

# Former Baker wrestling coach Pickens honored

## Oregon lifetime service award goes to man who started district's program

Baker City Herald

Bill Pickens, a longtime wrestling coach at Baker High School and Baker Middle School, will receive the Lifetime Service to Wrestling award from the Oregon chapter of the National Wrestling Hall of Fame this fall.

Pickens, who retired in 2001 and moved to Prineville in 2004, will be inducted during a ceremony Oct. 22 in Tigard.

Pickens started the wrestling program in the Baker School

District, serving as head coach at Baker Middle School from 1972 to 1985. The program was at BMS for the first four years, then wrestling was added at the high school.

Pickens was head wrestling coach at BHS in 1986, 1988-89, then from 1992-2001. After retiring in 2001, he volunteered as coach at BMS for two seasons.

Pickens moved to Prineville in 2004, where he volunteered for three seasons in the Crook County High School wrestling program.

He joins Baker High School's first head wrestling coach, Chuck Holliday, in receiving the Lifetime Service to Wrestling award.



The south wall at the Baker High School gym has a new look with fresh paint and slogans.

Photos by Ian Crawford/Baker City Herald

# Gym gets a new look

BY IAN CRAWFORD

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Spectators in the Baker High School gym will be greeted this fall with a new paint scheme featuring vibrant shades of purple, gold and black.

A new Bulldog mural stretches across the south wall, with the slogan "One Team One Family" in Baker colors.

On the north wall, Bulldog logos and paw prints flank a "Welcome to Baker" message.

New crash pads — the pads on the walls behind the baskets to prevent injuries — have been installed as well.

Baker volleyball players have been preparing for the season in the ren-

ovated gym. The season's first home match is set for Thursday, Aug. 25 against Nyssa, with the JV2 match scheduled for 4 p.m., followed by the JV match at 5 p.m. and the varsity contest at 6:30 p.m.

Buell Gonzales Jr., athletic director for the Baker School District, oversaw the design for the gym. It's the first of two projects he has planned. Next year he hopes to have the gym floor refinished to include a paint scheme similar to what adorns the north and south walls.

"The floor is next, not sure on design yet or time frame," Gonzales said. "Hopefully next summer."

The work this summer was completed for less than \$10,000.

Right: The south wall in the Baker High School gym has a new mural and crash pad.



## BHS FALL SPORTS START THIS WEEK

Baker High School's fall sports season is set to begin later this week.

On Thursday, Aug. 25, the Bulldog volleyball team will play host to Nyssa. The JV2 match is set for 4 p.m., followed by the JV at 5 p.m. and the varsity at 6:30 p.m.

Also on Thursday, Baker's cross-country teams will compete at the Splash and Dash meet at Vale, starting at 4 p.m. PST.

Baker's JV and varsity football teams are scheduled to travel to Burns for a jamboree on Friday, Aug. 26. Times and opponents are to be determined.

On Saturday, Aug. 27, the

JV and varsity volleyball teams are scheduled to travel to La Grande for a tournament. Times and opponents are to be determined.

Also on Saturday, the Baker girls soccer team is slated to travel to Ontario for a jamboree, with times and opponents to be determined.

And the Baker boys soccer team will have its alumni game on Saturday at 4 p.m. at the Sports Complex.

A link to all Baker sports schedules is available at <https://www.baker5j.org/apps/pages/athletics/hs-sports>.

— Baker City Herald

# 'A mystery': Northeast Oregon short on high school football referees

## Average age of local officials is 61.5

BY DICK MASON

The Observer

LA GRANDE — A shortage of football referees is looming ominously as the start of high school football season in Northeastern Oregon approaches.

The Northeast Oregon Football Officiating Association, which provides officials for high school and middle school varsity and junior games in Union, Wallowa, Baker and Grant counties, has just 19 people available to officiate this season, seven short of the minimum needed, according to Pete Caldwell, commissioner of the Northeast Oregon Football Association.

"It is the lowest number we have had," said Caldwell, who has been with the Northeast Oregon Football Association for about 25 years.

Caldwell attributes the decline to the fact that many members are over 60 and have been retiring.

"I don't know why more younger people are not getting involved in officiating, it is a mystery," said Caldwell, noting that the average age of his association's members is now 61.5 years.

He said that unless the association is able to recruit more people to officiate, it will face the prospect of requesting schools on some occasions to change their schedules so that all games can be played. He said that schools may be asked to move some contests to Thursday or Saturday — instead of Fridays, when there are an unusually high number of games — to reduce the logjam, making it possible for officials to be provided for all of them.

