

Basketball referee shortage feared

By JEFF BUDLONG

For EO Media Group

LA GRANDE — George Gillette isn't blowing the whistle to signal a panic-level problem when it comes to the number of officials who will call prep basketball games for the upcoming season. But he could be reaching for it soon.

The Blue Mountain Basketball Officials Association commissioner has seen a steady decline in numbers for decades, but the impact now is being truly felt.

Last spring's pandemic-compacted five-week season tested officials across the state and the Blue Mountain Basketball Officials Association — which is based out of Pendleton and handles schools from the state line at Milton-Freewater to Boardman and south to Ukiah through Pilot Rock — was no different.

"We were extremely short and we had less than half of what we would normally have during a regular season," Gillette said.

The association usually counts between 45 and 50 basketball officials able to work games in its region, but during the spring that number dropped to 17. It was further pared down to 12 by the end of the season because of injuries or overwork. It led to a situation where games were rescheduled or even canceled.

Gillette said with the varsity and JV schedules of the 13 schools the association is assisting this year, he is trying to cover about 1,200

games. Schools are moving games to different days, trying to find enough officials to work the games, but that only does so much.

Gillette is hoping the number of available officials increases before games tip off Dec. 1.

It is not a basketball-specific issue either. Football games were being played on Thursdays and Saturdays in addition to Friday to try to alleviate some of the official shortage.

"Moving games around will help, but most of the schools start games at 3 p.m. and it is difficult to get people to break away and be able to be in a gym and toss a ball up at that time," Gillette said.

Lingering issue

Gillette held his first meeting for this season Nov. 1 and had 25 officials attend, but there is a new problem he is having to contend with.

"We don't have a lot of lower-level officials, and last spring basically all 16 officials associations in Oregon were shorthanded," he said. "The (Oregon School Activities Association) allowed the schools to take the level of play at the JV level to the JV2 level, which means they did not have to use certified officials to work those games."

Gillette said he is fearful that could happen again this season. It makes it difficult for schools to find individuals to referee the games.

"The biggest issue is liability because if you have an injury there are a lot of things

that could come into play on the legal side," he said. "(Certified officials) have training in case of injury, and we know what OSAA policy is."

Other associations across the state are facing similar situations and can rarely send their officials to other areas to cover another associations' games.

Disturbing trend

Referee shortage is not just an Oregon issue but a nationwide problem driven by several factors, Gillette noted. It is a decline 30 to 40 years in the making with older officials getting out for a variety of reasons and no one there to take their place.

"Young people watch games growing up and see people in the stands going crazy, and really question whether they want to go out and subjugate themselves to being treated that way," he said.

Gillette has been commissioner for 24 years, but has been an official for 52 years at the high school level. He began as a 19-year-old and has continued on. Today's athletes graduate and have many other avenues to make money or spend their time.

"Trying to get people involved is very difficult," he said.

The lack of officials can also have an impact on the court with more games officiated by two-man crews rather than the preferred three.

"Over half our games in the spring had just two-man

crews," Gillette said. "That is why peoples' bodies started breaking down when they are working four and five nights a week. It doesn't mean in three-man that you don't run, but it is shorter distances and your vision and focus is greater."

Getting involved

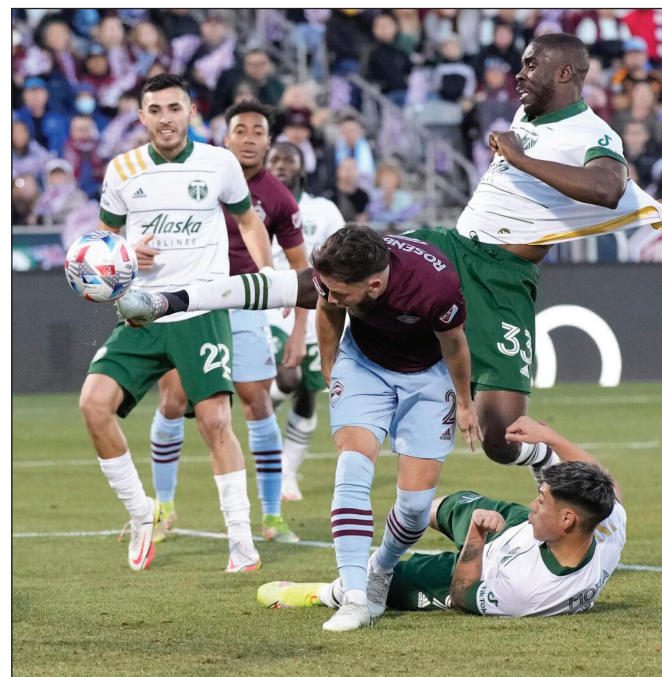
Becoming a certified official begins with a simple click of a mouse on the "Become an official" button on the OSAA website. After choosing a sport, they fill out an online information sheet and the OSAA will reach out to the proper association based on where the individual lives.

For basketball, registration and a fee is required as well as a background check. Individuals watch a video on warning signs when an athlete may have suffered a concussion, and there are six required meetings or at least 10 hours of instruction.

"People also have to take a state certification test that is 50 questions," said Gillette, who said people get three tries at the test.

