

Friendships last forever by Mark Toft

Why do we become umpires? It sure isn't to cop abuse from players, coaches and spectators. I'm sure it is not that we have a hate for the game of softball and it is our way of punishing all those who play while we officiate.

Maybe the reason is the friends we make and our true love for the game. Sure there are times that we are opened to the ugly part of the sport, but all in all it is the friends we make which keeps us going.

When I was a Level 4 umpire and I was a candidate for a Level 5 in Hobart I was told that all the other umpires were against me, not to trust them, just do your job and run hard.

Not being one to go on rumors, I let the week pan out and I found that I not only was enjoying myself, I was actually making friends with a whole new range of people from all walks of life and to this day those friendships have lasted.

Year by year I go to Nationals and meet up with old friends and in some cases make new friends, but the common denominator is the job we are there to do. The support you are able to get from others and the energy you can feed off lifts you to that higher level of a National competition. These experiences I have shared with my junior umpires within my own State.

Just to be a part of the National Umpiring Program is reward enough. If you only want to be a Level 1 or if you inspire to be an Olympic umpire, friends will always be there every step of the way.

What's in this issue???	I have always said that if I was told I could not return to the National scene my life would be empty.
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State Wrap	No softball umpiring is not the be all and end all of life, it's just the friends you would miss as the years go by.
	You must always remember that we are here for a common cause and we are all different.
	To all my friends that I will not see this year.... I will be thinking of you as I go about my business on the diamonds. To the rest, see you real soon.

MARGO'S CHRISTMAS MESSAGE

I wish you all a very merry and joyful Christmas surrounded by your family and friends, with the New Year bringing each of you its own rewards but especially those gifts of health and happiness.

A thought for this special time of year

“Kindness is more important than wisdom..... And once you understand this, you have the beginnings of wisdom.”



10 Strategies that will assist you becoming the best you can

1. Be self-observant, self-managing and self-motivated.
No one knows you better than yourself. Use your knowledge of best skills, values, personal characteristics and unique value-add to keep momentum. Self-knowledge is the foundation of our work and career 'house'. When you know what motivates you and what you do best, you'll succeed at much higher levels.

2. Use creative thinking, inquiry and risk taking as ways to access new learning.
Learning is a key competency for leadership. The drive for knowledge and openness to learning enhances opportunities for partnering, mentoring, development, etc.

3. Use peers, leaders and mentors for guidance, feedback and resources.
People who lead others, or self-lead, know it's essential to learn from others, get feedback and develop on-going relationships for future success. Leadership qualities do not develop in a vacuum; these relationships and resources are critical to development as a leader.

4. Be flexible: Readjust to changing priorities while continuing to deliver quality work.
Change is 'constant.' People who possess leadership qualities are able to adjust quickly to changing times and initiatives. Using creative thinking, flexibility, resourcefulness, one can be responsive to change and enhance value.

5. Be cognizant of what you 'don't know'; utilize effective resources to close knowledge gaps.
Again, qualities of leadership are enhanced when one uses one's current strengths and continually builds on those by additionally learning and resources. Those who stop learning, stop growing. Strong leaders are able to acknowledge gaps in their knowledge and seek resources to close them.

Next five.....Next Month

A busy time ahead for S.A. umpires

South Australia

The next two months will be very busy for South Australian umpires as will also be for many other umpires around the nation.

- Our Level 2 and 3 assessments are nearing completion within the Adelaide Competition.
- During January and March 2002, the following South Australian Umpires will be officiating at the Nationals –

Open Women Alan McAuliffe

U19 Men Damien McCauley

U16 Boys Raelene Robinson

U19 Women Alan McAuliffe, Raelene Robinson, Kevin Tannebring

U16 Girls Toula Connolly, Rod Dawson, John Glistak, Neville Lawrance

Open Men John McAuliffe

We wish each of them good calling at their respective national tournament.

- The Senior State Championships January 26-28 will also give the affiliate umpires the opportunity to be assessed at Levels 1-3 during the Championships.
- Neville Lawrance, Director of Umpiring, will undertake the duties of Tournament Chief Umpire for the Senior State Championships.
- Senior umpires will conduct an umpiring clinic on Sunday, February 3 at the Port Pirie Softball Association.
- Junior State Championships will follow over February 9-10 to be hosted by the Port Pirie Softball Association at its Leonard Park grounds.
- Representative and Club teams participate at this tournament. Affiliate umpires may be assessed at Level 1, and possibly at Level 2, during these Championships.
- Raelene Robinson, Deputy Director of Umpiring, will undertake the duties of Tournament Chief Umpire for the Junior State Championships.



