



Proposal for new Freestyle Rules

Mission Statement: *How can wrestling fashion a more dynamic set-of-rules that the viewing audience understands, yet provides a level playing field for all of the participants and ensures the best prepared wrestlers prevail.*

A FILA Rules Working Group held a meeting last November 23 & 24 in Budapest to discuss rule changes for the upcoming quadrennial. The group was comprised of the 6 FILA Bureau members who were gold medalists [3 GR, 3 FS], two officials and a few statisticians/researchers. Unfortunately at the time, our group was presented with some false choices and limitations. After Interim-President Lalovic and I met with the IOC Sports Director, we had a better understanding of the IOC's position and a broader platform as to potential rule changes. But some guiding principles remain—the rules should be simpler, modern, more dynamic and easier for the spectators to understand. Greco Roman & Freestyle must be made more distinguishable and most important; the rules must ensure the best wrestlers prevail without even a hint of either duplicity or complicity.

Prior to our meeting last November, the worldwide wrestling community through the Athletes' Questionnaire was able to submit ideas and many weighed-in. The results reflected the collective view of the best wrestlers in the world. Today the worldwide wrestling community has an opportunity to expand on these suggested rule changes. Again, many of the best and most thoughtful wrestlers have made suggestions and have helped identify some shortcomings. This type of constructive criticism was welcomed and has proved helpful. Hopefully, given the expanded view, the eventual changes will better capture the collective wisdom of the worldwide wrestling community. Of course, if when these new rules are put into practice some unintended consequences arise, the rules can always be modified.

Allow me to make it clear; none of the suggestions is mine. Instead, they are the collective views of spectators, media; and most significantly, some of the best wrestlers and coaches in the world—past and present. My task was to sort through the countless recommendations and sculpture a simpler, more dynamic set-of-rules that is more modern, simpler and pleasing to the viewing audience.

Overview:

The most common views among the Freestyle wrestling community:

1. Cumulative score is preferred to best-of-three-period format. Though many agree there are merits to the best-of-three format; more prefer cumulative score. And here is why: Cumulative score incentivizes the wrestlers to score at any time and more often. The wrestlers and coaches understand that accumulated points provide a secure path to victory. Those in favor of cumulative score point out: Today if a wrestler scores, he/she has little incentive to turn his/her opponent and risk losing the period. Equally important, total score is easier for a spectator to understand. Fans, not to mention the wrestlers, find it confusing when a wrestler scores 5 takedowns in a period, yet is defeated by a wrestler who scores just 1 takedown in each of 2 periods. The spectators are even more perplexed when one of those takedowns results from a 'ball-pull' and subsequent 'clinch.' Even the most ardent proponents of the best-of-three format concede—a 1-0 period victory should not be equal with a 5-0 period victory.
2. Two 3 minute-periods with a 30 second rest between periods is the consensus time frame for a match. The common view is that a 2 minute-period is insufficient time for the best prepared



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3. to execute the requisite tactics and strategies for an exciting match. What's more, it deprives the spectators of witnessing the will of the wrestlers.
4. Almost everyone agrees that too often wrestlers game the rules by continuously interlocking fingers [both standing and par terre] and burying-their-heads. This does not mean, however, it's widely agreed that officials should be granted the authority of anointing passivity or caution points. Rather, the consensus is to restore the authority of the officials to incent a wrestler to take action or suffer the consequences in a more constructive manner. Think require inactive wrestlers to take risk! The onus must be placed on the wrestlers to determine who the best is, not the officials.
5. A predominant number of wrestlers, coaches and fans feel a takedown should be equal to a turn and both a takedown and turn should be worth more than a push-out or penalty point.
6. Technical superiority should be rewarded somewhere between an 8 to 10 points difference in any match.
7. It's generally agreed the audience would be engaged more if the top 2 or even all 4 place finishers from the previous year's World Championships were separated into different brackets. The anticipation of the spectators to witness a rematch of the best in the world would create excitement, as the tournament progressed. Though it should be noted, the diverse number of countries earning medals was a positive for wrestling when compared against the other Olympic sports. Hence a reason to separate only the top 2, instead of all of the place finishers.
8. Most are proponents of a two day format. The predominant thought: A two-day format would result in more dynamic wrestling as the competitors would have sufficient time to recuperate and plan tactics and strategies. In addition, it would provide the organizers a day to market the wrestlers who will compete for the coveted medals.

