

Deaths prompt NCAA to change rules

The NCAA announced new restrictions on how wrestlers lose weight

By Christopher Clark
The Associated Press

OVERLAND PARK, Kan. — The NCAA, jarred by the recent deaths of three wrestlers trying to make their weight classes, announced rule changes Tuesday that put new restrictions on the ways wrestlers shed pounds to make weight.

Among the changes, effective immediately:

— Wrestlers may not use saunas for water loss, and rubber suits and diuretics cannot be used for any reason. NCAA rules already bar laxatives, fluid restriction, self-induced vomiting, hot rooms, hot boxes and steam rooms for dehydration. The NCAA defined a hot room as a room with a temperature above 79 degrees.

— For the rest of this season only, a seven-pound weight allowance has been added to all weight classes, which already have a one-pound allowance.

For example, for the 118-pound class, wrestlers may weigh as much as 126 pounds. But as of Feb. 1, when the one-pound allowance ends, seven

pounds will be added to each weight class, making 125 pounds the upper limit of the 118-pound class. The rule is effective only for the rest of this season and is expected to be reviewed when NCAA rules officials meet in April.

Wrestlers may compete only in weight classes in which they competed on or before Jan. 7 of this season.

— All weigh-ins will be held no more than two hours before a match, cutting down the time athletes have to lose weight.

"With less recovery time after weigh-in, a person who is using his head knows if he has to cut too much weight, he's not going to perform on the mat," said Marty Benson, playing rules liaison to the NCAA Wrestling Rules Committee.

Dan Gable, who took this year off as coach at Iowa after leading the Hawkeyes to 15 national titles in 21 years as coach, said the changes were overdue, but praised them anyway.

"It's been a long month trying to get some of these changes," said Gable. "I didn't realize how much protocol you had to go through to get what we thought were emergency

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changes. It's better late than never. It will help the individual and the sport."

The deaths alarmed coaches and prompted calls for the NCAA to review its rules.

The most recent victim was 21-year-old Jeff Reese of the University of Michigan. He died in December of kidney failure and a heart malfunction while wearing a rubber suit and riding a stationary bike to lose weight.

Eighteen days earlier, University of Wisconsin-La Crosse wrestler Joseph LaRosa, 22, also was wearing a rubber suit and riding an exercise bike when he died trying to shed four pounds.

On Nov. 9, 19-year-old Billy Saylor at North Carolina's Campbell University died trying to drop six pounds for a match.

CBS gets back into the NFL following a four-year hiatus

After CBS lost the NFC to Fox in 1993, the network fell to No. 3

The Associated Press

NEW YORK — While employees reported a tense and gloomy mood at NBC and ABC as they awaited their fate, there was nothing but good news at "Black Rock," CBS' headquarters. Even the guards wore hats bearing the slogan "NFL on CBS."

"To know that we're back in the NFL is a real relief," said CBS Sports President Sean McManus, whose network fell to No. 3 after losing the NFL to Fox four years ago.

This is the second big blow this month to NBC, which is losing "Seinfeld" at the end of the season and could lose "ER."

But NBC should not experience the disastrous freefall that CBS experienced after losing the NFL in 1993. NBC still has a strong sports lineup, including the NBA, the Olympics, baseball, golf and tennis.

"NBC is probably the strongest network and could probably survive the loss of the NFL better than any of its competitors," said Neal Pilson, the former president of CBS Sports who runs a consulting firm.

Since losing the NFC to Fox in 1993, CBS has been plotting its re-

turn to the NFL. And it accomplished it in stunning fashion Monday. The final plans began to be put into place in December 1996, shortly after McManus became president of CBS Sports.

While CBS was interested in all three packages, the AFC was the most appealing, because it was undervalued in the last deal. More importantly, CBS owns seven stations in AFC markets, compared with three for NBC.

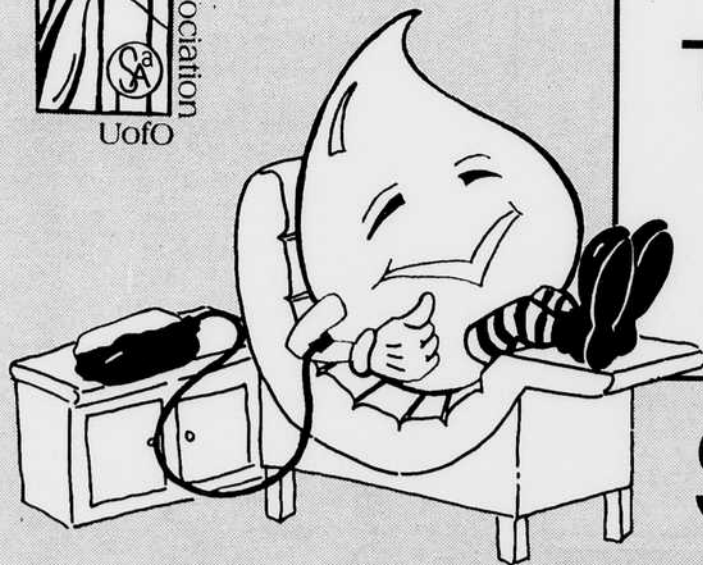
"We know better than anyone what it is like to have the NFL and what it is like not to have the NFL and it is a whole lot better to have it," said Mel Karmazin, chief executive officer of the CBS Station Group. "We had a tremendous advantage over NBC because of the owned and operated stations."

CBS also was helped by the timing of the negotiations. The AFC package was the first to be negotiated, leaving NBC with an out if it lost.

"The structure was an advantage for us," McManus said. "We heard that NBC had an interest in 'Monday Night Football.' We knew once the AFC was going first, that NBC would either have to pass on our bid or pass on Monday night."

CBS made its bid to the NFL for the AFC late last week, McManus said. Late Monday afternoon, NBC passed and CBS jumped at the opportunity.

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