

OUR VIEW

Friday night lights need help to shine

Last year, we used the space on this page to urge those who could and had the interest to check out the possibilities of becoming a referee for prep sports.

We did so because we understand the importance of prep sports in the communities that dot our great region, and now our schools are facing another shortage of football referees.

That's not good news for the future of prep football in our area.

Is it a crisis demanding everyone's attention? Probably not, but it is something our communities across the region should evaluate on their own to find a solution.

The reason, of course, is a simple one. Prep sports — and, in some ways, especially football — hold a very special place in the culture of our area. Every autumn delivers a sense of renewal and excitement on the football field.

Prep football is so much more than just a group of people running around on a field. Football teaches discipline, courage and commitment, and many of us enjoy the Friday nights — or afternoons — when we can take time out of our busy lives and stop for a moment to cheer on amateur athletics.

However, if there are not enough referees for the games, an entire system — carefully built upon schedules and times — is thrown out of whack.

That means games can be delayed or, even worse, canceled.

That, in turn, means one of the most rewarding elements to school — fair and fun athletic competition — fades away.

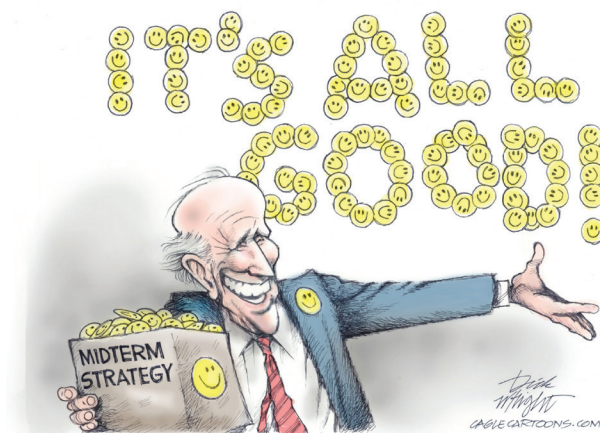
That impacts students and families. The opportunity to learn about life — that often there is defeat, but grit and determination can translate into victory — vanishes when games get canceled.

There is no use avoiding one of the other problems behind the lack of referees: They often bear the brunt of needless criticism and insults during a prep athletic contest. All too often passions get super-charged, and unpleasant and unacceptable words are thrown out onto the field toward referees.

We can't do much about other people's behavior, but we can encourage those who have an interest to give referring a try.

Sure, you're not going to make a million dollars, and yes you will be criticized. Yet, when the criticism does arrive, that is when referees must remember that what they are doing is bigger than a few words cast out by someone with bad manners.

We need referees. Period.



Big changes coming to Oregon Capitol



DICK HUGHES
OTHER VIEWS

If you were building a state capitol, would you construct it on stilts?

Probably not. But such an idea would borrow from the mind of Salem native A.C. Gilbert, who invented the Erector Set in the early 20th century.

More than a century later, the Oregon State Capitol is not actually being erected on stilts. Still, that is a handy image for visualizing the steel shoring that will hold up the massive 1938 portion of the building while base isolators and new columns are installed underneath.

A base isolator is key to reducing damage in an earthquake.

"Think of it as the building sort of sitting on a springy cushion. What it allows it to do is the building stays put while the ground moves under it," said Jodie Jones, the Capitol Accessibility, Maintenance and Safety project director.

Major seismic upgrades are part of phase 3, now underway. Phase 2 has included seismic work in the legislative office wings, hearing rooms and underground parking garage.

Compared with what I've heard from politicians, Jones offered a realistic answer when I asked how a seismically reinforced Capitol might fare in a 9.0 Cascadia quake.

"You can't really just pick a number and say this is seismically safe up to such-and-such a level. The reason for that is, it all depends on where the original earthquake happens. What the epicenter of it is and how close it is to where you are. How many aftershocks," she said.

"People always want to say, 'Are you safe to a Level 9?' Well, I can't say that because a Level 9 under the building is different than a Level 9

that's 50, 100, 300 miles away."

When a quake happens, the seismic upgrades have two aims: 1) Enable the occupants to safely exit the building, and 2) Get the Capitol back up and running as quickly as possible so the work of government can continue, which is doubly important during a disaster.

All this is part of making the "People's House" safe for the people.

How to get in: The Capitol's main entrances are closed due to the construction, but signs direct people to one door each on the east and west sides.

Parking around the Capitol is problematic due to the construction and other reserved spaces. Meanwhile, construction continues across the street at the Justice and Supreme Court buildings, although that work should wrap up this year.

Jones said she appreciates the patience shown by the public, legislators and employees in dealing with the noise, dust and inconvenience. Phase 3 requires the 1938 portion of the Capitol — including the rotunda and governor, secretary of state and treasurer offices — to be vacated for 2-1/2 years.

Still, she said, "We're trying to get this done as quickly as possible." And within budget and on time.

Other improvements: The half-billion-dollar project includes:

- Bringing the electrical, plumbing and HVAC systems up to code, including improved air circulation that meets the latest standards.
- Improved lighting. LED is being installed wherever possible, including the Senate and House chambers.
- Two new staircases to the lower level, which will be called the concourse instead of the basement, and additional staircases on the north side.
- Four additional hearing rooms, which will be on the concourse level.

- A new, larger cafe for the public.
- A new private lounge for all legislators, replacing separate eating areas for the Senate and House.

• Accessibility improvements throughout, including building entrances and ramps on the dais area of the Senate and House chambers.

• Two new courtyards on the first floor, replacing ones in the basement. The basement is being gutted, so everything there is being redone or moving, including the press room.

• Fire-suppression systems and improved fire-detection throughout the Capitol.

• Resealing and repairs throughout, including exterior cleaning.

• Installation of an emergency generator with expanded capacity.

Legislative schedule: Committees will meet virtually for Legislative Days, Sept. 21 to Sept. 23. The Senate will have an in-person floor session Sept. 23.

The Senate and House wings are open to the public, including all member offices. (Being a legislator theoretically is a part-time job, so don't count on finding your lawmaker in the office during the interim.)

The format for the December Legislative Days has not been announced.

Although virtual testimony options will remain available, in-person committee meetings are planned for the 2023 Legislature. Hearing Rooms A-F, 170 and 174 will be available for committees, but not rooms in the old part of the Capitol until construction finishes in late 2025.

The House and Senate chambers will be open during legislative sessions. Jones said public access will be limited for fire safety due to construction.

■ Dick Hughes has been covering the Oregon political scene since 1976.

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