

Blue's News On-Line

Official Australian Softball Umpire's Magazine

Contributions to mtoft@ozemail.com.au August Edition 8/2006

National Umpiring Program Website: umpiring.softball.org.au

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Softball Queensland recognise four umpires with State Service Awards

Softball Queensland have added another four umpires to the ever-growing list of State Service Award recipients.

John Ashby, Desleigh Armitage, Patti White and Stephen Gutteridge were recognised for their service to softball in Queensland, especially in the field of umpiring.

This quartet have been very active in all aspects of the sport from playing, coaching, scoring and administration over a number of years. Well Done!

Do you know a Long Serving Umpire?

The search is on! As part of my portfolio on National Staff I am compiling a list of umpires who have had more than 20 years of service in our sport (as an umpire).

Usually the umpire does not step forward so its up to friends and family to send in the name of the umpire and their contribution and the number of years service.

It does not matter what level they are or was before retiring, but time is running out. So make up your own list and send it through to me at mtoft@ozemail.com.au ASAP

Regards
Mark Toft

National Umpire Committee Meeting – August 2006

By Ken Culpitt Meeting Coordinator

The National Umpire Committee met recently to consider the Recommendations of the 2006 Umpire Program Review and take the necessary actions to ensure that the business of the Umpire Program progress in an effective way.

Participants demonstrated enthusiasm for the task and were very positively focused in achieving a large number of outcomes. Mark Toft was unable to take a place at the meeting table due to work commitments.

The meeting commenced by agreeing outcomes to be achieved and confirming shared behaviours. This opening set the scene on the purpose and how the group would work together.

The Executive Summary of the Umpire Program Review Report was discussed in detail and an action plan developed for progressing each of the thirteen Recommendations contained in the Report. Over 100 actions were identified. About 10% of the actions were completed by the time the meeting closed on Sunday evening.

As required by the Recommendations, outcome achieving and non achieving initiatives were identified. The group also identified the tasks that must be addressed during the transition period described in the Recommendations. Priorities were established for all items.

Work commenced on creating a schedule of all tasks identified and it was agreed that there was a need for a scheduler to monitor progress. The group also recognised that there is need for a resource plan to identify individuals to assist with achieving the anticipated outcomes. A plan strategy is that all national level umpires, Level 5+, will be approached to determine their interest, if any, in progressing specific tasks.

National Staff Members advised the meeting of their intentions and interests. The Review Recommendations anticipated filling two management positions to lead the operational and development streams. Agreement was reached on the individuals to fill these roles as well as assigning National Staff Members to specific tasks.

Tricia Sibraa will be Operations Manager and Andrew Rindfleish will be Development Manager for the Umpire Program. Sue Itzstein, Bruce McCahon and Mark Toft will work on operational tasks. Alan McAuliffe, as National Rules Interpreter and Leigh Evans will be the Technical stream with Alan's signature being used when required for Umpire in Chief duties.

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The meeting confirmed the importance of a role established by the Board Member coordinating the transaction arrangements for that of a minder, mentor and independent advisor.

The Regional Umpire in Chief joined the meeting for focus sessions concerning the role of the Regional UIC, umpiring practice which was jointly attended by an Athletes Commission representative and a discussion on female focus. An invitation was offered to the Athletes Commission representative to attend a future National Umpire Staff meeting.

The September 23 / 24 weekend was determined as most suitable for the State UICs / Directors meeting and agenda items with supporting papers are to be provided to the Manager Operations by 18 September. The structure of the weekend is to be so that the State representatives can meet for a time, independently of the National Staff. This decision is in response to a request made at the 2005 Meeting.

IS IT IMPORTANT THAT I GET ALONG WITH MY PARTNERS?

Officiating is about teamwork. You must be able to get along with the men and women who work in your crews. If your partners dislike you, it is going to be very tough (perhaps impossible) for you to be a successful umpire.

Many retiring umpires state that the camaraderie with fellow umpires is what they will miss the most. After joining the officiating community, you will notice that fellow umpires will be some of your best friends, and remain so the rest of your life.

If you are not a likeable person, if you are arrogant, conceited or act like a know-it-all, it is very doubtful that you will have any semblance of success as an umpire.

Umpiring games can be a very humbling experience, where you will make many mistakes. If you are a person who has a hard time accepting constructive criticism, it is better that you stay away from joining the umpiring ranks. Getting your partners on your side is a big plus and can help your officiating career.

