Dual-Meet/Team-Formatted Tournament that does not evolve into an Individually Bracketed Tournament and / or does not reward individual accomplishments; more than one wrestler in a weight class may be weighed in by a team and substitutions from one dual meet to the next are permissible and / or a wrestler who weighs in for one weight class may be shifted to the next highest weight class, provided it is not more than one weight class above that for which the actual weight qualifies that wrestler.

Appearing ready to wrestle on the mat, defeat due to injury, disqualifications and failure to make weight each day of the tournament apply the same as in Rules 10-2-2, 10-2-3, 10-2-6 and 10-2-7.

In Dual-Meet/Team-Formatted Tournaments, scoring is based upon the results of each individual match as in Rule 9-2-1.

In Dual-Meet/Team-Formatted Tournaments, flagrant misconduct by a contestant results in disqualification on first offense, a deduction of 3 team points and removal from the premises immediately for the duration of the event. The contestant is eliminated from further competition for the remainder of the tournament and no team points can be earned in the current round; however, team points earned in previous rounds are not lost. If teams have identical scores, the team tie-breaking system found in Rule 9-2-2 shall be used to determine the winner in order to determine which team advances in the bracket.

The tie-breaking system used to determine the winner in a dual meet should also be used to determine a winner in a Dual-Meet/Team-Formatted Tournament when one team has to advance in the bracket.

Illegal Hold/Maneuver

The Figure 4 around the head is illegal.

As with other illegal holds or maneuvers, there is no warning for a contestant applying the Figure 4 around the head. The first and second illegal holds or maneuvers result in one point being awarded to the opponent. The third instance results in a two-point penalty and the fourth infraction results in disqualification.

New York State Rules Update

1: Effective January 2012 NYSPHSAA executive committee granted a waiver to the headgear taping rule. Straps and chinstraps may be taped to allow for a better fit of the headgear: however, no taping is allowed on the ear section of the headgear.

2: A waiver of the uniform rule during the month of February to permit pink ribbon(s) on the uniform in recognition of breast cancer awareness initiatives.

3: In tournament situations, skin checks are to be performed on each day of wrestling competition.

4: A minimum weight is required for selectively classified athletes. Students in grades 9th through 12th do not have to make minimum weight (Aug 2011).

- a) To compete at the 99 lb. Class a wrestler MUST weigh in excess of 91 lbs. to be eligible.
- b) To compete at the 106 lb. Class a wrestler MUST weigh in excess of 96 lbs. to be eligible
- c) To compete at the 220 lb. Class a wrestler MUST weigh in excess of 185 lbs. to be eligible.
- d) To compete at the 285 lb. Class a wrestler Must weigh in excess of 210 lbs. to be eligible

5: At the modified level a minimum of 67 lbs. will be required to compete in the optional 74 lb. weight class. In the optional 165 lb. and unlimited classes contestants must be with in 10 lbs. of each other.

Awarding Near-Fall Points

By Dale Pleimann

Chair, NFHS Wrestling Rules Committee

The ultimate reward in wrestling is for a wrestler to pin the opponent. Just short of pinning the opponent is earning near-fall points. Other than pinning the opponent nothing changes the complexion of the match more drastically than having near-fall points awarded. Therefore it is extremely important that the referee accurately determine when near-fall points have been earned. Awarding near-fall points when they have not been earned or not awarding near-fall points when they have been earned both provide an unfair and undeserved advantage to one wrestler or the other.

The first requirement for earning near-fall points is to place the opponent, while controlling him/her, into near-fall criteria, which occurs when any part of both shoulders or both scapulae of the defensive wrestler are held within four inches of the mat or less, or when one shoulder or scapula of the defensive wrestler is touching the mat and the other shoulder or scapula is held at an angle of 45 degrees or less with the mat; or when the defensive wrestler is held in a high bridge or on both elbows.

How much is 4 inches? For most people 4 inches is approximately the width of their fist. How much is 45 degrees? 45 degrees is halfway between horizontal and vertical or between being flat on the mat and the shoulders being vertical or 90 degrees.

Too often referees are seen counting when the shoulder or scapula is held at an angle of 60 degrees or greater with the mat. Counting near-fall points should not start until the shoulder or scapula is held at an angle of 45 degrees or less and counting should not continue if the shoulder and scapula are not continuously held at 45 degrees or less. As soon as the angle becomes greater than 45 degrees, counting shall cease. If the angle is then decreased to 45 degrees or less, counting near-fall points will start over.

Too many times matches are won and lost because of incorrectly awarded near-fall points. It is the responsibility of the referee to anticipate the possibility of near-fall points and to move quickly to be in position to see the full situation in its entirety. Often the window during which an opponent is held in near-fall criteria is very short and limited. Therefore, it is imperative that the referee start counting as soon as the criteria is met and stop counting as soon as the criteria is no longer met. Starting the near-fall count too early or starting it too late are equally wrong and deprive one wrestler or the other. Likewise continuing to count once the shoulder / scapula are out of criteria is equally unforgivable.

There are several mechanics for the referee to keep in mind when actually counting near fall points. First, the count should be visual. The referee should move his/her arm at a 45 degree angle starting near the mat and moving toward the ceiling. If the referee counts parallel to the mat it can be hard for the coaches, scorekeepers and fans to see that a count is actually taking place. The length of time it takes the referee to move his/her arm that distance should be exactly one second. The most common error referees commit is to get caught up in the emotion and count too fast, sometimes completing five counts in about 3 to 3.5 seconds instead of 5 seconds. With practice and also having someone observe you and time your count, it is not hard to develop the pace of one arm swing per second.

Second, the count should be verbal. The count for a fall is silent, however, the count for near-fall points is verbal - at least part of the near-fall count should be verbal. The referee, as he / she starts his/her upward arm movement, should count "1,001," with the "1" coming as the arm finishes the upward movement. The "1,000" is a silent count with the "1" being verbalized. As long as criteria is met continuously the count continues: 1,001, 1,002, 1,003, etc. By counting "1, 2," etc. out loud, everyone knows exactly where the

referee is in the count. Until you verbalize the number that particular count, it is not complete. That is important when a wrestler moves in and out of criteria. Even though the referee may show two visual counts, it may have been a 1 count followed by another 1 count because the wrestler was not held continuously in criteria. So even though the referee's arm moved twice, the verbal count would be "1, 1," because criteria was not maintained continuously. It is also important to keep in mind that no matter how many times the referee moves his/her arm, until the referee verbalizes "2" or "5," it is not a 2-point or 3-point near-fall. It is also imperative that, when a wrestler does come out of criteria, the count stops immediately! The referee may be most of the way through the second count, but if criteria is not maintained for the complete 2 seconds, the count should be stopped and no near-fall should be awarded.

Referees who want to advance in the sport of wrestling need to work on the mechanics of awarding near-fall points in order to be consistent and fair. It is imperative that wrestlers be awarded all near-fall points earned and it is just as imperative that wrestlers not be awarded near-fall points that have not been earned. Any time errors are made in either direction, one of the two wrestlers has gained an advantage he or she does not deserve.