

IMMAF



AMATEUR JUNIORS&SENIORS FOULS&COMPETITION FORMULA

Official Rules & Competition Guidelines
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This rulebook was authored and officially developed by Mr. Guilherme Assumpção Pinto Bravo, Director of Regulatory Affairs, under the exclusive authority of IMMAF. Its creation was carried out by IMMAF's Regulatory Affairs Department, utilizing comparative analysis and benchmarking against international standards. The concept for the Fourth Judge Protocol was proposed by Bladimir Pulga, Staff Liaison of the Regulatory Affairs Department. All other structural definitions, operational protocols, and original regulatory concepts presented in this document were created and developed by the author to meet the evolving needs of IMMAF's 2025 global competitions.

CATEGORIES

Seniors 18+ IMMAF

Juniors 18 - 20s (U21) IMMAF

WEIGHT CLASSES

FEMALE

Atomweight: -47.6 kg /105 lbs
Strawweight: -52.2 kg /115 lbs
Flyweight: -56.7 kg /125 lbs
Bantamweight: -61.2 kg /135 lbs
Featherweight: -65.8 kg /145 lbs
Lightweight: -70.3 kg /155 lbs
Super Lightweight: -74.8 kg /165 lbs
Super Welterweight: -79.4 kg /175 lbs

MALE

Strawweight: -52.2 kg /115 lbs
Flyweight: -56.7 kg /125 lbs
Bantamweight: -61.2 kg /135 lbs
Featherweight: -65.8 kg /145 lbs
Lightweight: -70.3 kg /155 lbs
Super Lightweight: -74.8 kg /165 lbs
Super Welterweight: -79.4 kg /175 lbs
Middleweight: -83.9 kg /185 lbs
Super Middleweight: -88.4 kg /195 lbs
Light Heavyweight: -93 kg /205 lbs
Heavyweight: -97 kg /215 lbs
Super Heavyweight: +97 kg /+215 lbs

COMPETITION FORMULA

In Juniors&Seniors competitions, the format is a progressive single elimination tournament with medals awarded, and each bout consists of up to three minute rounds with one minute breaks. Draws after the three rounds are not permitted; if the score is tied, a fourth overtime round of three minutes is contested. Should a penalty such as a point deduction produce a tie in this overtime, the offending athlete is eliminated and their opponent advances. This fourth overtime round applies only in tournament formats; in all other circumstances, the result after three rounds is final and cannot be appealed. Scoring follows the “10-point must” system with three judges.

FOULS

PROFESSIONAL MMA FOULS

The following acts constitute a foul in mixed martial arts professional competition and at all IMMAF Classes:

Text highlighted in blue refers to rules specific to amateur IMMAF competitions.

1. Butting with the head

The head may not be used as a striking instrument in any fashion. Any use of the head as a striking instrument whether head to head, head to body or otherwise is illegal.

2. Eye gouging of any kind

Eye gouging by means of fingers, chin, or elbow is illegal. Legal strikes or punches that contact the athlete's eye socket are not eye gouging and shall be considered legal attacks.

3. Biting or spitting at an opponent

Biting in any form is illegal. An athlete must recognize that a referee may not be able to physically observe some actions and must make the referee aware if they are being bitten during an exhibition of unarmed combat.

4. Fish Hooking

Any attempt by an athlete to use their fingers in a manner that attacks their opponent's mouth, nose or ears, stretching the skin to that area will be considered "Fish hooking". Fish hooking generally is the placing of fingers into the mouth or your opponent and pulling your hands in opposing directions while holding onto the skin of your opponent.

5. Hair pulling

Pulling of the hair in any fashion is an illegal action. An athlete may not grab a hold of his opponent's hair to control their opponent in any way. If an athlete has long hair, they may not use their hair as a tool for holding or choking in any fashion.

6. Spiking the opponent to the canvas onto the head or neck (pile-driving)

Any throw with an arc to its motion is to be considered a legal throw. It does not matter if the opponents head hits the canvas. A pile driver is considered to be any throw where you control your opponent's body placing their feet up in the air with their head straight down and then forcibly drives the opponents head into the canvas or flooring material. It should be noted when an athlete is placed into a submission hold by their opponent, if that athlete is capable of elevating their opponent, they may bring that opponent down in any fashion they desire because they are not in control of their opponent's body. The athlete who is attempting the submission can either adjust their position or let go of their hold before being driven into the canvas.

7. Strikes to the spine or the back of the head

The back of the head starts at the Crown of the head with a one (1) inch variance to either side, running down the back of the head to the occipital junction.

This area stretches out at the occipital junction (nape of the neck) to cover the entire width of the neck. It then travels down the spine with a one (1) inch variance from the spine's centerline, including the tailbone.

8. Throat strikes of any kind and/or grabbing the trachea

No directed throat strikes are allowed. A directed attack would include an athlete pulling his opponents head in a way to open the neck area for a striking attack. An athlete may not gouge their fingers or thumb into their opponent's neck or trachea in an attempt to submit their opponent. If during stand-up action of a bout a strike is thrown and the strike lands in the throat area of the athlete, this shall be viewed as a clean and legal blow. [In amateur competitions it is considered an unintentional foul.](#)

9. Fingers outstretched toward an opponent's face/eyes

In the standing position, an athlete that moves their arm(s) toward their opponent with an open hand, fingers pointing at the opponent's face/eyes, will be a foul. Referees are to prevent this dangerous behavior by communicating clearly to Athletes. Athletes are directed to close their fists or point their fingers straight up in the air when reaching toward their opponent.

10. Groin attacks of any kind

Any attack to the groin area including, striking, grabbing, pinching or twisting is illegal. It should be clear that groin attacks are the same for men and women.

