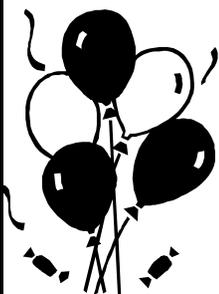


BLUES NEWS ON LINE

Contributions to mtoft@ozemail.com.au

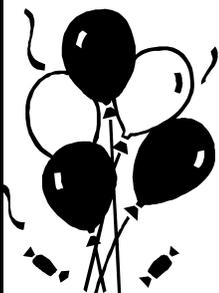
January Edition Vol 1 of 2004



Happy New Year

The excitement of a New Year..... Now that the parties are over it's time to get into some serious umpiring, especially those going to Nationals this month.

We take this opportunity to wish all Blues a Happy New Year and hope that all your goals and ambitions in your umpiring career are achieved.



I also take this opportunity to thank all those who have contributed to Blue's New On-Line over the past three years. Your contributions have enabled me to have a bit of fun each month putting together, what I believe, is one of the best reads in Australian Softball. Then again I could be bias.

A lot of my enjoyment comes from feedback, be it good or bad. If you would like to send some feedback, I will publish your thoughts. No names will be published, if desired.

Did you make a New Year's Resolution at midnight on December 31 and broke it at one minute past midnight on January 1, 2004.



New Year Resolutions are the most broken promises known to man (and woman). What was your New Year's Resolution? Do you want to share it with Blue's News On-Line? If so, send it to mtoft@ozemail.com.au

With your help we will have some new columns in 2004. One of which will be 'Feedback'. Send in your ideas.

Happy Calling!

Pollard simply the best By Mark Toft

I have listened to many umpiring presentations over the past decade and I have learnt a lot, but the experience of listening to ISF's Henry Pollard has got to be an experience of a lifetime.

Henry brought umpiring to a new level when making his presentation as part of the International Softball Federation Clinic in Brisbane recently. Either in the class room or in the field Henry was able to captivate his audience (the International Development Squad members and the observers).

Some of the things Henry was covering was basic stuff, but he was able to present it with a different slant and still made it interesting for all concerned. But there was a lot of signals and movements which are expected to be used by ISF accredited umpires and that was a challenge for the Squad members as old habits die hard. It was refreshing to see that umpires old habits were not going to count against any umpire during the assessment stages of the course.

The course conducted by Henry is the same course held in America as in Europe and in China. The aim of ISF is to give every umpire equal opportunity to be ISF accredited under the same guidelines.

As many of us who train umpires know that if you are the teacher at a clinic you refresh your own umpiring and I can say at the ISF clinic it was a good refresher course which got the participants ready for the up coming National tournaments and of course the expectation of ISF accreditation following the Open Women's Nationals in Brisbane.

I will be doing a one-on-one interview with Henry and I will publish that in February's edition of this magazine.

Henry Pollard it was a pleasure. Thank you.

What's in this Edition

- Groover's Diary from China
- Making Rules Easier
- Softball gear put to good use
- Grand Prix in Geelong
- Qld Umpires Golf Day
- BNOL Survey
- Year of the Official Workshop
- What's your call?
- 20 Second Clock?????

Making the rules easier With Alan McAuliffe - National Rules Interpreter

I have a question regarding the infamous DEFO & DP situation. In the following situation how many times can the DP bat, DEFO go in to run for the DP, the DEFO continue to play their assigned position on defense and the DP go back to bat their next time up in the order.

We have played 10 games this summer and up until our last game we have interchanged the DEFO and DP in the above situation as many as 2 times during the course of the game. All of the umpires have allowed this replacement until our last game, which was umpired by a new up-and-coming umpire.

Rule 4 Section 5f Notes "The DEFO replacing the DP is not a substitution." POE 13k states, in part, "A team may go from ten to nine players and back to ten players any number of times during a game." Does Rule 4 Section 5 mean the Re-entry rules do not apply since this is not a substitution. Who was correct?

Answer:

The described situation is a substitution of the DP and NOT the DEFO. The regular substitution rule therefore applies to the DP only! When the rule book states that this is not a substitution, it is referring to the DEFO only. Therefore, the DEFO may go in to run for the DP position any number of times in a game.

Look at it this way. There are 10 players listed on the line-up card when the DP/DEFO is being used. When the DP is replaced by the DEFO to run, this is a change to the line-up. The DP is removed (goes to the bench) and the number of names on the card has dropped to 9. The DEFO is still in the line-up, therefore there is no change in his status.

