

April 2013



## National UIC's Call

With Tricia Sibraa

Welcome to April's edition of BNOL – and what a full issue this is! We've got news from both Australia and from those who have recently travelled across the Tasman.

Firstly, congratulations to Yvonne Kahler (QLD) and Ron Houison (NSW), both of whom have been appointed to upcoming international events. Yvonne will be travelling with the Aussie Spirit as they compete at the 2013 World Cup of Softball VIII in Oklahoma, USA; Ron will then join the team as they continue their tour at the Canadian Open International Fastpitch Championship in Vancouver, Canada. We wish you both good calling and look forward to hearing about your experiences.

Thanks to Richard and Kyira for their reports about their experiences as Trans-Tasman exchange umpires - it sounds like you both enjoyed your umpiring in New Zealand greatly.

Friendly reminder – May brings the annual SAL Rules Exam, this year, to be held on Monday, 27<sup>th</sup> May at various locations around the country. Get in touch with your local association to see where you can sit your exam. Need to get some practice in? [Click here](#) to access past papers, with answers, as well as the "Hints and Tips" document to help you best prepare.

ACT, Victoria and New South Wales have provided us with a variety of news articles – season wrap-ups, reports about State Championships with details about Finals appointments and news about many umpires receiving their next levels. Congratulations to all umpires on your personal achievements and for your ongoing service to the sport we all love.

Most encouragingly in this edition is an open letter from Sandy, who is a Green Shirt umpire registered with West Beach, South Australia. Sandy has taken the time to reflect on her time as a member of SA's Green Shirt program, and her letter is a great encouragement to all involved in umpiring, regardless of whether it is your first season or your 'I've-lost-count' season. Sandy, thank you for taking the time to reflect on your experiences and sharing the positives that comes from being involved in this program – keep up the great work!

Until next edition, happy calling!

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# Trans Tasman Exchange

## Softball New Zealand 2013 Open Men's Club Championships, Christchurch

A pleasant phone call from Kylie Bloodworth just before Christmas brought me the news that I had been appointed to the NZ Men's Open Club Championships on the Trans-Tasman Exchange program - fantastic and exciting. First task is to organise my leave from work, then get started on getting a passport, which requires me to get a full birth certificate. While I make my way through the paperwork, interview and photos, my kids have a good chuckle – they've travelled OS before!

I caught-up with Kylie at Gilley's Final at Waverley to receive my travel documents. Along the way there is great support from Kylie and words of advice and congratulations from my umpire colleagues – thank you. There was plenty of pre-tournament communication with Wayne Saunders, UIC for Softball NZ and TCU for the tournament, including the allocations for days one and two. Off to the airport, I make my way through customs for the first time and lift-off for Christchurch. The Air New Zealand safety message is quite entertaining, as delivered by Bear Grylls. Regular visitor to our shores, Dave Beaumont greets me and we head off to the accommodation, where I meet Wayne and we head straight to the ballpark. I load my gear in, help with the ground inspection and meet the rest of the crew as they arrive.

Once bat checks are conducted for those teams arriving tonight, we head off for dinner and I can highly recommend the Canterbury Honey Chicken at Speights on Bealey Ave. After ten days of mid-30's in Melbourne I am struggling to adjust to the cold of Christchurch. The clean and comfortable accommodation was at Abbey Motor Lodge about 15 mins drive from the ballpark. Eight or so umpires had gathered in our room and a get-to-know-your-crewmates session proved to be a great bonding exercise. A good night's sleep and we are off to the grounds at 7am the next morning.



Photo: Dusk descends on Softball Lane in Christchurch

In the Umpires Roost there is a large change area and a separate kitchen, meals and lounge area. The walls are adorned with photos of past crews, and it is nice to see some familiar Aussie faces. Breakfast is laid on at the park each morning, with cereal/toast/fruit available. My first game is at 1st base on one of the outer diamonds and all goes well. These diamonds aren't fully fenced and an open field rule was applied. This rule allows for a ball hit through the dead ball line (down LF or RF) to remain alive.

A plate and another base round out day one for me. A great BBQ at the park for dinner provides a further chance to get to know more of the guys, as the first day seems to have rushed by. Five timeslots with four games each makes this a busy tournament.

