



...Selecting State Tournament Officials

By Bill Welker

This fall I received a questionnaire from another state's top interpreter asking me how our yearly rotation of officials for the state tournament was working. I bluntly replied that it wasn't. Allow me to explain.

The West Virginia Secondary Schools Activities Commission conducts the annual state high school wrestling championships in Huntington. Eight mats are utilized in which 12 officials are assigned to oversee the matches throughout the three-day event.

How are they selected?

Before I answer this question, let me tell you why we do not rotate state officials from year to year. Quite simply, we want the best officials the state has to offer our wrestlers and coaches, who have worked so hard to reach this level of competition.

Furthermore, if an official is doing a great job, demonstrating the ability to "keep

cool" when faced with difficult situations, why would we (coaches included) want to replace him. "If it ain't broke, why fix it!"

Finally, when you truly consider the rationale behind rotating officials for the state tournament, it contradicts striving to be the best. Would we tell a wrestler who was a state champion or coach who produced a state championship team that both were ineligible to compete the following year because we wanted to give other individuals and teams a chance to win states. Tell that to Parkersburg South or Oak Glen!

Then why should we rotate officials for the sake of egos, not abilities? Any objective observer could easily answer this question.

Now back to how officials are selected for the West Virginia State Wrestling Tournament.

There is a nine-member wrestling coaches' committee made up of mentors

across the state. Each member ranks 12 officials who he believes should be doing states. I assist by looking at the "coach's rating score" of the officials selected by the committee. (Note: The coach's rating score is based on how mentors, who hired these officials, felt they did at their matches the previous year.) Thus, all coaches throughout the Mountain State have a say in the selection process.

A list of prospective state tourney officials, including alternates, is turned into the WVSSAC office. The WVSSAC makes the final decision on which 12 officials will be invited to the state tournament.

It is a very fair process based on the merit of past officiating performances on the mats.

In closing, I want to share with you excerpts from a letter I received this November. It was written by an interpreter from another state that does not rotate officials. Below is his state's rationale for not doing so:

"Rotation of state officials is not our concern; competent officiating is the bottom line. Our wrestlers, like wrestlers from all states, work too hard to have nothing but the best officials overseeing their matches. We are not worried about the officials' egos, but about offering the wrestlers the best officiating possible, which includes concern for wrestler-safety as well."

I whole heartedly agree. 🙏

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