

A GUIDE TO STALLING: KENTUCKY WRESTLING OFFICIALS ASSOCIATION

By: Garrett Pikul & Chris Shaw

Stalling, a word commonly heard throughout any gymnasium during the winter months each year. As a group, officials struggle to find consistency in the way we call stalling. There is no solution or remedy to eliminate stalling from any level of wrestling, but developing a good system to recognizing stalling will help improve consistency. The purpose of this article is to help officials throughout the state of Kentucky recognize stalling in each position and during overtime as well.

When officials call stalling they should be **confident, authoritative and concise**. Officials should also call stalling **without hesitation**. Rule 5-25 of the NFHS Rule Book states that “Each wrestler is required an honest attempt to stay within the 10-foot circle and wrestle aggressively, regardless of position or the time or score of the match. It is also recommended that stalling is called **early and when recognized** to avoid making quick calls in the later periods.

In the neutral position, both wrestlers are equally responsible for working to secure a takedown. A wrestler that is not stalling might be: **Circling, Creating forward motion, Changing Levels, Changing Direction, Penetrating, taking risk, and Creating Angles**. It is recommended that the official verbally communicate with the wrestlers to encourage activity. The official can use verbal cues like: **Action, Contact, and Center**. It is important to remember that calling stalling in the first period will set the tone for the remainder of the match. It will also show both wrestlers and coaches that action is expected or the offending wrestler will be penalized for not creating sufficient action.

Another tactic used to recognize which wrestler is stalling in the neutral position is **counting legitimate shots**. Counting **legitimate** shots keeps officials alert and actively involved in

the match. Anytime either wrestler takes 3 shots to his opponents 0 it is a good indicator of stalling. The **3:0 ratio** is the most basic way for an official to recognize stalling. An example of counting shots could be: Wrestler A takes 5 legitimate shots while Wrestler B takes 2 or less. (Keep track of legitimate shots in your head)

There are many other deliberate tactics that a wrestler may use as a stalling technique. Some of these tactics include: continuously avoiding contact with their opponent, preventing an opponent from returning or remaining inbounds, blocking with the arms, blocking with the forearms, blocking with the head, backing to the edge of the mat, repeatedly causing stalemates and backing out of the 10 foot circle without making contact with their opponent .

During the course of the season each official will come into contact with defensive or counter wrestlers. These wrestlers will only initiate the action when their opponents are making an aggressive attempt for a takedown. It is important to note that defensive wrestling can be deemed as a stalling tactic. The official should use the follow tips to recognize counter wrestling: limited forward motion, backing away from their opponent, not initiating shots (count), and blocking their opponent with the tactics above. Also, repeatedly looking to score on the boundary line and having the ability to bail out of bounds if the situation becomes unfavorable.

In conclusion, it is very difficult to call stalling without taking the time to develop a **system/philosophy** for recognizing when it is occurring in a **consistent manner**. However, by using the tips discussed above Kentucky officials will become consistent making the most difficult call in our sport. If possible each official should have a friend, family member, or spouse videotape some of the events or tournaments that they call or request one from one of the participating coaches. The official should take some time to review the video with other officials and determine specifically where work can be done to improve. Reviewing their performance will also help to improve mechanics and mat demeanor.

STALLING FROM THE TOP POSITION:

KENTUCKY WRESTLING OFFICIALS ASSOCIATION

By: Michael Ford & Dave Wolterman

The purpose of this article is to help officials throughout the state of Kentucky become more consistent in recognizing stalling by the wrestler in the top or offensive or **advantage** position.

