



2017-18 and 2018-19 Major Rules Changes for Wrestling

The following rules changes were approved by the NCAA Wrestling Rules Committee and the Playing Rules Oversight Panel. They will be incorporated into the rules book for the 2017-18 and 2018-19 seasons.

**Note – rule references are associated with the new rules book.*

Rule	Rule Change and Rationale
1.1.2	<p>The entire competition circle and surrounding matted area shall be the same thickness, which shall not be more than 4 inches nor less than the thickness of a mat that has the shock-absorbing qualities of a 2-inch-thick hair-felt mat. <u>For the 2017-18 season, it is recommended the entire competition circle and surrounding matted area meet the most current ASTM Specification Standard for wrestling mats. By the 2018-19 season, all wrestling mats shall comply with the ASTM Specification Standard.</u></p> <p>Rationale: The current rules language is outdated and mats are no longer produced under the specifications in the rules book. The ASTM standard is a more appropriate measure for wrestling mats.</p>
1.2.1	<p>It is <u>required</u> that all mats be cleaned and disinfected prior to competition and recommended they be cleaned before all subsequent rounds of an event.</p> <p>Rationale: Provides clarity to tournament committees and competition hosts that disinfecting mats is imperative and must be performed, at a minimum, prior to the start of competition. It will continue to be a recommendation that the mat(s) be cleaned and disinfected between rounds and multiple dual meet events.</p>
1.3.1	<p>The matted area shall extend at least five feet from the competition circle. <u>It is recommended, whenever possible, that all obstructions be placed not closer than 8 feet from the edge of the competition circle.</u></p> <p>Rationale: The current rule only requires that obstructions be five feet from the competition circle. The committee was concerned with team benches and spectators being too close to the competition area and recommended an additional three-foot buffer zone outside of the mandatory five feet of matted protection.</p>
1.3.2 3.20.7	<p><u>The restricted zone during dual meets is the entire wrestling mat area and the area directly in front of the scorer's table extending to the edge of the wrestling mat.</u></p> <p>Rationale: Current rules regarding allowable coaching areas and restricted zones during dual meets are vague and difficult for coaches to understand and referees to enforce. This change will provide needed clarity.</p>

1.5.1c	<p><u>The wrestler’s last name, institutional logo or mascot, and national or state flag of the member institution, are allowed on the competition uniform.</u></p> <p>Rationale: Permits and standardizes additional items that may be placed on the competition uniform. The name or initials of the wrestler’s institution, in letters at least two inches high, continues to be a requirement.</p>
1.8.2	<p><u>Facial hair trimmed to a length so that the skin is visible for medical examinations (maximum ½ inch) is allowed. Facial hair that does not allow for a proper medical examination to be performed, as determined by the medical professional overseeing medical exams, shall be immediately trimmed to within the guidelines. Entrants with facial hair exceeding ½ inch in length that successfully clear medical examinations are allowed to compete using a non-abrasive facial hair covering or enclosed within the confines of a full facemask.</u></p> <p>Rationale: The original intent of the cleanshaven requirement was a historical concept that was outdated and in need of review. For medical examinations, the face needs to be inspected, but that can be sufficiently achieved with a modest amount of facial hair growth. Additionally, some student-athletes are negatively impacted by the constant requirement to shave, which may cause razor burn, folliculitis and other skin conditions that make them further susceptible to infection.</p>
2.2.1	<p>Adds a definition for dead time: <u>When a referee call on the mat has been reversed or overturned, all wrestling action after that correction is considered dead time and shall be re-wrestled.</u></p> <p>Rationale: Common practice update. Standardized language to add to the rules book.</p>
3.13.2c 3.13.9c	<p>If video review is not being utilized for the entire competition, tournament committees may determine the number of challenges as long as it does not exceed the current allotment outlined in Rule 3.21.</p> <p>Rationale: Issued as an interpretation on May 11, 2016. Many events only use video review for selected rounds of a tournament. The original rule allotted video review challenges based on video review being utilized for the entire tournament. This prescribed allotment is excessive when used only for selected rounds of competition.</p>
3.13.3	<p>Allows the option of securing a third-party registered official to serve as the sole individual responsible for executing coach requested video review challenges.</p>

