



January 21, 2026

NFHS Wrestling Weekly Rule Interpretations

This week's interpretation addresses some of the holds and maneuvers that are meant to punish an opponent. The Figure 4 and the various Spladles can be applied to hurt the opposing wrestler. As we enter regional and sectional post-season wrestling for many state associations, it is essential to have a clear understanding of what is permitted when the legs and groin area is involved. The feedback we have received thus far has been positive and encouraging. Thank you for your continued support and professionalism throughout the 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.

Figure 4

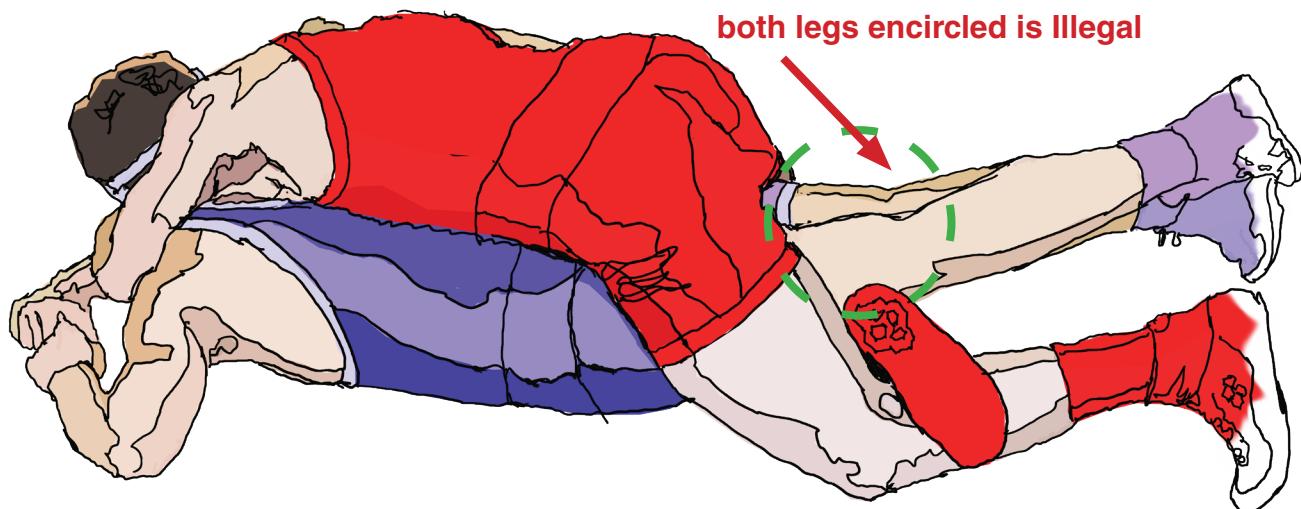
A

1. "Wrestler A has applied a tight figure 4 around the abdomen of Wrestler B. Rule 7-1-5 r states

"figure 4 around the body, head or both legs are **all illegal holds**". When the instep of the shoe is directly behind the crotch of the knee or locked from the top of the calf it is considered a figure 4... an **illegal** maneuver."



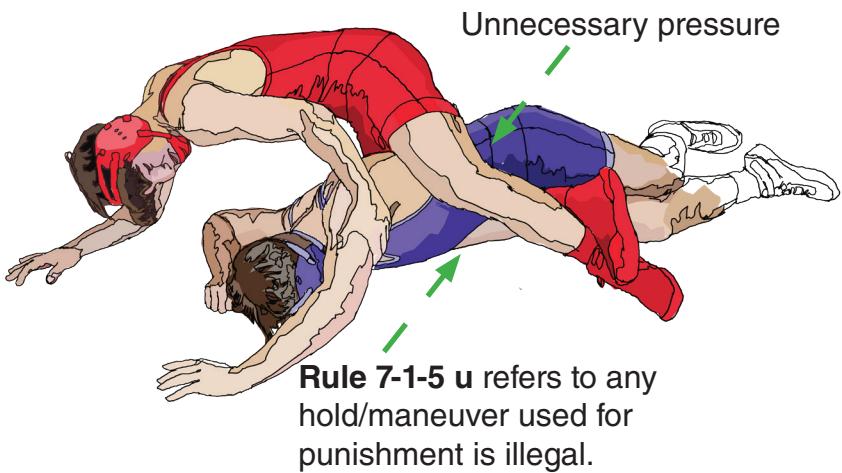
2. "Here Wrestler A has a figure 4 locked around both legs above the knees. This is also considered an **illegal** maneuver, as both legs are considered the **tube of the body**. A figure 4 applied to one leg is **legal**."



