

OFFICIATING SIGNALS & MECHANICS HANDBOOK

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Modified by Rod Frost to remove all references of NCAA with permission from Tim Shiels. Ronnie Schneider added the video links for consistency on signaling for HS.

Officials,

With permission from Tim Shiels, I have updated this NCAA document to fit NFHS rules and signals. This is a great read, please spend the time to read this as it will make us all much more consistent.

Regardless of officiating experience, this manual, along with the new 2021-22 Rules Book and updated Case Book, is invaluable.

INTENT & PURPOSE OF THIS DOCUMENT

This Mechanics Handbook is written to provide every MSHSL Wrestling Official consistent explanation of the signals, procedures, and mechanics while officiating. The Handbook is another tool to help sharpen your officiating skills. Referring to this Handbook often to study, learn, and master the mechanics and signals will only help you on your officiating journey.

This will be a living document that will continue to evolve with additional material and information being added over time.

Only the signals shown on Pages 83 & 84 of the NFHS Wrestling Rules Book are acceptable. Officials should avoid making up their own signals and mechanics. Consistency is critical among Officials.

To be a successful Official, the goal should be to develop consistency in all areas from the beginning to the end of the season. The ultimate goal is to make the correct call every time. Every match deserves the same respect and effort.

Wrestling Officials have the responsibility of conducting bouts in a dignified, professional, and unbiased manner and shall deal with all situations in adherence to the rules, in the spirit of good sportsmanship, and in the best interest of the wrestlers and the sport. The character and conduct of Officials must be above reproach. When in uniform or onsite, an Official shall not fraternize with competitors and/or coaches.

Officials should keep themselves prepared both physically and mentally to administer bouts.

Officials shall enforce the rules firmly and fairly in both letter and spirit in such a way that attention is drawn to the wrestlers rather than to themselves.

THE IMPORTANCE OF GOOD SIGNALS & MECHANICS

Signals are an Official's best means of communication. The better we communicate, the better the flow of the match and the less confusion for the wrestlers, coaches, and fans. Having good and clear signals allows everyone in the arena to understand what just occurred on the mat. *The wrestlers are the story, and the Officials are the reporters.*

1. Know the Signals [Link to signals](#)

One of the few things an Official can control is the execution and delivery of the signals and mechanics. Knowing the signal that needs to be executed in every situation is critical, so you don't have to think about it. This is achieved by practicing your signals to the point they become muscle memory. When an Official eliminates their signals from their thought process, it allows the Official to focus more on other areas.

2. Suggested Ways to Improve Appearance of Your Signals

Practice in front of a mirror so you know what they look like.

Watch yourself on video.

Time your counts on a stopwatch.

Work on being loud when verbalizing calls.

Have a trusted person or mentor watch and provide feedback on your signals and mechanics. Examples may include: "arms are not straight or not extended," "Nearfall was not at 45 degrees," "not rotating your points overhead," "fingers are apart on Stop signal and Neutral signal," etc.

3. Timing is Everything

What makes an Official's signals elite is how and when they deliver the signals. The timing and consistency of when the signal is executed can be easily affected if the Official is out of position or if the Official is overthinking. It doesn't matter how good the Official's signals are if they are being put up too early, too late, or at the wrong time.

POSITION • PATIENCE • POISE • PRESENTATION

SUCCESS & CONSISTENCY WITH SIGNALS

After Officials put in the work to make their signals muscle memory, there are other principles that will allow the Official to further develop their signals. Below are those principles, which are listed in order of importance. They are all important and all work together with the goal of getting each call correct, delivering a sharp signal, and clearly communicating the call.

1. Position

Being in the proper position to make the call should be the primary focus. Working hard to stay in the proper position affords the Official the opportunity to slow things down and have great timing when making calls. If the Official is out of position and rushing, then it can negatively affect the quality and delivery of the signals. You're only as good as your position!

2. Patience

When an Official maintains good position and they are not too close or chasing the action, it allows the Official to be patient when letting situations develop, especially in scramble situations. Patience also promotes proper timing when making a call and delivering the signals.

3. Poise

The level of comfort and confidence in each situation can mean the difference in getting the call right or wrong. Achieving principles one and two should give the Official confidence to relax and be poised in all situations. Being poised also allows for smoother signals.

4. Presentation

The timing, delivery, and execution of your signals.

POSITION yourself to see the call.

Once you're in position be **PATIENT**.

