

## **“MOVING WITH A PURPOSE”**

by

Tim Pierson

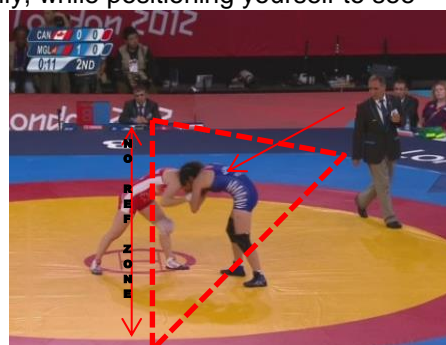
16 Mar 2017

As referees, we spend a lot of time discussing proper mechanics of this or that; when to make this call or that call. We all strive to be technically proficient and have fundamentally sound mechanics, but have you ever stopped long enough to ask yourself why? Why are you, moving from point-A to point-B (moving laterally); lowering your level (moving vertically); speaking (moving your words) and gesturing (moving your hands/arms)? Everyone moves around the mat when they referee, but are you moving with a purpose? You should never move purely for movement's sake. When you referee a bout, there should be a purpose for everything you do on the mat. If there isn't, you shouldn't be doing it. Think about that for moment and let it soak in.

Moving with a purpose is a fundamentally simple concept, but like so many things in refereeing, it requires thought and logic to be effective. Moving with a purpose is not walking around the mat, watching the wrestlers, holding up points, and giving an occasional command. That's just moving. Your movements on the mat should flow with the conduct of the bout. You should move with the wrestlers and engage them as if it were a choreographed dance. Your ability to maintain proper position while synchronizing your movements with the wrestler is critical to making a well-timed call without disrupting the flow of the bout. An essential part of moving with a purpose is anticipation. Anticipation is recognizing what is occurring on the mat and moving into the right position at the right time to make the right call. There are three elements of moving with a purpose; lateral, vertical, verbal and visual.

Let's analyze our first element of moving with a purpose; Lateral Movement. As the wrestlers move about the mat, so should you. You must constantly “feel” and “analyze” what the wrestlers are doing/setting-up. Too many times, referees fail to anticipate, stand flat-footed in one spot or in the center of the mat (inside-looking-out) and attempt to referee the bout. No movement or thought process; basically a traffic cop standing on the mat directing traffic. This does not work and you'll end up chasing the action the entire bout. (An editorial opinion, you should never run while refereeing.) If you need to run, then it's safe to say you're out of position. Now I will be the first to admit there will be times when the wrestlers do something completely out of character. In other words, they give all the indicators a throw is going to go to the left, you anticipate, and begin moving to get into proper position. Then they attack in a completely different direction. Little kids are the toughest to anticipate. Half of the time they don't know what they're doing which makes it brutal to anticipate their actions. If this happens, reposition yourself in the most expeditious manner possible, but do not run.

While you are on the mat, you should always be aware of your position in relation to the clock, wrestlers, judge, and chairman. When the wrestlers are on their feet, strive to position yourself so you can see the head butt, hands in the face, or hard shots to the head. Additionally, while positioning yourself to see between the two wrestlers, you should form a triangle with the judge and chairman, keeping the wrestlers in the middle of the triangle. This position will allow all three members of the referee crew to see the action. When you need to look at the clock, maintain the triangle and move to a position where you can look through the wrestlers at the clock. Never turn away from the wrestlers to look at the clock. As I mentioned previously, do not stand in the middle of the mat (No Ref Zone) and watch the action move away from you (inside-looking out). When you stand in the “No Ref Zone” you'll be blocking the view of the chairman and judge. Even if you aren't specifically blocking the action, you may be blocking their non-verbal communication as they won't be able to see each other. With that said, if the action dictates entering the “No Ref Zone” then by all means do it; just don't loiter in that area. When observing the action, you should always move to a position outside and pull the action towards you (outside-looking in). You need to maintain a position so you can see the entire action sequence. But not so far outside you can't see what's occurring with the



inside fight. Your position should be close enough so the wrestlers feel your presence but not so close you get kicked or hit by them. As you can see this is not a science; it's an art to get yourself into the right position or "sweet-spot." Every situation will have its own "sweet-spot" during the bout. You must constantly analyze the action and "think", are you in the best position to score the action or observe what is occurring between the wrestlers? If your answer is no, then you should logically move with a purpose to attain a better position.

