

Wrestling Cheering
KNOW THE RULES
By Sandi Hoffman

At the August coaches' conference, a series of round table discussions were held giving coaches an opportunity to raise questions or discuss a variety of topics. At the "rules table" it was interesting that in each of the four sessions, the same questions arose regarding wrestling cheerleaders and where they can be in relation to the mat.

On page 65 of the NFHS Spirit Rules Book under placement of squads 4-a-1 says: "At a wrestling match, they must be ten feet from the edge of the wrestling mat unless the facility does not permit." This rule was implemented for safety reasons. If a cheerleader is sitting or standing right at the edge of a mat the possibility of injury clearly exists if a wrestler's momentum carries him off the mat. Obviously, there may be times when the ten feet rule isn't feasible because of the limitations presented by the facility and/or number of mats in use. In those cases, the coach must use her/his best judgment to reduce the risk of injury to the cheerleaders. It is possible that at some large meets or in small gyms the cheerleaders may only be able to cheer from the stands.

On a related note, last winter I received numerous phone calls from coaches who were frustrated with wrestling cheerleaders from visiting schools who seemed to ignore the rule on jewelry. The rule is straightforward—NO jewelry is to be worn by any cheerleaders with the exception of religious or medical medals! (2-2-2, page 14 in the Spirit Rules Book) It is up to us, the coaches, to enforce these rules for everyone!

Good luck to all of you in the upcoming winter sports season! If you have any questions or concerns about rules, please e-mail me at bs4467@iw.net