Scissors

B

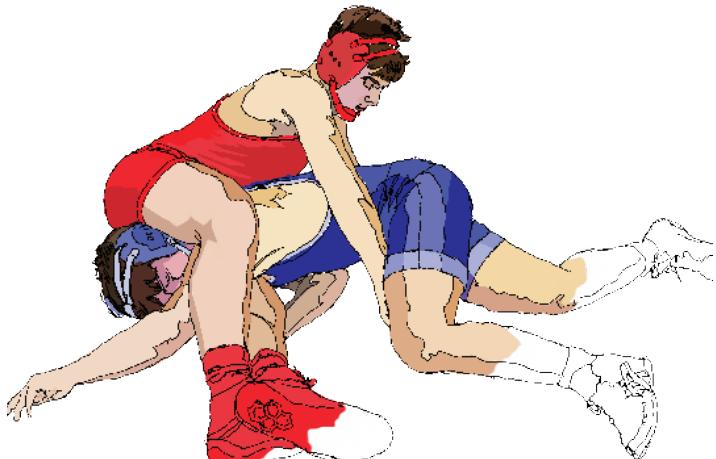
1. Although the body scissors is a legal maneuver, it may be illegal when it is used for punishment or to inflict pain and will then be considered unnecessary roughness. **Wrestler A** is squeezing their knees together to punish **Wrestler B**. This should be stopped and penalized accordingly.



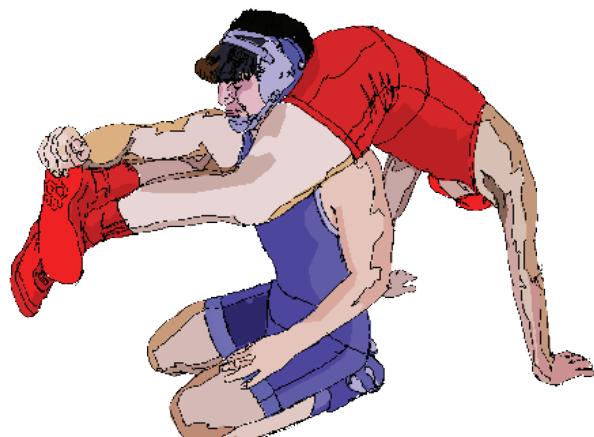
2 **Wrestler A** has applied an illegal head scissor. The scissors are straight across the head, neck and throat. **NFHS rule 7-6-1 e** states: “Straight head scissors (even though an arm is included.)” **NFHS Rule 7-1-5 g** also supports the illegal scissors as it states “any hold/maneuver putting pressure on the throat and/or carotid artery” is **illegal**.

3A. Here we see another form of the arm included in the head scissors. Notice the arm is raised up above the head and the scissors are straight across the throat and carotid artery. The maneuver is not across the chest, rather it is across the throat and again dangerous. This is **illegal by application**.

Refer to **NFHS Rule 7-1-5 e**.



3B. This illustration depicts legal scissors. Notice the scissors are draping under the armpit, below the shoulder and across the chest. It is not straight across the throat. Under the arm pit is considered the tube of the body making it a body scissors, although this may become **potentially dangerous** or **illegal** if used for punishment.”



