

THE NATIONWIDE DECLINE in SPORTS OFFICIALS

The number of sports officials is decreasing nationwide. What effect will this have on interscholastic sports in the U.S.?

NATIONAL DECREASE IN SECONDARY SCHOOL ATHLETICS OFFICIALS

300,000
TO
350,000

TOTAL HIGH SCHOOL OFFICIALS IN THE U.S.

TENNESSEE

4,500

OFFICIALS REGISTERED IN 2016

DOWN 200 FROM PREVIOUS YEAR

NEVADA

812

OFFICIALS REGISTERED IN 2016

DOWN FROM 1,300 IN 2015

KANSAS

1,887

BASKETBALL REFS IN 2015

DOWN FROM 2,027 IN 2013

OREGON

12%

DECREASE IN OFFICIALS

IN THE LAST THREE YEARS

WHY ARE THERE FEWER OFFICIALS?

- OLDER OFFICIALS RETIRE AND YOUNGER OFFICIALS ARE NOT REPLACING THEM**
 - In Kansas, the average age of softball umpires is 60
- OFFICIALS USUALLY OFFERED FAIRLY LOW PAY—AVERAGE \$24,870 PER YEAR IF FULL-TIME**
 - Per game pay ranges from \$35 to \$91, depending on the sport and location
- BACKGROUND CHECK POLICY IMPLEMENTED IN NOVEMBER 2015 IN TENNESSEE**
 - Officials required to pay their own \$5-35 fee to get a criminal background check to be completed each year to remain an official
- DIFFICULT TO RECRUIT NEW OFFICIALS AS ENVIRONMENT GROWS MORE NEGATIVE**
 - Verbal and physical abuse from fans increases each year
 - Poor behavior from spectators cited as #1 reason officials left the field
 - 85.7% of officials would consider terminating their officiating services if environment worsens
- OPPORTUNITY TO ADVANCE FROM HIGH SCHOOL TO COLLEGE LEVEL OR HIGHER AS AN OFFICIAL IS DIFFICULT**
 - Younger refs may spend 5-15 years at high school level
 - Very limited number of college official positions open up each year



HOW DOES IT AFFECT SECONDARY SCHOOL ATHLETICS

FEWER GAMES

FOR EACH SPORT
PER SEASON



SUB-VARSITY TEAMS

ARE BEING DROPPED ENTIRELY
AT SOME SCHOOLS

Officials are assigned to varsity level games first so shortages affect younger sport levels first

RESCHEDULING OF GAMES

TO ENSURE ENOUGH
OFFICIALS AT EACH GAME

This leads to officiating games with fewer officials than guidelines recommend



SOME SPORTS

BEING DROPPED
ALTOGETHER FROM
SCHOOL DISTRICTS

Lack of officials caused near-extinction of Florida's high school soccer teams



WHAT IS BEING DONE TO INCREASE THE NUMBER OF SECONDARY SCHOOL OFFICIALS?

- TENNESSEE SECONDARY SCHOOL ATHLETIC ASSOCIATION COMMITTEE** plans to increase recruitment and retention by working with many people who have been in the industry for decades and will have first-hand knowledge about what younger officials need
- WISCONSIN INTERSCHOLASTIC ATHLETICS ASSOCIATION** sent out a reminder of their sportsmanship guidelines in early 2016
 - Guidelines to teach and encourage proper sportsmanship
 - Rules ban chants that are "clearly intended to disrespect"
 - Potential to create a more positive environment at high school athletic events
- NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF SPORTS OFFICIALS**
 - Backed legislation in 20 states to increase punishment for people who attack refs
 - Provides insurance for officials who are victims of assault by spectators or athletes
- KANSAS STATE HIGH SCHOOL ACTIVITIES ASSOCIATION** created a \$1,000 grant
 - First year it went toward creating a video library for training officials
 - Coaches also asked to identify future refs among their players

