

Stalling, the Toughest Call in Wrestling.

by Mike Pyle, VP NWOA.

◆The toughest call in wrestling officiating is "Stalling." You have to have a philosophy that will carry through any situation. Some guys are tough and call everything that even remotely looks like stalling. Other guys never call any stalling. The key to being successful in calling stalling is the consistency you maintain. A coach is less likely to be critical of the level of toughness than the consistency. Stalling is not merely inactivity. It is strategic inactivity. An act. If the referee feels the wrestler in the lead is doing everything to keep his opponent from scoring and is not legitimately attempting to score then he is probably stalling.

The consistent, tougher refs are the most sought after by the better programs. The tougher programs will thrive on officials that maintain a high level of activity. The teams that train and drill the hardest will welcome officials that expect aggressive competition. Teams that are not as physically prepared will tend to slow the action down and take the match to the edge for protection against being scored upon. The better coaches will want refs that they know will be consistent during the entire match. They can give their wrestlers a game plan that includes the type of officiating they can expect.

One aspect of coaching that always bothered me was the coach that would say "make 'em wrestle." It isn't the referee's responsibility to make anyone wrestle. He can establish the atmosphere by which the meet will be conducted. There by the coach can set his game plan and motivate his team to wrestle accordingly. The coach has the greatest responsibility to "make 'em wrestle." Establishing a philosophy on calling stalling begins with the experience of the individual referee. His competitive experience will probably dictate how he will call stalling as a referee. If he was adept at getting a lead and off his opponents without being called for stalling then he might be appreciative of the ability of a similar wrestler and be reluctant to call them for stalling, or he may have been defeated by a similar tactic and doesn't want to see anyone get away it. Either philosophy is heavily affected by their on the mat experience. As time goes on and the referee is farther and farther away from his competitive years the philosophy can be softened. It is strongly recommended that a visit to a college wrestling room be included in the preseason. Get on a mat and have wrestlers and coaches debate with you about what is stalling and what isn't stalling. Is it a slick defense? Does the leading wrestler have the right to protect his lead that he has earned? How much does the leading wrestler have to "risk?" What is a legitimate attempt? How many ways can a block be a stalling tactic? When is the leg rider stalling and when is the bottom man just holding the leg rider off and not really trying to score? Is the stalemate called too much by unsure referees or is it being wisely utilized to take away a gray area of stalling and increase activity? These

questions should be addressed in a preseason practice with other referees, coaches and wrestlers.

The referee that just goes out and flies by the seat of his pants will end up being less consistent and more vulnerable to being persuaded by the coaches and the competitors. The strongest officials, with established philosophies, will be consistent. They will hang tough in the heat of battle and not be shaken out of their mind set. They will be recognized for their consistency and the respect they earn will be demonstrated in their continued selection to the toughest and most important meets and tournaments year after year.

Good officiating rarely happens from the onset of the official's career. It takes years of paying dues, watching and learning from the top refs, sacrificing time and expense and getting involved with the organizations that support and administer the officials. All these things can be done by just about any individual. The most difficult aspect of officiating wrestling is understanding stalling and developing a philosophy that will compliment your personality and carry you through any and all situations consistently. This is where the best refs are recognized above the good referees.