Freestyle Rules

1. Out-of-bounds:

a. The 1st time a wrestler pushes his/her opponent out-of-bounds without attempting a maneuver or if a wrestler inadvertently steps out-of-bounds; he/she is warned. Subsequent offenses result in a penalty point for fleeing-the hold. If in the legitimate attempt of a takedown, a wrestler steps out-of-bounds, a penalty point is assessed without a warning. If a wrestler finishes a takedown out-of-bounds, it should be scored as completed, i.e.; 1 pt, 2 pts, 3 pts, 5 pts and/or a caution.

2. Scoring:

- a. 1 point: push-out, caution, penalty or reversal [including reversals promotes more risk-taking on top in par terre].
- b. 2 points: par terre turn [regardless of hand-to-hand, elbow, shoulder or head], takedown or standing defensive tilt or exposure. This rewards takedowns and turns more than push-outs and penalty points, which encourages more risk-taking.
- c. 3 points: putting opponent into a danger position while completing a conventional takedown [promotes more dynamic techniques].
- d. 5 points: classic throws which takes one's opponent directly to his/her back. If agreed by the officials to be "Grand Amplitude", such moves end the match if the executing wrestler also has the highest total score. This should promote spectacular wrestling.



3. Technical Superiority:

Any wrestler who gains a 10 point differential over his/her opponent is awarded the victory by technical superiority. [10 points because a takedown is increased from 1 to 2 points].

4. Procedure for enforcement of Penalties for Inactivity:

- a. The role of the referees, among other vital duties, should be to evaluate and distinguish what is real action versus a feigned attempt to waste time. Anytime a majority among the 3 mat officials agrees a wrestler is blocking, interlocking fingers, thwarting his opponent and/or generally being inactive; the mat referee signals to the wrestler, "Caution blue or red." First offense is a verbal warning: "Attention." Second offense; the action is stopped briefly to designate the guilty wrestler and a 30-second penalty-period begins. A light corresponding to the wrestler at fault is lighted. This notifies the wrestlers, coaches and spectators a penalty session has begun. Think ice-hockey penalty!
Should either wrestler score in the 30 seconds penalty session, no penalty point is awarded, just the corresponding technical point or points. If neither wrestler scores, the opponent of the designated passive-wrestler is awarded a caution point.
- b. If after 2:00 minutes into the 1st period there is no score, the referees must mandatorily designate one of the wrestlers as passive (the same procedure described above is administered). This assures both wrestlers will continue to wrestle, yet still give the trailing wrestler sufficient time to recover.
- c. If this penalty system is accompanied with the current tie-breaker criteria [including last-to-score or first-to-score as some have suggested]; all overtimes, flips-of-the-coin, 'ball-pulls', or 'clinches' are eliminated. This simplifies the rules and enhances the experience for the viewing audience. In addition, the time saved from the 'ball-pull' and attendant jockeying in procuring the 'clinch' should off-set the increase from 2 to 3 minute periods.

5. Competition format:

The consensus view is that a 2 day format is needed. Yet there is less agreement as to competition structure.

1. Some feel: On day 1, wrestle up to the finals and repechage to the two third-place matches using the current system. Then, the 2nd day evening session, wrestle the finals and 3rd place matches from the previous day's weight categories.
2. Some in the media suggest that there would be more drama if a round-robin system was deployed to establish the round-of-sixteen or eight depending on the number of entries. Following the round-robin, wrestle a bracket up to the semi-finals. Then during the 2nd day evening session; the semi-finals, finals and the two 3rd-place matches would be wrestled.
3. In either structure, it's agreed that starting the first session in the morning is best. This allows the host to market 2 sessions each day, and provides vital recuperation time needed by the participants. This should improve the wrestlers' performance and reduce injuries.