Remain **POISED** as the situation develops.

PRESENT your signals sharply and smoothly.

MECHANICS SEQUENCES FOR SPECIFIC SITUATIONS

Maintain a loud and clear whistle throughout the match. Typically, the start whistle is quicker and shorter than the stoppage whistle.

Hand motion for starts (Neutral and Referee's Position) should be the same.

Hold points high and rotate your hand.

Keep your fingers tight with your thumb tucked.

3 point TD signal

Do not put your hands on your knees or your hips.

Use the Stop Signal (Signal #2) any time you stop the action for something other than an Out of Bounds call.

- a. **Stalemate** – stop the match then indicate the stalemate signal ([Signal #14](#)) with thumbs up and hands against your chest.
- a. **Potentially Dangerous** – stop the match then indicate Potentially Dangerous ([Signal #13](#)).
- b. **Penalties/Infractions** – stop the match then indicate infraction and corresponding points. No stop for ([Clasping straight to NF counts](#))
- c. [Penalty chart](#)
- d. **Stalling on Offensive Wrestler** – stop the match then signal the stall (Signal #16) on the Offensive wrestler. Don't stop for Defensive stalling and neutral stalling.

Stalling

Award points first in the following instances:

- e. **Reversal** – award the Reversal points before signaling the Reversal ([Signal #18](#)).
- f. **Escape** – award the Escape point then use the Neutral Signal ([Signal #8](#)).
- g. **Nearfall** – award the Nearfall points prior to bringing your hand across to far the shoulder ([Signal #21](#)).

Neutral Out of Bounds – use the following sequence:

- h. Blow your whistle while signaling Out of Bounds ([Signal #10](#))
- i. Indicate whether there was Action, Backing or Fleeing with proper color
 - i. If Stalling for Backing, Stalling (Signal #16), then the Neutral Signal (#8).
 - ii. If Fleeing an imminent scoring situation, ([Signal #19](#))

Choice of Position/Disc Mechanics

- j. Figure out a system that works for you and is easy to track choice of position during dual meets.
- k. Some Officials keep the disc in the front pockets while others use their back pockets or even their wristbands.
- e. You do not need to use your disc to indicate who has the choice of position. You are

wearing wristbands to indicate who has the choice of position.

f. When you flip the disc, stay in the 10-foot circle, leave it on the mat until after the choices have been made, then pick it up and put it in your pocket of who has the next choice. Touch disk for next period choice.

[Defer signal](#)

PREVENTIVE OFFICIATING

Officials may use tactics to prevent certain situations from taking place or from becoming Potentially Dangerous and/or Illegal. Some examples of preventive officiating are listed below.

1. Using simple commands such as the following (never single out one wrestler):
 - a. "Action"
 - b. "Center" or "Work Center" or "Action Center"
 - c. "Offense"
 - d. "Improve"
 - e. "No Control" or "Still Neutral"
 - f. "Green is in Control" or "Red is in Control"
 - g. "Contact" or "Engage"
 - h. "Keep it Legal" or "Keep it Safe"
2. Never turn your back on the wrestlers. Always keep your eyes on the wrestlers and stay in between them after an Out of Bounds situation.
3. Sometimes a stoppage in the match is necessary, if you feel the action is moving toward an aggressive state by either or both wrestlers. Stop the match and indicate to both wrestlers that that type of behavior is not acceptable and will not be tolerated.
4. Staying in between the wrestlers on Neutral starts can prevent false starts. You may also point to the starting lines, so the wrestlers understand you're not blowing the whistle until they're on the line.
5. Move in closer when an Offensive wrestler is applying various pinning combinations such as Arm Bars, Bow & Arrow, or Blair Ride to be in position to prevent a Potentially Dangerous situation or to prevent a hold from becoming Illegal.

PRE-MATCH RESPONSIBILITIES

Arrive onsite 30 minutes early if not performing weigh-ins, if performing weigh-ins arriving 15 min prior to weigh-ins should suffice; give yourself ample travel time to the venue. Locate Home Management and ask to be taken to your locker room.

Inspect mat area to ensure compliance. Notify Home Management of any issues. Remember to look for the 5 feet of extra mat for out of bounds. Expect table and bench to make sure at least 10 feet away, for tournaments sometimes the table is close to the mat to see if there is room to move them back.

Speak with the table workers and timers to see if there are any questions.

Locate coaches of each team and ask when they would like you to address their team.

