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Two dear friends tie the knot!!

The Sport of Kings have a horse race in Australia which stops a Nation, the wedding of Darren Sibraa and Tricia Bichel on Saturday wrote another chapter in the sport of softball. It may not have stopped a nation, but it disrupted a number of competitions as a number of the Blue family joined with the Bride and Groom to celebrate a special day.

The venue was at the small country town of Laidley which is 80 kilometers west of Brisbane, a town synonymous to the sporting fraternity, especially with the name of Bichel.

The wedding party was made up from Tricia and Darren's God children (Melissa Beckey, Coreena Staatz, Courtney Peiper, Laura Woodrow, Brendan Toft, Lachlan Sticklen and Mitchell Sibraa. Frank Thomas had the job of getting Darren to the alter on time in his role as the Best Man.

Unlike the rehearsal both Darren and Tricia arrived on time to a full church at Laidley. It was difficult for most not to have a tear in the eye (with some the tears just streamed down the face) during the wedding ceremony. Even the guy videoing the wedding had tears flowing.

At the reception it was time to reflect the events of the day and to catch up with friends while waiting for the wedding party.

What's in this issue???? Report from South Pacific

Laughing with Larter

Big Al's Teaser

World Championship and Japan Cup teams named

Darren and Tricia's big day

State Wrap - N.T., QLD, A.C.T., N.S.W.

Mr and Mrs Sibraa (that's Darren and Tricia) were introduced and the festivities began. The speeches were like all speeches and the anecdotes supplied by those in the know of the Bride and Groom were well received.

On behalf of our large Blue Family I take this opportunity to congratulate Mr and Mrs Sibraa and wish them every happiness together as man and wife.

Those who wish to send messages of congratulations to the Bride and Groom just Email me and I will print them in the May edition of Blue's News On-Line. But where are the now????????????????

Off-season - what's an off-season???



Many of us are often asked by friends and work mates, "What are you going to do in the off season?" The term "off-season" is really relevant to geography – the summer months of October to March are the "off-season" in the NT and the far north west of Australia.

During the so-called "off-season", Queensland has State Under Age Championships, WA runs its premier State League competition, NT conducts its regular competition, NSW holds Under Age State Championships and Waratah League finals in May, July and August respectively and Victoria sees regular competitions at both the Melbourne and Knox Associations.

While our game is played all year round in many areas in Australia, the months May to September, for umpires at all levels, are taken up with other softball work, quite apart from being "on-the-park".

Perhaps the most significant event for all umpires during this period is the Umpires' Theory Exam at the end of May. Umpires Australia-wide will spend many hours at rules lectures and the like, with study groups, both formal and casual, meeting regularly. Marking, recording and returning the papers requires many hours of work for National and State umpire staff.

Several States have their Annual Meetings during these months so, for these State Umpiring Committees, a lot of time is spent on annual reports and planning. At the National level, meetings of the National Umpiring Committee and the State Directors of Umpiring and National Umpire Staff are scheduled in this period, with reviews undertaken and plans and strategies put in place for the future.

Applications for appointments to the 2003 National Championships need to be completed and handed in by the end of June. Assignments are published in September.

The National and various State newsletters, both print and electronic, will continue to be researched, written and distributed during this time.

Umpires selected to travel to the northern summer competitions, [Matt Gowty (Hawaii Cup, Canada Cup and Women's World Championship) in July, and Leigh Evans (Japan Cup) in August], must continue their fitness programs and double their efforts to umpire quality games with other senior Blues to keep up their performance levels prior to their departure.

This year we again have a commitment to the Micronesia Games, with two of our senior umpires traveling to Pohnpei, in the Federated States of Micronesia, in July to assist with the softball, fast and slow pitch, component. Alan McAuliffe will repeat his role as ISF Technical Delegate for the Games and David Crowe will be umpiring and assisting with teaching the local umpires some more skills of umpiring. An umpire from New Zealand will join Alan and David.

Also this year, as the World Masters Games in Melbourne draws closer, the meetings of the Games Softball Sub-Committee for the softball component will no doubt step up a notch or two.

In answer to the question then, it would be safe to say to whoever may enquire, that, for umpires at least, it has been a long time since there has been an "off-season". There is always something to do – all year round.

Larter
the best
Medicine



There is al-
ways time
to laugh!

It's a dog's life

A business was looking for office help. They put a sign in the window, stating the following:

HELP WANTED

Must be able to type, have computer skills, and be bilingual. We are an Equal Opportunity Employer.

A dog trotted up to the window, saw the sign and went inside. He looked at the receptionist and wagged his tail, then walked over to the sign, looked at it and whined a bit.

Getting the idea, the receptionist got the office manager. The office manager looked at the dog and was surprised, to say the least.

