

BLUES NEWS ON LINE

Contributions to mtoft@ozemail.com.au

September Edition Vol 8 of 2003



Cracking: No-one will forget the fires in the Nation's capital earlier this year. This picture was taken during the storm and sent to BNOL. As you can see there was a lot to deal with especially when many softball persons were away from Canberra that week. Let's all hope that people have recovered and are rebuilding their lives. Somehow all doesn't seem that bad where we are!

Previous editions of Blue's News On-Line are available from the Resource Library on the Umpire's Website
nuc.softball.org.au

MARGO'S MEMO



BUILDING STRONG RELATIONSHIPS

From Level 1 to Level 8 umpires need to understand that they are part of a team and as such should consider how they relate to their fellow umpires before, during and after working a game.

Here are some tips on how to build and maintain strong working relationships with your fellow umpires.

Communicate honestly. Always say what you mean, and mean what you say.

Give positive feedback. You can often make a fellow umpire's game performance more meaningful by offering supportive encouragement and sincere compliments where they are warranted.

Listen carefully to what others have to say before interrupting them with your response.

Resolve conflicts early. If difficult situations arise between yourself and another umpire, do not allow them to fester. Be direct, but courteous, and develop a plan of action on how to resolve conflicts as soon as possible.

Treat all other umpires with respect. Be respectful by paying attention, listening carefully and responding appropriately. Always be courteous and professional.

Be honest and open about your own performance. Do not fool yourself into believing that your game was flawless.

Understand and accept personal differences. Be less judgemental and more accepting of others. Realise that everyone is different and learn to accept and appreciate these differences.

Promise only what you can deliver. If for some reason you cannot follow through on an assignment be truthful and give clear explanations – not excuses – why.

.....Continues Page 9

What's in this Edition

- Exam Report
- Queensland jUmp program
- Managing the game environment
- Busy year for young umpire

- Trouble between the plate and first
- Kill the umpire
- 2003 Friendship series
- Dealing with the angry sports parent

jUmp report

QUEENSLAND

Having received Office of Sport & Recreation Queensland funding, the Queensland Umpiring Committee has commenced the delivery of its Junior Umpiring Program, otherwise known as jUmp. Mt Isa, along with Cairns, Mackay and Rockhampton were selected as District Associations to be involved in the program, which integrates a PowerPoint presentation with on-diamond practical sessions.

The launch of the training program was a pilot clinic conducted at Mt Isa in March. State training officer, Darren Sibraa, subsequently returned Mt Isa on 12 - 13 July to present the follow-up clinic. Mt Isa Umpiring Coordinator, Brian Macpherson, and his crew of enthusiastic umpires have really taken to the program and are showing enormous potential. Twelve umpires have participated in the clinic at Mt Isa to date, and it is expected that the next edition of Counterpoints will be reporting the umpires that have attained their level one accreditation.

The initial clinics have proven to be very effective in raising the profile and interest in umpiring.

Mt Isa Association had nine umpires sit the National Open examination on 26th May, which is more than any year in recent history. As an aside, it is worth noting that all umpires passed.

In addition seven umpires successfully sat the basic examination, which means that a significant number of them will attain level one accreditation once they umpire in the local competition. I expect that this will eventuate after discussions with the DA umpiring coordinator. It was fantastic to hear that two Mt Isa umpires (Darryl Parker and Margaret Cleary) have expressed an interest in attending their first State Championships later in the year.

Mackay jUmp Clinic

The first jUmp Clinic in Mackay was conducted on August 9 – August 10, 2003 the purpose of the trip was to deliver the jUmp presentation on rules and practical skills that would benefit the participants in the Mackay District Association.

The purpose was to observe and evaluate some local umpires during games on the Saturday and deliver feedback on areas where improvements could be made and would be most beneficial to the local team of umpires. This was followed by the jUmp presentation and any discussions, which arose.

The jUmp presentation was given and used to steer the discussions. As is usual the discussions moved to areas of confusion and experiences. General

discussion and questions were encouraged with participation being major criteria.

Peter Baxter and the Mackay association have tried hard to promote the jUmp program and the results were encouraging. Numbers were average with the attendance of a couple of levelled umpires adding to make the program more enjoyable. Due to work commitments not all participants were able to attend all sessions. Seven people fitted within the program profile.

Rockhampton jUmp Clinic

A jUmp clinic was held in Rockhampton on 16th-17th August. Saturday was spent going to the park and watching games. Feedback was given to the junior umpires together with Ross Carter their umpiring co-ordinator.

