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Albert Lea  
**Tribune**

**Weekend**

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# GROUP OF LOCAL OFFICIALS DECIDE TO HANG UP THE WHISTLE



Dennis Flom, Jeff Rayman, Bob Rinaldi, Don Nolander and Al Schallock have a combined total of 195 years officiating high school football games and have been on the same crew together for roughly 20 years. Wednesday night's game marked the retirement for all five. TYLER JULSON/ALBERT LEA TRIBUNE

## 5 retire from officiating with 195 years of experience

**By Tyler Julson**  
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**A**mong many other skills and attributes, being a sports official takes a lot of dedication, responsibility, tough skin and passion for the sport at hand.

After a combined 195 years of high school football officiating experience Don Nolander, Dennis Flom, Bob Rinaldi, Al Schallock and Jeff Rayman have all of those qualities in droves. Working on the same crew for roughly 20 years, the group of five called it a career after the football game in Alden Wednesday night, putting on the uniform one last time as a crew.

Over the years, this crew has coached countless regular season games, 22 postseason games and one state championship. They have witnessed some of the very best games

“I enjoy being around the young people. When you go out and you have a game that’s a real competitive good game, not a lot of penalties, you get done with one of those and you say “That was a lot of fun.”

— Don Nolander

with the best seats in the house, and officiated games with athletes that went onto become stars at the collegiate and professional levels.

However, after all of those special moments and star athletes, the one thing they all said was the best part about it all — the comradery with each other.

Rayman said the group is together on the road every Friday night for the entire season, beginning in late summer and finishing at the onset of winter, ending the season with a chili-feed with one another. Depending on where the assigned game was,

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## Vaccinated County employees sick time for breakthrough COVID cases

**By Sarah Stultz**  
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The Freeborn County Board of Commissioners on Tuesday approved a revision to the county’s employee COVID-19 response plan to allow a bank of up to five days of sick time for vaccinated employees who have a breakthrough positive COVID test and are unable to work.

Freeborn County Administrator Tom Jensen said since the expiration of the Families First Coronavirus Response Act, which required employers to provide sick leave and expanded family and medical leave tied to COVID-19, employees have had to use their PTO hours if they were exposed to another person who tested positive to COVID-19 and got sick themselves or had to quarantine. Under current guidelines, vaccinated employees who have been exposed can remain at work, with masking and monitoring for symptoms, while a non-vaccinated person who was exposed must isolate for seven days or until he or she



**Tom Jensen**

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## Woman taken into custody after shots fired at hotel

**By Albert Lea Tribune**

A Mason City woman was arrested Friday morning after allegedly firing a bullet into a hotel room at Motel 6 in Albert Lea.

Jessica Ann Hutfles, 31, was taken into custody but official charges remain pending due to an ongoing investigation, according to a press release from the Albert Lea Police Department.

At approximately 8:50 a.m. officers from the Albert Lea Police Department, Freeborn County Sheriff’s Office and the Minnesota State Patrol responded to Motel 6 on East Main Street after receiving a call from a person who said a woman had shot a bullet into his hotel room door and fled the scene.

The caller was able to describe Hutfles by the clothes she was wearing, and officers were able to locate her within minutes of the initial call and a short distance away from the crime scene. Hutfles was taken into custody and a firearm was located.

The release stated there is no ongoing risk to public safety.

If anyone has any information they would like to share pertaining to the case, contact detectives David Miller or Julie Kohl from the Albert Lea Police Department.

## Waseca officer Arik Matson retires at commendation ceremony

**By Julian Hast**  
Owatonna People’s Press,  
APG Southern Minnesota

It has been 21 months since Waseca Officer Arik Matson was shot in the head and critically wounded while responding to a report of a suspicious person, and last week he officially retired.

The ceremony for his retirement took place at a community commendation ceremony Thursday night in which Waseca residents, first responders and members of public safety organizations received commendations inside the Performing Arts Center at Waseca Junior/Senior

High School.

After all other commendations were finished, Waseca Chief of Police Penny Vought introduced what was, in some ways, the biggest event of the evening.