Banana Split

A

1. Set-up: Wrestler B

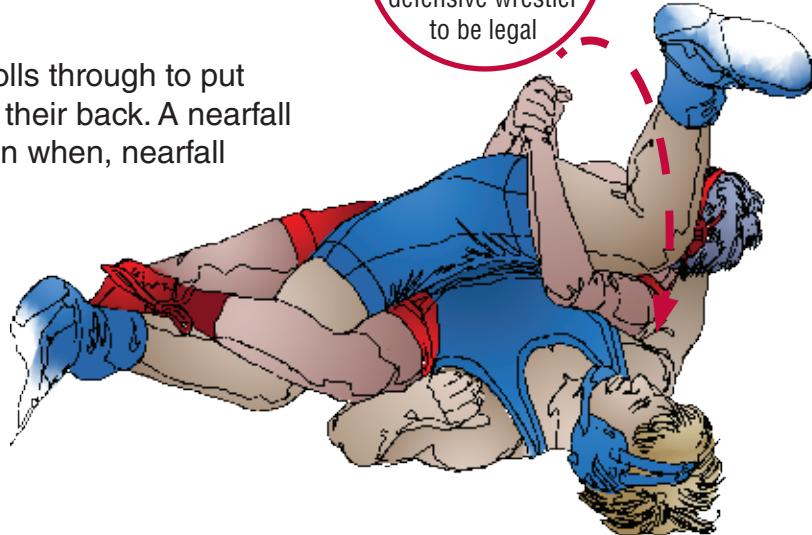
slides in grapevine leg on
Wrestler A.



3. When Wrestler B hangs their head over the side, **Wrestler A** reaches over **Wrestler B's** head and rolls through...

Knee has
to be taken
toward earguard/
shoulder of
defensive wrestler
to be legal

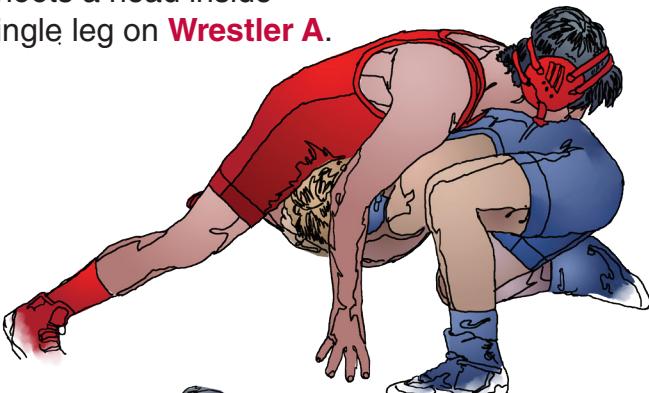
4. Wrestler A rolls through to put **Wrestler B** on their back. A nearfall count may begin when, nearfall criteria is met.



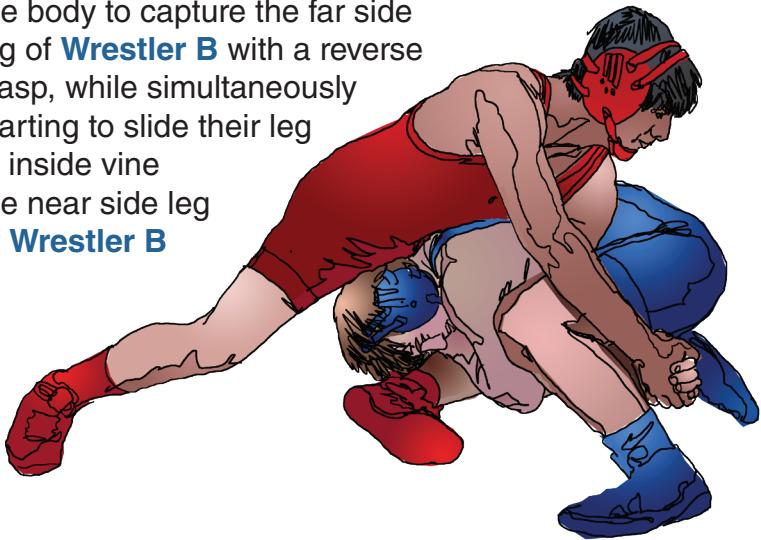
Note: The grapevine leg may split, while the other leg **must be** pulled downward toward the **ear guard and no wider than the shoulder**. The official must be vigilant as the split may become **potentially dangerous** to **illegal** very quickly.

1. Set-up: Wrestler B

shoots a head inside single leg on **Wrestler A**.