On Sunday a clinic was held with 15 umpires attending this session covering both theory and practical.

There are a lot of potential junior umpires in Rockhampton and these people show a great attitude by listening, asking questions and learning.

New State Director

It's official! Queensland have a new State Director of Umpiring—Darren Sibraa. Darren is a current National Level 5 umpire and hails from the Wynnum Association in Brisbane.

I am pleased to say that I have known Darren since the start of his umpiring career and was his UIC at his first State Championships in Toowoomba.

His willingness to listen, learn and his passion for the game makes him an exceptional choice to lead Queensland in the next era of our game.

Words will not express the sentiments of all umpires from the Sunshine State for the work Tricia Bichel has done for Queensland Umpires. I personally appreciated Tricia's work and thank her for her contribution as State Director over the past decade.

Darren has big shoes to fill and I am sure with assistance from his newly elected committee Darren will be able to carry on Tricia's great work.

The confirmed committee members are: - Mark Toft, Yvonne Kahler, Ian Bunston, Ron Trow, and Ron Yardley. The final make up of portfolios, sub-committees and the remaining committee members along with the direction of Queensland Umpires will be finalised in the coming weeks.

Good example is twice the value of good advice" H.J.W.

Managing The Game Environment

by Martin Turnbull

This article continues the theme, from the last article in BNOL that, over the period of about the last ten years, Officials training in most sports has focused on the rules of the game and not the skills of the official that are demanded by the participants of the game.

Note: the self help Exercises and case Study examples presented here can be easily used in a group training session, with the addition of facilitated group discussions on each topic.

When most of us start umpiring the most common thing to do is pick up a rulebook and attempt to commit the entire book to memory. But as all experienced umpires know, there are so many other aspects to officiating than just rote learning the rules.

Exercise 1 - What do Umpires Do?

Write down your list of everything that you can think of that an umpire does - give yourself one minute to complete your list, before reading further.

Here is my list:

- Manage a game to ensure one team does not gain an unfair advantage over the other
- apply the rules of the game
- ensure a safe environment for players
- control a game
- be invisible*
- be consistent
- apply the rule to suit the standard (character?) of the game

You should find that every umpire's list would contain a point about applying the rules of the game that is high on their list of importance. Novice umpires tend to list only points that relate directly to the rules, which could lead to the observation that:

- The novice official will concentrate on learning and then 'applying' the rules, as opposed to 'managing' the game.

The problem with this focus on 'rule management' as opposed to the 'game management' can lead to:

- over officiating, which may trigger:
- player dissatisfaction/conflict,
- spectator conflict/conflict
- additional stress and management problems for the official in question

So, when training umpires we therefore should consider: rule interpretation and application, *versus*:

Applying the letter of the rule, *which will have a flow-on effect on*: player behaviour. It should be noted that **communication** plays an extremely important role in this approach.

Exercise 2 - What factors are present in Officiating that affect the game environment?

Write down your list of factors that you think may be present that could affect the game - give yourself one minute to complete your list, before reading further.

Here is my list:

- societal influences (general lack of respects for authority figure in society today)
- competitiveness
- emotion
- expectations (of players, spectators & administrators)
- variations in standards
- scrutiny of performance (media. players, administrator, other officials)

An awareness of these factors can help an official understand that the environment that we work in is not isolated and that outside influences can affect what happens on the playing field

Exercise 3 - What changes can take place in a game that will affect the game environment?

Write down your list of changes that could take place in a game - give yourself one minute to complete your list, before reading further.

Here is my list:

- fitness
- climate
- tension (due to game incident e.g. change in score, proximity to end of game, etc)
- inactivity by the official
- safety
- substitutions
- the three E's (Emotion, Exhaustion, Ego)

An awareness of these changes, by the Official, can be used as cues which may allow the official to act appropriately to the situation.

Case Study 1

Read through the case study and then answer the questions posed.

During the first play of the game a player is infringed aggressively (illegal contact) but is able to continue playing.

You caution the aggressor and play continues. Three minutes later a similar incident occurs which results in players pushing and shoving and abusing each other. You again issue a caution to the offending players. Sledging has escalated to the point where there is ongoing aggro in the game.

Just prior to the end of the game time a couple of potential nasty incidents occur where the players have cocked elbows that miss their targets. You quietly mention to the players that they should keep their elbows down.

From Page 4

They don't respond to or acknowledge your comment. At the end of the game, as you leave the playing area, supporters get very vocal towards opposition players but there is no incident. Some comments are directed towards you regarding the need to keep the game under control.

