

Blue's News On-Line

Official Australian Softball Umpire's Magazine

Contributions to mtoft@ozemail.com.au April Edition 4/2006

Diane and Debbie selected for World Championships



The announcement that Victorian umpires, Debbie Grove (right) and Diane Waller, have been appointed to the Women's World Championships in China in August 2006 has affirmed that the Australian National Umpiring program is well on track.

To have two Australian females appointed to this event is testament to these two individuals as umpires and as ambassadors of our country and our sport. It is also reflective of the work undertaken within our umpire program over 20 years, particularly by Margo Koskelainen, in the development of quality female international umpires. This is the first year of the revised method of appointment of umpires to World events where ISF essentially select the umpire crew from all umpires available from all softball playing countries, irrespective of whether the country is competing at that world event or not.

Congratulations to Debbie and Diane (See International careers Page 6)

The National UIC's Call with Andrew Rindfleish

With the two under 23 tournaments a week or so ago, the 2006 national Championships have drawn to a close. The following statistics summarise the efforts of the umpires servicing our sport.

- 8 tournaments
- 39 qualified umpires available for appointment
- 5 skill share umpires
- 4 Level 5 candidates
- 3 Off diamond UICs
- 51 appointed umpires
- 92 appointments
- 7 Umpires appointed to 3 tournaments
- 27 Umpires appointed to 2 tournaments
- 12 withdrawals after applications were received
- 9 versions of the appointments

My sincere thanks go to all those umpires who were available for the 2006 Nationals, especially those available for multiple and those who accepted offers of appointment at late notice.

I am in the process of completing a questionnaire for all umpires who attended Nationals in 2006. The questionnaire is voluntary but I'd encourage all umpires to complete it as the information will be valuable for the National program managers. Please keep an eye out on the web site for this questionnaire.

The following umpires were successful in improving their accreditation levels at the 2006 Nationals. Alex Turnbull and Howard Watt achieved Level 5 in January. Level 6s were gained by Ron Houison and Col Davis in January, and Kevin Offer, Kevin Tannebring and Ron Trow at the 23s in April. Congratulations to all. Additional questionnaires are being finalised for the candidates and their mentors to gain feedback on the assessment process and the preparation undertaken, focusing on the development plans each candidate prepared.

In addition to the Nationals this summer, there have been a number of other commitments at national and international level requiring the services of many of our national and near national umpires. These commitments included GP 1, 2 and 3, international series against the Japanese 19s, the Japanese national side and the Chinese Taipei national side. The inaugural Commonwealth Men's tournament was held in Melbourne in January and there were two high standard men's club tournaments – the ACT Skins and the NSW Blacktown Invitational Fastball.

Plenty of softball, plenty of umpiring and a sterling effort by those of you who continued to put your hands up to be part of it.

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AUSTRALIA V JAPAN INTERNATIONAL TEST SERIES

This series was held at Blacktown Olympic Park during the week directly following the Open Men's Nationals. The umpiring Crew consisted of Darrell Shepard, Sue Itzstein, Scott Rindfleish, Greg Baker and UIC Andrew Rindfleish. Japan was victorious for the series with the score-line reading 4 games to Japan and 1 game to Australia.

The Japanese dominated the series with both the bat and pitching, with relentless determination and intensity shown by the side.

ISF Regional Umpire Clinic

The 2006 ISF Regional Clinic originally scheduled for January 2005 had to be re-scheduled. Kevin Broomhall, Warren Duff, Scott Rindfleish and Darren Si-braa will now attend the Clinic in Upper Hutt from 18 to 22 October.

The Clinic will be run in conjunction with a New Zealand Services umpire clinic and will be attached to the Doreen Dalton, Men's and Women's tournament, which runs Friday to Monday.

This is the first major Club tournament in the New Zealand season and is conducted by the Hutt City United Club. The Clinic will be conducted at the Department of Defence Facility, Upper Hutt, near Wellington.

UMPIRE DEVELOPMENT - BASIC CLINIC

The Umpire Development Basic Clinic was held on the February 25-26 at Blacktown Olympic Park. The instructors included Scott Rindfleish, Peter Medbury and Vicki Lansley.

A very successful day was had by all with 11 budding new umpires meeting their pre-requisite requirements to be considered for a Level 2 candidate position in the future. The age group was diverse with group dynamics presenting a wide range of life and softball experience, making an interesting mix for both Instructors and trainees.