However, the dog looked determined, so he led him into the office. Inside, the dog jumped up on a chair and stared at the manager. The manager said "I can't hire you. The sign says you have to be able to type."

The dog jumped down, went to the typewriter and proceeded to type out a perfect letter. He took out the page and trotted over to the manager and gave it to him, then jumped back up on the chair.

The manager was stunned, but then told the dog, "The sign also says you have to be good with a computer."

The dog jumped down again and went to the computer. The dog proceeded to enter and execute a perfect spreadsheet that worked flawlessly the first time.

By this time, the manager was totally dumb-founded! He looked at the dog and said, "I realize that you are a very intelligent dog and have some interesting abilities. However, I still can't give you the job."

The dog jumped down and went over to a copy of the sign and put his paw on the sentence about being an Equal Opportunity Employer.

The manager said "Yes, but the sign also says that you have to be bilingual." The dog looked at that manager calmly and said, "Meow."



Rules Challenge

Big Al's Tester

Question:

On a wild pitch, with a runner stealing home, should the batter remain within the batter's box, or move away from the area? What happens if the batter gets hit, either inside the batter's box or outside the batter's box, with the ball that is thrown, by the catcher to the pitcher, in the attempt to retire the runner?

Answer:

The batter's box is not a haven for the batter unless he is awaiting the pitch. Once the pitch has reached the catcher, the batter has an obligation to move away from the batter's box area when a runner is advancing to the plate. Rule 7 Section 9j 3 indicates a batter is out if he interferes with a play at the plate. (Being hit by a thrown ball could be classed as a form of interference). If the batter remains in the batter's box and the thrown ball strikes him, thereby interfering with the pitcher's opportunity to retire the runner, the ball would be declared dead, the batter would be called out and the runner returned to third.

The same penalty would also apply if the batter vacated the batter's box but was still hit by the thrown ball. However, in deciding if the batter created the interference while out of the batter's box, consideration must be given to the quality of the throw by the catcher to the pitcher. If the throw was accurate (i. e., directly to the pitcher covering the plate), the batter would be out. If the throw to the pitcher was wild and the batter could not avoid being hit, then the contact would be deemed accidental and play continues with no penalty.



Expressions of Interest

Well what do you think? Have you ever traveled to and from the motel and the park and had nothing to put anything into, well this bag could be the answer.

At time of publication this bag is not an official ASF product, but it has been made to create some type of interest within the umpiring ranks.

If you think you would like one email Andrew Rindfleish at

rindfleish@hotmail.com.au

The cost would be between \$35-\$40 (Australian of course). With enough interest this could be a permanent item in the life of an umpire.

Under 23 Women put on a show at South Brisbane

By Mark Toft

Queensland

First and foremost the standard of competition at this year's Under 23 Women's tournament was of a very high standard, even without an international team playing.

Queensland prevailed to win its first championship, with the class of the other teams ensuring that they did it hard all the way to the final out.

The umpiring crew was of a very high standard with a number of hopefuls looking for advancement at Nationals in January 2003.

Officiating Blues were Queenslanders, Mark Toft (Level 6), Frank Thomas (Level 5), Darren Sibraa, Helen Strauss, Ron Trow, Ian Goodman, Keith Hardman (Level 4s), Rick Gill (Level 2) and the sole New South Welshman, a Novocastrian to boot, Col Davis (Level 4). The crew was led by Queensland State Director of Umpiring, Tricia Bichel in what was her last tournament as a single woman.

Being a tournament of development it was important to the officiating umpires to get exposure at the National Level. Hopefully, if some good ground work is done maybe we will be able to see this and the Under 23 Men's tournament blossom into a full National competition.

If that came to fruition, the avenues for Blues that would be opened would increase. In fact more and more umpires could look at accreditation opportunities at these tournaments, while attempting to break into the Open Men and Women's scene.

The championship game allocations saw three promising Level 4s do the job. Darren Sibraa (in his last game as a bachelor) called the balls and strikes, Helen Strauss at first and Ron Trow at third.

Under 14 Boys and Girls

Queensland conducted its Under 14 State Championships at two venues earlier this month with the Boys playing at Redcliffe and the Girls at Caboolture.

These championships enabled some of the best junior umpires an opportunity to show their wares under the guidance of members of the Queensland Development Committee.

Helen Strauss (Level 4) and Robyn Pittman (Level 5) were in charge at Caboolture while Alan Clissold (Level 4 ret) and Ian Frame (Level 5) made the decisions at Redcliffe.

The clinics run at the championships were beneficial to the junior Blues as well as those who were asked to assist in the training. Well done to all concerned.

