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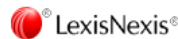
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## Ref Shortage Prompts Proposal to Change HS Soccer Scheduling (</high-school/ref-shortage-props-proposal-to-change-hs-soccer-scheduling.html>)

by Victor Flores, Writer October 2015

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Idaho Falls Post Register

Victor Flores, Writer

During a phone interview, District 6 soccer referee commissioner Chuck Raines received another call. It came from District 5 commissioner Dan Murphy.

"I know what he wants," Raines said in the interview. "He's short referees for tomorrow. Honestly, I should be on the phone contacting people to say, 'Can you help us out, do some refereeing tomorrow?'"

This has been a common scenario for Raines and Murphy this season. Districts 5 and 6 have struggled all fall to get full referee crews for soccer games, resulting in postponements.

"We're going by the skin of our teeth almost every night," Raines said.

With soccer season wrapping up, both districts have discussed recruiting more referees and adjusting schedules to help the situation.

It's hard for Raines or Sam Knighton - the rules interpreter for District 5 officials - to pinpoint how many soccer games have been postponed this season due to lack of referees, especially in comparison to previous years. But they agreed that this has been a rough year for referee availability. That stems from a decline in officials from 2014 to 2015.

The number of District 6 referees dropped from 45 to 34 after last year, according to Raines. District 5 lost four senior referees after last season and now has 22, Knighton said.

Knighton and Raines said some of those officials moved. Some couldn't handle the criticism from coaches and parents. Some were too old and/or weren't in good enough shape (referees often run miles per game, Raines said).

"I don't know if it's a trend downward," Knighton said. "Some years we lose a few, some years we gain a few. It ebbs and flows."

There's also a broader issue with scheduling.

Raines said 80 to 90 percent of soccer games this season were played on Tuesdays and Thursdays. In many cases, there were games at eight or more soccer venues per day. Two referees are required for each game, but three is preferable, so 24 referees are called upon when games are played at eight different venues.

"At 10 venues, if everybody refereed, I'd barely be able to cover it with 34 referees total," Raines said.

The best way for either district to avoid these problems in the future is to simply get more referees. Raines said he recruits officials from BYU-Idaho, the summer Idaho Falls adult league and the United State Soccer Federation certification program in the spring.

The districts might gain more referees by next season, but they can't rely on that. That's why District 6 board of control president Chris Tucker has proposed changing next year's schedule.



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The proposal would operate under this general premise: 2A and 3A schools would only play on Tuesdays and Thursdays, while 5A and 4A would only play Mondays, Wednesdays and Saturdays.

"That cuts the number of games in half, potentially, that will be played on (any) night," Raines said. "It would be a huge relief from a referee perspective."

Raines would also like to see games spread out during a given day. If, say, four Saturday games in Idaho Falls were separated by two hours, one referee crew could make it to every game. The referee pool would be used more efficiently, as a result.

These strategies might be the only way to prevent postponements in future seasons.

"We're trying to help the situation," Tucker said. "If there were more refs, we wouldn't have to worry about it."

October 15, 2015

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Jay 6 hours ago

May I suggest? Start dealing with the misguided fan (parent) behavior and you will keep more officials working.

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