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ATTN: All Utahns Interested in Officiating High School Sports

When you watch a game, what are the most important things you're looking for?

Two teams, sure; a prepared facility, absolutely; equipment, that's a must. All those aspects are needed to hold a successful high school sporting event in Utah, but what am I missing? What group is necessary to ensuring a safe, educational environment for high school sports? Officials, the third team on the field.

Managing officials in the state of Utah is a unique and rewarding challenge. Because of how diverse our schools and students are, providing officials around the state to 150+ member schools are a constant battle in a war that's never won. Trying to recruit new officials is as constant as breathing, and training them to be better is just as important.

Every year, we have more and more high school students making the choice to involve themselves in their schools and communities, meaning we have more and more games being played. Utah also continues to experience a population boom, meaning we have more and more schools who are taking part in UHSAA activities.

I think you probably get the problem – we have more participants than ever, meaning we need more officials than ever. However, the problem for the UHSAA is we are losing numbers of qualified officials while adding participants, creating a unique problem.

The reason why officials retire or leave the hobby are many – lack of time, age, lack of physical ability, and an exhaustion from dealing with unsportsmanlike fans. All of these problems have morphed into full-fledged reasons for why the state of Utah is down in officials in nearly every sport.

However, for all of the reasons why people aren't officiating, there's so many reasons why people should officiate. First and foremost, officiating allows people who were likely student-athletes to teach and preside over activities that made a significant difference in their own lives; something that can't be quantified in terms of value. While that emotional pay is high, there is a financial compensation as part of officiating, with game fees and mileage to/from contests.

There's also a physical fitness benefit to officiating, as you're active and moving around. To put it succinctly, when was the last time your gym paid you for working out, while also giving you the feeling of making the lives of student-athletes better?

Officiating is an activity everyone can find a place in, and a way for sports-crazed people (like you) to be a part of the game. Most successful officials are former athletes who know the rules, know the game, and know they want to be involved in sports.

To become an official and make a difference in the lives of kids in the state of Utah, go to www.highschoolofficials.com or email jeffcluff@uhsaa.org. I can promise you that I will personally get in contact with each and every inquiry, so we can find the best fit for you in officiating.

I look forward to speaking with you as we help make high school activities an even greater experience for Utah high school students.

Yours in Service,

Jeff Cluff

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