Rules Challenge

Big Al's Tester

See how you go!!!!

Team 'A' commences a game using a 'DH'.

B7 (the DH) leads off the 4th inning with a single.

B8 picks a walk, advancing B7 to 2nd.

B9 bats and is declared out on an Infield Fly.

B10 (the player for whom the DH is batting) enters the batter's box and takes the first pitch for a strike. The second pitch is a passed ball, allowing both runners to advance one base. B10 then singles, scoring both B7 and B8.

The defence now appeal for a batting out-of-order.

Is the appeal legal, and if so, what would you rule?

(See Page 6 for the answer)

Wanted
Full time position.
Experienced print
journalist. Will relocate
to any State.
mtoft@ozemail.com.au

DATES TO REMEMBER

Jan 1-4—Int. Development Clinic Canb.

Jan 6-12—National Open Women Canb

Jan 6-12—National Under 19 Men Melb.

Jan 6-12—National Under 16 Boys Syd.

Jan 13-19—National U19 Women Adel.

Jan 13-19—National Under 16 Girls Hob.

Successful Candidates — 4 x 2

Victoria

At the Victorian Under 16 Championships held at the Berwick-Casey Softball Association over the 1st and 2nd December. Again in terrible conditions and driving rain on the Sunday)

Four (4) candidates were successful in obtaining their Level 2 Accreditation. Matthew Ziola - Werribee Softball Association, Stacey Evans - Sunshine Softball Association, Bronwyn Thomas - Glen Eira Softball Association and Tracy Reid - Dandenong Softball Association.

Kevin Broomhall (Level 6 candidate at the Under 19 Men Nationals next month) from the Werribee Softball Association was successful in his assessment and is now a Senior Examiner for Victoria.

Grass Roots Umpiring

Born to Officiate

Queensland

Queensland trio officiate the Battle of the States

Fourteen-year-old Toowoomba umpire, Louise Hancock is well on her way to achieving her long-term goal (to be an Olympic Umpire) after only two years in the Umpiring Program.

Louise has already attended five State Championships, Under 14 Boys 2000 (Wynnum), Under 16 Girls 2000 (Caboolture), Secondary State Schoolgirls 2001 (Toowoomba), Under 14 Boys 2001 (Rockhampton) and Under 16 Girls 2001 (Ipswich). Besides five State Championships Louise has umpired A Grade bases in Laidley (70 kilometres east of Toowoomba) and Toowoomba fixtures as well as many junior games in between.

Louise started umpiring in the 1999 summer season in Toowoomba as a 12-year-old and has been under the watchful eye and guidance of Mark Toft throughout her short career. Louise is hoping to attain her Level 2 accreditation at the end of this current season, which is her short-term goal.

This year Louise, along with 19 other junior umpires was identified under the Queensland Junior Developing Umpires Program instigated by the Queensland Umpiring Committee, again a huge achievement for someone so young.

Besides umpiring Louise also plays in the local Under 17 competition and is a Level 1 scorer. Her Father, Paul is a Level 2 scorer, Mother, Debbie a team manageress and brother Todd is a representative player and is learning umpiring this year also.

Louise is always looking for challenges in life and that was the main reason she took up umpiring.

“I just enjoy umpiring very much.”

Louise lists her greatest highlight of her short career as officiating at her first State Championships in Wynnum last April.

If umpiring softball was not challenging enough Louise decided to become a boundary and goal umpire in the regional Australian Rules competition. In fact she has excelled as a football official as well.

“Debbie and I are very proud of her achievement at this stage and we will be supporting her throughout her career in her quest for personal goals,” A very proud Dad (Paul Hancock) said.

Louise is an umpire who is going places. Keep an eye out for her - She was born to officiate.



Louise Hancock

When there a sporting contest between Queensland and New South Wales you can expect the whole competition to rise to another level.

Recently the Queensland Academy of Sport Open women's team traveled into enemy territory (New South Wales) at Tweed Heads to play against the New South Wales Institute of Sport team in a three game series.

Queensland umpires, Mark Toft (Level 5), Ian Frame (Level 5) and Ian Bunston (Level 4) were invited by Queensland's coach Richard McCreedy to officiate in the series.