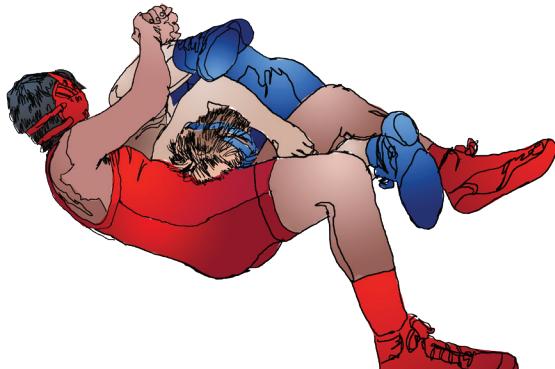


2. **Wrestler A** reaches across the body to capture the far side leg of **Wrestler B** with a reverse clasp, while simultaneously starting to slide their leg to inside vine the near side leg of **Wrestler B**

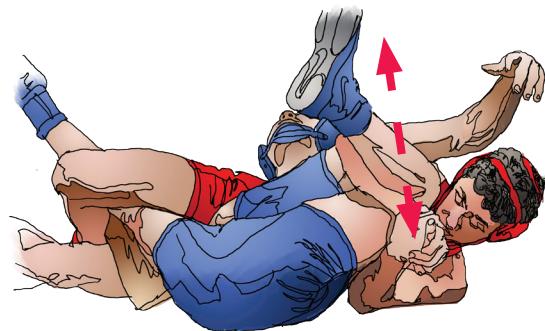


3. With **Wrestler B** head trapped inside, the nearside leg vined and the far side leg pulled up, **Wrestler A** pulls **Wrestler B** over into near fall criteria.

4/4a. Opposite side view for officials to recognize spladle leg splits

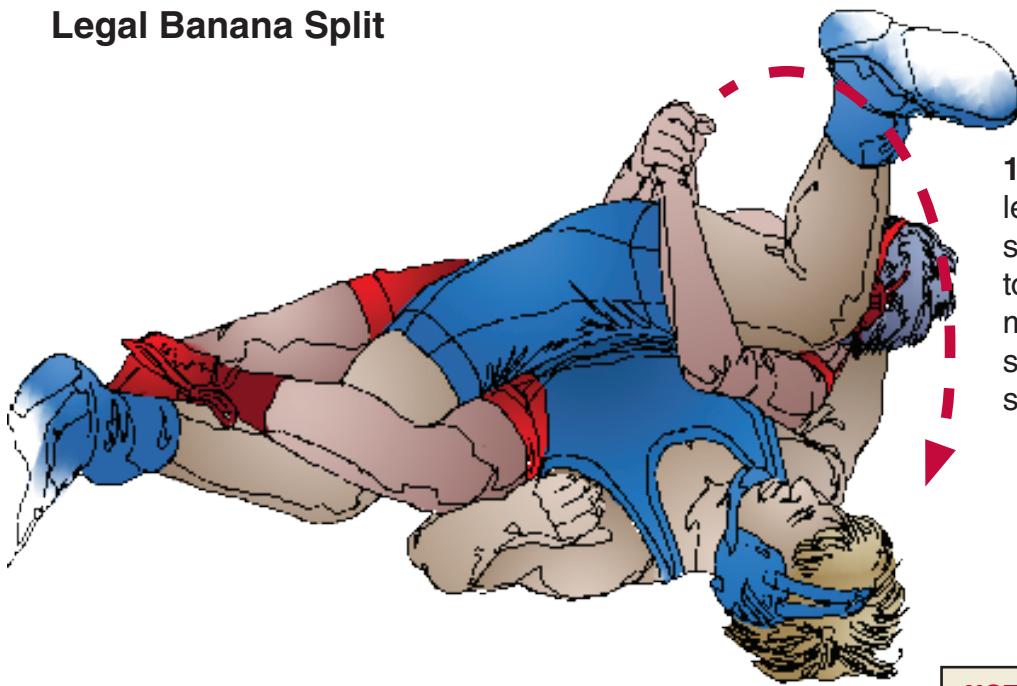


Knee has to be taken between ear guard/ shoulder of defensive wrestler to be legal



NOTE: If **Wrestler A** starts to pull the leg outside the range of the ear guard it becomes potentially dangerous. Stop immediately. If the leg is continued to be forced wider, it is an illegal maneuver and must be penalized.

