

National UIC's Call Andrew Rindfleish



In previous months I have talked about a number of tools and techniques that help in an umpire's development. This month I'd like to cover some aspects of mentoring. Mentoring is a term heard around softball umpires, sometimes to describe what really is mentoring, sometimes what is not.

Of all the development tools, mentoring is really the most personal. In fact mentoring should always be thought of as a "mentor relationship" because it is the relationship that is at the crux of mentoring. Mentoring is all about building a relationship. The same sort of concerns we have about personal relationships equally apply to mentor relationships for softball umpires.

In a mentor relationship, the mentee should have only a small number of mentors, and some would even argue that a mentee should only have one mentor. On the other hand, a mentor can easily work with a number of mentees. Given the mentor will most

often be a more experienced and senior umpire, the fact is that higher up the accreditation ladder you go, there are less umpires.

There are some officiating programs that have structured, formal mentoring programs where individual mentors and mentees are forced to work together. For the same reason that most blind dates do not lead to long term and beneficial relationships, so formal programs often place incompatible couples together. Administrators of such structured programs need to be really conscious of this.

A successful mentor relationship requires significant input and buy-in by both parties. Both have to agree to be in this relationship in the first place. The mentee must drive the relationship by setting and keeping meetings and ensuring the relationship flourishes- this relationship is for his/her benefit. The mentor has to agree to be available for the mentee and to be open and honest in providing feedback and support for the mentee.

I often hear that umpire development programs, particularly junior umpire development programs, have a mentoring component. Whilst there may be some close relationships between the junior umpires and the senior umpire and these form an important part of grass roots umpire development, most of these programs serve an ad hoc training or minding function.

The principles of a successful mentor relationship are:

- Focus is on the mentee
- Define the outcomes of the relationship
- Respect for each other
- Regular communication
- Driven by the mentee
- Don't be afraid to end the relationship and move on

There is no doubt we can all benefit from feedback, guidance and support that can be often best provided through an open, honest, strong and effective mentoring relationship.



Aust. Capital Territory

www.suaact.softball.org.au

Braving the cold in Canberra by Sarah Houston

Normally in Canberra at this time of the year, our umpire's uniforms are tucked away in the warmth of their wardrobes, and our umpires are at home drinking hot chocolate and enjoying the warmth of their log fires.

Some hearty souls, who over the last two years have braved the elements to support Softball ACT's Winter competition. This competition lasts anywhere from 8 - 12 weeks (depending on how many rounds are washed/snowed out) right in the middle of winter. These brave souls have accepted the challenge of umpiring these weeknight games in minus degree temperatures.

This year things are a little different with the introduction of 'Speedball', a faster, more exciting form of the original game. Some of the rule changes include each team having three innings at bat, with 10 minutes in each to get as many runs as they can with unrestricted outs. Pitchers and batters are restricted to a time limit to pitch and get in the box, no conferences are allowed, there are only 3 balls and 2 strikes to play with, a wider home plate and larger strike zone and no drop third strike or infield fly rules.

Feedback from the players has been largely positive with certainly the speed of the game making it more exciting. The umpires have had to be on their game, with the changed rules and having to watch the clock for when the 10 minutes is up. The high standard of umpiring has certainly enhanced winter ball and will help it maintain its growing popularity with the players and officials. So here's a cheer to our brave Winter Competition Umpires.



Braving the elements: ACT umpires Brianna Williams, Diana Kropp and Rebekah Pearson ensure they rug up before going out in the Canberra night air during the winter competition.

National Umpiring Program

Website: www.umpiring.softball.org.au BNOL Submissions to mtoft@ozemail.com.au



New South Wales

www.nswumpires.softball.org.au

2009 NSW U19 Women's State Championship By Jesse Smith

Twelve teams and an umpiring crew of approximately nineteen descended on Blacktown Olympic Park to participate in the 2009 U19 Women's State Championship. Seven members of the umpiring crew were being assessed for their Level 3 Accreditation, six of whom continued their assessment at the U19 Men's State Championship two weeks later.



In cold conditions, teams battled it out for top positions in each pool until Sunday lunch. Game results were unpredictable across the weekend, which resulted in some close games. With rain on the radar, and the cross pool play-offs complete, the decision was made to abort the Prelim Final in order to bring forward the Grand Final. Congratulations to the following umpires who were appointed to the Grand Final: Plate: Vicki Lansley, 1st: Greg Zucchetti, 3rd: Leanne Gearside, LF: Peter Medbury, RF: Sharyn Girdler (Pictured left by Gary McGinty).