When the wrestlers are in parterre, your position will be dictated by the style you are refereeing. In Freestyle parterre, your position should be more towards the head of the bottom wrestler. This position will allow you to see the quick turn (flash) into danger and potentially dangerous hold near the neck and head. Your position in parterre will bring you much closer to the wrestlers than in the standing position. You will want to be close enough so you can quickly stop an illegal or potentially dangerous hold from injuring a wrestler. Sometimes, blowing the whistle is not enough; you'll need to be able to react quickly.

In Greco-Roman parterre, you'll want to establish a position more to the side of the bottom wrestler. This will give you a good view of both wrestlers' legs. You'll be watching for defensive and offensive leg fouls. Just like in the standing position, you must constantly "feel" and "analyze" what the wrestlers are doing/setting up. Anticipate the direction of the action and move to that side of the wrestlers. It is very important to move out to the side in Greco-Roman. If you try to referee Greco-Roman parterre from a Freestyle parterre position you will not be able to see the leg fouls because the torso of both wrestlers will block your view. Wrestlers are very smart athletes. They will take note of your poor position and subtly attack the legs. At first, being out to the side will feel odd, like you're out of position. But you're not; you're exactly where you should be. Trust me, you will get comfortable.

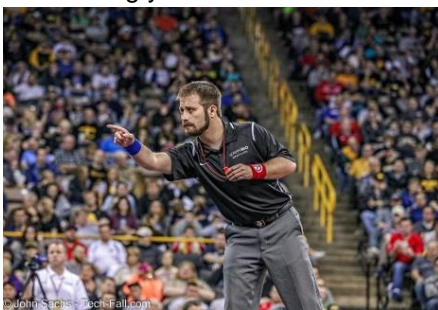
Our next element of moving with a purpose is Vertical Movement. Very similar to moving laterally, moving vertically has all the same attributes; logic, thought, and anticipation.

When a throw begins, you will want to lower your level so you can see the landing. Does the defensive wrestler land in danger, or even better, is it a fall? Do not get caught up in the "wow factor" and focus on the middle of the throw. If you do, you'll be late when they land and miss the score. Anticipate the landing spot and be in position to see the impact on the mat. The same applies while the wrestlers are in parterre. When a turn begins, lower your level and watch for the exposure; but more importantly look for the fall. You cannot see a fall from your feet. You must lower your level. Similar to falls and turns, vertical movement also applies to holds near the neck or head. When a wrestler has a front head lock or another type hold near the neck or head, lower your level in order to see under the defensive wrestler.

You focus is the throat and carotid artery. Wrestlers do a very good job camouflaging these holds and it is imperative you lower your level to see and stop these holds before a wrestler becomes injured. It only takes a few seconds for a wrestler to be rendered unconscious.



Our final element is words and hand/arm movements. Similar to moving lateral and vertical movement, synchronizing your commands and arm/hand movements is equally important. You must apply logic



when giving commands. Why are you addressing the wrestlers? What reaction do you want from them? Think about that for a second. You should not throw out random commands. Your commands and arm movements should move together for a specific purpose. If blue is burying his head, point at blue, with your blue hand, and command blue to get their head up or if red is not engaging, point at red, with your red hand, and tell red contact. By simultaneously verbalizing and pointing, you are expressing to red or blue a specific reaction to your command. Verbal and visual movements go hand-in-hand. (No pun intended.) The movements you make with your colored

wrist visually indicate your command and whom you are addressing. If you are talking to blue use your

blue colored wrist. If you're not talking to blue you should not be moving your blue wrist. It is important that when you speak to a wrestler, you use the appropriate colored wrist. In addition to using the wrong colored wrists, I have heard referees verbalize random commands that made absolutely no sense and confused everyone who heard them. Example; red has blue in a body lock and the referee says "red contact." Think about the command just given. Red has a body lock on blue, why is the referee saying "Red Contact? He can't get any closer. These types of commands only confuse the wrestlers, coaches, and referee team. Think before you speak. Similarly, the timing of your command is as important as what you command. You don't want to make your calls to fast, or too slow.

You should never just move around the mat for movement's sake. The analogy I like to use when discussing moving with a purpose; is that a wrestling bout is similar to a dance. Except in our dance, we have three dancers; two wrestlers and one referee. The wrestlers are the active participants while the referee is the silent partner. There's a balance of thought, anticipation and position; and moving with a purpose enables you to balance these three things in order to effectively manage the bout. Moving with a purpose allows you to observe the clock (time management), observe the judge, or chairman, watch the action and be in the right position take make the right call at the right time. If you are not moving with a purpose, you'll be out of position and your calls may be out of sequence or late. Very little will be said if you are in good position and make a not so good call, but the world will end if you are in bad position and make a bad call. The most important thing on the mat is position, position, and position.