



NATIONAL FEDERATION OF STATE HIGH SCHOOL ASSOCIATIONS

NEWS RELEASE

Changes in High School Wrestling Rules Include Allowance of Six Matches in One Day of Competition

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Elliot Hopkins

INDIANAPOLIS, IN (April 27, 2023) – High school wrestlers will be able to wrestle in six matches in any one day of competition beginning with the 2023-24 season. The six-match limit includes championship and consolation matches and excludes forfeits.

This change to Rule 1-4-3 was one of 12 revisions recommended by the National Federation of State High School Associations (NFHS) Wrestling Rules Committee at its April 2-4 meeting in Indianapolis. All changes were subsequently approved by the NFHS Board of Directors.

The increase from five to six matches for regular-season competition follows the change two years ago which permitted six matches in any one day of tournament competition. With experiments conducted last year by state associations with no reported injuries, the committee thought the increase to six for regular-season competition was a natural progression.

With risk minimization in mind, the committee also approved Rule 1-4-7, which states that no contestant shall wrestle in more than 10 matches in two consecutive days.

Another significant change was made in the Definitions (Rule 5) section of the NFHS Wrestling Rules Book. In Rule 5-15-2a which lists the points of support when a wrestler is down on the mat,

“foot/feet” was added to the list that includes the knee(s), side of the thigh, buttocks, hand(s) and head.

“Feet are regularly supporting the wrestler’s weight during the match while on the mat,” said Elliot Hopkins, director of sports and student services and liaison to the Wrestling Rules Committee. “We allow a wrestler’s feet to be considered supporting points while in a near-fall situation. By adding it to the list of usual supporting points on the mat, it will create more clarity and consistency for the wrestlers, coaches and officials – without creating additional injury risk.”

In another Rule 5-Definitions revision, the committee expanded the definition of forfeit in Section 13 to include a medical forfeit. The new language states that “it shall be considered a medical forfeit when the opponent fails to appear for a match due to injury or illness that occurred during the tournament. This determination will be made by the tournament director.” A medical forfeit would not count against the wrestler’s record.

In Rule 4 regarding the wrestler’s uniform and appearance, language was altered in Rule 4-1-1a to denote that the one-piece singlet may be worn with full-length, form-fitted tights. The stirrups requirement was deleted because the tights worn by wrestlers today do not ride up the wrestler’s leg causing a disadvantage to the opponent.

In Rule 4-2-1, the committee deleted additional language regarding facial hair requirements and approved a simple new sentence: Facial hair is permissible.

“If there are any questionable areas with regard to skin disease on or around the face, the on-site approved health-care professional would be involved; however, the length of the facial hair does not have any influence on the referee’s decision,” Hopkins said.

Another change approved by the committee includes Rule 1-4-4, which will allow competitors to wrestle in two consecutive matches with a 30-minute rest rather than the previous 45-minute rest period. The committee said the sentiment was that 30 minutes was sufficient rest between matches.

The final revisions were made in Rule 3-1-1, which will permit white or gray trim on the referee’s shoes, and Rule 6-5-2 regarding the end-of-match procedure, which provides the official another option to raising the hand of the winning wrestler.

Rule 6-5-2 now states that the wrestlers shall shake hands and the referee shall declare the winner “by raising the winning wrestler’s hand or by raising the color wristband of the winning wrestler on the referee’s arm or have the winning wrestler raise their own arm.”

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 2021-22 NFHS High School Athletics Participation Survey, wrestling is the sixth-most popular high school sport for boys with 231,874 participants in 10,797 schools nationwide. In addition, there were 31,654 girls who participated in wrestling in 4,802 schools.

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About the National Federation of State High School Associations (NFHS)

The NFHS, based in Indianapolis, Indiana, is the national leadership organization for high school sports and performing arts activities. Since 1920, the NFHS has led the development of education-based interscholastic sports and performing arts activities that help students succeed in their lives. The NFHS sets direction for the future by building awareness and support, improving the participation experience, establishing consistent standards and rules for competition, and helping those who oversee high school sports and activities. The NFHS writes playing rules for 17 sports for boys and girls at the high school level. Through its 50 member state associations and the District of Columbia, the NFHS reaches more than 19,500 high schools and 12 million participants in high school activity programs, including more than 7.6 million in high school sports. As the recognized national authority on interscholastic activity programs, the NFHS conducts national meetings; sanctions interstate events; offers online publications and services for high school coaches and officials; sponsors professional organizations for high school coaches, officials, speech and debate coaches, and music adjudicators; serves as the national source for interscholastic coach training; and serves as a national information resource of interscholastic athletics and activities. For more information, visit the NFHS website at www.nfhs.org.

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