

BLUES NEWS ON LINE

Contributions to mtoft@ozemail.com.au

February Edition Vol 2 of 2004

International Softball Federation Clinic Brisbane 20004



Back L to R: Bruce McCahon, Darrell Shepherd, Leigh Evans
Middle L to R Margo Koskelainen (National Director), Lindsay
Whitehead, Diane Waller, Debbie Keogh
Front L to R: Alan McAuliffe (National Deputy Director), Tricia
Sibraa (National Deputy Director), George James, Sue Itstien,

National reports

I have urged a couple of people to report on some of the fun times at the Nationals this year.

As yet many are not in and I didn't expect them in this issue.

March should see a few more stories come out of this year's Nationals, so stay tuned.

I hope all had a great time at their respective Nationals, I know I enjoyed myself.

Tofty

Margo's Memo



Blues battle boiling conditions

The 2004 Women's Open Championship held in Brisbane recently was one of the most gruelling for the umpires for many, many years.

The extremely high heat combined with excessive humidity certainly took its toll on the "blues" and it is a credit to the 11 umpires appointed to that tournament that they all saw it through - but it was not without a cost.

While a lot has been written about hydration and re-hydration, with the emphasis on loading up prior to the game, the umpires found that they could not keep the fluid intake up to replace that lost during the game.

With temperatures at the home plate in excess of 52° during some games, it was the plate umpire who was the most seriously effected and it was found that even after a two hour rest with plenty of fluids, the umpire was still dehydrated.

Currently the thinking on hydration and excessive thirst is being re-evaluated with a number of conflicting reports, both pro and con, about what is and is not appropriate fluid intake. The NUC will be monitoring these studies through the ASC but it would be interesting to see how the "gurus" would assess the situation in Brisbane.

Interestingly, the Softball Australia "Hot Weather Guidelines" are just that, guidelines, and geared towards players. In similar circumstances in the future Softball Australia will need to be aware that the health of the umpires also needs to be taken into consideration, along with that of the players, when deciding to continue with the playing schedule.

My sincere thanks to those umpires who worked the Brisbane Championship tournament, for their commitment to the game and for a job very, very well done.

Margo

What's in this Edition

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- Making Rules easier
- Letters to the editor
- The long and the short of umpiring
- Matt Gowty retires
- Pics from ISF Clinic

- It could only happen in Tasmania
- Aust v Japan Test Series in Hobart (The lighter side)
- Pics from Under 16 Boys Hobart
- National Finals allocations
- Successful Level 5 & 6 Candidates

DEADLINE FOR MARCH'S EDITION - MARCH 2

Publication date - MARCH 5 Get your articles in early.

Understanding & Managing Stress

'Understanding & Managing Stress' and is reprinted from a 1995 article in **Referee Magazine**.

(While this article does not focus on rules or softball specifically, it is considered to be worth reading, as every one of us has been, or will be, confronted with some form of stress in our officiating lives - Big Al).

Jim, a softball umpire, is going through a rough time in his life. His wife recently told him she wants a divorce. The company he works for just announced it will lay off several hundred employees, and Jim is worried that he may soon be out of work. The day after that announcement was made, Jim was the base umpire for a summer recreational league game.

During the game there was the normal griping from players about calls. Normally, Jim would have been able to ignore the comments. However, because his body was in a stress-overload mode, Jim snapped when he heard the centre fielder question a ball-strike call made by the plate umpire.

"Who do you think you are, trying to show up the umpires?" yelled Jim. "Since you have the amazing ability to call pitches from more than 150 feet away, you better come up here and take my place and I'll go home." When the player tried to respond, he was ejected by Jim.

Jim carried over onto the softball field the stress he felt in other parts of his life. The unresolved anger he harboured led to him snapping and losing control in a game situation that he normally would have handled without incident.

Whether the tension you feel is caused by your job, family situation, officiating or anything else, there are steps you can take to reduce stress to keep it from taking over your life.

Causes, symptoms.

Stress is your body's response to mental or emotional pressures. It's a natural part of life, and normally we are able to deal with those pressures without a problem. But when you are faced with several changes in your life or a crisis, your body can't always manage the stress, which can lead to more trouble.

Major events, such as an illness, a death in the family or a job change will

cause stress. But more than likely, the stress we feel comes from everyday situations, such as arguments, car trouble, running late or meeting new people.

Stress that your body can't handle may surface in the form of physical, behavioural or emotional symptoms. Physical signs can include headaches, muscle tension, fatigue, rapid heartbeat, and cold or sweaty hands and feet. Behavioural signs of stress include nervousness, irritability, a short temper (Jim's problem) and eating, smoking or drinking more than normal. Emotional signals are worrying, anxiety, anger, difficulty concentrating and a sense that you've lost control.

