



NBA Referee Dick Bavetta to Break Sports' All-Time Consecutive Iron Man Game Streak

Long-time NBA Referee Dick Bavetta will break professional sports' all-time consecutive Iron Man game streak when he officiates the Wednesday, April 2nd, matchup between the New York Knicks and Brooklyn Nets at Madison Square Garden. His streak will stand at 2,633 consecutive games, passing Major League Baseball Hall of Famer and Baltimore Orioles great Cal Ripken, Jr. Bavetta broke the NBA record for consecutive games refereed at 2,135 in 2006.

Bavetta began his illustrious career as an NBA official in 1975 and has been an example of consistency for the past four decades. He has officiated 270 NBA playoff games in 29 consecutive seasons, including 27 NBA Finals games and the 1989, 1995, and 2006 NBA All-Star Games. Outside of officiating NBA regular season and playoff NBA games, Bavetta has been active in international play as well, officiating the 1990 Japan Opening Games, first NBA referee selected to work the 1992 Olympics in Barcelona and the 1993 Mexico Challenge. He has earned multiple distinctions in the basketball community, enshrined into the New York City Catholic High School Hall of Fame in 2000, recipient of National Pro-Am Achievement Award in 2002, and earning entrance into the New York City Basketball Hall of Fame in 2012. Bavetta is also active in the New York City community. His experience refereeing in the New York City Public and Catholic High School League motivated him to establish – and personally finance – the Bavetta Scholarships in 1986, which provides financial aid for minority children to attend parochial high schools.

“The NBRA is in awe of what Dick has accomplished,” says Lee Seham, General Counsel for the National Basketball Referees Association. “During his streak, he has worked tirelessly on-the-court and made sacrifices off-the-court to never miss an NBA game assignment. And what the public should keep in mind is that every referee works the entirety of every game he officiates. We are all humbled by what Dick has done and he is an inspiration to all future referees.”

[Veteran ref Bavetta's streak hits 2,633](#)

April 2, 2014 - 11:09AM



POSTED BY:
STEVE ASCHBURNER

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There was a miserable morning in Toronto a few years back, when the airport was frozen over and the de-icing trucks were bone dry. He and fellow ref **Mike (Duke) Callahan** were booked for another game that night in Cleveland, so they rented a car and slid their way out of Ontario, no GPS and only the city of Buffalo as their North Star to navigate to northeast Ohio.

There was the time he had a flight to work a Celtics game re-routed to Bangor, Maine, and bribed a cab driver into taking him overnight to Boston for \$400. Even then, they had to stop at the driver's house first, so he could convince his wife it was OK.

There have been snowstorms in Chicago, a broken nose in New Jersey and the triple-crown of airport lockdowns — LaGuardia, Kennedy and Newark all shut down by weather. Yet even mail carriers with their "neither snow nor rain..." creed could learn a few things from veteran NBA referee **Dick Bavetta**.

Travel snags and injuries have caused a few close calls, but when the 74-year-old Bavetta works [the Brooklyn Nets-New York Knicks game Wednesday night at Madison Square Garden \(7 ET, ESPN\)](#), he will log his 2,633rd consecutive game. His streak dates back to his NBA debut game on Dec. 2, 1975, which means Bavetta has given the NBA 38 1/2 years of unbroken service without using one sick day.

Why is the number notable? **Cal Ripken Jr.**, the MLB Baltimore Orioles' Hall of Fame shortstop, pushed his more famous streak of consecutive games to 2,632 [after eclipsing Lou Gehrig in 1995](#).

"They could always find people to work if you had to miss a game, but I never wanted to inconvenience other referees," Bavetta said from his hotel in New York Tuesday. "To me, it was determination, dedication. I've always said, 'No, we've got to give it our best shot to get there.' "

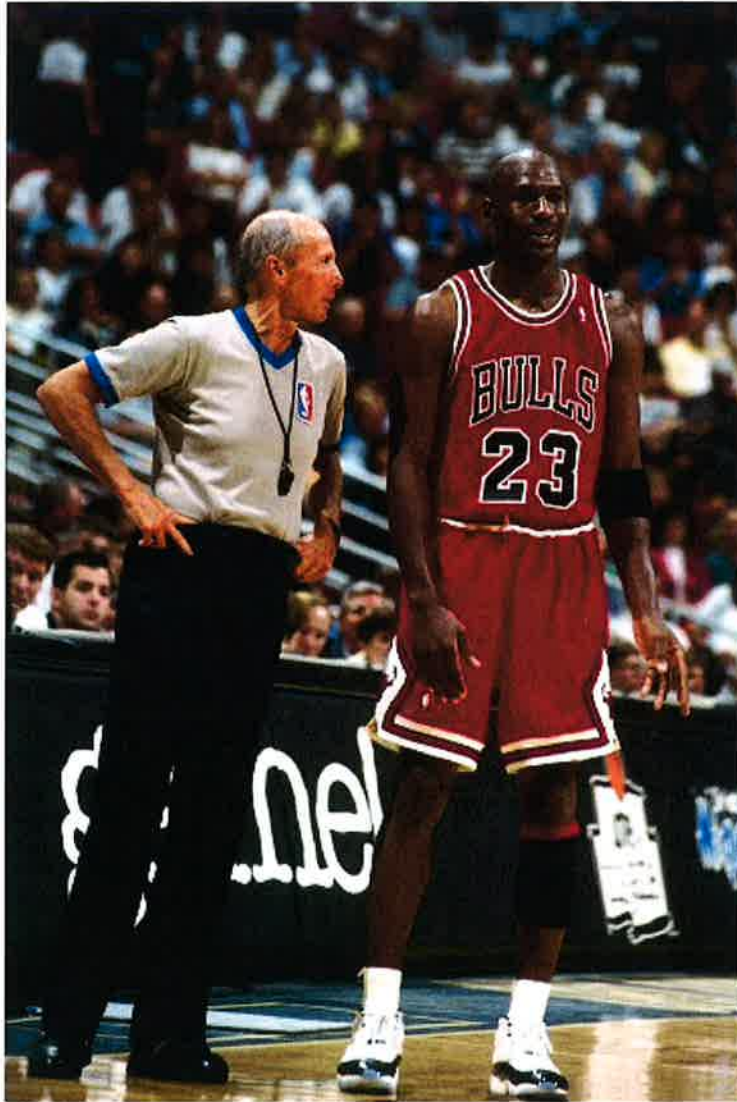
Bavetta's Manhattan hotel was close enough this time that, even in the event of a flash blizzard, he could walk to MSG for tipoff between the Nets and Knicks. That meant he only had to avoid a misstep or an overzealous taxi in the crosswalk.

