

sports

FOLLOW
@PLNUSEALIONS

Mixed Reviews

ANDREW HANSEN
STAFF WRITER

At any sporting event with high stakes, it is common to hear chants of “Ref, you suck. Ref, you suck” ringing out from the stands. Or maybe the fans chant something that sounds a lot like “Bull ----” in protest of a bad call. (The second might be heard at non-Nazarene schools in particular.)

Being an official is a thankless job, one where every decision they make usually makes half the fans watching unhappy. It is difficult to make split-second decisions and get every call right, yet many fans, coaches and players often expect perfect decisions from the officials.

Advancements in technology have allowed referees to improve the accuracy of their calls,

allowing them to change certain calls to make sure they get it right. In 1999, the NFL instituted its modern replay system that allows coaches to challenge calls. When a coach challenges a call, the refs are able to watch the replay of the play from several different angles and change the call if they made the wrong decision in the first place.

The NBA, MLB, NHL and soccer leagues around the world have also begun to utilize different systems of instant replay, and the responses from fans continues to be mixed. Many people approve of efforts to get calls right, but others are frustrated that the replays slow the game down and the final decision still seems to be arbitrary.

This year, the NFL has added the opportunity for coaches

to challenge pass interference penalties, but the requirements for a call to be overturned remains unclear, and few calls have been changed so far.

PLNU Head Men’s Soccer Coach Phil Wolf says video assisted replay (VAR) is a positive step for soccer because it can be impossible to get calls like offside right at times.

“The problem arises in that VAR is being applied in different countries [and] competitions differently,” Wolf said. Some countries, like England, are being very conservative as it relates to assisting a head referee while in other countries, every call is being looked at. Like all things, VAR needs time, but right now, some people are not happy with it.”

In an English Premier League match this past weekend, VAR

and controversial calls were the focus of commentary and match reactions, even more so than the game itself in the case of the Sheffield United-Tottenham Hotspur match. One of the biggest issues was that one review lasted almost four minutes and interrupted the game flow.

“I like the use of replay to get the call right,” PLNU Head Baseball Coach Justin James said. “It needs to be done in a quick manner though to not interrupt the flow of the game.”

Replay is being used at some colleges at the Division I level now, but it is not used in any PLNU competitions. The primary issues for implementing such systems are finances and the technological capabilities. However, PLNU coaches would love to have the benefit of replay.

“I am in favor of college replay, and in the postseason, college baseball has started to implement [it], but only on certain plays,” James said.

“It would be great!” Wolf said. “We had a goal called back earlier in the year against Western Washington, and that could be the difference between getting into the NCAA tournament and missing out.”

As technology evolves, so does officiating in sports. The most important thing is the calls being made are the right calls, but replay must continue to evolve to reduce the controversies surrounding its use and become more effective.

Q&A with Alix Henderson, PLNU’s New Point Guard

CASSIDY KLEIN
STAFF WRITER

Sophomore Alix Henderson is starting her first season as point guard for the PLNU women’s basketball team. She previously played for the U-18 and U-20 Great Britain women’s national team at the FIBA European Championships. The Point sat down with Henderson to talk about her transition to PLNU and her hopes for this basketball season.

Q: Tell me a bit about yourself.

A: I’m from Inverness in Scotland, which is where, if you’ve ever heard of the Loch Ness monster, that’s where I’m from. I was studying economics at the University of Edinburgh before coming here. Then when I transferred, Point Loma didn’t have an economics major, so I chose to study international development with a minor in economics.

Q: What brought you to Point Loma?

A: Basketball, mainly. I was playing in the European Championship for Great Britain women’s league. I got an offer from a random school in the U.S., and I thought I wouldn’t be able to move because I already studied for two years in Scotland. I thought, “I probably can’t do it, but if I can, I’d love to [move to America].” One of my coaches was super supportive. He was an assistant coach for the Great Britain team, and he took me on visits to schools in Texas where I got a few offers. He asked me, ideally, where I would want to go. And I was like, California, why wouldn’t I? So he contacted some schools, and I had a couple of unofficial visits arranged. I spoke to the UC Davis coach, and she knew [PLNU’s] coach Lisa [Faulkner], and she was

like, you should check out Point Loma. Then we watched them in a conference [game], and I came and I loved it. I feel like I definitely made the right choice, even though at the time I [didn’t] know.

Q: What’s it like playing basketball for a national team in Europe?

A: I played for Great Britain with a lot of talented people, which is good because you can look up to them and play up to their game. But it’s also a big challenge. My first year of playing with Great Britain, I was under 17 playing under 18, so I barely played. That was hard, but it gave me an opportunity to establish myself. We had the same coach the following year, and that year I was under 18. I went from being a bench player, knowing my role in encouraging the team, to being a starter. That year we did not do well, but the next two years when I played for Great Britain, we came [in] fourth twice, so hopefully this year when I get on the team, we’ll come in the top three.

[I can play for both PLNU and Great Britain because] the Great Britain national team stuff is over summer. There’s a Scottish team up until the age of under 18, and then there’s a Great Britain national team. The Great Britain national team has only been playing the last three years. You’re playing with people you’re used to playing against, which is a challenge in itself. It definitely exposes a lot of your weaknesses playing a higher level.

Q: How is playing basketball different in Europe versus America?

A: [Basketball] is a lot more of a cultural thing here. It’s a lot bigger with the NBA and everything whereas in Britain, the highest level is not as high. I think there’s a lot more experience here and a lot more knowledge, and

it’s a good place to learn from people [whose] whole life has been dedicated to basketball.

Q: What are some of your hopes for your first basketball season at Point Loma, and in the future beyond Point Loma?

A: Hopefully this year, I just want to have the biggest impact as I can on the team. I want to have an on-court and off-court impact. Being a point guard, I want to be able to lead the team and make sure everything is set up correctly. For me, a big focus will be staying candid in a game and not letting the pressure get to me [and] knowing where my teammates are supposed to be when, so I can help them. Really, just setting up plays, making sure I need to be a vocal leader on the court.

Past college, I guess I’ll see how long I can play. There’s a lot more opportunities to play after college overseas, like in European countries. Even in Britain, I was playing in the women’s British league, and that’s the highest level in Britain, but it’s also not really that good. That’s why I didn’t want to stay there, because my whole playing career would be on the same level. I definitely want to play some overseas basketball, but then I’m also quite career-focused; I want to do something in economics and development.

Q: Do you have any Loch Ness monster stories?

A: There’s actually this guy who sits in a caravan and looks with binoculars for the Loch Ness monster and spends every day there on one beach of the lake, and my dad goes and talks to him sometimes. And he’s just sitting there in his caravan. But yeah, he seems pretty happy living his life, just looking at the Loch. So that’s a bit of a weird one. Everyone in Inverness knows he just sits there.

