

## How to Understand Stalling – It's Simple!

Stalling...the most interesting call in wrestling. I will tell you that unless you have a thorough knowledge of what stalling really is and how to recognize it, and until you are on that mat, in a situation where someone is stalling, or might be stalling, in a big match, you have no idea what the referee is thinking.

I truly believe calling stalling in a college match or a high level high school match is an art form. Most fans don't have a true grasp of the intricacies of the college or high school stall call and what all goes into it.

It's all about getting it right...every time, every match. Each side is yelling, the fans are yelling, this is happening, that is occurring...a thousand things at one time. I am going to try and explain stalling and how to get the call you need or want. It's simple.

Stalling calls, be it a high level high school or a college match, are very unique situations. The score does matter, who has shot and who hasn't matters...who is pushing..who is shoving...who is working the edge..who is circling back in...who is defending a lead..who is blocking off...who is tying up..who is riding...who is content with the score...my goodness...there is a lot to consider. In every match, depending on which corner you are in, or what side of the gym you are sitting, you will see different things and want different things based on what you know...or don't know.

Do you know how to force a call? I don't mean screaming from the chair or stands "what's the bottom guy doing...or get him off the hips...or he's backing either. It's very simple.

Want a stall call? Shoot..move forward..work harder than the other kid...make it so apparent that the other kid is stalling that it becomes an easy call to make because it stands out. The formula is simple: **Create Action**. I don't mean circling, that isn't a move, Or pushing someone out of bounds. Or burying your head and blocking off. Or sitting on the hips with both legs in an "working" a half. The opposite of Creating Action is... NO ACTION. Better known as...stalling. It really is a simple formula.

Force me NOT to make the call versus not doing anything and making it easy for me to make the call.

Let's look at several common situations where stalling takes place.

### First period – First minute

99.99% of the time you will not see a stall call in the first minute in the neutral position because the wrestlers are setting things up. One kid may be a lot more aggressive than the other and if he shoots and reshoots and reshoots, there will either be a lot of TD's or

counter wrestling, and counter wrestling is not stalling, unless that wrestler is content to be defensive and not offensive.

### **First period – Second minute (1:30 in college)**

Now is when a referee is really starting to look at who is taking all shots or creating the action. Is the one that is getting shot on backing up? Blocking off? Using the edge as protection? If neither is shooting, or creating action, the referee will usually pick one at 1:15-1:30. Timing is crucial. No other action, he will hit the other at 1:45 or so. Each has a warning. Period ends.

### **First period with a TD**

A TD is what we want. A TD should lead to working towards a fall. A TD most times indicates one is more aggressive than the other. There is an old adage.....The most aggressor kid should win. Doesn't always happen but generally it is true. Another old adage...did the right kid win? What's that mean? It means did the kid that took the chances, who was the aggressor, and who worked harder should win the match. How that plays into stalling? It's simple.

Green shot and got a TD. In college, he gets 1 point if he has 1 minute more riding time than his opponent at the end of the match. So, I will usually let him get his 1 min, as long as he isn't just not moving at all. Give me something and you will get your minute in. Then, you will usually see me hit a stalemate. Which is me saying..."ok...you have your minute...now work towards the fall." He gets...some "credit" for that TD. When fans or coaches start yelling about what the top guy is doing...well..he is riding the kid he just took down!

In high school, there is no riding time, so with that taken into consideration; the top kid has to work a move that will lead to attempting to turn for NF or a fall. Attempt is the key word. The top kid doesn't have to turn if he can't, but he must attempt. How do you attempt? Get off the hips! Create angles! Create angles is the key...I do not know of any way the top kid can turn a kid without creating an angle. It's really simple.

### **Second period**

Top man must work towards a fall, bottom man must work for an escape or reversal. Simple.

What are we looking for? Top man must work for a fall by getting off the hips and attempting to turn. Easier said than done at times of course. As I am referring, I am asking myself constantly, who is working hard? Who is working harder than the other? Is the top man working to turn or happy to ride? Bottom man head on the mat?

Question...is there a move, other than a Granby maybe that requires the head to be on the mat? Don't think so. When I hear coaches tell their kid..."you have to move", or "build a base", or best one is "you can't just lay there". These are the same things I want to say!!! On the other hand, I am always shocked when I do hit that same kid, whether or not the coach has been verbal, when the coach wants to argue why I hit his kid. Look at what he is doing....is that what you teach? Is that how he will win this match?

### **Third Period**

Depending on the type of match, stalling may never be a factor. With no score in the 1<sup>st</sup> period, and a quick escape and no more score in the 2<sup>nd</sup>...you will probably have a escape and possible OT match.

With no stalling calls prior...how's it happen in the 3<sup>rd</sup>? Another old adage..."if you don't call stalling in the first two periods. Don't call it in the third." I don't agree with that. With riding time, the top guy will want to pad and protect...can't do that. In high school, the top kid will not want the bottom kid to escape this tying the match..imagine that! Penalties are really about stopping cheating. By hanging on and not wrestling, the top guy is "cheating" and that's why we have to call stalling. Imagine this...that any wrestler could apply a bear hug and simply hold on tight for two minutes and win...is that fair? Of course not...that is what stalling is however...a form of bear hugging, but not just quite as obvious. It's simple.

### **Defending a lead**

Red has 5, green 4. With a minute to go, and one warning, I will be looking strong at Red and seeing if he is blocking, pushing, riding, circling, or anything else to attempt to defend his lead and win the match. I guarantee that I will never let a kid win a match by defending his lead and not working to score. I will recognize the stall technique and tie the match up to take it to OT.