We are a very close-knit community and word gets around fast. If you are a team player and others circulate good things about you, other umpires will look forward to working with you. The word will also get back to your assignor.

One of the best ways to get someone on your side is to support them 100% during the game. After the game, you can discuss the proper way to handle the situation. During the game, you and your partner are a team.

If you were sitting there and had nothing to read you might look at an edition of Who's Who of Australian Women. Especially page 609. It may not be up-to-date but at least you will recognise the name of one of our sports highly decorated umpires.

KOSTAKIDIS

Who's Who of Australian Women

Aestheticians Aust., Aust. Assn Beauty Therapy, Aust. Bus. Women's Network, Founder Excellence Award TAPE, est. Beauty Treatment Program for Aged (Benevolent Socy), Adv. Bureau Statistics Salon Practices, Presenter Nat. Workshops Health and Beauty; Promoter Pub. Awareness Skin Protection in Aust. Climate; *pub.* num. video productions, radio presentations, pblns and articles on Health and Beauty; *m.* Sept. 1, 1969 George Gabriel (Corner, s. of: Dr Eugene Komer and Jo-hanna Adler; c. 3 d; *rec.* reading, music, theatre, travel and walking; *address:* 1 Union Street, PymontNSW 2009.

"Quote from 'A Fair Go - Portraits of the Australian Dream' By Wendy McCarthy AO. 'Madams Komer gave the industry the makeover it had been needing for some time, the temptation was there to go worldwide. I would not consider living anywhere else. What I value most about life in Australia compared to the rest of the world is the freedom and its spaciousness. I became an Australian wholeheartedly - an Australian Passport works really well forme. 'Also researched, developed and launched new skin care products in association with daughter, Rebecca in UK (2004), France/Italy (2005) and USA (2006)."

KOSKELAINEN Margo Laurel; OAM 2000; Softball Umpire and Administrator; Umpire-in-Chief, Australian Softball Association, since 1984; career: Umpire-in-chief Internal. Softball Fedn Jnr Men's World Championship 2001, Dep. Umpire-in-chief Olympic Games (Syd.) 2000; Life Memb. Softball Aust. since 1993; named on the Vie. Hon. Roll of Women 2006, recipient Officials Dev. Award Ausport Awards 2004, inducted into Internal. Soft-ball Hall of Fame 2003, recipient Aust. Sports Medal 2000; address: Shepparton, Vic.

KOSKY Hon. Lynne Janice; BSocW UMelb.); Victorian Minister for Education TM<1 Training, since 2002; MLA (ALP) for Altona, Victoria, since 1996; *b.* Sept. 2, WB Melbourne; *ed.* Footscray H Sch. Vvic.), Univ. Melb.; *career:* Vie. Minr for "n. 2000-02, Post-Compulsory Educ ' raining and Employment 1999-2002, 1 QO ^{Minr} Post Compulsory Educ. ^{wy}, Training and Employment 1999,

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Contributions for Blue's News On-Line

All umpires are encouraged to contribute to Australia's official Umpiring Magazine. Send your contributions to Mark Toft the editor mtoft@ozemail.com.au

Remember Blue's News On-Line is written by umpires for umpires
Be a part of it!

PRE & POST SEASON MENTAL CONDITIONING

With a new season about to start for a good number of umpires around the country, I thought this would be a good time to reflect on how you should be preparing for the coming months.

PRE SEASON: Well in advance of your season, you need to:

1. Study the rules. Following the introduction of the re-printed rulebook, this is particularly important at this point of time in order that you have a full understanding of the rule changes adopted by the ISF Congress. Consider the following ~ "A knowledge of the rules should be such a part of you that you don't have to worry about anything. After you've got the rules down, then you can zero in on judgement."

2. Check your equipment and apparel. Try on your uniform well in advance of the season to ensure that everything fits and is in good condition.

3. Get yourself in peak physical condition. The athletes will be in good shape, so it is up to you to ensure that you are not left behind and found wanting. The potential for injuries is reduced when you are in shape.

4. Meet with a small group. Pick a group of four or five fellow officials who are interested in "going the extra mile" with rules study and meet with them periodically. The small group sessions ensure that everyone comes to the meetings prepared.

5. Work scrimmages. They will help you get physically and mentally ready for the real games to follow. They will also demonstrate to the teams that you are willing to work to better yourself which in turn will benefit them.