Dedicated to honing his craft

Referees' schedules aren't made public in advance, so it's hard to know when one of them actually has stuck to his or not. A full season is pretty much the same as the players and the teams: 82 games. In his first two years, Bavetta was a part-timer, which meant he was scheduled for 68-70 games (making \$200 a night, \$16,000 a year at the start).

[Veteran ref Bavetta's streak hits 2,633](#) (Continued)

Since then, he has been full-time like no one else, adding 270 playoff games, including 27 in The Finals, to his resume. He has worked multiple All-Star games and international NBA events, as well as the "Dream Team" Olympics in 1992.



Dick Bavetta, shown here in 1995, has been an NBA referee since 1975.

Raised in New York, Bavetta attended Power Memorial, the same Manhattan high school where **Kareem Abdul-Jabbar** played. He had a first career as a broker on Wall Street, but his brother, Joe, refereed ABA games. That helped draw Dick into the profession. After years of amateur, high school and college games, Bavetta worked in the minors (the Eastern League that morphed into the CBA) for nine years.

Each year, he tried to get to the NBA. Finally, after honing his craft ("I thought I was ready earlier, but I wasn't") he made it on his ninth try. Now he ranks as the NBA's all-time leader among officials in games, with fellow vet **Joey Crawford** in hot pursuit 100 or so games behind.

[Veteran ref Bavetta's streak hits 2,633 \(Continued\)](#)

"My upbringing was, you didn't miss days of school and you went to work, regardless of the circumstances," said Bavetta, the son of a New York cop. "I can't remember even high school games in New York City or the Eastern League ... whatever it would take to get to the game."

A rough career, on and off the court

His only real concession to the grind has been requesting no back-to-back games for the past five or six seasons. Bavetta had plenty of years doing five games in seven nights or seven in nine, but spacing out his games gives him more travel and recovery time. That's helpful with the streak, but it does accordion-out his schedule, making it tough to get even consecutive days off. And on the days in between, he still works out — he had just gotten back from a long run through Central Park before he picked up the phone.

Schedules rocked by family members or other things from his personal life? Fuhgedaboutit. They've been scheduled around his NBA work.

"I've missed birthdays," Bavetta said. "Haven't missed weddings."

Obviously Bavetta has had memorable games prior to this one tonight. He had to go solo at a Celtics-76ers game after partner **Jack Madden** suffered a broken leg and it ended up being the game in which **Larry Bird** and **Julius Erving** grabbed each other by the throat and got tossed. There have been controversial moments, too, as Utah Jazz and Sacramento Kings fans can quickly recall and grumble about from the playoffs.

One game a while back that nearly snapped Bavetta's streak, though, came in New York. When a skirmish broke out between Knicks center **Patrick Ewing** and the Pacers' **Jalen Rose** that night, Rose threw a punch that missed Ewing and hit Bavetta smack in the nose. "I'm going down and if it wasn't for the fact I was holding onto Patrick's jersey, I'd have been down and out," Bavetta remembered.

Bavetta stubbornly finished the game with a broken nose and a Band-Aid across it, but required micro-surgery the next morning. That was supposed to put him out for at least a week but, hey, he had a Nets game at the Meadowlands the next night. So naturally, he persuaded doctors to give him clearance.

That night, Bavetta went onto the court again with a Band-Aid across his nose. His two fellow refs, goofing on him, did the same and got the folks at the scorers' table to all tape Band-Aids across their noses, too. Nets forward **Jayson Williams** already had a broken nose and was wearing one.

So when Charlotte's **Baron Davis** walked to center court shortly before tipoff for the captains' meeting, he wondered what was going on.

Said Bavetta: "I told him, 'Baron, you can't attend this meeting unless a Band-Aid on your nose.' He went back and got one so he wouldn't be different. ... We do whatever it takes to work the game."

[Veteran ref Bavetta's streak hits 2,633](#) (Continued)

Bavetta keeps chugging along

Bavetta has seen all the changes swirl around him through the years, from two-man crews to the current three, from the “play on!” mentality a few decades ago to the replays and [zero-tolerance policy applied by the referees' overseers](#) today.

As for how much longer, Bavetta said: “I haven’t thought about it. People ask about years. I look at this thing in days. Getting to the next game. I worked in Atlanta Monday, I’m in New York Wednesday. Health is so fleeting – I’ve seen it where a player just turns the wrong way. A calf pull, a knee can go in an instant.”

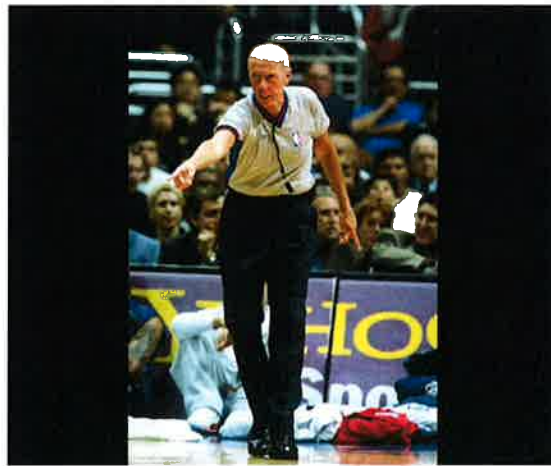
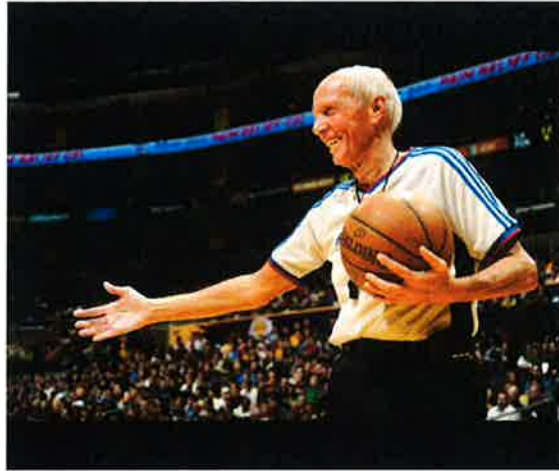
The streak-breaker, whether MLB decides to recognize Bavetta’s total or not, puts him full circle. He made his debut in 1975, eight days before his 36th birthday, in a Celtics-at-Knicks contest. “I said, ‘What better way than to have the streak ‘broken’ than back at Madison Square Garden?’ But the league arranged my schedule accordingly,” Bavetta said. “We don’t get a say.”

So might he job around the perimeter of the court after the final horn, a la Ripken, slapping hands with fans in attendance? “I don’t think so,” he said. “Probably couldn’t afford the fine.”