Australian Capital Territory

ACT Blues on the road again

Thirteen SUA ACT umpires travelled to Melbourne on the Easter Long Weekend to attend the Waverely\Dandenog junior tournament. Softball ACT sent eight teams and it was pleasing to be able to offer five umpires more that was required to assist the UIC's at both Waverely and Dandenong.

Dandenong

Brett Atkinson Level 4

Craig Williams Level 3

Ken Ryan Level 2

Brian Higginbotham Level 2

Dick Gallagher Level 2

Mark Gallagher Level 1

Waverely

Martin Turnbull Level 4

Alex Turnbull Level 3

Brendon Le Leirve Level 3

Mike Hurrell Level 3

Adam Hurrell Level 3

John Maxwell Level 2

Lyle Roberts Level 1

It was pleasing to see that almost every SUA ACT umpire was allocated to a final.

The SUA ACT Executive met this week to discuss issues for the 2002-2003 season. The committee is well underway in planing examinations, pre-tournament clinics and targeting umpires identified for possible examination next season.

Congratulations to Tim Duffy for obtaining his Level 3 Accreditation and Brian Higginbotham for being awarded an (Hon) Level 3.

I would like to thank Softball ACT and the SUA ACT Executive for their valuable assistance again this year.

Denise Culpitt
SDU ACT

2002 South Pacific Classic with David Crowe

Every four years host countries Australia and New Zealand, on a rotational basis, conduct the South Pacific Classic. This tournament dates back to 1985 and today is sanctioned by the International Softball Federation and is utilised by many countries as an important part of their preparation towards the Women's World Championships.

This year the Classic was hosted by the Western Australia Softball Association in Perth, and, while the number of teams competing were down, the calibre of players and matches continue to highlight the importance that this event attracts.

Australia, New Zealand, China and a second Australian team under the colours of the Australian Institute of Sport (AIS) battled against each other for the opportunity to play for gold. No less than 23 Sydney Olympians were included in the playing line-ups of the four teams.

The umpiring crew for this event, like the teams involved, included a mix of experience and new faces to international level softball. The umpires were lead by Margo Koskelainen OAM (ASF) and included David Crowe (NSW), Debbie Grove (VIC), Alan McAuliffe (SA), Damien McCauley (SA), Darrell Shephard (NSW), Lance Type (NZ) and Diane Waller (VIC). An umpire from China was expected to be part of the crew however for some reason did not make the flight.

It is always interesting when you get a group of umpires together to watch their idiosyncrasies and how they interact with each other. By way of explanation try this little test and see if you can pick the individuals involved...

- Two of the crew were more than happy to cook roast dinners for nine people including six vegetables and cheese sauce (MK, DC)
- Which crew member brings along 'playing cards' from her bridal shop (DG)
- Who loves tigers and eagles, and loves listening to Shania Twain (AM)
- Seven am, time to walk 10 kilometres (DG, DW)
- Bookworms (DM, MK)
- Who discovered that they like the taste of 'McEwan's Pale Ale' (DC, DW)
- Has a friend in Perth he hasn't seen for years (DS)
- Has a bad habit of telling bad jokes (DS)
- Goes through 11 kilos of ice cream a week (DG)

The list could go on and on but it highlights the variety of people involved in our sport. One of the great things that came from this tournament was the high level of support and camaraderie that existed among the crew. Everyone was there for each other and no one was singing their own praises. It really was a great experience both on and off the diamond.

Jason the Liaison King

Speaking of "off the diamond", our Liaison Officer, Bus Driver and Tour Guide, Jason Carter, is a man of many talents. A Level 3 umpire, Jason's "Mobile Phone Users" Classes were well attended [daily – coz they kept forgetting] by DG and MK (who, by the way, was repeating the Basic class from March) and now both are proficient [well nearly] in sending and receiving text messages. Jason also took the time to cook the crew a great pasta meal one night that was such a hit a copy of the recipe was requested by everyone.

Final Day Allocations

Bronze Medal Game

Australia v China David Crowe, Damien McCauley, Alan McAuliffe

Gold Medal Game

AIS v New Zealand Darrell Shephard, Lance Type, Debbie Grove, Dianne Waller

Results - China 6 d Australia 3, AIS 3 d New Zealand 2

Big Al calls it quits on International Games

On a sad note, Alan McAuliffe announced after the closing ceremony that the Classic was his last international game.

Alan has amassed in the vicinity of 180 International games under his belt including the 1996 Olympics, several Women's World Championships and a number of Youth Championships. Alan's international career began 13 years ago when he was appointed to the South Pacific Classic in Christchurch in 1989.

While 'Big Al' has not formally made a decision regarding National level umpiring, I am sure that I speak for all umpires who know Alan that we hope he continues on the park in some capacity or another for many years to come. His leadership, on and off diamond support and respect for the game provides valuable lessons for us all.

