



January 14, 2026

NFHS Wrestling Weekly Rule Interpretations

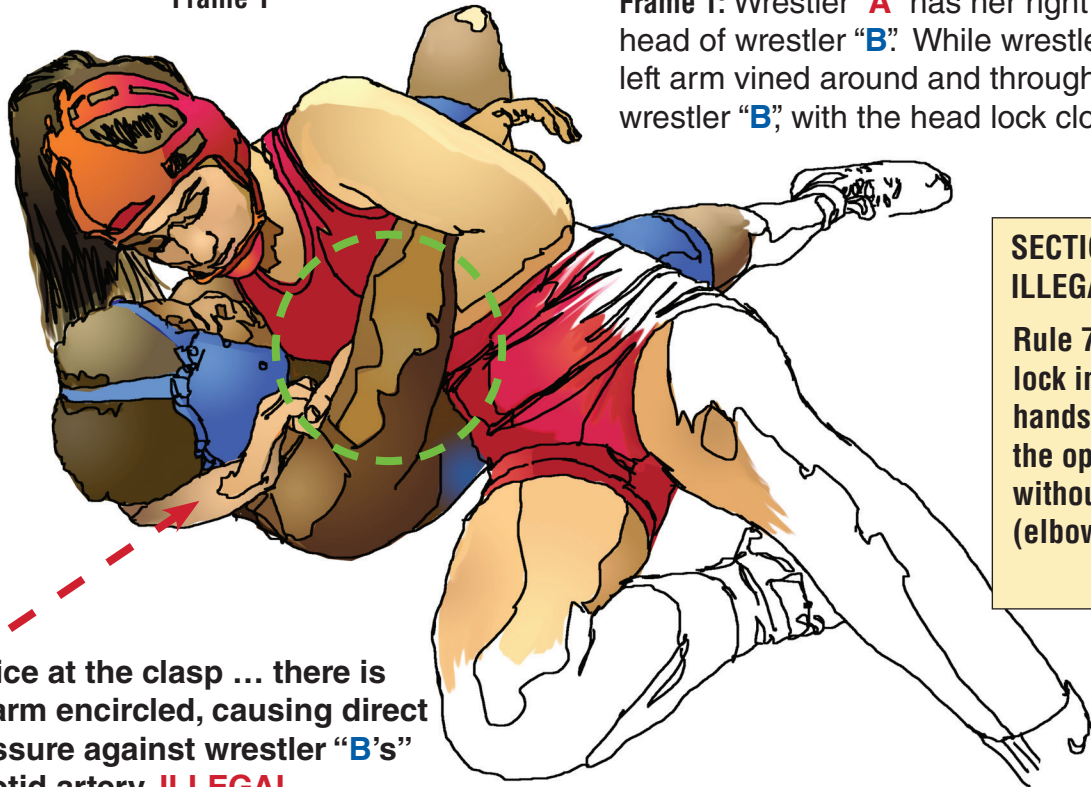
We are well into the wrestling season, and this week's interpretation addresses the wide range of holds and maneuvers that involve the head. Some are fundamental wrestling techniques, while others fall along a continuum from potentially dangerous to clearly illegal. As we enter conference and league championship competition and begin post-season positioning, it is essential to have a clear understanding of what is permitted when the head is involved. It is critically important that referees consistently recognize what is legal and illegal with respect to the head, neck, and carotid artery to prevent injury to an opposing wrestler. The feedback we have received thus far has been positive and encouraging. Thank you for your continued support and professionalism throughout the season.

We hope that the illustrations are helpful and timely for your wrestling referees to discuss and use as talking points during their officials' chapter/board meetings this season and post-season. We are attaching the illustrations as separate documents for your use and for ease of distribution. These resources are excellent conversation starters for first year and seasoned referees alike! Have a wonderful second half of the wrestling season.

Illegal Headlock... Look Close

Frame 1

Frame 1: Wrestler "A" has her right arm around the head of wrestler "B". While wrestler "A" has her left arm vined around and through the right arm of wrestler "B", with the head lock closed.