Pre-Match Discussion with Coaches & Athletes [Set the tone](#)

Keep it Simple, Keep it Short - two to three minutes at most. Ask if anyone has any special equipment.

Two most important things: safety of the athletes and getting the calls right.

Discuss major rule changes.

Neutral Out of Bounds – explain how they got to the edge.

Traditional Stalling – emphasis on how you get to the edge, etc.

The Offensive wrestler is responsible for attempting to return the Defensive wrestler.

Discuss your starting sequence in the Referee's Position. Reduce Cautions. Thank them for their time and wish them good luck.

Discussion with Second Official

Be sure to discuss expectations with your Second Official (SO), if you have one.

Communication is key. Talk to one another during the match.

Talking Points

1. Clock is number one priority – start and stop, riding time.
2. Stay 180° from Lead Official (LO), if possible.
3. Look for backside violations that LO cannot see. [Active assistant](#)
4. Look for Nearfall if action moves away quickly.
5. Cover front side if action turns away from LO.
6. Location during timeouts.
7. Location for Neutral starts and Referee's Position starts.
8. Location at the conclusion of each match (top of key).
9. Discuss how to handle disagreements on calls.
10. SO to remain in the circle with wrestlers during the coach's conference at table.

OFFICIAL'S MECHANICS IN NEUTRAL SITUATIONS

1. Wrestler's Position in Neutral Start

- a. Both wrestlers must place one foot on their respective starting line and the other foot on or behind the line or the line extended. Don't start unless both wrestlers have a foot on the line. Point to the line to ensure this. Eliminate unnecessary Cautions.
- b. Hands and/or forehead cannot touch the opponent.
- c. Both wrestlers must be stationary until the whistle sounds (no rolling starts).
- d. It is not recommended for the Official to shake the hands of the wrestlers unless they initiate shaking hands with you.

2. Neutral Starting Mechanics

- a. The Official should step in between the wrestlers with outstretched arms between the red and green starting lines. Make sure this position does not interfere with the wrestlers, however.
- b. The Official should be stationary and facing the scorer's table. Point at and make eye contact with the timekeeper.
- c. Make sure you have visual acknowledgment from the timekeeper prior to blowing the whistle.
- d. Verbally "set" the wrestlers.
- e. Sound your whistle loud and sharp while simultaneously making a visual arm motion to start the match (Signal #1).
- f. Move out quickly to a proper calling distance (10-15 feet) and adjust your position according to where the action goes. Glance up momentarily to ensure that the clock has properly started. Always keep both wrestlers in your line of sight as you back out.
- g. It is recommended that the whistle remain in the front of the Official's mouth unless giving verbal commands to the wrestlers – not on the side of the mouth.

3. Neutral Standing Position

- a. Situate yourself so that you are far enough away from the wrestling to observe the action and not interfere with sudden changes in position. Move in closer when identifying Potentially Dangerous and/or potentially Illegal maneuvers.
- b. A range of 10-15 feet is suggested. Find your comfortable space. A wider range allows for a greater perspective.

- c. Know how various Takedowns finish so you can position yourself to stay out of the way and to observe control as it is established.
- d. Continuously work to improve your position and situate yourself between both wrestlers as they face each other to ensure you can move to either side in scoring situations and to see the hand fighting.
- e. Anticipate position. Understand where action should go next.
- f. Do not chase the action; stop and let the action come back to you. Oftentimes moving counter to the wrestlers' rotation is more effective.
- g. Change levels and be mobile in order to be in the proper position to observe Potentially Dangerous and/or Illegal maneuvers; bend knees – drop hips.
- h. It is important to loudly verbalize the award of Takedown points. Move in and lower your level. This allows the scoring wrestler to release the locked hands. Verbalize who is in control.
- i. Award points in a confident manner using approved hand signals. Arm should be extended overhead while rotating the points (Signal #22).
- j. Eye contact should be maintained strictly on the wrestlers. Trust the table team to do their job correctly and keep your focus on the wrestlers.