	<p>Rationale: This optional rule provides institutions and tournament hosts the ability to hire a third-party video review official to conduct coaches’ challenges, if they believe an independent review is best for their event.</p>
3.13.5	<p>Replaces the video review challenge flags with a foam red and green brick not to exceed 8”x5”x5”, which shall be available in the restricted zone. The brick would be thrown onto the mat away from the wrestling action when a coach is indicating a video review challenge is being requested.</p> <p>Rationale: The flags created numerous problems. First, when a coach walks to the table and is contemplating a video review challenge, the referees might mistake this for a request to stop the match for timing or scoring, and/or to question the referee. Secondly, the time it takes to walk to the table adds to the total length of time that turns into dead time if a review is overturned. Third, throwing the brick is decisive and the coach would be unable to retract that like they can by pulling the flag down. Finally, when only a single referee is calling the match, it is often very difficult to see the flag being raised.</p>
3.14.3	<p>In the overtime tiebreaker, each wrestler will have the choice of either top, bottom or neutral.</p> <p>Rationale: The current tiebreaker rule requires a choice of top or bottom only. This conflicts when injury timeouts are called and the wrestler loses his choice to his competitor and referees must adhere to the injury timeout rule which requires giving the choice of top, bottom or neutral. Making this rule change will standardize choices and make it a top, bottom or neutral selection in all instances throughout the match.</p>
3.19.4c	<p>Changes the questioning a rules application violation sequence from warning, warning, 1 team point, 2 team points, ejection to <u>warning, warning, 1 team point for each subsequent questioning the referee violation.</u></p> <p>Rationale: The nature of the questioning the referee call is not sufficient to warrant a coaching ejection. The potential loss of multiple team points is sufficient penalty to inhibit this action.</p>
3.20.3	<p><u>A maximum of four team personnel will be permitted in the reserved zone for NCAA Championships finals matches. If four team personnel are used, three must hold coaching credentials and one must be properly credentialed medical personnel. A chair will be placed behind the coaches for the credentialed medical personnel.</u></p> <p>Rationale: This is the single biggest match for any institution and providing the opportunity for three credentialed coaches to be in the restricted zone allows both the student-athlete and coaching staff to enjoy this tremendous honor and assist the wrestler in the best way possible.</p>

3.20.7	<p>Changes the control of mat violation sequence from warning, 1 team point, 2 team points and ejection to <u>1st and all subsequent violations will be a 1-team point deduction.</u></p> <p>Rationale: Removing the progressive nature of control of mat violations would allow, in tournaments, team point deductions to be recorded on the bout sheet at the match table and sent to the head scorer. The implementation of this would allow the violation to be immediately executed by the referee instead of sending it to someone at the head table to determine what the penalty should be. This ensures team scores are accurate and all penalties are properly applied as prescribed in the rules book. Additionally, removing the ejection as part of the control of mat violation sequence would make the nature of these penalties more accurate with the actions that typically occur. Flagrant misconduct call and ejection would be reserved for the most serious conduct violations.</p>
3.20.7	<p>Requires referees to display the appropriate signal and verbally inform coaches on the mat when they have received a control of mat violation.</p> <p>Rationale: In addition to the previous mandatory referee signal, verbally informing coaches is an additional assurance that the coach will always know when they have received a control of mat violation.</p>
3.22.4	<p><u>NCAA institutions may hold open events that include prospective student-athletes per Bylaw 13.11.3.1, however, results from matches competed against prospective student-athletes shall not be placed on the Individual Season Record Form (ISRF) and will not be used in calculations for NCAA championship selection purposes.</u></p> <p>Rationale: This rule previously conflicted with NCAA tryout legislation. This language change now allows for the rule and bylaw to work together.</p>
3.22.5	<p>Limits the number of matches a wrestler can compete in one day to 6 matches. Forfeits and medical forfeits would not count in this tally, but all other matches would be countable in the 6-match limit.</p> <p>Rationale: Competing in more than 6 matches in a day is an unnecessary injury risk for student-athletes. Limiting individuals to 6 matches would increase the quality of those matches and reduce fatigue-related injuries. Additionally, this rule will naturally develop a higher quality open tournament and likely more open tournaments in which teams could choose to compete in since unlimited entries in an event would be difficult to manage with the match limitation. 6 matches is the number needed to complete a 16-competitor bracket.</p>

