

Sports

Baker Little League cancels season

By **Corey Kirk**
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The Baker Little League board of directors, after weeks of weighing their options and hoping to salvage the season, decided Wednesday to cancel the season due to the coronavirus pandemic.

“We are very, very disappointed,” Board President Jason McClaughry said. “It is certainly not a decision we take lightly, and to ultimately come to this conclusion basically exhausting everything that we could.”

Following direction from Little League International and state officials, the local board’s main objective is to keep the kids, coaches and parents safe. As the state and the county have slowly begun to open up once again, large gatherings like sporting events are still prohibited.

“That is the absolute first consideration in this current situation we find ourselves in,” McClaughry said.

As the local board tried to find a way to salvage the season, other leagues in District 3 canceled their schedules.

That left McClaughry and other board members wondering who Baker all-star teams would be able to play in a district tournament.

“We certainly monitored that,” McClaughry said. “We were looking for interleague play in those other towns, and a part of the decision-making process was to see if there was going to be enough teams for the district tournament.”

Another vital piece in this decision was hearing from the parents around the league.

A couple of weeks ago, the board posted a survey on the Baker Little League Facebook



Photo by Toni Joseph / 2018

Baker second baseman Palmer Chandler gets ready to field a ground ball during a 2018 state tournament game as teammate Isaiah Jones, left, looks on from shortstop.

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— **Jason McClaughry, Baker Little League board of directors president**

page to gauge how many parents would be comfortable having their kids compete this summer.

“Who would be available to play or would we have enough kids to field teams to have meaningful competitive league,” McClaughry said. “We had a third of all the participants reply to the survey.”

Based on these responses, the board was able to get a better sense of what the season might look like. Although some parents were open to a delayed start if it was permitted, their numbers were going to be too low to build teams.

“One of the board’s primary concerns was having enough

players to ensure that we could provide programs at all age levels,” McClaughry said.

Based on all these factors, board members decided that they had no other choice but to cancel this season.

Frustrated as he is about the turn of events, McClaughry is thankful for parents being understanding about the circumstances.

“I don’t think this decision was unexpected based on what our region has been and other towns making similar decisions,” McClaughry said.

Now that the difficult decision has been made, the Baker Little League’s next objective is to give parents an opportunity to decide how they intend to handle the money they spent for the season. Parents have these options:

- They can receive a complete refund
- They can have these fees roll over to the 2021 season
- They can opt for their

money to be treated as a donation.

Though the 2020 season won’t happen, this doesn’t mean Baker Little League will stop working, McClaughry said.

Behind the staff of their dedicated volunteers, they intend to re-evaluate financially to make sure the organization is in good standing, and that fields are maintained.

The focus is now on the 2021 season.

“We’ll start planning for operations next year to make sure to have everything in place that we can,” McClaughry said. “The job won’t stop for the board, there is still a lot to do.”

Those parents interested in Baker Little League’s refund policy can go to the League’s Facebook page to fill out the form they posted so they can handle their money accordingly.

The deadline to fill out the form is July 6.

NBA approves 22-team season starting July 31

By **Tim Reynolds**
AP Basketball Writer

The NBA took a major step toward getting back on the court Thursday, with the league’s Board of Governors approving a 22-team format for restarting the league season next month at the Disney campus near Orlando, Florida.

The vote was 29-1, with Portland casting the dissenting vote, said a person with knowledge of the situation. The person spoke to The Associated Press on condition of anonymity because the league did not publicly release voting details.

Teams would arrive at Disney around July 7 and play an eight-game slate starting July 31 at the ESPN Wide World Of Sports complex. All teams will stay, practice and play at Disney and the NBA Finals — which would have started Thursday if not for the coronavirus pandemic that caused the NBA to suspend its season on March 11 — will likely stretch into October.

“The Board’s approval of the restart format is a necessary step toward resuming the NBA season,” NBA Commissioner Adam Silver said. “While the COVID-19 pandemic presents formidable challenges, we are hopeful of finishing the season in a safe and responsible manner based on strict protocols now being finalized with public health officials and medical experts.”

The eight-game slate — it’s unclear if they will be classified as regular season games — will help determine playoff seeding. From there, the league could have a play-in tournament for the final spot in the Eastern Conference and Western Conference postseason fields.