4. Neutral Boundary Line Situations

- a. Beat the wrestlers to the boundary line. The Official should be in position to observe the location of each wrestler. Position yourself so that you can view the action and the boundary line to see when the wrestlers break the cylinder. Maintain proper distance and keep moving. The Second Official should be in a position to see if either wrestler touches off the mat surface.
- b. Be patient; do not overly anticipate an Out of Bounds situation occurring. Control your whistle until you are sure a situation finishes Out of Bounds.
- c. Call Out of Bounds by the letter of the rule and be consistent from call to call. Use proper hand mechanics with simultaneous whistle (Signal #10). No stop sign is necessary.
- d. Always keep safety in mind. You may have to sound a premature whistle when safety is a concern. For example, if walls, bleachers, chairs, tables, platforms, etc. are nearby.
- e. When possible, award the earned points before sounding your whistle. Award points in the proper sequence as they occurred.
- f. The Official may verbally request that both wrestlers "work center" but keep comments short and refrain from "coaching."

5. Neutral Scramble Situations

- a. Continuously work to maintain the best possible position to observe control, non-control.
- b. Be patient. Let the action unfold and remain calm.
- c. Take a deep breath and take a couple steps back. Officials tend to move in closer when the action picks up. Follow the action and work to anticipate where it's going.
- d. It's better to be a half second late versus a half second early when awarding points in all situations.
- e. When control is gained, loudly verbalize the awarded points.
- f. Likewise, verbalize no control with proper mechanics if scramble remains Neutral. Show the No Control signal (Signal #11) every 8-10 seconds. Avoid holding the No Control signal for prolonged periods of time. Being verbal is critical.
- g. In many scramble situations it is obvious that control has not been established. However, when control is close to being established, then that is when the No Control signal should be used. The goal is to not over-utilize the No Control signal.
- h. Circle in the opposite direction to catch up to the action.

OFFICIAL'S MECHANICS IN MAT WRESTLING SITUATIONS

1. Start of the Referee's Position

- a. The hand movement should be the same as the Neutral start of the match.
- b. As with other hand signals, the hand motion is also for the table, coaches, and fans.
- c. Verbally "set" each wrestler, pause and then blow the whistle loud and clear!
- d. If your matches have an inordinate number of false starts, it is possible the Official is causing the problem.
- e. Be stationary and alternate positions on the mat to avoid rolling starts.

2. Referee's Position (12 o'clock is in reference to the heads of wrestlers)

- a. The Official should be at an angle (right or left of center) to the wrestlers. If the wrestlers are at 12 o'clock, the Official should be at 10 or 2 o'clock.
- b. Although altering sides may help, the Official should be aware of the tendencies of the wrestlers throughout the match and set up accordingly.

- c. The Official should stand. This gives the Official the ability to see the placement of the Offensive wrestler's head on the midline, the palm on the navel, the palm on the elbow, and the back foot. (Officials may lower the level to view the palm.)
- d. Do not be out on the edge of the circle; that is too far away. Stay in between the 10-foot circle and the Out of Bounds line.
- e. After the Defensive wrestler gets in position and is "set," the Official should get into ready position. Next, the Official will direct the Offensive wrestler to "cover." Once legal and stationary, the Official will verbally "set" the Offensive wrestler and then start the match with a simultaneous hand signal and whistle.
- f. Remember to pause for at least one second before sounding the whistle.

3. Movement as Wrestling Continues

- a. After the start and throughout the mat wrestling, the Official wants to be primarily at the head and hands of the wrestlers, suggested 8-12 feet from the wrestlers.
- b. As the Offensive wrestler breaks his opponent down and applies bars, wings, power halves or comes closer to Nearfalls, the Official may move closer in position to stop Potentially Dangerous holds or look for Nearfalls and Falls.
- c. Vary distance from wrestlers depending on the situation. The Official should be in position to block or stop Potentially Dangerous situations BEFORE they become Illegal.
- d. Being verbal here is critical to allow the wrestlers to adjust and prevent holds from becoming Illegal or Potentially Dangerous.

4. When the Defensive Wrestler Comes to a Standing Position

- a. As the Defensive wrestler makes it to their feet, the Official should come to the head and hands of the wrestlers but be ready to change directions quickly.
- b. The Official should pay particular attention to hand control to determine if the Offensive wrestler can attempt to return the Defensive wrestler. Baiting is a Technical Violation and should be called when it presents itself.
- c. Indicate who is in control with proper hand mechanics. Be verbal with "Improve."
- d. The Offensive wrestler has the responsibility to **attempt** to return the Defensive wrestler to the mat, as per NFHS rules. If they are making no legitimate attempt, then they shall be called for Stalling. Do not stop the match when making the Stalling call in this situation. Only if stalling from the top and they are down on the mat.
- e. If the Official feels that the Offensive wrestler is incapable of attempting to return the Defensive wrestler and/or neither wrestler can improve, then a Stalemate is warranted.