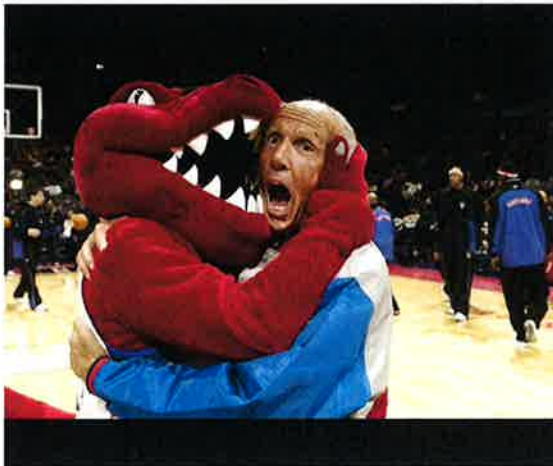
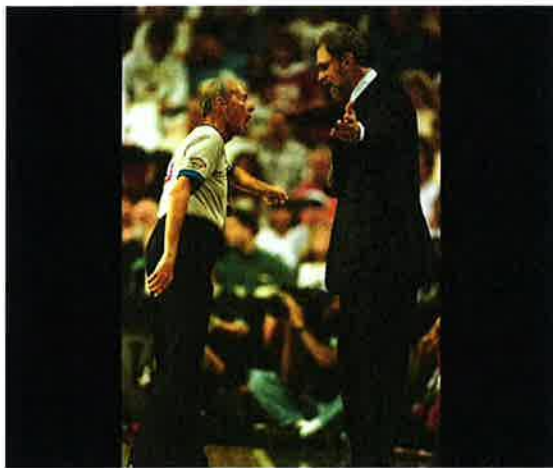
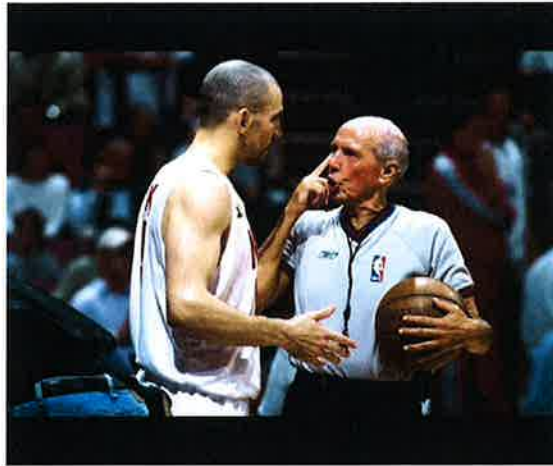
Missing calls is a fact of any game official’s life, from umpires to NBA refs. Missing games, that’s been the infallible thing for Bavetta.



[Veteran ref Bavetta's streak hits 2,633](#) (Continued)



[Veteran ref Bavetta's streak hits 2,633](#) (Continued)



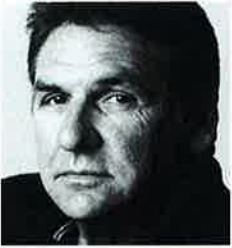
[Veteran ref Bavetta's streak hits 2,633](#) (Continued)



Basketball

Hamill: Brooklyn-born NBA referee Dick Bavetta officiates

2,633rd-straight game over 39 seasons



BY DENIS HAMILL

He broke Cal Ripken Jr.'s major league attendance record. Bavetta tried out to be an NBA ref nine times before finally landing the job. He was inspired by the vast talents of Rucker League summer ball players.

NEW YORK DAILY NEWS
Wednesday, April 2, 2014, 11:41 PM



ROBERT SABO/NEW YORK DAILY NEWS

NBA referee Dick Bavetta officiating the New York Knicks and Brooklyn Nets game Wednesday.

HAMILL: BROOKLYN-BORN NBA REFEREE DICK BAVETTA OFFICIATES

2,633RD STRAIGHT GAME OVER 39 SEASONS (Continued)

On Wednesday, he broke Cal Ripken Jr.'s record.

NBA referee Dick Bavetta, out of the working-class Park Slope, Brooklyn, of yesteryear, broke the baseball hall of famer's iron man streak of participation in the most consecutive professional sports games in history in Madison Square Garden on Wednesday night when he officiated his 2,633rd consecutive NBA game.

Born in 1939 as the son of an NYPD cop in a brownstone his grandfather from Italy bought on Eighth St., Bavetta went to St. Saviour's grammar school, graduated from Power Memorial High — which also gave us Kareem Abdul-Jabbar — and St. Francis College where he played hoops.

IT'S BEEN A LONG TIME ...

Dick Bavetta made his NBA debut Dec. 2, 1975, at Madison Square Garden. Nearly 40 years later, he's still going. A look at the nation during the season Bavetta first hit NBA floor:

TOP-SELLING SONG: "Love Will Keep Us Together" by the Captain and Tennille (below)

TOP-GROSSING MOVIE: "Jaws"
NBA CHAMPION: Boston Celtics

NBA MVP: Kareem Abdul-Jabbar, Los Angeles Lakers

AVERAGE COST OF NEW HOME: \$42,600

AVERAGE GALLON OF GAS: 57 cents

AVERAGE GALLON OF MILK: \$1.57



PHOTOS BY STEVE SCHAPIRO/TIME & LIFE PICTURES/GETTY IMAGES; UNIVERSAL STUDIOS

"I was a really average player," he says. "But I loved and respected the game. My dad had been a cop from the 1920s to the 1950s and my brother Joe was a first-grade detective from 1954 to 1974. But he also used to referee American Basketball Association games on the side."

HAMILL: BROOKLYN-BORN NBA REFEREE DICK BAVETTA OFFICIATES

2,633RD STRAIGHT GAME OVER 39 SEASONS (Continued)

Dick Bavetta was working for Salomon Brothers on Wall Street when his older brother told him he should really start refereeing hoops games.

I learned a work ethic from my dad, whom I never remember missing a day on the job as a cop.

“He said it was fun,” says Bavetta. “So I started refereeing Catholic Youth Association games. And I really did enjoy it. And you made a few extra bucks doing it.”

His love for reffing soon spread to public school games. Then he would ref games for workers from Con Ed, the telephone company, Wall Street, a bank league. “Then I started refereeing for the Eastern League that took me to places like Scranton in blizzards,” he said. “It never occurred to me, no matter what the weather, or how I was feeling, to miss a game.”