A highlight of the weekend was the feedback provided to all umpires, not just candidates, by the very experienced management crew. At the end of the tournament, each umpire was provided with a brief report that categorised 'what worked well' and things to 'take a look at.' This was very useful feedback that will certainly assist all umpires develop their performances into the future.

Examiner training was also conducted over the weekend. This provided regional umpires with the opportunity to develop their knowledge of the examination system and have questions answered by experienced National Examiners. For those fortunate enough to be involved, it was very beneficial and greatly appreciated.

Congratulations must go to the candidates for the manner in which they conducted themselves and umpired over the weekend. Following the U19 Women's, Andrew Cocks (pictured right with UIC, Scott Rindfleish, courtesy of Gary McGinty), from Manly Warringah Softball Association, was successful in gaining his Level 3 Umpire Accreditation - congratulations, Andrew!



NSW's top six Under 19 Men's association representative teams came together at Blacktown Olympic Park to battle for the title of 'State Champion'. A close competition saw each team win and lose in unpredictable fashion. Umpires from all over NSW united to serve the game under the leadership of UIC Bruce McCahon.

The playoffs commenced in the second timeslot on Sunday and the top 4 teams certainly provided awesome spectator viewing. Eventual champions, Macarthur, showed supremacy, winning the semi-final against Georges River. A rematch between these two teams occurred in the grand final. A dominant pitching performance by Harry Peters, who was well supported by a strong and deep hitting line up, ensured Macarthur would take the crown as State Champions for 2009.

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The four key games of the finals were officiated using a 5 man umpiring crew. This allowed excellent ground coverage and an exciting way to reward great umpiring performances.

A big thank you must be expressed to all umpires for their hard work throughout the event, and congratulations on a great performance in managing the, sometimes, fiery and ever aggressive U19 men's competition.

Six candidate umpires were under additional pressure and definitely rose to

the challenge! NSW awarded Level 3 Accreditation to: Chris Ioannou, Garry Grimes, Vic Guillaumier, Robert McIntosh, Steve Smith and Shane Wells, bringing the NSW Level 3 count to 18. (Photo above, courtesy of Gary McGinty).

The examination process for these gentlemen was split 50/50 across this event and the Under 19 Women's State Championship two weeks prior. The obvious challenge was to step up for the back end of the examination after a week break to complete the final three games at the men's competition. Congratulations to you all on a job very well done!

Congratulations also to the following umpires who were appointed to the Grand Final: Plate: Scott Rindfleish, 1st: Howard Watt, 3rd: Amanda Houison, LF: Vicki Lansley, RF: Leanne Gearside.

2009 NSW U16's State Championships

Twenty teams descended on western Sydney to contest this year's U16's State Championships. Both male and female competitors represented their affiliates across a cold and, at times, wet weekend in Campbelltown.

Darrell Shephard led a very large umpiring crew at the tournament, with the assistance of Deputy UICs Bruce McCahon and Greg Baker. The management crew was supported across the weekend by 5 examiners.

An early morning frost in the west did not deter enthusiasm as all umpires arrived for their early morning pre-tournament meeting at the grounds. Administration complete, the games started just as the sun began to appear through the clouds. Saturday saw a mixture of results across the two female pools, and in the boy's competition, results were also relatively unpredictable.

Unfortunately for those who like sleeping in, Sunday's competition started at 8am, requiring all umpires to be at the grounds by 7:15. The morning frost did a great job at freezing everyone's extremities! After the beginning of the second timeslot at approximately 10am, the mercury read only 6 degrees, and failed to rise much higher for the rest of the day. The girl's playoffs started in the fourth timeslot on Sunday, while the boy's grand final was decided by results from their straight round robin.

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Manly and Hornsby met in the girl's grand final, while Southern Districts and Georges River faced off in the boy's grand final. The girl's game was a very close encounter, with Manly scoring 1 run in the sixth inning to take the Championship. The boy's final saw Southern Districts take an early lead, only for Georges River to fight back and take the lead in the fourth. With loaded bases in the sixth, a grand-slam by Kayne Kajan ensured Southern Districts would take the win.



Congratulations to the following umpires who were appointed to the Grand Finals: **Girl's:** (Above left) Plate: Jay Gibson, 1st: Leanne Gearside, 3rd: Greg Zucchetti, LF: Shane Wells, RF: Chris Ioannou. **Boy's:** (Above right) Plate: Jesse Smith, 1st: Kyira Cox, 3rd: Sharyn Girdler, LF: James English, RF: Robert McIntosh. (Photo courtesy of Gary McGinty).