Final Word

Well the planes have all landed at the best destination of all, 'Home', and hopefully all of the luggage left with flight crews has made it to the same destination. Gear is being aired and uniforms washed ready for the next game we do.

While I umpire that first base on the under 17's school girls competition at North Shore (probably being berated by a disgruntled parent), I will think back to my first ever international competition and realise that another step in my development has been reached and that I may be another step closer to achieving my goal of being the best that I can be.

2002 World Championship Team

Players

Sandra Allen (QLD), Marissa Carpadios (QLD), Alisa Denne (QLD), Peta Edebone (VIC), Fiona Hanes (NSW), Kelly Hardie (QLD), Tanya Harding (QLD), Kirsty Jennings (VIC), Sally McCreedy (QLD), Simmone Morrow (QLD), Tracey Mosley (SA), Natalie Shaprio (QLD), Natalie Ward (NSW), Danica White (NSW), Brooke Wilkins (QLD), Felicity Witt (NSW), Kerry Wyborn (NSW)

Staff

Simon Roskvist (Head Coach), Lloyd Howlett (Assistant Coach), Martin Rubinoff (Assistant Coach), Faye Bourne (Team Manager), James Hodgkinson (Physiotherapist), Howard Arbuthnot (Massage Therapist), Wendy Swift (Psychologist), Carolyn Buttsworth (Statistician), David Aitken (Video / Biomechanist), **Matthew Gowty (Umpire)**.

2002 Japan Cup Team

Players

Sandra Allen (QLD), Amy Borbiro (VIC), Alisa Denne (QLD), Kelly Gentle (NSW), Danni Hanna (VIC), Kirsty Jennings (VIC), Kate Judd (ACT), Sarah Lockett (WA), Stacey Porter (NSW), Kerrie Sheehan (NSW), Kym Tollenaere (QLD), Amanda Wheeler (NSW), Danica White (NSW), Brooke Wilkins (QLD), Felicity Witt (NSW), Belinda Wright (NSW), Kerry Wyborn (NSW)

Staff

Simon Roskvist (Head Coach), Kathy Horton (Assistant Coach), Sue Tomlinson (Assistant Coach), Faye Bourne (Team Manager), David Bick (Physiotherapist), (Massage Therapist - TBC), (Statistician - TBC), David Aitken (Video / Biomechanist), **Leigh Evans (Umpire)**.

National Umpire's Examination

Make sure you keep May 27 free. As most of you know, you have to sit the National exam if you wish to advance in your accreditations.

Of course a pass mark is required in the same year you present for your higher accreditation. So get your study groups together. This year's examination does not include the new Rules.

We are only a month away from the examination. (Yes it's that close).

Good luck to everyone, especially those budding candidates.

NT UMPIRES BEGIN NEW SEASON

with Margaret Lee (Northern Territory SDU)

The 2002 Northern Territory softball season began in Alice Springs And Darwin on Saturday, April 13.

In Darwin the conditions were very hot and humid with everyone vying for the 4:30pm game when the humidity had begun to drop! A repeat again last Saturday so umpires are only doing 2 games each.

The weather bureau has now announced that the rain has finished so we should get cooler conditions!!!!!!!

In Darwin we have had three umpires return to the fold – Ian Lee (Level 2), Ian Aiken (Level 2) and Penny Aiken (Level 1)- as well as the “old” crew returning.

Northern Territory

A few merry drinks were had last Saturday after the games as we had the first tie breaker for quite some time. “Blondie” Newman being on the plate had to shout the rest of the blue team. When she entered the change room after the game she was staggered by the drink list on the board!

A basic umpiring clinic has begun on Saturday mornings for club members. Yvonne is running this and hopefully more people will attend this week as word gets around. Those participants seem very keen and it is nice to see a few juniors interested.

We have also begun working on our web page. It is beginning to look quite interesting! The address is **ntumps.softball.org.au**.

Some dates for umpires elsewhere to think about

- **Honda Masters Games Alice Springs – Oct 19 –26, 2002.**
- **Arafura Games Darwin – May 14 – 21, 2003.**

Come and umpire and experience the NT hospitality!!

Just to mess with your mind a little more?????

