



REPORT OF THE
NCAA MEN'S WRESTLING RULES COMMITTEE
APRIL 28-30, 2025, MEETING

ACTION ITEMS.

1. Legislative items.

- None.

2. Nonlegislative items. The NCAA Men's Wrestling Rules Committee approved the following rules change proposals for the 2025-26 and 2026-27 seasons. The committee requests approval from the NCAA Playing Rules Oversight Panel (PROP) for the following items:

a. Ear Protection (Rule 1.5.4). *This rule was subsequently rescinded by the Men's Wrestling Rules Committee during its May 27, 2025, videoconference.

(1) Recommendation. To eliminate ear protection as required equipment.

(2) Effective date. Immediately.

(3) Rationale. The proposal to eliminate ear protection is raised during every rules change cycle by the membership with the overwhelming sentiment that the ear protection requirement is both unnecessary and outdated. Several studies have shown that ear protection does not significantly prevent auricular hematomas (cauliflower ear) – the primary rationale in requiring ear protection. Additionally, a consensus statement by the Journal of Athletic Training cites concerns that ear protection/headgear could increase rotational forces during impact, potentially increasing the risk of spine or concussion-related injuries.

Scores of elite wrestlers have also described ear protection as “restrictive” and/or “distracting” and that it obstructs peripheral awareness. The use of ear protection can also disrupt the flow of a match due to fingers getting caught in ear protection and timeouts for equipment repair/adjustment.

Most significantly, the United World Wrestling (UWW) organization, the governing body of international wrestling competitions, does not require ear protection at any UWW competitions, including youth events, the Olympics and World Championships.

(4) Estimated budget impact. None.

(5) Student-athlete impact. Provides consistency for student-athletes with other national governing bodies.

b. Mouth Guards (Rule 1.7.2). *This rule was subsequently rescinded by the Men's Wrestling Rules Committee during its May 27, 2025, videoconference.

- (1) Recommendation. To require a protective mouth guard to be worn (currently optional).
- (2) Effective date. Immediately.
- (3) Rationale. To aid in the prevention of oral and dental problems.
- (4) Estimated budget impact. None.
- (5) Student-athlete impact. Enhance student-athlete safety.

c. Starting Positions (Rules 2.1.1, 2.1.3 and 2.1.4).

- (1) Recommendation. To eliminate the requirement that the referee say "Set" from all three starting positions before blowing the whistle.
- (2) Effective date. Immediately.
- (3) Rationale. The pause is unnecessary once the wrestlers are on the starting line (neutral position) or in referee's position (defense/offense). The rule is inconsistently applied by officials and even when used, the word "set" is often inaudible. This creates confusion for the wrestlers, referee-induced false starts and disrupts the flow and progress of the match.
- (4) Estimated budget impact. None.
- (5) Student-athlete impact. None.

d. Third-Party Video Review Official (Rules 3.13.3 and 3.13.9).

- (1) Recommendation. To allow the third-party video review official(s) to consult with the on-mat official(s) to obtain pertinent information.
- (2) Effective date. Immediately.
- (3) Rationale. To ensure a complete and accurate video review, the third-party video reviewer may communicate with the official(s) on the mat to obtain pertinent information (e.g., time and score). No matters of judgment or editorialization would be permitted during the communications.

(4) Estimated budget impact. None.

(5) Student-athlete impact. None.

e. Video Review System Failure (Rule 3.13.11).

(1) Recommendation. If the video review system is inoperable during an individual match (e.g., 125-lb bout), it shall not be used for the remainder of that match/bout.

(2) Effective date. Immediately.

(3) Rationale. Neither coach should be permitted to initiate a video review challenge if at any point during the individual match the video review system is inoperable. This would ensure fairness to both competitors and reduce the opportunity for manipulation.

(4) Estimated budget impact. None.

(5) Student-athlete impact. None.

f. Video Review System Obstruction (Rule 3.13.12).

(1) Recommendation. To allow a coach to retain their video review challenge if an obstruction of the view on the video screen caused by participants, coaches, referees or tournament personnel on the mat does not allow for a complete review. A video challenge would also be retained if the entire wrestling sequence is not viewable on the video screen.

(2) Effective date. Immediately.

(3) Rationale. It is unfair that a coach would lose their video review challenge, which in a dual meet is only one, due to circumstances beyond their control. Obstructions during wrestling sequences that are not viewable would not be able to be reviewed, and the challenging coach should be permitted to retain their video review challenge.

(4) Estimated budget impact. None.

(5) Student-athlete impact. None.

g. Riding Time Point in the Rear Standing Position (Rules 4.5.13 and 5.1.4).