Special mention must go to Softball NSW who presented all trainees with a "show bag" of sorts with NSW merchandise, information and give aways. The venue was perfect for such a clinic utilising the newly painted and furnished umpires room that was transformed into a lecture room complete with screens, speakers, projector and white board.

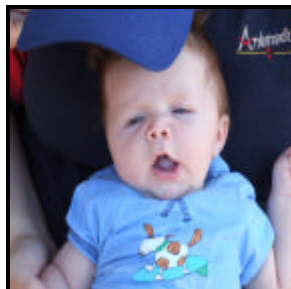
NEW SOUTH WALES

www.nswumpires.softball.org.au

2006 NSW SUA Executive

Umpire In Chief	Darrell Shepard
Deputy UIC	Bruce McCahon
Secretary	Sue Itzstein
Treasurer	Heather Kennedy
Training Co-ordinator	Scott Rindfleish
State League Co-ordinator	Ron Houison
Special Events	Vicki Lansley
Information Co-ordinator	Wendy Boyd

A warm welcome to Ron, Vicki and Wendy as they join the NSW SUA Executive in 2006. We look forward to their valuable contribution and their support of the NSW SUA Program.



BABY BLUES NEWS

Heather Kennedy Level 5 Umpire from North Shore District Softball Association took a break from Nationals in 2006 to have baby Zac. Both mother and father – Gavin, have long awaited this precious arrival.

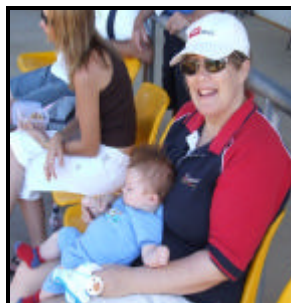
Baby details include:

Name: Zac Gavin Kennedy

Born - 20th January 2006

Weighed - 10 lb 11.5 oz or 4.86 kg

Length - 57 cm



Heather and Zac made an appearance at Open Men's Nationals in March at BOP for Zac's introduction to men's softball. Heather will be back umpiring in the very near future.

BNOL DEADLINE

Just a reminder that the deadline for contributions is the 15th day of each month. All umpires are reminded that anyone can submit articles and pictures to Blue's News On-Line. BNOL is the official Australian umpiring magazine written by umpires for umpires. Contributions can be sent to

mtoft@ozemail.com.au

Victorian Under 14 State Championships

The 2006 Victorian Under 14 Championships were held at Frankston on the weekend of 11-12 March. Although there were some initial difficulties with allocations due to teams not providing umpires, the weekend went well and all umpires who attended enjoyed themselves.

As usual, the Future Umpires Program was run at this event and Stacey Evans, in her capacity as FUP Trainer, executed her duties very well along with Alex Turnbull and Vanessa Fleming-Baillie as assistant trainers.

It was pretty hot over the weekend which made it tough for umpires doing back-to-back games. All the games were played in good spirit and I'm happy to say there were no ejections or tribunals. Cooperation with the representatives from VSA was excellent and I enjoyed working with them.



Thank you to the committee from Frankston for making sure we had good facilities. Also thanks to the grounds people for providing excellent conditions for play. There were very few things that needed fixing prior to games starting for which I was very grateful.

"THE CREW"



Finals Allocations

Congratulations to the following people who were allocated to grand finals.

	Plate	Base
A Grade Girls	Trevor Murphy	James Loveridge
B Grade Girls	Casey Fogarty	Brendan Shatwell
A Grade Boys	Ryan Thorneycroft	Jake Harvey
B Grade Boys	Carly Van Kesteren	Anthony Battrich

All the umpires worked well together and I enjoyed their company over the weekend. I would like to single out Stan Tolmy who umpired wherever and whenever asked and did a sensational job working with the junior umpires. "Thank you", Stan.

Jason Carter
Tournament UIC

Tassie umpires head to Victoria for experience

As Tasmanian umpires are restricted in quality games three from the Apple Isle crossed Bass Strait to attend championships in Victoria.

Former State Director, David Lipscombe went to the annual Waverly Easter Carnival. While current State Director Wayne Clarke and his sister Cindy Clarke improved their skills at the Dandenong Easter Carnival.

In what is important to the standard of umpiring in Tasmania these three umpires are the true heart and soul of their State's umpiring program.