ROBERT SABO/NEW YORK DAILY NEWS

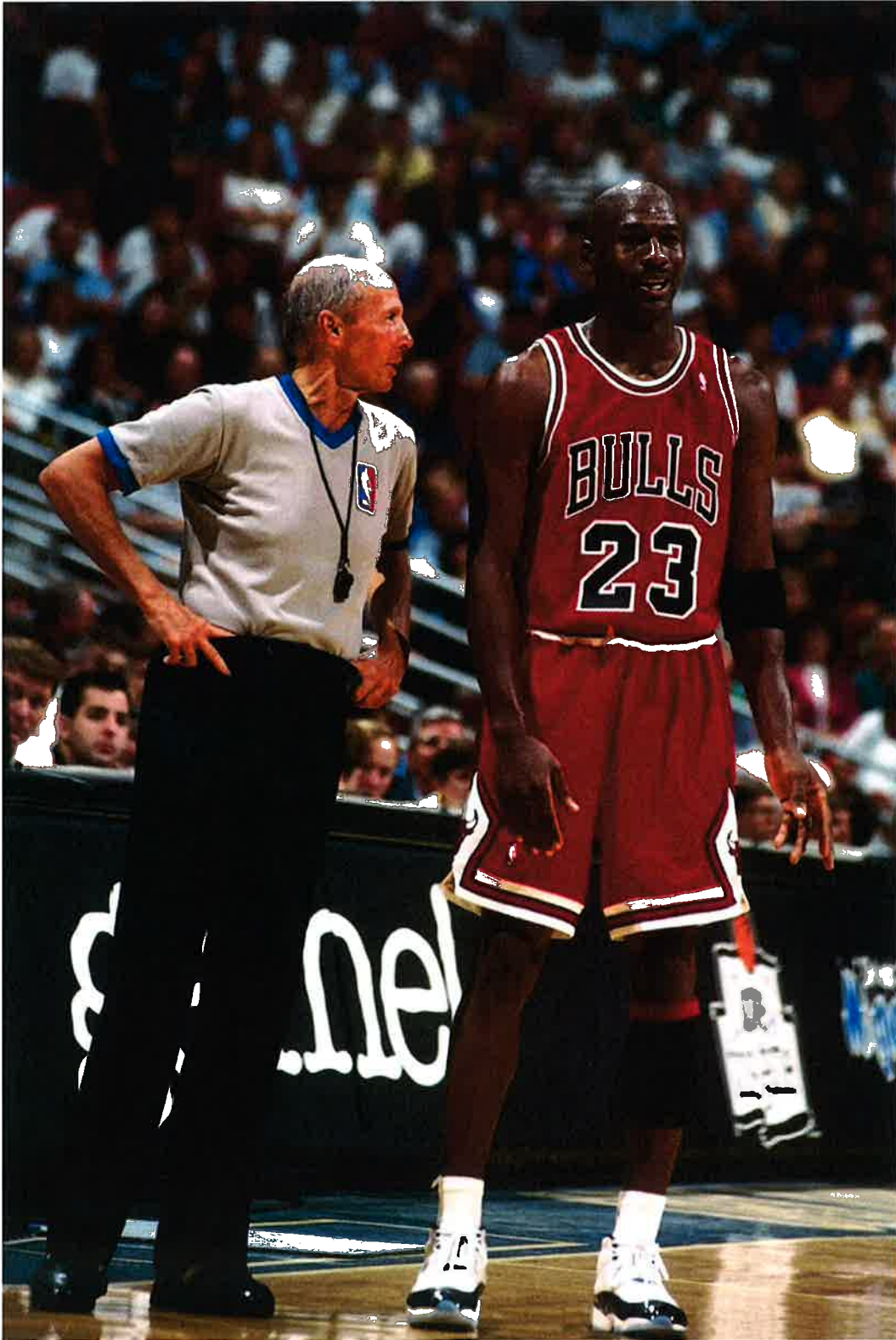
NBA ref Dick Bavetta has been defending calls with players and coaches for decades.

Once, after a game in Scranton, Pa., Bavetta climbed in his car in a blizzard and looking for Route 80, he just started following the guy in front of him, making lefts and rights, until the driver stopped and got out wielding a baseball bat, demanding to know why he was following him. “I told him I was looking for Route 80,” Bavetta says. “He shouted, ‘This is my driveway!’ ”

Bavetta was still not detoured.

HAMILL: BROOKLYN-BORN NBA REFEREE DICK BAVETTA OFFICIATES

2,633RD STRAIGHT GAME OVER 39 SEASONS (Continued)



NATHANIEL S. BUTLER/NBAE/GETTY IMAGES

Michael Jordan catches his breath beside ref Dick Bavetta in Game 2 of the 1995 Eastern Conference Semi-Finals against at the Orlando Magic.

HAMILL: BROOKLYN-BORN NBA REFEREE DICK BAVETTA OFFICIATES

2,633RD STRAIGHT GAME OVER 39 SEASONS (Continued)



PHELAN M. EBENHACK/AP

Orlando Magic center Dwight Howard (left) talks with referee Dick Bavetta.

HAMILL: BROOKLYN-BORN NBA REFEREE DICK BAVETTA OFFICIATES

2,633RD STRAIGHT GAME OVER 39 SEASONS (Continued)



RAY STUBBLEBINE/REUTERS

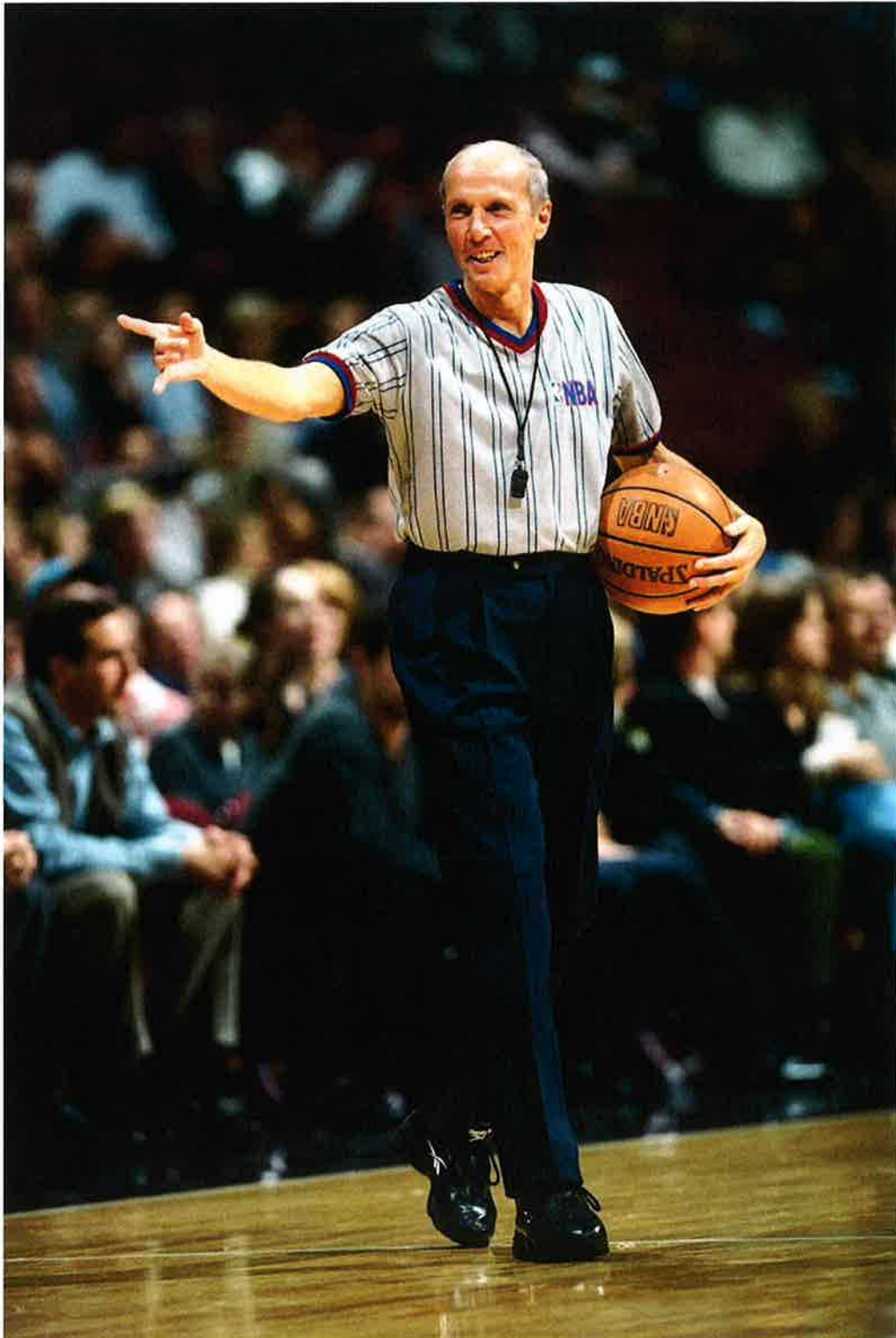
Referee Dick Bavetta (right) keeps between New York Knicks forward Carmelo Anthony and Boston Celtics forward Kevin Garnett (not pictured) as they argue Jan. 7, 2013.

