



Rule 5.3 Unnecessary Roughness

Hands to the Face

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Rule 5.3 on unnecessary roughness is in place to protect wrestlers from injury. While the unnecessary roughness rule has nearly 100 words, the first two sentences are all we really need to understand the intent of the rule.

Rule 5.3...“Unnecessary roughness involves physical acts that occur during a match. It includes any act that exceeds normal aggressiveness...”

What follows these two sentences in Rule 5.3 are examples of possible unnecessary roughness situations. Certainly, these examples do not encompass the entirety of actions considered illegal by the rules book but it is an attempt from the current and previous rules committees to emphasize certain actions. Today I will focus on the passage in Rule 5.3 that pertains to the hands to the face violation.

*Rule 5.3 “...forceful slap to the head or face, **gouging or poking the eyes**, a forceful application of a crossface, a forceful trip, or a forearm or elbow used in a punishing way, such as on the spine or the back of the head or neck...”*

The use of examples in a rules book can be a slippery slope since it often provides the impression that the exact example described in the rules book is required in order for a violation to occur. The purpose of including gouging or poking the eyes as unnecessary roughness is because of the severity of the consequence for the wrestler who receives the finger, thumb, palm or any part of their opponents hand into their eye.

In previous articles, we have discussed the fact that illegal holds are illegal upon application because the rules committee does not ever want to see them executed. As an example, the hold in Figure 1 is illegal because applying this hold can severely damage the wrestler’s knee. It is not acceptable to say this hold is legal if the wrestler is not injured and illegal if the wrestler is injured or, legal if it is attempted but not successful but illegal if attempted and is successful.



Figure 1

The rules book does not currently list hands to the face as an illegal hold but all unnecessary roughness penalties are as serious as any illegal hold violation. Since most wrestlers never intend to gouge or poke their opponents eyes and also considering that even an inadvertent finger to the eye can cause serious damage, hands to the face is considered unnecessary roughness upon application. Placing hands to a wrestlers face at any level of force is exceeding normal aggressiveness and a violation of Rule 5.3. If an injury results because of this illegal action, the wrestler is provided recovery time as indicated by Rule 6.3.5

Figure 2 demonstrates clearly a violation of rule 5.3 regarding unnecessary roughness and hands to the face.



Figure 2

In figure 3 you see the wrestler's fingers are on top of the head but the base of the wrestler's palm is posted in the area around the wrestlers eyes. This is also an

unnecessary roughness violation since any part of the fingers, thumb, palm or base of the palm coming into contact in the area of the eyes, nose or mouth is an unnecessary roughness violation.



Figure 3

The official Case Book interpretation for hands to the face is located in section A.R. 5-44

In figure 4 you will see a hold being executed that is not considered unnecessary roughness because no part of the wrestler's palm, the base of the palm, fingers or thumb is anywhere near the wrestlers eyes nose or mouth. Additionally, wrestlers that utilize collar tie-ups, where they initiate the tie up from the outside towards the opponent's neck do not need to fear an unnecessary roughness violation as long as they do not use excessive force to execute the technique.



Figure 4



Finally, I would like to provide a few answers to possible questions regarding this rule interpretation that may come up as the season progresses.

Question: Is a hand to the face violation video reviewable?

SRE Answer: Yes it is.

Question: Is it a violation to use the palm of your hand on the area around the other wrestler's ear?

SRE Answer: a hand that comes from the outside and taps on the opponents ear guard is not a hand to the face.

Question: What happens if a wrestler puts a hand in their opponents face and the opponent injured because of this action and cannot continue?

SRE Answer: The wrestler who placed the hand to the face is disqualified and the offended wrestling wins the match.

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