Relieve pressure.

To keep stress from taking over your life in the long run, follow these steps:

- Get regular exercise, it's a great tension release.
- Stretch your muscles, especially if your back and neck muscles are tense.
- Eat a well-balanced diet to keep your body healthy and in peak form for fighting stress.
- Know how your body reacts to stress and learn what triggers your symptoms, so you can take steps to avoid those situations or use techniques to minimise them.

Here are three options you should try to apply when you encounter everyday sources of stress:

Avoid. Can you prevent the situation in the first place, or can you walk away from it? In Jim's case, it would have been better if he turned away from the centre fielder, walking away between innings to talk to another umpire to help Jim calm down.

Alter. Can you change the situation? Leave early for a game if you know the traffic will be bad so you don't get all worked up sitting in traffic and worrying about being late. Make sure you have your equipment ready ahead of time so you don't pack in a hurry, then worry that you forgot something.

Adapt. Learn to change your responses to stressful situations so you don't snap. Learn relaxation techniques such as deep breathing. Replace negative thoughts with positive ones. Finally, talk with someone about the pressures you are under.



Henry Pollard

BLUE'S NEWS ON-LINE EDITOR GOES ONE-ON-ONE WITH INTERNATIONAL SOFTBALL FEDERATION MEMBER



Mark Toft

M.T: Have you read Australia's Umpires Code, which sets out the Australian Umpiring Program? If so what do you think and what do you think about our International Development Squad Program?

H.P: I am impressed with the preparation of the umpires for the ISF Clinic in Brisbane. The umpires I have seen have good mechanics and are very knowledgeable of the rules of softball, but I believe they need to show a little more flare.

Don't get me wrong, there is a difference between having a bit of "Showmanship" and being a "Showboat". We don't need showboats, but we do need to show a little more showmanship in our games as umpires.

All the umpires who officiated in Brisbane are of a high standard. The competition of your National Open Women's championships is equal to if not better than the American Open Championships. Therefore the umpires are working a very high standard of play.

The only difference from the two championships is that the American National team does not play in the Open Championships where in Australia your national players participate.

I am also impressed with the management of the games. There doesn't seem to be as many disruptions from coaches and players here like we have in America.

M.T: Australia has its Umpire Program well documented. Other than a few lines in the ISF Code relevant to World Championships, I cannot find any documentation that explains the ISF Umpire Program/Structure and or how the ISF Umpire Program fits into the ISF. Are there plans to formalize the ISF Umpire Program/Umpire Management/Administration this way?

H.P: The ISF Clinics have been set up to formalize the ISF accreditation throughout the world. We are looking to ensure that all umpires from every country get the same opportunities. It is our job to make sure that just because you're a friend of one of the examiners you automatic get ISF accreditation. Everyone must go through the same testing, no matter where you come from or who you know.

M.T: Can you see a division of male umpires for male tournaments a female umpires for female tournaments at the International level?

H.P: Before answering that question I must say that I am amazed with the set up of Downey Park in Brisbane. The dedication of a sporting complex for female sport is a world first.

The female program in Australia is world-leading. This is because of your administration at the highest level.

It is possible and does happen that all male crews officiate at World Open Men's Championships, but I doubt if it would happen in Open Women's play. The reason for this is the standard of female umpires in many countries are not at the highest level. Countries have high ranked female umpires but are not with the necessary preparation for World Championship play.

One of the factors which inhibits this is the family factor for female umpires. Many careers are restricted by family commitments for females than for males.

With only female play in the Olympics it would be a good place to start with an all female crew, but at this stage I don't think that would be possible.

On the other hand I believe that an umpire with ISF accreditation should be able to call both men and women at the highest level.

M.T: Since the inception of ISF accredited umpires, the male to female umpire ratio world-wide is 92% to 8% respectively. Australia has more female ISF accredited umpires than male **[currently 17 women, 16 Male]**. Where do you see the problem lies with the world-wide ratio compared with Australia's ratio of 1:1?

H.P: I must say that Australia's dominance of female umpires with ISF accreditation is the hard work of Margo and Tricia and those who have gone before them. Other countries do not give females the same opportunities as their male counterparts.

The way the Australian Umpiring Program is set up males and females are getting the same opportunity and it would be good if that happened all over the world. I believe your National Administrators are doing a wonderful job.