- f. If the Offensive wrestler is attempting to return the opponent to the mat, then there is no Stalling – the key being a legitimate attempt.
- g. In a rear standing position, the Official must anticipate the Offensive wrestler's movement in order to maintain the best possible position to see all scoring situations.

5. On the Out of Bounds Line

- a. The Official should position themselves on the edge in order to view the heads/hands of the wrestlers while also maintaining a good view of the boundary line to see if or when they break the cylinder. Maintain enough space to see the whole situation.
- b. The Official should continue to move and improve position to view the best angle.
- c. If Officials need to change positions on the edge, then switch to the outside of the wrestlers with SO on the outside. Do not switch on the inside on the mat.
- d. Note: if there is no significant action taking place on the edge, then you may restart the wrestlers back in the center.

OFFICIAL'S MECHANICS IN NEARFALL SITUATIONS

1. Directly from the Feet

- a. Follow the flow of the action. When the back of the Defensive wrestler is exposed - beyond Reaction Time - work to be down on the mat in the best vantage position to view both shoulders/scapulae. It may not be toward the head and shoulders.
- b. In many cases the Official may have to cut off the mat and, therefore, should take the best angle possible to maintain proper position when the action goes from feet to back.
- c. Continuously improving your position while on your feet should help to eliminate having to chase the action when it moves quickly in another direction. In some instances, it is more beneficial to move counter to the wrestling action and let it come to you.
- d. Your first Nearfall count does not start until the Defensive wrestler is in Nearfall criteria beyond Reaction Time. Remember there are 4 criteria for NF, 1) Any part of both shoulders or both scapula of the defensive wrestler are held within 4 inches, 2) when 1 shoulder or scapula is touching the mat and the other shoulder or scapula is at 45 degrees, 3)defensive wrestler is held in a high bridge or 4) when on both elbows
- e. A verbal and visual count should be used whenever possible.

- f. Do not place or reach a hand under the scapulae or shoulders of the Defensive wrestler.
- g. The Official should continue to move to view the best angle to see the Nearfall or Fall.
 - Look underneath, while also looking at action happening around the face and hands.

h. From the Mat

- As Defensive wrestlers are getting put into Nearfall criteria, start lowering your body. Get in a ready position to see when the Nearfall criteria is met. Officials should stay in a mobile position while maintaining distance because the direction of the action may change often.
- Your first Nearfall count does not start until the Defensive wrestler is in Nearfall criteria beyond Reaction Time. Remember there are 4 criteria for NF, 1) Any part of both shoulders or both scapula of the defensive wrestler are held within 4 inches, 2) when 1 shoulder or scapula is touching the mat and the other shoulder or scapula is at 45 degrees, 3) defensive wrestler is held in a high bridge or 4) when on both elbows
- Once criteria have been met, give a clear, precise verbal and visual count: *“thousand one, thousand two, thousand three, thousand four, thousand 5”* Or *“one, two, three, four, five* Visual count should be with arm up and out at a 45-degree angle with fingers tight together. The key here is whatever language you use, make sure that it is 1 full second before you state the next count. Time yourself in the mirror
- Verbal count is critical for both wrestlers, while the visual signal is important for the coaches, fans and table.
- The Official should be down on the mat when the Nearfall happens and understand when a Nearfall is still the same situation so as not to award the Nearfall points prematurely.

i. Do Not Make Up Hand Signals

- DO NOT make a hand gesture with fingers and thumb showing how close the back is to the mat.
- DO NOT make a hand signal with a hand straight up and down

symbolizing a 90- degree angle.

- DO NOT wave a hand back and forth to indicate that a wrestler moved in and out of Nearfall.
- DO NOT shake your head yes or no to indicate if the wrestler is in and out of Nearfall criteria.