“Whenever I drove home from out of town, from the Jersey Shore League, or from upstate, I made sure to pass Madison Square Garden, drive around it, look up at the marquee and dream that someday I’d ref a game in there,” he said.

HAMILL: BROOKLYN-BORN NBA REFEREE DICK BAVETTA OFFICIATES

2,633RD STRAIGHT GAME OVER 39 SEASONS (Continued)

Bavetta went to the NBA referee tryouts at Brandeis High School for nine straight years. "I was rejected every time," he says. "And rightfully so. I just didn't have the experience for the NBA."



ANDY HAYT/NBAE/GETTY IMAGES

NBA referee Dick Bavetta runs 6 to 8 miles a day to keep in top shape on the court.

HAMILL: BROOKLYN-BORN NBA REFEREE DICK BAVETTA OFFICIATES

2,633RD STRAIGHT GAME OVER 39 SEASONS (Continued)

So he started refereeing in the Rucker League on W. 155th St. and Eighth Ave., where he says the greatest basketball players he had ever seen played summer ball.

“A lot of NBA players, including the whole Nets team played there one summer,” said Bavetta, who runs 6 to 8 miles a day. “And they didn’t win it. That’s how good those players you’ve never heard of were. These were men who played above the rim, doing things with the ball I’d never seen before. Their greatness forced me to rise to the occasion and be better.”

In 1975, the Italian kid from Park Slope was finally made an NBA ref. He has been doing it now for 2,633 straight games over 39 seasons, including 270 NBA playoff games, and 27 finals games, and the 1992 Olympics in Barcelona. He has been voted into the New York Basketball Hall of Fame and the New York Catholic High School Hall of Fame.

“I never set out to break any records,” he said on Wednesday afternoon before his record-breaking game between the Knicks and the Nets.

“I learned a work ethic from my dad, whom I never remember missing a day on the job as a cop. I never missed an NBA game but then I can’t remember ever missing any other game I was ever lucky enough to be asked to ref. So tonight, I feel the same privilege I felt the first time I reffed a game. First, I’ll take a walk around the Garden and gaze up at that marquee I used to look up with a dream in my head. Then, I’ll go inside, put on my uniform, step out and do my job as fairly and as professionally as possible knowing that I am human and can make mistakes. And I’ll thank the big guy upstairs for giving me such a wonderful career.”

In his 2,633rd NBA record-breaking game.

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Bavetta – 4-2-14 New York Daily News

Sports Illustrated

P IN1 FORWARD

Posted April 03, 2014

In Focus: Dick Bavetta, ironman referee

By [Ethan Phillips](#)



Dick Bavetta and The Raptor in 2006. (Ron Turenne/NBAE via Getty Images)