“While there is still work to be done, we applaud all the effort and collaboration that has gone into finding a safe, competitive format,” Orlando Magic CEO Alex Martins said. “It has always been our feeling that sports have the ability to bring people together and we look forward to restarting the NBA season while using that platform to drive meaningful social impact at this period of time.”

There are numerous other details to continue working through, including finalizing specifics of what the testing plan at Disney will entail and calculating the financial ramifications of playing fewer games.

Another person, also speaking to AP on condition of anonymity because the details of the ongoing talks have not been publicly released, said the NBPA and the NBA are working on “lengthy” medical protocols. The details will be shared with teams once those discussions are completed, which will be long before they arrive at Disney, the person said.

“The NBA is taking all the appropriate measures, and working tirelessly to provide a safe environment for our team and staff,” the Dallas Mavericks said in statement.

RESTAURANTS

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Jerry Shaw, owner of the Inland Cafe, also on 10th Street, said his restaurant has been busier than he expected, but that that hasn’t translated to profit because of the limited seating and astronomical rise of beef prices as a result of the coronavirus pandemic.

“We’re keeping our head above water, but we’re not turning a profit,” Shaw said. “The cost of beef has skyrocketed. The cost of prime rib for me has doubled, and other meat has as well, which is almost hurting us worse than the limited seating.”

Kari Raffety, owner of The Main Event Sports Bar and Eatery on Main Street downtown, said the social distancing requirement has reduced the capacity from 175 to just 40.

Raffety says that “it’s been absolutely no issue keeping our tables full, but when they’re full, that’s all you can have, so it’s hard for business.”

Raffety said that she’s had to raise prices because food costs have gone up so much.

She said the community has been very understanding that it’s something small businesses have to do right now.

The Main Event has also suffered from the loss of liquor sales, as seating at bars isn’t allowed unless the bar or counter faces a window or wall and at least 6 feet is maintained between parties and staff behind the bar.

Raffety is also worried that local businesses won’t see the influx of tourists this summer, as some traditional events, including the Baker City Cycling Classic later this month, and the Hells Canyon Motorcycle Rally in July, have already been canceled.

“I think what we saw was the community rallying around the businesses that were still open and protecting them to make sure they made it through. We saw the community support that makes you know why you keep your business in this town.”

— **Jamie Kassien, co-owner, D&J Taco Shop in Baker City**

“We are gearing up for what we can for the summer,” Raffety said. “Normally this is the time of year where I’m hiring more people for those busy weekends, but it sounds like some of those aren’t going to happen, so that’s tough.”

Jamie Kassien, co-owner of D&J Taco Shop on the first floor of the Baker Tower, said he was worried about his business after his friends in New York had their restaurants completely shut down for a full two weeks.

Oregon decided on a less drastic measure, however, and Kassien said that during the first few weeks when the taco shop was limited to takeout, it had days with more business than any he had seen since opening five years ago.

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PORTLAND

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The news came after thousands of protesters gathered on Wednesday for the sixth consecutive night in Portland and remained peaceful. Gov. Kate Brown on Thursday ordered all flags flown at half-staff to honor Floyd, a handcuffed black man who died after a white Minneapolis police officer pressed his knee to Floyd’s neck.

The use of armed school resource officers in educational settings has been a contentious one.

Beyond their law enforce-

ment role, the model for school resource officers endorsed by the U.S. Justice Department enlists them also as mentors, informal counselors and educators on topics ranging from bullying to drunk driving with the goal of promoting school safety.

But critics of the concept say the officers’ presence can also lead to the criminalization of students, particularly students of color, who may be labeled as troublemakers for things such as not paying attention in class, using a cellphone or other minor infractions. In 2015, a school resource officer in South Caro-

lina was caught on video flipping a female student to the floor and dragging her across a classroom after she refused to surrender her cellphone.

Nationwide, 43% of public schools had an armed law enforcement officer present at least once a week in the 2015-2016 school year, the last time the National Center for Education Statistics released data on this topic.

The officers work closely with school administrators, who are encouraged to reach understandings with officers that disciplinary issues short of anything illegal are to be handled by school officials.

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