

November 18, 2019

To: Wrestling schools (A.D. and head coach), wrestling officials
From: Lewie Curtis, IHSAA wrestling administrator

Welcome to the 2019-20 wrestling season! As always, this is an exciting time of year and I want to wish all of you the best of luck throughout the season. If you have questions or concerns, don't hesitate to contact me by email at lcurtis@iahsaa.org or by phone at 515-432-2011.

I will try to send out information to you on a regular basis. I'd like to make contact or send reminders about every 2-3 weeks. Head wrestling coaches should share this information with their assistant coaches and junior high coaches. I'll try to be brief and touch on some general concerns that I observe or that have been shared with me. With that in mind, here are some pre-season thoughts, ideas, and suggestions.

- State finals tickets go on sale to schools on Monday, December 9. An email is being sent soon to all athletic directors with the login information if ordering online. Spectators can purchase their limited numbers of state finals tickets beginning Tuesday, December 17, or they purchase through the schools.
- Sectional and District sites and assignments will be posted to our website this Friday, November 22, after Board of Control approval.
- All head coaches need to have completed viewing the [Online Wrestling Rules Meeting](#) prior to the first competition (Dec. 1) date. Get that taken care of ASAP, if you haven't already! I'd suggest assistant and junior high coaches also view the rules meeting.
- Take a very serious approach to preventing and eliminating bullying or hazing in our wrestling programs. Nothing will put a black cloud over your program faster than the mere suggestion that the coaches or administration aren't looking out for the safety of all participants, particularly the youngest, smallest, or most defenseless, as well as any females that have joined the team. I'd challenge all of you to take 4-5 minutes out of one practice to emphasize the importance of working as a team and supporting all teammates, especially as it relates to bullying or hazing. If your students hear the message directly out of the coaches' mouths, they will know you mean business. Set your expectations and follow through if there is a problem!
- The IHSAA is making a concerted effort to recruit and retain new officials in all sports. Please take a chance on hiring a new official to work some of your junior high and junior varsity level contests, and when you do bring them in, help them to be successful. Don't expect flawless efforts the first few times out, but do expect a new official to hustle and conduct themselves in a professional manner. We have conducted new officials' clinics to focus on mechanics, communication, rules, and professionalism. What I expect from coaches at all levels is to let the officials work and give their best effort, allowing them to explain calls or rules interpretations at appropriate times and in a professional manner, without fear of being attacked or ridiculed. We need officials now, but more importantly we need officials to develop for the future. Let's all work together to make wrestling at the high school and junior high levels a sport that is respected because of the respect we share for and show toward each other.
- Regarding weigh in procedures:
 - Eligibility issues (academic rule – state and local, good conduct rule, transfer rule, ejection policy, etc.) prevents a participant from weighing in, thus they can't participate in that event (including a multiple-day event).

- Skin conditions makes a wrestler disqualified from participation but not from weighing in. They can weigh in for purposes of certification, or, if they are cleared for the 2nd day of a tournament, they'd be able to weigh in on day 1 but not compete, then weigh in on day 2 and compete (with proper clearance on the skin form).
- Concussion protocol does not keep a wrestler from weighing in, but the school must have medical clearance prior to the athlete competing.
- Wrestler listed at a weight but weighs in at a higher weight – cross out the weight and replace it with the correct weight class that he weighed in at. (i.e. Weigh in sheet says 106 for Wrestler A. Wrestler A weighs in at 113. Simply cross out 106 and write in 113 and Wrestler A is eligible to compete at 113 and/or 120 in that event, must make weight at same weight class for multiple day event)
- If you have female wrestlers to weigh in, you may get them weighed in prior to the official start time (one hour before in duals and two hours before in tournaments – maximum times). Let's go with no more than 15 minutes early, followed by the officials' pre-meet discussion with all teams and coaches, then the male contestants can start their weigh-ins at the scheduled time.
- If competing against teams from other states, keep in mind that those schools follow their state rules regarding skin forms, so we should accept their state's skin form. Likewise, some other states allow participation from their junior high athletes as part of their high school team. We'd allow that to take place in Iowa, as the out-of-state team follows their own states rule. If an Iowa school competes in another state that allows JH wrestler to participate, we still do not allow our own JH wrestlers to compete.
- Can a wrestler compete with a cast on their wrist? The short answer is no. Rule 4-3-1 states "Any equipment which does not permit normal movement of the joints and which prevents one's opponent from applying normal holds/maneuvers shall not be permitted." If the cast is a hard cast which does not permit movement in the wrist joint, it would not be legal by rule. A soft cast that allows for some movement or a brace on the wrist, may be legal and should be approved by the official(s) on site.
- Fleeing vs. Stalling – Rule 5 defines Stalling (Section 24) and Technical Violations (Section 27), which spell out the difference between these two. The primary difference is that fleeing involves intentionally going out of the wrestling area or forcing an opponent out of the wrestling area to avoid an imminent scoring situation, while stalling involves backing out of bounds or pushing or pulling the opponent out of bounds. Stalling typically involves avoiding wrestling while fleeing involves avoiding being scored upon.
- Edge of mat, gym floor, walls – Safety is paramount in all sports and wrestling is no exception. Keep in mind, Rule 2-1-2 defines the minimum size of the mat, which includes a 5-foot safety mat area. Wrestling shall be stopped if the wrestler has a body part that touches the gym floor or wall outside of that 5-foot safety area that is not padded.
- Extended Head, Neck, Cervical column (HNC) injury time (Rule 8-2-4) – if an on-site, designated, healthcare professional is available, and they request extended time to conduct an HNC evaluation, they will be granted a one-time (per contestant, per match) 5-minute evaluation time. If, after the evaluation, the healthcare professional deems the wrestler fit to continue, they will write a note indicating that they are not observing signs or symptoms of a concussion and present that written notice to the official. When this provision is used, the time consumed

