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New union contract contains a retirement incentive for veterans

NEWS by Mark Schultz - October 4, 2019 💬 1



Retiring officials sometimes leave their shoes on the field after their last game.

According to an ESPN report, the NFL will offer a retirement incentive to 22-officials with 20 or more years of experience, provided they retire before the start of the 2020 season.

While we don't expect every official to take the retirement incentive, the upcoming offseason could see the biggest exodus of officials in six years, when a whopping 14 officials voluntarily retired, or took a separation buyout.

Potential for another big exit

In the past two years, the NFL has lost seven referees to retirement and four non-referees left the field. One official was terminated by the league in the middle of last season.

It is understandable why the NFL wants to move older officials out the door and hire new ones. First of all, there are a whopping 42 college officials in the Officiating Development Program (ODP). These officials have been training and waiting for a position to open up on the NFL roster. The NFL likes to hire an official in their 40s, so the clock is ticking for some in the ODP. The NFL has invested in these officials and wants that investment to pay off.



The advertisement features a smiling man in a light blue shirt and glasses, looking towards the right. In the top right corner, there is a blue square with the Old National Bank logo and a play button icon. Below the image, a yellow banner contains the text "Business Checking". Underneath, a white box with a blue border contains the text "Switch and earn up to \$1,100 for your business!". At the bottom, a dark blue bar contains the text "Member FDIC" on the left and "SEE DETAILS" with a right-pointing arrow on the right.

Secondly, newer officials are in a lower salary bracket and it costs the NFL less to pay its zebra herd.

Finally, new officials are hired on a three-year probationary period. A new official, without security as a tenured, respected veteran, will be more pliable to the NFL regarding mechanics, style, signaling and rule changes. A renegade or rebel probationary employee rarely lasts in any business.

On the other hand, any veteran official will say that it takes a good five years for a new official to finally get the feel of the pro game, learn its nuances and feel confident in their abilities. After every large roster turnover, there are a few years of controversies that can attributed to officiating inexperience. Does Al Riveron want that headache?

Also, a mass exodus next year, means another mass exodus in 20 – 25 years as the young officials of today age out. It can turn into a vicious cycle.

Other CBA odds and ends

According to the ESPN article, look for officiating trainers to return. For several years, retired officials served as trainers specializing at a specific position. For instance, Jerry Markbreit and the late Red Cashion trained and mentored referees. Ben Montgomery mentored line of scrimmage officials. At its height, there were nine officiating mentors – now there are two.

The NFL Referees Association wanted the mentoring program to return to help with an official's professional development. The mentors will not grade film. The mentor is there to share confidential counsel to officials to help them improve. It's a shame that this program withered on the vine; however it is back and can only help the predicted influx of new officials.

To coordinate the mentoring and professional development program, the NFL front office will create a new vice president position dedicated to training programs.

Return of full time officials?

The new CBA allows for the return of full-time officials, if the NFL wants it. The union didn't object. Full-time officiating was a major road block in the bitter 2012 labor dispute.

The NFL got full-time officials, but honestly, the idea fizzled out and was suspended for this year. Frankly, there aren't enough games and activities for a full-time official to do that makes it economically worth the league's time. If the NFL builds a better full-time officials mouse trap, it could return.

A new union contract almost always signals changes and the next 10 months will see many changes in NFL officiating.

		Yrs 2019 crew	College	Occupation
R 51	Carl Cheffers	20	California-Irvine	sales manager
R 66	Walt Anderson	24	Texas	former college officiating coordinator, retired

				dentist
R 99	Tony Corrente	25	Cal State-Fullerton	former college officiating coordinator, retired educator
U 44	Jeff Rice	25 Blakeman	Northwestern	attorney
U 124	Carl Paganelli	20 Boger	Michigan State	retired federal probation officer
U 129	Bill Schuster	20 Corrente	Alfred	insurance broker
DJ 28	Mark Hittner	23 Smith	Pittsburg State	investment broker
DJ 68	Tom Stephan	21 Anderson	Pittsburg State	president and CEO
DJ 90	Mike Spanier	21 (swing)	St Cloud State	middle school principal
DJ 134	Ed Camp	20 Hochuli	William Paterson	physical education teacher
LJ 18	Byron Boston	25 Anderson	Austin	tax consultant, Southland Conference officiating coordinator
LJ 32	Jeff Bergman	28 Kemp	Robert Morris	president and chief executive officer, medical services
LJ 84	Mark Steinkerchner	26 Torbert	Akron	vice president
LJ 108	Gary Arthur	23 Martin	Wright State	president, commercial printing company
FJ 33	Steve Zimmer	23 Allen	Hofstra	attorney
FJ 97	Tom Hill	21 Hochuli	Carson Newman	teacher
SJ 3	Scott Edwards	21 Torbert	Alabama	environmental engineer
SJ 15	Rick Patterson	24 Anderson	Wofford	banker
SJ 41	Boris Cheek	24 Corrente	Morgan State	director of operations and management
BJ 46	Perry Paganelli	22 Blakeman	Hope College	retired high school administrator
BJ 61	Keith Ferguson	20 Anderson	San Jose State	sales
BJ 112	Tony Steratore	20 Boger	California (Pa.)	co-owner, supply company

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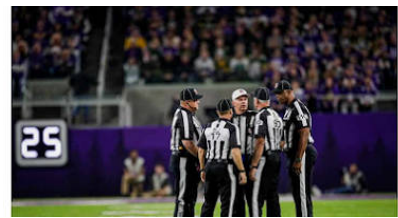
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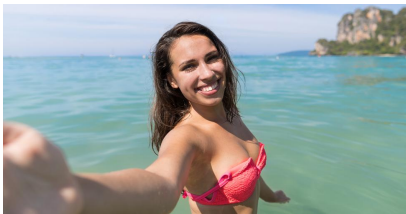
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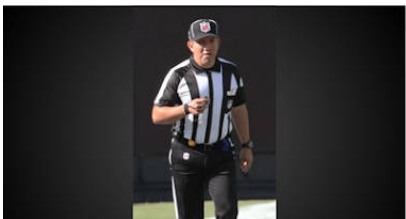
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Mark Schultz

Mark Schultz is a high school football official, freelance writer and journalist. He first became interested in officiating when he was six years old, was watching a NFL game with his father and asked the fateful question, "Dad, what are those guys in the striped shirts doing?"



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Ken McManus (@Kokoken53)

October 4, 2019 at 9:36 pm

The main reason Major League Baseball, the NBA and the NHL have full-time officials when the NFL doesn't is the schedule. The other leagues have games every night of the week; the NFL schedules ONE game on Thursday, 14 games on Sunday and ONE game on Monday. To justify having full-time officials, the owners would first have to change their scheduling philosophy. If we have four

games Sunday, Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday, you have four crews working Sunday-Tuesday games and four crews working Monday-Wednesday games. But even then, would it be worth cutting the staff from 17 crews to eight in order to give the officials who remain two games a week to work instead of one?

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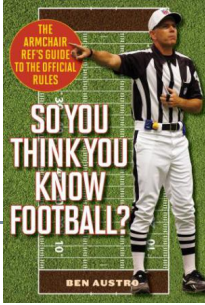
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