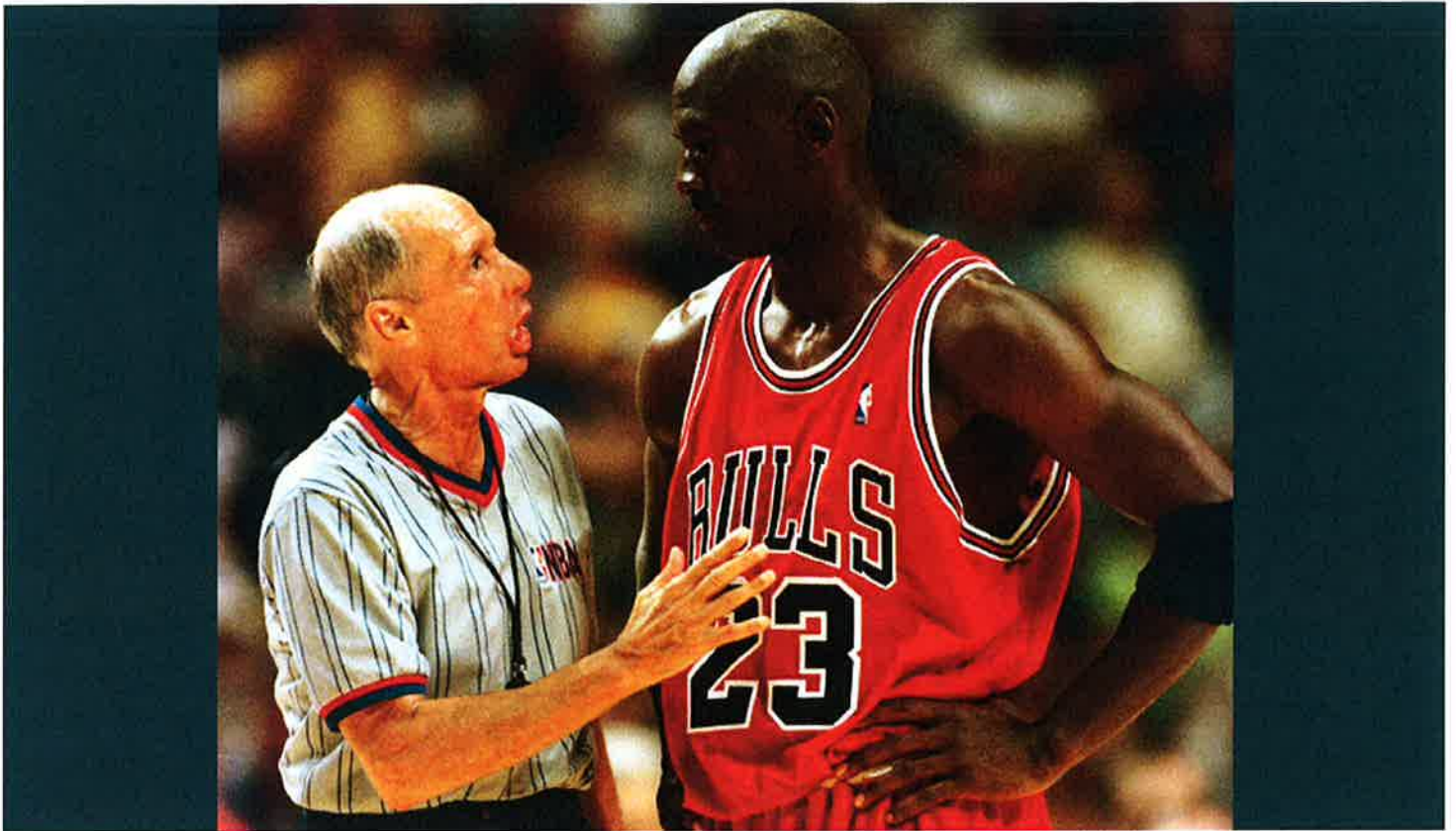
In honor of NBA stalwart Dick Bavetta officiating [his 39th season](#), passing Cal Ripken Jr.'s MLB ironman streak, we decided to to [celebrate the](#) [legacy](#) of the 74-year-old-referee, who has been calling games for 39 seasons. Without further adieu — and before he whistles me for a five-second violation — here's Bavetta:



Dick Bavetta was honored before Wednesday's Knicks-Nets game. (Nathaniel S. Butler/NBAE/Getty Images)

Bavetta speaks with an angry Shaquille O'Neal during the 1995 Finals. (John W. McDonough/SI)





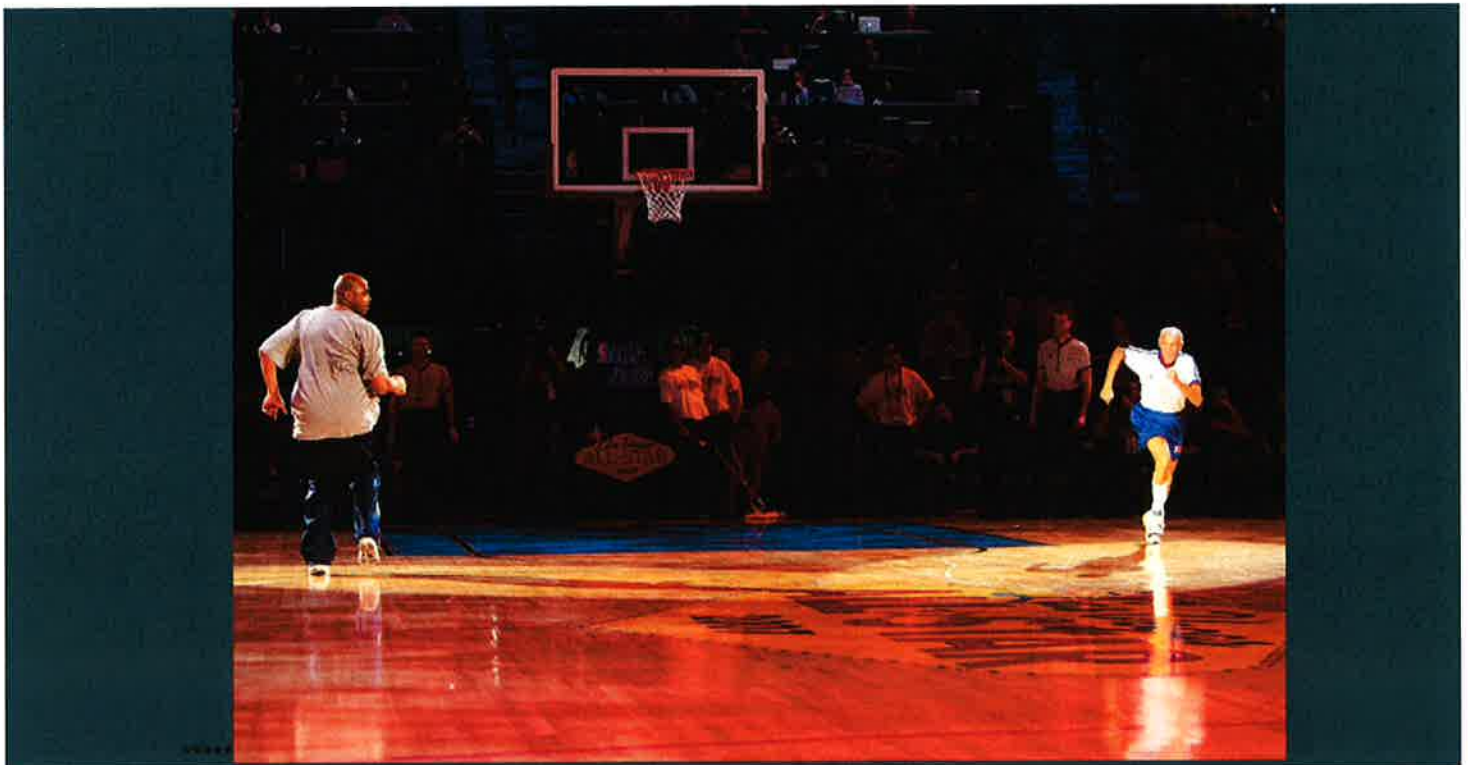
Bavetta speaks with Michael Jordan in 1998. (Vincent Laforet/ALLSPORT)



Bavetta tries to calm down an irate Matt Geiger during the 2001 NBA Finals. (AP/Rusty Kennedy)



Bavetta shares a tender moment with Tim Duncan. (D. Clarke Evans/NBAE via Getty Images)