for the injury will in no way affect time used, or available, for other types of injuries. Any time used during injury or recovery time prior to the requested 5-minute evaluation will be transferred to that 5 minutes and no longer be a part of injury or recovery time. Please keep in mind that this new rule is designed for the safety and protection of the athletes and in no way should be used with gamesmanship in mind. In the absence of an on-site, designated, healthcare professional, the 5-minute HNC provision cannot be utilized. Coaches and officials cannot conduct an HNC evaluation!

- A contestant can receive a written notice to return from concussion protocol or HNC evaluation from a healthcare professional other than the one on-site but could not continue in that match without an on-site healthcare professional.
- Athletic Directors should expect communication with their officials that will be working at their school. Part of the conversation should include start time, location of weigh-ins, pay for attending weigh-ins and for working the event, as well as whether there will be an on-site, designated healthcare professional. This last item is critical this year, with the new rule (8-2-4) taking effect.
- A reminder that skin checks must take place prior to wrestlers competing at all levels. This includes females and males, varsity, junior varsity, and junior high! Most times these skin checks will take place prior to weigh-ins, however they might take place just prior to the wrestler competing (junior high or JV meets, or tournaments might require this procedure). Coaches, you must remember that making sure all contestants are legal and properly equipped includes not having a contagious skin condition! The proper skin condition form can be found at the link [Wrestling Skin Condition Report Form](#) and should accompany all wrestlers with a suspect skin condition. If contagious, the wrestler should not be competing or practicing until non-contagious.
 - Current skin forms must be presented to the official at the weigh-in or skin check. If ruled contagious, that wrestler would be out of that competition. They can seek another opinion from an off-site healthcare professional but would not be able to compete in that event. The off-site healthcare professional's skin form would only apply to a future event. Only the on-site healthcare professional or the referee can rule on the wrestler with a suspect skin condition at that event in the absence of a skin form report.
 - Clean wrestling mats before, during, and after wrestling meets and tournaments! Please, let's send the message to all in attendance that we are taking skin conditions seriously and doing everything we can to help protect all our wrestlers!
- Keep in mind that the new rule regarding shoes coming untied should not come into play during scoring action. Do not stop the match to give a stalling warning/call when there is action taking place. Let the action continue and give the stalling call at the conclusion of action. The same would be true of other situations such as hair coming free from the legal hair-control device, the headgear coming unsnapped, etc. We should let action continue and take care of the problem when the match can be halted.

New rules changes

Below are two links that address the NFHS rules changes and comments regarding those changes for the sport of wrestling. Take a moment to review these sites and be sure to coach and officiate to these changes.

[NFHS Wrestling Rules Changes 2019-20 season](#)

[NFHS Comments on the Rules 2019-20 season](#)

Best of luck,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Lewie Curtis". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "L" and a stylized "C".

Lewie Curtis, Director of Officials
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