Wayne is hoping to get a number of umpires through the ranks and maybe have another umpire and more on the National scene.

Did you know that Australia is the world's number one softball nation?

- World number one - Under 19 Men's team (Aussie Colts), three consecutive World Championship titles.
- World number two - Open Women's team (Aussie Spirit), Silver Medallist (Athens, 2004), Bronze Medallists (Sydney 2000 and Atlanta 1996).
- World number three - Open Men's team (Aussie Steelers) and Under 19 Women's team (Aussie Pride).

INFORMATION CIRCULAR

To: State UICs, State Associations,
National Umpiring Committee.



From: Susan Crow (Chief Executive)

Date: May 1, 2006

Subject: UIC position

I am writing to you about the management arrangements for the National Umpire program. Recently a selection process was held for a Chief Umpire. The process involved Softball Australia's procedure of calling for applications and an interview process was utilised.

A selection committee was established by the Softball Australia President that included a Director of Sport Employment Australia, the Board member for High Performance, the Chief Executive and a Chief Executive from an independent sport with a good understanding of softball from a playing and coaching background.

The committee found that there was no clearly defined statement of the role and responsibilities of the UIC position. As such, the committee found it difficult to select for a role that was not clearly defined and drew this to the attention of the Board.

The Board of Softball Australia has considered the recommendations of the independent selection committee. The current term of appointment of the incumbent UIC (Andrew Rindfleish) is to be extended until the review of the umpiring program has been completed. Board member, Ken Culpitt, is leading the review and recommendations from the review will be presented to the Softball Australia Board at the August meeting.

In the meantime, the consultation process involving the umpiring community, as part of this review is continuing.

Times are busy in SA by Dave Datson

South Australia

The past season in SA was very busy starting with the traditional Junior Carnival over the October long weekend, followed by the Australian Masters Games, our usual location association programs and Senior Country and Junior Carnivals in January and February. All of these gave our blues plenty of opportunities to advance their skills.

During the season we saw several new umpires join the ranks and several advance their accreditation levels.

Welcome to the new level one umpires – Rob Dinneen (Adelaide), and Catherine Stratman, Belinda Scott, Brenda Scott, Brooke Williams, Danielle Sage, Debbie Breen, Fiona Scott, Jessica Pettingill and Michelle Lewis (Mt Gambier).



Congratulations to Steve Conlan (Level 2 Mt Gambier), Terrine Renfrey and Anne-Marie Filsill (Level 2 Centrals), Denise Moldovan (Level 3 Riverland), Tom Morre (Level 3 Whyalla) and Kevin Tannebring (Level 6 Adelaide) on successfully passing their assessments for new accreditation levels. Above is a photograph Kevin being congratulated by John McAuliffe on attaining his Level 6.

Congratulations to you all.

Rick Gill's Message to us

Dear Friends,

I am writing this message to you, to let you know that you have all meant so much to me throughout my life. Don't miss me, just remember me because I will always be there.

Love Rick



Tasman Exchange Umpire - Scott Rindfleish

2006 has been action packed with national and international events for all umpires in Australia. I have been fortunate to have had the most rewarding year of my umpiring career, starting with the Open Women's Nationals, the Under 19 Women's Nationals, the Open Men's in March and the Australia versus Japan International Test Series. March was topped off by an awesome experience in New Zealand as part of the Tasman Exchange. Umpiring at the 2006 Open Men's Club National Tournament in Hastings, Hawks Bay has been, by far, the best umpiring experience of my career!

I flew in to Auckland around 11.30am where I was met by NZ Chief Bill Smith and Glen Nalepa. After a quick clothes change in the airport express pick up, we boarded Bill's Honda and we were off, for a cold and rainy five hour trip to Hastings. Bill, Glen and I were the first umpires to arrive at our accommodation, the Fantasyland Motel, we met the rest of the crew in the Scout Hall come Umpires room on Day 1. Our room was great, big, facilities to burn and it even came complete with Faye, a generous lady who had offered her time to be our chef for the week.

The grounds were not quite to the standard at Blacktown. In fact only two of eight diamonds used were enclosed, and the backstops were small wire nets just behind the dish. It was unusual for me to see Black Sox catcher, Patrick Shannon sit in his white pants in the mud to gear up as there were no benches or dugouts to protect the players from the five days of constant rain. The pitchers used a rubber mat every game and while conditions were tough, whining and duty of care never entered discussion.