11. Kneeing and/or Kicking the head of a grounded opponent

A grounded athlete is defined as: An athlete shall be considered grounded and may not be legally kneed or kicked to the head when any part of their body other than their hands or feet is in contact with the canvas (ground).

12. Stomping of a grounded athlete

Stomping is considered any type of striking action with the feet where the athlete lifts their leg up bending their leg at the knee and initiating a striking action with the bottom of their foot or heel.

Axe kicks are not stomping. Standing foot stops are NOT a foul. As such, this foul does not include stomping the feet of a standing athlete.

13. Holding opponent's gloves or shorts

An athlete may not control their opponent's movement by holding onto their opponent's shorts or gloves. An athlete may hold onto or grab their opponent's hand as long as they are not controlling the hand only by using the material of the glove, but by actually gripping the hand of the opponent. It is legal to hold onto your own gloves or shorts.

14. Holding or grabbing the fence or ropes with fingers or toes

An athlete may put their hands on the fence and push off of it at any time. An athlete may place their feet onto the fence and have their toes go through the fencing material at any time. When an athlete's fingers or toes go through the fence and grab hold of the fence and start to control either their body position or their opponent's body position it now becomes an illegal action. An athlete may not grab the ropes or wrap their arms over or under the ring ropes at any time. The athlete may not purposely step through the ropes. If an athlete is caught holding the fence or ring rope material the referee may issue a one-point deduction from the offending Athletes scorecard if the foul caused a substantial effect in the bout. If a point deduction for holding the fence occurs, and because of the infraction, the fouling athlete ends up in a superior position due to the foul, the Athletes should be re-started by the referee, standing in a neutral position.

15. Small joint manipulation

Fingers and Toes are small joints (2-). Wrists, Ankles, Knees, Shoulders and Elbows are all large joints. Grabbing the majority of fingers (3+)/toes (3+) at once is allowed.

16. Throwing an opponent out of the ring or bout area

An athlete shall not throw their opponent out of the ring or bout area.

17. Intentionally placing a finger into any orifice, or into any cut or laceration of your Opponent

An athlete may not place their fingers into an open laceration in an attempt to enlarge the cut. An athlete may not place their fingers into an opponent's, nose, ears, mouth, or any body cavity.

18. Clawing, pinching, twisting the flesh

Any attack that targets the athlete's skin by clawing at the skin or attempting to pull or twist the skin to apply pain is illegal.

19. Timidity (avoiding contact, or consistently dropping the mouthpiece, or faking an injury)

Timidity is defined as any athlete who purposely avoids contact with his opponent or runs away from the action of the bout. Timidity can also be called by the referee for any attempt by an athlete to receive time by falsely claiming a foul, injury, or purposely dropping or spitting out their mouthpiece or other action designed to stall or delay the action of the bout.

20. Use of abusive language in the field of play

The use of abusive language is not allowed during MMA competition. It is the sole responsibility of the referee to determine when language crosses over the line to abusive. It should be clear that Athletes can talk during a match. The mere use of auditory language is not a violation of this rule. Examples of abusive language would be (Racially motivated or Derogatory language).

21. Flagrant disregard of the referee's instructions

An athlete MUST follow the instructions of the referee at all times. Any deviation or non-compliance may result in the athlete's disqualification.

22. Unsportsmanlike conduct that causes an injury to opponent

Every athlete competing in the sport of MMA is expected to represent the sport in a positive light emphasizing sportsmanship and humility. Any athlete that disrespects the rules of the sport or attempts to inflict unnecessary harm on a competitor who has been either taken out of the competition by the referee or has tapped out of the competition shall be viewed as being unsportsmanlike.

23. Attacking an opponent after the bell has sounded the end of the period of unarmed combat

The end of a round is signified by the sound of the bell and the call of time by the referee. Once the referee has made the call of time, any offensive actions initiated by the athlete shall be considered after the bell and illegal.

24. Attacking an opponent on or during the break

An athlete shall not engage their opponent in any fashion during a time-out or break of action in competition.

25. Attacking an opponent who is under the care of the referee

Once the referee has called for a stop of the action to protect an athlete who has been incapacitated or is unable to continue to compete in the bout, Athletes shall cease all offensive actions against their opponent.

26. Interference from a mixed martial artist's corner or seconds

Interference is defined as any action or activity aimed at disrupting the bout or causing an unfair advantage to be given to a corner's combatant. Corners are not allowed to distract the referee or influence the actions of the referee in any fashion. [The coach may only give instructions to their own athlete, not to the opponent.](#)

27. Applying any foreign substance to the head or body in order to gain an Advantage.

Addendum to Rule 6

Spiking the Opponent to the Canvas onto the Head or Neck and Pile-Driving Moves. The only exception to the spiking rule occurs when an athlete is under attack, and the opponent has the ability to release their submission hold to defend themselves. A common example is when an athlete applies an armbar, and the defending athlete lifts and spikes them to the canvas. In this scenario, the opponent has the option to let go of the submission and protect themselves, making the spiking action legal.

However, **the piledriver technique** is strictly prohibited at all times. Unlike defensive spiking, a piledriver involves total control of the opponent's body, preventing them from defending or escaping the position. Since this technique eliminates the opponent's ability to react or release a hold, it remains an illegal maneuver under all circumstances.

Additionally, during a takedown, an athlete **must not intentionally** drive an opponent headfirst into the canvas in a straight, downward trajectory. Any deliberate action that forces an opponent's head directly toward the ground is considered dangerous and will be penalized accordingly. [A slam is another legal movement in professional MMA. Do not confuse it with the two techniques described above.](#)

IMMAF AMATEUR FOULS FORBIDDEN TECHNIQUES TO ALL CATEGORIES AND JUNIORS&SENIORS RULES

In addition to the listed fouls from the professional sport above, techniques that shall remain forbidden in Amateur Mixed Martial Arts contests (all categories) shall be:

1. Elbows and forearm strikes of any kind.
2. Heel Hook
3. Twister, neck crank, can opener, cervical locks, sit through crucifix, and/or any submission deemed as applying pressure to the neck or spine*, also rib compressions*
4. Knees to the head of an opponent.
5. Linear/front kicks directly targeting the knee.