My plate on the main diamond on day two was 15-0 in three innings, but you still have to work hard, one pitch at a time, every pitch. All games were of high standard and played with intensity and good sportsmanship. I made certain to have a pre-game discussion with my crew before each game, which proved valuable. Given that I stood out as different (with my Aussie shirt) and unknown, I could sense players/coaches testing me, but this didn't cause any problems. I was happy with my on-diamond performance and worked very hard at it. There was no shortage of close calls and pitches nibbling the edges of the zone.



Photo: Richard Barrow umpiring the plate

As the crew gathered for breakfast at the ballpark each morning, a debrief on any notable matters from the previous day was held. The opportunity was also used to cover any points for further education. I found these sessions very worthwhile. My day three plate on the main diamond was a cracker of a game, ending 4-3 after seven innings.

I umpired 14 games over the five days, with five plates and nine bases. Each game had something of interest or something to learn from. I was also fortunate to work with nearly every other crew member, which was invaluable. I enjoyed good camaraderie and on-diamond working relationships with each crew that I worked with. It was also nice to strike up and enjoy conversation with a few players and coaches. One of the best things about softball are the relationships that we make, and this tournament enabled me to make a whole bunch more.

The NZ crew was a fantastic bunch of guys to work with, and I felt very welcome and embraced into their family. To hand out my tour gifts I ran a fun Aussie Trivia Quiz, and was presented with gifts of my own to bring back - a silver-fern cap, NZ badge and a traditional Maori weapon, a Patu. With Finals day finished, we took a quick tour of Christchurch as we dropped other umpires at the airport.



Photo: A view of the Grand Final from upstairs - Auckland United vs. Hutt Valley Dodgers

A special thank you to Dave Beaumont for hosting me on the last night and for the 4:00am departure to the airport for my return to Melbourne on the Monday morning, this was most appreciated.

It was a fantastic experience that I thoroughly enjoyed. My sincere thanks and appreciation to the NUC, Softball Australia and Softball New

Zealand for the opportunity. I would highly recommend the Trans-Tasman Exchange to my fellow umpires.

Writer: Richard Barrow

## NZ Open Women's Club Championship, Lower Hutt

With my bags packed and the excitement rising I head to the airport very early Wednesday morning to catch my flight across the Tasman to join my fellow NZ Umpires at the 2013 NZ Open Women's Club Championship in Lower Hutt.

Upon arrival into Wellington airport I cleared customs without any dramas and found Tara Harris who was going to be a crew member and my taxi driver for the weekend. A big THANK YOU to Tara for her hospitality for the weekend.

After some food and a nap I was collect by UIC Daph Turner to attend the Technical Meeting where the bat checks would be conducted and I would meet my new crew members for the weekend. It was definitely strange going into a tournament not already knowing everybody. But it wasn't long before the NZ vs. Aussie jokes were out and we were into the tournament. I have to admit attending a tournament the week after NZ won the Men's World Championship I was preparing myself for the bragging - which was well thrown out and taken by all involved!



Crew Photo: Left to Right Standing: Tara Harris (HV), Kyira Cox (Softball Australia), Liz Kawana (MW), Terry Ratu (HV), Daph Turner – UIC (HV), Dave Shedlock (WN), Ross Emerson (NO), Rebecca Taylor (DN), Jay Hart (Softball Canada). Kneeling: Kyoske Okada (HV), Nicola Ogier (CB), Charlie Gaze (CB)

Jay Hart from Canada was another international exchange umpire which made for some interesting conversations over the course of the weekend. Jay set the standard high in the first time slot by going to the wrong diamond, allowing him to be the butt of most of the jokes from then on!

With my first game of the tournament not coming until the second timeslot I was able to get a feel of the dynamics of the games prior to umpiring. With all three games of the first timeslot going over the two hours I was determined to bring my diamond back on time (which I did in true Aussie style). I figured if I was going to be umpiring three 7 innings games in one day I was getting the job done! At the completion of day one the body was definitely feeling every part of the 21 innings of the day. The crew members that were staying at the Camellia Motel decided on a feed at a pub within walking distance (loosening out the soreness) and upon arrival the minimal number of patrons all gave us hope of a short wait time for our meal.... Fools on us! With the waitresses' lack of understanding and a 1 hour wait after the first half of the groups mains came out the rest of us were feed. This time allowed lots of stories to be told (mostly softball of course) and some history of three countries being thrown around the table and some real softball friendships were made.