Page 26 of the 2009-10 NFHS Wrestling Rules reads the following: **Rule 5-24-Art. 4 . . .** *It is stalling when the contestant in the advantage position:*

- a. does not wrestle aggressively and attempts to secure a fall, except when the wrestler intentionally releases the opponent in order to thereafter immediately attempt to secure a takedown*
- b. legally holds the heel to the buttocks while the defensive wrestler is broken down on the mat for more than five seconds*
- c. holding an opponent's leg with the use of two hands on two legs or two hands on one leg in action not designed to break the opponent down, or is for the purpose of securing a fall, or is to prevent an escape or reversal, is stalling. Repeated grasping and holding the leg or legs with both hands or arms to break an opponent down for the sole purpose of controlling is stalling.*

Stalling is further defined on page 38 in the following: **Rule 7-6-Art. 6 . . .** *It is stalling when either wrestler:*

- b. delays the match. This includes straggling back from out of bounds, unnecessarily changing or adjusting equipment or delay in assuming the starting position on the mat*

c. repeatedly creates a stalemate situation to prevent an opponent from scoring.

Either of the wrestlers is charged with initiating action and wrestling aggressively throughout the match. The above stated rules and their corresponding Case Book clarifications/descriptions are very clear and precise.

From the Referee's Position, once the whistle blows, the top Wrestler should attempt to break his opponent down. If the ***advantage*** wrestler is only following his opponent and trying to hang on, stalling may be called. Another tactic that an official may see is the ***advantage*** wrestler not clearing the hips (riding/not taking risk) and/or half hearted attempts at applying pinning combinations and not "aggressively" attempting to complete the move. Once a ***defensive*** wrestler has been broken down, there should be immediate attempts by the ***advantage*** wrestler to turn and pin the opponent. If there is not significant action toward these ends **within a general guideline of 5 to 10 seconds** (as a general guideline), these actions are a clear signal that stalling is taking place. Leg wrestlers will also perform these similar maneuvers in an attempt to just control or ride their opponent. Creating a stalemate with the use of Legs also should be called stalling after one or two times. Let the top Wrestler know that you are watching and that repeated stalemates by his actions can be construed as Stalling. The differences between half hearted attempts and aggressive attempts to complete a move are very obvious. Coaches will argue that their wrestler is attempting pinning combinations but the key is to attempt them with the intent on completing them. However, be cautious in warning or calling stalling on the ***advantage*** wrestler if the ***defensive*** wrestler is blocking or countering the moves of the ***offensive*** wrestler and not allowing the completion of the move as described in the **2009-10 NFHS Wrestling Case/Manual** on page 51 which reads the following: **Rule 7.6.6 (b)** *Wrestler A, in the top position, puts in a leg and is aggressively attempting to turn Wrestler B to score a near fall. Wrestler B continues to hold the wrist/arm of Wrestler A, but does not use the situation to attempt to break Wrestler A's hold or to*

*secure an escape or reversal. A stalemate is called when Wrestler A fails to turn Wrestler B and Wrestler B fails to escape or gain a reversal. . . **Ruling** Wrestler B has created a stalemate situation to avoid being scored upon. Repeating the same action to create a stalemate situation without using it in an attempt to score would be stalling on Wrestler B. . . Wrestler A would not be called for stalling. . .*

Finally, as Mr. Pikul stated last week, “when officials call stalling they should be **confident and concise**. Officials should also call stalling **without hesitation**”. Developing skills at recognizing stalling takes time and we must continually educate ourselves to become more consistent. Once we have a sense of keeping silent counts when unaggressive wrestling is observed, the confidence and precision when to make the calls will come without hesitation. Be consistent in calling stalling no matter what point in the match it is. If you start at the beginning of the match and are consistent through out, a stalling call with little time left on the clock is consistent with the way it has been called in the entire match. Also getting the wrestlers to start wrestling in the first period sets the tone for them to continue to be aggressive through the entire match.

STALLING FROM THE BOTTOM POSITION: KENTUCKY WRESTLING OFFICIALS ASSOCIATION

By: David Barnett & Jim Shaw

The purpose of this article is to help officials throughout the state of Kentucky become more consistent in recognizing stalling by the wrestler in the bottom or **defensive** position.