Grounded Opponent Definition

An athlete shall be considered grounded and may not be legally kned or kicked to the head when any part of their body other than their hands or feet is in contact with the canvas (ground)

Addendum

1. * No compression of the back is allowed, such as crushing the ribs against the hips while forcing spinal twisting, closing pressure on the lumbar region, **scorpion** or spinal manipulation involving the lumbar or cervical regions.

2. Is important to remember that any technique that manipulates the spine or neck is considered illegal, even if it is not directly listed. This means that even if a position is initially allowed, transitioning into a finishing maneuver that manipulates the neck or spine renders the technique illegal.

3. Spinal Twisting Submissions (Twister-Type Mechanics)

Movements involving asymmetric twisting of the spine (mainly thoracic and cervical regions), with simultaneous control of the hip and lower limbs, characterized as **Spinal Twisting Submissions (Twister-Type Mechanics)**, include, but are not limited to:

- Twister Roll
- Truck Transitions
- Twister Control
- Banana split
- Crucifix Rollings

All of these movements as soon they start to be a manipulation of spine, cervical they became **prohibited** due to the extreme risk of injury to the spine and neurological system.

4. Triangle

In IMMAF competitions, the neck manipulation within a Triangle Choke is only considered a legal submission when applied with the opponent's arm inside the hold meaning the arm is across the neck and positioned between the legs of the athlete executing the triangle.

Any attempt to apply pressure to the neck, cervical spine, or head in a triangle setup without the opponent's arm inside the lock particularly when the arm is intentionally pulled out or repositioned to expose the neck shall be considered an illegal neck and spine manipulation.

Manipulating the neck directly without the protective buffer of the arm constitutes a foul due to the high risk of cervical and spinal injury. Referees and officials must be attentive to this distinction when assessing the legality of a triangle submission.

5. Positional risk clarification

Even when a submission technique is generally permitted, certain positional variations may transform a legal maneuver into an illegal application if the position results in undue manipulation of the spine, neck, or cervical region and, in some categories, also of the knees or ankles.

Example:

A guillotine, when applied from a top position such as mount or from inside the guard, becomes a positional foul. These positional restrictions are established due to the elevated risk of cervical spine compression and the limited ability of the defending athlete to perform safe and effective escape maneuvers. This is just one example of a legal technique that can become illegal due to a positional variation, turning it into a manipulation of the neck, spine, or even cervical region. Coaches and athletes must stay alert to these situations.

Referees and regulatory officials must exercise heightened vigilance when observing any attempt to initiate or transition into prohibited applications. Immediate intervention is required in any situation where a choke or submission is applied from a restricted position.

6. Positional pathway and submission activation

During grappling transitions, athletes may enter or progress through positions that have the potential to evolve into illegal submissions. The mere act of entering or holding such a transitional position does not automatically constitute a foul or illegal action.

The legality is determined by the athlete's mechanical actions within the position.

A. Transitional Position vs. Submission Activation

A grappling position becomes illegal **only at the moment** the athlete actively applies manipulation, pressure, or force to the restricted anatomical zones such as:

- Cervical spine
- Vertebral column
- Neck twisting or compression
- Simply reaching or using these positions for control, stabilization, or transitioning to other legal attacks remains permitted.

B. Application Example

Entering a **Twister Setup Position** (hip control, back ride with leg entanglement) is not illegal while:

- No spinal rotation or lateral cervical manipulation occurs.
- The position is being used for control or transition to another technique.
- The position becomes illegal when:
 - The athlete initiates twisting torque or rotational force on the spine.
 - The submission mechanics of the Twister begin to activate.

C. Athlete Responsibility in Variational Use

D. Referee Intervention Timing

- Referees shall allow positional transitions until the mechanical activation of the illegal submission occurs.
- Once submission mechanics targeting prohibited anatomical structures are engaged, immediate intervention is required.

7. Deliberate illegal positioning and foul provocation during submissions

The following rule shall apply to athletes who intentionally manipulate their positioning to induce fouls or compromise referee authority:

Definition of Foul Provocation

Foul Provocation occurs when an athlete:

- Deliberately exposes prohibited or illegal target zones (including but not limited to the back of the head, cervical spine, or neck region) during submission attempts, striking exchanges, or defensive maneuvers;

- Intentionally manipulates body position or orientation with the objective of enticing the opponent into committing an unintentional foul;
- Seeks to provoke foul rulings in order to gain unfair advantage or disrupt the flow of competition.

Examples of foul provocation include (but are not limited to):

- Intentionally turning or shifting the head to expose the back of the head during striking sequences;
- Purposefully adjusting body alignment to invite illegal contact during submissions;
- Engaging in any tactical behavior designed to compromise the opponent's legal options and create artificial foul scenarios.

Upon identification of foul provocation:

- The referee shall immediately halt the action.
- The provoking athlete shall be subject to the following disciplinary measures, depending on severity and repetition:
 - **Official warning;**
 - **Immediate point deduction (at referee's discretion);**
 - **Disqualification in cases of severe or repeated misconduct.**

Reinstatement of Position

After the stoppage:

- The bout shall summarize from the exact position that existed prior to the foul provocation attempt.
- No positional or strategic advantage shall be granted to the provoking athlete.