When the DP comes back in, this is a re-entry. Again there is no change to the status of the DEFO as his name has never left the line-up. The key is to look at the line-up and see which names have left the line-up and which ones have not.

Remember, the DP may re-enter the game on one occasion and he may be replaced with the DEFO to run for him a second time. However, if that happens the starting DP is out of the game for a second time and may not legally return. A substitute DP could then be used with the line-up reverting to 10 players. This move could be done as many times as there are substitutes to make it.

LOOKInteresting Case Study on Page 12



WELL DONE RICK!: The Victorian Open Championships were held at Knox 15 - 16 November - Rick Loveridge was successful in achieving his Level 4 accreditation.

Pictured receiving his accreditation from Victorian Umpiring Director, Kerry Franklin.

Umpires from around Victoria set off to the Victorian Under 16 Championships in Albury December 6 and 7. There were 4 candidates who were successful in achieved their Level 2.



4 x 2: Congratulations to four new Level 2 umpires in Victoria. Left to Right, Sharon Davies (Waverley), Simon Reisman (Glen Eira), Vanessa Fleming-Baillie (Melbourne), and Stuart Tyler (Waverley)

**DEADLINE FOR FEBRUARY'S EDITION
FEBRUARY 4**

**Publication date - February 8
Get your articles in early.**

Can you Help with a survey?

How effective is Blue's New On-Line?

If you receive an Email from Matt Gowty saying that the next edition of BNOL is available through the Resource Library on the NUC Website that's great. You do not have to continue with the survey.

If you don't receive the Email from Matt Gowty that means you are not on the mailing list and that's bad!

Just take a moment to work out how you are reading this edition.

- A. Did you go to the Website like you do every month and download it?
- B. Did you hear it was out and then went to the Website to download it?
- C. Did someone give you a hard copy?

If you answered Yes to any of the above send me an Email at mtoft@ozemail.com.au and I will ensure you are put on the mailing list.

Questions -

Are you seeing your State or Association represented in Australia's National Umpiring Magazine, with articles, recognition of higher levels or pictures? If not send me an Email and I will forward it on to the correct person to take action!

Do you have any interesting things to share with other umpires? If so, send them direct to me by Email!

Don't get left out in the cold. Get yourself on the mailing list and get you and your fellow umpires in the only National Umpiring Magazine.

Blue's News On-Line

mtoft@ozemail.com.au

DO IT NOW!



Top 5 responses to the caption of the picture (left)

5. I'm a 'shoe in' for my four now!
4. I suppose I have to iron shirts after this!
3. Have I got your shoes UIC? (Sent in anon)
2. What are you looking at. I'm too busy for photographs today.
1. Shoes, shoes, shoes they said "Come away and get your next level" all I have seen is shoes, shoes, shoes. (Sent by Ross Harrison NSW)

Queensland Umpires Golf Day by Ron Yardley

This years golf day was held over two days at Laidley (70 km west of Brisbane). A total of 26 players and 4 non players attended, many of the crew camped at the local caravan park and enjoyed an evening of wine, women and song. In what was a hot weekend the caravan park's pool got a good workout at all hours of the day and night. The BBQ on the Saturday night was a great success with the usual umpire banter being thrown around (who needs enemies), a swim and little drop of the good stuff. Overall a great weekend , It gets better every year

Winners

Overall - Matt Gowty and Stuart Fort (54 for 12 holes on a count back)

Nearest to pin - (Hole 4) Di Bunston and Mark Toft
(Hole 8) Darren Sibraa and Sally Crawford

Bradmans - Sandra Gill and Ron Yardley

Best Dressed - Margaret Toft

Raffle - Wendy Harries

All trophies and prizes were donated by Toowoomba Tupperware Managers Mark and Margaret Toft.

Pics on page 6

Groover's trip to China - What an experience!

**VII Jr. Women's Fast Pitch World Championship - Nanjing , China
October 12-20, 2003**

Debbie's Diary

My experiences I won't forget too quickly started with a camp in Sydney, October 1 - 5, 2003. I arrived at Sydney airport and caught a taxi to Blacktown Travelodge. The Australian Team had just finished a practice run and was coming back to their rooms. I caught up with Faye and Leanne and was told of the agenda for the evening. Dinner at 6.00 pm then 7.00 pm a meeting that Leanne wanted me to go over what I knew of the 25-second clock procedures. At this point of time it was quite clear that the players and officials had already a special bonding.