Page 27 of the 2009-10 NFHS Wrestling Rules reads the following: **Rule 5-25-Art. 5 . . .** *When a defensive wrestler refuses to aggressively attempt escapes or reversals, it is stalling:*

Rule 5-25-Art. 6 . . . *It is stalling when either wrestler:*

- a. repeatedly grasps or interlocks or interlocks around one leg of the opponent to prevent scoring; or*
- b. delays the match. This includes stragglng back from out of bounds, unnecessarily changing or adjusting equipment or delay in assuming the starting position on the mat; or*
- c. repeatedly creates a stalemate situation to prevent an opponent from scoring.*

Rule 5-25-Art. 7 . . . *The defensive wrestler is not stalling when overpowered:*

The participants are charged with initiating action and wrestling aggressively throughout the match. In addition, both wrestlers are equally responsible for initiating action whether it be in the top, bottom or neutral position. The above stated rules and their corresponding Case Book clarifications/descriptions are very clear and precise.

Case Book: Pages 50 & 51 – 7.6, 7.6.1.C, 7.6.6

Referee's Manual in the Case Book: Pages 80 & 81 – 1, 2, 6

The Referee's Manual in the back of the case book specifically speaks to ***Stalling in the Defensive Position*** and to the fact that the bottom or defensive wrestler is just as responsible for action as the wrestler in the top or offensive position. The manual states that it is not intended for the defensive wrestler to be unnecessarily exposed, but the wrestler must make continued effort to gain an escape or reversal.

Below are a few key rules of thumb or guidelines that can be used to assist in developing a method for recognizing and penalizing stalling from the bottom position.

From Page 81 of the Case Book & Manual

1. **Remaining on all fours in a basic start:** If bottom man makes no attempt to initiate an escape move and stays in the original starting position or locks his body in the position this could be stalling. Typically participants wrestle like they practice so be careful of being overzealous with your call should the defensive wrestler initially brace for defense and then follow-up with an escape or reversal attempt. Setting up a move and being defensive off the whistle is not stalling unless the position is not improved upon in a reasonable amount of time.
2. **Content to just lie on the mat in a belly-down position:** Look for how the bottom wrestler reacts when the top wrestler comes off the hips and provides “space”. At a minimum the bottom wrestler should attempt to establish a base **(or at least attempt to raise his hips)** and work for an escape or reversal. Remaining flat with no action or attempt to improve their position can be a sign of stalling.
3. **Lying on the mat with elbows held in close to the body:** Similar in nature to #2 where the bottom man is creating a situation where the offensive wrestler has little area to initiate moves for near fall is a clear indicator for stalling. This should be stopped when remaining in the position beyond normal reaction time for a defensive move.
4. **Grasping opponent’s hands (or arms) and just holding them close to your body:** Often the bottom wrestler will grab and/or hold onto the top wrestler’s arm or hand(s) without any attempt to improve their position. This tactic can quickly become a stalemate and if repeated becomes stalling. This can further be defined as locking their own hands together and remaining in the position as a form of blocking.

Additional Rules of Thumb:

1. **Being overpowered:** Often the wrestler on the bottom is simply being overpowered by their opponent. Overwhelming strength or a true mismatch in experience is generally fairly easy to recognize. If this is the case the bottom wrestler is not stalling, but the bottom wrestler is still required to make an attempt to improve their position. Double legs/grapevine on the defensive wrestler is typically a good example of the defensive wrestler being overpowered.
2. **Head on the mat, Balling up or Watching the clock:** Look for the bottom wrestler’s head position. If it is buried in the mat with no pressure from the top wrestler this can be a sign of stalling from the bottom. This is generally very easy to recognize and should be penalized immediately. Watching the clock in order to assess the amount of time left in the period is not Stalling, but if the individual stares at the clock and immediately “Re-assumes” the previous position you should be looking for the call.
3. **Locking around or holding on to one or both legs:** Often the bottom wrestler will “turn in” and lock around the top wrestler’s leg(s) only to “hold on” and/or prevent the top wrestler from scoring can be another sign of stalling. These situations quickly become a stalemate, but if repeated, it becomes stalling.