Repeated Violations

- Upon a second confirmed act of deliberate foul provocation, the athlete shall be immediately disqualified, and the victory awarded to the opponent.
- This policy regardless applies of bout phase, score, or remaining bout time.

REFEREE VERIFICATION COMMAND DURING SUBMISSIONS (ATHLETE RESPONSIVENESS PROTOCOL)

During submission attempts where the referee's visibility is obstructed or when the athlete's consciousness cannot be clearly confirmed through observation, the referee shall issue an immediate Responsiveness Command to verify the athlete's condition without compromising the athlete's defensive posture or safety.

In MMA it is critical that referees develop strong observational skills and a deep understanding of the body reactions and consciousness signs during choke holds and submission attempts. A referee must be able to "read" an athlete's body and eyes to detect loss of consciousness or injury since involuntary signs such as shaking limbs or residual muscle tension may be misleading.

However, in IMMAF-regulated amateur competition, safety always takes absolute priority over outcome. Unlike some purely professional settings, in IMMAF events the Regulatory Affairs Department has adopted an additional safety layer to support referees in moments of uncertainty recognizing that even experienced referees may face visibility limitations or ambiguous athlete reactions.

Therefore, in cases where the athlete's state cannot be fully confirmed visually especially when the referee's angle is obstructed or the athlete's face and eyes are not clearly visible IMMAF referees are required to apply the Responsiveness Protocol described below.

This protocol provides a safe, controlled method to request a voluntary response from the athlete, preventing prolonged unconsciousness or escalation of injury.

Primary Verbal Command:

"I need to know that you are okay."

(The referee may also repeat: "you are okay.")

This command allows the athlete to respond either:

- Verbally (speaking or answering), or
- Through minimal physical indications (nod, thumbs up, head movement, eye contact, facial expression, or any safe minimal gesture).

Supplementary Visual Communication:

The referee must always combine the verbal command with visual non-verbal cues (gestures) to support universal understanding, particularly for athletes with hearing impairments or in high-stress situations where auditory comprehension may be limited.

Gestures may include a clear hand signal inviting confirmation.

Athletes with Hearing Disabilities (Deaf or Hard of Hearing):

If an athlete is deaf or hearing-impaired, special protocol shall be established during the pre-event rules briefing. In such cases:

- The referee may apply physical contact (light tap on the body or shoulder) to request athlete responsiveness.
- The athlete must respond voluntarily via clear physical acknowledgment (head nod, hand sign, thumbs up, eye contact, etc.)

Clarification on Physical Contact Testing:

While light physical contact may be used to request confirmation, referees must be aware that:

- Involuntary body reactions (arm stiffness, delayed limb retraction, uncontrolled muscle tension) are not valid responses.
- Reflexive or postural rigidity may occur even in unconscious or semi-conscious athletes.
- Only voluntary, intentional responses (verbal or controlled gestures) are considered valid indicators of consciousness.

Immediate Stoppage Rule:

- If no response, unclear response, or ambiguous reaction is received after the verification command is issued, the referee shall immediately stop the bout to protect the athlete.
- In all such cases, athlete safety takes absolute precedence over competitive outcome.

POSITIONAL STALLING AND ACTIVE ENGAGEMENT REQUIREMENT

Athletes who achieve positional advantages must remain active in pursuing further advancement, dominance, or finishing actions. Stalling while maintaining positional control without offensive progression will result in a break.

Stalling Indicators:

- Using the fence or guard position solely to maintain neutral control without attempting advancement.
- Avoiding to attack, transition, or create opportunities for bout-ending sequences.

The referee will allow reasonable time for athletes to work but shall issue a general verbal warning (e.g., “**work**,” “action,” “improve”) directed to both athletes involved regardless of who initiated the position.

Both athletes share responsibility:

- The athlete who is trying to control must advance.
- The defensive athlete must escape, stall the opponent or counter.

If no progress follows after the warning, the referee shall break and reset the athletes.

Exceptions:

Extreme dominant positions such as:

- Back Control
- Full Mount
- Back Mount

Shall never be separated by the referee unless specific fouls or safety concerns arise.

JUDGING

The MMA judge is, above all, an evaluator.

Judges observe, interpret, quantify, and assign value to every offensive action. An MMA judge must be able to identify, recognize, and measure offensive sequences, risky positions, tactical strategies, and real competitive impact.

One of the most essential qualities of an MMA judge, besides technical knowledge, is the ability to maintain complete cognitive focus throughout the entire event. A Judge must not be distracted by crowd noise, coaching voices, institutional pressure, or emotions. Neutrality is not just ethical, it is cognitive.

A judge must never “wait for the bell” to decide who won a round. Scoring is a continuous mental process, constantly updated as the bout unfolds.

The MMA judge must think mathematically: with logic, precision, and consistency.

Each offensive action, whether from striking or grappling, is assessed using a mental equation based on:

- Blow
- Force
- Power
- Impact
- Consequence

Judge’s Equation of Consequence:

$$(B + F + P + IMP) = C(\text{Blow} + \text{Force} + \text{Power} + \text{Impact} = \text{Consequence})$$

This mental equation works like an imaginary bout meter in the judge’s mind, dynamic, not static, always concluding with the consequence generated by the action.

Caution: “Damage” is a misleading term. In MMA, damage is not a standalone scoring criterion. It is merely one potential indicator within the broader concept of effective striking and grappling.

Overemphasis on the visible damage leads to distortion:

- Striking tends to produce more visible damage.
- Grappling may produce greater real impact, but it is often invisible.

This creates a false equivalence between visibility and effectiveness.

Some actions cause visible bruises or cuts but have no real consequence. Others, such as body shots, positional control, submission attempts, or energy-draining transitions, may leave no mark but dramatically affect the outcome by restricting breathing, exhausting the opponent, or shifting momentum.