6. Separating the Best Wrestler:

- a. Though many argue the merits of ranking the top 4 wrestlers, most acknowledge it would be difficult to administer and concede the value of a random draw to wrestling's



development. As a compromise, separating the Gold and Silver medal winners from the previous year's championship into opposite brackets would add an element of anticipation for the spectators. For example, in a 32-person bracket, last year's champion would be placed in the # 1 position and last year's silver medalist would be in the # 17 slot. Then, the remaining field would be drawn randomly. This would avert having the best 2 wrestlers meet in the early rounds which deprives the viewing audience of a true final.

7. Objective ranking of officials:

- a. The Jury-of-Appeal shall assign the officiating team—mat chairman, judge and referee—as close as possible to the actual start of the match.
- b. If a Jury-of-Appeal overturns any referee's decision 3 times during a Continental or World Championship, he or she is downgraded. It is imperative for the sport of wrestling that we ensure the veracity of the outcomes of all matches.

9. The Challenge:

- a. With a few minor adjustments, the basic tenants of the challenge remain: ***Provide the wrestler redress in the event he or she either questions the veracity or the accuracy of a call.*** The balance between the coaches/wrestlers and the referees must be retained. An objective thermometer is the challenge. No other relative sport affords its athletes such transparent redress at the decision point on the field of play. This may include points awarded or neglected to be awarded in a contested situation.
- b. Via a challenge, the wrestler is allowed to stop the action and request the refereeing body, in full view of the entire audience, to re-score a particular scoring sequence.
- c. The coach requests a challenge by throwing a soft-cube onto the mat. He/she must do so within 5 seconds after the questioned score is posted on the official scoreboard. The referee then must present the cube to the athlete for his approval. Once the wrestler approves a challenge, the decision is final. If the wrestler disagrees with the coach's decision to challenge, then the cube is returned and the match continues. The wrestler can only override his or her coach 1 time per match; otherwise, some may misuse this privilege as a stalling tactic.
- d. After reviewing the contested action, even if the referee, judge and mat chairman all agree, the decision of the Jury-of-Appeal must be rendered. This represents a subtle but substantive change. Many feel it is difficult for an official to admit his/her mistake. Hence the process of seeking a disinterested 3rd-party's judgment—one with a different vantage point—in all challenges enhances the veracity of the challenge process.
- e. A unanimous decision made by the Jury-of-Appeal is final and cannot be challenged. If there is disagreement among the Jury-of-Appeal, there may be one final review. A majority among the Jury-of-Appeal then determines the outcome. It is not possible to request a "counter challenge" once a final decision has been made by the Jury-of-Appeal.
- f. Under no circumstance should anyone—including FILA Bureau members, FILA delegates, coaches, wrestlers or team leaders—attempt to interfere or influence the Jury-of-Appeal. Any persons violating this rule shall be expelled from the field of play for the duration of the tournament. It is universally agreed, regardless of intent, the appearance of influence is simply intolerable and stains our sport.



Specific points

1. Each wrestler is entitled to one (1) challenge per match. If after reviewing the challenge the refereeing body, including the Jury-of-Appeal, modifies its decision, then the cube is returned to the coach and a challenge can be made again during the match.
2. The mat chairman will demand to stop the match to review the challenge as soon as the action on the mat stops
3. If the refereeing body, including the Jury-of-Appeal, confirms the decision, the wrestler loses the challenge and his opponent receives one (1) penalty point.
4. In the event of a fall confirmed by the mat chairman, no challenge is accepted.
5. A challenge cannot be requested after the end of the regular time of a period, except if the points have not been correctly posted to the scoreboard at the time the match ends.
6. The coach requesting the challenge must do so from his seat—without stepping on the mat or approaching the judge's or the mat chairman's table.
7. During the review of the challenge, no consultation among the refereeing body is permitted.