<p>3.22.6</p>	<p>Clarifies that individuals entered into tournaments after the verification of entry deadline are considered official entrants and may not be substituted. The official list of competitors in the same event are those entrants that have cleared medical exams and successfully weighed in.</p> <p>Rationale: Provides clarity for tournaments on who is considered an entrant and at what point they become a competitor. This confirms that being an official entrant into an event is not sufficient enough to be considered a competitor. Competitors in an event must be an official entrant, pass medical exams and make weight at the event.</p>
<p>3.22.17</p>	<p>Requires a mandatory 30-minute rest in between all matches.</p> <p>Rationale: Since the current rule is only a rest recommendation, some tournaments do not provide adequate rest between matches. This practice of minimizing or eliminating rest between matches puts student-athletes at unnecessary risk for fatigue-related injuries and lowers the overall quality of the match.</p>
<p>3.23.3d</p>	<p>Allows tournaments to utilize alternate methods for assigning byes in the first round of a tournament, as long as byes and/or resulting first round pigtail matches are distributed randomly and no institution is unfairly helped or harmed by the resulting assignments.</p> <p>Rationale: This provides tournament hosts flexibility to choose the bracket size most appropriate for the competition and the number of competitors.</p>
<p>4.2.3 4.2.4</p>	<p>Creates a neutral danger zone takedown: <u>When in the neutral position, the referee shall announce a neutral danger signal (NDS) anytime a wrestler exposes their shoulders to the mat at any angle less than 90 degrees (neutral danger zone). The danger zone utilizes near fall criteria outlined in Rule 4.5.1, but replaces 45 degrees with any angle less than 90 degrees. The NDS announcement shall occur anytime a wrestler is voluntarily or involuntarily in the neutral danger zone, beyond reaction time, and will continue until the wrestler is out of the danger zone or a takedown is awarded.</u></p> <p><u>The NDS is a verbal announcement of the word "danger," followed by a verbal three count. If the referee reaches the third count and the wrestler is still in the danger zone, the opposing wrestler is awarded a takedown.</u></p> <p>Rationale: Provides wrestlers a mechanism for which they can demonstrate control in these scramble situations. The implementation of a NDS will minimize stalemates and increase scoring opportunities. The</p>

	NDS will also provide the referees rules backing for making difficult takedown control calls when wrestlers are on their back and traditional control concepts are not applicable.
4.8.5	<p><u>For individual team tournament scoring, when more than one competitor from the same institution competes in a given weight class, only the score for the competitor with the highest number of team points shall be used for calculating team points.</u></p> <p>Rationale: Standardizes how team scores are calculated.</p>
4.8.6	<p><u>When true placement matches are wrestled in an individual team advancement tournament, the team score shall be adjusted only if true placement matches are held at all possible weight classes.</u></p> <p>Rationale: It is not fair to adjust team scores for true placement matches when true placement matches are only held at selected weight classes and not all possible weight classes. Example: Holding true 2nd place matches in only those weight classifications that have two automatic national qualifiers and not holding them at any other weight class.</p>
5.1.2g	<p>When a referee is executing a verbal and visual count for a drop-down, and the defensive wrestler is in the process of scoring, the wrestling action can continue and the defensive wrestler afforded the opportunity to score. Once the scoring opportunity has passed, the stall call can then be issued.</p> <p>Rationale: This allows the defensive wrestler to continue scoring actions and not immediately stop the action on a 5th count. This rule falls into line with current rules for allowing this to occur during locked hands calls.</p>
5.2	<p>Removes the requirement that referees review all unsportsmanlike conduct calls.</p> <p>Rationale: The current mandatory review of unsportsmanlike conduct calls is an unnecessary requirement of the referee. Referees are still allowed to use review if they wish to, but mandatory review of unsportsmanlike conduct is an unnecessary match delay. The requirement to review flagrant misconduct calls remains.</p>
5.2.1	<p>Clarifies having the uniform straps down within the competition circle and aggressively throwing and/or spiking headgear is unsportsmanlike conduct.</p> <p>Rationale: Currently, the ambiguity in this rule results in varying degrees of application by referees, which ends up in either unfair application or a perceived unfair application of the rule.</p>