“We understand very well that this is a very sad event,” she said about Matson’s retirement. “But it’s also an event where we should attempt to find and have gratitude. We are grateful and thankful for so many things, especially that Arik is here with us tonight.”

Mary Williams, a Waseca resident on whose property the shooting took place, addressed



Captain Kris Markeson, who was present at the scene of Matson’s shooting, choked up as he presented Matson his retirement badge, Law Enforcement Purple Heart and Medal Honor. JULIAN HAST/SOUTHERNMINN.COM

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# OFFICIALS

Continued from Front Page

the crew could spend multiple hours in the car together every week. That time adds up over numerous years and has formed a brotherhood between this group of officials.

On top of the comradery, they all take pride in teaching the athletes and being a positive influence on their lives.

"I enjoy being around the young people," Noland said. "When you go out and you have a game that's a real competitive good game, not a lot of penalties, you get done with one of those and you say 'That was a lot of fun.'"

"If there's been good sportsmanship, then we have fun," Schallock added.

Each member of the crew got into football officiating for their own individual reasons, but they all share a love of the sport.

The group has multiple humorous stories from their experiences over the years. Whether it was Noland tripping over the chains multiple times in one play, Flom taking numerous hits from players on the field or Rayman doing laundry in the car on the way to the game, there will be no shortage of good memories for the group to look back on.

With the crew retiring, that leaves five positions open in the officiating field. All across the state, a shortage of officials has become a rising concern.

Noland said there are a number of factors that could discourage a potential official from picking up the whistle. A long time commitment, giving up a lot of nights and standing out in the cold fall weather are some of the reasons. But the biggest downfall is the grief taken by unruly and disrespectful fans.

"You take a lot of grief during the game," Rinaldi said. "Most of the time you hear it and you move on. You just have to concentrate on the next play."

Noland said he understands why those potential officials would be disheartened. And Schallock said those types of things make some nights worse than others, but its about moving on to the next play.

Flom said its usually worse on the basketball court because the fans are closer to the action, but Rayman said they can still hear it on the football field.

"Spectators will come right down from the stands and meet us when we're going into halftime or something and shout about anything. 'Hey, you blew this call. Hey, you blew that call,' You'd like to take that guy and put him on the field and see if he

can do it any better."

Rinaldi said there is a good way for anyone interested in becoming an official to get their foot in the door — through mentoring.

"Get on with a crew," Rinaldi said. "Shadow someone. Do a lot of the JV, the little league games. The more you do that, the more you get acclimated and get better at it. You'll build your confidence level."

Now that their varsity officiating careers are over, most of them will take on different roles. Noland, Flom and Rayman said they might still officiate a lower level game every once in a while, but Rinaldi will trade in his stripes and whistle for a Huskies sweatshirt just in time to watch his grandson suit up for the Owatonna football program.

All five members of the crew wanted to thank their wives for being understanding throughout the years and the seasons. They said being gone from mid afternoon to sometimes 1 a.m. every Friday night takes a lot of patience from their partners.

"I'm not going to miss those unsportsmanlike coaches or fans," Schallock said. "Next year, I'm going to think 'Yeah, I don't need to hear that.' But I'm going to miss this. I'm going to be with the group. This is what keeps me coming back every week."

# Minneapolis cop charged in chase that killed innocent driver

MINNEAPOLIS (AP) — A Minneapolis police officer has been charged with manslaughter and vehicular homicide for a crash in July that killed an innocent motorist while the officer was pursuing a stolen vehicle, a prosecutor announced Friday.

Officer Brian Cummings was driving nearly 80 mph (129 kph) in Minneapolis with his siren and lights activated when his squad car slammed into another vehicle, killing 40-year-old Leneal Frazier, Hennepin County Attorney Mike Freeman said in a statement. The crash ended a chase that lasted more than 20 blocks, including through residential neighborhoods where the posted speed limit is 25 mph.