1. What hair colour do they put on the drivers licenses of bald men?
2. I was thinking about how people seem to read the Bible a whole lot more as they get older, then it dawned on me. They're cramming for their final exam.
3. I thought about how mothers feed their babies with tiny little spoons and forks so I wondered, what do Chinese mothers use? Toothpicks?
4. Why do they put pictures of criminals up in the Post Office? What are we supposed to do, write to them? Why don't they just put their pictures on the postage stamps so the mailmen could look for them while they delivered the mail?
5. If it's true that we are here to help others, then what exactly are the others here for?
6. You never really learn to swear until you learn to drive.
7. No one ever says, "It's only a game" when their team is winning.
8. Ever wonder what the speed of lightning would be if it didn't zigzag?
9. Last night I played a blank tape at full blast. The mime next door went nuts.
10. If a cow laughed, would milk come out her nose?
11. Whatever happened to Preparations A through G?
12. If olive oil comes from olives and peanut oil from peanuts, where does baby oil come from?

Photographs of the Wedding of the Year

Due to circumstances beyond the editor of this magazines control we are unable to bring you pictures of Darren and Tricia's wedding this month.

It is hoped that we can have a spread of pics for those interested in the June edition. Sorry guys and gals! :(

Also ensure you get your articles in to Mark Toft for next month's edition ASAP. Don't wait for your State to do, you can do it too.

The MENSA Test, see how you go!

Here is something that will test your minds to the limits. For those who have tried this before, come back and have another go as it is amazing how quick we forget. For those who haven't the test is about to begin. I will give you the first one the rest is up to you. **24 H IN A D = 24 HOURS IN A DAY**. GOOD LUCK.

0	24 H in a D	24 hours in a day
1	26 L of the A	
2	7 D of the W	
3	7 W of the W	
4	12 S of the Z	
5	66 B of the B	
6	52 C in a P (W Js)	
7	13 S in the U S F	
8	18 H on a G C	
9	39 B of the O T	
10	5 T on a F	
11	90 D in a R A	
12	3 B M (S H T R)	
13	32 is the T in D F at which W F	
14	15 P in a R T	
15	3 W on a T	
16	100 C in a R	
17	11 P in a F (S) T	
18	12 M in a Y	
19	13 is U F S	
20	8 T on a O	
21	29 D in F in a L Y	
22	27 B in the N T	
23	365 D in a Y	
24	13 I in a B D	
25	52 W in a Y	
26	9 L of a C	
27	60 M in a H	
28	23 P of C in the H B	
29	64 S on a C B	
30	9 P in S A	
31	6 B to an O in C	
32	1000 Y in a M	
33	15 M on a D M C	

How did you go? I will supply the answers next month (If you can wait that long)

To the first time Liaison Officer

by Jason Carter

My name is Jason Carter. I am a Level 3 umpire in WA and I always wanted to be a bus driver. Ever since I was a kid and used to pretend to stop and pick up passengers on my bike. The people in my street must have wondered what the hell I was doing – ride a bit, stop, ride a bit, stop. Anyway, I ended up getting my bus license when I taught Computing (Diploma subjects) at the local College of TAFE for a few years and I sated that need. What has this got to do with being a Liaison Officer? Well – I got to drive people around again.

When the opportunity arose to be the LO for the Men's Nationals this year, I hunted around for information on what was expected. I was given a small pamphlet that outlined the role but didn't really give me what I was looking for. I work in a precise industry – I wanted precise instructions! There aren't any – and for good reason.

I'm writing this in the hope that it may help you, who are in a similar situation as I was and maybe inspire others to do the job in future. Some of the issues I dealt with may be local (WA) issues and ground/park related – but pick up what you will and throw out the rest. Here we go.

It is NOT a holiday. You've lined up your leave with the boss and told everyone you're taking a week's leave (and obtained the usual insults from your workmates). While its work of an entirely different nature – you'll be working. It starts from the time you get the notification of your appointment. Don't let the person telling you of your appointment off the hook. I would be asking:

- How many umpires have been allocated to the tournament and who are they? This will affect the facilities required. Also, you may have local umpires interested to know who is coming.
- Will there be additional facilities hired by the host association? In WA, WASA hired a caravan with air conditioning. Air conditioning and fans are important as most of the national tournaments are held in Summer. Also, it may be your responsibility, as it was in my case, to stock the caravan with tea, coffee and cups. I was able to "borrow" this stuff from WASA (Shirley – I put it all back, I promise!)
- Has transport been arranged? For the two tournaments I have been LO, the local umpires (and myself) provided ground transport for one, and WASA provided a 14-seater bus for the other. If transport is provided, make sure you have a pick-up address and booking reference number. Also, and I don't mean to be demeaning, make sure you have a license to drive the vehicle supplied. I'll talk about getting your fuel money later if you are required to supply the transport.