You arrive in the change room with much running around in your head, knowing that this is was the first game of a doubler header between the same two teams!

- What thoughts would you have during the break (on reflection) in terms of your management of the game?
- What cues could you have reacted to?
- What could you have done?
- What approach would you consider for the second game?
- Why & How?

Case Study 2

Read through the case study and then answer the questions posed.

The game is flowing well, but with no score, until the top of the 7th when runners get on base and the crowd becomes very vocal as the runner steals 2nd and then 3rd on successive pitches. One the next pitch there is a squeeze play where the runner on 3rd base attempts to score but there is a train wreck at the plate. Before a call can be made, the on-deck batter runs in and punches the catcher. You manage to restore order, ejecting the on-deck batter. The players settle down and the game continues.

- What approach would you take to officiating from this point on?
- Why?
- What cues would you be on the look out for?
- Why?

Self Improvement Exercise

Select a game from your recent past, in which there were difficulties, and list all the cues that you remember observing, both before and after the point where you realised 'things were getting difficult'. For each cue you list describe what action you took at the time and then, analysing each action, describe what you would do differently now. The Official should not be over technical, nor pedantic, but should use their communication skills, their knowledge of the game environment and, of course, their knowledge of the rules to manage the game for the benefit of all those involved in the game.

The information in this article is based on a lecture 'Game Management', presented by David Levens, at the AIS on 28 May 2003, as part of the ACT Sport & Recreation Skilling Of Officials Series. Martin Turnbull is a Level 5 umpire, based in the ACT, who holds a degree in Adult Education and is a qualified ASC Sports Official Coach.



Left: The Darling Downs Representative team with Umpire Louise Hancock.



Left: Queensland Secondary Schools team with umpire Louise Hancock.



Above: The crew at the Australian Secondary Schools Championships in Adelaide again with Louise Hancock (seated far right)

2003 - What a year for young Queensland Umpire

Louise Hancock is a Level Two umpire in Toowoomba in Queensland and has had one heck of a year, especially with the schoolgirl representative season.

Louise attended the trials as a player to make the very competitive Darling Downs Regional team, but didn't make the cut. Although disappointing the doors seemed to open wide for this talented umpire. When the possibles v probables teams were named Louise's name was not called out and so she donned her umpiring uniform and did the final selection game.

So impressed with her commitment the Darling Downs coach invited her to accompany the team to the State Championships in Rockhampton. At the closing ceremony in Rockhampton, Louise was in tears as the President of the Secondary Schools Softball Association named Louise the umpire to travel with the Queensland team to Adelaide for the Nationals. Working with some of Australia's best umpires Louise has improved greatly from the experience.

Louise will be attending the Queensland Under 19 Women's Championships this week as a candidate for her Level 3. Good Luck Louise, your dedication and hard work should pay off.

Trouble between the plate and first base

That innocent looking path from home to first base can be a real trouble zone. No other area on the field presents as many difficult calls, causes more arguments or has as many rules. For defensive players, the ball and the batter-runner sometimes converge near the first-base line. You and your partners are there to keep things fair. Let's review four of the sometimes tricky rules that govern play between home and first.

The One-Metre (3 ft) Lane.

The one-metre runner's lane exists along the last half of the distance between home and first, adjacent to the foul line. The chalk lines marking the lanes are part of the lane. The batter-runner may not leave the lane and crash into the fielder taking the throw, nor may he legally screen the fielder receiving the throw. The rule is in effect for plays *going to* first base. The violation is for hindering a fielder taking a throw at first base that could have been handled except for the batter-runner's presence.

Here's another way to look at the rule. If the batter-runner is *inside* the lane, the rule assumes he is not trying to interfere with the play. He will be declared out for interference only if the umpire sees the batter-runner *intentionally* interfere with the play. If the batter-runner is *outside* the lane, the rule assumes he is trying to interfere with the fielder at first base. Thus *any* interference is intentional and is penalised.

Declare the ball dead and the batter-runner out *if he interferes* while running outside the lane, either to the left of the foul line or to the right of the one-metre line. Use the batter-runner's feet as a guideline to determine whether he is in or out of the lane. If the batter-runner has one foot completely outside the lane and on the ground, he is not in compliance with the rule. However, he is not out for running outside the one-metre lane if he does not interfere with the play.

The official ASF interpretation allows you to declare the batter-runner out for one-metre lane interference if any part of his body is hit with a thrown ball on the fair side of the foul line or outside the one-metre lane in foul territory. This interpretation applies even if both feet are on or within the one-metre lane lines, providing some part of his body is struck while outside the lane.