Appearance ≠ Effectiveness.

There are strategic and psychological consequences too; the judge must also consider non-visible outcomes:

- A submission attempt may not finish the bout, but it can compromise a joint, force positional change, or reveal vulnerability.
- Effective Pressure can break the opponent’s will or force technical errors.
- High-paced Transitions can drain energy and disrupt the game plan.

An athlete may win without inflicting any visible harm, simply by outsmarting, outworking and overwhelming the opponent. This is still real, invisible and impactful.

Consequence > Damage

*“Consequence is more important than the cause itself!”
“The true value of an action lies in its consequence, not in its appearance.”*

Every offensive action must be evaluated based on:

- Does it significantly shift the bout?
- Does it compromise the opponent’s capacity?
- Does it bring the athlete closer to victory?

Scoring by consequence:

If the consequence is serious (nearly ending the bout): High value.

If Moderate but meaningful: Intermediate value.

If only impact, but with no major consequence: Still valuable but lower value.

A professional judge:

- Does not reward blood alone.
- Does not penalize athletes for lack of visible damage.
- Does not confuse dominance with control or stalling.
- Rewards efficiency, effectiveness, and consequence.
- Maintains a running mental count, throughout the round.

The judge must identify which athlete produced more effective actions toward finishing the bout and use the consequences of those actions to score round by round.

SCORING CRITERIA

MAIN ONE:

1. Effective Striking/Grappling

BACKUP CRITERIA:

2. Effective Proactively
3. Effective Bout Control

Only if the effective striking/grappling is even, or non-existent, should the second criteria (Proactively) be utilized in the scoring. The same then applies to the second criteria, only utilizing the third criteria (Bout area control) if there is still no advantage based on the first two criteria.

Effective Striking/Grappling

Effective Striking

Any legal strike (punch, kick, elbow, knee, etc.) that lands on an appropriate target must be scored.

Effective Grappling

Any legal grappling action (takedown, sweep, pass, submission attempt) must be scored based on:

Position alone is not enough advancing position, pressuring, or threatening the opponent are required for continued scoring.

Takedown Important Note:

Every successful takedown should be scored equally to a successful strike.

A takedown is NOT required to have post-takedown control to be scored.

If the takedown succeeds (brings the opponent to the ground), it scores regardless of whether the athlete controls afterward.

Takedowns, a competing technique that can be compared to a successful strike on the feet. It should be scored in the same way.

1. Effective Proactively

Initiative that leads to real offensive outcome.

Proactively making attempts to finish the bout. The key term is 'effective'. Chasing after an opponent with no effective result or impact should not render in the judges' assessments, the action must have impact and create real opportunities to win. So, it is not always the athlete moving forward or dominating the center of the bout area that is being proactively. Likewise, an athlete using counter-attacks, controlling distance, or drawing the opponent into effective strikes may be showing true proactive effectiveness. Judges must be able to recognize the difference between athletes who are taking initiative with purpose and those who are simply moving.

Effective Proactively is only to be assessed if Effective Striking/Grappling is 100% equal for both competitors or if they do not exist. This will be assessed very rarely.

2. Effective Bout Control

Successful implementation of game plan in chosen location (standing, ground or clinch).

Bout area Control refers to which athlete is effectively controlling the location and pace of the bout, dictating where the action takes place (standing, fence, or ground) and executing their game plan successfully.

It is not enough to move the bout to a certain area (such as fence or ground) the athlete must also demonstrate control once there.

For example, an athlete taking an opponent down but then being controlled on the ground is not showing Bout area Control their opponent is.

The essence of Bout area Play Control is:

Controlling the bout where the athlete chooses to be and being effective there.

TEN (10) POINT MUST SYSTEM

The 10-Point Must System is the international official standard scoring system used in all IMMAF-sanctioned bouts, across all competition categories.

Under this system, the winner of each round must be awarded 10 points, and the losing athlete will receive 9 points or less, depending on the level of effective performance demonstrated during the round.

10–10 Round (Very Rare):

Used when no effective judging criteria clearly occurred, or when all three criteria were considered equal by the judges resulting in an entirely even round.

Is when both athletes have competed for the full duration of the round, with no difference or advantage between them.

A possible example is when both athletes avoid engagement (don't want to engage) and show no effective action or intent to compete.

This score should be used only in the rarest of situations.

Judges are expected to identify even the smallest difference between athletes as we say: "find the needle in the haystack."

A 10–10 round is not a score to be used as an excuse by a judge who cannot assess the differences in the round.

10–9 Round (Most Common):

Awarded when one competitor has a slight but clear edge.

This is the most common score a judge will assign during a bout or across the event.

A score of 10–9 can reflect an extremely close round, a moderate advantage, or a decisive round where the winner demonstrated strong superiority but without fully meeting the criteria for a 10–8.

Additionally, IMMAF has adopted a modernized scoring card layout: after each round, judges are required to mark in a dedicated box their qualitative assessment of a 10x09 round:

- Close Round
- Moderate Round
- Decisive Round

10–8 Round:

Awarded when one athlete is clearly superior to their opponent during the round, showing Impact (Damage), Dominance, and Duration known as the Triple D's.

(Note: In IMMAF scoring terminology, “Damage” is referred to as “Impact”. From here forward we will use “Impact” instead of “Damage” when referring to scoring criteria.)

Is awarded when one athlete is clearly superior to their opponent during the round.

Judges must not confuse neutralization with domination.

10–7 Round (Very Rare):

A 10–7 Round in MMA is awarded when an athlete completely overwhelms their opponent through Effective Striking and/or Grappling, delivering overwhelming Impact and total domination where the opponent is no longer competitive or effective and an immediate stoppage would have been warranted.