Calling the worlds best players from the Black Sox Team as they represent their club teams created unbelievable opportunities to work with pitchers and catchers of great quality in each and every team with former Black Sox and softball enthusiasts of superior game understanding completing the field. The strength of each team was solid throughout each 12 players in all twenty-four teams.

Respect – Nowhere before have I ever witnessed softballers display such respect for their team, their opposition, the umpires, the league and above all, the game. They play each and every game, no matter the importance of the outcome with respect, immense skill and dignity. This was consistent throughout all teams from the beginning of the tournament through to the business end.

A mind-blowing event took place on the last day. The definitive display of respect for the umpires came when former Black Sox catcher Bevin Martin came to the umpires' room and asked Bill if he could say a few words to the umpires. Bevin formally announced that he had just played the last game of his career and he was scheduled for surgery on his knees the following week. Bevin went on to thank the umpires present and umpires throughout New Zealand for their

contribution to softball and the friendships formed throughout his career. His speech was heard in absolute silence, as a hard playing, dominating, formidable man made heartfelt statements of respect and admiration about umpires. The speech created a solemn feeling in the room as we farewelled a player, forced to leave our sport due to injury, but also a feeling of appreciation as never before have words of thanks been expressed so emotionally.

One of the highlights for me was without doubt, working with the pitchers and catchers. I umpired 13 games, 7 of which were plates, and I was thrilled to see pitchers with movement, speed and pitch location control that is matched by only a few in Australia. Catchers worked with the umpires, with such professionalism and respect toward the plate umpire, best illustrated by the fact that I never saw the eyes of the catchers during any game; not to mention the rapport and umpire management skills...Awesome! The catchers worked overtime in the first inning to develop a relationship with me, learning my name, where exactly I live and the type of ball I umpire in Australia. Catchers had a great skill in managing the umpires and were focused on the umpires as much as catching the ball. This was very new to me, and it highlights the sheer professionalism and respect that the New Zealand players have for the umpires.

On our drive from Hastings back to Auckland, Bill was our personal Tour Guide, stopping at some of the hot spots along the way. I have a huge folder of photos of a breathtaking waterfall (huge), the Waikato River and naturally lots of softball.

Thank you to Softball Australia and the National Umpire Program for this awesome opportunity. Special thanks also to Softball New Zealand particularly Bill Smith and the umpire Crew for their great support and friendship, it was great to meet some of the blues that will be attending the ISF Clinic in October and to umpire with some of New Zealand's best. I can't wait for the next chance to umpire men's ball in New Zealand.



**B Grade Final
Crew L TO R**

**Dave Shedlock,
Scott Rindfleish,
Alan Jensen,
Glen Nalepa**

(UIC Bill Smith.

DEBBIE GROVE

1996 - Women's tour in Melbourne
1997 - Women's tour in Melbourne
1997 - Women's Tour in New Zealand
1999 - International Challenge in Canberra
1999 - Canada Cup
2000 - Women's Series in New Zealand
2001 - V1 Junior Men's Worlds in Sydney
2002 - International Women's Challenge in Queensland
2003 - Tri Series Men's in New Zealand (combining the Dean Schick Shield)
2003 - Tri Series Women's in Tasmania
2003 - V11 Jr Women's Worlds in China
2006 - U19 Women's Series in Melbourne
2006 - Women's Series in Sydney

DIANE WALLER

2001 - Women's tour in Melbourne
2001 - Women's tour in Wellington
2002 - Women's tour in Melbourne
2002 - South Pacific Classic in Perth
2003 - Youth Olympics in Sydney
2003 - Canada Cup
2003 - Women's tour in San Francisco
2003 - Women's tour in Hobart
2004 - Blacktown International in Sydney
2004 - World University Games in Florida
2005 - Blacktown International in Sydney
2005 - Canada Cup
2006 - Women's Tour in Melbourne
2006 - Women's tour in Sydney



Lara Beattie



Lara Beattie and Paul Gierke

Busy, busy, busy!

Queensland

Over the last two months Queensland umpires have been involved officiating at numerous tournaments throughout the state, including the U/14 Boys and Girls State Championships and the Secondary School Girls State Championships.

2006 Queensland Secondary School Girls State Championships

This tournament was conducted at Ipswich Softball Grounds from 23 March to 26 March. Thanks is extended to all the umpires who attended the tournament.