"Police are supposed to protect and serve citizens, and to act in a manner consistent with their sworn oath to do so. Officer Cummings' actions deviated from his oath and his negligence caused the death of Leneal Frazier," Freeman said.

During Cummings' chase, Frazier's Jeep entered an intersection on a green light. According to investigators, the driver of the stolen vehicle narrowly missed Frazier's Jeep before the squad car struck it on the driver's side. An accident reconstruction report said the fatal collision "can be attributed to the Defendant for failure to operate his vehicle with due regard for the safety of other motorists."

Mayor Jacob Frey said after Frazier's death that the city would review its pursuit policy, and that review was still ongoing Friday. A police spokesman said this summer that the policy was properly followed in the chase, but the complaint clearly suggested that prosecutors don't think it was by

"Police are supposed to protect and serve citizens, and to act in a manner consistent with their sworn oath to do so."

— Mike Freeman, Hennepin County Attorney

quoting directly from the policy:

"Officers shall not initiate a pursuit or shall terminate a pursuit in progress if the pursuit poses an unreasonable risk to the officers, the public or passengers of the vehicle being pursued who may be unwilling participants."

Cummings' attorney, Tom Plunkett, said Cummings was pursuing a suspect in a "violent carjacking" and that the occupants had been "on a crime spree, a practice that has unfortunately become too common in Minneapolis."

The city's police union didn't immediately respond to a message.

Frazier was the uncle of Darnella Frazier, whose cellphone video of Minneapolis police Officer Derek Chauvin kneeling on George Floyd's neck was viewed worldwide and helped launch a global protest movement against racial injustice. Chauvin was convicted of murder and sentenced this year in Floyd's 2020 death.

The Frazier family, which had called for Cummings to be prosecuted in Frazier's death, welcomed the charges as a first step toward justice, according to their lawyers, Ben Crump and Jeff Storms.

"The Frazier family and our legal team are grateful for the charges brought against Brian Cummings for the reckless killing of Leneal Frazier," they said in a statement. "We commend the Hennepin

County Attorney's Office for having the courage to hold law enforcement accountable in this instance. No innocent civilian should ever lose their life because of unwarranted high-speed chases in residential neighborhoods."

Both charges against Cummings carry a presumptive prison sentence of four years under state sentencing guidelines. Jail records show he was released on his own recognizance without bail required and has a hearing set for Nov. 9.

The department's policy manual allows pursuits for "serious and violent crimes," including robbery, and "flagrantly reckless driving that is life-threatening to the public." The complaint said the stolen vehicle was suspected in thefts from businesses that involved "some limited use of force" but none involving weapons or resulted in injuries. Chases for simple auto theft are not allowed.

Freeman made a fresh plea Friday for law enforcement across the state to change their pursuit policies, saying they don't do enough to protect human life. He said responses to previous criticism had been "weak and ineffective." He said Minnesota agencies reported 40 fatal injuries resulting from pursuits from 2013-2020.

"This must stop," Freeman wrote. "Pursuits must be reserved for only the most serious crimes and cases."

## COVID cases rising faster on reservations in Minn.

ST. PAUL (AP) — Native Americans have contracted COVID-19 at two to three times the rate of white Minnesotans over the past month, according to state health officials.

There are large pockets of unvaccinated people in the 18 to 49 age range in Minnesota's tribal communities and across the country, according to Mary Owen, director of the Center for American Indian and Minority Health at the University of Minnesota medical school.

"We have some folks who are not getting vaccinated, whether it's because they're resisting it or because they're not able to get access. Not quite sure. It's probably a combination of those. But that's impacting us again, significantly," said Owen, who is also president of the Association of American Indian Physicians.

Owen says that's especially concerning because Native Americans have high rates of health disparities that put them

at higher risk for serious COVID-19 illness, such as diabetes, Minnesota Public Radio News reported.

"We have some very frail people in our communities that cannot afford to get infected. We have to protect them," Owen said. "So please, do what's right for our communities, not just for us as individuals."

The Leech Lake reservation has recorded its highest numbers of positive COVID-19 cases over the past month since the pandemic began.



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