6. Have your motor vehicle inspected. While this may sound strange, your most expensive piece of equipment should be running smoothly to ensure that you get to your games without fail. If not, you will be letting the teams down as well as yourself.

7. Take your family out for a night on the town. Just before your season begins, you need to do something special for your family members. It's your way of saying, "I understand the difficulties sometimes created by my absences to officiate."

POST SEASON: When your season ends, you should:

8. Get back into the rulebook. Proper rule study should be on-going (although a short break may be needed right at the end of the season).

9. Mentally review your entire season. What things did you do well? Not so well? Review problem areas and work to correct them.

10. Thank those who positively influenced your season. Let them know you appreciate their help, but don't play "politics."

11. Thoroughly clean your equipment. Don't let dirt eat away at your items while not in use for a lengthy period of time.

12. Properly store uniforms. After cleaning your apparel, store the items in a separate location and arrange them so they won't fade or crease in the wrong places.

13. Stay in shape. If you get out of your fitness routine, it will be harder to get back into shape before the next season.

14. Take a mental breather from officiating. Once you've accomplished the other post season items, forget about officiating for awhile. Do other things you enjoy, including ...

15. Reacquaint yourself with your family. They may have missed you. On the other hand

National Umpire's Examination By Alan McAuliffe

The following is a brief synopsis of the National Examination report, which is to be presented at the SDU meeting next month.

A total of 583 candidates at all levels sat the exam with the average marks obtained: Level 0-3 62.0%; Level 4-8 82.9%; All levels 64.4%

The Examining Panel marked all papers for Level 4-8 candidates and the following were successful in achieving the top mark for their State.

ACT - Ken Culpitt
NSW - Darrell Shephard
NT - Cathie Allen
QLD - Ian Goodman (also had highest mark Australia wide of 98%)
SA - Dave Roberts
TAS - Craig Williams
VIC - Debbie Grove
WA - Bill Kilmurray

The top marks for Level 0-3 candidates are unknown, as these papers were marked within the respective State Bodies.

2007 NATIONAL CLUB CHAMPIONSHIPS

GENERAL INFORMATION

DATE: Friday, 6 - Sunday, 8 April, 2007

VENUE: Redlands Softball Association, Hilliard's Park, Ormiston, Queensland

TEAMS: 12 women's and 12 men's club teams will be accepted to compete

One women's and one men's club team from NZ will be accepted

Team Entries are due by Friday, December 1, 2006

COST: \$1000 in total. \$600 team entry and \$400 good behaviour bond (to be returned at end of championship)

PRIZE MONEY: \$6000 in total - \$3000 for women and \$3000 for men
\$2000 to winning team, \$1000 to runner-up

AWARDS: MVP, Best Batter, Best Pitcher, All-Star team selection.

COMPETITION FORMAT

In the women's and men's competition the 12 teams will be split into two pools of 6. Each team will play all other teams in their pool (5 matches) over the first two days of competition. At the end of the pool matches, the top two teams in each pool will qualify for Division 1, teams 3 and 4 in each pool will qualify for Division 2. A page system finals will be played on the final day of competition for each division, with prize money being awarded to the two teams that play in the Division 1 Grand Final.

COMPETITION RULES

MATCH LENGTH: Matches will be played for the full 7 innings. International tie-breaker will commence in the 8th innings.

RULES: As per the 2006-2009 Rule Book, with the following changes:

- Pitchers must remain within the pitching circle once they have received the ball - an illegal pitch will be called if the pitcher steps outside of the circle.

REGISTERED PLAYERS: All players wishing to compete for a club team must be registered to that club.

PICK-UP PLAYERS: Each club team will be eligible to pick-up three players that are not registered with their club. The pick-up players must be registered softball players, unless they are based with an overseas team. Overseas players will need to pay an additional fee to cover insurance. Teams that wish to apply for more than three pick-up players may make a written request to the NCC Advisory Committee. The NCC Advisory Committee will have the power to accept or decline pick-up player applications.

TEAM ROSTER: Each team will be allowed a maximum of 14 players on their team roster (including pick-up players). When team entries are initially submitted,

a squad of up to 20 players may be listed (with a maximum of 3 pick-up players), with the final 14 players to be advised by a certain date. Teams that wish to add players on their team roster after the final date, must go through their state association, who will approve/decline the request and then notify Softball Australia.

TEAM ENTRIES: Where more than 12 women's or 12 men's club teams submit entries to compete at the championship, club teams will be selected to play by the NCC Advisory Committee on the basis of their ability to pay the entry fee and the strength of their team.