In amateur competition, this is a score that judges will rarely give because under IMMAF safety policies, the referee should intervene before a bout reaches this extreme level

Judging Guide – control, neutralization, and domination.

This is one of the most important distinctions in MMA judging and one that separates experienced judges from those still learning the depth of the sport.

It is essential to understand that gaining a dominant position is not the same as being dominant inside that position. An athlete may enter a dominant position such as mount or back control but what matters for scoring is what the athlete does from that position.

Likewise, controlling an opponent is different from stalling. An athlete may achieve control but stall (neutralize) the bout to run the clock this must not be rewarded. Conversely, dominance requires clear offensive effort: attacking, advancing, causing impact.

A judge's role is to discern these layers with clarity and fairness, ensuring that athletes who take risks and pursue victory are rewarded while passive tactics are not overvalued.

The key for judges is:

What is the athlete doing with the position?

Are they attacking, advancing, causing impact or simply holding?

FOURTH JUDGE SYSTEM

All IMMAF contests will be evaluated and scored by three judges, with the potential use of a Fourth Judge system to enhance scoring fairness and accuracy.

The Fourth Judge system has been introduced to enhance the fairness and accuracy of scoring in IMMAF competitions. The role of the Fourth Judge is to provide an additional level of oversight, ensuring that athlete performances are judged accurately and fairly.

OPEN SCORECARDS SYSTEM

To enhance transparency, IMMAF uses **The Open Scorecards System**. Under this system, scorecards will be made available at the end of each bout, displaying round-by-round scoring with judge anonymity maintained by replacing names with identifiers (Judge 1, Judge 2, and Judge 3)

FOULS IN IMMAF AMATEUR TOURNAMENTS

IMMAF Amateur MMA follows a multi-day tournament format, unlike professional MMA, where bouts are standalone events. This structural difference necessitates additional athlete safety measures to ensure competitors can progress through the tournament without compromising their health.

In professional MMA, an athlete may continue after sustaining an intentional foul that results in an injury, even with a 2-point deduction, because they do not have to compete again for months. However, in amateur MMA tournaments, athletes may compete on consecutive days, making it unsafe to allow an athlete who has suffered a significant injury from an intentional foul to continue.

Therefore, in IMMAF Amateur MMA:

- The only type of Technical Draw that exists in IMMAF is a Double Knockout. In cases of a Technical Decision, the injured athlete will always advance.
- The bout does not continue if a 2-point mandatory deduction is required in case of an intentional foul with an injury happens → Safety is the priority.
- The offending athlete is eliminated from the tournament → This reinforces discipline and prevents dangerous behaviours.

The goal is to educate amateur athletes, protect their health, and promote a structured pathway to professional MMA.

MAXIMUM POINT DEDUCTION ALLOWED IN A SINGLE BOUT REGULATORY PRINCIPLE

In IMMAF sanctioned amateur MMA competitions, an athlete is subject to elimination if they accumulate more than two (2) total point deductions during a bout.

The rule operates under the following regulatory framework:

1. The maximum allowable deduction in a single bout is two (2) points.
2. If a single foul results in a two-point deduction, the athlete remains eligible to continue the bout but any subsequent foul resulting in point deduction, even if only one point, will trigger immediate disqualification.
3. If an athlete commits multiple fouls that result in a cumulative deduction of three (3) points, regardless of the number of actions, the athlete is disqualified.
4. The nature and severity of each foul are considered, but the total point loss cannot exceed two (2) if the athlete intends to remain in the bout.

Examples:

- An athlete receives one deduction of 2 points for a severe foul. He is allowed to continue. On the next foul (1 point), he is disqualified (total = 3 points lost).
 - An athlete commits three separate fouls, each resulting in a 1-point deduction. He is disqualified upon the third deduction (1+1+1 = 3 points lost).
 - An athlete commits one foul that results in 1-point deduction, then a second foul that results in a 2-point deduction. Total = 3 points → disqualified.
- This policy is in place to ensure athlete safety, discourage repeated infractions, and maintain the integrity of the amateur system. Point deductions are not simply penalties they are regulatory signals. Once the athlete crosses the limit of two (2) points lost, it is no longer considered a recoverable situation. Three points lost = elimination.

1. Fair Blows:

If an athlete sustains a severe injury caused by a legal strike and is unable to continue, the bout will be stopped, and the injured athlete will lose by TKO (Technical Knockout).

2. Intentional fouls:

Any intentional foul shall result in the immediate disqualification (DQ) of the offending athlete from the competition! In all competition format the athlete who commits a Intentional Foul

and has his result a disqualification from the bout and the tournament, even if their opponent is later medically ruled **unfit** to continue competing.

Under no circumstance shall the disqualified athlete be allowed to return or occupy the position of the injured athlete in the following stage of the competition.

3. Reckless Action Fouls (IMMAF Amateur Tournaments):

A Reckless Action Foul is a foul that results from an intentional technique executed with disregard for the potential risk of committing a foul, even if the athlete's intent was not to break the rules. In simple terms, it occurs when an athlete knowingly engages in an action that carries a high probability of resulting in an illegal outcome due to the specific context, position, or timing and assumes that risk anyway.

This type of foul is not classified as unintentional and is not considered an accidental situation, because the athlete had prior knowledge that the action could result in a violation. The core principle behind a Reckless Action Foul is similar to the legal concept of assumption of risk.

For example, an athlete throws a knee while their opponent is transitioning downward to the ground, assuming the knee will land on the body, but it ends up landing on the face. This is reckless. The athlete understood the risk and still chose to throw the knee.

Intent does not absolve responsibility when the risk is clear and the outcome is dangerous. Athletes are responsible for maintaining control of their techniques at all times, especially in amateur competition, where safety is paramount.