Another aspect of the one-metre lane rule: No throw, no interference. In addition, you must take the quality of the throw into consideration. If the throw has no realistic chance to retire the batter-runner, do not call interference. The batter-runner may legally leave the lane to avoid a fielder who is in the act of fielding a batted ball.

If the ball is being fielded from fair territory, the throw must be coming from behind the batter-runner for interference to be called. Create an imaginary box in your mind to help you make one-metre lane calls. Visualise the box from the rear of home plate, half way down the first base line, to the pitcher's plate, to half way down the third base line and back to home plate. If the throw did not originate from your imaginary box, it probably is not one-metre lane interference.

Remember, the safety base is positioned inside the one-metre lane, so there can be no excuse for a batter-runner who runs to first base inside the foul line when there is going to be a play at the base.

Be realistic and not legalistic when making one-metre lane calls and while reviewing the following plays. (Answers on Page 7)

Play 1. B1 taps a fair ball in front of home plate. F2 pounces on the ball and his throw strikes B1 in fair territory about 7.5 metres (25 ft) from home plate.

Play 2. B1 hits a roller *on* the first base foul line. F3 moves to field the ball near the beginning of the one-metre lane. B1 runs well into fair territory to avoid the ball and F3. With F4 covering first, F3's wide throw strikes B1's left shoulder as he is running 1.5 metres (5 ft) from first.

Play 3. B1 hits a hard shot that deflects off F1's leg into foul territory between home and first. F2 recovers the ball and his throw strikes B1 in fair territory about 3 metres (10 ft) before first base.

Play 4. B1 hits a hard shot that deflects off F1's leg into foul territory between home and first. F2 recovers the ball and his throw strikes B1 1.5 metres (5 ft) in foul territory and about 3 metres (10 ft) before first base.

Play 5. R3 is on third base with one out. B1 hits a ground ball to F3. F3's throw home strikes B1 in fair territory.

Play 6. B1 hits a fair ball in front of home plate. B1 runs to the left of the foul line and obstructs F3's view as he nears first base. F3 is unable to catch F1's throw.

Play 7. B1 hits a fair ball in front of home plate. B1 is running within the one-metre lane as F2 throws to first base. B1 raises his arms above his head and hinders F3's view of the ball.

Batter-runner retreats. It is legal for a runner to retreat toward a previously occupied base to avoid or delay a tag. Runners advancing from first often do this when a ball is hit to the second baseman, hoping to avoid a tag or at least force a throw. The tactic sometimes prevents the defence from turning a double play.

Rule 8 Section 2i prohibits the batter-runner from retreating toward home to delay or avoid a tag. There is no penalty if the batter-runner merely *stops*. When the batter-runner retreats (steps) back to avoid or delay a tag the ball is immediately dead. Call the batter-runner out; runners return to the bases held at the time of the pitch.

Batter-runner interferes. If the batter-runner interferes, rule the ball dead and the batter-runner out. If the interference is an obvious attempt to prevent a double play, the runner closest to home is also out.

Batter-runner gives up in fast pitch. Many umpires tend to over officiate in a dropped-third-strike situation. If first is unoccupied, or if there are two outs, the catcher must catch the third strike in flight or the batter-runner may run for first. "In flight" means catching the ball before it touches the ground. If the pitch bounces and the batter swings and misses, the catcher has *not* caught the third strike in flight. Obviously, if the catcher drops the third strike the batter-runner can attempt to advance.

....Continues Page 9

Kill the Umpire by Carol Baker

For children playing sport is about having fun, hanging out with friends and learning physical skills, Or is it? Some parents' sideline antics could be sending their offspring the message that winning is all that counts, whatever the cost. Don't like the call the referee made? Scream him down. Parents of the opposing team too rowdy? Throw a few colourful phrases their way. Is this the kind of behaviour you want to teach your children?

In one of the worst cases of parental sledging in sport Canadian ice hockey referee Michael Costin was beaten to death by Thomas Junta, a player's father, because he didn't like his handling of rough play on the field. Junta is now serving up to ten years in jail for voluntary manslaughter, and the Costin family has lost their father forever.

In Australia we haven't witnessed the darker side of children's sport played out to such extremes, but perhaps it is just a matter of time. Media reports recount frightening tales of escalating violence. In New South Wales an angry father waved a shovel at officials at his son's Under-11 semi-final football game, screaming, "Come any closer and I'll smack you," because he didn't approve of decisions made by the amateur referee. At a soccer game in Sydney a referee was forced to cower in the change rooms and await police protection against angry parents when he awarded a penalty. At an Under-13 Rugby League match, also in Sydney, two boys were banned for life after their mother assaulted the mother of a member of the opposing team.

