

Let the Assistant Ref Be Responsible for Calling all Stalling

by Mike Pyle, VP NWOA.

Over the years we have tried different ways to make officiating better and eliminate officiating errors as much as possible. In the 70's we tried a method similar to freestyle. Two mat judges were added in tournament semi-finals and finals matches. Unlike freestyle the judges didn't effect a match's functioning, but, they helped decide a winner in case of a tie. Obviously the mat judging wasn't as helpful as hoped because it faded out over time without a whimper. Then in the late 80's the Assistant Referee was adopted. The idea was to have someone opposite the referee that could communicate activity that the referee could not see. And to give unbiased consultations. In the early 90's we tried to beef up the duties of the assistant by implementing the "first on, last off" procedure. Which has proven to be very effective in policing the mat area before and after wrestling? But it still does nothing to keep the assistant concentrating on the match. Most assistants find it difficult to stay alert. We work all season alone and then at the end of the season we try to inject a 2-man system. In many situations this has been problematic in administering the mechanics as well as the personality conflicts. There are few if any times during the season that a school will use 2 refs for a big meet. The coaches don't feel that the system warrants the financial expenditure. We need to make the assistant referee more responsible if it is to have and credibility and thus survive. Today's referee is expected to be proficient as an administrator of a site, technically expert in match procedures, scoring and safety, a mind reader in determining stalling and an emotionally neutral judge when implementing penalties and sanctions against participants, coaches and fans. For all but a few exceptional referees we may be asking too much of individual in today's high pressure and overly demanding athletic arena to be all things to all teams in all situations. The assistant referee is becoming more and more a necessity; if we only give the position some realistic duties and responsibilities. I want to throw out to you, the referees, and the idea of giving the assistant referee the duty of calling all the stalling during the match. This statement usually gets a very cool reception from my colleagues. All these years we have had complete control over our matches. And the thought of giving up one of the most crucial parts of the match to someone else is quite alien. It would take some practice and time to iron out the wrinkles of exactly how the match would be administered. I would start with two high level refs that have worked together for years and know each others styles. Two refs that trust each other and won't let their ego's get in the way. As basketball refs have learned to trust each other and give up territory to the one or two refs they work with, a wrestling official can learn to appreciate the position of the other ref and have a mutually beneficial officiating experience. Think about how much better it would be to just have to worry about the technical side of a match. Giving all your attention to the scoring, edge work and safety of the competitors. And if you are the assistant you would be seriously involved with the match and your presence would be as a

necessity rather than just a safety net. As the two officials do a better job the coaches will recognize the value of a 2-man system and they will want to pay for the improved system. It would reduce the stress and spread the responsibility around. Overall I have enjoyed having an assistant during matches. The only times that I have had a negative experience has been when the assistant has not been able to keep his concentration, due to his lack of responsibility. I like the security of having a colleague on the mat with me. And with the dwindling of meets throughout the country, at the college level, it might create more opportunities for officials. Please don't dismiss this idea out of hand. Give it some thought. Send me your response. I would love to see a couple of guys go into some early season tournaments and give it a try. Our sport is suffering dramatically at the college level and any attempt to improve the accuracy of officiating will help to make our sport more viable and attractive to the powers that be that are making the crucial decisions about our sport.