

SPORTS

Storr: Basketball officiating in country mediocre at best

The basketball program in the country is seriously challenged to motivate further development, at all levels.

What's going on with the training aspect within the Bahamas Basketball Federation (BBF)? Is the officiating, generally appropriate? How is the national basketball fraternity adapting to the ongoing NCAA and international rule changes? Indeed, what is the federation doing about heightening the development process of the sport at all levels, beyond the focus on competition?

Today, in this column, officiating is the key subject. In the words of the long-time basketball stalwart Sharon "The General" Storr, basketball officiating in the country is in a deplorable state.

"Personally, officiating (of basketball in The Bahamas) is at the worst stage it has ever been. The point is that while we do have people who can train officials properly, if you put all of the technical aspects and theories in place, you will turn a lot of people off. I can tell you, that many are just not prepared to go through the important phases and the tests. They just don't want to deal with the real and full process. So we have ended up with a lot of those who just want to put on an official's outfit and blow a whistle. That is the extent of their desire it seems," Storr lamented when we had a recent chat about the game that is synonymous with him.

Indeed, it's now a culture, according to Storr, of "settling for mediocrity."

This is an indictment of the game that the federation oversees on behalf of the International Basketball Federation and the Bahamian sporting landscape. Efforts made by the federation to upgrade officiating have not manifested the anticipated expansion of quality officials. Storr informed that the



REFEREE BUSINESS – Calling a game at the YMCA

federation has paved the way for at least two officials to be internationally certified and they have the authority to accredit other Bahamian referees.

Obviously, at that point there is a breakdown within the basketball system. Apparently the attitude of those who are coming forward to be trained is such that the result is, in Storr's words "an upside down situation." He did take the federation to task and accused the directorate of looking through "very narrow lens"

regarding the overall development of basketball in the country.

"In how many Family Islands are the basic aspects of the game passed on to those who are interested? Where and when are clinics held in these islands. In how many islands is there an emphasis on the refereeing aspect? What about the recruitment drive for referees? It looks like just a big boys club to me," said Storr.

The veteran sports associate who is a member of the National Sports Hall of Fame, was locally certified to referee almost three decades ago. He would love to get the opportunity to be internationally classified, but requires a special dispensation because of being over 60. Perhaps the federation should move around the "personality issues" and embrace dedicated basketball pro-

ponents such as Storr and Tony Williams, etc. and bring them into the fold to assist with the national officiating program.

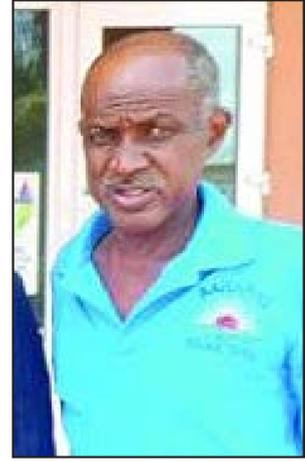
It is the federation that has the jurisdiction from which it can apply for special age dispensations for Storr, Williams and all others who demonstrate the interest in enhancing basketball officiating in the country.

"Officiating is difficult. A lot goes into it if you are going to do the job properly, a lot of research and keeping up with the game worldwide. There has to be also, full acceptance of wanting to contribute to the development of the game, rather than being involved just for the show," said Storr.

I compliment Storr for having the courage to publicly address the issue of officiating. He will be seen by some as a critic, but "the General" has offered words



CHARLIE 'SOFTLY' ROBINS
BBF President



SHARON
'THE GENERAL' STORR
basketball stalwart

of wisdom, in my view.

On Wednesday morning, I reached BBF President Charlie Robins. He was in Florida securing materials for hurricane preparation. Robins promised

to engage in a basketball discussion upon his return.

• To respond to this column, kindly contact Fred Sturupp at sturupp1504@gmail.com or at [WhatsApp on 727-6363](https://www.whatsapp.com/channel/00299a61111111111111)

Sports Scope

By Fred Sturupp



Miami Hurricanes, other teams bow to Irma's potential impact

TIM REYNOLDS,
AP Sports Writer

CORAL GABLES, Fla. (AP)

— The Miami Hurricanes decided to take the weekend off, the Miami Dolphins were given the weekend off, and many other teams around the state of Florida kept a very cautious eye Wednesday on powerful and destructive Hurricane Irma as it churned across the Atlantic on a path toward the U.S.

No. 16 Miami canceled its game at Arkansas State, in part out of concern that the Hurricanes may get stranded away from home if the storm strikes South Florida. The Dolphins and Tampa Bay Buccaneers, who were scheduled to play a Miami home game Sunday, now will get the opening week of the NFL year off and won't meet until Nov. 19.

No. 10 Florida State and No.

22 Florida moved up their Saturday home games to midday starts, out of caution. A slew of other events were either cancelled or rescheduled, all in deference to the storm that forecasters believe may start affecting the state by Saturday — possibly as a direct hit.