Notice at the clasp ... there is no arm encircled, causing direct pressure against wrestler "B's" carotid artery. **ILLEGAL**

SECTION 7 INFRACTIONS ILLEGAL HEADLOCK

Rule 7-1-5d any headlock in which the arms or hands are locked around the opponents's head without encircling an arm (elbow or above)

Frame 2

Frame 2: Wrestler "A" has her right arm around the head of wrestler "B". While wrestler "A" DOES NOT have her left arm ENCIRCLING either the shoulder or the elbow of wrestler "B", with the head lock closed. **ILLEGAL**

Direct pressure against wrestler "B's" carotid artery — →

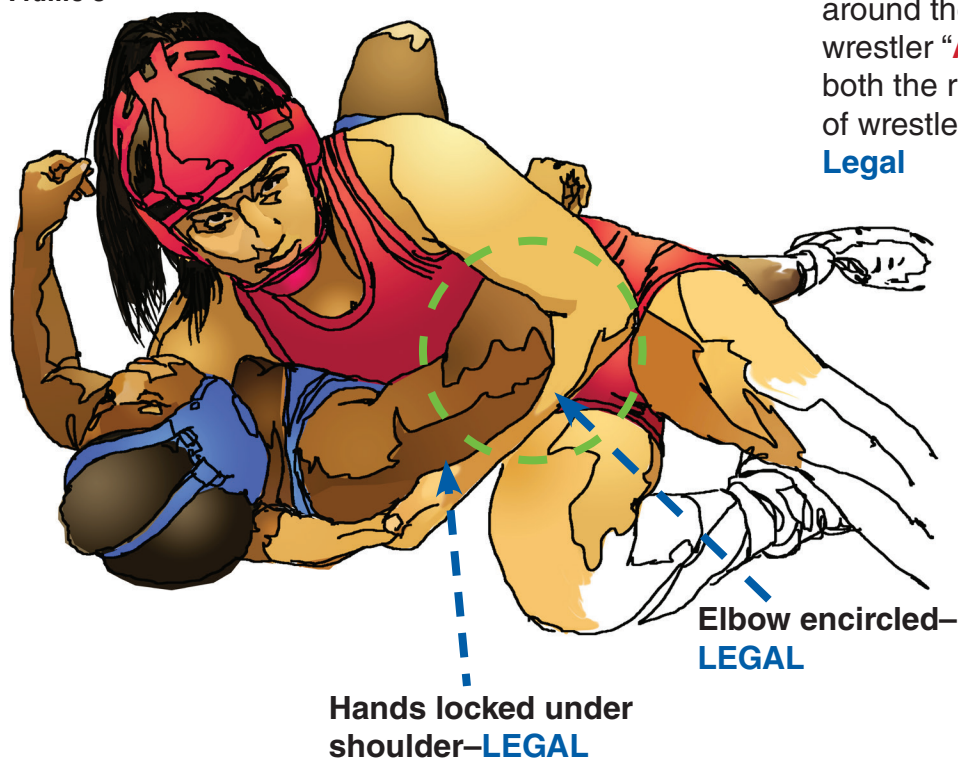


Notice at the clasp ... there is no arm or shoulder encircled, causing direct pressure against wrestler "B's" carotid artery. **ILLEGAL**

"It is the **elbow**, or **shoulder encircled** that allows a headlock to be legal, because it blocks the pressure on the neck and carotid artery. It is important to note all headlocks are considered potentially dangerous."