- (1) Recommendation. The riding time shall stop when, in the rear standing position, the offensive wrestler is penalized for stalling while wrestling action continues.
- (2) Effective date. Immediately.
- (3) Rationale. Riding time stops in other offensive stalling situations (e.g., the drop-down count) and the rule change is to align with these situations. No riding time should be accumulated after an infraction has incurred (in this case, stalling).
- (4) Estimated budget impact. None.
- (5) Student-athlete impact. None.

h. Unsportsmanlike Conduct (Rule 5.2.1).

- (1) Recommendation. To clarify tossing, throwing, sliding or spiking any piece of equipment shall be called unsportsmanlike conduct.
- (2) Effective date. Immediately.
- (3) Rationale. To clarify that all equipment is to remain in the possession of the wrestlers until they leave the mat. The current rule only addresses “aggressively throwing ear protection” which is ambiguous and left to each individual official’s interpretation that has consequently resulted in inconsistent enforcement of the rule.
- (4) Estimated budget impact. None.
- (5) Student-athlete impact. None.

i. Flagrant Misconduct Illegal Participation (New Rule 5.5.11).

- (1) Recommendation. If a wrestler receives flagrant misconduct and illegally participates in any event: (1) the original term of suspension for the wrestler shall be doubled, and (2) the head coach shall also serve the same suspension of the player. If a head coach receives flagrant misconduct and illegally participates in any event, the original term of suspension for the head coach shall be doubled.
- (2) Effective date. Immediately.

(3) Rationale. In response to the directive from the Playing Rules Oversight Panel (PROP), to implement a penalty for illegal participation by a player or coach who received flagrant misconduct.

(4) Estimated budget impact. None.

(5) Student-athlete impact. None.

j. Flagrant Misconduct Post Competition Review (New Rule 5.5.12).

(1) Recommendation. To allow a post competition review of flagrant misconduct. The request to review, including video of the incident, must be filed within 48 hours of the completion of the event and be submitted by the conference office or conference coordinator of officials. A committee consisting of the NCAA Wrestling Secretary-Rules Editor, NCAA National Coordinator of Officials and one other individual, who is not affiliated with the team or conference, will consider the review and render a decision.

(2) Effective date. Immediately.

(3) Rationale. To provide institutions and conferences with an avenue to ensure suspensions are appropriate and fair based on the rules.

(4) Estimated budget impact. None.

(5) Student-athlete impact. None.

k. Illegal Holds (Rule 5.6.1).

(1) Recommendation. To eliminate the mat return from the broomstick position (when the offensive wrestler leaves both feet and makes contact with the back of the defensive wrestler's leg(s) in the broomstick position) from Illegal Holds.

(2) Effective date. Immediately.

(3) Rationale. This move is currently being called illegal by application (when the second foot/leg of the offensive wrestler makes contact with any part of the back leg of the defensive wrestler). This can occur very quickly and is challenging for officials to ascertain in real time but more significantly, the defensive wrestler can be safely returned to the mat in this position with minimal risk of injury.

(4) Estimated budget impact. None.

(5) Student-athlete impact. None.

l. Interlocking Fingers in Neutral Position (Rule 5.8.1).

(1) Recommendation. To eliminate the Interlocking Fingers in Neutral Position infraction.

(2) Effective date. Immediately.

(3) Rationale. This situation can naturally occur during a wrestling match and the referee is currently tasked with calling a stalemate on the first offense and then penalizing a wrestler for stalling for subsequent violations. It is both challenging and difficult, if not impossible, for the referee to ascertain which wrestler initiated this position and with the current rule, may result in a wrestler being unfairly penalized.

(4) Estimated budget impact. None.

(5) Student-athlete impact. None.

m. 1-Pound Weight Allowance (Rule 9.3.2).

(1) Recommendation. To expand the use of the 1-pound weight allowance for all dual meets held within a 48-hour window.

(2) Effective date. Immediately.

(3) Rationale. Currently, only teams that compete on consecutive days receive a 1-pound weight allowance. This change would expand the 1-pound weight allowance for teams that compete in separate dual meets within a 48-hour window. (Example: Team A wrestles a Friday evening dual; travels Saturday; competes in a Sunday afternoon dual – the 1-pound allowance would be granted for Sunday's dual).

(4) Estimated budget impact. None.

(5) Student-athlete impact. Assist wrestlers with proper hydration and nutrition while juggling the challenges of travel, logistics and studies while on the road and in between these competition dates.

INFORMATIONAL ITEMS.

- 1. Welcome and announcements.** Deral Brown, chair of the Men's Wrestling Rules Committee, welcomed the committee and invited guests and thanked them for their time.