M.T: You attended the 2001 Canadian Blue Convention where the Australian Director of Umpiring/UIC presented a paper on "An Effective Female Umpire Program". Have you read the paper? How does the Australian approach differ from the ASA?

H.P: At this time I have not studied the paper, but I am interested in looking further into the subject. I have seen small portions of it, but am not prepared to comment until I look at it more closely.

M.T: Can you see specific umpiring, such as umpires who only do plate work and umpires who only do base work?

H.P: I don't believe this will happen as we are teaching all aspects of umpiring at that means both plate and base work. It is important that umpires are skilled in both areas. Some umpires are better plate umpires, but everyone needs to work on their base work no matter how good their plate work is.

M.T: Australia has a short-term international Exchange Program with New Zealand, is there a possibility of a long-term (six months) international exchange, say, for an umpire from Australia going to the United States and making a living?

H.P: I believe there should be more of this happening throughout the world. It would give more opportunities to improve each country's umpiring program, with umpires returning to teach more aspects of the game.

This would also give more opportunity to get consistency in the game throughout the world.

The only problem I see is different rules. In America you would have a variance of rules with ASA play, College and other level of play. Where in Australia you play ISF rules all the time which would make it easier for umpires to exchange to Australia.

I believe ISF should be working on formalizing this as a program during the years where we are not meeting for rule changes. It would definitely be an agenda item at a conference in the near future. The length of the

exchange would need to be varied between two weeks and a six month season.

Making a living would depend on the number of games, the standard of play and the standard of living an umpire requires. I would think an umpire would have to live in with a family to make it work.

M.T: What has been a highlight in your umpiring career?

H.P: The highlight of my career comes every weekend. Everytime I come to one of these clinics and I see umpires doing the same thing as me.....umpiring softball that's a highlight.

No matter where we are in the world I see the comradeship, love for the game and people making friends and that's is what it is all about.

See people umpire is all I need as a highlight. I know I have made a few friends here this week and that is a real highlight for me.

M.T: With highlights there must have been a low light, what's yours?

H.P: I have had a few lowlights, but I have worked on not showing disappointment. Working on that enables me to work on the positives and not the negatives.

M.T: Do you think we will come to a point where we will rely upon a video replay to make an out or a safe, or to take that to an even lower point, calling a strike or a ball?

H.P: Over the years we have been trying to get all games completed in the two hour time span. The replay would only defeat the purpose of speed up the game. Also the umpires creditability would be questioned more if a replay had resulted in a change of decision. The human element in our game is one of the games strong features.

The electronic strike zone was trialled in a Texas league in baseball a few years ago and it was found to change the game dramatically. Where a pitcher would set up a batter by throwing out of the zone, the batters were leaving the pitch and allowing the ball to be called a ball therefore there were many more walks and more time to complete a game. The electronic strike zone was too perfect and without the human element the game lost something. I don't think softball will ever adopt the electronic strike zone.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

In regards to "WHAT'S YOUR CALL?" In January's edition.

Big AI this could be solution number 8.

Umpire Santa Clause says that Rudolph is not out, the reason his nose glowed is glandular, it's not his fault that all the other reindeers won't let him join in all the other reindeer's games and he got all excited. The play Stands!!!!!!

Just a concern. It has come to my attention that sometimes when umpires go out for dinner the bill at the end of the night is way above what some have eaten. Sitting down to a meal and having a main course could cost you \$27.00 but at the end of the night that \$27.00 has escalated to \$45.00 or even more.

Those who eat an entrée then a main, then dessert and coffee to finish and then work out the bill divided by the number at the table are really feeding (excuse the pun) off the ones who are conservative and just have a main.

Maybe each should pay their own and that would alleviate some concerns.

Answer to your letter

As editor of the Blue's News On-Line I have the opportunity to answer a letter received. The letter has been published above and it talks about group meals.

In answer to the letter I must say that you need to establish before you sit down whether you are paying individual or equal share at the end.

When we were in Hobart we had guests at our table and we paid for their meals, which meant that we all shared the bill at the end. On other nights we paid our own. Just set up the parameters before you eat.

I understand it is difficult to share the cost when most are having a three course meal and you are only having a main meal. Just let everyone know where you stand before you start ordering. I am sure everyone will understand.

Tofty

The long and short of umpiring

At the recent Under 16 Victorian Championships, I had the pleasure to work with a small umpire, who has a very big future.

Ryan, from the Albury Softball Association, has been actively involved in umpiring for a couple of years under the tutorage of Rhonda Scammell, and is progressing very well.

I first met this likeable, unassuming and quietly confident umpire at the VSA Masters last June, where he handled the games with confidence and surprised some of the Veterans with his ability.