Day 2

Got up early for a walk around the block with the team after I had a hard night (dreaming of Chinese people capturing me and torturing me. All night I spent trying to run away) We all went shopping to buy for "our special friend" then came back to have lunch.

We then set off to go to the park for 2 games against New Zealand. Australia and New Zealand wanted to try the mechanics of the 25-second clock. We weren't too sure about- When after rotating to another base and the pitcher has the ball when does the clock start again? There were lots of other queries but we thought it best to wait until we get to China, but it was good for the pitchers and batters to get a feeling of the timing.

Day 3

Woke up to a beautiful morning - 2 games were played against New Zealand and the Australian team was looking good. Back at the Travelodge I helped with some laundry for the team, then we had a Jumper presentation with some words of wisdom from Fiona Crawford. Faye had told Cheryl and I not to leave the Uniforms in the laundry so we went to collect them and the cars got organised to go for dinner and left without us, they didn't realise until they got to the restaurant and had to come back for us (from then on it was a joke ... to make sure we had every-one)

Day 4

Bags all packed and ready to go. Every-one was exited, not really sure what to expect in China.

Day 5

Arrived in Hong Kong where we had an overnight stay at the Regal Airport Motel. It was great to get off the plane and stretch the legs. We all got up

early set for Nanjing. Excess baggage was not a problem here as we had very little time to catch the plane as we still had a train to catch to get to our departure gate. On arrival at Nanjing we were met by two Liasion's that stayed with the team the entire trip. We had a 2-hour bus trip to our accommodation and the first impressions of China was the road Transport, road rules (or lack of) and the haze that covered the sky.

Day 6

The accommodation at Nanjing was very comfortable, but the food is an experience. There was very little food that the players could eat. Faye went to management to see what could be organised for tomorrow. Because we were the first team to arrive the organisers weren't quite ready for us. The Australian team only have a few days here and then moving to Daji Resort, but two officials have to stay at this motel.

Leanne, Sue, Faye and I went out on an excursion on pushbikes with drivers. This was a great trip so much so we are organising all the girls to go in the morning. After lunch we went to the diamond and had 2-hours training. There were some more hurdles to over come. We all got on the bus and then got told the bus driver has left to go to have lunch so we all had to get off. Faye was not very impressed and let them know just that. We got to the diamond and it was all locked up so we had to climb the fence. Cheryl and I went for a look around the University. It was hard to believe that all the workers around paving, moving soil by hand, fixing the roads, could possibly have everything finished in a few days. It was fascinating watching them all work and around the clock they did to have the surroundings all finished in time and a picture it was.

Day 7& 8

There was excitement at breakfast today as a toaster, bread and milk was supplied. After breakfast we all set off on a trip to the shops on the pedal bikes. I was the leader for the group we arrived at a Temple to find that some of the officials hadn't arrived. They had been taken another direction but eventually found their way back. It was a culture shock to some of the girls but was very interesting to see how the Chinese lived and their working conditions.

After lunch a practice match was organised against Russia. There was no changing room so that was different for me to change behind a tree!!! The Russian team didn't seem to understand the 25-second clock but after explaining to their interpreter by the end of the practice they were able to put it into play.

Turn to page 5 for Day 9

Day 9

Only a couple of days to go and getting very anxious and excited. By now we have got our "2nd Special Friend" and trying to get a gift in their possession without them knowing is a challenge within itself. Photo's for I.D had to be organised again as China said they hadn't received them from Australia. Little things like this kept coming up just to keep on our toes. In the end the photos were on the ID anyway!!

Day 10

Today the Aussie team is having practice matches against Japan and China, so we organised another 4-man system. No other umpire brought their own uniforms so they were happy for me to do the plate and they rotated around the bases. After the game the Japan coach wanted me to explain how the 25-second clock was going to work. I continued to tell them that I really hadn't used it exactly and we would get a better understanding once Merle explained it.

Day 11

This day was taken up with meetings. We received our Uniforms only some of the shoes were not the right sizes but over all the uniforms were great. I would like to thank Mizuno for the sponsorship for this equipment.

Day 12

Woke up to a rainy day and that's the way it stayed all day. Our last team member arrived to-day (Miroslav) he could have been Darren Clark's twin. We all went on a trip on the bikes and after tea we went into Nanjing City and checked out the markets. The bartering and how cheap everything was, was amazing.