RESPONSIBILITIES OF SECOND OFFICIALS

1. The Second Official (SO) is the first on and last off the mat. Be active and assist with the same latitude of mobility as the Lead Official (LO). Movement and communication should be constant and are the keys for success.
2. One of the SO's primary responsibilities is time. Make sure the clock starts and stops on the LO's whistle. The SO is also responsible for knowing the score, confirming that points get posted to the scoreboard, who scored first, who has Stalling warnings, and who has the choice at the start of each period. Indicate to the LO who has choice of position in between each period.
3. The LO always passes on the inside path when crossing, and the SO should be no closer than the LO. The SO has freedom to move to seek their best position to complement the LO making calls and should move and be in position to see the action and/or potential violations. Anticipation is essential for the SO. Drop to a lower level to look underneath in tie-up and headlock situations.
4. In Referee's Position starts, the SO should position themselves perpendicular to the LO.
5. The SO should not yell across the mat; rather, move to circle behind the LO and make your statement, or move in toward the LO to voice your opinion of the situation.
6. If the SO questions a situation, both Officials should conference at the appropriate time and away from coaches. Cover your mouth. Never be afraid to voice an opinion to the LO.
7. When disagreeing with a call, the SO needs to be direct and clearly communicate with the LO to improve the efficiency of the match. Approach the LO in a calm, rational manner and let the LO know you'd like to consult.
8. Bring infractions to the LO's immediate attention. Cover the front side (when the action rotates toward you) and wait for the LO to catch up to the action before rotating 180°.

9. Police the designated coaches' area. Do not allow yourself to be addressed by coaches and never communicate with a coach. Direct the coach to the LO and keep moving.
10. Assist the LO with injury, recovery, and concussion protocols (discuss responsibilities before the match).
11. On boundary situations, be in position to see when the action goes Out of Bounds. If the wrestlers go out and the LO does not see it, then SO may yell "Out." If the wrestlers touch off the mat surface, then SO may yell "Out" so everyone knows why.
12. Be in position to watch the clock with wrestlers in your field of vision during the last 10 seconds of the period/match.
13. If the match goes into Overtime, then the SO should know who scored first, who has Stalling warnings and/or other penalties, and who will get choice of position first in any Rideout periods.

SECOND OFFICIAL'S RESPONSIBILITIES IN NEARFALL SITUATIONS

The SO should work to stay in the best possible position to see any potential infractions, to watch for Out of Bounds, and to watch the clock.

If there is a foot-to-back situation or if a Nearfall situation moves quickly away from the LO, then the SO should be prepared to provide a verbal Nearfall count until the LO is in position to see the Nearfall.

Make sure the Defensive wrestler isn't doing anything Illegal, the Offensive wrestler isn't doing anything Illegal, or to see if any hold becomes Illegal through wrestling action.

If an Illegal move occurs, the SO needs to notify the FO. The decision is predicated on if it became Illegal by the Defensive wrestler or the Offensive wrestler. Then the LO will make the correct call.

1. The SO may count down “4, 3, 2, 1, Time” in Nearfall or potential Fall situations at the end of periods but should avoid using hand signals or fingers to count down.
2. Advantages of the SO watching the clock are as follows:
 - a. To see if enough time was remaining to score either 2 Nearfall or 3 four Nearfall points (2 seconds or 5 seconds).
 - b. To help with the “Fall call” if the wrestler had the Fall before the clock ran out.

Note: You are an officiating team, and your goal should always be to keep the wrestlers safe and to get the calls correct. This only becomes possible if both Officials are fully engaged and communicate clearly and freely with one another throughout the match.

MECHANICS OF INJURY, RECOVERY & CONCUSSION TIMEOUTS

See Page 83-84 in the NFHS Rules Book for proper hand signals. Signals on the mat should be directed toward the table using the color for the stoppage time. Remember only the

onsite mechanical provider can request Head Neck Cervical timeout.

Unless it's obvious, confirm with the wrestler that they need injury time.

The Official should stay in a position to see both wrestlers, coaches, and the clock.

Tell the coach when there is one minute left, 30 seconds and 15 seconds.

Use Signal #3 to indicate when the Injury or Recovery Time stops.

1. Injury Time (1:30 cumulative throughout match)

- a. Official will signal (Signal #4) to start the Injury Time once an Athletic Trainer or Medical Personnel has arrived on the mat.
- b. It is critical that the Official knows the proper sequence when a wrestler takes injury time in all situations. Make sure wrestlers restart in the proper position

STALLING – GENERAL GUIDELINES

The most difficult aspect of officiating wrestling is to understand Stalling. You must develop a philosophy that will assist in most situations. This is where the best Officials are recognized above the good Officials.

