

...On Stalling

By Steve Sabo

Several years ago, Mr. Jim Barta and I sat down after an NCAA Tournament to attempt to figure out what could be done to eliminate the controversy surrounding the affect of "stalling" either called or not called. It seems that officials are certainly placed in the middle on whether to call or not call "stalling" and some officials call "stalling" in the last part of the match and their decision to do so greatly impacts the outcome of the match. We would hope that the outcome of the matches could be taken out of the officials "hands" and instead placed into the wrestler's control.

I do not want to question the criteria used by the officials to call "stalling", but rather the effect. "Stalling" or even intentionally going out of bounds (possibly another topic) needs to be addressed and changed in order to give wrestling more action and improve the ethical nature inherent in the sport. We need to do all we can to make the wrestling product attrac-

tive and worthy in the eyes of our spectators.

We believe that by taking the outcome out of the officials' hands and placing into the wrestlers' will greatly relieve the stress of the officials and create a more dramatic and fair competitive situation. Below is our proposal:

When "stalling" is determined, by the referee, the offending wrestler is called for the violation without benefit of a "warning". Once the call is made the other wrestler has the option of selecting one of three options:

1. Neutral; 2. Bottom Position; 3. Top Position

No points are awarded by the referee! There is no increase in penalty options due to subsequent offenses. However, disqualification would take place after a third offense by the same wrestler. Simultaneous "stalling" calls to both wrestlers would no longer be permitted.

Carefully consider what we are proposing. Wrestlers faced with NO warning,

"stalling" call would have to be ever mindful of what receiving one would mean. "Stalling" as a tactic in close matches or "shutting down" when comfortably ahead would surely be eliminated due to the ramifications of a rule change. Since the scenario would be changed and the referee does not award points, the outcome would have to be earned, but at the choice of the offended wrestler. It may or may not change the score in any particular case, but it would certainly force the action.

Think of what this would mean; a wrestler short of time for the riding time point could choose top. OR a wrestler who needs a point to tie could choose bottom and escape for the tie, OR a wrestler good on top has an opportunity to turn his opponent for the win. There are many scenarios, which put the match into the hands of the wrestler and his coach, rather than having the official decide the match. Less stress on the official and possibly even opening the window slightly for the officials to actually call more evident "stalling" situations. Think of what this would mean to the wrestling activity at the conclusion of a close match. A wrestler with a single point advantage whose opponent had fifty-five seconds of riding time with 20 seconds left in the third period and on their feet, would absolutely believe he could not shut down for fear that his opponent could tie it with either an escape or 5 seconds of riding time. He would have to continue active aggressive wrestling. There would be no guarantee of a point being scored, but the tactical and point potential of the situation, with the options, would certainly lead to continuous action again created by the wrestlers decisions. I believe that officials would become more comfortable calling stalling" (even intentionally leaving the mat) when the direct consequence of the call would not be a deciding point. The wrestlers themselves would be the decision makers and the outcome would be theirs. Drama would be increased knowing that such decisions would be made throughout the tournament.

We also believe that the criteria for "stalling" and "stalemate" determinations should be absolutely consistent and not change with respect to the clock or time remaining in the period or match. Our change would help to remove that tendency by officials because their decision would only be indirect! 🏆

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