The weather was perfect for softball (if you were sitting in a swimming pool and not on a skinned diamond), approximate temperature 38 degrees plus.

As we all know women's seven innings games are usually completed in one and one half hours or so. Well that soon changed at the Tweed.

Ian Frame had the first plate and it went an unbelievable two hours, fifteen minutes. Of course it was stated by Mark Toft (Big Mouth) that the next game which was due to start in 45 minutes time would be a quicker game so we could get to the beach and the swimming pool in the safe haven of the motel.

Well Tofty decided he would run his plate for two hours, 20 minutes. Believe it that all players and umpires were looking to re-hydrate during the game and immediately after the final out.

The next day it was Ian Bunston's turn at the plate and he was the best with a one hour, 55 minute game.

The experience which was gained by all three umpires was very much appreciated. Thanks must go to Richard McCreedy and New South Wales coach Barry Blanchard for their professional outlook during the games.

I know the players and the coaching staff from both sporting academies got value from the series, especially with the number of cameras set up for future reference.

The competition was of a high standard with many State and Australian representatives competing.

Queensland won the series 2-1

Crew Signals

Talk to your mates!!!

There may be some questions which go through your mind during and after each game. But who answers those questions? There are a number of options by which an umpire can evaluate his/her performance. If at all possible, seek help to difficult situations from senior umpires. They may be able to turn a negative into a positive or into a learning experience.

Talking it over with your crew members

If a situation arose in a game and you have concerns regarding the outcome, it is good practice to discuss this with your crew members after the game, in the privacy of the dressing room. Ensuring members of the teams are not aware of or cannot hear your discussion.

It is not a sign of guilt, nor is it a sign of weakness. In fact, discussing certain situations in a game with your fellow crew members can enable you to become a better, stronger umpire.

As we have two or more umpires on one diamond at one time there is always the aspect of others seeing something which we may not have. We have our own view of what and/or how something happened, others may be able to provide feed back on a different point of view because they may have perceived it differently. Therefore, a discussion with crew members after the game can give us a different point of view or may pick up a technical problem with our own positioning or even timing.

The purpose of a crew discussion enables all aspects to be looked at logically and honestly and should never be a 'run-down' session of the umpire concerned.

Asking for assistance from someone not in the crew

Most umpires who ask for someone to look at their game from the sideline need to take into account the reason they ask for feedback. It is a good idea to pin point a certain area in which you want the feedback. In saying that, if you want the truth then you must be prepared to listen. Look at it more as an analysis of your game. Just remember it was you who asked for the review of your game. If you are not prepared to listen don't ask for assistance in the first place. Whether it is your crew or someone you have asked, don't give excuses or tell them something happened that didn't, listen, take it in, and analyse it. Then take from it when you can and what will work for you. Otherwise they will just stop giving it.

Self Assessment

This is probably the best assessment you could have in regards to your own game. It is important that you be honest with your self assessment as you can work out the problems. If you're not honest then the problems only become more difficult to work through.

It is important not to be too critical of your own performance. Don't set the 'bar' so high that it is unachievable at your stage of your career. Try and work on certain areas over a number of games. One area at a time is a good starting point.

One of the major traps which junior umpires fall into is that they set themselves to concentrate on a particular point in the game and when they make a mistake, they concen-

trate on the mistake and other parts of their game deteriorate.

It is of the utmost importance during the game to not brood over a decision or situation. Put it out of your mind until the end of the game. If you do not, you may give a make up call unconscientiously. Thinking about mistakes or difficult situations can bring about the domino theory and destroy your whole game. "Get over it".

Tools

There are several tools you can use to improve your game and to provide yourself with feed back. The crew. Your peers. Respected coach's and players and a mirror for crisp signals and mechanics. Have someone video your game for an outside view of your movement, stance, angles and idiosyncrasies. And last of all visualization.

Remember— "Teamwork means giving everyone a lift,"

"It takes a bad game to know when you have had a good game."

A lot to say, making no sense

New South wales

Nobody likes to read a longwinded, pointless, uninteresting article that never seems to go anywhere but fills so many lines that reading becomes a chore and if read aloud then breathtaking in almost impossible due to the obvious lack of punctuation and methodical writing techniques that should have been mastered in elementary school or at the latest junior high English. Well I think I make a good point!

Scott Rindfleish

NSW Umpires – Dressing for the Occasion

By Scott Rindfleish

The NSW SUA has introduced a new on-diamond shirt that is really turning heads.

