

RULES OF SELF-EVALUATION

FOR OFFICIALS

By Bert Lawlor-NHWOA President: February 1996
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NHWOA members with a couple of seasons under their belts always get around to asking me either: "How do I get a shot at one of the big tourneys?", "Where do I stand in the association?", or "What can I do to improve?"

To move to the "next level" of his avocation, a wrestling official must practice, plan and establish both short and long-term goals. One good way to chart your progress is to sit down and evaluate each match, identifying weaknesses and areas for improvement. Until the NHWOA decides to have a full time Evaluator position established, you are on your own with this.

When you get home from a match and are enjoying that post-match cold beer, take a few minutes to ask yourself the following questions while the match is still fresh in your mind. Hopefully, the answers will help you reach new officiating levels.

DID I ARRIVE IN TIME TO PREPARE FOR THE MATCH?

If you've never been to a school before, take 10 minutes to find out if there are any unusual situations with the mat/benches/bleachers, scoreboard/clock, line-up announcements, national anthem, etc. Meet your table personnel and instruct them. Ensure that weigh-in sheets are signed. Try to eliminate as many surprises as possible.

DID I HOLD WORTHWHILE PRE-MEET CONFERENCES?

Discuss your stalling criteria, check all skin, nails, beards, equipment, etc. in the locker room. Let the wrestlers know your criteria for penalizing stalling during this conference so that they'll act accordingly on the mat. Alert opposing coaches of any disqualifications due to skin/communicable disease situations*

**Note-Our policy in NHWOA is to alert the opposing coach to any disqualification that occurs subsequent to the weigh-in and prior to the start of the match. Our officials do not conduct weighs but do skin checks. If someone is DQ'd from competition prior to the match, we allow them to dress and be on the bench, but we let the opposing coach that he cannot compete. We've had instances where coaches juggled lineups and sent wrestlers to the table to check in thinking a wrestler in uniform for the opposition was going to be sent out to wrestle. To avoid this we let the*

coach know immediately of any disqualification.

WAS MY UNIFORM CLEAN; MY SHOES POLISHED?

Your FIRST impression is made when you initially present yourself at the pre-meet conferences. An official who looks good command respect even before the coin flip. Wrinkled pants, faded out wristbands, dirty shoes announce that you are "bush league" even before the first take-down call. Varsity, JV, Prep, or Jr. High: Take pride in your appearance regardless of the level.

WAS I IN POSITION FOR THE CALL I MADE?

Was I straddling that the line on the take-downs at the edge? Did I get in a good position to really see the locked-hands on that call I made? REMEMBER: the official who hustles gets the benefit of the doubt on close plays. Did I hustle tonight?

DID I ANTICIPATE THE ACTION; OR WAS I CHASING THE PLAY?

Did I recognize that arm-bar? And, was I where I should have been as a result of it to look for a near fall. Think ahead: Anticipate the play but not the call.

WAS I CONSISTENT?

If I said I was going to be tough on stalling, did I follow through? Did I call it tough in some bouts, but not in others? Wrestlers will adapt to your standards; but they can't if you're not consistent. Officials build credibility on JUDGEMENT, CONSISTENCY, AND HUSTLE.

DID ANYTHING OCCUR? DID I RECOGNIZE IT AND CALL IT QUICKLY AND CORRECTLY?

Clock malfunctions, "bad time", wrong options given, flagrant misconduct, tech-falls in a pinning situation, etc. &SHY; these are all "non routine" calls. Did I act quickly, with confidence?

WERE MY SIGNALS CLEAR AND SHARP?

Were my signals and points awarded seen by all? Were my take-down calls at the edge timid and hesitant" or, were they clear, decisive and sharp, showing I had strength for match control.

DID I HANDLE CONFRONTATIONS IN A MANNER THAT I CAN BE PROUD OF?

Did I prevent shouting matches? Did I sell the calls I had to? Did I remain calm and deliberate? Did I keep an open mind when the coach came to the table? How did I end the confrontations? Did I remain in control throughout? Did I let it effect my officiating for the rest of the contest?

WAS I IN CONTROL TONIGHT?

Was I getting questioned at every turn? Do I think the coaches had confidence in me working a good match? Did I find myself having to explain

calls to the coaches? Did I keep the match flowing at a good pace? Or, was the action constantly being interrupted by trips to the table to meet with the coaches? SEE IT, CALL IT, SELL IT IF YOU HAVE TO, AND MOVE ON.

IS THERE PART OF THE MATCH I CAN WORK ON NOT MENTIONED HERE?

No matter how good some of us think we are, the perfect match has yet to be worked. There are always areas in need of improvement. An official who is satisfied is lazy, uninterested and lucky. Yes, lucky that he hasn't had his weaknesses exploited in front of a full gym.

WHAT CAN I DO TO BETTER THE NEXT MATCH?

Don't dwell too long on calls you could have done better on. Learn from the mistake; correct the flaw in your mechanics that caused the problem and move on. Don't punish yourself with second-guessing; leave that to the fans and coaches. Remember this: No match is as important as the one you are going to work that day. Give it your best effort no matter what the level of competition is.

DID I WORK AT IMPROVING MY OFFICIATING TODAY?

How many of us have not opened the rollback since the exam prior to the beginning of the season? On an open date do I seek out the veteran officials working that day to watch and learn from? Do I ask questions? Do I work the scorers table at tournaments to watch and learn? Do I take notes of things that happen to me or that I see so that I will know how to handle these situations next time?

Many of you are aware that from August to Thanksgiving I am a football official. Two seasons ago (my 5th) I was rated 45 out of 96 working officials in our association. Decent for a 5-year official but not great. I made a commitment to improve; the competitive bug within me wanted to move up and work the "big matches". I began by reading the "Psychology of Sports Officiating" by Dr. Robert S. Weinberg. Then I put together a short list of top rated officials that I found easy to talk to, any time I had a question I called them. If we were car-pooling to a contest I would pick their brains for the length of the ride. When I had a night game, I would watch these top officials work their afternoon games: I watched where they were positioning for each situation, their mechanics/signals, how they dealt with coaches and obnoxious fans, etc. I got the officials manual and rule book and read, read, read.

This past November, the regular season ratings came out and I was ranked in the top 10; high enough to be selected to work as Back Judge in the Division I Title game before over 5600 people at Gill Stadium in Manchester, My field ratings were much improved as were my test scores.

Am I bragging? No. I'm telling you that if you want to move up and improve

you can do it. You can work at it like I did. I still kick a call occasionally-but I make sure to write it down and learn from it. The opportunity to improve is always there if we utilize these self-evaluation principles. Officiating is a lot more fun if you're confident, in control and mentally prepared. Now, getting paid for having fun is not such a bad way to spend a Saturday is it?

**Best of Luck,
Bert Lawlor**