Legal Headlock... Look Close

Frame 3

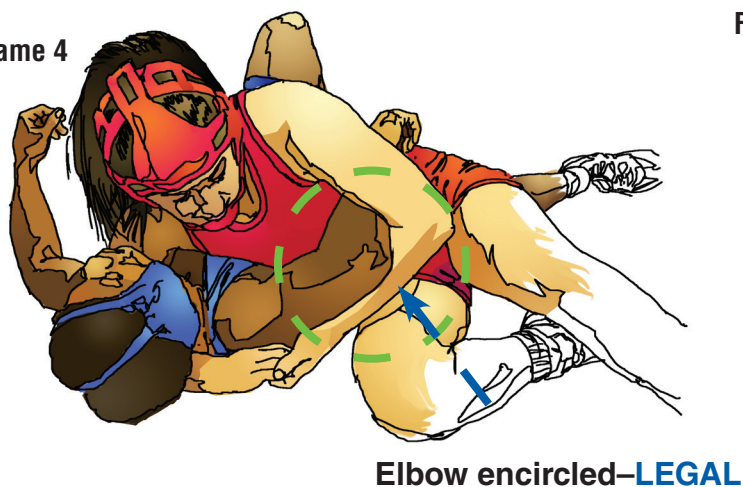


Frame 3: Wrestler “A” has her right arm around the head of wrestler “B”. While wrestler “A” has her left arm encircling both the right shoulder and the elbow of wrestler “B”. The clasped hands are **Legal**