Reckless Action Fouls are treated with the same seriousness as an unintentional foul and may result in warnings, point deductions, or disqualification, depending on the severity and consequence of the action.

1) Reckless Action Fouls Without Injury (athlete can continue)

- **Mandatory one-point** deduction shall be applied to the athlete who committed the foul.

2) Reckless Action Fouls With Injury (athlete can continue)

- **Mandatory Two-point** deduction shall be applied to the athlete who committed the foul.

- If the injured athlete is able to continue but must stop later in the bout due to the effects of the original foul, the bout shall be stopped immediately.
- 1) If the bout is stopped before two rounds are completed, the victory will be awarded to the athlete who did not commit the foul, as the result will be considered a win by disqualification.
- 2) After the Completion of Two Rounds
 - A) WHO IS AHEAD ON THE SCORECARD will be awarded the Technical Decision Victory.
 - B) If the result is a draw, the victory will be awarded to the athlete who did not commit the foul, as the result will be considered a win by disqualification.

Note: In all competition formats:

If the Reckless Action Foul causes an injury but the opponent is still able to continue competing, the offending athlete shall be disqualified from the bout only and may remain in the competition.

3) Reckless Action Fouls With Injury (athlete can not continue)

- The bout will result in a DISQUALIFICATION for the offending athlete from the competition.

Note: In all competition formats:

- If an athlete commits a Reckless Action Foul that results in an injury which immediately removes the opponent from the tournament, the outcome shall be a Disqualification (DQ) from both the bout and the entire competition.
- Under no circumstance shall a disqualified athlete be allowed to return to the competition or replace the injured athlete in the following stage, even if the injured athlete is later ruled medically unfit to continue.

4. Unintentional Fouls:

An unintentional foul occurs when an athlete performs a legal offensive technique, but it unintentionally results in a foul.

Some examples:

- A knee is aimed at the body in a clinch, but the opponent moves unexpectedly, causing an accidental low blow.
- An athlete throws a legal body kick, but the opponent ducks at the same moment, causing an accidental strike to the head of a grounded opponent

1) Unintentional Fouls Without Injury (athlete can continue)

Warnings and/or point deductions may be issued to the athlete who committed the foul.

2) Unintentional Fouls With Injury (athlete can continue)

- Warnings and/or point deductions **should** be considered to the athlete who committed the foul.
- If the injured athlete is able to continue but must stop later in the bout due to the effects of the original foul, the bout shall be stopped immediately.
In this case, The bout shall be declared a No Contest (NC).

3) Unintentional Fouls With Injury (athlete can not continue)

A. Injury Occurs Before the End of the Second Round

- The bout shall be declared a No Contest (NC).
- Both athletes will receive zero points for the bout (ONLY in Round Robin tournament).
- Both athletes may continue in the competition, pending medical clearance.

Exception – Elimination Tournaments (Finals Only)

- In Elimination Tournament formats, when the bout in question is the final match for a gold medal position, a No Contest is not permitted, even if the injury occurred before two rounds were completed.
- In such cases, if the injured athlete cannot continue due to an unintentional foul and the bout cannot be judged (i.e., insufficient rounds), the athlete who committed the

foul regardless of intention shall be declared the loser of the bout.

The result shall be recorded as:

- Gold medal awarded to the injured athlete
- Silver medal awarded to the athlete who caused the injury

This ensures that medal placements are assigned, and no final ends without declared winner.

- B. Injury Occurs After the Completion of Two Rounds
- Point deductions **should** be considered to the athlete who committed the foul
 - Judges' scorecards will determine the winner.
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- In the event of a draw, the fouled athlete will be declared the winner.

ACCIDENTS

Accidents are non-offensive, involuntary actions that occur without intent and without the execution of a attack from strike or grappling technique. In accidents, the athlete did not attempt or apply any movement that constitutes attack technique.

These are incidental contacts, usually the result of positioning, balance, or natural motion during the bout.

Some examples of Accidents:

- A clash of heads is not headbutt.
- Two athletes shoot simultaneously and clash heads this is not a headbutt, but a natural collision
- An athlete slips on the canvas, and during the fall, their arm unintentionally makes contact with the opponent's face or eye.
- An athlete turns or pivots, and their back or elbow brushes the opponent unintentionally, with no intent to strike or engage.

In these cases, there is no foul, even if the bout must be momentarily stopped. The referee may pause the action to allow recovery, but no warning or penalty should be applied.

AN ACCIDENT IS NOT CONSIDERED A FOUL.

1) Accident Without Injury (athlete can continue)

- The bout continues.

2) Accident With Injury (athlete can not continue)

- If it occurs, the athlete who was not injured advances and continues. If neither athlete can continue, the bout is declared a No Contest.

TIEBREAKER PROTOCOL (BOUTS WITH ANY KIND OF FOUL)

In cases where a bout ends in a tie, the following criteria will be applied to ensure fairness and reinforce the importance of competing within the rules:

Tie with Foul:

- If a bout ends in a tie and a foul was committed, the athlete who did not commit the foul will be declared the winner.
- This protocol serves as a deterrent for fouls by ensuring that no competitor benefits from breaking the rules.
- However, if the foul whether **intentional, unintentional or reckless** occurs, the athlete who committed the foul will **automatically lose** the contest.

This system aims to discourage athletes from committing fouls, prevent unnecessary fatigue from additional rounds, and ensure fair outcomes that uphold the integrity of the sport. Athletes should compete with the knowledge that fouls carry serious consequences.

