



January 7, 2026

NFHS Wrestling Weekly Rule Interpretations

Happy Holidays! As we are coming out of the holiday wrestling tournaments, we have seen some very interesting holds and maneuvers. This week's interpretation discusses the back bow and its variants along with a legal cross-face. By definition, the back bow is illegal upon application. It is important that as referees, we understand what is legal and illegal when it pertains to the spine and cervical column to prevent injury to an opposing wrestler. So far, the feedback that we are receiving remains positive and encouraging. Thank you for your ongoing support this season.

We hope that the illustrations are helpful and timely for your wrestling referees to discuss and use as talking points during their officials' chapter/board meetings this season and post-season. We are attaching the illustrations as separate documents for your use and for ease of distribution. These resources are excellent conversation starters for first year and seasoned referees alike! Have a wonderful second half of the wrestling season.

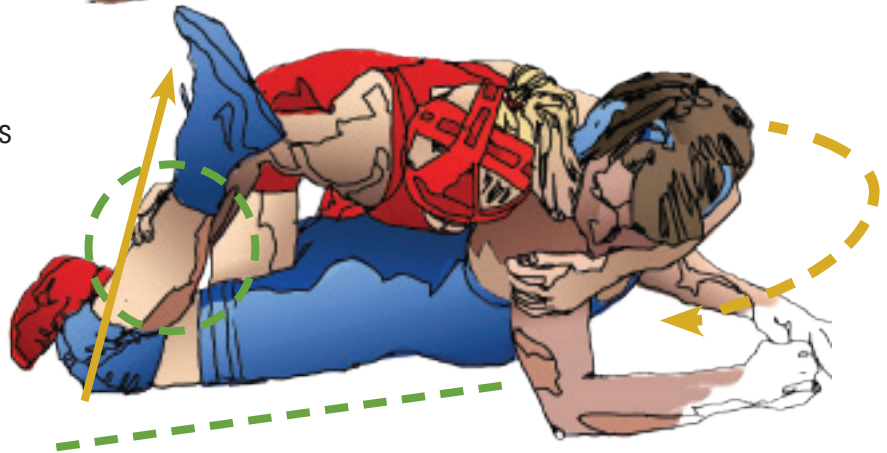
Farside Back bow

A



Frame 1: Set-up **Wrestler A**—straddling **Wrestler B's** nearside hip & thigh is **LEGAL**.

Frame 2 : **Wrestler A**— reaches back grabs **Wrestler B's** farside foot/ankle. Grabbing foot/ankle not illegal, but the lifting of foot/ankle is **ILLEGAL**.

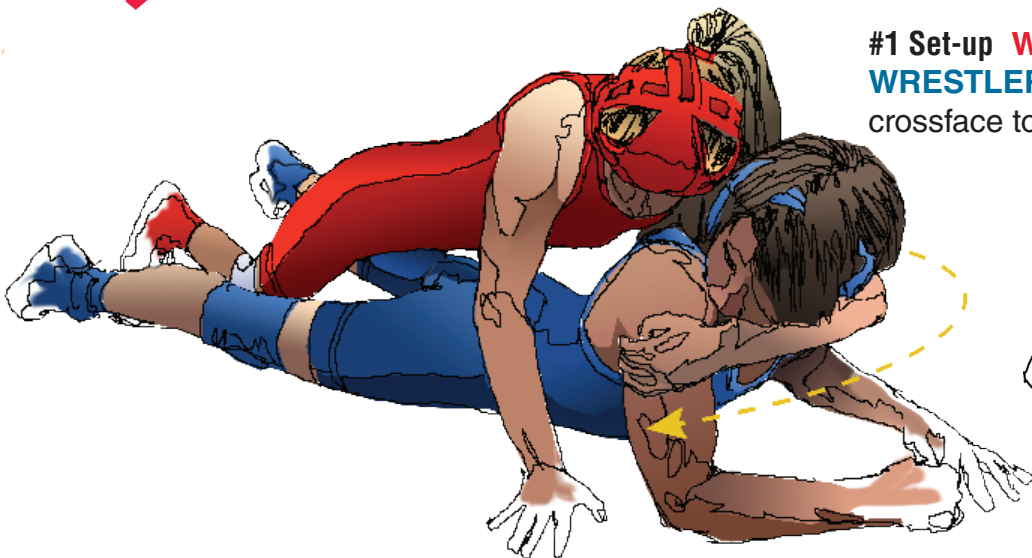


Frame 3 : **Wrestler A**—with **Wrestler B's** farside foot/ankle either pulls toward **Wrestler B's** head/shoulder or pushes head/shoulder or pushes head to foot/ankle stop immediatly... **ILLEGAL** back bow.