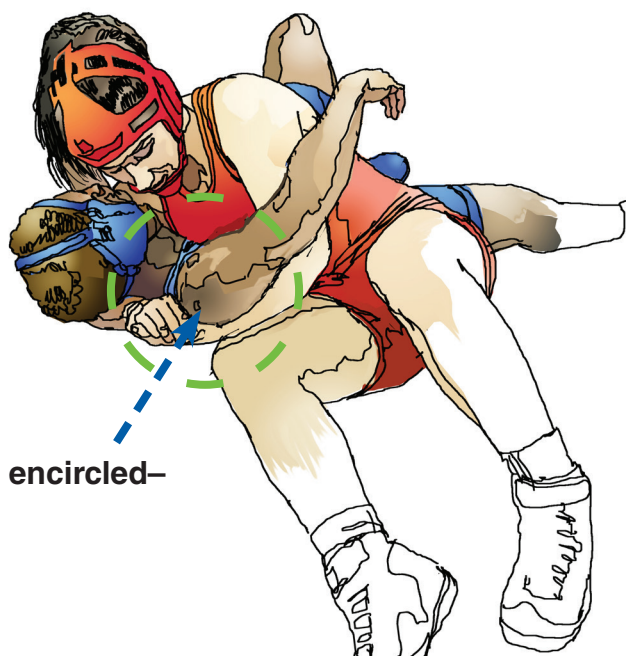
SECTION 7 INFRACTIONS ILLEGAL HEADLOCK

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Frame 4



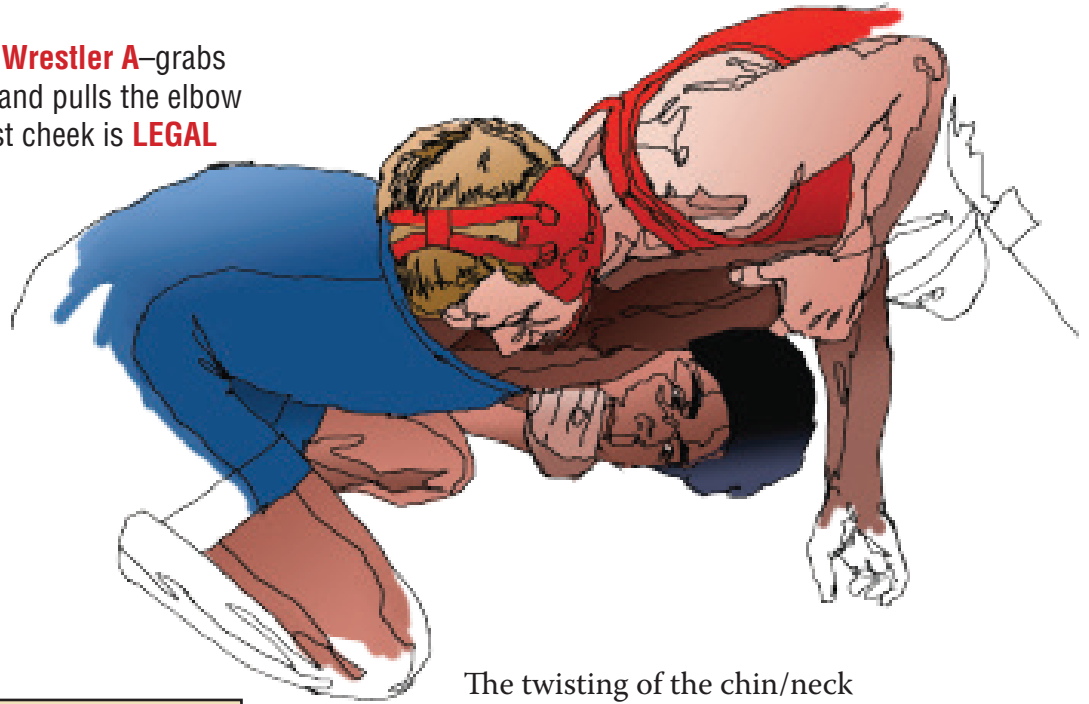
Frame 5



“It is the **elbow**, or **shoulder encircled** that allows a headlock to be legal, because it blocks the pressure on the neck and carotid artery. It is important to note all headlocks are considered potentially dangerous.”

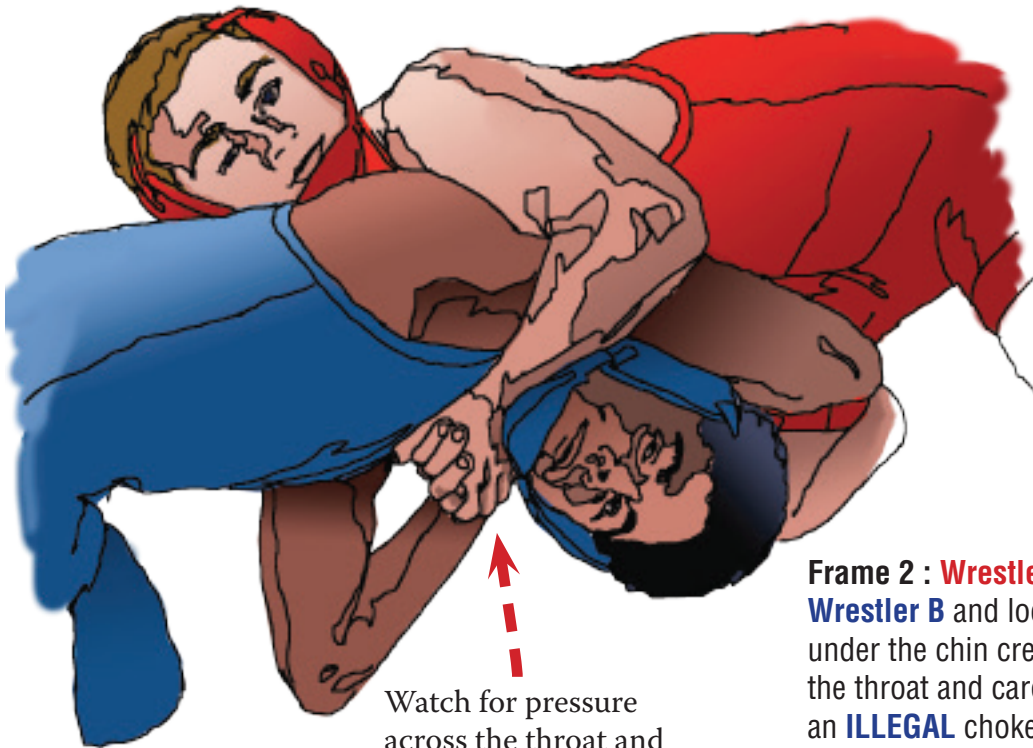
Front Head lock– Choke Hold—Illegal

Frame 1: From the front **Wrestler A**—grabs **Wrestler B's** cheek/chin and pulls the elbow up to trap the arm against cheek is **LEGAL**



NOTE: Official needs to lower their levels to see up under wrestler throat.