SPECIAL CASES: ADVANCEMENT IN THE TOURNAMENT

Unintentional Fouls & Accidents:

- **Cuts & Concussions:**
If an unintentional foul/accident results in a cut or concussion, the injured athlete will be automatically eliminated for safety reasons, and the result will be recorded as a Doctor Stoppage
- **Low Blows & Eye Pokes:**
If an unintentional/accidental low blow or eye poke occurs, the injured athlete will be given time to recover during the bout.

If the injured athlete cannot continue immediately, but there is a possibility they may continue in the tournament, both athletes must attend the next-day weigh-in for a final medical evaluation.

If the injured athlete is medically stopped at the weigh-in, the athlete who caused the accident will advance in the tournament.

Appeals that result in a No Contest:

Juniors&Seniors:

If a bout is overturned to a No Contest, a one-round rematch (5 minutes) may be scheduled, preferably on the same day, with at least 15 minutes of rest following the original bout to determine who advances. If the result is changed due to an intentional foul, the non-offending athlete will automatically advance, and the offending athlete will receive a disqualification from the tournament or lose the bout, depending on the severity of the infraction.

Intentional and Reckless Fouls & Advancement:

An athlete can advance in the competition and even become a champion in these situations without competing if their opponent is deemed unfit to continue by a doctor's stoppage, like a forfeit situation.

Example:

In a tournament format, if an athlete commits an intentional or reckless foul that causes injury and is subsequently disqualified from the tournament, they are automatically removed from the competition and cannot advance, regardless of any future bracket implications.

If the injured opponent is also deemed medically unfit to continue (e.g., due to a concussion or other serious injury resulting in a doctor's stoppage), then neither athlete is eligible to advance. In this case, the next opponent waiting in the bracket, for example, a semifinalist awaiting the winner of a quarter-final bout will automatically advance to the next round (e.g., the final) without having to compete.

Tournament Placement in Special Cases:

If the incident occurs in the quarter-final:

- The injured athlete will be placed 3rd in the final ranking, reflecting their previous advancement.

If it occurs in the semi-final:

- The athlete who was scheduled to face the winner of the semi-final will be declared the champion by walkover.
- The injured athlete will receive 2nd place.

If the incident occurs in the final bout:

- The injured athlete will be awarded 1st place if their opponent was disqualified for an intentional or reckless foul and they were medically unable to continue.

IMMAF SPECIAL PROTOCOLS

INSTANT REPLAY

The Instant Replay system is a critical tool to ensure accurate decisions in specific bout scenarios.

There are only two situations where Instant Replay may be used:

To review a Bout Ending Sequence by only the referee video replay and for a clarification of specific fouls made only by the central referee.

RED LIGHT PROTOCOL

The primary objective of the Red-Light Protocol is to allow immediate assessment of potential risks or errors without prematurely stopping the bout. When activated, the referee will call for a timeout and assesses the situation.

RED, BLUE, AND WHITE TOWEL

White Towel:

In a MMA and other combat sports, the practice of "throwing in the towel" is a long-standing and widely recognized method for a coach to indicate their athlete's withdrawal from the bout to protect their safety. By throwing a white towel into the ring or bout area, the coach signals to the referee that they want to end the bout to prevent further harm to the competitor. While the referee has the ultimate authority to stop the bout, the act of throwing the towel is respected and considered a crucial safety measure.

Red and Blue Towels:

The red and blue towels is for exclusive use by the Director of Regulatory Affairs and the field of the match Commissioner in critical situations where an athlete's safety is at immediate risk, and the referee has failed to recognize the severity of the situation.

These towels are used in the following scenarios:

- **Undetected Bone Fracture:** When an athlete suffers a visible fracture, but the referee does not notice the injury, allowing the bout to continue, which could worsen the athlete's condition.
- **Loss of Consciousness in a Submission:** If an athlete loses consciousness due to a submission hold (such as a choke), and the referee fails to recognize it, allowing the submission to be maintained for an extended period, increasing the risk of serious injury.

NO FREE WILL RULE

In IMMAF amateur competitions, the concept of "Free Will," which allows an athlete to endure a submission until a bone is broken, is strictly prohibited. Athlete safety is the top priority in amateur sports, and IMMAF aims to protect competitors from preventable injuries.

- IMMAF Amateur MMA focuses on long-term development and injury prevention.
- Coaches (White Towel) are responsible for preventing serious injuries by stopping bouts at the right moment.
- The referees must stop a bout when an athlete is caught in a submission with no means of intelligent defense (Broken Bone).
- When a bout is stopped under this rule, the official result announced will be a **Preventive Submission Stoppage (PSS)**, indicating that the referee intervened to prevent a potential injury.
- This rule applies across all IMMAF age categories to ensure consistency in safeguarding athletes' health.

CHOKES EXCEPTION

While submission locks that threaten bone integrity are strictly regulated, chokes resulting in temporary loss of consciousness are managed differently, provided they are promptly addressed by referees. It is permitted for an athlete to lose consciousness due to a choke; however, they must not remain unconscious within the hold for more than 5 seconds. The bout must be stopped immediately once the referee identifies that the athlete has lost consciousness to prevent further harm. This measure ensures that while chokes can be part of competition strategy, athlete safety remains the top priority.

KNOCKDOWNS AND FLASHDOWNS: PREVENTING THE KO (CONCUSSION)

At IMMAF Tournaments The Referees are also trained to monitor flashdowns and knockdowns. A flashdown occurs when an athlete is briefly stunned or knocked down but still appears able to continue. However, the referee's role is to prevent a knockout (KO) before it happens. If an athlete experiences a flashdown and the referee observes that the athlete's brain is no longer sending signals for intelligent defense, the bout should be stopped before a KO occurs.

Prevention is key. If the referee determines that an athlete is no longer able to intelligently defend themselves, even if they remain standing, the bout must be stopped. The priority is to prevent further damage that could result in a knockout or a possible concussion.