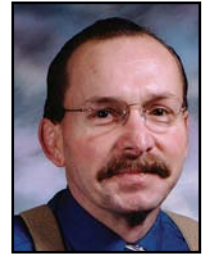


Stalling:

Wrestling's Great Debate

By Bill Welker, EdD



Stalling has always been a heated topic of discussion in wrestling circles ever since I can remember. And from the very beginning of my officiating career, there is one quote I have heard time and time

again:

"If you think there is stalling, then call it."

As my officiating colleagues will tell you, I have always had problems with this dictum. To be quite candid, I dismissed the belief altogether. And my reason is quite simple.

There is no way I was ever going to say to a coach after indicating stalling, "Well, coach, I thought there was stalling."

The astute coach would have run me through the ringer, "You think there was stalling. Could you be a little more SPECIFIC, Welker?"

"Ah, no; I just thought there was."

If I couldn't go over to the coach, when a conference was requested, and explain to him exactly why I called stalling, I wouldn't call it. My philosophy on the topic has caused some mumbling from coaches over the years, but I can honestly say they were never irate.

On the other hand, I have seen officials call the big "S" when they thought it occurred, often near the end of a match. The result: They heard about it for weeks, from coaches, parents, and fans alike. And everybody knew their names.

There is another old wrestling adage:

"If the coaches, parents, and fans don't remember who refereed the match, you did your job."

The abovementioned referees missed the boat regarding this long-standing quote. Allow me to share with you a personal experience I encountered as the tournament interpreter many, many years ago in reference to such a call.

It was a championship finals bout of a very prestigious event. Wrestler A was winning by a point in the third period, but was previously warned for stalling in the first period. There was less than 15 seconds left in the match. Both wrestlers were in the neutral position, attacking and countering, but not in an overly aggressive manner.

At this point, let's freeze the action so I can explain the demeanor of those in attendance: wrestlers, coaches, and fans.

To begin with, Wrestler B, the losing contestant, seemed to be content in knowing that he would be taking home the runner-up trophy. Second, the veteran coach of Wrestler B did not seem to think that any stalling was taking place. I can assure you, knowing this wrestling coach, he would have made it a point to vehemently voice his opinion to the match official – if he thought Wrestler A was stalling. Finally, the fans were just cheering for their favorite wrestler; no hint of stalling was verbalized from the stands.

Now back to the match. With less than 10 seconds remaining in the bout, the referee penalized Wrestler A for stalling. Wrestler A was so shocked by the call, and unable to regain his composure, that he was taken down in the overtime period and lost the match.

As the official was walking off the mat, many of his officiating colleagues were praising him for the "gutsy" call. I was not one of them. In point of fact, I walked away from that referee in disgust, knowing he had stolen the match from Wrestler A. Truth being, he became the limelight of the bout instead of the wrestlers.

That night I had to listen to Wrestler B's coach for over half an hour, trying, in vain, to defend the match referee. Two weeks later, I was confronted by Wrestler A's father about the match; the emotional outrage was still far from over.

Oh yes, everybody intimately involved with the match knew the official's full name months later. Did he do his job? I'll let you decide.

My advice to any new or experienced official when it comes to stalling is summed-up in the following quote:

"Don't think there is stalling, know it, before raising your fist."

If a wrestling official lives by this philosophy, there will rarely be a complaint from the coach. But more importantly, a week later, no one will remember he did the match.

In essence, anonymity is the key to great officiating in wrestling, and for that matter, all sports.

The Fall

The fall (or pin) terminates the match and no individual match points are necessary. In a dual meet, the winner's team receives six points and during tournament action the victor's team receives two additional points.

A fall occurs when both shoulders are forced to the mat for a period of two seconds in high school and one second in college bouts.

Normally, the offensive wrestler (the man in control) scores the fall but if the offensive wrestler's shoulders are somehow forced to the mat for the required time, his opponent would win with a defensive fall. It's rare, but it does happen.

A fall may be indicated when parts of both shoulders are in-bounds, or one shoulder is completely in-bounds.

Mini-Mat Quiz

Q: *Wrestler A, the offensive wrestler, catches Wrestler B in a cradle pinning combination. However, as Wrestler B attempts to fight off his back, Wrestler A rolls completely out-of-bounds. Only the tops of Wrestler B's shoulders remain in-bounds on the mat. What's the call?*

If Wrestler B was held in that position for the required time, Wrestler A would secure a fall. The match would not be stopped because Wrestler B's shoulders (now considered his supporting points) are in-bounds.

Mat Message

"Other people may not have had high expectations for me...but, I had high expectations for myself."

— Shannon Miller

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