

Don't Blame the Ref

By Ben Askren

The sport of wrestling is a *"one on one"* sport and most people involved take pride in that aspect. However, to me, it seems many only keep it *"one on one"* when it seems convenient for them to do so. What am I talking about? Blaming the referee!

How often do you hear *"I got screwed by the referee?"* Last week I heard the phrase from an 8 year old member of the club I help out with. It made me sick. Well I am here to tell you, by blaming the referee you are taking the easy way out and degrading the sport.

I say this for a number of reasons. First, most refs are good natured and do their job to the best of their ability. They don't get paid a lot and more often than not, they ref as a service to the sport of wrestling. Which brings me to my next point; why are fans so out-of-control in regard to referees? Refs are trying to do a good job. The next time there is a questionable call, be quiet and listen to those around you. Most likely you will be thinking *"Wow. These people are crazy"* or *"Man, these people sound stupid."* Well, guess what, you sound the exact same way. Next time, as a fan, you feel the need to scream an obscenity at the top of your lungs, DON'T! It really isn't necessary and isn't fair to the referees. How would you like it if someone came to your job and screamed obscenities at you and told you, you sucked? There is a wrestling referee shortage in America, and it is the fans fault. Give refs a break, and use your energy to support your wrestler instead.

As a wrestler, the reason to not to blame the referee is simple. It is your fault you lost, not the refs. So often, it is sickening to see wrestlers waiting for overtime or double OT and the flip. That concept is foreign to me. I figure if you wait that long you deserve to lose the match. I have a simple philosophy that prevents me from blaming the referee. If my match is close enough where the ref can make a difference then it is my fault I put him in the equation. I strongly believe all wrestlers should think this way. If you have a problem beating people by a lot, the answer is simple: Work Harder. I have never seen Cael Sanderson or Alexander Karelin whine about the call of a ref. Did you? Wrestlers, do your jobs! Take responsibility for what you do and don't blame someone else.

Next time you are at a wrestling meet, relax, cheer for the wrestlers and don't heckle the referee. Rather applaud (not literally) his effort.

Wrestlers, next time the ref makes a questionable call, think of where you could have worked harder and be mad at yourself instead.

Good job refs! Have fun everyone.

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Olympic Team Hopeful

2 X NCAA D-I Champion

2 X NCAA D-I Runner-up

2007 ESPY Nominee for Best Male Athlete

2 X Dan Hodge Trophy Winner

3rd on NCAA Pin list with 91 falls

2 X Wisconsin High School State Champion