

Lehmann

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1964 and 1965 and has been working games every year since then, staying mostly in southeast Kansas in about a 100-mile radius of his hometown, LeRoy. During the 1980s and 1990s, he worked junior college basketball, mostly with the Kansas Jayhawk Community College Conference, which took him down to Arkansas City and Coffeyville. He also has officiated at high school state tournaments and has memories to go with them.

"I had a number, I don't know how many, of state tournaments that I worked, back in the 80s and 90s mostly," Lehmann said. "I remember one game I had Dreiling from Wichita-Kapaun Mt. Carmel, when he was playing. He was seven foot or so, and he could dunk it. I remember him coming in. He stole a pass or something and came in to dunk it, and I didn't think I was back far enough; I was probably going to get hit. But, he missed me!"

Lehmann officiated state tournaments for different classes, as well.

"There were several years there that I worked 5A state tournaments, then I worked 4A one year, and I think I had one 2A," Lehmann said. "I never did go to Hays or anything; I always stayed closer to home."

The people are what Lehmann said he enjoys most about officiating. It also keeps him close to a sport he once played himself.

"When you can't play the sport, that's the next thing to it," Lehmann said. "I played basketball when I was in junior college, and then, after I got out of college, that was the closest thing to playing it. So, I just kept refereeing. I just enjoy the people, the coaches and athletic directors and school personnel. The association with coaches and players and administration has been my enjoyment."

Through his years as



Photo submitted
Wilfred Lehmann receives a 60-year award from KSHSAA recognizing his service as a registered official. The award was presented during the state basketball tournament hosted at Emporia.

an official, Lehmann has seen many changes in basketball, from the rules of the game to the gymnasiums in which the games are played.

"A lot of guys have asked me whether they still had the peach baskets up for goals and things like that when I started," Lehmann said. "Back in the earlier days, we didn't have breakaway rims, and I worked two games where guys went in and dunked and hung on the rim and pulled the rim down and broke the backboard. We had glass all over the place. They ended up taking the backboards off and putting new ones on, had about an hour delay but went ahead and played the ball game. One was at a tournament in Osage City and the other was at Jayhawk-Linn one night."

He also has seen the addition of girls' teams and rules of the game.

"When I first started, there weren't very many girls' teams, and then it came to where the girls had as many games as the boys," Lehmann said. "Back in those days, if there was a jump ball, you jumped it. No matter where it was on the floor, you'd go to the closest circle and jump it, whereas now, it's alternating possession, and you have only the one jump ball at the beginning of the game. If you go into overtime, you have the overtime jump, but otherwise you don't have any jump balls, not that you actu-

ally jump."

The addition of the three-point basket was another change Lehmann saw.

"The three-point rule was put in back I don't know how many years ago, but in earlier years, everything was two points, no matter where you shot from. Two points or one, on free throws."

He has seen changes in rules for coaches, too.

"There was a period of time when they had a rule they called the seat-belt rule, that coaches couldn't stand during the game," Lehmann said. "While the ball was live, being played, they had to be sitting on the bench, and if they got up, it was an automatic technical foul. But, that's changed."

Lehmann has also witnessed the evolution of gyms from smaller spaces to the arena-like gyms of today. He recalls well the older, smaller gyms.

"In the old Burlington gym, they had on the sideline pillars, support pillars, that were just off the court by a few feet or so," Lehmann said. "As an official, you'd work up and down the sideline and if you got too far off the floor or something, why, you'd run into those poles! There were a lot of different gyms that bring back memories. They're not the big, open gyms; they're the smaller gyms a lot of schools had back in the 60s and 70s. There were several gyms around; Lamont had a gym similar to that. A lot

of gyms had stages on one end and a wall on the other end or something that didn't give you too much room to work."

Lehmann said it has been easier officiating in more recent years.

"It's been easier officiating in the last 10 years or so, because they've gone to three officials," Lehmann said. "Before, all those games I worked were just two-man officiating, and there were a lot of times you couldn't see completely. You have to be in a position to see what happens, and with three officials, you can cover the floor a lot easier."

Lehmann now officiates primarily junior high and junior varsity games, but he takes them just as seriously as varsity games.

"All the games a person works - they are all important games," Lehmann said. "A junior high game or junior varsity game means a lot to the kids, as much as a varsity game does, and so a person needs to give it the same respect as they do the top varsity game."

While his family did have to make some sacrifices, Lehmann said it has all been for the better.

"My family made sacrifices while I was gone working ball games," Lehmann said. "The boys had to do chores and things; it's all part of family life that way. But, it's been a rewarding experience to referee and meet people. I've got a lot of good memories and have made a lot of friends. Sometimes, some

nights, you think maybe they aren't friends at all, but later on, they come back and talk to you and it's all things of the past. I worked for a lot of good coaches and have got memories of different places I worked."

Lehmann has no plans

to retire from officiating anytime soon.

"I'm still planning on working junior high and some junior varsity games," Lehmann said. "As long as I feel I can get up and down a court, I will probably keep working."

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Kelly signs cell phone ban bill into law, starting next school year

Allie Fischer

Kansas Statehouse Wire Service

Cell phones will no longer be allowed in Kansas classrooms starting in Fall 2026.

Gov. Laura Kelly (D) signed the bipartisan cell-phone ban bill into law on March 19. The ban will require students' phones and personal electronic devices to be "stored away from the student's person in an inaccessible location during the school day" for all Kansas public and private accredited schools, according to the bill.

There are exceptions for medical exemptions and students with individual education programs or 504 plans. School districts will get to decide how the cellphones will be stored and what disciplinary ac-

tion will be taken if a student does not comply.

The bill also prohibits school district employees from communicating with students via social media platforms.

"In our rapidly changing world, technology dominates our lives, and that's why it's essential that we reduce distractions in the classroom," Kelly said at the signing. "By banning cell phone use during the school day, we're taking a commonsense approach to address the impact smart-phones and social media have on Kansas children's academic performance, learning environments, and mental health."

Although the bill gained bipartisan support in the House and Senate, Sen. Cindy Holscher (D-Overland Park) was among the four senators who voted

against the bill. She offered to amend the bill to not include schools that previously had a no phones policy in place but the amendment was rejected.

"Over 90% of Kansas students are already in districts with policies in place, yet this new law overrides local control, imposes an unfunded mandate, and puts a burden on teachers without providing the necessary resources," Holscher said in a statement.

Teachers, parents and students of Kansas school districts have expressed concerns on the bill about overriding local control and student safety.

—Allie Fischer is a University of Kansas senior from Salina studying multimedia journalism and creative writing.



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