The twisting of the chin/neck is an **ILLEGAL** neck wrench



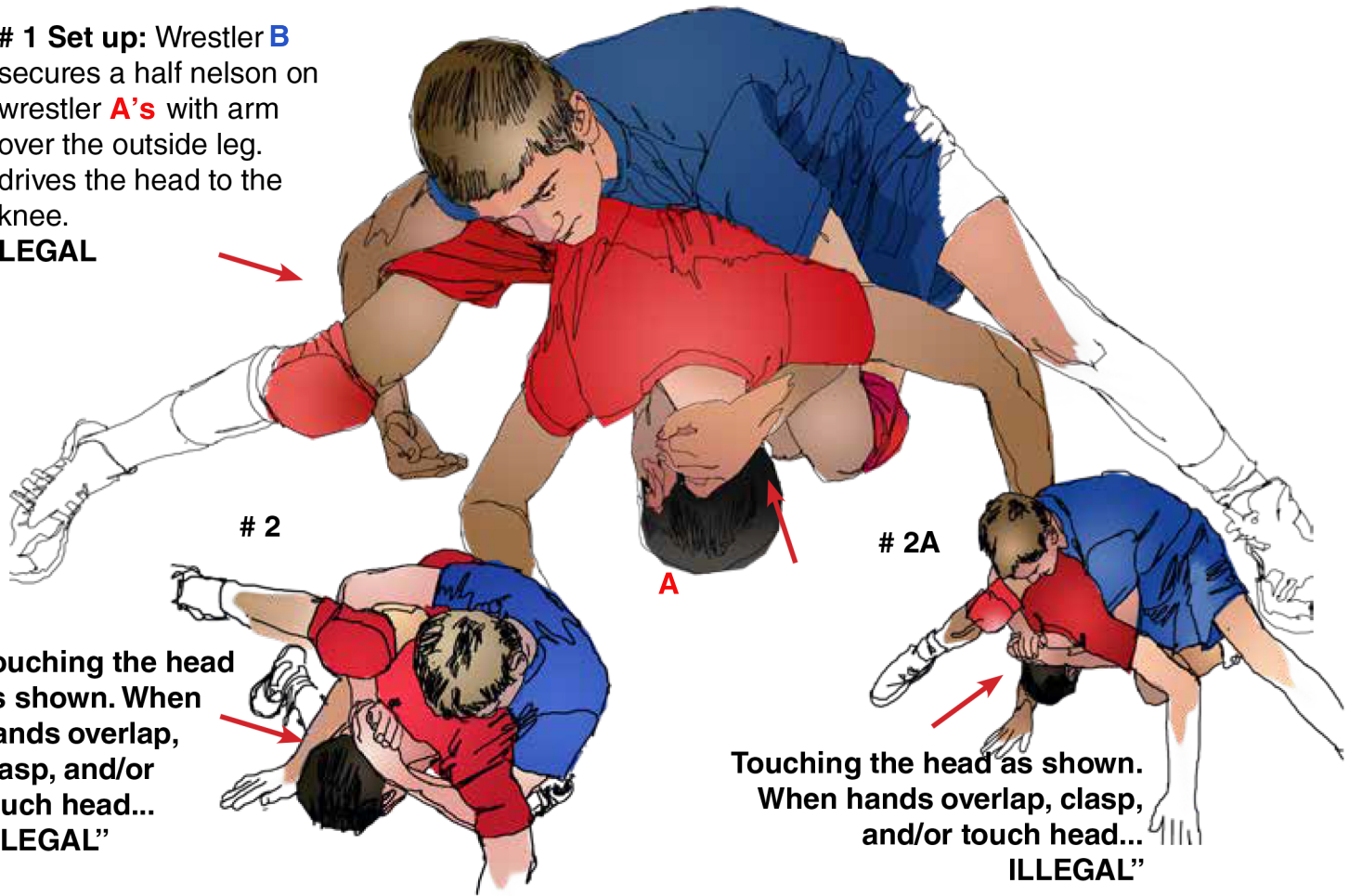
Watch for pressure across the throat and side of neck.