Each wrestler is required to make an honest attempt to stay within the 10-foot circle and wrestle aggressively, regardless of position or the time or the score of the match. Action is to be maintained throughout the match by the contestants wrestling whether in the top, bottom or Neutral position, and both contestants are equally responsible for initiating action. Contestants must also work to stay on the mat and maintain action in bounds. It is the responsibility of contestants, coaches and Officials to avoid the use of Stalling tactics or allowing the use thereof.

Stalling is one of the most subjective calls in wrestling because:

- a. No two Officials call Stalling identically.
- b. No two Officials recognize Stalling within the same time frame.
- c. Consistency with Stalling is tough due to different dynamics in each match.

Any delays directly related to shoelaces is an automatic stall call.

It is Stalling when a wrestler backs off the mat, or when either pushes or pulls the opponent off the mat. One of three calls must be made each time they go Out of Bounds.

NEUTRAL STALLING

1. What to recognize:

- a. From Neutral start backing out of the circle without making contact with the opponent.
- b. Continuously avoiding contact with the opponent.
- c. Preventing opponent from returning to or remaining in-bounds.
- d. Playing the edge of the mat.
- e. Continuously pushing or pulling with no shot attempt.
- f. Repeatedly faking contact without follow-through.
- g. Using an underhook or wrist control without a follow-through shot.
- h. Collar tie pushing/pulling no follow-through.
- i. Single or double underhook without a shot attempt.
- j. Wrist control (single or double) without attempt at a shot or to prevent opponent's shot.
- k. Blocking with a forearm or head in a tie-up with no attempt at shot or to prevent the opponent's shot.
- l. Repeatedly grasping or holding a leg with no attempt at follow-through to improve position.
- m. Repeatedly grasping or holding a leg to prevent the opponent from scoring.
- n. Repeatedly causing a stalemate.
- o. Controlling a 2-on-1 (Russian Tie) without an attack attempt.
- p. Slowly straggling back from OB.

OFFENSIVE STALLING

It is Stalling when the Offensive wrestler does not aggressively attempt to break down the opponent.

1. What to Recognize:

- a. Keeping the heel held to the buttocks for 5 seconds. Note this is the only time holding an ankle or heel has a 5 second count. Coaches will argue that any holding of the ankle for 5 is stalling but that is no longer in the rule book and has been gone for a very long time.
- b. Deep waist and wrist with no attempt to improve.
- c. Hooking the back ankle of a Defensive wrestler for an extended period with minimal attempt to break the opponent down (Western Hook).
- d. Staying behind an opponent in a rear standing position without attempting to return to the mat. Remember the wrestler is not required to return the defensive wrestler to the mat in any amount of time. He/She must make an attempt to return. In theory lots of attempts could result in the rear-standing position for a very long time. Also watch the defensive wrestler if he is not allowing the offensive wrestler the ability to return (is he holding the offensive wrestler's hands, is he squatting and not attempting to get away). This is actually stalling on the defensive wrestler and should be called.
- e. Repeatedly using two legs and being unable to turn an opponent resulting in a stalemate or repeated use of cross-body ride with no attempt to improve position.
- f. Running an arm bar with the opponent broken down on the mat with minimal attempt to improve.
- g. In all offensive situations the match is stopped to award stalling calls except for #d, (rear standing not making an attempt to return to mat)

DEFENSIVE STALLING

The Defensive wrestler must work aggressively to Escape or reverse their opponent.

1. What to Recognize:

- a. Does the Defensive wrestler initiate an Escape or Reversal?
- b. Once broken down onto the mat, is the Defensive wrestler working to build a base?
- c. When the Offensive wrestler comes off the hips creating space, does the Defensive wrestler attempt to take advantage or content to stay down?
- d. Do Defensive wrestlers attempt to improve their position to try to score?
- e. Lying on the mat with elbows tucked into the body.
- f. Lying on the mat with arms and legs spread apart (par terre).
- g. Grasping the opponent's hands or arms and just holding on.
- h. Forehead down on the mat and/or balling up.
- i. Defensive wrestlers repeatedly crawling out of the 10-foot circle, crawling to the edge or working toward Out of Bounds with no attempt to improve position would constitute Stalling.
- j. The Official does not stop the match when penalizing the Defensive wrestler for Stalling.

