



2025-26 NFHS Wrestling Points Of Emphasis

The NFHS Wrestling Rules Committee and the NFHS Board of Directors believe there are areas of interscholastic wrestling that need to be addressed and given special attention. These areas of concern are often cyclical, some areas need more attention than others, and that is why they might appear in the rules book for consecutive editions. These concerns are identified as “Points of Emphasis.” For the 2025-26 high school wrestling season, attention is being called to: The use and necessity of the NFHS Skin Lesion Form, Coach Misconduct Penalty Consequences and Clarifying the Officials Wrestling Signal – Out of Bounds. When a topic is included in the Points of Emphasis, these topics are important enough to reinforce throughout the academic year because they are not being given the proper attention needed.

Use and Necessity of the NFHS Wrestling Skin Lesion Form

The NFHS Wrestling Skin Lesion Form is a critical document designed to promote student safety and prevent the spread of infectious skin diseases in wrestling. Given the high-contact nature of the sport, wrestlers are particularly vulnerable to conditions such as ringworm, impetigo and herpes simplex. This form provides standardized medical documentation that allows licensed medical professionals to evaluate skin lesions and determine whether an athlete is medically cleared to compete. By requiring this form prior to participation, schools and state associations can ensure consistent, evidence-based decision-making while minimizing health risks to all competitors. Its use is not only a matter of compliance with national guidelines but a crucial component of maintaining local public health and personal integrity within competitive wrestling. [The NFHS Skin Lesion](https://www.nfhs.org/wrestling/skin-lesion-form) form is a (.pdf) and is made available to the public for free on the NFHS website (www.nfhs.org) under the Wrestling Resources area.

Coach Misconduct Penalty – Consequences

At face value, coach misconduct occurs when a coach improperly questions the referee at the scorer’s table. Whether questioning a possible misapplication of a rule or the judgment of the referee, it will result in the head coach receiving a misconduct penalty. What the coach is not always aware of are the consequences of the penalty. The consequences are that whenever a coach improperly questions the referee, it is done at the coach's peril because each offense has its own penalty...and they are cumulative from a warning to a two team point deduction and removal of the head coach for the remainder of the day.

Beside the punitive effects of coaching misconduct, there are the environmental impacts such as affecting team morale and focus.

1. Team Morale

- Wrestlers may become distracted or demoralized during a match if they see their coach penalized or ejected.
- It can lead to a loss of composure among athletes who look to coaches for leadership and emotional regulation during intense moments.

2. Competitive Disadvantage

- Misconduct penalties can accumulate and result in team point deductions, which can significantly affect dual meet or tournament outcomes.
- In tight competitions, a single point deduction could be the difference between advancing or elimination.

3. Reputation and Credibility Loss

- Coaches may develop a reputation for poor sportsmanship, which can impact:
 - Parental respect and trust
 - Collegial relationships with other coaches,
 - School and community trust.

4. Administrative and Disciplinary Ramifications

- Repeat offenses may trigger school or state athletic association reviews, leading to suspension or formal reprimand.
- It can affect job evaluations, or the potential for rehiring, especially if the coach is a teacher or staff member.

5. Negative Role Modeling

- High school sports are education-based. A coach penalized for misconduct can inadvertently model poor behavior for the team's wrestlers.
- This undermines core values like respect, accountability and sportsmanship, which are the very underpinnings of high school sports and activities.

NFHS Official Wrestling Signals – Out of Bounds

The role of the referee is an integral part of the sport of wrestling. Referees communicate all of the action on the mat and surrounding areas to the wrestlers, fans, coaches and team personnel. Using clear wrestling official signals is essential for ensuring consistent communication, maintaining the integrity of the match, and enhancing the overall spectator experience. Wrestling is a fast-paced and technical sport where split-second decisions by officials can significantly impact the outcome. When officials use standardized, visible and

unmistakable signals, it reduces confusion among coaches, athletes, scorers and fans. Clear signals also promote fairness and transparency, allowing everyone to understand infractions, points awarded, or match-ending calls in real-time. The out-of-bounds signal is crucial because of the opportunity to score right before a wrestler goes out of bounds. The correct mechanic is sounding the referee's whistle while using a sweeping motion of both arms to express that a wrestler has gone out of bounds. That motion alone does not require that the referee stop action first before signaling out of bounds. Consistent use of these and all the other official wrestling signals reinforces uniformity across all skill levels of high school competition, helping students and coaches to better understand expectations no matter where or with whom they compete against on the mat.