



January 8, 2018

Attention Wrestling Officials:

Recently, a college wrestler from Missouri was allowed to compete wearing a cervical collar (neck brace). This would not be allowed for our OHSAA scholastic events. The NFHS rules (4-6-1 thru 3) require any special equipment to be inspected by the official during the weigh-in for approval. The official is to make sure it is properly padded and safe for both the competitor and his/her opponent. We need to be fair to the opponent, in that any brace, taping or padding, etc. is not so large, thick or cumbersome that it would not allow normal legal holds and maneuvers by the opponent. Braces are not allowed to restrict normal range of movement. A cervical neck brace is designed to diminish the normal range of motion and thereby impede the opponent's opportunity to slide in a half nelson, cradle, etc. to work for a fall. The other issue in play is that as a half nelson is applied the neck brace could roll / twist around the neck thereby help the defensive wrestler slide out of the half nelson and avoid near fall points or a fall. Additionally, it is conceivable that the brace could compromise the breathing of the wrestler wearing it. One could also argue that if a wrestler had a neck injury severe enough to require wearing a brace, perhaps the best option would be further medical treatment and more healing time.

High school and junior high wrestlers are growing and developing physically, mentally, and psychologically. These very important developmental issues play a very pivotal role in how our scholastic wrestling officials evaluate every wrestling match. We stop serious issues as potentially dangerous, whereas at the college level officials let things go further. Collegiate athletes are more physically developed, stronger, and have faster reaction time. We have a duty of safety to foresee a possible serious injury compounding an initial existing problem. We do not need to follow this example now set at the college level.

Everyone needs to use their best judgment when special equipment is checked. All equipment needs to be exactly according to NFHS rules and requirements for the physical safety of the wrestlers and the legal safety of officials, coaches, school systems etc. This type of cervical neck brace (collar) should not be allowed.

Beau Rugg, OHSAA  
Director of Officiating  
& Sport Management

Dr. Randy Wroble, OHSAA  
Chair, Sports Medicine Comm.

Jim Vreeland, OHSAA  
Directing of Development