"This is about what's best for our students, coaching staff and their families," Miami athletic director Blake James said, after telling Arkansas State about the decision that wasn't exactly warmly received. "We're not confident that we were going to get back after the game and we weren't going to leave our players stranded somewhere. There's bigger things than football."

Arkansas State athletic director Terry Mohajir said his team offered several options to Miami, including moving the game to Friday night.

"Ultimately, the Miami administration made the decision not

to travel," Mohajir said.

Florida International is hitting the road, now set to play Alcorn State on Friday night at Birmingham, Alabama. That game was originally set to be FIU's home opener (and first home game under Butch Davis) on Saturday, but Irma forced the switch to a neutral site.

Forecasters aren't certain what Irma will do to Florida. Forecasts have been fluctuating for the past several days and likely will continue to do so as the storm that has been packing 185 mph winds gets closer to the peninsula. Vacationers — and in some cases, residents of vulnerable areas — have been urged to evacuate the Florida Keys and parts of Miami-Dade and Broward counties.

It's the uncertainty that has teams guessing, and the Hurricanes said if they were going to err they would do so on the side of safety.

"We made the collective decision that we simply cannot put our student-athletes, coaches and staff in danger traveling to and from contests," James said.

All Hurricanes teams scheduled to play this weekend, home and away, have seen those contests cancelled.

Florida State and Florida were both going to play night games as their home openers this weekend, with the Seminoles facing Louisiana-Monroe and the Gators playing host to Northern Colorado.

"It won't affect us until much later in the week," Seminoles' coach Jimbo Fisher said. "They're just trying to get it for some of the families to be able to get in and get out of here. ... There's a lot of things that are very important, and a game is very important, but also people's lives and things like that are, too."

More football schedule chang-

es may be coming.

No. 21 South Florida's game at Connecticut on Saturday may either be changed or called off, officials said, and Florida Atlantic's trip to No. 9 Wisconsin was still on — but there are contingencies in place, if the Owls can't get home Saturday night as scheduled.

In other Irma-related sports news Wednesday:

— The Florida Panthers chartered a plane to take about 90 people — players, staff, coaches and families — and 20 pets to Boston and out of Irma's path on Friday. Panthers CEO Matthew Caldwell said the team originally chartered a smaller plane, then upgraded when more seats were needed. The team is planning to stay in the Boston area through at least the weekend, depending on what Irma does.

— Gulfstream Park in Hallandale Beach, Florida (about 20 miles north of downtown Mi-

ami) called off its racing cards for Thursday, Friday, Saturday and Sunday. Track officials are tentatively hoping to resume racing on Wednesday, Sept. 13.

— A four-team tournament for NHL prospects in Estero, Florida (on the southwest corner of the state) was called off. The tournament was to include Florida, the Washington Capitals, Tampa Bay Lightning and Nashville Predators. Later Wednesday, Tampa Bay and Nashville decided to have their rookie teams play in a three-game series that will start Sunday in Nashville.

— The University of South Florida, in Tampa, cancelled a Thursday home women's soccer match against Mississippi State, and a volleyball tournament that was to include USF, Florida Atlantic, Oral Roberts and Bethune-Cookman on Friday and Saturday. USF's women's soccer game at Florida on Sunday has also been called off.

NFL: Dolphins-Bucs will not be played in Miami this week

STEVEN WINE,
AP Sports Writer

DAVIE, Fla. (AP) — The Miami Dolphins' season opener against the Tampa Bay Buccaneers will not be played in Miami this week, but may be moved to a neutral site because of Hurricane Irma, the NFL said Tuesday.

If the game is not relocated, it will be postponed until November, when the teams share the

same bye week.

Kick-off had been scheduled for Sunday at 1 p.m. EDT, but Irma is forecast to threaten South Florida this weekend. The NFL decided against switching the game to Thursday night in Miami.

"In the interest of public safety in light of the current state of emergency, the NFL, in consultation with state and local officials as well as both clubs, has decided that playing an NFL game in

South Florida this week is not appropriate," the league said in a statement.

"The league will continue to examine other options, including playing the game this Sunday at a neutral site or in Miami later this season."

A decision on when and where to play is expected by Wednesday.

"We're going to keep practicing and getting ready for the game

until somebody tells us different," Dolphins' coach Adam Gase said.

"I want to play today if we could," Miami receiver Jarvis Landry said.

The teams would prefer to avoid moving the game to the weekend of Nov. 19, because it would mean both teams would play their entire season without a break.

"Like 16 weeks straight?"

Landry said. "It's a long season, let's be honest about it. We could use that bye."

Irma is forecast to be a major hurricane as it approaches Florida later this week.

"I've never been through anything like that," said Gase, a Michigan native in his second season with the Dolphins. "I don't know what to expect. I just want our guys to think, 'Hey, we know what we're doing.'"

Quarterback Jay Cutler, who joined the Dolphins a month ago, said this is also his first flirtation with a hurricane. He acknowledged the distraction for players as they worry about their families and preparations, but said a change in the kick-off won't faze them.

"We're open to anything," Cutler said. "This team is young and flexible, and they're ready to rock."