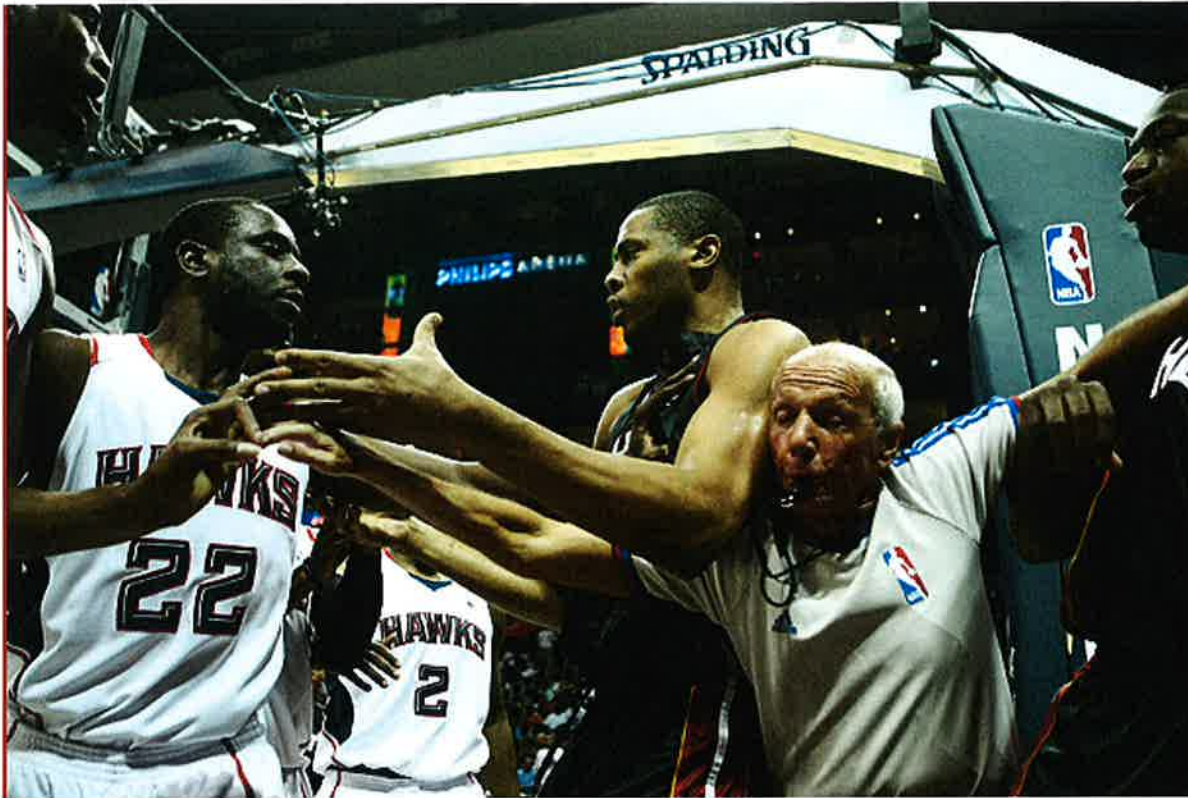
Bavetta and Barkley compete to see who's faster at the 2007 NBA All-Star Weekend. (Jed Jacobsohn/Getty Images)



Bavetta is honored by the Nets after refing his 2,135th career game. (Jesse D. Garrabrant/NBAE via Getty Images)



Bavetta feels the wrath of Kobe during a 2009 Lakers-Thunder game. (AP/Mark Terrill)



Bavetta gets in the middle of the action during a tense moment in a Heat-Hawks game. (Doug Benc/Getty Images)



Rufus, the Bobcats mascot, gets a little friendly with Bavetta. (McClatchy-Tribune/Getty Images)



Benny the Bull hands thy basketball to Bavetta. (Jonathan Daniel/Getty Images Sport)



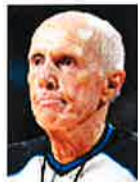
Bavetta gets in the middle of an angry trio of Knicks. (Willie J. Allen Jr/AP)

Dick Bavetta betters Cal Ripken Jr.

Updated: April 3, 2014, 12:22 PM ET
By [Ohm Youngmisuk](#) | [ESPNNewYork.com](#)

NEW YORK -- Longtime NBA referee Dick Bavetta was honored before the Brooklyn Nets-New York Knicks game by the NBA for officiating in his 2,633rd consecutive regular season game.

Move Over, Cal



Cal Ripken had his streak. NBA official Dick Bavetta's, though, is still going strong.

It started in 1975, more than five years earlier than Iron Man Ripken's.

League	MLB	NBA
Games streak	2,632	2,633
Years	1982-1998	1975-2013
Age	38	74

Bavetta passed former Major League Baseball and Orioles great Cal Ripken Jr.'s ironman streak and was presented with a commemorative plaque and basketball by Rod Thorn, the NBA's president of basketball operations.

"Well it means that I am here and alive and happy," Bavetta said about what he thinks of his streak. "And it doesn't end here as they say. After tonight there is another game. That is what we (do). I am just blessed that the ironman streak has been broken here (at Madison Square Garden), I couldn't ask for something any better."

"I can't think of any reason unless it's an act of God with weather problems and things like that, but I've been blessed by the good Lord above with good health," he added. "So that has enabled me to stay healthy over the years and I think it's symbolic of our profession."

Bavetta, 74, who is a member of the New York City Basketball Hall of Fame, began officiating NBA games in 1975 and has worked 270 playoff games in 29 straight seasons. He has officiated 27 NBA Finals games and three All-Star Games. Bavetta also was the first NBA referee selected to officiate the 1992 Summer Olympic Games in Barcelona.

Dick Bavetta betters Cal Ripken Jr. (Continued)

"The NBRA is in awe of what Dick has accomplished," said Lee Seham, general counsel for the National Basketball Referees Association. "During his streak, he has worked tirelessly on the court and made sacrifices off the court to never miss an NBA game assignment. And what the public should keep in mind is that every referee works the entirety of every game he officiates."

Bavetta said there were several close calls due to inclement weather that could have interrupted his streak. Bavetta said NBA officials work 82 games a season -- averaging about 12 games a month -- and make all their own travel arrangements, which are paid for by the NBA.

So when there have been airport closings due to bad weather, Bavetta and his officiating crew have often rented cars to drive to the next city. He told stories of driving for several hours from Chicago to Detroit overnight in treacherous weather and driving from Toronto to Cleveland on the morning of a game as well due to flight cancellations.

Bavetta even once took a punch to the nose from Jalen Rose while trying to break up a fight between Rose and Patrick Ewing at the Garden. He refereed a Nets game the next night.

"Oh I have had many close calls over the years," Bavetta said. "We are contracted to do 82 games just like the teams. Unfortunately we don't get 41 home games so we are on the road quite often. It is something that becomes a part of your life.

"You have to be an independent individual," he continued. "And most importantly you have to have a family that is supportive of you, a wife that understands that you are going to miss a birthday here or there and daughters that understand that a prom may be missed or something like that. The NBA will try to work around that for you but that is part of what we do and it is an accepted fact and we accept that gladly."