To officiate at the junior varsity or lower level, people only need to take the test. A varsity-level official must score 75 or better. To qualify for postseason assignments, officials must have three years of experience and score 90 or above.

The latest requirement is to supply a COVID-19 vaccination card or apply for a medical or religious exemption.



David Zalubowski/Associated Press

Portland Timbers defender Larrys Mabilia (No. 33) kicks the ball in for the winning goal past Colorado Rapids defender Keegan Rosenberry, third from left, and goaltender William Yarbrough, far left, in the second half of a Western Conference semifinal Thursday, Nov. 25 in Commerce City, Colorado.

Timbers beat Rapids on late goal to reach MLS West final

COMMERCE CITY, Colo. (AP) — Larrys Mabilia scored in the 90th minute and the Portland Timbers beat the Colorado Rapids 1-0 on Thursday, Nov. 25 to advance to the Western Conference final.

Portland will face the winner of the game Sunday between Sporting Kansas City and Real Salt Lake.

Yimmi Chara's corner kick was deflected high into the air and Cristhian Paredes headed it into the 6-yard box for Mabilia to knock home. Mabilia hadn't scored all season before

connecting in consecutive playoff games.

Portland star playmaker Sebastian Blanco left early in the second half with an apparent leg injury. As he tried to run to a forward pass, Blanco went to the ground, grabbed the back of his taped left leg and immediately signaled for a substitution.

Portland will be without Dairon Asprilla for the conference final after he received a straight red card for violent conduct in second-half stoppage time.

Baker County CHURCH DIRECTORY

BAKER CITY CHRISTIAN CHURCH
Sunday Worship
First Service 8:30 AM
2nd Service & Sunday School 10 AM
Jr. High & High School Youth Tues 6:30 PM
Youth Pastor Silas Moe
675 Hwy 7, Baker City • 541-523-5425

THE CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST OF LATTER-DAY SAINTS
9-11 AM - Baker City 2nd Ward
11:30-1:30 PM Baker Valley Ward
2-4 PM - Baker City 1st Ward
Everyone Welcome

Family History Center is open again - Everything Free - Masks required
Tues & Fri 1-4 PM
Wed & Thurs 10AM-1PM
Wed Evenings 5-8 PM
2625 Hughes Lane, Baker City
541-523-2397

FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
Sunday Worship Service 10:30 AM
1995 4th Street, Baker City
541-523-5201
firstpresbaker.blogspot.com

Calvary Baptist Church
Third & Broadway
541-523-3891
Sundays
10 AM Worship Service
9 AM Sunday School
Thursdays
5:30 - 6 PM
Free Community Dinner
6:15 - 8 PM
Celebrate Recovery
bakercalvarybaptist.com

CHRISTIAN SCIENCE CHURCH
Sunday Service 10:00 AM
www.ChristianScience.com
3rd & Washington, Baker City
541-523-5911

Elkhorn Baptist Church
Sunday School 10 AM
Morning Worship 11 AM
Evening Worship 6 PM
Discovery Kids Worship 6:30 PM
3520 Birch St, Baker City
541-523-4332

FIRST LUTHERAN CHURCH
Service at 11 am
Live Streaming on Facebook
1734 Third Street, Baker City
541-523-3922
firstlutheranbakercity@gmail.com

Baker City Church of the Nazarene
Sunday Worship 9:45am
Sunday School 8:30am
Coffee is 9:15 AM - 9:45 AM
Pastor Troy Teeter
1250 Hughes Lane, Baker City
(Corner of Cedar & Hughes)
541-523-3533
www.bakernaz.com

St. Stephen's Episcopal
Services at 9 AM
1st & 3rd Sundays, Holy Eucharist
2nd & 4th Sundays, Morning Prayer
5th Sunday, Morning Prayer
2177 First Street • Baker City
Entrance on 1st Street
Corner Church & First Streets
541-523-4812

Baker & Haines United Methodist Churches
Currently meeting via Zoom only
Worship 10am Sunday
Please join us
Join Video Zoom Meeting
https://greaterw.zoom.us/j/5415234201
Meeting ID: 541 523 4201
669 900 6833 US (San Jose) (audio only)
Or follow us on Facebook
https://www.facebook.com/BakerUMCOregon
https://www.facebook.com/Haines-United-Methodist-Church-Oregon-291208291510986

ST. BRIGID'S IN THE PINES COMMUNITY CHURCH
11:30 a.m. Services
1st & 3rd Sunday
Holy Eucharist
East Auburn Street, Sumpter
541-523-4812
A Mission of St. Stephen's Episcopal Church in Baker City

AGAPE CHRISTIAN CENTER
Sunday Services
10:00 AM & 6:30 PM
South Highway 7,
Baker City
541-523-6586

The church directory is published once monthly. Information for this directory is provided by participating churches, please call 541-523-3673 for more information.

Thank you to the participating churches and these sponsors:

Whelan Electric, Inc.
523-5756 • CCB 103032

Cliff's Saws & Cycles
2619 Tenth • 523-2412

Coles Tribute Center
1950 Place • 523-4300

GRAY'S WEST & CO.
1500 Dewey • 523-3677