The umpiring crew for the grand final was David Casey on plate, Darren Sibraa first base and Ken McIntyre on third base.

Under 14 State Championships

Both the Boys and Girls and Under 14 State Championships were conducted over the weekend of 7 to 9 April, with the Boys tournament being conducted at Noosa and the Girls being conducted at South Brisbane.

Both tournaments were predominantly staffed by younger umpires and positive comments were received in relation to the performance of these umpires at both tournaments.

The grand final crews for these tournaments were as follows:-

Girls State Championship - Paul Gierke (Toowoomba), Josh Jansen (Mackay) and Boyd Davison (Brisbane).

Girls President's Cup - Lara Beattie (Redlands) (First State Championship), Tegan O'Day (Cairns) and Rebecca Coogan (Ipswich).

Boys State Championship - Adrian Ralph (Wynnum), Michael Trost (Bundaberg) and Shane Grigsby (Hervey Bay)

Boys President's Cup - Bridget Pohle (Brisbane), Brian MacPherson (Mt Isa) and Chris Warnock (Ipswich).

Finally, congratulations is also extended to Ron Trow from all in the Queensland umpiring community for his attaining his Level 6 accreditation at the U/23 Women's Nationals.

.....From Page 1

I'm sure you have all visited our re-vamped website. Web master Jason Carted has restructured the site so that migration around it is much easier. I hope you find it much more user friendly. We will be making it more informative with the addition of a "Rules Forum" and a "Latest mechanics" page. I welcome feedback on the site, any feedback at all. Please also let us have your thoughts on the proposed additional features. Feedback can be left with web master Jason Carter. Jason's email is on the web site.

The new rule book, effective from 2006 to 2009, is in final stages of being type set and checked and rechecked. It should be available within weeks. Please watch for its notice of its launch on the web site. Alan McAuliffe, our national Rules Interpreter has managed the updating of the Rule Book and the accompanying Points of Emphasis and Case Book. In the meantime, keep studying the old book for the Umpires' Examination, to be held Monday 29th May.

The Softball Australia Friendship Series will be held again at the BOP, in Sydney, in July. The actual dates are 3rd to 7th. We intend to again conduct an Advanced Umpire Clinic in conjunction with this event. Please watch the website for details, to be posted to the site in the next couple of weeks.

SPONSORSHIP FOR SOFTBALL AUSTRALIA

Softball Australia and St George are pleased to announce a Good Choice Home Loan Referral Program tailored to softball's members, families and friends. Softball Australia has teamed up with St George to help supporters of the sport save money by finding the right home loan suitable to them and also to raise some much needed money for softball at all levels.

This initiative will not only benefit Softball Australia, but local clubs and associations. Softball Australia will receive \$750 for every home loan over \$150,000 taken out with St George. The borrower's State Association will receive \$200 in the form of a rebate on fees payable to Softball Australia and the nominated softball club will receive a \$150 Easton equipment voucher.

St George is Australia's fifth largest bank and one of the top 15 publicly listed companies in Australia. By joining forces with Softball Australia, they aim to help grow softball in Australia and provide benefits to its supporters.

For more information visit www.softball.org.au or call Adrian Cox, St George Business Development Manager on 0434 073 295 or via email coxa@stgeorge.com.au

To ensure your Association/Club benefits, quote agent number 97520 when making your enquiry.

Rick Gill (1 October 1961 – 24 April 2006)

A tribute to a mate (by Darren Sibraa)

When Rick Gill passed away on the morning of 24 April, the umpiring program lost not only a rising talent that experienced his first taste of Nationals earlier this year, but to many of us that knew him better, we had lost a mate.

When I first met Rick at a South Brisbane umpiring clinic that was being conducted jointly with Frank Thomas, I could not have imagined the journey that we would travel at many times together. Frank had described him as this "big fella that was still playing but had shown interest in umpiring".

In subsequent years that interest had overwhelmed his interest in playing the game, and he showed a greater passion for enjoying the bond with his fellow umpires and the stories that developed.

A larrikin, Rick forged friendships that will endure. His sense of humour and selflessness were attributes that endeared him to many, almost as much as his smile or infectious laugh.

I know he will be missed, but the atmosphere of the public service on Friday 28 April, demonstrated that his spirit will live on in the hearts of all that knew him.



Umpire's Golf Day 2002