Legal Banana Split

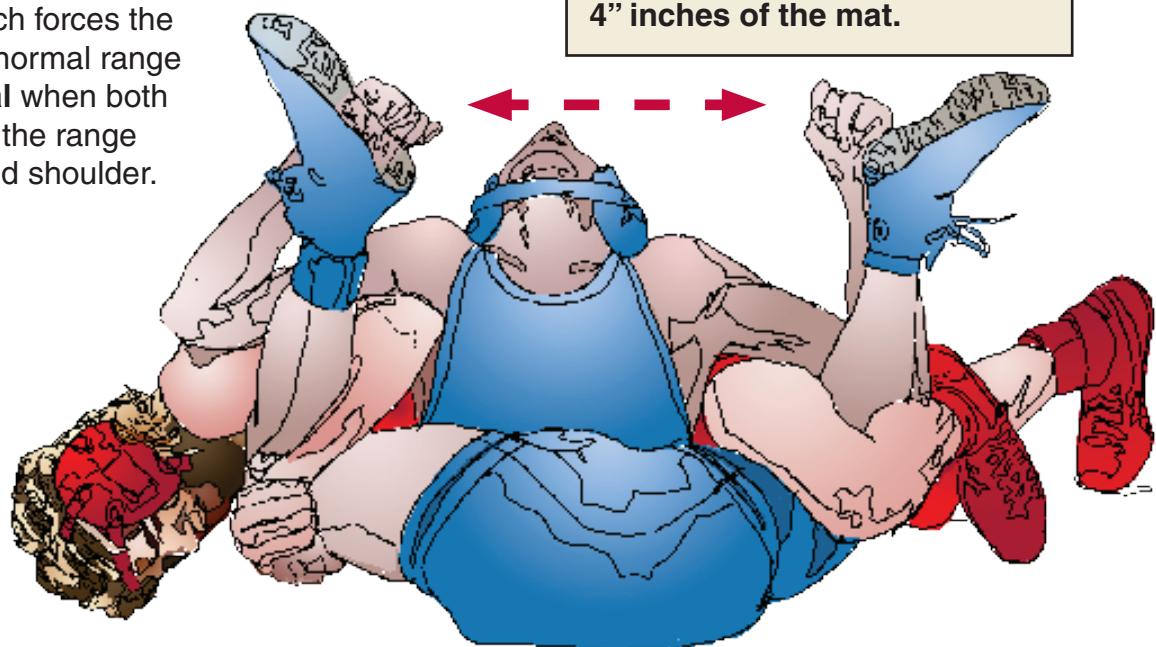


1. **Wrestler A** pulls near side leg down to drive the near side shoulder/scapulae of **Wrestler B** to the mat for near fall criteria to be met. Near fall may be earned while split is in a legal position. A legal split allows one leg pulled wide.

Illegal Spladle Split

2. With the inside leg laced on the near side and the reverse clasp on the other, **Wrestler A** is splitting the legs of **Wrestler B** which forces the hip joints beyond their normal range of motion. This is **illegal** when both legs are pulled outside the range between ear guards and shoulder. **Stop and penalize.**

NOTE: Near-fall cannot be earned when the defensive wrestler is being blocked by laying on the chest of the offensive wrestler. Near fall may be earned if the lower part of the scapulae are within 4" inches of the mat.



Strikes to Back of Head or Neck / Illegal

Rule 7-1-5 u: any hold/maneuver used for punishment is **illegal**

Rule 7-4-1: **unnecessary roughness** involves any physical acts which exceed normal aggressiveness ... which includes a **forceful forearm or elbow** used in a punishing way, such as, **on the spine or back of head or neck**.

Rule 7-4-3: **flagrant misconduct** includes physical or no-physical acts which the referee considers serious enough to disqualify the contestant. These include striking, butting, elbowing, biting, etc.

FRAME 1: Wrestler A

drives a forcefull elbow or forearm to back of head or neck of **Wrestler B**. Stop and penalize immediately. **illegal / unnecessary roughness.**



KEYS TO WATCH:

Having arm back or high elbow **does not mean illegal**, but is an **indicator**. The official's position and judgment is important.

Frame 2-2a: Blows to the head, neck and spinal areas may cause serious injury, concussion or worse. Hard competition is expected, but intentional acts to harm/injure one's opponent is a **flagrant** act and should be penalized accordingly.

Frame 2



Frame 2a

