

NATIONAL FEDERATION OF STATE
HIGH SCHOOL ASSOCIATIONS



Eased Restrictions On Facial Hair Among 2022-23 High School Wrestling Rules Changes

High school wrestlers may now have facial hair on the entire face and chin, provided a skin check can still be conducted. Previously, wrestlers were required to be clean shaven with the exception of sideburns and a neatly trimmed mustache.

The change to facial hair requirements was one of three rules changes recommended by the National Federation of State High School Associations (NFHS) Wrestling Rules Committee at its meeting April 3-5 in Indianapolis, which subsequently were approved by the NFHS Board of Directors.

The revised procedure for facial hair is that the skin must be visible to allow for a skin check to be performed, as determined by the referee or a designated onsite appropriate health-care professional overseeing skin checks. In the event a skin check cannot be performed, a wrestler will be permitted to trim the facial hair to within the guidelines and must do so before competing. A wrestler may also choose to wear a face mask in lieu of making adjustments to the facial hair.

“We have been systematically removing barriers of participation in our sport,” said Elliot Hopkins, NFHS director of sports, sanctioning and student services and liaison to the NFHS Wrestling Rules Committee. “It started with allowing the optional two-piece uniform, then modifying the hair rule, providing options for state associations with three choices of weight classes for boys and adding three separate girls’ sets of weight classes and now this change. Literally, there is no rule-based reason that a young person cannot participate. We accept all students who want to learn how to wrestle with no restrictions and encourage them to try out for their school team.”

An additional change to Rule 4-2-1 permits wrestlers to wear hair-control devices and other adornments in the hair that are securely fastened and do not present an increased risk to the wrestler or opponents.

“The NFHS Wrestling Rules Committee continues to be forward-thinking with rules changes that promote participation in our sport,” said Anthony Clarke, chair of the NFHS Wrestling Rules Committee. “The committee also strives to adopt rules changes that make wrestling easier for officials, coaches, wrestlers and fans to understand.”

In the event a wrestler’s shoelace laces become untied or the shoe comes off during a match, a wrestler will now be penalized for stalling. Previously, this situation resulted in a technical violation. Shoe and shoelace infractions are no longer subject to injury time and the match will not be stopped to warn or penalize this instance of stalling. Additionally, any two-point stalling infractions and penalties will not cause the match to be stopped to warn or penalize a wrestler.

Changes to 4-1-1 and 4-5-7 clarified the uniform requirements for female wrestlers. Female wrestlers shall wear a sports bra that completely covers their breasts and minimizes the risk of exposure during weigh-ins and competition. Additionally, the change also clarifies that compression shirts may be worn underneath a one-piece singlet and are not required for female wrestlers unless needed to ensure complete coverage.

A complete listing of the wrestling rules changes will be available on the NFHS website at www.nfhs.org. Click on “Activities & Sports” at the top of the home page and select “Wrestling.”

According to the most recent NFHS High School Athletics Participation Survey, wrestling is the seventh-most popular sport for boys with 247,441 participants in 10,843 schools. In addition, a total of 21,124 girls are involved in the sport in 2,890 schools.