4. **Attempting one move off the whistle then going to blocking:** Wrestlers are charged with initiating action throughout the course of a match . You will notice that when the defensive man attempts one move then balls up or blocks for 10-15 seconds (as a general guideline) and repeats the action that this should be called for stalling. Making one attempt off the whistle then failing to initiate action is not considered aggressive wrestling.
5. **Standing up / Crawling out of the 10 foot circle or crawling out of bounds:** When the bottom mans action is repeatedly ending out of bounds or on the edge of the mat after attempting an escape or reversal. This typically happens in a stand up situation and the bottom man attempts a stand up and forces the action to the edge of the mat and is brought back down to the mat. It can also occur when the bottom man is content to crawl out of bounds without attempting an escape or takedown. In both situations you should be aware and enforce stalling for failing to stay in the wrestling area. This should not be confused with being forced off the mat or normal action occurring on the edge of the mat.
6. **Repeatedly creating Potential Dangerous situations:** This is best described in the Case book example 7.6 on Page 50. While down on the mat Wrestler A, who is in control, applies a grapevine to Wrestler B's leg and, at that time, B, stands, bearing all the weight of A. The referee should stop the match for Potentially Dangerous and the match should be restarted. If it occurs a second time the match should again be stopped for Potentially Dangerous and consider stalling. The third time it occurs, there is no question it would be considered stalling on Wrestler B or the defensive wrestler. We don't recommend this to be a running count throughout a match but should be specific to the action occurring in sequence.
7. **Moving only to counter or block:** This is hard to recognize because it appears that the wrestler is wrestling aggressively. However, be aware that if the only action from the bottom man is to simply counter or block the offensive wrestler's action then it could be stalling. This typically happens when you have two experienced wrestlers in a tight match and the bottom man is only worried about defending or fighting off attempted near-fall attempts and never attempts an escape or reversal. You should be looking for the answer to this question, "Is the bottom man preventing the top man from the opportunity to score?"

These are just some tips/suggestion to help in developing your system to recognize and penalize stalling. The key from the bottom is that a constant effort must be made to improve your position and attempt to earn an escape or reversal; provided that there is adequate "space" to operate and that the bottom wrestler is not being overpowered. If you are constantly vocalizing to the wrestlers that they need to continue working, then stalling is probably occurring.

Finally, as previously stated in the first two editorials, "when officials call stalling they should be **confident, authoritative and precise**. Officials should also call stalling **without hesitation**".

Developing skills at recognizing stalling takes time and we must continually educate ourselves to become more consistent. Once we have a sense of **recognizing** unaggressive wrestling, the confidence and precision on when to make the calls will come without hesitation. Be consistent in calling stalling no

matter what point it is in the match. If you start at the beginning of the match and are consistent throughout, a stalling call with little time left on the clock is consistent with the way it has been called in the entire match. Also getting the wrestlers to start wrestling in the first period sets the tone for them to continue to be aggressive through the entire match.

STALLING – Unique & OT Situations:

KENTUCKY WRESTLING OFFICIALS ASSOCIATION

By: John M. Hutcheson & Chris Shaw

Three regular periods provide the opportunity for wrestlers to score points, work towards a fall, and maintain control. Often regulation time is not enough time to determine a winner. Wrestlers then move into overtime. Overtime has evolved from the referee simply declaring a winner to our present system of sudden victory, two 30-second tiebreakers, and a 30-second ultimate tiebreaker. In order for a referee to maintain the flow of a match, it is important that he is fully aware of all definitions that occur during overtime scenarios, and he must also be cognizant of what has occurred during the regular match.

Section 6.7.1

“Overtime will consist of a one-minute sudden victory period, and if needed two 30-second tiebreakers. If the score remains tied at the end of the two 30-second tiebreakers, a 30-second ultimate tiebreaker shall take place,”

Section 6.7.1

If the match is tied, the referee should immediately bring wrestlers to the center circle, line them up in the neutral position ready for action while the timekeeper sets the clock for one minute. Action should continue without interruption unless there is a discrepancy in scoring or time. Coaches should not interrupt the flow of the match as an attempt to provide a timeout for their wrestlers. The wrestler who gains the first takedown is declared the winner, and the match is over.