### **Tied Match**

I have been referring matches for almost 20 years. I will be the first to admit that in my early years, I called stalling a lot more strictly with NO consideration of the score or time left in the match. That cost some kids wins, and championships. For that, I am sorry. That doesn't mean at all that if a kid is stalling with 10 secs to go that I wont or shouldn't make that touch stall call. I have and will. If you are backing out, fleeing and just flat out stop wrestling...you will lose. Also..when that kids mom yells, "Hey ref...my kid is stalling! That doesn't happen too often however.

### **Overtime**

In the 1<sup>st</sup> 1 minute overtime....you need to score a TD to win. Simple. If one already has a stall call, he has to be alert to another. I guarantee the other coaches will know it and will say "He has a stall call..push him"

To get a stall call in OT, it must be OBVIOUS, or better put...it is such a simple call when it occurs..because it is so OBVIOUS. Depending on the time, you get a 1 point led with less than 30 left...you really have to be running backwards or fleeing to get that second call. If you haven't been warned yet....you might get that warning call...but rarely...would there be a second in less than 30 sec.

### **Other OT Periods**

Be it high school or college, the first call will always be a stalemate. That's the rule. If the same kid does the same thing again, tie up to the ankle, hanging on to a leg, deep waist and ankle etc...depending on the time, you are subject to a stall call to lose. I will tell you that time is a factor when spacing out calls.

### **The First Warning Call**

Imagine this, your kid is winning 11-3. Third period, 1:30 left. The referee hits your kid who is on top. You say, "How is that even possible?" Easy...it's only a warning! More political than anything else to be honest.

It's not in the rule book...but the aggressor should win the match. Doesn't always happen..because of sloppy throws etc, but overall...the kid that truly is the aggressor should win the match. If a kid is winning by 5-6-7 points, he truly has been the aggressor....can he still be hit with a warning if he slows down...might....but I doubt it goes any further than that.

### **How To Get a Stall Call – Simplified**

Neutral – Move forward, shoot, work towards the middle, shoot again and again. Make the referee see that only your kid is working. Make it easy for the referee to make the call. Give him a reason to make the call. I have had kids lose a match because they were down a point and the other kid had a warning, but the kid losing did NOTHING to force the call. Force the referee not by screaming for a call, but by coaching your kid to be more aggressive...it will pay dividends.

### **Top**

Your kid is on top....he is down by one or two and needs a turn. The bottom kid never ever has to give up position, but he must open up and work to get out. The problem for the bottom kid is by working to get out, he might get turned....simple uh? Bottom guy can't lock up. Can't bury his head, and ball up. So force the referee to make the call

by getting off the hips, show the referee that even with no pressure, the bottom is doing nothing. Simple!

The other thing is if you can't turn them..kick them and work for the stall call by being more aggressive and forcing the call as I speak to above. Simple

## **Bottom**

Your kid needs to get out. Top kid is hanging on for dear life to win by one. How do you get this call? Work! Work harder than the top kid to show that he isn't countering your kids move but rather just hanging on.

Ever really tried to get out with a kid on top of you with legs in cranking on your shoulder? It is tough and I understand that. Biggest indication that a stall call is coming is when the bottom man has his head down and clamps up.

Make it so apparent, that even a blind referee can see it. Simple

## **Keys to Getting the Stall Call**

- 1.Be more aggressive than the other kid
- 2.Stay in bounds
- 3.Work towards the middle
- 4.Create Angles

## **Things You May Not Know**

- Circling is not a move
- A knee tap is not a shot
- Going from the middle of the mat backwards to the edge is not "setting up a move"
- This is not Greco – Head down, butt out is blocking
- A collar tie is not a shot or is it "working"
- Double legs in and stretching is not turning
- Head on the mat is ...sleeping

Each wrestler has the responsibility to make an honest effort to make sure that action is maintained throughout the entire match by wrestling aggressively, whether in the neutral, offensive, or defensive position. Each wrestler must continually try and improve their position.

Stalling, in its purest sense, is an extremely easy call...depending on where you are seated. On the other hand, it exists in the minds and eyes of a certain segment of

onlookers while it perplexes others watching the same match. How can that be? Multiple factors distinguish between actions used to initiate wrestling versus action used to avoid wrestling. The capability and capacity to distinguish those elements that lead to stalling comes with time and experience.

I love officiating. I love the intensity. Until you do it, you will never know the exhilaration of what it is like calling a NCAA D1 match or a high level high school match. When I walk onto a mat, I know there aren't very many that can do what I am about to do, at the level I do it. Everyone makes mistakes....I strive with every atom in my body not to make even one in any given match.

D1 college wrestlers down to 7th grade middle school wrestlers work their butts off to step onto that mat and compete. I and every other referee owes them the highest level of expertise we can muster..to be in the proper position at all times, know the rules, know the criteria, and practice perfect mechanics. Coaches work just as hard to get their kids ready to step onto that mat. They expect perfection. It truly is...that simple.

**"Perfection consists not in doing extraordinary things, but in doing ordinary things extraordinarily well."**



**About the author, Frederick Feeney:** Fred, a long time Ohio wrestling official, is a certified OHSAA instructor and is a member of the Central Ohio Wrestling Officials Association, the Collegiate Wrestling Officials Association and the National Wrestling Officials Association. Fred has been named the "Official of the Year" multiple times in both CDWCA and the CWOA. Fred is also is a moderator on a popular national wrestling discussion forum. Fred's in-depth experience encompasses both scholastic and collegiate levels, having culminated with numerous assignments at the OHSAA State Tournament, the NWCA National Duals, the NCWA National Finals, and both the NCAA Division II and III National finals. Fred and his wife reside in Dublin, Ohio.