- Will keys be supplied to change rooms at the grounds and the caravan? Make sure if you can that there are always two keys for everything. You keep one key at all times and leave one key with the UIC. That way, if you leave the ground for any reason, access to rooms is available. Remember, with umpires changing clothes all the time, it's not hard for a member of the crew to "forget" what they did with your key. I was a "key nazi" – and proud of it.
- Where will the umpires be staying? If staying at a hotel, maybe do a drive-by and scout out the area. Make sure you know where the hotel is and that the vehicle you're driving will fit in the undercover parking. I got caught with this one! The bus supplied by WASA didn't fit in the undercover carpark. Also, see what restaurants are around. They're a hungry lot and you've seen nothing scarier than a group of hungry umpires. That is until someone loses the key to the bus at the end of a long day and they can't go back to the hotel straight away. That's probably a lot worse and is to be avoided.
- Will there be a final night dinner? You may need to organise tickets for the umpires and collect payments (which I'll get to). You are expected to go to the final night dinner so make sure you get a ticket as well. Personally, I would be expecting the host association to pay for your ticket – seeing as you have donated your time and energy it only seems fair.
- Am I expected to participate in the opening/closing ceremony? I got stung with this one. The crew were resplendent in their uniforms and waiting to go on the field for the opening ceremony of the South Pacific Classic. I was sitting down stuffing a hamburger down my throat. An announcement came over the PA asking me to immediately see the tournament convenor. She told me I had to lead the crew out onto the field – but they had already gone out. I had to run out on the field and I was really embarrassed. I hadn't been told – but this is a lesson – don't expect to be told everything. The tournament managers are busy managing and, to be honest, you are the last of their concerns.
- When will the umpires be arriving? Interstate umpires arrive, in my experience, the day before the tournament is due to start. Local umpires looked after themselves, in terms of getting to the hotel. Get a list of arrival times and try to arrange it so you have as few trips out and back as possible. If you have separate domestic and international terminals (as we do in Perth), make sure you go to the right terminal! Of course, you will need to know when they are leaving also.
- Will there be an official photographer? At both tournaments, a photographer was available. Find out when they will be there and discuss it with the UIC. Note: in my experience it is difficult getting umpires to appear on camera. Be firm, but fair!!

So those are the questions I'd ask the person giving you the job. It could be the convenor of the tournament or your local SDU could approach you, I guess. There are some other questions you may have as well.

- How will I know the umpires when they get off the plane? This is the easy part – they will be wearing the formal umpires walking out jacket. An amazing colour blue with the ASF logo on it. At least, that was until they changed the colour to fawn (Margo says it's another colour – but it evades me). However, fawn will do. Also, they will be expecting someone to collect them from the airport and will have that "I'm looking for someone" look on their face. If you wear a "softbally" type shirt you can't go wrong.
- What will they want to eat? Everything.
- Where will they want to go? Everywhere. They may be in your city for the first time – organise a tour if there's time. They'll let you know what they want to do. You aren't in the entertainment industry either. Most of the time they'll be dead tired anyway and happy to go with the flow.
- Can I leave the grounds? Of course, it's not prison – they can't force you to be there. But you gave a commitment when you took on the job. Generally, that means you are where the umpires (and UIC) are. In practise it's not an issue. Just agree on a time you will be back by and all will be happy. If you aren't punctual, they're not going to trust you next time and will be narky next time you want to leave.
- What are the hours? Depends on game times and the UIC. During the tournaments I did, the UIC decided when the crews should be picked up in the morning. If a crew didn't have games until the afternoon, some umpires stayed at the hotel until I went back and picked them up around lunch time. It is possible to go back and forward a few of times in the day but it will also depend on the transport you have, the distance from the ground to the hotel and other time constraints (maybe you have to pick kids up from school?). You go home once everyone is back at the hotel. Most nights, I dropped and ran, getting home around 10:30-11pm. Depends on all sorts of things – but expect long days.

At the ground during the day, the umpires not on the diamond do their own thing. They may ask for a lift to the local shops to get supplies or maybe visit a local site of interest (if there's time).

So here is my summary of what I did, broken up into each segment:

- First Day
 - Make sure I have my list of arrivals and pick up the umpires – generally all arrive in the morning. Take them back to the hotel and help them with luggage.