Day 13

First day of games and I was really looking forward to the challenge. Our roster for the week was given to us so we knew what games we were going to do. We got to the park and saw for the first time the 25-second clock; it was large and very clear.

- The ground crew re-marked the batters box every-game at the top 5th innings
- The time clock didn't seem a problem for pitches but some batters were stepping out when they shouldn't have. We were giving them a warning but no penalties were given.
- It seemed that a lot more time was being wasted between innings in some cases.
- May be the time clock could be used for the one minute change over.

Day 14

I had two games today. The 1st game at 3rd base which went for 55minutes. A quick games they say is a good game. My 2nd game I was at 1st base and nothing really happened, just standard plays.

Day 15

Games went well all day (and so far we haven't heard the buzzer go off for the 25 second clock, although it should have a couple of times, but there was a little inconsistency when it started some times. The crowd when China played was huge and the noise was unbelievable. There was not a seat left and the bleaches around the outfield was dotted with people, and the banging of drums just made the atmosphere electrifying.

Day 16

The opening Ceremony was held today and the organisers had done a lot of work and it looked spectacular with dancers, dragons with lots of colour. The highlight of the day for me was the last game against Japan and China. I was on 2nd base and to look into the stand and not see a seat left was unbelievable.

Day 17

We got up early this day to get a group photo taken. As a group of umpires we tried involve every-one but the Chinese just took a little longer to join in. This was the first time that as line umpires we stayed out in the outfield between innings and when changes were being made and new pitchers are warming up you also stayed out.

All games went off well and now we are ready for the play off tomorrow. We had a team meeting and signed large balls for our souvenirs and received gifts from Merle as a token of thanks.

Day 18 & 19

There were a few comments from Merle about tracking the ball over the plate with your head. He seemed to think this is a good technique. A couple of interesting things happened in our games on Sunday. It was brought to our attention that the 10-second time was up on a batter. So time was called to confer with each other and we agreed a strike would be called which made the 3rd strike.

The game Australia v Taipei. The catcher for Taipei was begging for strikes to be called. Australia started to have a batting rally and the coach from Taipei had a few words with the plate umpire but was handled okay and they got on with the game. At this point of time the crowd started to get involved, rubbish was being thrown onto the diamond but things settled down after a while. It

Turn to page 6 for Day 20 action



Played at Laidley Golf Club
 Winning score 54 (12 holes)
 4BBB Stableford



Pictures clockwise from top left:

1. State Director, Darren Sibraa looks the part as he attempts a chip to the green.
2. Winners, from left, Stewart and Matt Gowty received the perpetual trophy.
3. Ron Yardley (F.C. Functions Coordinator) explains the rules of the golf day at the caravan park the night before.
4. Wendy Harries accepts the raffle prizes from Ron Yardley.
5. The biggest Motley Crew you have ever seen. But boy they had fun.
6. Mark Toft clowning around. There's always one in every crowd.

Photographs courtesy of Sally Crawford



Queensland Umpires' Golf Day 2003



Debbie Grove spoke of the 20 second clock rule in her diary at the World Championships in China. This article was released by the International Softball Federation in March 2003. This article was downloaded from that site for your information and to assist in understanding what Debbie was talking about.

20-SECOND CLOCKS TO BE IMPLEMENTED IN INTERNATIONAL SOFTBALL

Latest Advancement In Softball Part of Efforts to Keep Game Lengths TV-friendly

It's not a rule change, but it will certainly be noticeable to players, umpires, and fans at international softball games. International Softball Federation (ISF) President Don Porter has announced that the Federation will be implementing a 20-second clock that will provide for a countdown visible to the pitcher, coaches, umpires, and the fans.

On page 86 of the ISF's official rulebook, Rule 6, Section 3 (LEGAL DELIVERY), Item m states, *The pitcher has 20 seconds to release the next pitch after receiving the ball, or after the umpire indicates, "Play Ball."* As the rule goes on to state, if the pitch is not released within the 20 seconds the result would be a "ball" called by the umpire. Implementing a physical clock will assist the umpires in their enforcement of this one of many rules as well as aid the pitcher in ensuring that his/her release occurs within the allotted time. The batters too will be required to shorten their time in seeking signals from the coaches. The third base umpire will be responsible for starting the 20-second clock after the plate umpire indicates "Play Ball."