Following the look introduced some years ago by ISF, NSW has designed a polo shirt that presents style, comfort and a sporty, athletic approach to softball umpiring.



This new uniform has attracted compliments by all and clearly umpires in NSW are seen to be, more than ever before, focused on positive change.

It was thought that implementation of this new look would take a number of years. However sales have skyrocketed, already into the many hundreds, signifying the success of modernising softball umpiring in NSW.



Larter
the best
Medicine



There is al-
ways time
to laugh!

Remember When ...

A computer was something on TV
from a science fiction show of note
a window was something you hated to clean...
And ram was the cousin of a goat....

Meg was the name of my girlfriend
and gig was a job for the nights
now they all mean different things
and that really mega bytes

An application was for employment
a program was a TV show
a cursor used profanity
a keyboard was a piano

Memory was something that you lost with age
a CD was a bank account
and if you had a 3 1/2" floppy
you hoped nobody found out

Compress was something you did to the garbage
not something you did to a file
and if you unzipped anything in public
you'd be in jail for a while

Log on was adding wood to the fire
hard drive was a long trip on the road
a mouse pad was where a mouse lived
and a backup happened to your commode

Cut you did with a pocket knife
paste you did with glue
a web was a spider's home
and a virus was the flu

I guess I'll stick to my pad and paper
and the memory in my head
I hear nobody's been killed in a computer crash
but when it happens they wish they were dead.

Good Luck Rookies

I take this opportunity to wish
all the Level 5 candidates,
Andrew, Allen, Nicole, Scott,
Julie and Rod the best of luck
in their quest.

The work you have put in over
many years has got you to
this point and believe me to
umpire at Nationals year in,
year out is a very special oc-
casion.

I have had the privilege of
working with most of you, and
I know you will have a great
time (nervous but great).
Good Luck guys and I hope to
see you in the New Year.

To the Skill Share umpires,
Ian, Ron and Margaret enjoy
your experience, I know you
all will have a great time with
each of your crews.

To my fellow Level Six candi-
dates Kevin, Greg and
Graham, I wish you all the
success in achieving the next
Level of accreditation.

I have the opportunity to be
working in the same crew as
you all and I look forward to
the challenge we will face to-
gether. Good Luck Guys.

Tofty

Formation taking shape in the West

With Peter Baker—SDU

The formation of the Umpire Management Group is
now the number one priority for Western Australian
umpires. The ratification of the Umpire Management
Group will be decided at the next Western Australia Softball Association
(WASA) board meeting with the following persons being put up for positions.

Western Australia

State Director—Peter Baker
Training Co-coordinator—Warren Duff
Administrator—Wayne McDonnell
Other positions will be offered to selected persons.
Examiner
Rules Interpreter

The first meeting of the Umpire Board of Management will take place on Feb-
ruary 2, 2002. An operational agenda will be discussed to implement a full
program for all umpires throughout the State.

The original working group will be invited to attend along with WASA Board
members to give advice and help as needed. More details regarding the Um-
piring Board will be released in the January edition of BNOL.

Two local umpires have been assessed for higher accreditation during State
league games, Rob Harris and Bill Kilmurray. Their results will be published
next edition.

Western Australia will conduct the Rockingham Carnival on December 16.
The Carnival invites teams from all parts of the region and a large number of
umpires will be in attendance. Some assessments for Level 1 candidates will
be done during the tournament. Full story next edition.

Good luck to all umpires attending Nationals in January. Peter Baker U/19
Women—Adelaide and Alan Cheesman U/16 Boys - Sydney.

I take this opportunity to wish all umpires

**A Very Merry Christmas and a Happy and Prosperous New Year and
Good Umpiring**

Peter Baker SDU

Answer to Big Al's Question

From Page 3

The appeal is legal, as it has been made before a pitch to the next batter. All actions resulting from the incorrect batter's turn at bat (B10) are nullified, so the safe hit is cancelled and B7 & B8 must return to 3rd & 2nd respectively (they made these bases without assistance from B10). B1, the batter who should have batted, is declared OUT and B2 will be the next batter (See Effect 2 for R7 Sec 2b-c). By entering the batter's box and facing a pitch, B10 has violated the provisions of R4 S 5g (the player for whom the DH is batting may not play on offence), so he should be EJECTED from the game. NOTE: Although the coach should have prevented B10 from batting, the violation was NOT an Illegal Re-entry (B10 has never left the game), so the coach is not ejected along with B10.