Frame 2 : **Wrestler A** releases the arm of **Wrestler B** and locks his hands at, and under the chin creating direct pressure on the throat and carotid artery and making this an **ILLEGAL** choke hold, stop and penalize.

Nelson Cradle

1 Set up: Wrestler **B** secures a half nelson on wrestler **A's** with arm over the outside leg. drives the head to the knee.

LEGAL



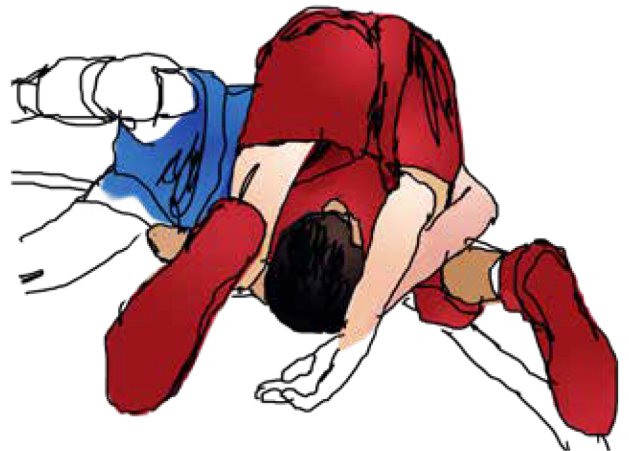
2-2a-3 Although not a true full nelson, this nelson-cradle meets the definition and criteria of a dangerous full nelson. The far side knee acts as the back side arm pit which creates downward pressure on the neck and can injure wrestler **A**

#3

Touching the head as shown. When hands overlap, clasp, and/or touch head... **ILLEGAL**



#4



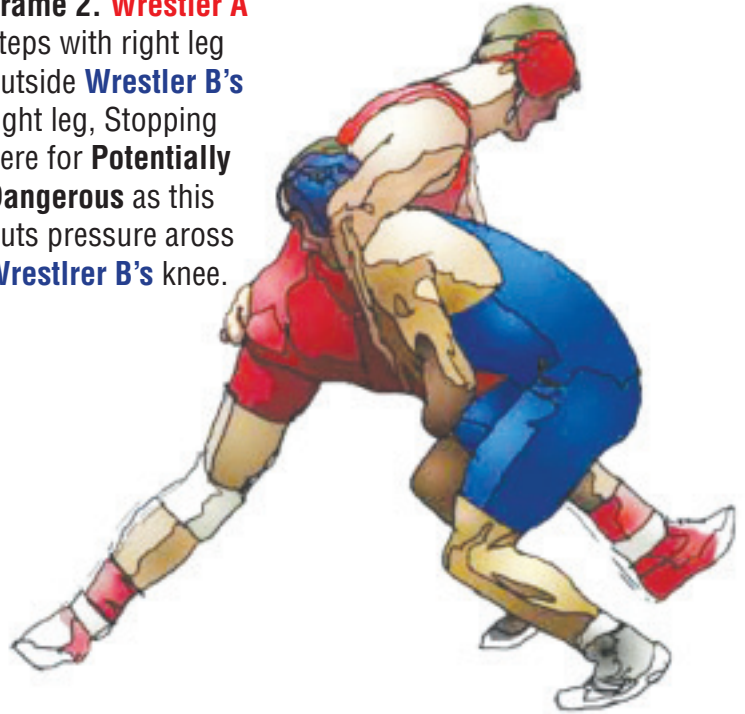
This **nelson cradle** is interpreted the same as a variation of a **full nelson** and **shall be called and penalized the same as a full nelson.** It is illegal by application if the hands overlap, clasp or are on the ear guards."

Head Trap/knee-Block– Potentially dangerous

Frame 1. Set up: **Wrestler B**
shoots in on **Wrestler A**



Frame 2. **Wrestler A**
steps with right leg
outside **Wrestler B's**
right leg, Stopping
here for **Potentially
Dangerous** as this
puts pressure across
Wrestler B's knee.