QUESTIONING & CONTROL OF MAT

1. Do not stand chest-to-chest as it appears more confrontational.
2. Ask the coach to address the situation at the head table, get them out of their comfort zone and in front of the head table so everyone involved with the match can hear the discussion.
3. Listen first. Let the coach be heard. Coaches are not always wrong.
4. If the coach questions a call – and no change is made – then the coach MUST be warned for Questioning.
5. If a coach commits an infraction that requires a Control of Mat Area, then the Official must penalize that coach accordingly. These happen when the coach is doing things from the bench and not at the head table.
6. How the Official penalizes the coach is critical:
 - a. Go to the center of the mat and calmly indicate and announce the infraction to the head table.
 - b. Make sure the coach is aware that they have been penalized.
 - c. Do not get emotionally involved. Be professional at all times.
 - d. If a coach crosses the line and Unsportsmanlike Conduct is warranted, the Official should maintain composure and penalize the coach in the same professional manner as a lesser penalty. (Signal #25)

UNSPORTSMANLIKE CONDUCT

The Official needs to constantly monitor and assess the intensity of the match and identify whether the athletes are nearing a potentially negative situation. If a situation is identified, the Official may stop the match and have a quick chat with both wrestlers in the center of the mat. Be preventive in these situations. It is critical that the Official never turns their back to the wrestlers. Always keep the wrestlers in your view. If a situation cannot be prevented, then the Official is to penalize the offending wrestler(s) in a calm and professional manner (Signal #23,24 or 26) . The Official should also make the table aware of the penalty and let the coach of the offending wrestler know that their wrestler has received a penalty for Unsportsmanlike Conduct.

CONCLUSION

Good officiating does not start the first day of an officiating career. Rather, it is acquired

after many years and much time on the mat. Watch and learn from the top Officials either in person, on video, and/or in meeting discussions. With advanced media it's now possible to watch hours of wrestling to improve your performance. Officials must put in the time to gain the valuable knowledge necessary to recognize all wrestling situations. Mistakes are inevitable, but the Official should learn from those mistakes and work to prevent making them again. **Experience is the best teacher.**

Furthermore, there are additional factors that separate and produce high-level Officials.

1. Attitude

Continuous improvement and growth is critical to an Official's success.

Complacency is the enemy. An Official is always learning, working to improve, and better themselves. Two things define you as an Official: your patience when you have nothing and your attitude when you have everything.

2. Mindset

Ego is the enemy. Take the approach that we are all imperfect and we may not get everything right – the first time. However, we have tools around us to help us get the call right in the end. Try not to give your attention to what others do or fail to do; give it to what you do or fail to do. Focus on being the best version of yourself and controlling only what you can control.

3. The Team

Officials must strive to work together in a professional manner and treat each other with respect. It's not about us, it's about getting the calls right. Making a mistake is not the real mistake; not working together and using all the tools/resources to get it right is the mistake. Comparing, complaining and criticizing will get you nowhere.

4. Mentorship

Finding a mentor who you trust and who can provide you with constructive feedback can be critical to your growth. Share videos with each other, discuss calls, watch matches together, and get constructive feedback to aid in your growth. It's OK to be vulnerable and unselfish. The goal is to plant trees for others to climb.

5. Quiet Confidence

Great officials are confident because they consistently prepare, analyze and, through experiences, always strive for improvement and excellence. Perfection is not attainable, but excellence can be achieved.

6. Humility

Great officials let their actions speak louder than their words. They understand the sport is first and foremost about the student athletes.



OFFICIAL WRESTLING SIGNALS

1. Starting the Match



2. Stopping the Match



3. Time-Out



4. Start Injury Time



5. Start Blood Time Out



6. Start Recovery Time



7. Stop Blood/Injury/Recovery Time



8. Neutral Position



9. Indicates No Control



10. Out-of-Bounds



11. Indicates Wrestler in Control – Left/Right Hand



12. Defer Choice



13. Potentially Dangerous – Left/Right Hand





OFFICIAL WRESTLING SIGNALS

14. Stalemate



15. Caution – False Start or Incorrect Starting Procedure



16. Stalling – Left/Right Hand



17. Interlocking Hands or Grasping Clothing



18. Reversal



19. Technical Violation



20. Illegal Hold



21. Near-Fall



22. Awarding Points – Left/Right Hand



23. Unsportsmanlike Conduct – Left/Right Hand



24. Flagrant Misconduct – Left/Right Hand



25. Coach Misconduct – Left/Right Hand



26. Unnecessary Roughness – Left/Right Hand



27. Default Technical Fall Disqualification



28. Start Head, Neck, Cervical Injury Evaluation Time