WITHDRAWAL OF A TEAM: If a team withdraws its entry after the team entry deadline, that team will lose its team entry fee and bond (\$1000).

UMPIRES: Each team must supply two umpires. One umpire must be minimum level four and one umpire must be minimum level two.

STATISTICIANS: Teams are welcome to bring their own scorer/statistician. All scorers/statisticians will be pooled to form a statistician's team for the championship. Where possible team statisticians will be allocated their own team's matches.

TEAM ENTRY FORMS, WITH PAYMENT, DUE BY DECEMBER 1, 2006

Team Entry forms can be sent to Softball Australia, Suite 4, 38 - 40 Prospect St, Box Hill, Vic 3128 For more information contact Softball Australia on (03) 9890 8200 or email shane.cantelmi@softball.org.au.

Queensland Umpires gearing up for State Championships

Many umpires from the Sunshine State are making preparations for a busy representative season with numerous State Championships being held over the next three months. A number of candidates will be under the microscope as Queensland look to bluster its middle to high umpire numbers.

	UIC and Examiners
Open Ladies Ipswich September 8-11	P. Sibraa, I Frame, Y Kahler
U/ 16 Boys Bundaberg September 23-25	Y Kahler, I Bunston, R Yardley D Bunston (Trainee Examiner)
U/16 Girls Redlands September 23-25	H Strauss, R Trow, D Casey I Goodman (Trainee Ex)
U/19 Women Redcliffe October 6-8	I Frame, R Trow, J Harries
U/19 Men Wynnum October 6-8	P Sibraa, D Sibraa, F Thomas
Open Men Toowoomba November 24-26	P Sibraa, D Sibraa, M Toft

Queensland 2006 Umpire of Year Awards

Queensland State Director, Darren Sibraa has taken out the prestigious Tricia Bichel Queensland Umpire of the Year Award for the second time since its inception three years ago. Cairns Umpire Natalie Fleischfresser has been named Junior Umpire of the Year for the second consecutive year.

Darren, a Level 6 Umpire, has been actively involved with umpiring for over 10 years. As the Queensland State Director of Umpiring, Darren has been instrumental in developing umpiring in Queensland. Darren established the "QSA Umpire Development Program". In conjunction with this program, a 'Train-the-Trainer' and 'Examiners Course' was established.

Darren is a great role model, who maintains a positive public image for softball. Through the delivery of "rules sessions", Darren has developed strong relationships with coaches and players. Darren's dedication and commitment to the ongoing development of umpires throughout Queensland is to be commended.

At the age of 17 Natalie has already umpired both junior and senior games. Apart from spending time mentoring others, some much older than herself, Natalie has taken on the umpire coordinator job in the Cairns Softball Association.

Always immaculately dressed Natalie is approachable and enthusiastic whenever she umpires.

Some of her notable achievements include obtaining Level 3 at the 2005 Under 16 State Championships, Grand Final Plate umpire 2005 Under 14 Girls State championship, Queensland Junior Umpire of the Year 2005.



Above: Darren with wife Tricia Sibraa (nee Bichel) at the Awards Dinner.

Below: Natalie is presented her award by State Director Darren Sibraa.



Advanced Umpire Clinic - Friendship Series

by Vicki Lansley (NSW)

As part of the National Umpire Program, an Advanced Umpire Clinic was held during the Friendship Series at Blacktown Olympic Park in July.

The clinic was attended by umpires from several states: David Casey, Jamie Harries (QLD), David Datson (SA), Richard Barrow, Stacey Evans (VIC), Peter Medbury, Leanne Gearside and Vicki Lansley (NSW) along with Dave Beaumont from New Zealand.

The clinic began at 7.30am on Sunday morning with all umpires meeting for breakfast behind the canteen area. This was to become a daily ritual along with lunch and dinner and was good for team building. Registration and introduction to the program began just after 8am in the Boardroom at NSWSA which became our classroom over the next 5 days.

We were asked what we would like to get out of the clinic and our objectives were listed on post-it notes around the room. The agenda for the day included topics such as the role of the umpire, signals, base mechanics and game management. There were two sessions outside where we went over our signals and the other, a session on balls and strikes and managing difficult situations.

From Monday through to Thursday, we umpired various games with Diamond 1 which were videoed by Paul Kerr. These were copied onto CDs for us to refer to and helped us identify areas we need to improve. Paul was able to concentrate one camera on the plate and another zoomed out to give a full view of the umpire rotation during a play.