Such incidents with angry parents are not just restricted to the sporting field. In an incident in North Queensland parents sent 'poison pen' letters to member of a girls' netball team when their children failed to make the final cut. The fact that this abuse was delivered outside an adrenalin-charged sporting arena, with time for a considered response, is alarming.

So why do some parents exhibit problem behaviour the moment their offspring pulls on a sports shirt? A 'win at all costs' mentality is what drives some parents to destructive spectator behaviour, says Professor Matt Sanders, clinical psychologist, and founder of the Positive Parenting Program. "most parents are supportive in a positive way. It's only the minority who cause problems," he says. "They over-invest emotional energy in the game, they lose sight of the real reason their child is there in the first place – to have fun. As a society we need to be sending our kids the message. "win, lose or draw, it's OK". If parents get distressed when their child's team is losing, they are sending the message that losing is terrible. As a consequence some will choose not to play sport ever again," says Professor Sanders.

Parental misconceptions about junior sport have only compounded the prob-

lem. "Some parents forget they are at a junior game." Says Seam Scott, Senior Sports Consultant, Sports Education Australia. "They watch national and international sporting events and carry over their expectations to junior sport. Local clubs don't have officials trained at the same level of expertise as at professional events," he says. Often they are just young kids, having a go at refereeing. "Instead of castigating them we should be encouraging and supporting them. Many show real promise as officials, but they leave rather than face constant abuse," he says.

It can also be argued that cultural perceptions of sport within Australia have contributed to the ugly parent syndrome. Sporting prowess is highly valued in our country, and for a select few, sporting accolades will lead to hero status and the promise of lucrative sponsorship deals. Realistically, however parents need to accept that most kids will never reach elite athlete status in their chosen sport. Denis Baker, author of *Winning is Kids Stuff* and *Kids Sport – a Survival Guide for Grown-ups* says there are five main reasons why kids play sport: having fun; peer (their friends play so they play too); the instinct to play and compete; to show off for mum and dad; and to dream about and emulate their heroes. Given that for most children, sport is not about a future career, but about learning life skills. Baker says parents need to be sending their children the right messages about sport, encouraging their children to enjoy the game, to accept the result and to learn from their mistakes.

In order to overcome 'problem parental behaviour', Professor Sanders says that we need to see a shift in cultural perceptions sport, and a proactive strategy implemented by sporting associations with the aim of educating spectators. "Coaches, club and association have a responsibility to encourage parents to enjoy participating in a non-confrontational way. They need to give them feedback, about their behaviour and clearly indicate what constitutes good spectator etiquette."

.....**Continues**

There is nothing we achieve without some measure of failure.

9th Australian Masters Games

Planning is well underway for the 9AMG and, with 96 teams registered so far, it will be a busy time for umpires from all over the country as they gather in Canberra to officiate at one of Australia's largest sporting events-from 31st October to 8th November.

For the latest information about the games and to learn more about the social events planned for this busy week check out the AMG web site at www.amg2003.com and select 'Softball' from the 'Sports & Venues' page.

ASF U16 DEVELOPMENT SQUAD PROGRAMME 2003 FRIENDSHIP SERIES

The 2003 Friendship Series was conducted along similar lines to the 2002 Series and was once again held at the Blacktown Olympic Centre Softball Venue, Sydney, from July 4 to 10, 2003. The ASF U16 Women' and the Men's U19 Development Squad participated, along with a selected group of coaches from around Austral

were housed at Rooty Hill Resort. A levy, paid by each coach and squad members, suits, coaching resources and insurance.

Thirty coaches, including the coaching coordinators, participated in putting the squa completion of each day the coaches attended evening presentation sessions -brief meetings.

In addition to the players being put through skill & training sessions, the respective squads were split into two teams (Green & Gold) to participate in a series of games that were played under ISF Rules. The women competed with 2 visiting USA High School teams, a NSW Metro team and a NSW Country team, while the men competed with a NSW Metro team and a NSW Count

the NSW Umpires Association. My personal thanks were extended to NSW umpires to give of their time to support the series. Of the 46 games played, only 9 i- a ing. The level of accreditation ranged from Level 2 through to Level 7, and while some of the 26 were only able to officiate 1 g go to Ben McCall (Level 2) and Graham Boyle (Level 5) for 11 games each and Doug Stracey (Level 3) a

vered that one of the travelling parents (Frank) was a registered ASA umpire; I ussion I enquired if he would care to participate in a game, at which he gratefully accepted and subsequently es in which his daughter played.