Mr. Porter noted another benefit from having such a display. "This is yet another way that we can ensure ourselves that we're making the necessary efforts to keep our game moving, so that there's not significant down time. By keeping the action going, our game becomes not only more enjoyable for the spectators, but more compatible with a TV broadcast.

Our games at last summer's Women's World Championship averaged 1:52 (one hour, 52 minutes), and a 20-second clock will help keep games at that length, if not a little shorter, keeping them in line with what television networks are looking for to fit their time slots."

That same Women's World Championship saw the debut of significant rule changes that the ISF had previously adopted, also with an eye toward speeding up the game. For instance, the tiebreaker rule was changed to begin after seven complete innings instead of nine, four balls were no longer needed for an intentional walk, and warm-up pitches were changed from five to three between innings, so as not to drag on.

The 20-second clock will be implemented in time to use at the ISF's VI Junior Women's World Championship (19-and-under), to be held in Nanjing, China in September.

The International Softball Federation is the world governing body of the sport as recognized by the International Olympic Committee (IOC) and the General Association of International Sports Federations (GAISF). Softball (women's fast pitch) made its Olympic debut at the 1996 Games in Atlanta. There are 124 affiliated countries in the ISF and millions of participants in the sport worldwide.

For more information, please contact ISF Director of Communications Bruce Wawrzyniak at brucew@internationalsoftball.com or 1-813-864-0100, ext. 229

.....from page 5

was a good game to watch and to top it off Australia won which means they continue tomorrow.

Day 20

Last day of games. All I can say is that Australia did us proud and the Umpiring crew worked well together and made many friends. This is another experience that is in my memory bank not to be forgotten. We said our good-byes and said we would keep in contact by e-mails. A promise I plan on keeping. We joined up with the Australian team to go back to Hong Kong for a couple of days before returning back home. We did some sight seeing and lots of shopping and one of the best things we went out for tea and had some real food!! Boy it tasted good.

Thanks ASF, ISF and the committee members and everyone that made this championship possible for me.

Debbie Grove

Blue's News On-Line wishes to thank Debbie Grove for her Diary regarding her trip to China. It was wonderful to hear about all the adventures at a World Championship.

DON'T FORGET TO GET YOUR ARTICLES IN FOR FEBRUARY'S EDITION.

SEND TO MTOFT@OZEMAIO.COM.AU

Dear All,

On Monday, December 8 I attended a Year of the Official Administrators Education Workshop. From the workshop I gained lots of information about initiatives/strategies from all sports on how to improve behaviour towards officials and how to improve competence of officials.

Compared to a variety of sports Softball Queensland is doing well in both areas. We have always worked hard to educate current and new umpires and now with the Zero Tolerance Policy we are heading towards improving the behaviour towards officials at all levels.

I have attached to this email a copy of the report I have developed. At the bottom are some recommendations I have. I hope you will read the report and consider the recommendations.

I hope that together we can all reduce the amount of harassment and abuse our umpires receive.

Kind Regards
Lisa Griffiths
Project Officer
Softball Queensland

YEAR OF THE OFFICIAL **Administrator Education Workshop**

The workshop was conducted on Monday, December 8 and the goal of the workshop was to educate administrators from SSO's, local sporting organisations and clubs. The program addressed the behaviour and competency strategies identified for the Year of the Official.

Introduction / Scene Setting

The participants were introduced to a local administrator and a local official. The Local administrator was Jan Ellis from Hockey Queensland and the Local official was Eddie Ward from Rugby League. Both were interviewed and asked questions in relation to officials. Both answered the questions with great detail and provided as an excellent introduction to the workshop.

Group Work

Most of the day consisted of discussing issues within small groups and reporting back to the big group. The first group discussion was about '**Why do people play sport?**' The main finding was that most play for fun and enjoyment. It is up to sports to make all parts of the sport fun and enjoyable includ-

ing officiating.

The second discussion was based around the topic '**Why do we need officials in sport?**' It was discussed that officials have an integral role and they ensure the game/ event is played fairly, in accordance with the rules and focusing on safety for athletes.

The Problem

The problem in sport today is that officials are leaving sports rapidly. Between 1997 and 2001 the number of officials in Australia dropped by 26%. Harassment, abuse and disrespect are high on officials' lists of reasons why the leave sport. This needs to be stopped.

Administrators in sport are being asked to help fix this problem by educating people about their behaviour towards officials and recruiting, educating and retaining officials.