Across the weekend, a number of candidates put themselves to the test in the hope of gaining their Level 2 Umpire Accreditations. The unpredictable game results challenged all candidates and required strong umpiring. A big thank you must be expressed to all umpires for making themselves available for this year's championships. On behalf of the crew, thank you to Darrell and his team for ensuring the weekend was enjoyable for all umpires.



At the end of the weekend, four candidates were successful in gaining their Level 2 Accreditations:

(Left top) Myles Lego (Hornsby), (Left bottom) Dermot O'Daly (Macarthur), (Right top) Kristina Travers (Macarthur) & (Bottom right) Darren Edwards (Sutherland).

Congratulations to all four candidates on a job well done! We wish you all well in your future umpiring endeavours. (Photos by of Gary McGinty).

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Queensland

www.umpires.qld.softball.org.au

Busy time for Queensland Umpires by Mark Toft

The Queensland umpires are gearing up for a busy time as the annual State Championships will be held over the next couple of months. Under 16 Boys and Girls, Under 19 Youth and Women, Open Women and Open Men will be contested and manned by Queensland's best in the Blue team.

Following success in selecting the crew for the 2008 Men's State Championships Queensland have used a new system in crewing state championships. Umpires have been asked to nominate which championships they wish to attend and are selected by the Umpiring State Directorate. This system will be used for all State Championships this year except for the Under 14 and Under 16 Championships.

Under 16 Girls will be held at Downey Park, Brisbane 19-21 September

UIC - Yvonne Kahler, Examiners Stephen Gutteridge and Ron Yardley, Trainee Examiners Sally Crawford, Peter Walsh and Norelle Thomas.

Under 16 Boys will be held in Caboolture 19-21 September

UIC - Darren Sibraa, Examiners Ian Frame and David Casey, Trainee Examiners, Matt Blake, Jana McCaskill and Jamie Harries.

Under 19 Women will be held in Wynnum 2-4 October

UIC - Ian Frame, Examiners Ron Trow and Ian Bunston.

Under 19 Youths will be held in Noosa 2-4 October

UIC - Tricia Sibraa, Examiners Darren Sibraa, Helen Strauss.

Queensland Cup & Open Women's will be held at Redlands 4-6 September.

UIC - Tricia Sibraa, Examiners Darren Sibraa and Yvonne Kahler.

Queensland Cup & Open Men's will be held in Toowoomba 27-29 November

UIC - Tricia Sibraa, Examiners Trevor Pascall and Mark Toft.

Queensland Forum

Recently the umpire coordinators from all of the District Associations came together in Brisbane for the annual Umpiring Forum.

State Director, Darren Sibraa went through the results of the previous year and bought the coordinators up-to-date with a number of new processes for the year ahead. On top of the agenda was the new positioning and signals which will be adopted throughout the State this year.

It is envisaged that the coordinators will be able to go back to their district associations to put into place the new changes. Many associations in Queensland are in a summer recess with very few who play winter. The upcoming State Championships will also give the Queensland umpires a chance to hone their new-learnt skills.

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Victoria

www.vuc.softball.org.au

Umpires in the Spotlight by Stacey Evans

The recent Victorian State Dinner was the venue where two prestigious awards were presented by the Victoria Umpiring Committee.

The John Larter Umpire Development Scholarship and the Margo Koskelainen Victorian Umpire of the Year Award. Two umpires were also recognized for their exceptional service to softball in Victoria with Merle Short Service awards and Life Memberships.

The John Larter Umpire Development Scholarship is designed to assist level one umpires with the purchase of umpire equipment (thanks to the generous support of VSA and Fielder's Choice).

The nominees for the John Larter Umpire Development Scholarship are:

- Alex Van Kesteren from Albury Softball Association
- Alan Van Breda from Albury Softball Association
- David Luisetto from Glen Eira Softball Association
- Brett Tyler from Waverley Softball Association

And the award goes to...

Alan Van Breda

Alan was the plate umpire in the Under14 State Championships A-grade girls final. Alan's goal is to obtain Level 2 in 2009.

The June and July editions of Blue's News On-Line recognised The Margo Koskelainen Victoria Umpire of the Year recipients Diane Waller and Debbie Grove. While an article in honour of Victorian Umpiring stalwarts Leigh Evans and Kevin Broomhall who were bestowed the Merle Short Service Award and inducted as life members of Softball Victoria has appeared in previous edition.



WORLD CHAMPIONS

The Australian Open Men's team were crowned World Champions following their win against New Zealand in final in Canada recently.

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