Ryan looks up to Kerry (Franklin) and Di (Waller) literally and thoroughly enjoys being part of the umpiring fraternity.

It will be a pleasure to watch this young man as he starts to progress through the system and I quietly predict a big future for this young man.

Kevin Offer



Thirteen-year-old Ryan Thornycroft and Kevin Offer going out to umpire a game at the Victorian Under 16 Championships in Albury.

The Wrong Way

As a senior citizen was driving down the freeway, his car phone rang. Answering, he heard his wife's voice urgently warning him, "Herman, I just heard on the news that there's a car going the wrong way on Route 280. Please be careful!"

"It's not just one car," said Herman, "It's hundreds of them!"

The Cookies Crumbled

What is green and yellow and lies in a pile of cookie crumbs?
A beat-up girl scout.

Matty Gowty retires

Probably the only disappointment to come from the Open Women's Nationals in Brisbane was the announcement by Matt Gowty of his retirement from umpiring and of the position of Webmaster for the National Umpiring Committee Website.

Matt had listed his decision as personal and will now have more time for family commitments and see his children take their own sporting interests.

Matt was unavailable for comment as he is out of the State at this time. Maybe we can get something when he returns to Queensland.

BNOL had highlighted Matt's career last year which included four World Championships.

From all in the Blue's Family I take this opportunity to thank Matt for his work as an umpire in almost every State in this country and wish him the best in his retirement.

Matt, Margaret and family have returned to Brisbane for his retirement.

2004 National Finals Allocations

Under 16 Boys - Darren Sibraa, Kerry Franklin, Peter Baker

Under 16 Girls - Debbie Grove, Ron Houison, Warren Duff

Under 19 Men - Damien McCauley, Andrew Rindfleish, Trevor Pascall

Under 19 Women - Rod Dawson, Di Waller, Sue Itzstien

Open Women - Debbie Keogh, Matt Gowty, Leigh Evans

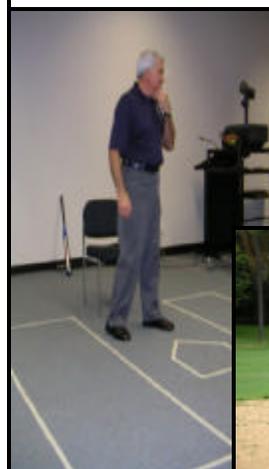
National Higher Accreditation

Level 5 - Ron Trow (QLD), Kevin Offer (VIC), Cathy Allen (NT), Alan Cheeseman (WA), Heather Randall (NSW), Dave Roberts (SA). **Well Guys & Gals!!**

Level 6 - Scott Rindfleish (NSW) **Well Done Scott!**

Could all other States please send their most recent State accreditations so we can recognise their umpires.

ISF Clinic Brisbane 2004



Pics supplied by
Alan McAuliffe
&
Leigh Evans

Bizarre Sporting Failures

Wallace Williams ran in the 1979 Pan-American Games marathon, but was so slow that by the time he reached the stadium it was locked and everyone had left.

To fight the heat in the 1950 Tour de France, Abd-El Kader Zaag drank a bottle of wine and promptly fell off his bike. After sleeping it off by the side of the road, he got back on and rode off - in the wrong direction.

It could only happen in Tasmania

To say the umpiring crew had a great time in Hobart for the Under 16 Boys would be an understatement. I believe we were a great unit on and off the diamond.

I know I speak for all the Blues when I say we are indebted to our liaison officer, Di Palmer and her team of people who ferried us around for the week. If you have ever been to Hobart you will know that Di Palmer is one of the best, and is definitely a Level 6 Liaison Officer.

We did many things but the night of nights came at the Tasmanian Inn which was a stone's throw from the accommodation.

The UIC and the examiners were busy doing paperwork so the crew headed off to the local to have a counter tea. When we arrived and asked for a table for nine we were initially told no, but the manager set up a table on what was to be the dance floor for the night.

During our meal the band struck up who had an average age of about 55, but hey, they did a great job with a number of old tunes.

As we had Raylene Robinson with us we requested Mrs Robinson by Simon and Garfunkle, but we were declined.

After tea the manager's wife asked us to move our tables back so the other patrons could get up and dance. We did this and then the dance floor was invaded by the locals.

Now if you know the crew we had in Hobart our average age was about 50 years, but to our amazement we were the youngest in the place. There were a lot of matured aged Taswegens showing their moves on the dance floor. Lucky none of them dislocated a hip or two.

