



NEWS RELEASE

Adjustment in Minimum Body Fat Percentage for Females Highlights High School Wrestling Rules Changes

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Elliot Hopkins

INDIANAPOLIS, IN (April 17, 2026) — In an effort to establish a more healthy process for girls involved in high school wrestling, the minimum body fat percentage for females has been raised from 12 to 19 percent, effective with the 2026-27 season.

Revisions to weight-control rules (1-5-1, 1-5-2) were two of 18 rules changes recommended by the NFHS Wrestling Rules Committee at its March 29-31 meeting in Indianapolis. All rules changes were reviewed by the NFHS Rules Review Committee and approved by the NFHS Board of Directors.

In making this significant change, the committee reviewed information from the National Wrestling Coaches Association, the proud supporter of the NFHS, and had the backing of the NFHS Sports Medicine Advisory Committee.

The committee determined that based on peer-reviewed research data, increasing the body fat percentage for high school girls establishes a safer margin for minimal wrestling weight for those girls intent on achieving a lower weight class.

“This is a huge victory for girls involved in high school wrestling,” said Elliot Hopkins, NFHS director of sports, sanctioning and student services, and liaison to the Wrestling Rules Committee. “Now, girls will not be forced to go through unhealthy weight-loss efforts, and it allows girls to be their natural selves. It definitely will help those girls in the larger weight classes, and it will provide more opportunities for girls to be involved in high school wrestling.”

In another significant change for next year, bleeding has been added to recovery time in Rule 5-28-3. Now, if a contestant is injured **or bleeding** as a result of an illegal hold/maneuver, unnecessary roughness, unsportsmanlike conduct during the match or the result of a false start (by the opponent) in the neutral position, the wrestler is entitled to two minutes of recovery time.

The committee determined that a bleeding contestant should not have to bleed for five minutes before being declared the winner if injured because of any of the aforementioned situations.

Language was added to the stalling rules in Rule 7-6-3. Beginning next year, when wrestling is stopped for going out of bounds in the neutral position, one of the following calls should be made: stalling by one of the wrestlers for leaving the wrestling areas, stalling by pushing or pulling the opponent out of bounds, stalling by backing out of the wrestling area, or wrestling action is taking place.

The committee noted that by announcing one of these calls when wrestling is stopped, it will provide more clarification for the wrestlers and coaches, as well as the fans, when calling stalling on the edge of the mat vs. traditional stalling.

Other changes approved by the committee included guidelines for a properly fitted tooth and mouth protector, opportunity to weigh in by team if it is more practical, and referee signaling and vocalizing a five-second count.

Finally, new language regarding byes was inserted in several rules as follows: "Byes do not count as a match and are not counted toward the maximum number of six matches per day or 10 matches over a two-day event. Byes also do not count toward a wrestler's match record."

A complete listing of the wrestling rules changes will be available on the NFHS website at www.nfhs.org. Click on "Sports" at the top of the home page and select "Wrestling" and then "Rules." The print version of the 2026-27 Wrestling Rules Book will be available for purchase in late July at www.NFHS.com, and the digital version will be available in July via NFHS Digital at www.NFHS.org.

According to the 2024-25 NFHS High School Athletics Participation Survey, wrestling is the sixth-most popular sport for boys with 300,214 participants in 11,526 schools nationwide. For girls, it ranks 12th with 74,064 participants in 8,100 schools.

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About the National Federation of State High School Associations (NFHS)

The NFHS, based in Indianapolis, Indiana, is the national leadership organization for high school sports and performing arts activities. Since 1920, the NFHS has led the development of education-based interscholastic sports and performing arts activities that help students succeed in their lives. The NFHS sets direction for the future by building awareness and support, improving the participation experience, establishing consistent standards and rules for competition, and helping those who oversee high school sports and activities. The NFHS writes playing rules for 18 sports for boys and girls at the high school level. Through its 50 member state associations and the District of Columbia, the NFHS reaches more than 19,800 high schools and 12 million participants in high school activity programs, including more than 8.2 million in high school sports. As the recognized national authority on interscholastic activity programs, the NFHS conducts national meetings; sanctions interstate events; offers online publications and services for high school coaches and officials; sponsors professional organizations for high school coaches, officials, speech and debate coaches, and music adjudicators; serves as the national source for interscholastic coach training; and serves as a national information resource of interscholastic athletics and activities. For more information, visit the NFHS website at www.nfhs.org.

MEDIA CONTACTS:

Bruce Howard, 317-972-6900
Director of Publications and Communications
National Federation of State High School Associations
bhoward@nfhs.org

Chris Boone, 317-972-6900
Assistant Director of Publications and Communications
National Federation of State High School Associations
cboone@nfhs.org

Jordan Morey, 317-972-6900
Manager of Communications and Media Relations
National Federation of State High School Association
jmorey@nfhs.org