- They will want to stock their room with food and other stuff – like washing powder etc. They may want a lift to the local shopping centre.
- I lounged around with them in the afternoon, watching telly, chatting, singing 'show toons'...whatever.
- In the evening, there is likely to be a tech briefing and they will all need to get to the grounds. It is a good idea to get the umpires to take their gear bags and uniform with them as they can lock it up at the park. That way, it's all there in the morning and it won't be such a squeeze in the morning. Depends on what transport you have, really.
- After the tech briefing, back at the hotel, a team meeting is likely. Stick around for that. I made sure they all had my mobile number at that time. I also found out what they wanted to eat the next day (see "During the Tournament").
- Dinner is probably on the cards next. A nice restaurant ends the night pretty well.
- During the tournament
 - Arrive at the hotel at the prearranged time. Normally, the UIC will arrange to be at the park at least an hour before the first game.
 - When at the game, unlock the facilities (change rooms, caravan, whatever) so the first crew can get ready.
 - Fill up water containers with water and ice so there is always cold water available. If conditions are hot, arrange a cold drink for the umpires on the diamond in between digs at various times. But hustle – there isn't much time.
 - Assist the UIC with pre-game duties. Photocopying, team lists etc. Also, bring the game balls to the UIC (which are usually in a box and may be locked up with the umpires gear). I roughed up the game balls at this time as well.
 - Mid-morning, when the first game(s) are under way, I went to the shops and stocked up on bread, milk, fillings and other food items that were requested at the team meeting. This is a daily event. I generally bought sliced meat of some kind (eg. ham, silverside), salad stuff, fruit and "munchy stuff". The crews will "graze" on this

all day.

- The rest of the day is spent assisting the UIC and umpires and watching some ball. Note: by the 3rd or 4th day, you'll probably be sick of watching softball and will be glad to do anything else.
- If crews have finished for the day, take them back to the hotel or maybe on a site seeing trip of some sort.
- At the end of the day, make sure everything is locked up and take the umpires back to the hotel.
- **Going Home!**
 - Have your list of departure times handy for taking everyone to the airport. It's not necessary to park – a drive-by drop-off is OK. You may even want to stop the vehicle first before pushing them out!
 - It's likely that the last umpires to leave will donate the remaining items left in the hotel room to you. And I don't mean the furniture. Bring a box with you as there may be a bit of stuff.
- **Recovery**
 - It's quite a job – it lasts perhaps from a Saturday through to the Sunday of the following week. It might be a good idea to allow a day to recover if you can swing it. Otherwise, it's back to work as usual.

Show me the money! That's right – it's time to talk money. Throughout this document you've read that you are required to supply certain things. The money tree is bare – so where does it come from? Your good friends, the umpires. Start collecting as soon as possible, like at the team meeting on the first night (say \$5 to \$10...as a start). If supplying your own vehicle, you will need fuel - keep track of what it costs you. If a vehicle is supplied, keep the receipt and recover your costs from the host association.

Collect money for food in the caravan (or whatever) at the park. If there is a final night dinner, collect money for the tickets. If a photographer has been organised, collect money for the photos. It could get confusing – but that won't happen to you because you've kept a list of who has paid what and kept everything fair.

However, and this is a big however, you are responsible for the money and taking care of the umpires (and UIC's) interests. You should be on the lookout for specials at the shops for food and making sure the money isn't spent on silly items. Like you, the umpires have committed their time and money to be at the tournament and don't want either to be squandered.

Look, I don't want you to get the wrong impression. I wasn't perfect and I'm not writing this because I think I was. The purpose is to give you an idea of what to expect. I've done that part - now why in the world would you do it?

What I haven't said is how enjoyable I found the experience. You know how in "Blues News Online" all the national umpires go on about the "camaraderie", the "friends I've made in softball" and "blah blah blah". Well it's true – it really is. If you're reading this then you have probably been involved in umpiring at some level. You do your game (s) and you go home. Your wife/girlfriend/partner says "How were your games, honey". "Crap.", you say, "I blew a call at home and both coaches want my neck in a noose". "Never mind, dear. What should we have for tea?". And then you are awake all night thinking about that play. You get the idea.

A national tournament isn't like that. You are with people who have a similar interest and are driven to do the job well. You see how they handle the good stuff and the bad stuff that happens. That's not to say its softball, softball, softball all week, but over the period of the tournament you become immersed in it. As a Liaison Officer, you get to share the experience and it makes you want to be a part of the scene, to be a part of the crew. I am more certain now than ever before that I would like to continue the program – and that's one of the benefits of being an LO – you see what you're missing out on (damn it!). Yes – you ask questions. Yes – you see some good ball. Yes – you see how a tournament operates. But if that's all you get out of it you're missing the point.

Anyway, after the second tournament, the UIC asked if I would do it again. I said "absolutely not!!"

My reasons:

- 1) there isn't a national tournament in WA in 2003 (fair enough), but most importantly –
- 2) I want to be part of the crew at the next national tournament I attend. And when I am part of a national tournament as an umpire, I know how I would like to be treated by the Liaison Officer. Maybe I'll see you there.

Jason Carter

This year Jason (pictured left) was a 'God Send' to all the Umpires who visited Western Australia for the Open Men's Nationals and the South Pacific Classic.

Nothing was too much trouble for this great guy. From all the Blue's thanks Jason. Hope you achieve your goals and many of us are looking forward to seeing you on the diamond at Nationals real soon. But, WATCH OUT!