Caldwell, who said rescheduling had to be done several times in 2021 when there was also a shortage of officials, said it is not easy.

"It is a huge headache," he said.

Doug Hislop, of La Grande, an official with the association for the past 52 years, also said rescheduling games is not ideal. He said he fears that some schools trying to reschedule games may find it creates so



The Observer, File

Ab Orton, a referee with OSAA, walks off the field after a game between La Grande and Vale on Friday, Sept. 17, 2021. The Northeast Oregon Football Officiating Association, which provides officials for high school and middle school varsity and junior games in Union, Wallowa, Baker and Grant counties, has just 19 people available to officiate this season, seven short of the minimum needed, according to Pete Caldwell, commissioner of the Northeast Oregon Football Association.

many complications that they instead cancel contests.

Caldwell is hoping that people will step forward to serve as officials to reduce the shortage. He said that previous officiating experience is not needed.

"We can teach anyone to be an of-

ficial," he said.

Caldwell said those starting out may first be assigned to middle school and junior varsity games before officiating varsity contests. This will allow them to develop their skills in a less pressure packed environment, Caldwell said.

## More Information

People interested in serving as football officials for the Northeast Oregon Football Officiating Association should call Pete Caldwell at 541-910-7020.

Caldwell said many people who serve as officials are driven to do so because they want to help youth.

"They want to give back to the community and kids," he said.

Hislop said this a motivating factor for him, noting that he will never forget how referees made it possible for him to participate in high school athletics as a youth growing up in Idaho.

"I had the opportunity to play football and wrestle because we had officials," he said.

Others are drawn to officiating because of their love of football.

"It gives people chance to be part of the game," Caldwell said.

Officials are paid on a per game basis, making \$73.50 for officiating class 4A games. Officials are paid a little less for officiating varsity games involving schools in the 3A, 2A and 1A classifications for smaller schools.

# Agada sparks Sporting KC to 4-1 romp over Portland

KANSAS CITY, Kan. (AP) — William Agada scored two goals and Sporting Kansas City cruised to a 4-1 victory over the Portland Timbers on Sunday, Aug. 21.

Agada gave Sporting KC (7-15-5) a 1-0 lead in the 31st minute. Andreu Fontàs found the net in the 40th minute and Erik Thommy scored two minutes later as Sporting KC took a 3-0 lead into halftime.

Agada polished off his brace in the 75th minute with his fifth goal of the season. He also picked up an assist on Thommy's score.

Portland (7-8-12) avoided a shutout on a goal by Sebastián Blanco — his sixth — in the 90th minute.

John Pulskamp had four saves for Sporting KC. Al-jaz Ivacic saved five shots for Portland.

Portland came in 4-0-3 in its last seven matches with Sporting KC. The Timbers have matched a team-record five-match winless streak set in 2019.

Portland set a team record for goals in a 7-2 win over Sporting KC on May 14.

# Thibodeaux, former Duck and Giants' top pick, hurt in preseason game

BY TOM CANAVAN

Associated Press

EAST RUTHERFORD, N.J. — Linebacker Kayvon Thibodeaux, the No. 5 overall choice in the draft, left the New York Giants' preseason game in the second quarter Sunday night, Aug. 21, and was ruled out with a knee injury.

The Giants also lost kicker Graham Gano to a concussion, while returner-wide receiver C.J. Board was

sidelined with a rib injury and sixth-round draft pick Darrian Beavers left with a knee injury.

Thibodeaux was hurt when he was hit on the right knee on a cut block by Bengals tight end Thaddeus Moss on a running play from the Giants 15. It happened right after Board fumbled on a kickoff return.

Thibodeaux lay on the ground holding his knee as trainers ran on the field. A cart was quickly driven

on the field to take him to the locker room but he got up and walked to the team's medical tent to be examined. He was later taken to the locker room.

There was no immediate word on the extent of his injury, but the team said he would not return. Board sustained a rib injury on his return and he was ruled out.

The 35-year-old Gano was hurt attempting to make a tackle on a 73-

yard kickoff return by Chris Evans in the second quarter.

Much was expected this season of Thibodeaux, a superb athlete out of Oregon who was considered one of the top edge rushers in the draft.

Beavers, a sixth-round pick out of Cincinnati, hurt his left knee in the third quarter on a running play.

Cincinnati lost backup guard Lamont Gaillard to a calf injury in the third quarter.

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