Day two saw another three games and two of those being plates. Charlie Gaze my 3rd base umpire on my first plate for the day was encouraging a tie breaker before stepping foot onto the diamond. Darrell Shephard and Ryan Thorneycroft you would like Charlie! With the power of positive thinking and conviction on it wouldn't happen the game was a close fought game of 3-1 ball game but done in under an hour and a half. My second plate of the day had me umpiring with Jay from Canada where at the plate meeting both coaches thought it was hilarious to have two foreign umpires. Carrying on from the coaches, I made the comment that we probably couldn't understand what they were saying as they were talking Kiwi to us! With both international umpires bouncing around the diamond smiling and laughing the game was over before we knew it.



Photo: Jay Hart (Canada) & I getting ready for our game

The final time slot of day three came the final series. I was honoured to be appointed plate on the 1<sup>st</sup> v 1<sup>st</sup> playoff game where Te Arhoa were victorious. With an earlier finish on Saturday night the crew hit the local Servicemen's club for a crew dinner, where partners of local umpires joined in on the conversations as well as the official statisticians for the Championship.

Rain loomed on the final day as the last of the games got underway (the rain was a welcome surprise for the locals as Lower Hutt and the surrounding areas only had 12 days of their water supply left). Thankfully the morning games were only interrupted by some light drizzle but the jackets were on. With the rain holding at bay, the final was fought between Te Arhoa and Bears with the Bears winning. I was awarded the honour of 3rd base on the grand final.

With the games over, the bags packed and the rain tumbling down the crew said their goodbyes. Some farewells were "I see you next week at the Men's Club Championship" and others were "until next time". I would like to thank Daph Turner as the supportive Tournament Chief, Tara Harris for the transport and support, and finally to all my crew members for welcoming me into the NZ Umpiring family were by I received my NZ Badge.



Photo: NZ Badge

Writer: Kyira Cox

# Australian Capital Territory

## Season wrap up

ACT's Summer competitions have drawn to a close and reflecting back on the season it's clear that it's been one of SUAACT's best. With Alex Turnbull at the helm we've been working hard to not only develop our umpires before and during the season but also relations with the clubs and various associations. We've still got some work to do, but certainly did some great groundwork this season. This year we brought in a duty umpire each week whose role it was to not only act as UIC for the day but also to get around to all the games, watch the SUAACT umpires, offering advice on the run, chatting to the coaches and exchanging two way constructive feedback, work with club umpires, offer support and umpiring advice. Also running Community Umpiring sessions each week, where 'clubbies' could come along and learn some of the basics, enough it was hoped for them to then go out and fulfil their club umpiring duties with more confidence.

The finals series for the Saturday League was very exciting for our umpires as there were many very close games going right down to the wire, the SUAACT umpires did a fabulous job and all games were handled very professionally by all of our umpires. Photos below show some of the crews, for the A grade Women's; we had Diana Kropp on the plate, Mark Gallagher on first and Andrew Dickson at third.



A Grade Women's Grand Final crew (L to R) Mark Gallagher, Diana Kropp and Andrew Dickson

Di really earned the top spot this year, with consistently solid performances week in week out, even umpiring with injuries when some of her younger counterparts may have pulled out. Mark, ever reliable, has been a great role model and mentor throughout the season and Andrew is an umpire who gives 100% every week, really trying to improve his umpiring and advance up through the ranks.

One of the most sort after awards within the SUAACT ranks each year is the Dan McKay Rookie Umpire of the year (named after THE Legend). Each year an umpire who is newly registered with SUAACT is eligible to win the award. This season we had five new members and all were very worthy, however, one stood out. Fred Litchfield came to SUAACT after having been in the junior umpiring program at North Canberra for several years. He's a quiet fella, but is keen as mustard about his umpiring.



Photo: Dan McKay Rookie of the year (L to R) Dan McKay and Fred Litchfield

Fred umpired each week in the Saturday League competition, slowly progressing his skills and knowledge, accepting advice from the senior umpires and umpiring at the Australia Day tournament. A few weeks ago, Fred earned a plate on Grand Final day in the E Grade women's Grand Final and was very impressive with the way he handled himself and nailed a couple of very close calls at home. We congratulate Fred on his achievements and look forward to him advancing through the ranks over the coming years.