What Can Be Done - Behaviour

As sport administrators we need to be educating players, coaches, parents and spectators on the appropriate behaviour that is needed in the sporting environment. Procedural and attitudinal change is required so that abuse, harassment and disrespect towards officials is dramatically reduced. In the groups at the workshop we were given different scenarios and asked to develop management strategies to overcome the issues. This was an interesting task and provided insight into how other sports handle situations.

In the groups we discussed the initiatives and strategies our sports had in place to improve and change behaviours. I informed my group that QSA has a new 'Zero Tolerance Policy' in place as well as 'Codes of Conduct/Ethics'. They were all interested in hearing about the 'Zero Tolerance Policy'. The policy was well received and others were interested in reading through it to get ideas for their sport.

What Can Be Done - Competence

The next section involved discussing what education processes each sport has in place to improve the competence of our officials. I informed the group about our various umpiring courses that we conduct throughout the state.

The biggest challenge in educating officials is making sure that we can provide the support that they require. Especially with out JUMP clinics being so successful we need to now make sure these up and coming officials are provided with mentors and support so that if they do have problems or experience abuse they

.....continues Page 9

...from Page 8

can be supported rather than dropping out altogether. Once we recruit officials and educate them then WE MUST RETAIN THEM.

Making It Happen

From the workshop we were asked to list some action items for ourselves. I am aware that the Zero Tolerance Policy has been created and currently education workshops are being carried out in various DA's. I believe QSA are doing well in the area of improving the competence of our officials but I would be interested to know the level of support the umpires get. Are junior officials given support and mentored by older umpires in the local Associations? If not I think this should be an area that is looked at because I believe it is important.

The biggest area that needs to be addressed is educating people about behaviour towards officials. QSA are starting to do this through the 'Zero Tolerance Policy' which is fantastic.

The major action item I listed was:

- *Educate DA's about:*
 - *improving the competence of their officials (conducting courses/ clinics)*
 - *improving behaviour of their members towards officials*
 - *the zero tolerance policy.*

Recommendations

- Encourage DA's to conduct at least one umpiring course /clinic a year to improve the competence of their existing umpires and recruit new umpires. Each DA is allowed one clinic each year that has the costs covered by QSA.
- Increase education sessions in DA's regarding the Zero Tolerance Policy. *(Specifically more focus on educating DA's to educate their members on the appropriate behaviour required towards officials. This could be done using a similar resource used at the workshop).*
- Year of the Official posters will be received soon from SRQ and I want to try and get at least one poster in each DA, more if we can but it depends on the number we receive.
- Display the Year of the Official poster at the National Championships and also get a copy of the radio commercial for the Year of the Official produced by SRQ and play during the National Championships in Brisbane to raise awareness.
- Next year SRQ will be running a 'Fair Go Program' and I would like to get members from each DA to attend a workshop near their Association.

SOFTBALL EQUIPMENT BEING PUT TO GOOD USE

(This article was downloaded from the ISF Website - with thanks)

Softball equipment has been sent out by the ISF's Development Department to more than 50 countries over the last two years. Recently, the British Softball Federation (BSF) took advantage of this resource, and purchased nine "starter kits." The BSF has indicated the great impact that has been made by what they received.

Julie Potter is one of the people involved in the launch of a schools program in Great Britain for girls' fast pitch softball. Tanya Price, Director of the Grass Roots Girls' Fast Pitch Development Program, successfully coordinated the BSF's purchase of the equipment from the ISF, then Potter was one of the beneficiaries.

The Regional Coordinator for Oxfordshire, she noted "how much difference these (kits) have made to the development of the game in the UK." For instance, last year, for the first time ever, they held a National Schools Championship. Over 100 girls competed in two age groups, after having competed prior to that in regional competitions. Potter said, "The girls loved it and the quality of play was remarkably high. There is no way, given the lack of retailers available here and the limited funding available to BSUK and to British schools at the moment, that this would have been possible without those bags of equipment."

Bob Fromer, CEO of the BSF said, "Julie has been involved with Grass Roots from the beginning, and has done a great job building the program in Oxfordshire. I'm grateful to (the ISF) for offering to let her purchase equipment...to cope with the requirements of a program that's happily continuing to grow."

"Starter kits" consist of: 12 gloves, six bats, six balls, four helmets, a set of catching gear, and a set of bases.

Fromer also noted that Price has created a "School of Excellence," which is a means to pull the most promising girls out of the school leagues and give them additional coaching at a higher level. "This in turn should start feeding our junior national teams program, where we're adding an U-13 Team this year to compete in the first European Softball Federation U-13 Championship," he said.

