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ARM BARS

A Quick Look at Arm Bars: In high school wrestling the offensive wrestler is expected to work towards securing a fall or work towards turning the opponent for near fall points. The defensive wrestler is expected to work towards securing an escape or a reversal. Both the offensive and defensive wrestlers are expected to continue wrestling throughout the match. The ultimate goal in wrestling is to defeat your opponent and if you secure a fall your team is awarded the maximum team points possible. There are many pinning combinations, wrestling maneuvers and counters that will cause great discomfort to the wrestlers.

As an official, you are responsible for enforcing the rules and regulations of wrestling. Your most important job is to ensure the safety of the wrestlers. It is your job to understand the difference between legal, illegal, and potentially dangerous holds.

As the skill level of the opposing wrestler's increases, it becomes increasingly difficult to secure near falls and falls. The official must understand the wrestling holds used by the wrestlers, how those holds are being applied and an understanding of body mechanics. In other words ... how do body parts move and work?

Wrestling is a tough physical sport. It is filled with action and counter action that requires the official to be constantly analyzing hundreds may be thousands situations that occur during the match. It is not an easy task. The better the official is at understanding the wrestling hold and how the wrestler can or cannot use that hold is paramount to the safety of the wrestlers.

With that being said, the arm bar is misunderstood by some officials and that causes inconsistency in making potentially dangerous and illegal holds calls when officials encounter this maneuver during live action.

In wrestling, anytime the defensive wrestler turns a legal hold into an illegal hold by his actions, the correct call is not illegal but potentially dangerous. Since the defensive wrestler caused the maneuver to become illegal it is not deemed the fault of the offensive wrestler, therefore it is called potentially dangerous. There is no penalty to the offensive wrestler. This is often the case when the offensive man is applying the arm bar.

In order to gain a near fall when wrestling a tough opponent oftentimes there may be some discomfort involved while the hold is being applied. The arm bar must be driven forward and then at an angle towards the far side ear of the defensive wrestler. Many officials immediately call this potentially dangerous or even illegal.

If the arm bar is tight the defensive wrestler's elbow will be locked in and snug in front of the chest of the offensive wrestler. When the pressure starts forward then transfers across to the far ear it constitutes a legal hold. It becomes potentially dangerous if the elbow of the defensive wrestler pops out and is exposed. When the elbow is visible serious damage to the shoulder may occur if the offensive wrestler drives forward. However, if the pressure is straight ahead (12 o'clock) and the offensive wrestler continues to drive forward it constitutes an illegal hold. Simply driving the arm bar forward to start the arm bar is not illegal. The ball and socket joint of the shoulder does not rotate 360 degrees from the rear upward.

Another situation with the arm bar occurs when the offensive wrestler has a near side arm bar in and throws in a back-side half nelson. The offensive wrestler then jumps to the half nelson side and turns his opponent. When this happens, the forward pressure on the shoulder diminishes when the offensive wrestler jumps over to drive the half nelson for back points. This is not illegal, but there may be concern for another potentially dangerous situation. There may be no threat of injury as the defensive wrestler gets turned, but the official must watch it. Almost all wrestling holds and maneuvers have the potential to be dangerous. As officials, it is our job to understand the rules and the interpretation of the rules in view of body mechanics.

Be Professional * Polite * Prompt * Direct * Decisive

Expectation of safety: remember, you are an independent contractor and can choose to accept or deny any events you wish. Attacks on sports officials are already too prevalent. Every sports official from youth, scholastic, collegiate and professional all have an expectation of safety wherever they accept to officiate. Do not let any situations get out of hand. Exercise the necessary rules to control the match and/or the event. The official has jurisdiction when he/she arrives at the site.

Everyone should just ... Do It Right !

The greatest number of false starts and cautions are assessed during the starting of the wrestlers in the referee's position. Many times it is the referee who may cause the wrestlers to flinch, and then assess a caution violation. When this occurs, the official has interfered with the match and possibly the outcome. For these reasons it is important for the official to always start the wrestlers utilizing the same procedure, be in position to see all points of concern for a fair start and allow all to hear and have a visual look at the hand signal. The other aspect of the start is to allow the team of table workers to have the same unobstructed view of the start.

The second "set" to freeze the top wrestler has been causing the problem. Different voice inflections, moving while the wrestlers are stationary, raising your hand after they are ready are a few of the reasons why it is necessary to make a slight change to the official's procedure. We have been causing penalty points, and even penalty points which have determined the outcome of a match. The change is to eliminate one word; the second "set" for the top wrestler.

Posture Indicates Intent

The following is a procedure for setting the wrestlers in the referee's position. While standing at the top of the ten foot circle, ask the defensive wrestler to get set in his bottom position. With your arm extended to set the bottom wrestler ask "are you set?" With any affirmative response or nod of the head, check his/her position. Are the hands in front of the starting line with heel of the hands on the mat? Are the knees behind and parallel to the rear starting line? If the position is correct continue to place the offensive wrestler, if not assess the necessary caution violation and inform the athlete. Now ask the top wrestler to mount. Remember, you are still standing at the top of the ten foot circle directly in front of the head of the bottom wrestler. Whichever side the top wrestler chooses to mount, the official should take two or three steps to the opposite side, stand stationary with arm raised, and hand in position to signal the start of the wrestling. After the top wrestler is stationary the official should quickly check his/her position to make sure it is legal. That means, glance at the hand on the navel, check that the offensive wrestler's knee is not draping on the hip and the feet are not breaking the plane of the feet in the rear. Again, if the position is not legal, make the necessary caution violation. If the position is correct give the simultaneous visual hand signal and blow the whistle to start wrestling.

REMEMBER: Every wrestler must make a scratch weight before they are allowed to use any extra pound, such as no practice; the day before a meet, match before a tournament, etc. Also just as important, a wrestler may not use any extra pounds to qualify for a weight class.