Finally, but by no means least, we had three umpires advance their levels throughout the year, Billy Dickson and Robert Dickson were assessed over the Australia Day Tournament and both were awarded their Level 2. Anneliese Brenner was assessed and achieved her level 1 – congratulations.



Photo: New levels (above) Robert Dickson



Photo: Billie McPherson and new level Billy Dickson



Photo: Dan McKay and Mark Gallagher

Congratulations to Mark Gallagher who was presented with his 10 year SAACT Pin by President and Legend Dan McKay.

Writer: Sarah Houston

# Victoria

## 2013 Victorian Open State Championships Albury-Wodonga 9 & 10 March

A crew of 19 umpires made the journey to Albury-Wodonga for the 2013 Victorian Open State Championships held at Jelbart Park. A warm weekend was forecast and the weather was glorious – blue sky, bright sunshine and mid-30's temperatures.

Able led by our Management Crew – Rhonda Scammell (TCU), Diane Waller (DTCU) and Debbie Grove (TAO) – all umpires had fun on and off the diamond. The Albury facilities and hospitality were great as always. Of course, when a large contingent of umpires goes out for dinner on a Saturday night, the laughs never stop.

With 43 games over the two days, all umpires did a great job providing service to the sport. Thank you all.



Photo (L to R): A Men: Debbie Grove (1B), Ryan Thorneycroft (P), Jason Carter (2B), Phil Waller (3B)



Photo (L to R): A Women: Richard Dodds (1B), Diane Waller (P), Dave Addlem (2B), Roy Arscott (3B)



Photo (L to R): B Women: Brett Tyler (3B), Stuart Tyler (P), Hayden Croft (3B)



Crew photo (L to R) Dave Addlem, Hayden Croft, Stuart Tyler, Richard Barrow, Diane Waller, Roy Arscott, Richard Dodds, Rhonda Scammell, Jason Carter, Hilda Gardiner, Debbie Grove, Brett Tyler, Ryan Thorneycroft, Phil Waller, Bernard Vella.

# South Australia

## Umpiring experience as a Green Shirt

My name is Sandy, and I am what is known as a GREENSHIRT in the umpiring vernacular, or the bottom of the food chain as it may be as far as umpiring is concerned. I started umpiring 2 seasons ago because my daughter started playing softball at West Beach, Adelaide after we moved down from the country. I did so after encouragement from my family and friends, as I needed to do something, due to the fact the previous few years of my life had been very difficult due to having to give up a much loved career because of the onset of a spinal problem for which I had to have a spinal fusion and reconstruction done. This as many would know, meant a lot of change in my life (and we all know how difficult that is) and consequently lead to a whole other set of problems, needless to say I was quite rudderless and I needed to something to gain back some kind of respect for myself. At first I thought I would learn how to do scoring, but my husband and friends said I needed something more physical to build up my muscles in my back, so umpiring it was.

Well that as I said was 2 seasons ago, what a change it has made in my life. Not only has it helped me physically, but mentally, and has also given me back some of that lost self-respect, but lifted my confidence level to such a level, that it helped me get back in the work force after 5 years. I know you may say, how can taking up a sport do that? Well starting in the green shirt programme started me off slowly, with lots of mistakes and achievements along the way. But man what support and encouragement I got from all the higher levels of umpires, and I mean high level umpires, some who have written and interpreted rules, umpired at Olympic Games, and other who were starting out, like me but had achieved their level 1 and so many others. I am grateful to every single one of them, because without them I probably would have given up, and wouldn't be where I am now, oh I'm still a green shirt, but I mean all the other stuff. I have pride, and self-respect for myself again something which I have surely missed, most of all my family has pride in me again, I see it in their eyes when I head out in that fluoro-green shirt, and oh how do I love that, What a gift !!!

There have been bumps along the way and I am sure some teams would have gladly kicked my butt clear off the diamond if they could BUT I'm a GREENSHIRT they can't. The teams are very patient and more often than not, kind and encouraging to new umpires, who I know they must get very exasperated with at times, but, they continue to put up with me and I appreciate that, and I will always try to do my best for, better still learn from my mistakes to become a better umpire.

