

Principles for Successful Officiating in Wrestling

By Bill Welker, EdD

Throughout the decades, I gradually began to understand the personal characteristics that all great wrestling officials possess which coaches want to see. I have developed eight principles for success as an athletic arbitrator: Composure, Openness, Mechanics, Rule Knowledge, Appearance, Decisiveness, Enthusiasm, and Safety.

Composure

The wrestling official's professional demeanor under stressful and/or unusual athletic occurrences can be the calming element that alleviates potential unsportsmanlike, irrational responses from coaches, wrestlers, and fans. Be calm under pressure.

Openness

The wrestling official's communications with all coaches, wrestlers, scorekeepers, and team personnel should be respectful and formal in nature. Be approachable.

Mechanics

Of course, it is imperative that wrestling officials use the correct signals as specifically illustrated in the rulebook. And just as important, strive to be in the proper position at all times. By doing so, the coach is unlikely to question the wrestling official who is on top of a difficult call. Be a man of position.

Rule Knowledge

It is a must to review the rules of the sport on a weekly basis during the wrestling season. The competent wrestling official must be an expert in the interpretation of the rules during the rigors of athletic competition. Be a student of the game!

Appearance

Just as the wrestler physically prepares himself during the preseason for the competitive season, the wrestling official must also do the same. His attire must be neat and clean. Look professional!

Decisiveness

Be demonstrative when making each and every call – be it routine or quite difficult, exhibiting complete confidence in your decision. Be resolute!

Consistency is also a facet of decisiveness. Coaches respect a wrestling official who is consistent, even if they disagree with the official's call, especially in the area of stalling. At least, they know what to expect. Be consistent!

Enthusiasm

The wrestling official should emanate a demeanor of excitement in performing his trade, no matter the level of competition to which he is assigned.

Be enthusiastic; it's contagious!

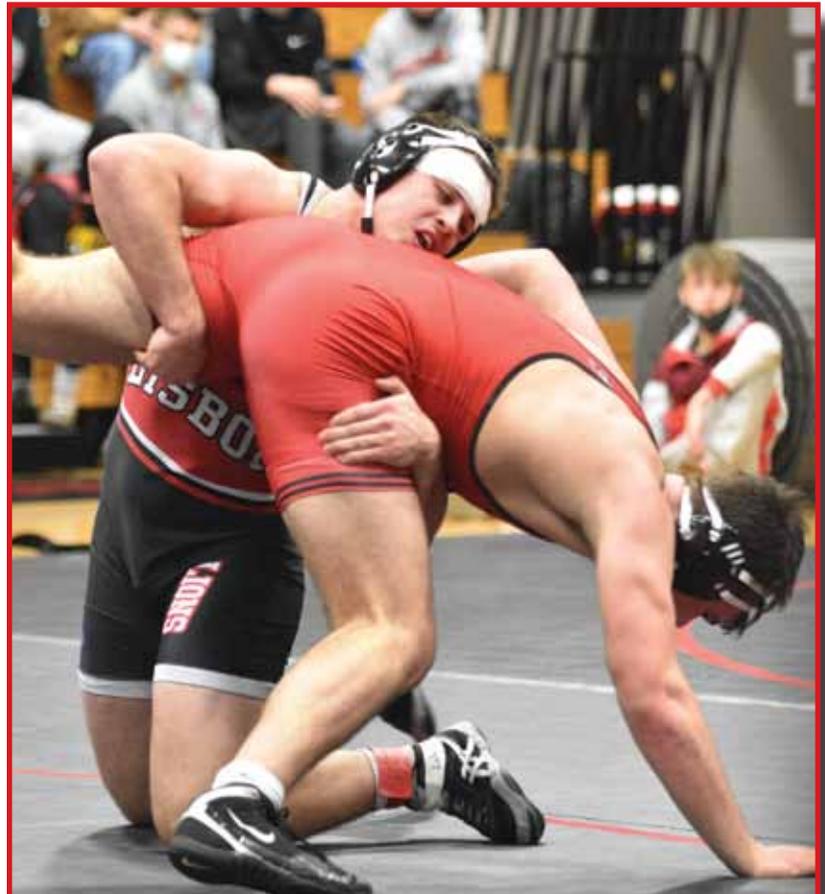
Safety

First and foremost, the adept wrestling official checks that the wrestlers are properly equipped prior to the match to

assist in allaying injuries. Likewise, he is also constantly prepared for the unexpected. Be safety conscious!

As a state rules interpreter for nearly three decades, I incorporated these principles to evaluate 100s of wrestling referees (evaluation form to the right). I found the procedure to be very beneficial for developing competent and compassionate officials.

Editor's Note: If you are not a wrestling official, feel free to copy this article and COMRADES Evaluation Form and share it with area leaders in the officiating ranks. Wrestling USA Magazine would like to thank the editors of Referee Magazine for their permission to reprint this article.



2021 Bob Lueders Invitational Finals - 220 lbs. Cole Clark (Lisbon) finishing a takedown on Luke Gaffney (Linn-Mar). Clark won by decision 6-2. Photo by G Wyatt Schultz.

COMRADES

(Wrestling Official's Evaluation Form)

Key: 1 = Excellent 2 = Good 3 = Fair 4 = Poor

Category	1	2	3	4
Composure (Under Pressure)				
Openness (Coaches/Wrestlers/Table Crew Relations)				
Mechanics (Proper Positions/Signals)				
Rule Knowledge (Correct Interpretations)				
Appearance (Professionally Attired)				
Decisiveness (Assertive/Consistent Calls)				
Enthusiasm (Inspiring Demeanor)				
Safety (Protection of Wrestlers)				

Note: The lower the score the better. A perfect Score is 8. Score (Point-Total): _____

Points of Emphasis:

Wrestling Official: _____ Evaluator: _____