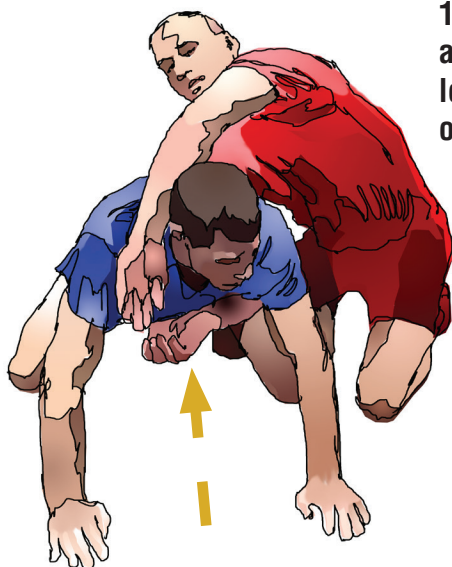
Frame 3. **Wrestler A** blocks **Wrestler B's**
right knee and reverse grasps across the
neck or may grasp chin as he/she hips
across. **Note:** If **Wrestler A** grabs the chin
of **Wrestler B** it may become an illegal
neck wrench, stop immediately to penalize
the **illegal** hold.



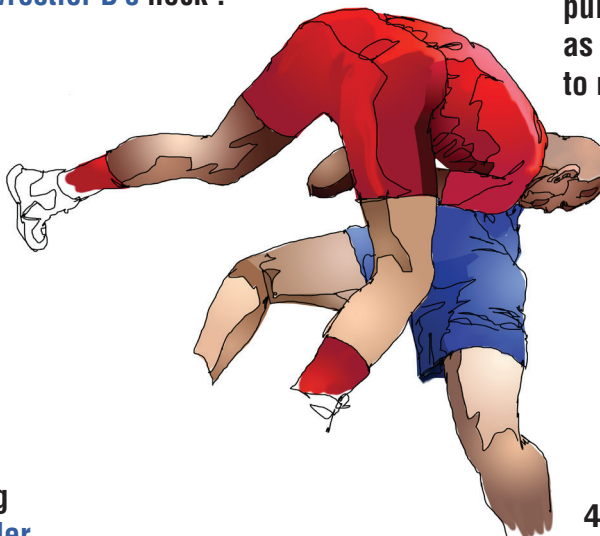
Frame 4. **Wrestler A** takes
Wrestler B to his/her back. Stop
for **Potentially Dangerous** or if
deemed to forceful, the official
should call **unnecessary
roughness**; penalize accordingly.

The Assassin (A Kolat Variation) Potentially Dangerous Which May Become Illegal

A



1. Set-up- **Wrestler A** reaches over head and under shoulder w/ far side arm to lock & vice hands in side of **wrestler B's** neck .



2. **Wrestler A** crunches & pulls **wrestler B** into his knee as **wrestler B** breaks down to mat.

Note: THE OFFICIAL'S POSITION IS CRITICAL TO SEE DANGEROUS POINTS.

3. **Wrestler A** steps across w/ far leg (a sit out step) pulling across **wrestler B's** head, neck and throat to his back. This may become **ILLEGAL** if across the throat.



Note: Head and upper body will rotate due to pressure caused by locked hands

4. **Wrestler A** may plant his far side knee in the hip or lower back to help **wrestler B** pop over. This may become **UNNECESSARY ROUGHNESS**.



Note: Knee in lower back may also be **ILLEGAL**

5. As **wrestler A** turns **wrestler B**, he will keep his hips parallel to mat and tight against **wrestler B's** hip.



Note: Pressure across the throat



6. As **wrestler A** finishes the move, notice **wrestler B's** head propped up by **wrestler A's** arm pit and upper arm forcing the chin to be pinched against the arm across the throat. This has definitely become a choke hold ... **ILLEGAL**.