The ISF accepts donations of used equipment to use for distribution to member countries.

For more information, go to the International Softball Website or contact your local association or State body. It would be great if Australia could get involved and get some gear for counties who do not have the funds to purchase equipment.



Grand Prix Series Geelong

Photographs clockwise (starting from above)

1. Diamond One at Geelong
2. Kevin Broomhall in action
3. Kerry Franklin at the plate
4. Leigh Evans at third
5. Kerry Franklin in between pitches
6. Debbie Grove on the move

Photographs taken by Warren Duff



WHAT'S YOUR CALL? From Alan McAuliffe

I was umpiring our annual game between the Elves and the Reindeer. The game was tied 1-1 in the bottom of the seventh and the Reindeer were threatening to score with bases loaded. Donner was on first, Blitzen on second and Dasher on third. The count was 3-2 with two outs and Rudolph was up to bat. As the pitch approached, Rudolph started glowing that darn red nose of his; both the catcher and I were blinded, the ball went to the backstop and of course Dasher scored with ease with the go ahead run.

The Elves immediately protested, which they always seem to do. Anyway, I could not find anything in the rule book to help me out with this one. Can any of you expert umpires find a rule to help me out. We will continue the game the day after Christmas, so I need an answer this week.

Several knowledgeable umpires subsequently met and the following is a snapshot of their thoughts:

Umpire #1 (Peter Cottontail):

Having lots of experience umpiring games between little people, i.e.. elves, menehunes, trolls, fairies etc. and the magical animals such as reindeer, unicorns and talking horses, I'm very familiar with the FSA rule book (Fantasy Softball Association). There is a specific ruling concerning Rudolph's nose. In Rule 13 Section 7 it states that glowing noses can only be used during foggy nights and only on games played on Christmas Eve. If the batter's nose glows any other time the batter is called out. Since the game in question was not played on Christmas Eve, the batter (Rudolph) should be out.

Umpire #2 (Bugs Bunny):

As usual, the players do something weird to put the umpires on the spot. As I see it, we have two possible outcomes from this play. Santa is sitting in the stands watching the game, but he has had too many egg nogs to be really paying close attention to what is happening. When the ball went to the backstop, the run may legally score, but Santa forgot to yell "On Donner and Blitzen", so they thought the game was over and did not advance to the next base and left the field to join in the wild celebration at the North Pole. The elves, knowing the rules for once, appealed that the runners did not advance to the next base that they were forced to, so they were called out and the run does not score. Of course the game degenerated into a snowball fight and the outcome was never settled.

Our second option would be to declare Rudolph out for interference and eject him from the game. This action would probably be a bad idea just before Christmas because Rudolph would likely be so upset that he would quit the

Reindeer team and Santa would be left without someone to guide his sleigh.

Umpire #3 (Donald Duck):

I would return Dasher to third and declare a "No Pitch". It seems the pitcher and the runner both ignored the RED LIGHT!!

Umpire #4 (Sinbad the Sailor):

I think that as soon as Rudolph turns up the candle power on that sleigh-guiding halogen, he's out for interference. If there's nothing in Santa's sleigh for the Blue, then he's gone and we're not letting him play in any more Reindeer games.

Umpire #5 (Frosty the Snowman):

As the umpire you must rule on the following, which is a judgment call and not subject to protest: Did Rudolph interfere? If you judge that he did, then Rudolph is out, go to the next inning with the score still tied at one. If Rudolph did not interfere, it does not matter if the pitch was a ball or a strike if it got away from the catcher. If ball four and everyone moves to and touches the next base, BALL GAME! Reindeer win. If strike three and everyone moves to and touches the next base without being tagged or forced out, BALL GAME! Reindeer win.

Umpire #6 (Bart Simpson):

It seems to me that the obvious call would be intentional interference by the batter. Rudolph should be out on interference making it out number three and ending the inning.

Umpire #7 (Anon):

Just make it up as you go (according to many players, umpires usually do anyway) use Rule 10, Section 1.

"The plate umpire shall have the authority to make decisions on any situations not specifically covered in the rules."

Just remember that there are a lot of softballers waiting for presents from Santa. I suggest the run scores and you are out of trouble, any other scenario and you are in more than snow up to you knees.

How do you think you would rule if confronted with something as 'out-of-this-world' as this! No wonder we see some strange calls by umpires from time to time!