



Rule 5.3 Unnecessary Roughness Hands to the Face Follow-up

October 19, 2018

This article is to provide additional clarity regarding rule 5.3 on unnecessary roughness and hands to the face for the 2018-19 season. If after reviewing this Question & Answer document you have rules interpretation questions, please contact me via e-mail or for refereeing questions you may contact Tim Shiels. Question numbers one and two will be placed in the next edition of the NCAA Wrestling Case Book.

1. **Question:** will a wrestler be called for an unnecessary roughness violation if they are in a scramble situation or normal wrestling action (i.e. hand fighting) and their hand inadvertently hits the other wrestler's face or eyes?

Response: No, unnecessary roughness refers to physical acts that are deliberate in nature. If a wrestler's hand comes into contact with their opponents face inadvertently and not because of the use of a purposeful hold or tactic then this is not considered unnecessary roughness.

2. **Question:** why then is a wrestler being called for unnecessary roughness when they place their hand on the opponent's face without using excessive force?

Response: Because of the low amount of force needed to cause injury to a wrestler's eye, placing the hand(s) in on or around the eyes nose or mouth as a hold, tactic, defense or any other sort of purposeful technique, regardless of the force used, is considered deliberate and is unnecessary roughness.

3. **Question:** what if a wrestler, using excessive force, open hand palms another wrestler but is not in on or around the eyes nose or mouth, will they still be penalized with an unnecessary roughness violation?

Response: yes, per rule 5.3 all physical acts exceeding normal aggressiveness (regardless of the location) are penalized with an unnecessary roughness violation.

4. **Question:** what if the referee calls my wrestler for a hands to the face violation but I believe it's incorrect?

Response: if a video review is available you can use one of your video reviews to challenge the call. The referee will then look to see if these two rules requirements were met: 1) was the wrestler's hand in on or around the opponent's eyes, nose, or mouth; 2) was it placed their deliberately? If both of those are satisfied then your wrestler has been correctly called for unnecessary roughness. If video review is unavailable you may question the referee about their application of the rule. In the absence of video review the referee would ask themselves the same two previous questions in order to determine if the correct call was made.

Important point: per rule 7.2.2 on matters of judgment the referee has full control of the meet and their decision is final. This means that the referee is responsible for determining which acts are deliberate and their decision on that is final.



5. **Question:** why is the rules committee putting such an emphasis on hands to the face right now, and why not so much in past years?

Response: the sport of wrestling evolves from year to year and decade to decade. Different holds, tactics and trends come and go and the rules committee is charged with monitoring this evolution and ensuring playing rules are relevant and safe for the wrestlers. The rules committee noticed the dramatic increase in number of wrestlers using hands the face and was concerned about the safety of wrestlers as this tactic became more prevalent. There is no new rule being implemented this year, the rules committee is simply making the unnecessary roughness hands in the face a point of emphasis.

6. **Question:** can a wrestler really get disqualified for putting hands in their opponent's face?

Response: yes, a wrestler can be disqualified for any unnecessary roughness violation if the opponent is unable to continue after recovery time.

Additional rationale: As mentioned in my first article, all illegal holds and acts of unnecessary roughness are techniques or tactics the rules committee does not want to be used because they are dangerous. Illegal holds are illegal upon application and the rules committee is reinforcing, this year, that deliberately placing hands to the face is considered gouging or poking the eyes and is unnecessary roughness.

7. **Question:** As the Secretary Rules Editor can you describe some other deliberate ways in which hands to the face are used as a hold or tactic and that would be considered unnecessary roughness?

Response: as you can imagine, the number of ways this could occur is almost impossible to put down on paper. However, in the hopes that some examples will be helpful to referees and coaches I will describe a few below:

- a. Neutral position, two wrestlers facing one another and one reaches out and palms the other one in the face.
- b. A wrestler is bouncing on one leg trying to defend a single leg and they post with their hand in the other wrestler's face to try and defend the attack.
- c. A wrestler is on their back being pinned in a headlock and reaches up with their hand in the opponent's eyes in an effort to get out of the headlock.
- d. A wrestler is using a cross body ride and attempting to turk them over and during that attempt they reach up with their palm directly on the opponents face in an attempt to get them completely into near fall criteria.
- e. And per rule 7.2.2 any other wrestling areas that the referee determines this action has occurred.



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