THE 'BRAINS TRUST' OF AUSTRALIAN UMPIRING

Back L to R: Matt Gowty (Webmaster), Lindsay Whitehead (Victorian Director), Neville Lawrance (S.A. Director), David Crowe (National Staff Member), John Larter (National Staff Member), Alan McAuliffe (National Deputy Director), Andrew Rindfleish (National Staff Member), Graham Bancroft (W.A. Delegate), Mark Toft (Editor BNOL)

Middle L to R: Denise Culpitt (A.C.T. Director), David Lipscombe (Tasmanian Director), Sue Itzstein (N.S.W. Delegate), Tricia Bichel (Queensland Director/National Deputy Director), Marg Lee (N.T. Director), Peter Baker (W.A. Director), Ken Culpitt (National Staff Member), Darrell Shephard (N.S.W. Director).

Sitting L to R: Frank Thomas (Queensland Delegate), Viv Triplett (Meeting Facilitator), Margo Koskelainen (National Director), Raylene Robin-

On behalf of all Queensland Umpires I would like to wish all the BLUES the very best for the Festive Season and look forward to working with you in the future.

MERRY CHRISTMAS AND HAVE A HAPPY NEW YEAR.

Tricia Bichel

Quote for the Month

“Success comes from having a steady goal and a dedicated aim.”

The Azul Umpires Association would like to extend to it's members and all softballers out there on the diamond a...

Merry Christmas, and a safe, prosperous New Year

See everyone back on the diamond

Coaches Working with Umpires to Understand – It's Over When

By Andrew Rindfleish

All in the game of softball need to treat it, the Game, as a threatened species. Everything coaches and umpires, especially, do should ensure the game thrives and grows. Umpires and coaches have BIG parts to play in the protection of our game.

As sport administrators try harder for sponsorship and a heightened public awareness, we all have to make the game better. If we want the game to stay in the Olympic program, if we want it become a main stream sport, if we want the sport to be recognised as a men's sport, not a women's sport some men play, we need a game with more action, more spark, more appeal.

There are a couple of issues I'd like to discuss here, issues close to my heart, issues I think are critically important to the protection and growth of our game.

My good fortune has seen me attend six World Championships and the two Olympic competitions. I was honoured to have been able to umpire at four of these World Championships. At each, I learned a lot about the game and about managing it. You'll notice I said, "manage" not "umpire". Particularly at the higher levels, both of play and within the umpire ranks, officiating is more about managing and less about mechanics and signals, those sorts of things some might traditionally think of as "umpiring".

The emphasis of this discussion is about managing the end of a game of softball, how to "finish" the game when it's over. Umpires, and sometimes coaches will employ the management techniques I'll discuss. Whether for their use or not, it is critically important that coaches UNDERSTAND these techniques and that they educate their teams, parents and fans, generally, so that all in our sport understand them.

Right at the outset, I need to make it clear that the players decide when a game is over, when we have a first place getter and a second place getter. Umpires should not influence the result of the game through any deed, action or thought. When it is clear that one team cannot win, the umpires should manage the game to get it over and done with as quickly as possible and with the absolute least amount of pain, pain to the second place team and to the Game.

The Official Playing Rules, by way of changes over the years, recognise this. There has been 10 runs after five innings rule for some time now. More recently, the 20 after 3 and 15 after four rules were introduced. In many elite competitions, administrators have gone further and introduced a 7-run rule. These rules are called "Mercy Rules". Why? They are intended too show some mercy to the team running a distant second, the team who cannot win.

Continued Page 8 & 9

The KID... (Kangaroo Island Damien) by Mark Toft

Many things have been said about umpires who have a great deal of travel and expense to achieve their goals; well the KID (Damien McCauley) is one such person.

Damien McCauley is a quiet, unobtrusive, South Australian who loves the better things in life. a) His family (Wife, Tracey at the top of the list, of course!), b) Their baby (That's Zac, a 4-month-old Labrador puppy), c) Softball Umpiring, d) Sharing time with friends (especially umpiring friends) It is assumed that these are in the correct order. Tracey may have things in a different order, but that could be a follow-up story.

Damien is a self employed store Manager and he lives on Kangaroo Island with his lovely wife Tracey. The McCauley's only moved last week (from the mud hut) to their new home, which is still on the Island. Pictures on next page.

