

OHSAA WRESTLING BULLETIN

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Religious Faith Apparel Accommodations

State law, codified in Section 3313.5317 of the Ohio Revised Code, was enacted on May 30, 2022. The law prohibits anyone from interfering with or obstructing a student-athlete from wearing religious apparel during participation in interscholastic athletic competitions or other extracurricular activities.

In accordance with the state law, the OHSAA allows student-athletes to modify an athletic or team uniform to make the uniform more modest to conform to the requirements or preferences of a student-athlete's religion. This means athletes can wear head coverings, such as a kippah, hijab, or turban, or wear additional clothing such as long sleeve T-shirts or leggings (tights) for religious reasons. Requiring the student-athlete to obtain prior approval or other permission to compete with a modified uniform for religious purposes is unlawful.

While NFHS Rule 4-1-1(c) and the note thereunder prohibits sleeves from extending below the elbows and requires full-length tights with stirrups, to accommodate religious modesty concerns, long sleeves and tights without stirrups shall be allowed. It is recommended (not mandated) that a form-fitted long-sleeved T-shirt that fits securely about the wrists, and snug fitting tights with stirrups be worn. However, if these apparel items are not immediately available, a long-sleeved T-shirt can be secured by taping at the cuffs, and stirrup-less tights can be secured by taping about the ankles (assuming these items are loose fitting at the wrists and ankles).

Student-athletes in Ohio should ever have to worry about not being able to compete in scholastic sports because of their religious beliefs.

Gender-Neutral Uniforms & Undergarments

Rule 4-1-1(a), (b) and (c) defines the wrestler's legal uniform requirements including suitable undergarments. There is no reference to gender, except the notes under Rule 4-1-1(a) & (c) requiring female contestants to wear a sports bra. The undergarment stipulation under Rule 4-1-1(a) & (b) is gender-neutral, requiring both male and female contestants to wear a suitable undergarment that completely covers the buttocks and

groin area. An undergarment that does not meet the requirements of Rule 4-1-1(a) & (b) is illegal for both male and female contestants.

Accordingly, during weigh-ins, grooming/skin checks, or during the pre-meet locker room discussion with the teams, officials are not to single out a particular gender and focus on the undergarments they should not wear. Let alone warn them about the consequences should they not conform. If the undergarment does not conform to the rule (not completely covering the buttocks and groin area), regardless of gender, there are remedies to discreetly address the situation. The requirements of a legal uniform and undergarments and the consequences for not complying should never be directed to a specific gender in the public domain.

During weigh-ins if a competitor reports to weigh-ins with no discernable, legal, suitable undergarment, that wrestler regardless of gender shall change into a legal, suitable undergarment before stepping onto the scale to weigh-in (Case Book page 12, 4.1.1, Situation C). The issue should be discreetly brought to the attention of the head coach and the competitor allowed to change into a legal, suitable undergarment. If changing into a legal, suitable undergarment requires leaving the designated weigh-in area, Rule 4-5-3 permits contestants to leave the designated weigh-in area if permission is granted by the meet administration (e.g., the on-site official or school administrator). If the contestant is granted permission to leave the designated weigh-in area, he or she shall be accompanied by a same gender meet administrator or official to ensure no weight loss/weight gain activities take place during the interim.

If an illegal uniform/undergarment is discovered after weigh-ins (assuming weigh-ins were overseen by an authorized person other than the meet official) and during the pre-meet discussion with each team, the issue can be addressed by discreetly informing the head coach of the infraction.

No wrestler should report to the scorer's table with an illegal uniform/undergarment and have the embarrassment of being denied the opportunity to wrestle. If this situation occurs, it is because the official has not carried out the prescribed pre-meet duties during the weigh-ins and/or locker room discussion with each team, or the wrestler and/or coach are defying the official's decision that the uniform/undergarment is illegal. In this case, the contestant will be assessed a technical violation penalty, charged with an injury timeout, and given a maximum of 1½ minutes to correct the situation.

Sports Bras

Officials do not want to be labeled as the “sports bra police”. While the term “sports bra” is referenced in the notes under Rule 4-1-1(a) & (c) requiring female contestants to wear a sports bra, there is no definition describing what a sports bra is. If a retailer markets a bra as a sports bra, then technically it is a sports bra.

The bra pictured below is marketed as a sports bra.



The issue with this sports bra is that the multiple straps (if exposed about the shoulder area) present a hazard for fingers getting caught as holds are applied about the neck area. Accordingly, if a contestant is wearing a sports bra with exposed multiple straps as shown above, for safety, a form fitted compression type T-shirt must be worn to cover the straps. However, if a female cut singlet covers the multiple straps, the form fitted T-shirt would not be necessary.

Biting is Penalized as Flagrant Misconduct

Rule 5-12-2(c) states: “If in the opinion of the referee, a wrestler bites an opponent this will be deemed as intentional biting and will be called as flagrant misconduct.” (See also Rules 5-2-1 & 5-2-2).

Given the gravity of the consequences for a flagrant misconduct penalty, when assessing a potential bite situation, the official must ensure that the bite was not self-inflicted and that teeth indentations were merely the result of a crossface across the open mouth of the opponent.

If the bite is determined to be intentional a flagrant misconduct penalty must be called resulting in disqualification from the match, the loss of all earned team points, a deduction of three team points, and removal from the premises for the duration of the event. If the event is a dual meet advancement tournament, the ejected wrestler will

lose all team points associated with the dual where the ejection took place. Points earned by the ejected wrestler in previous dual meets in the tournament are not affected. If a parent, legal guardian, or school administrator is not present to supervise the removed wrestler, the wrestler must be confined to the team bench area for supervision by the coaching staff.

The flagrant misconduct penalty must be reported to the OHSAA within 48 hours of the occurrence via the official's MyOHSAA portal.

Injury or Bleeding Occurring During Near Fall (Offensive Wrestler)

Rule 5-11-2(f), (g) and (h) address what happens during an imminent near-fall situation, a two-count near-fall situation, and a three-count near-fall situation if the defensive wrestler becomes injured or bleeds (review Rule 5-11-2(a)-(i)). In essence, the match is stopped (for injury or bleeding of the defensive wrestler) and an additional near-fall point is awarded.

Remember that the foregoing near-fall scenarios only pertain to situations where the defensive wrestler is injured or bleeds. In these situations, if the offensive wrestler becomes injured or bleeds, the match must be stopped but no additional near-fall point is awarded. The offensive wrestler is only entitled to the points earned up until the time the match was stopped for the injury or the bleeding.

Thank you for all you do!

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OHSAA