Bavetta said he hasn't decided yet whether he will continue officiating beyond this season.

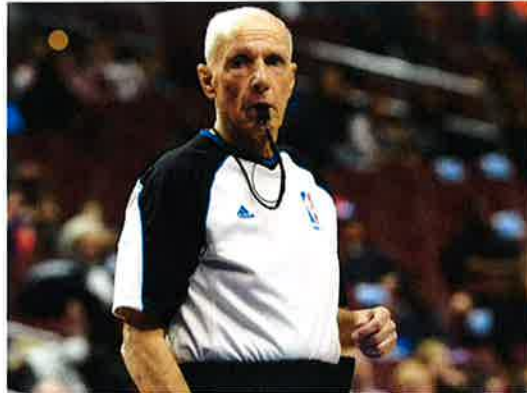
"Maybe get involved with the league office in some way or maybe come back," he said of his future plans. "I haven't really decided. ... I usually sit down with my family after the season is over, with my two daughters and my wife, and decide what we are going to do.

"The NBA is all there for me. Whatever I want, they are in favor of."



NBA referee Dick Bavetta has a longer iron-man streak than Cal Ripken

By [Sean Highkin](#) April 3, 2014 3:51 pm ET



Eric Hartline, USA TODAY Sports

On Wednesday night, Dick Bavetta was part of the officiating crew for the New York Knicks' blowout win over the Brooklyn Nets. It was his 2,633rd consecutive regular-season game, eclipsing Cal Ripken, Jr.'s iron-man streak of 2,632 consecutive games played for the Baltimore Orioles.

Bavetta is 74 years old and has been an NBA referee for 39 years. A lot has changed in the NBA since 1975:

- The ABA and the NBA merged in 1976.
- The NBA added a three-point line in time for the 1979-80 season.
- Larry Bird and Magic Johnson played out their entire NBA careers, rekindling the legendary Lakers-Celtics rivalry.
- Michael Jordan enrolled at University of North Carolina in 1981, won a national championship in 1982, was drafted by the Chicago Bulls in 1984, won three championships, retired for two years to play baseball, came back, won three more championships, retired again as the greatest player of all time, briefly came back and played for the Washington Wizards, retired again and bought the Charlotte Bobcats.
- LeBron James was born in 1984, made the cover of *Sports Illustrated* at age 16, was drafted first overall out of high school by the Cleveland Cavaliers in 2003, left for Miami in 2010, became the most hated man in basketball, became liked again, won two straight championships and celebrated his 29th birthday.
- David Stern replaced Larry O'Brien as NBA commissioner in 1984 and presided over the league for 30 years before handing off the reins to Adam Silver this year.
- The 1992 U.S. Olympic men's basketball team was the first to allow NBA players, kicking off a string of teams led by NBA superstars all the way up to the 2012 gold-medal squad.
- Shaquille O'Neal and Kobe Bryant joined forces in Los Angeles in 1996, won three championships from 2000 to 2002, broke up, O'Neal won another championship in Miami, Bryant won two more in Los Angeles, and O'Neal retired and became a studio analyst for TNT's *Inside the NBA*.

NBA referee Dick Bavetta has a longer iron-man streak than Cal Ripken

-Continued-

That's a lot of the NBA's history, and through it all, Bavetta has never missed a game. His streak doesn't involve the day-to-day grind of being an everyday Major League Baseball player like Ripken, but the kind of physical shape you have to be in to run up and down the floor at an NBA speed for 48 minutes is beyond impressive at age 74.

This is the new iron man.

Bavetta – 4-3-14 USA Today

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NBA Ref Bavetta's Ironman Streak Hits 2,633 Games

NEW YORK April 3, 2014 (AP)

By BRIAN MAHONEY AP Basketball Writer

NBA referee Dick Bavetta worked his 2,633rd consecutive game assignment Wednesday, an ironman streak even longer than the one compiled by baseball Hall of Famer Cal Ripken Jr.

Bavetta worked the game between the Knicks and Nets at Madison Square Garden, where he began his career in 1975, extending a streak during which he has never missed an assignment. He chalked up his streak to good health, a dedication he said all officials shared, and a fear of inconveniencing someone else if he had to take a day off.

"I tell you I don't think about it, in a sense that I guess it's a work ethic that I got from my mom and dad, and it's always been my way of thinking, that you get a fair day's wage for a fair day's work," Bavetta said before the game.

"And I can't think of any reason unless it's an act of God with weather problems and things like that, but I've been blessed by the good Lord above with good health, so that has enabled me to stay healthy over the years, and I think it's symbolic of our profession."

The 74-year-old Bavetta has worked 270 playoff games in 29 seasons, including 27 NBA Finals games, three All-Star games and the 1992 Olympics. He was honored before the game, joined on the court by NBA president of operations Rod Thorn and fellow official Tony Brothers.

There have been close calls through the years, usually when bad weather caused flights to be canceled or airports to be closed. But he always found a way, renting a car to drive from Toronto to Cleveland, or Chicago to Detroit, so he and his partner official could get where they had to be.

"It's just inbred in us that we don't want to miss a game," Bavetta said. "I've always felt that when I miss a game, I'm imposing upon someone that's home with his family, that already has made plans for the weekend or something. So by me not be able to make a game, they have to call someone else up and as far I am concerned, if I am healthy enough and able to get to where I am getting, that is my job."

NBA Ref Bavetta's Ironman Streak Hits 2,633 Games (Continued)

NBA referees are contracted to work 82 games a season, same as the teams. He figures he does about 12 to 15 games a month, making his own travel arrangements and then re-arranging them whenever circumstances intervene, such as the bad weather that hammered the East and Midwest this winter.

"The NBRA is in awe of what Dick has accomplished," said Lee Seham, general counsel for the National Basketball Referees Association. "During his streak, he has worked tirelessly on the court and made sacrifices off the court to never miss an NBA game assignment. And what the public should keep in mind is that every referee works the entirety of every game he officiates. We are all humbled by what Dick has done and he is an inspiration to all future referees."

Ripken played in 2,632 consecutive games with Baltimore, when he shattered Lou Gehrig's record of 2,130.

Bavetta isn't sure how far his streak will go. He hasn't decided when he will retire, saying he usually discusses his plans after the season with his wife and two daughters. Though he got to work in his home city Wednesday, most of his games are on the road, but he isn't sure he's ready to stay home yet.

"It is something that becomes a part of your life," Bavetta said. "You have to be an independent individual and most importantly you have to have a family that is supportive of you, a wife that understands that you are going to miss a birthday here or there and daughters that understand that a prom may be missed or something like that. The NBA will try to work around that for you, but that is part of what we do and it is an accepted fact and we accept that gladly."

