

# OHSAA WRESTLING BULLETIN

2023-2024 Bulletin No. 4

February 19, 2024

## Unsportsmanlike Conduct

As the post-season is upon us, we are increasingly responsible for teaching, supporting, and promoting good sportsmanship. This is the time of the season where competitors, coaches, and yes, officials often are on edge given the trials and tribulations embodied toward advancing to the state tournament.

We must be consistent in enforcing sportsmanship norms from the opening handshake to the final whistle. On one hand, our objective is to encourage and acknowledge acts of good sportsmanship, and on the other, to discourage unsporting behavior and acts by penalizing appropriately.

I was at a large national tournament in early December where I was approached by a coach who queried me about how an unsportsmanlike penalty against a coach is to be administered. The coach was penalized for moving outside of the coaches' area on the mat and by his own admission for being obnoxious to the official. The coach admitted that he deserved to be penalized for his behavior. The coach was rightfully penalized for unsportsmanlike behavior but did not understand why the official penalized his wrestler 1-point for the infraction. I was curious about the penalty administration, so I went to the head table to confirm how the match was scored. Sure enough, there was no team point deduction, but there was a match point awarded to the penalized wrestler's opponent for unsportsmanlike conduct.

Unsportsmanlike conduct penalty administration was reviewed last season in 2022-2023 Bulletin No. 2, issued on January 19, 2023. The following excerpt is taken from that bulletin.

“Note that an unsportsmanlike conduct penalty administered to a contestant during a match is managed differently than an unsportsmanlike penalty imposed prior to or after the conclusion of a match. The definition of a match is set forth in **Rule 5-17-2**: "A match begins when the proper wrestler reports to the scorer's table in dual matches and tournaments until the conclusion of wrestling. The conclusion of wrestling occurs when the time expires at the end of the third period, when the overtime ends, or when a fall technical fall, disqualification or default occurs". **Rule 8-1-3** governs unsportsmanlike conduct during a match which states in-part: "Penalties and warnings are cumulative throughout the match. Each infraction has its specific penalty. The penalty for an illegal hold/maneuver, technical violation (except false start or incorrect starting position), unnecessary roughness and wrestler's unsportsmanlike conduct in the match is awarding the opponent of the offender one match point on the first and second offenses, and two match points on the on the third offense. A fourth offense shall result in disqualification...".

In short, an unsportsmanlike conduct penalty imposed on a contestant during a match is progressively penalized in accordance with the penalty chart as a match point(s), while an unsportsmanlike penalty imposed prior to or after the conclusion of a match is penalized as a team point(s) (see 2022-2023 Case Book, 8-1-3 Situation A on page 54).

Administering a 4<sup>th</sup> penalty during a match for unsportsmanlike conduct or a combination of penalties including unsportsmanlike conduct during a match result in a disqualification from the match and does not result in a deduction of team points, earned team points or an ejection from the contest and removal from the premises. A wrestler disqualified from a match due to penalty chart progression is still eligible to compete in a multiple school event or tournament competition.

Continuing acts of unsportsmanlike conduct or unnecessary roughness during a match may be construed by the referee as flagrant misconduct.

The administration of two unsportsmanlike conduct penalties to a contestant (outside of a match), other team personnel **or a coach** result in the deduction of one team point on the first offense and 2 team points and removal from the premises for the remainder of the event, day/dual meet, or tournament on the second offense, and must be reported to the OHSAA via the MyOHSAA portal.

In the forgoing situation, the coach and not the wrestler, should have been penalized for the unsportsmanlike act. The coach should have been penalized for 1-team point, as this was his first offense. Rule 7.5.3 governs unsportsmanlike conduct penalty administration against coaches and other team personnel. The rule reads: “Unsportsmanlike conduct of coaches and other team personnel is any act that becomes abusive or interferes with the orderly progress of the match. These acts could occur prior to, during, or after a match. This includes violations of the bench decorum rule (7.5.2), taunting, acts of disrespect or those actions which incite negative reaction by others. The offender shall be penalized for unsportsmanlike conduct in accordance with the Penalty Chart.”

Remember, for unsportsmanlike behavior, it is the perpetrator of the unsportsmanlike act that is penalized.

Good luck in your officiating endeavors during the post-season!

Toby Dunlap  
OHSAA Director of Officiating Development – Wrestling