This was a great learning opportunity for the Level 2 & 3 umpires who participated within the ensuing weeks. These umpires were given ample feedback on their performance, based both on my observations and comments from the coaching staff.

Alan McAuliffe

Analysis of candidates sitting the 2003 examination

State	Level 0-	% of	-8	State Total	STATE TOTAL	% of Nat Total
ACT	8	57.14%	6	42.86%	14	1.99%
NSW	192	91.43%	18	8.57%	210	29.83%
NT	5	62.50%	3	37.50%	8	1.13%
QLD	161	89.94%	18	10.06%	179	25.42%
SA	74	91.36%	7	8.64%	81	11.51%
TAS	24	96.00%	1	4.00%	25	3.55%
VIC	70	81.40%	16	18.60%	86	12.22%
WA	89	88.12%	12	11.88%	101	14.35%
TOTAL		88.49%		11.51%		

Answers to Play situations

Ruling Play 1. No interference. The throw struck B1 before he reached the one-metre lane. The ball remains in play.

Ruling Play 2. B1 is not out, even though he was hit by a throw while in fair territory. F3 had an open throwing lane to first, but made an errant throw that could not have retired B1. In this case, the ball remains in play.

Ruling Play 3. No interference. F2 had an unobstructed area to throw to first. the ball is in play.

Ruling Play 4. Here's the interference. B1 was not in the running lane *and* interfered with the throw to first. The ball is dead; B1 is out.

Ruling Play 5. B1 is not out for one-metre lane interference. The rule applies on throws going *to first base*. B1 is not out unless you judge he *intentionally* interfered with the throw to the plate.

Ruling Play 6. The ball is dead and B1 is out. B1 does not have to be struck with ball for interference to be called.

Ruling Play 7. Even though B1 was in the running lane, he is out for *intentionally* interfering with a thrown ball. The ball is dead immediately.

Ruling Play 8. The play stands. The defense did not legally retire B1. Continue the game with two outs and B1 on second.

Ruling Play 9. B1 is out. Although the pitch bounced, B1 tipped the ball and it was legally caught by F2.

DEALING WITH THE ANGRY SPORTS PARENT

By Tim Kotzur, Barker College, Sydney.

There is an old saying among sport coaches that 'the best coaching jobs are in orphanages because there are no parents there' (Manos 1996). Nearly every coach of a children's sporting team can at one time or another relate to this saying. Virtually every coach at some stage of their career has to deal with complaints from an angry parent. It might be about why their child only got half a game, or why their child was taken off, or why are they playing their child at that position.

Such situations are an unfortunate and almost inevitable reality of coaching children's sport. The reasons for the parent's complaint are many and varied, and it makes no difference if the complaint is real or imagined. No one likes to be the target of a complaint, and it is one of the least desirable aspects of coaching children's sport.

Often coaches are taken aback by these verbal assaults, and react in a way that is inappropriate or makes the matter worse. These situations if not handled sensitively can get out of hand, and as a consequence make life very difficult for the coach. It is therefore something that every coach must learn to deal with effectively.

Summary

The Do's & Don'ts of dealing with angry sports parents

Don't

Discuss the problem at the game

Dismiss the problem

Lose control

Become defensive

Interrupt

Alienate the Parent

Do

Deal with the issue

Listen

Empathise

Ask questions

Offer solutions

Leave the door open

Ten steps to dealing effectively with the angry sports parent.

When confronted with the disgruntled parent of a player in their sports team, the coach should try to adopt the following actions.

1. Avoid discussing the problem at the game.

The first thing the coach should, or rather shouldn't, do is to discuss the problem with the parent on the field, particularly if the parent is irate (Hoch 2000). The playing field is not the place for confrontations.

2. Agree to meet at more appropriate time/venue.

Rather than discuss the problem then and there, the coach should agree to meet with the parent or telephone the parent at a mutually convenient time to discuss the complaint. By doing this, the coach achieves three things

- a. The coach avoids giving the parent an audience. Many parents who are prone to such outbursts are fuelled by the presence of an audience. By scheduling a meeting or telephone call the audience disappears.
- b. Much of the heat is taken out of the situation. Many times when the parent has had the opportunity to "cool off" they will realise the inappropriateness of their actions, and apologise for it.
- c. It gives the coach time to prepare, so that he/she can respond appropriately to the complaint.