Damien first got involved in Softball in the 1982/83 season with the Riverland Softball Association, the same year he was introduced to umpiring and officiated at his first South Australian State Championships.

Prior to attain his Level 5 accreditation Damien officiated at a number of National events which included three Club Championships and the 1994 World Masters games in Brisbane. Since then he has officiated at the following National Championships—2001 U19 Mens and Open Men, 1998 U/16 Girls, U/19/U/16 Mens, 1997 Open Mens, 1997 Open Women, 1996 Open Men's, 1996 U/16 Girls, 1995 U/19 Girls, 1994 U/19/U/16 Men's. Damien has attended five international tournaments which include the Youth World's in Sydney this year, (a career highlight).

Damien will be an assessing umpire at the Under 19 Men's in Melbourne next month and will be officiating at the Open Men in Perth in March.

Damien is a quiet achiever who has virtually just started his International career, one, it is hoped, to be a long and successful career.

One on one with KID (Damien talks with Mark Toft)

BNOL: Who has been the biggest influence in your umpiring career?

KID: Alan and John McAuliffe.

BNOL: What has been the highlight/s of your umpiring career?

KID: Appointment to the Under 19 Junior Men's World Championship in Sydney 2001. Great group of umpires. Great group of people to be with.

BNOL: What has been the best tournament in regards to fun and why?

KID: Hobart 1998, goes without saying. I can honestly say, that life has not been the same since. (Just to let everyone know that is the first time Damien met yours truly.)

BNOL: Who's your favourite umpire/s and why?

KID: The umpires that I will be working with at the next National Tournament.

BNOL: What made you become an umpire?

KID: Being young and naive, umpiring appeared to be reasonably straight forward. After a

short while a lot of different and challenging situations presented themselves. Not being happy with the results and outcomes from early experiences, there was opportunity to do things better. The more challenges, the more opportunities.

BNOL: Does the travel to and from Kangaroo Island pose many problems? (How far is it and how do you travel it??)

KID: Living in a remote part of South Australia does make the task of getting regular games in the Adelaide competition extremely expensive. It means that opportunities to participate are restricted to weekends. Fortunately, catching a plane is not very difficult and the Airport is not far from Barrett Reserve at West Beach. The flights last for between 25 and 35 minutes depending on weather conditions. Kangaroo Island is directly South of Adelaide, approximately 140 kilometres straight line. It is Australia's third largest Island after Tasmania, and Melville Island just off Darwin.

BNOL: What are your short term goals?

KID: To make sure I continue to be appointed to another tournament. Short term goal setting will be oriented around the summer season. I break the season down into two parts. I look forward to the season before Christmas and the season post Christmas. Goal setting will often be oriented around on diamond issues, the things that are most tangible about umpiring. For me, short term goals will be those achieved inside a season.

BNOL: What are your long term goals?

KID: To be remembered for making a positive contribution towards umpiring and the game. This will mean trying to be an umpire that can be well-regarded by most people involved in the game.

BNOL: When will Kangaroo Island hold a National Softball Championship? Has your committee applied? Maybe a masters tournament????

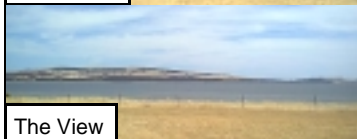
KID: I've got the place if ASF have got the funds, although it may not be quite like a National tournament as we know it. Probably more like a week at the beach.

BNOL: Who is the best player/s you have umpired in your career and why?

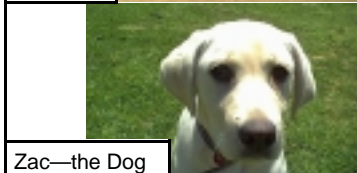
KID: The Japanese. They never seem to be unbalanced. For their size they always seem to be very light and powerful, both offensively and defensively.



The House



The View



Zac—the Dog



Lindsay Edwards (NZ) (left) and Damien 'KID' McCauley relaxing at the Under 19 Worlds in Sydney this year. Pic from M. Gowty.

At most, if not all local Associations, there are rules governing how many runs a team can score in an innings. These too are aimed at providing relief to the team running second in the game. To support the intent of these mercy rules, umpires need to be able to manage such games to achieve an appropriate ending to the game.