Section 6.7.3

If the wrestler gains an advantage “straight to near-fall criteria in the overtime period then the match shall continue until the near-fall or fall situation has concluded”

Section 6.7.8

At the end of the sudden victory, if the score remains tied, two 30-second tiebreakers will be allotted to determine the winner. The referee shall flip a disk for a wrestler to choose top, down, or defer. Wrestlers may defer choice in the first 30-second tiebreaker. In the second tiebreaker the wrestler may choose top or bottom. All points are cumulative during each of the two tiebreakers.

If at the end of the two 30-second tiebreakers, the score remains tied, an ultimate tiebreaker will be wrestled. The wrestler who scored the first points will be awarded choice of top, down, or defer. The referee should quickly consult the score keeper at the table if he is uncertain which wrestler has choice. The case book suggests in 6.7.1 that if no one, the official scorer and both schools' score keepers, then the referee must determine who has choice "based on his recall." However, if a wrestler has been called for unsportsmanlike conduct, he will not have choice in the ultimate tiebreaker. The wrestler who scores the first points will be declared the winner. Once again if points are scored directly to "near-fall criteria, the match shall continue until the near-fall or fall situation has concluded." At the conclusion of the ultimate tiebreaker, if no scoring occurs, "the offensive wrestler will be declared the winner, and one match point shall be added to the offensive wrestler's score."

Everything that has occurred in the regular match does extend into overtime: "all points, penalties, cautions, warnings, time-out and injury time . . ." Officials must be aware of all penalties that have occurred and must continue to call penalties consistently in overtime. Most notably, it is important to call stalling in overtime in the same manner it is called during regulation. Pikul and Shaw "recommended that stalling is called **early and often** to avoid making quick calls in the later periods." The exception for stalling is in the ultimate tiebreaker. The goal of the ultimate tiebreaker for the offensive wrestler is to maintain control for 30 seconds. "The offensive wrestler's responsibility is controlled wrestling. Therefore, the first obvious stall call on the top wrestler will be called a stalemate. If this is repeated, the next call could be called stalling" (Dick Loewenstine). The official must communicate to the offensive wrestler the reason for the stalemate prior to recommencing action.

Case Book 7.3.1 Situation E

There are unique situations officials should be aware of regarding technical violations and stalling. Fleeing the mat is a technical violation, and it is worth noting that a wrestler in the defensive position who is not in near fall criteria must make every effort to stay in bounds despite the danger of being placed in near fall criteria. Only if a wrestler has been placed in near fall criteria is he free to exit the mat area without being penalized for fleeing the mat.

Section 7.6.4

Stalling in the offensive position occurs when the offensive wrestler “legally holds the heel to the buttocks while the defensive wrestler is broken down . . . for more than five seconds. The official should immediately begin counting when the offensive wrestler breaks his opponent down in this position. However, coaches often cite the offensive wrestler as stalling when he is attempting to break the defensive wrestler down with an ankle. This is not stalling as this hold is not consistent with 7.6.4.

Offensive wrestlers often utilize the leg series. When the wrestlers are on the mat and action is not progressing, the official should stop wrestling with stalemate. If this situation occurs again, stalemate should be called. On the third similar situation the top man should be penalized for stalling. After each stalemate the referee is responsible to communicate to the offensive wrestler that he must work for a turn and wrestle aggressively. While the offensive wrestler is responsible to use the leg series, the official is responsible to communicate what he is judging.

When an offensive wrestler uses the legs to stop the defensive wrestler, action is stopped. In the first sequence action is stopped for a potentially dangerous hold. The referee needs to communicate to the offensive wrestler why the potentially dangerous hold was called and inform him that if the same situation occurs again stalling will be called. If the scenario arises for a second time, the referee should stop the action and warn the top man. On the third time, he should penalize the offensive wrestler.