5.2.4	<p>Disqualifies a competitor from that match after they are called for their second unsportsmanlike conduct during a single match (currently it is on the 4th violation). This rule would also remove in-match unsportsmanlike conduct calls from its current penalty sequence and create its own new sequence.</p> <p>Rationale: Allowing athletes to engage in four acts of unsportsmanlike conduct, during a single match, before being ejected is an excessively weak penalty sequence. This would also align the rule with the current out-of-match unsportsmanlike conduct calls for non-competing athletes which is ejection after two incidences.</p>
5.7.15d	<p>Clarifies the offensive wrestler is always responsible for making an effort to return the defensive wrestler to the mat in all rear-standing situations.</p> <p>Rationale: This ensures that the defensive wrestler, whose obligation is to work up to attempt an escape or reversal, is not penalized for coming to their feet.</p>
7.2.1	<p>Extends the jurisdiction of the referee to when they enter their locker room post-competition.</p> <p>Rationale: Currently, referees have no authority in situations that arise from the time the match is over until they leave the facility. This rule allows them to issue flagrant misconduct violations during the postmatch period.</p>
8.3.1	<p>Changes the final weight assessment deadline to establish the wrestler’s lowest allowable weight class from not later than the first official practice (October 10) to not later than the first date of competition for the wrestler each year (November 1).</p> <p>Rationale: The rules for weight certification are in place so that an independent review of the wrestler’s body composition occurs and an objective decision can be made as to the most appropriate weight class for that individual. The current rule states that the assessment must occur before the student-athlete is allowed to practice. Removing this pre-practice certification requirement would not alter the integrity, rigor or purpose of the weight certification protocols, but rather, provide institutions with the flexibility to execute the weight certification requirements in a way that fits into their unique academic, training, competition and facility options and/or limitations. With the dramatic differences between training regimes and medical personnel support between NCAA Divisions I, II and III programs, this flexibility is a much-needed accommodation. Regardless of when the certification occurs, student-athletes still must adhere to the 1.5% maximum weight loss descent per week rule</p>

	<p>and may not compete at their lowest allowable weight class until the date indicated on their weight loss descent plan.</p>
<p>8.3.9</p>	<p>Eliminates the February 15th deadline that requires a wrestler to reach or descend back to their lowest certified weight class. Wrestlers would be required to reach or descend back to their lowest allowable weight class no later than postseason competition.</p> <p>Rationale: The February 15th deadline has become an arbitrary date that has no impact on whether a student-athlete is descending to their weight class appropriately. The very important rule of limiting weight loss to a maximum of 1.5% per week is still in effect and this rule is the key to slow and proper weight descent. The deadline has a negative impact on student-athletes who are injured or not able to compete or train earlier in the season by forcing them to engage in unsafe weight loss practices that will allow them to certify at their lowest allowable weight by the February 15th deadline. Additionally, many teams need the flexibility to have a wrestler compete up a weight class to help the team during important dual meets. The February 15th deadline means that almost no wrestler is allowed to compete in a higher a weight class in the month of February because there is so little time for them to descend back down by the deadline date. Eliminating the February 15th deadline would help teams field full teams throughout the dual meet portion of the season.</p>
<p>8.4.1</p>	<p>Establishes a fixed penalty structure for violations of the NCAA weight certification, rules, protocol and processes.</p> <p><u>Violations of the NCAA weight certification rules, protocols and processes, including falsifying weight certification data, urine manipulation and any other action that violates the integrity of the weight management process, are subject to the following:</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. <u>The violation shall be reported to the NCAA Wrestling Rules Committee liaison at the NCAA national office at 317-917-6222;</u> b. <u>The NCAA Wrestling Rules Committee will investigate and review violation details;</u> c. <u>A first violation will result in:</u> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <u>The wrestler being suspended from the next eight consecutive dates of competition as per the official team schedule. The wrestler will not be allowed to compete unattached during this suspension;</u> 2. <u>The wrestler being required to re-certify during the suspension period; and</u> 3. <u>A private reprimand to the head coach and director of athletics.</u> d. <u>A second violation will result in:</u> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <u>The wrestler being suspended for one year from the date of the violation; and</u>