Knowing when “its over” is sometimes not easy. It takes an experienced official to be able to get this judgement call right each time. Who would have thought NSW could have come back from being 8-0 down against WA in the final series of the Men’s Nationals in 1999! I recall an example of poorly judging when it was over during a final game of the then National Club. One team was only up by three or four runs when a runner at second base was called for leaving early. Four runs can be one hit in a game of softball.

I contrast this example with a game at our recent NSW Men’s State Championships in which I umpired first base. One team was heading for the Championship game; the other was contesting the wooden spoon. With the first team up by 8 or 9 runs, I called a runner out at first when he was about a step beyond first on a sharp hit ground ball to the short stop. Soon after I was able to call another, from the same team, out for leaving the base early. Neither thought they were real good calls, but I don’t think either appreciated the status of the game at that moment.

I must state, though, that a lot of umpires still need to learn when it’s over. However, far many more coaches need to learn that when it is over, IT IS OVER.

So, how do umpires manage games that are “dead in the water”? They usually open up the strike zone, definitely for the team running first and often for both contestants. They might also find more out calls on base. These calls need to be realistic, an umpire should not make anything up, should not go looking for things or find technicalities. Rather, they should judge the plays as the players make then happen.

In addition, it is often very helpful if you tell the coaches and/or players what it is you are about to do. In a game during the NSW State League finals, I had a need to close out a rather long innings. As Phil (Spider) Savage, a former Australian player and one of the most thorough gentlemen in the game, entered the box I said to him that I was about the close the innings. In saying “can’t you wait one more batter?” he certainly appreciated the situation.

How should coaches and players react when it is obvious that the umpires are trying to manage a game to a merciful end? They should recognise that the game is over, whether they are placed first or second in the contest and accept the decisions being made. If the umpire(s) have it wrong, coaches should feel upset and should let the umpire know they are not happy. But if the umpire(s) have it right, they should give the umpire credit for his handling of the situation.

What I have just discussed, particularly “finding outs” should not be confused with what is a real out and what is not. Good plays and good players, who execute them, at whatever level of play, deserve to be recognised. Plays that are less than good do not deserve to be rewarded. It’s almost the law of the jungle and if we can agree with this simple philosophy, then what follows will be easier to comprehend.

Before going on, there is something else we need to understand and that is that “outs” win softball games. In a standard seven innings game you cannot win unless you get 42 outs. In each and every seven innings game you need 42 outs. I challenge you to tell me how many runs in a game will assure you of a win in each and every 7 innings softball game. One might be enough or 10 or any other number.

So, in State Championship, State League, A Grade, what is an out, say on a play from the infield to 1st base? Some say if the ball arrives at the same time as the runner, the benefit of the doubt goes to the runner. That may well be in junior leagues where any hit, including a hit to the infield, is a good hit. But, I do not know of one coach of a senior team who conducts infield hitting training sessions. A hit to the infield is a mishit and far short of “good play”. If the fielder fields the ball cleanly, throws to the first base player who catches it cleanly, this is an out. You’ll notice I am silent on where the batter-runner is in this description.

The other play a lot of people have problems accepting, what to the untrained eye appears to be a bad call, is the double play. Within our endangered species there are a small number of almost extinct sub-species – we do not want the double play to become one of these.

Picture this. The pivot is about to receive the throw to second base for the first leg on the double play. Hurling toward him is a 110 kg base runner with his coach and teammates yelling at him to “break it up”. Even if he slides correctly the soles of his shoes, both containing half a dozen 20mm long by 10mm deep steel cleats will be aimed at the pivot’s feet/ankles. If the runner happens to bounce a little as he lands in his sliding motion the potential target area is now from the pivot’s ankle to his groin. To insist that the fielder stand on the base as the base-runner slides would be to place him in grave danger. If he fields the ball and has it as he runs near the base, this has to be paid as an out.

The second leg of the double play is just as big a call as the first leg. If the pivot gets his throw away and the first base player catches it, unless the runner is a couple of steps past the base, he should be called out. Coaches have to accept that experienced umpires will make calls such as these. Further, coaches have to explain to their charges and their parents and fans that these are outs and not bad calls. Coaches have to be very much part of the re-education process.

The last facet I want to discuss is a quality that should be evident at all times during a game but is one that I have seen many times lacking in a team when in an unassailable position, when the other team has no chance of winning. I am, of course, refer-

ring to respect. Respect should be evident in many ways - respect of yourself, the other participants in the game and respect of the game itself. The first big dose of DISREPECT I encountered was at the Under 19 Girls World Championships in Adelaide in 1991. Australia was ahead of the US, late in a round game by five or six runs. The US had not scored all game; maybe they'd scored one run.