On Monday, UIC Sue Itzstein, organised for sessions in the bull pen area when we were not umpiring. Here we worked on our height adjustments, tracking the ball and timing. These sessions were also copied down to CDs for our reference.

After umpiring a game, each umpiring team went through the game themselves before an official debriefed. This was very beneficial especially when you worked with umpires who you did not know previously. We were able to give each other feedback on the games especially on parts of your game where improvement was needed.

The fog and rain rolled in on Tuesday causing havoc with the diamond allocations – Diamond 1 was out of action until later in the day. At one stage, we had three diamonds starting at different times which became a UIC's nightmare. Wednesday afternoon, a session on game management and development plans.

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During the series, there were 77 games managed by 33 umpires with the majority of games having 3 umpires allocated. The clinic was very informative, helped achieve everyone's objectives and the presenters very professional, approachable and encouraging.

Special thanks go to Paul Kerr for videoing our games and copying them onto CDs for us, Nick for catching in the bull pen, Cathy Kerr who is always behind the scenes making sure everything is running smoothly and Jodi Neilson and her staff for all our meals.

Thank you to the other umpires at the clinic – it was great to add new faces to our umpiring family and good luck to all if you are going to Nationals.

IF A COACH DISAGREES WITH MY CALLS, WHAT DO I DO?

**(extracted from What You Need to Learn to be a Successful Umpire
by: Bob Henning Softball Canada Level V ISF Umpire)**

Some calls will require a lot of judgment or experience, and will necessarily cause criticism. Well, you wanted to be the decision maker, didn't you?

That is why you, a trained umpire, are on the field - to make unbiased calls that will, nonetheless, be occasionally rejected by coaches, fans and players. Be willing to accept some of this criticism and begin to develop a little thicker skin for biased comments.

After each call, particularly the grey area ones that generate controversy, one coach will be happy and one, well, will not be so happy. Your job is to avoid worrying about how coaches will feel about your calls.

Although coaches talk incessantly about consistency, they are ultimately interested in calls going "consistently" in their favor. This bias is why they try to work you!

When a coach is upset or angered about a call that he feels you missed, it is a good idea to let him/her know what you saw on the play. Describe it briefly. From your angle, you saw what you saw. You will need to find some time during the game to do this.

In other words, avoid stopping the game to hold an elongated discussion on the play. You could talk forever and likely never convince a coach that you were right.

Remember that when talking with a coach, your job is not to prove that you are right and that he/she is wrong. The reason to communicate with coaches is to diffuse the situation and let them know that you care about what they saw.

Softball Australia Events



2006/07

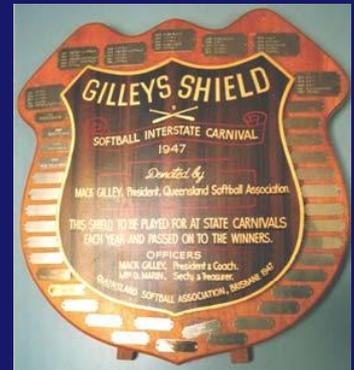


2006 Softball Australia Awards of Excellence

Date: Saturday, 14 October, 2006
Time: 7.00pm
Venue: Bayview on the Park, Melbourne (52 Queens Rd)
Tickets: \$65 per person
Bookings: Contact Softball Australia
Phone: 03 9890 8200
Email: shane.cantelmi@softball.org.au

National Championships 60th Anniversary Dinner

Date: Saturday, 6 January, 2007
Time: 6.00pm
Venue: Rooty Hill RSL, NSW (Cnr Sherbrooke & Station Streets)
Tickets: \$50 per person
Bookings: Contact Softball Australia
Phone: 03 9890 8200
Email: shane.cantelmi@softball.org.au



2007 National Club Championships

Date: Friday, 6 April - Sunday, 8 April, 2007 (Easter Weekend)
Venue: Redlands Softball Association
Hilliard's Park, Ormiston
Teams: Team Entry Forms can be downloaded from the Softball Australia website
Team Entries due 1st December

2007 Softball Australia Masters

Date: Friday, 6 April - Monday, 9 April (Easter Weekend)
Venue: Campbelltown & Districts Softball Association
Milton Park, Ingleburn
Teams: Team Entry Forms will be available from the Softball Australia website shortly
Keep an eye on the Softball Australia website for further information



For more information go to www.softball.org.au