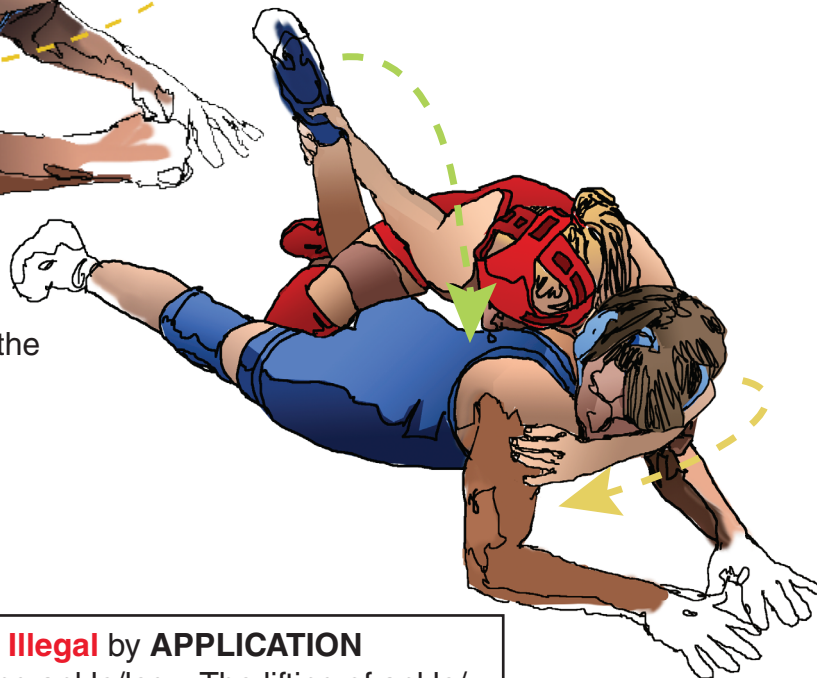
NOTE: Official should be in position to see that if either direction is taken you stop and penalize. This maneuver should not get this far.



#1 Set-up **WRESTLER A**—straddling **WRESTLER B's**—nearside leg, uses a crossface to a far arm—**LEGAL**.



#2 **WRESTLER A**—reaches back and picks up nearside ankle/leg of **WRESTLER B** and pulls ankle/leg toward farside shoulder as she presses the crossface over for nearfall—**stop immediately** and penalize for **ILLEGAL** back bow.



This is **Illegal** by **APPLICATION** grabbing ankle/leg—The lifting of ankle/leg forced toward the opposite shoulder creates a reverse “C” to spine—**Stop immediately**, penalize accordingly.



This maneuver should not get this far.

Cross-Face far Ankle to an **Illegal** Back Bow

C

Frame 1.

LEGAL



Frame #1. Set-up: **Wrestler B** has **Wrestler A** broken down and has applied tight cross-face to far shoulder **LEGAL**.

Frame #2. **Wrestler B** drives with his chest to turn **wrestler A's** for nearfall. Official must watch the cross-face is not across the throat, that **wrestler B** does not grab and pull **wrestler A's** foot up to the head and /or presses **wrestler A's** head to his feet. **Back bow** is **ILLEGAL** by application.

Frame 2.



Head moves
toward foot
ILLEGAL

Foot moves
toward head
ILLEGAL

SECTION 7 INFRACTIONS BACK BOW

Rule 7-1-5q

Rule 7-1-5p

bending, twisting or forcing the head or any limb beyond its normal limits of movement.