The Kolat (side 3/4 Nelson Choke Hold) **ILLEGAL**

Rule 7-2-21
7-2-42
Rule 7-1-5g
7-1-5u
ILLEGAL



#1. **Set-up:** From mat, **Wrestler B** over the neck and under the armpit of **Wrestler A** and locks hands

#2. **Wrestler B** snaps down and vices forearms together which creates pressure against throat and side of neck (carotid artery)



Note: Head official should move in and drop their level to check throat/neck. Stop for potentially dangerous sooner than later.



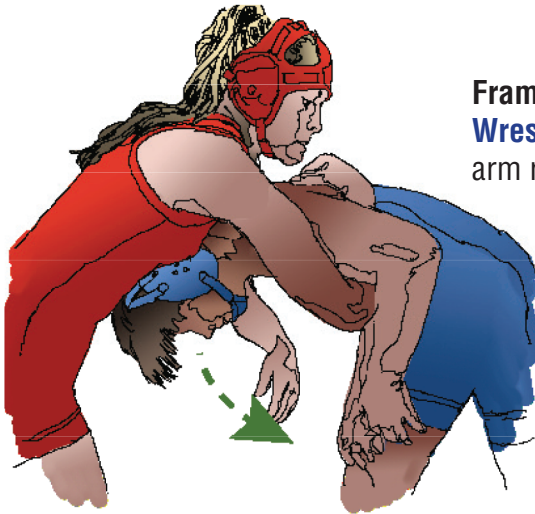
#3. **Wrestler B** pulls **Wrestler A's** head down, stop immediately, for **ILLEGAL** and penalize for hold.

#4. If **Wrestler B** turns **Wrestler A** to his back this will be an **ILLEGAL** choke with pressure against throat-**Stop** immediately and penalize accordingly.



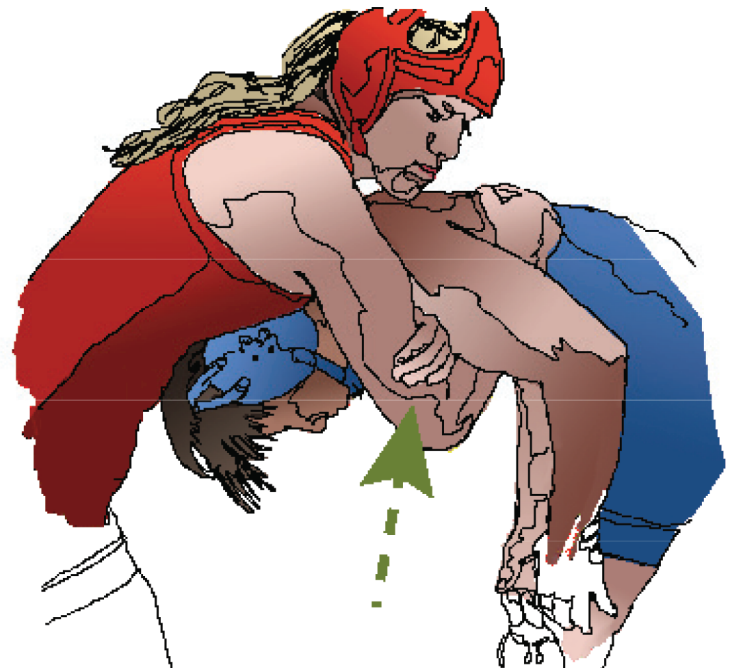


Front Head lock–Cement Mixer—Illegal A



Frame 1: Set-up **Wrestler A**—underhooks **Wrestler B's** arm...**Wrestler A**—with opposite arm reaches under the throat of **Wrestler B**...

Frame 2 : **Wrestler A**—grabs her own arm used to underhook **Wrestler B's** arm. This creates pressure across the throat and carotid artery. This is also an **ILLEGAL** head lock as there is no arm encircled **ILLEGAL**.



NOTE: Official should move to underhook side and lower his/her level so they can see up under both wrestlers to see arm movement.