

Concussions and the Referee

- The NFHS continues to focus on efforts toward maintaining the highest level of wrestler safety.
- The previous rule directed referees to remove a wrestler from competition if the athlete was “unconscious or apparently unconscious”. This was perceived by many as being a medical diagnosis by the referee. This rule no longer exists.
- All coaches must be aware of the signs, symptoms, or behaviors consistent with a concussion and must remove a wrestler from any competition or practice if he or she exhibits those signs, symptoms or behaviors.
- As a review. Here are the signs and symptoms of a concussion.
 - Loss of consciousness
 - Headache
 - Dizziness
 - Confusion or balance problems
- Most concussed athletes do not lose consciousness.
- So what should the referee do if a wrestler shows signs or symptoms of a concussion?
- The sole role of the referee is to stop wrestling by calling an injury time out, and immediately beckon the coach or trainer to attend the athlete.
- The referee is not involved with the return to competition decision. No specific written authorization needs to be presented to the referee in order for a contestant to return to competition.
- If the health care professional present at the event examines the athlete and recognizes signs, symptoms or behaviors of a concussion, then they should not allow the athlete to continue competition. If they did not suffer a concussion – they may return.
- If no health care professional is present, then the coach is responsible for the examining the athlete for these signs, symptoms or behaviors. If present, then the athlete may not continue wrestling.
- If the athlete is judged by the coach to be able to continue wrestling, but upon return, the referee views that he / she needs additional attention, he will call another time out and again beckon the coach to attend the athlete.
- Remember - In Wisconsin, if medical personnel are present, they may extend the time to 5 minutes to properly diagnose head, neck, and vertebrae injuries.
- Also Remember: The official may overrule a coach, trainer, or a physician that decides to allow an athlete to continue. He may not, however, overrule a coach, trainer, or physician that decides an athlete should not continue.