3. Listen

When the meeting or telephone call from the parent does eventuate, one of the most important things a coach can do is listen (Vining 1995). The coach should listen reflectively. Little things such as taking notes and nodding to acknowledge you have heard what the parent is saying are crucial.

4. Avoid interrupting

Even if the parent raise his/her voice, or his/her story has only half the facts, the coach should avoid interrupting. By interrupting the parent the coach risks inflaming the situation. Nothing is worse than a parent who feels that they have not been listened to, or to taken seriously. Such a reaction will seriously hinder a successful resolution.

Queensland Open Men's Championships

The Queensland Cup and Open Men's Championships were held at Caboolture last weekend in soaring heat (even the 8.00am timeslot tested the water bottle brigade) with more than 30 umpires officiating.

With the teams split into three pools the first round was conducted under a skins format and then the teams were split into three separate pools with the top two from each pool to contest the Queensland Cup, third and fourth from each pool to contest the Open Men's Title while the remainder contested the President's Cup. With a number of games to officiate and an extremely hot weekend the Blues were virtually dead on their feet coming into the finals games on the third day.

The men's is the first State Championship for the representative season with the Under 19 Men and Women to be played next week and the Under 16's in October.

Championship Games were officiated by

Queensland Cup - Mark Toft, Darren Sibraa, Steve Gutteridge

Open Men's - Ian Bunston, Yvonne Kahler, Garry Pittman

President's Cup - Helen Strauss, Rick Gill, Danny Griffiths

.....From Page 5

Don't declare the batter out unless he is tagged, he enters his bench or dugout, or he leaves the field of play. Even from near a dugout, the batter-runner may legally cut across the diamond to reach first. The defence must tag him or hold the ball on first before the batter-runner arrives.

More third strike situations. The following two plays can be confusing. See if you can get them right.

Play 8. With two outs, B1 strikes out on a pitch that bounces and is trapped by the catcher (Note: It makes no difference if the pitch bounces before, during or after the batter swings and misses). F2 rolls the ball toward the pitcher's circle and the infielders leave the diamond. B1, still standing at home plate, runs and reaches first base, then advances to second before the opposing pitcher returns and picks up the ball.

Play 9. With two outs and two strikes on B1, F1 throws a pitch that hits the ground in front of home plate. B1 swings and tips the ball, which is held by F2 for a foul tip. B1 runs for first and F2 throws wildly into right field.

ANSWERS ON PAGE 7

This month's article is a copy (with some modification) of an article by Jay Miner in July 1996 edition of Referee Magazine.

From Page 1 (Margo's Memo - Building strong relationships)

Widen your circle of umpire friends. If you are always with the same group of umpires, invite another umpire to join in with your group.

Take responsibility for your actions at all times and own up to your mistakes – do not fool yourself that nobody else knows.

Seek advice from others rather than always being eager to give it.

Keep a positive attitude when dealing with others. Even if things have not gone well for you during a game, that is no reason to take it out on your colleagues.

Resist the urge to blame others if things go wrong. After the game work on finding the source of the problem then fix it rather than looking for what amount to an excuse for

Go out of your way and give more than 100%. The extra effort will always be appreciated.

Avoid jumping to conclusions in stressful situations. Always gather as much information as possible about a situation before making decisions or reacting defensively.

Strive to understand how others feel and try to be more empathetic and sensitive to others' feelings. Attempt to put yourself in their shoes and imagine how you would want to be treated in the same situation.

Making Rules Simpler

with Alan McAuliffe (Big Al)

EXAMINATION REPORT

The 2003 Australian Umpire Theory Examination was conducted in all states on 26th May 2003.

The exam was conducted under the format agreed upon at the 2000 SDU Meeting, viz: a mixture of True/False and Yes/No questions, with some 2-mark and some 3-mark questions.

A total number of 704 candidates at all levels sat the exam, which were 78 (9.97%) less than last year ~ a surprising (and disturbing) statistic given that the exam was based on the 2002-2005 rule book for the first time, thereby containing questions on the new rules introduced in January 2002.

Only 2 states showed an increase in candidates (TAS & WA with 1 & 19 respectively), with NSW experiencing the largest decrease of 71 (25.27%). Tasmania experienced an increase for the second consecutive year, while WA arrested a 3-year decrease in numbers.