With a runner on third base, the Australian coach sent the runner home on a throw back to the pitcher. The more experienced and exposed students of the game said that if that had been in a ball game in the States, the following batters would have all been beamed, as a lesson for doing what is just "not done".

More recent cases of disrespect come from the Australian Under 19 Men's Nationals in 2001. NSW were beating Tasmania by a huge score. NSW finished the rounds in first position and Tasmania last. Tassie have performed very admirably, but have only won one game. On two occasions, with runners on first and second, the NSW coach called a double steal. On the first occasion the ball, on being thrown to third base, was knocked down and the runners did not advance. But on the second occasion, the ball ended up in left field and both runners scored.

Contrast this with the game between Victoria and Tasmania, a day or two earlier. Victoria had in their coaching staff a very experienced ex-Kiwi and at one time Australian assistant coach. When Victoria were ahead by more than ten runs, this coach actually verbalised instructions to his base runners NOT to be stealing, because of the state of the game.

How many times have you seen teams bunt against opposition teams who are being soundly beaten? Members of the umpiring crew at these Under 19 Nationals said that the some of the stronger State teams do that sort of stuff ALL the time.

This sport cannot be played unless you have a team to play. This sport will not develop and grow unless you have strong teams to play against. Irrespective of whether the opposition is the developing Tasmania, or the home of softball, the US, if they are down and out in a game, THEY need looking after – THE GAME NEEDS LOOKING AFTER.

In really one-sided ball games, bunting and stealing, both examples of rubbing their noses onto the dolerite, MUST be permanently removed from the coach's repertoire of plays. A win is a win – all that HAS to be done to win against a weaker team is all that SHOULD be done. Finishing a game in first position and allowing the second place getters to feel as good about themselves as a beaten team can feel should be foremost in all coaches' minds.

Experienced umpires do their bit to end games as mercifully as possible, winning coaches have to win with as much respect for the opposition and for the games as they can muster.

The End

Marg picks up certificate at NTIS

NORTHERN TERRITORY

Not a great deal happening at the moment. Last week-end the weather won both men's games as the field turned into a mud swamp. This Saturday is the last day of games before the Christmas break so hopefully both games will be played. A highlight through the week was the presentation of a certificate to Marg Lee by the NT Institute of Sport as she had successfully completed the Officiating Principles of the National Officiating Program. The ceremony was held at the NTIS in the conference room on Tuesday, December 11. She was also presented with a "Thanks Official" certificate and another water bottle! The photo shows Marg with her certificate. On behalf of all the NT umpires – **A MERRY CHRISTMAS TO ALL!**



Blues busy in the Nation's Capital

Australian Capital Territory

SUAACT umpires, Dan McKay (TCU), Mike Sanford, Ken Ryan and Alex Turnbull were kept busy at the National Primary School Softball Championships between December 3-7. (For updates and final standing view the SUAACT Umpires Web site <http://www.softballact.org.au/default.asp>)

On December 7, for the first time in Australia, the introduction of a Skins format was conducted in a major tournament. Prize money was allocated to 'A' Grade teams on the basis of innings won, the most home runs hit, the least hits against and runners getting on base in a game.

The 'B' grade format will be the standard round robin competition used in previous years with the winners in each pool playing off for finals placings PLUS prize money to the first Pitcher who pitches a no hitter, or if not achieved the most number of strikeouts over the tournament PLUS prizes for the batter who hits the most number of homeruns over the tournament.

Teams from Victoria, ACT and NSW participated in the event with Gators an ACT team winning the A Grade with a total prize money for the finals exceeding \$1500, the NSW Combined High School State Team winning the B Grade.

Tournament Umpires - Denise Culpitt, Ken Culpitt, Martin Turnbull, Alex Turnbull, Brendan Le Lievre and Brett Atkinson from ACT, Frank Thomas and Darren Sibra from Queensland, Greg Baker, Scott Rindfleish, Ben McCall, Nic Beaheal and Keith Crompton from NSW and Debbie Grove from Victoria.

From an umpiring point of view the standard of the games was as high as one could wish for in Men's ball in this country. The umpires accommodation was provided by Eagle Hawk Resort, and all umpires were paid for the games umpired over the weekend.

Have a great Christmas.

Denise