	<p>2. <u>Additional penalties to the head coach and/or institution to be determined by the rules committee. The above penalty structure outlines the minimum penalty for weight certification violations that violate the integrity of the process. The rules committee reserves the right to impose additional penalties to wrestlers, coaches and institutions if the situation warrants further action.</u></p> <p>Rationale: Violations of this nature are serious and endanger student-athletes as well as impact the integrity of the weight management process. This protocol makes clear that violations of this nature will be handled as very serious rules violations.</p>
9.1.8	<p><u>Individuals failing medical examinations/skin checks at national qualifying events may be allowed to weigh in and then be listed on the bracket as a medical forfeit.</u></p> <p>Rationale: This allows individuals that fail medical examinations to still have the opportunity to be selected as an at-large bid for the NCAA Championships.</p>
9.3.2	<p><u>When back-to-back dual, triangular and quadrangular meets occur, all wrestlers shall receive a 1-pound weight allowance on the second day of competition. The 1-pound weight allowance would include those wrestlers on opposing teams that did not compete the day before. The maximum weight allowance is 1 pound regardless of the number of back-to-back dual, triangular or quadrangular meets that occur. This rule does not apply when a dual, triangular or quadrangular meet precedes an individual or team-advancement tournament.</u></p> <p>Rationale: Current rules allow the 1-pound weight allowance to be provided for multi-day individual and/or team advancement events. Providing this same 1-pound allowance for dual, triangular and quadrangular meets will have no impact on weight loss descent requirements or weight management protocols. All student-athletes will continue to descend to their lowest allowable weight classes by adhering to all descent rules. The insertion of a 1-pound weight allowance for back-to-back dual, triangular and quadrangular meets does provide wrestlers a much needed benefit to accommodate for the travel, academic disruptions and general upheaval that occurs when competing in back-to-back events either home or away. The rule would not apply when dual, triangular and quadrangular meets precede tournaments and would also be capped at a maximum of 1 pound.</p>
9.7.1	<p>Establishes a fixed penalty structure for severe violations of the NCAA weigh in, medical examinations and prohibited practices rules.</p>

Committing a severe weigh-in or medical examination violation and/or engaging in any of the prohibited practices (e.g., using a rubber suit, intravenous rehydration, avoiding skin checks, knowingly wrestling with a communicable skin disease, etc.) are subject to the following:

- a. For tournaments, violations shall be reported to the tournament committee. For dual meets, violations shall be reported to the host game management personnel. For violations outside competition dates, violations shall be reported to the NCAA Wrestling Rules Committee liaison at the NCAA national office at 317-917-6222;
- b. The tournament committee or host game management personnel shall disqualify the wrestler from the event. The tournament committee or host game management personnel shall then notify the NCAA Wrestling Rules Committee liaison at the NCAA national office at 317-917-6222;
- c. The NCAA Wrestling Rules Committee will investigate and review violation details;
- d. A first violation will result in:
 - 1. The wrestler being suspended from the next eight consecutive dates of competition as per the official team schedule. The wrestler will not be allowed to compete unattached during this suspension;
 - 2. The wrestler being required to re-certify during the suspension period; and
 - 3. A private reprimand to the head coach and director of athletics.
- e. A second violation will result in:
 - 1. The wrestler being suspended for one year from the date of the violation; and
 - 2. Additional penalties to the head coach and/or institution to be determined by the rules committee.

The above penalty structure outlines the minimum penalty for severe weigh-in, medical examination or prohibited practices violations. The rules committee reserves the right to impose additional penalties to wrestlers, coaches and institutions if the situation warrants further action.

Rationale: Violations of this nature are serious and endanger the health and wellness of the student-athletes as well as impact the integrity of the weigh-in and medical examination process. This protocol makes clear that violations of this nature will be handled as very serious rules violations.