Once again it is evident from the average marks achieved across all levels that more intensive preparation is given when it is known that questions will be asked on new rules. The average for Levels 0-3 was 68.7 (6.8 better than last year); the average for Levels 4-8 was 83.7 (2.2 better) and the overall average for all candidates was 70.4 (6.5 better).

Another pleasing feature indicating better preparation, is reflected by the highest error rate for any question at all levels, which was only 67.05%, compared to a highest rate of 83.38% last year.

While it is acknowledged that a typing error occurred in Question 62 (the word *offence* instead of *defence*), the mistake did not appear to adversely affect the overall result as only 82 of a total 704 (11.65%) candidates answered incorrectly. As such, the Examining Panel, in consultation with the National UIC, decided no adjustment to the marks would be made.

States are to be commended for the prompt forwarding of papers for marking, as with exception of NT, all papers were received within one week of the exam date. The examining panel marks all NT papers, not just the Level 4-8 papers, and due to a misunderstanding by the NT scrutineer the papers were forwarded to me by the respective centres rather than by the State Scrutineer. This caused a minor delay in the return of the duly marked papers to the states as the papers cannot be returned until all papers have been received for marking.

(GO TO PAGE 7 FOR THE ANALYSIS TABLE)

Kill the Umpire by Carol Baker - continued from page 6

In response to increasing anecdotal evidence of parental sledging in junior sport, the Australian Sports Commission (ASC) has developed a number of programs, including the recent Australia-wide Fair Go for Officials Forums aimed at dealing with the issue of abuse against referees. Finding from the forums indicated several key areas that need to be addressed:

- ❖ Evaluation programs to assess referees' and coaches' behaviour and performance.
- ❖ Uniform and consistent approaches to educating and informing participants and coaches of the rules of the game.
- ❖ Parent and Participant Codes of Conduct given out when children register.
- ❖ Using ground marshals or match day coordinators to talk to teams about inappropriate behaviour and be responsible for crowd control.
- ❖ Empowering referees to stop games
- ❖ Increasing the physical distance between spectators and the field of play

Additional initiatives developed by the ASC include a trial program called. 'Good Spots Monitors' to be run in conjunction with the ACT Bureau of Sport and Recreation. The program aims to create a safe sporting environment for players by having parents act as monitors at junior sporting venues. Prior to the game, coaches hand out two green jackets to parents who are nominated as sports monitors. The monitors' job is to observe sideline behaviour, and to ask a committee member to intervene if they see a problem. It's a non-confrontational strategy that gives parents the responsibility of keeping an eye on their own teams.

Future decisions relating to parental sledging will hinge on the outcome of trial programs such as these. Next year will be the test, says Sam Scott. "if current programs don't curb problem parent behaviour the ASC may be forced to take a hand-line approach. "that approach may follow steps taken in the USA, where officials have introduced parental behaviour contracts that stipulate appropriate parental behaviour at sporting matches. If parents refuse to sign the contract the child cannot participate. The contracts contain clauses prohibiting parents from carrying weapons such as knives or guns to a sporting match, and imposing counselling sessions when necessary. If parents breach the contract both they and their child face a lifetime ban from the sport.

Australian sporting associations are doing all they can to prevent the need for such rigid policies by educating parents and ensuring that officials and coaches are given ample, up-to-date training. It is now up to parents. The ball is literally in their court.

Codes of Behaviour

The Australian Sports Commission Codes of Behaviour cover player, parents, coaches, spectators, administrators and officials, and the media.

Parent Codes of Behaviour

- Remember that children participate in sport for their enjoyment, not yours.
- Encourage children to participate, do not force them
- Focus on the child's efforts and performance rather than winning and losing.
- Encourage children always to play according to the rules and to settle disagreements without resorting to hostility or violence.
- Never ridicule or yell at a child for making a mistake or losing a competition.
- Remember that children learn best by example
- Appreciate good performance and skilful play by all participants
- Support all efforts to remove verbal and physical abuse from sporting activities
- Respect officials' decisions and teach children to do likewise
- Show appreciation for volunteer coaches, officials and administrators. Without them, your child could not participate.
- Respect the rights, dignity and worth of every young person, regardless of their gender, ability, cultural background or religion.

For more information about the codes visit the ASC web site – www.ausport.gov.au, State Government Initiatives and Programs

Sport and Recreation Queensland has conducted a series of regional conferences to explore ways to promote appropriate behaviour for players, officials and spectators at a local level. For information on the strategies that resulted from these conferences, or on any aspect of appropriate behaviour on the sporting field, phone Sport and Recreation Queensland on 3237 0098 or visit www.sportrec.qld.gov.au