When an offensive wrestler already has the legs in and the defensive wrestler stands, action is

stopped for potentially dangerous hold. At this time the referee must inform the defensive wrestler not to stand up with the legs in or stalling will be called. In this case, the defensive wrestler is avoiding wrestling by bringing his hands off the mat. On the second occurrence wrestling is stopped, and the defensive wrestler is warned. On the third occurrence wrestling is stopped, and the defensive wrestler is penalized.

Another special situation discussed in the rules book deals with stalling in the neutral position. In the neutral position if either wrestler backs directly out of the 10 foot circle without making contact then stalling should be called. This situation typically occurs immediately after the whistle has been blown to start the match, subsequent period, or overtime period.

Note: All situations described above can be found in the rules book or case manual. If anyone has trouble finding rules support for any of the situations please feel free to contact Jim Shaw / Chris Shaw / Mark Hutcheson.

Fleeing the Mat:

KENTUCKY WRESTLING OFFICIALS ASSOCIATION

By: Marty Fulkerson & Chris Shaw

Within wrestling there are six technical violations referred to in rule 7-3 articles 1-6. The focus of this editorial will be article one, namely fleeing the mat. There is an obvious disparity throughout the state in making this call. Hopefully, by the end of this editorial there will be some understanding as to how we collectively can be consistent in making this call, using the intent of the rule.

Rule 7.3.1 reads: Going out of the wrestling area or forcing an opponent out of the wrestling area, by either wrestler at any time as a means of avoiding wrestling, is a technical violation. Both wrestlers should make every effort to remain inbounds. When the referee feels that either wrestler has failed to make every effort to stay inbounds, the offending wrestler shall be penalized. There can be no technical violation of fleeing the mat if near-fall points have been awarded.

When looking at fleeing, it is important to consider if the wrestler has any other way to go, is the wrestler looking at not giving up points such as a reversal or escape. A wrestler may rather give up 1 point for fleeing than 2 points for a reversal. Most often you will see this in the neutral position when a wrestler will flee the mat to avoid giving up a takedown. In this case, we should give the offensive wrestler the 1 point for fleeing since he would have gotten 2 for the take down. The only time fleeing is legal is after near fall criteria has been met.

1. Standing and running out with the offensive man trailing. This is a tactic often used to prevent being returned to the mat. The bottom man has the right to stand turn and face but not to sprint for the edge in hopes to lose the offensive wrestler going out of bounds.

2. Crawling out to avoid being turned by the offensive wrestler, or “to get a breather.” In this instance wrestling is being avoided and the penalty should be assessed within the sequence.
3. Before near fall has been earned the bottom wrestler finds his way out of bounds. In situation E of the case book (pg. 45) this situation is specifically referenced. A referee must take care not to penalize the bottom wrestler for making a legitimate move toward the boundary. Remember “the boundary line should not serve to handicap a wrestler or place him in a situation of disadvantage.” However if the action is on the edge and before criteria is met the defensive wrestler scooting out it can be considered as fleeing.

Fleeing from neutral is without a doubt the most prevalent in my experience. Situations C and D in the case book (pg. 45) give us the two examples most commonly seen throughout wrestling. In situation C, Wrestler A has Wrestler B’s leg in the air and B hops out of bounds. This is obvious fleeing and should be called and penalized as such. In situation D, Wrestler A attempts to secure a takedown and B backs out of bounds. Once again this is obvious fleeing as wrestling is being avoided. The penalty should be assessed in the proper sequence. Word of caution, be aware of Wrestler A pushing. This is another article for another day.

The intent of this rule is very straight forward, to penalize a wrestler for obvious refusal to wrestle, by intentionally stepping out of bounds. There is no warning to be given for fleeing the mat, the match is to be stopped and the penalty assessed immediately. It is important as officials we have an understanding of the intricacies of such calls, to make the calls without hesitation, and to make the calls with fortitude and conviction. In other words, leave no doubt!