2. **Review schedule, agenda, committee operations manual and Playing Rules Oversight Panel directive.** The rules committee reviewed the meeting schedule, agenda and operations manual, which included the NCAA conflict of interest policy, guidance for committee members regarding meeting reports, notes and email, voting procedures, principles for rules writing, and experimental playing rules guidelines. The rules committee was reminded of the directive of PROP from 2014. This directive encourages all rules committees to strongly consider providing at least a one-year delay for Division II and Division III institutions before implementing any rules changes that have financial or facility implications.
3. **Approval of the February 11 videoconference report.** The report was approved as written.
4. **Playing Rules Oversight Panel report and new directive.** Lexie Vernon, PROP liaison to the Men's Wrestling Rules Committee, reviewed PROP's January 22 annual meeting report, noting the discussion on commercial logos on uniforms and playing surfaces and presented the PROP directive from 2025. This directive recommends a penalty be established and incorporated into the rules to address illegal participation by suspended players and coaches.
5. **Secretary-rules editor/weight management liaison report.** The rules committee heard a report from the secretary-rules editor and weight management liaison, which included a recap of the preseason points of emphasis and a review of the information posted on Center Mat, interpretations, waivers and sanctions. The weight management liaison report recapped the nine weight management violations from the past season.
6. **National coordinator of officials report.** The rules committee heard a report from the national coordinator of officials, which focused on the successful implementation of headsets worn by officials both during the regular season and postseason.
7. **NCAA Injury Surveillance Program report.** The rules committee heard a report on men's wrestling injury data from the Datalys Center for Sports Injury Research and Prevention.
8. **Active official report.** The rules committee heard a report from the active official, which reiterated the successful use of headsets.
9. **National Athletic Trainers' Association liaison report.** The NATA liaison was unable to participate.
10. **National Federation of State High School Associations report.** The rules committee heard a report from the NFHS, which included the 24 potential rules changes for next season (eight passed and will be voted on this week). Girls wrestling continues to grow.
11. **Men's Wrestling Championships scoring, misconduct and video review data.** The rules committee reviewed scoring, misconduct and video review data from the DI, DII and DIII Men's Wrestling Championships.

- 12. Review 2024-25 rules survey results.** The rules committee reviewed the 2024-25 rules survey results in conjunction with discussion on the corresponding rules change proposals. It was noted that the response rate for head coaches was decent (67%), but the response rate for all other positions was low.
- 13. Review 2025-26/2026-27 rules proposals and committees' feedback.** The rules committee reviewed and considered 75 rules proposals and recommended 13 major rules changes for the 2025-26 and 2026-27 wrestling seasons, as noted above in the Action Items section of this report.
- 14. Review 2023-24 and 2024-25 Men's Wrestling Case Book.** The rules committee reviewed and approved all approved rulings in the case book. It was noted A.R. 5-39 could be deleted if the rules change to Illegal Holds is approved.
- 15. Future annual meeting and videoconference schedule.** The next videoconference is scheduled for noon Eastern time Tuesday, May 27, to review the comment period results.
- 16. Selection of chair.** The rules committee tabled this selection.
- 17. Other business.** Proposals regarding the new Division I governance structure were discussed.
- 18. Adjournment.** The meeting was adjourned at 1:30 p.m. Eastern time Wednesday, April 30.

Committee Chair: Deral Brown, Newberry College, South Atlantic Conference
Staff Liaison(s): Ashlee Follis, Championships and Alliances, Playing Rules and Officiating

NCAA Men's Wrestling Rules Committee April 28-30, 2025, Meeting	
Attendees:	
Duane Bastress, York College (Pennsylvania).	
Frank Beasley, George Mason University.	
Chris Bono, University of Wisconsin-Madison.	
Deral Brown, Newberry College.	
Jimmy Chung, secretary-rules editor and weight management liaison.	
Logan Davis, Southern Virginia University.	
Keith Gavin, University of Pittsburgh.	
Wyatt Hall, University of Montevallo.	
Mike Morrison, Sacred Heart University.	
Absentees:	
None.	

Guests in Attendance:
Kody Campbell, Datalys Center for Sports Injury Research and Prevention.
Avinash Chandran, Datalys Center for Sports Injury Research and Prevention.
Elliot Hopkins, National Federation of State High School Associations.
Mike McCormick, national coordinator of officials.
Angel Rivera, active official.
Lexie Vernon, Rocky Mountain Athletic Conference.
NCAA Staff Liaison in Attendance:
Ashlee Follis.
Other NCAA Staff Members in Attendance:
LaGwyn Durden, Greg Johnson and Mallory Mickus.