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"... the bite must be handled when it occurs."

Be Sure of the Bite

By: Jim Vreeland

Biting, or any form of flagrant misconduct, is not to be taken lightly. It is the final and ultimate penalty for any wrestler. When biting occurs it is the responsibility of every wrestling official to handle the situation promptly and decisively. There are several important aspects the official must be aware of in every biting incident.

First, if the bite occurs in a place where the defensive wrestler may have bitten himself, the official must see the biting action. Just seeing a cross face doesn't necessarily mean the top wrestler was bitten. The official should see the clamping action of the jaws during the bite, and then apply the flagrant misconduct penalty. If the official sees the defensive wrestler bite himself and shows the official the teeth marks, it should be unsportsmanlike conduct on him. Any time a wrestler uses the official to make a call for his benefit, it should be deemed unsportsmanlike conduct.



Second, the bite must be handled when it occurs. Reference should be made to page 49 of the *NFHS Wrestling Case Manual, 7.4.3 Situation B*, which states, "When the referee makes this call it must be an occurrence that is brought to the referee's immediate attention." The wrestler and/or coach can't wait until the end of the match or sometime thereafter to complain about a bite that took place during the first period. The bitten wrestler should tell and show the official the bite marks when it occurs. For example, if the wrestler is bitten on his thigh, shoulder, or the back of his leg you should certainly recognize he could not have bitten himself in these places. When the official looks at the bite he should look for both the upper and lower sets of teeth marks indented in the flesh of the injured wrestler. The impression of a bite should be the teeth marks left after the clamping of the bite occurs. This verifies the bite, and now comes the difficult part for every official.

Third, once the official is absolutely sure of the biting incident, it is important the official handles this situation without delay. He needs to exhibit self-confidence and, in a prompt firm manner, make the flagrant misconduct call. If necessary, show the opposing coach the bite imprint for his satisfaction the correct call was made based on the necessary evidence of the situation.

The official is required to file the necessary written report within 48-hours and contact the offending wrestler's principal / athletic director the first school day following the incident, advising them of the disqualification. This is explained in the OHSAA Officials Handbook page 13, Section VII, Number 5, *Required Reports*. Moreover, get a copy of the bout sheet with the flagrant misconduct penalty recorded on the score sheet. This will be necessary to assist you in completing the state report form of the ejection. It's also advisable to attach a copy of the score sheet to the reports you distribute to the schools and the OHSAA office.



About the author, Jim Vreeland: Jim, who has been a wrestling official in Ohio for 34 years, was president of the South Shore Wrestling Officials Association from 1987 to 1998. He has been an official at the Ohio High School Athletic Association state wrestling tournament for 16 years and was inducted into the Ohio Wrestling Hall of Fame in 1996. An accomplished speaker and writer of high school wrestling, and a longtime wrestling camp director and clinician, Vreeland was a member of the group that wrote the NFHS Wrestling Officiating Training Manual. Vreeland holds an M.Ed. degree from Bowling Green (Ohio) State University. He and his wife, Pam, reside in Oak Harbor, Ohio and have four grown children.

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