

For Immediate Release

Contact: Lloyd Pierson
Perennial Sports and
Entertainment
202.638.5090
lperson@perennialsg.com

NBA Referees Face Lockout to Begin 2009-2010 Season

Washington, D.C., September 10, 2009 – The NBA will start the 2009-2010 Season without the NBA referees after the League ended negotiations this week. The impending lockout is based on the referees' refusal to concede to all of the NBA's demands for significant cutbacks to the referees' budget.

After months of negotiations, the NBA continues to insist on cutting 10 percent from the referees' budget for the 2009-2010 Season. The National Basketball Referees Association's (NBRA) most recent proposal, which the NBA rejected, offered to cut more than \$2.5 million from last season's budget. This includes cutting travel costs by 15 percent and per diem by 7 percent. The referees have also agreed to freeze their salaries for the 2009-2010 Season. This represents a 10 percent savings to the NBA from the salaries it paid during the 2008-2009 Season. While demanding cutbacks, the League also says it is necessary to add two new NBA Developmental League referees to the staff, even though the referees have agreed to take on the additional workload.

The NBRA recognizes the difficult economic climate, and has been attempting to work with the NBA to negotiate a two-year contract to ride out the current downturn (previous contracts were for five years). "We understand that everyone in the country is facing tough times, but the NBA is continuing to make money, sign large marketing and television contracts, and expand their business internationally," said Lamell McMorris, spokesman for the NBRA. "We have attempted to negotiate in good faith and give substantial cuts to get the referees back to work."

Mr. McMorris also represents the Major League umpires, who are also currently negotiating their collective bargaining agreement with Major League Baseball. Joe West, President of the umpires' union, stated that he is "saddened that the NBA referees have reached an impasse with the NBA, and that a lockout appears likely. I understand that, as David Stern abruptly ended [the latest] bargaining session, he told the negotiators to 'go negotiate your deal with baseball.' For Mr. Stern's information, negotiations between the umpires and Major League Baseball have been going fairly smoothly, thanks in large part to the professionalism of Mr. McMorris's team and the executives at MLB. Even though our contract expires in December, we are hoping to get a deal done well in advance of that date. Mr. Stern may want to think about taking a page from our playbook."

While the NBA maintains that cost-cutting is essential, the League has given raises and bonuses this year to the senior staff responsible for overseeing the referee program, including Ron Johnson (Senior VP for Referee Operations), Bernie Fryer (VP and Director of Officials), and Joe Borgia (VP of Referee Operations).

The NBA's Annual Referees' Fall Training Camp begins September 20th, and the first preseason game is scheduled for the 1st of October. Despite the NBRA's willingness to agree to reduce costs, the NBA has already begun to contact replacement referees to work at least the early part of the preseason and regular season.

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About the NBRA

The National Basketball Referees Association represents the referees of the National Basketball Association.