In between each song we called out to the band to play Mrs Robinson and had indicated that Mrs Robinson was in our group. After the first music break we heard the band plucking away and all of a sudden our request came true, the band struck up the harmony of Mrs Robinson (the words may have been a little different but the music was pretty good).

On hearing this the crew were in very good song. Raylene and Peter got up and danced, but none of the locals took the floor. After our song the locals again invaded the dance floor.

You would be amazed with the type of dancing the locals were getting up to. Really I thought seriously about calling for a couple of ambulances with paramedics on hand.

Anyway on our departure we waved to the band and thanked them for a good night and to farewell us they struck up Mrs Robinson and added the words "Goodbye Mrs Robinson" and to our amazement the locals sang along

It was a fantastic night had by the crew and the locals really enjoyed our company as well.

Mark Toft



Under 16 Boys

Hobart

2004



Top: Preliminary Final crew, Mark Toft, Peter Richardson and Col Davis.

Middle: Darren Sibraa in action on the Grand Final.

Bottom: Darren Sibraa calling ball and strikes on the Grand Final



QLD v VIC
(2004 Grand Final)

Plate
Darren Sibraa

First
Kerry Franklin

Third
Peter Baker

Australia V Japan Test Series

December 11 – 14, 2003.
Venue Prince of Wales Park,
Hobart

Tasmania played host to a Tri series between Australia, Japan and the AIS.

There were a total of ten games played over the 4 days. Japan went on to win the series over Australia in the bottom of the eighth innings, with a grand slam.

There were great games, tough calls, but of course good fun off the field. The crew got on very well. May be a little too well.

Some of the memorable moments were; A few children were playing with Frisbees that ASF had given out in show bags, one came over the fence during a game. Guess who had to throw the Frisbee back over the fence? The wind was blowing a gale, the Frisbee went straight up a back onto the field not once but twice, much to the crowds delight, (helps if you throw it lip side down)

There was plenty of time in between games, we used the intentional walk and the new length of games management, as per the recent tech bulletin, games were played at 1pm, 4.30 pm and 8.00 pm. Most of the games only went 1 ½ hours, except for the fast game of the tournament, 1hour 10 minutes, by the guy back row centre.

So we had plenty of time to play, incy wincey spider, sing "happy and you know it", "aeroplane jelly", "happy little vegemites", and a list of others, Australian idols where not!

We also played games of keep the ball off the ground only using a bat, game was going well till, our only kettle was victim of a stray ball. (Game over!).

I tried to teach Deb to juggle which was going great till we introduced the third ball.

Not leaving Lindsay of the hook I have video footage of him juggling, I have the proof.



THE CREW: Back L to R: Lindsay Whitehead, Leigh Evans, Neville Laurence, Front L to R: Debbie Grove, Margo Koskelainen (UIC), Diane Waller.



Di was hit on the hand during a game, she had it iced and bandaged, as she would not do as told by Neville and keep it elevated, we taped her hand above her heart, to the wall above.

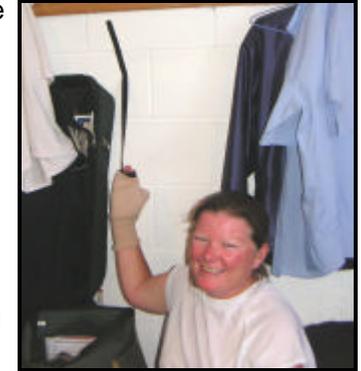
On our way out to dinner one night we had to climb about 500 steps, (well 150) We all ran up the steps to the tune of a well known movie, Neville and I reached the top at the same time and did our Rocky Bellbowa impersonation. I guess you had to be there?

One thing for certain, next time Softball Australia needs to schedule games closer, we had much too much time on our hands.

On a serous note it was great to have the opportunity to officiate at the series, fun was had, but more important there were games of Softball being played at International level.

Oh! If anyone sees Deb, ask her if she's found the remote control.

A special thank you to Di Palmer for looking after us blues during the tournament.
Leigh



Kim James, the QSA Administration Officer, is taking 6 months leave to travel overseas. Kim's leave commences at the end of March and she will be back in the QSA Office at the start of October.

While Kim is away, a new Administration Officer is to be employed. The position is a senior full-time position for the 6 months that Kim is away. The successful applicant must be experienced in office administration with preference being given to someone with an adequate working knowledge of softball.

Persons interested in applying for this position should forward a brief resume, together with a covering letter, outlining their previous administration experience. The closing date for applications is the 1st of March 2004. Applications should be sent to:

The General Manager
Queensland Softball Association
1/866 Main Street
Woolloongabba Q 4102