In conclusion, most of the suggestions from the wrestling community were thoughtful and constructive. The range of suggestions include modest as well as a few substantive changes. Supporting statistics were woven into most arguments and considered in the deliberations.

While the final suggestions represent no single-person's set of ideas or unanimity, the changes provide a comprehensive set of modifications that should modernize our sport. Of course, there are those who will never support rule changes, even if we address every one of their concerns. They have no shortage of complaints, yet generally offer no solutions of their own. In sum, as with any deliberations, no one feels completely satisfied with the outcome, yet I hope most agree the results are productive and meet the objectives.

As with any rule change, much of the success depends on the final interpretation of the refereeing body and its implementation.

World Championship Tournament Scoring:

In order to create more drama for the spectators, some have suggested modifying the team scoring system. The intent: Engage the fans and reward the team if one of its wrestlers wins by technical superiority or by fall.

Advancement points

During the World Championship, if a wrestler wins by fall his team receives 2 pts., 1.5 pts if by technical superiority and 1 pt. for a simple victory.



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Team Placement points

- 1st place: 15 points
- 2nd place: 12 points
- 3rd place: 10 points
- 3rd place: 10 points
- 5th place: 8 points
- 5th place: 8 points
- 7th place: 5 points
- 8th place: 4 points
- 9th place: 3 points
- 10th place: 2 points

10th May 2013



Proposal for New GR Wrestling rules

1. **Weigh-ins:** At the weigh-ins the drawing of lots should be manual and fully transparent. Each wrestler himself draws a lot.
2. **Pairings:** Separate the gold, silver and bronze medal winners of the preceding year into different groups.
3. **Match format :** two by three minute periods with a 30 second break between each period.
4. **Process for enforcing passivity:**
 - 1st violation: warn the athlete and notify the mat chairman;
 - 2nd passivity violation results in a caution. The opponent of the cautioned wrestler chooses between either "Parterre" or "Standing" position.
 - 3rd violation results in a technical point for the opponent of the guilty wrestler. In addition, he has the choice of either "Parterre" or "Standing" position;
 - 4th passivity violation; the bout is terminated. The active wrestler is rewarded a victory by fall.
 - A bout ending 0-0: The victory is awarded to the wrestler who was the last to be judged most active. If neither wrestler has been warned--which should be unlikely--for passivity, the "Jury of Appeal" must choose the winner.
 - The 1st unintentional step out-of-bounds is scored with a warning instead of 1 point;
 - The second out-of-bounds violation is scored with 1 point, caution and the choice for the active wrestle between either "Parterre" or "Standing" position.
5. All technical actions completed out-of-bounds are scored as completed: 1, 2, 3 or 5 points.
6. It is recommended that the officials define one of wrestlers optimally in a short period of time, perhaps within 30 to 45 seconds from the start of the match.
7. The bout winner is defined with the highest total cumulative score for the two periods.
8. A victory by fall is awarded to any wrestler who holds his opponent's shoulders to the mat or has gained a total scoring difference of 7 points.
9. Start the competition at 11:00. This additional time will give the participants in finals more of a rest, which will improve the quality of wrestling.



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10. The use of both a bottle of water and damp towels during the match in the mat corner is permitted.

11. A wrestler, whose both shoulders touch the mat while executing an offensive turn in "parterre" is awarded only 1 technical point. The wrestler who successfully executes a turn in a "wrestling bridge," not touching the mat with his shoulders, scores 2 points.

12. Return to conventional "Parterre" position:

- The bottom parterre wrestler's position: The wrestler sits down with his buttocks on the calves of his legs; hands roughly 20 centimeters not less from his knees.
- The top parterre wrestler's position: The wrestler has one knee touching the mat; his hands are placed on the shoulders of the bottom wrestler