NSW UMPIRES KEPT BUSY OVER THE LAST MONTH

It has been a very busy time for Umpires in NSW over that past few weeks.

On March 26 and 27 NSW hosted a **Test Series between Australian Under 19 and NZ Under 19 Women**. Margo Koskelainen was the UIC and the officiating umpires were Michael Smeath, (New Zealand), David Crowe, Sue Itzstein, Bruce McCahon and Darrell Shephard.

Two games were scheduled for each evening however rain intervened on the Tuesday and forced the suspension of the second game which was rescheduled for Thursday, March 28 unfortunately rain again caused the game to be abandoned. New Zealand won the Series 3 games to 0.

Australia Cup

The Australia cup was held at the NSW State Softball Centre over Easter. Margo was the UIC and Frank Thomas, Darren Sibraa, Helen Strauss and Ian Frame travelled from Queensland to join with Sue Itzstein, Ross Harrison, Amanda Greggs, Darrell Shephard, Bruce McCahon, Andrew Rindfleish, Scott Rindfleish, David Crowe, Graham Boyle, Nicole Crowe, Lisa Freeman, and Greg Baker to crew the games.

Once again rain intervened and most of Fridays games were abandoned. A new draw was developed overnight and we started a fresh on Saturday. Queensland Academy of Sport won the final 2 – 1 over Arncliffe Scotts. Umpires on the Final were David Crowe on the plate – who made an excellent and courageous call of obstruction which resulted in the winning run being scored, Sue Itzstein at first, Bruce McCahon at second and Darrell Shephard at third.

Tee Ball State Tournament

At the same time as the Australia cup was being played Georges River Association hosted the NSW Tee Ball Tournament. Teams from across NSW competed and some forty odd umpires led by UIC Alf Chapman and his deputy Heather Randall, were kept busy during the two day event.

The Under 19 Male Qualifying Tournament was held at the NSW State Softball Centre on Saturday, April 13, which saw a team of twelve umpires officiate on a very hectic day where 15 games were played. Unfortunately the withdrawal of a team on the day prior to the event took some of the interest away from the event as all teams qualified for the State Championships to be held in July.

Pacific International Under 23 Men's Fastpitch Tournament

Sue Itzstein was the UIC for this event held over three days at the NSW State Softball Centre. Teams from Queensland, NSW, ACT, Victoria and NSW Country played in a very competitive tournament. ACT played Victoria in the final and ran out winners 4 – 0. Umpires for the Final were Bruce McCahon, on the plate, Ross Harrison at first and Scott Rindfleish on third.

NSW Umpires are now having a weeks break before the Under 19 female qualifier to be held at Aquilina on May 11 and 12 followed by the Under 16 State Championships being held at Lismore on the following weekend.

Good luck to Greg Zuchetti, Matt Hayes, Sam Mooney, Robert Young, and Geoff Fittler who are Level 2 candidates at the Under 16 Championships.

By Bruce McCahon

Letter to the Editor

Money to umpire... Are you in it for the right reasons???

There are times when the opportunities and budgets have been set up that umpires get paid for their services. That is well and good. The most disappointing aspect of getting paid for umpiring comes down to the simple fact that some umpires won't take the diamond without the money in their hand. Some won't travel to destinations unless their fuel bill is covered.

Whatever happened to umpiring the game because we love it. Sure the money that is available in some cases pays for the beverages after the games, update of your kit bag or something extra to spend on a loved one.

Recently I heard of umpires who held their local Association to ransom with an unbelievable amount of money per game for a season. This was to put the strain on the association, the clubs, the players and the parents of the junior players.

Of course the money has to come from somewhere and negotiations for a reasonable fee fell through because the association was not prepared to sell the players, parents and clubs out for a bunch of money-hungry umpires, who picked only the games they wanted to do and not all games. What is the world coming to....I ask you? Well this time the umpires were told NO and the games were done by clubbies and the umpires had no games to umpire.

I am an umpire and from a small country association and I have had to make many financial sacrifices to advance in umpiring, but really when you look at it, if we are not there for the game then we are there for the wrong reason.

These type of associations, inadvertently would have helped you in your career as an umpire and the benefits of making friends within the umpiring circle should not have a price tag on it.

What is a game worth? Are you accountable for the decisions you make (especially when you are asking exorbitant amounts per game).

In a look at traveling expenses, it is feasible to say that if you want to be paid to travel to a game then you are way out of line. If you can't afford it, don't go seems to be the logical answer.

It is obvious that we should, as umpires take a step back and ask ourselves why are we here? For the money or for the enjoyment of the game.

It is a privilege to officiate games of softball and that is the bottom line. Umpires are not bigger than the game, no one is!

ANON