Last year and again this year I went to the Easter Carnival in Waverley in Victoria, and man oh man what a learning curve!! I thought last year was great but this year WOW what a great time. Met new faces, saw some familiar ones from last year and had a ball (pardon the pun). The carnival is aimed at developing the skills of not only the players, but also the umpires, so there is lots of support, encouragement and genuinely constructive criticism for the games you take part in, the senior umpires provide all that and more, which enhances the learning curve to an almost climactic level. 12 diamonds going all day from around 8am to 7pm at night and you go to where ever you are staying exhausted and happy with the day's events. You get plenty of opportunity to watch games especially if you have family playing, to add to the enjoyment. So if you get the chance to go next year, take it and make the most of every opportunity offered, and have some laughs and fun along with it.

There are so many people I need to thank for the help, guidance and support they have given me since I started umpiring, these include all the umpires I work with at West Beach during the season, on all levels, Jacqui, Mr Al, Nev, Haydyn, Kev, Dave, Jim, Tony, Steve, Ian, Heather, Craig and oh so many others, I thank you all from the bottom of my heart, you have all given me so much more than just the love of a game, most of all thanks to my family whom I love very much for all the encouragement and support you always give me and for the wonderful Christmas present of all the umpiring gear, and special thanks to Gill and her family, and Jacqui who I know without I may have given up but didn't because you have helped me so much.

I hope to keep on working with everyone I have mentioned and hopefully the many others I have met and become friends with along the way. So if you are looking for something to do that is challenging, and learns heaps, not only about the game but yourself, then give umpiring a go, any age - I'm no spring chicken - and learn to love the game even more. Come along and give it a go, come along to Waverley next year, you'll really get a kick out of it and meet new people and friends along the way.

Cheers Everybody,

Sandy from West Beach, Adelaide

# New South Wales

## Successful U11 State Championships hosted by Penrith City

Penrith City Softball Association hosted the 2013 SNSW U11 State Championship on 6 to 7 April 2013.

A total of 11 female and 10 male teams participated in this year's championship.

Joining the two teams were a total of 42 blues, who had the best seat in the house as they watched the future stars of our game hit, catch, run and dive as they battled it out on the diamond.

Leading the umpiring crew was Tournament Chief Umpire Kyira Cox, who was very pleased with how the weekend evolved.

"The championship ran quite smoothly, with all umpires adapting to numerous allocation changes within each timeslot. Games were also managed well with five games going seven innings in under one hour, including both Championship Finals."

"I would like to thank all of those who helped make the weekend so successful. The umpires on the diamond did a great job and were supported throughout the weekend by James English (DUIC) and Vic Guillaumier (DUIC), who provided various umpires with supportive feedback."

"I would also like to thank the senior umpires for supporting the younger and newly accredited Level 1 umpires," Cox said.

Congratulations to the following umpires who were appointed to the Championship Finals:

Girls' Grand Final – Manly Warringah (10) defeated North Shore (3)

- Plate: Craig Myers (Orange)
- 1st Base: Tom Ryan (Hornsby)
- 3rd Base: Darren O'Neil (Penrith City)
- Card: Wayne Wickens (Cumberland Nepean)

Boys' Grand Final – Georges River (9) defeated Macarthur (7)

- Plate: Jess Rooke (Manly Warringah)
- 1st Base: Katrina Bulmer (North Shore)
- 3rd Base: Joe Kellermeier (Southern Districts)
- Card: Andrew Cooper (North Shore)

## Other News

- Congratulations to NSW umpire Amanda Houison who, alongside Victoria's Phil Waller, has been appointed to the ISF X Junior Women's World Championship in Canada, 1-7 July.
- Congratulations to NSW umpire Ron Houison who has been appointed to the Canadian Open International Fastpitch Championship in Canada, 16-22 July.
- Congratulations to our latest Level 2 umpires Meg South (North Shore), Glenn Hangan (Hornsby) and Tom Ryan (Hornsby). These three umpires were successful in gaining their accreditations at the Blacktown Junior International Challenge over the weekend of 23-24 March.



Photo (L to R): Meg South, Glenn Hangan, Tom Ryan

- The SNSWUA hosted a rule lecture on Wednesday 10 April from 7-9pm at Blacktown International Sports Park. The session was well attended and marks the beginning of a number of planned lectures ahead of the SAL Rule Exam in May.
- NSW 'blues' hit the diamond on the weekend of 14-15 April as the 2013 SNSW 'Winter League' commenced. Leanne Gearside will be overseeing umpire appointments across the Winter League season, which will conclude on 26 May. This league will also be used as a key opportunity for umpires to receive targeted feedback from senior.