

Blue's News On-Line

Official Australian Softball Umpire's Magazine

Contributions to mtoft@ozemail.com.au

January Edition 1/2005

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- NSW Umpiring Awards

Congratulations to the successful Level 5 candidates

Congratulation to Helen Strauss from Queensland and Jason Carter from Western Australia/Victorian who attained their Level Five at the National Under 19 Women's Championships in Melbourne.

Congratulations to Brett Atkinson from Canberra and Danny Wikitoo from Western Australia who attained their Level Five at the National Under 16 Girls Championships in Sydney.

National Under 19 Women's Grand Final Crew: Ian Frame, Garry Pittman, Graeme Webster.

National Under 16 Girls Grand Final Crew: Ron Trow, Di Waller, Sue Itzstein.

BNOL will have a full breakdown of the remaining Nationals in the February Edition.

If there is any spectator/umpire/parent who has any photographs from any of the Nationals held in January please send them to The Editor mtoft@ozemail.com.au



South Australia Softball Association are proud of their three Olympic umpires and took the opportunity to get a group photograph during the 2005 Open Women's Nationals in Adelaide earlier this month.

L to R: Neville Lawrance (Athens 2004), John McAuliffe (Sydney 2000), Alan McAuliffe (Atlanta 1996).

BNOL would like to thank Rob Farmer who generously supplied a copy of the photograph.

To view more photographs from the 2005 Open Women's Championships go to website www.robfarmer.com.au

Send in your contributions

Next edition of BNOL will be published at the end of February. You can send your items now. Pictures and articles from Nationals would be good now.

Deadline: February 15, 2005

BNOL ACTION PLAN FOR 2005

At the National Umpiring Conference in Melbourne recently the Editor of Blue's News On-line submitted an Action Plan to improve the content of BNOL and the contribution from all States to appear in each edition.

Set out below is the Action Plan and those responsible for the dispersion of information to the Editor.

Most of the responsibility for required action is the State Directors or their Communications Officers. In item five the Editor will organise one of the crew members to write a article on the more humorous times had at the Championship. Anyone who takes photographs can send these to mtoft@ozemail.com.au in jpeg format.

1. Recognition information to be sent to the editor as soon as it becomes available. **(Deadline 15th of each month)**
2. Higher Level accreditation to be sent to editor as soon as it becomes available. **(Deadline 15th of each month)**
3. Special events information. Prior to and post event articles to be sent to editor. **(Pre event - One month prior. Post event - Deadline 15th of month following event)**
4. To expand the coverage of BNOL via email.
5. To have each National Championship covered with articles and photographs. **(Deadline 15th of the month following Championship)**
6. To Obtain more general contributions from District Associations. **(As soon as they become available)**
7. That the editor get a copy of each State's Newsletter in Word Format. **(Day of publication)**
8. To gain more outside contributions from other sports and International/ National/State bodies. **(Deadline 15th of each month)**

As discussed at the National Umpire's Conference Blue's News On-Line will be the main source, in conjunction with the Website, of information, news and events for umpires within Australia.

It's up to the State Directors and their committees to assist so that we have fresh and interesting articles and photographs published on a monthly basis.

Mark Toft (Editor BNOL)

NSW Annual Umpire Awards

Congratulations to Bruce McCahon who was named the recipient of the "Andrew Rindfleish / NSW Umpire of the Year" Award at the 2005 NSW State Teams Dinner held at Bankstown Sports Club.

National Director Andrew Rindfleish presented the award to Bruce in front of 300 people who attended the dinner.

Other Awards Winners

Andrew Rindfleish Umpire of the Year – Bruce McCahon
Directors Award for Services to Umpiring – Dinga Bell
Individual Award for the Development of Umpires – Howard Watt
Encouragement Award - Wendy Boyd
Affiliate Award - North Shore



National Director Andrew Rindfleish presents Bruce McCahon with the Andrew Rindfleish NSW Umpire of the Year Award.

Happiness

Happiness cannot be traveled to, owned, earned, won, or consumed. Happiness is the spiritual experience of living every minute with love, grace and gratitude.

Umpiring Tip

(Reference www.calgarysoftballumpires)

Observing Warm-up Pitches - A mechanic that surprisingly few fast-pitch softball umpires use while some baseball associations make the practice mandatory involves observing warm-up pitches. When the starting pitcher begins her warm-ups in the top of the first inning, set up behind the catcher with your regular plate stance, watch the ball and call the pitch silently to yourself. Always wear your mask. Be assured you will learn something about the pitcher, her control and ball movement. You'll also familiarize yourself with the catcher and how she works. You'll see firsthand how the catcher throws to second base after the pitcher's last warm-up. Most catchers will appreciate your efforts and managers and coaches will see that you are there to give them your best effort. Follow the same procedure for the opposing pitcher in the bottom of the first inning. Some softball umpires are sensitive about adopting baseball techniques for softball umpiring. However, don't let that prevent you from improving your umpiring.

Mentoring

(A pocket Guide to practical coaching and learning for Softball Umpiring)

Why do you umpire? It may be to achieve success in umpiring, the need to belong to a group, gain friends, maintain your involvement in softball, enhance personal fitness or purely in the pursuit of gaining new knowledge and skills. It may even be to earn some extra money.

Whatever your reason, you must accept that your primary role is to manage games, on behalf of your association, and to apply the rules of the game so that no one team gains an unfair advantage over any other team. In order to carry out this role you need knowledge and skills that can be gained through a simple training process known as mentoring.

Mentoring is a two-way process between two people. It requires one person who is willing to learn and another person who has some knowledge and skills to pass on - and a desire to teach.

As far as softball officiating goes, you can easily spend your career filling both these roles as you work towards your personal goals. You may spend a lot of time learning and maintaining your skills as you work with fellow umpires in your quest for continuous personal improvement. It does not matter how long you have been umpiring, you will always find someone who has been doing it for a longer or shorter time than you. Therefore you will always have the opportunity to learn or to pass on your expertise from, or to, another person. As both a learner and mentor you must always remember constructive criticism will be given honestly and accurately about your performance as an umpire - not as an individual. You are a respected and valuable member of the team.

A mentor must have knowledge of the sport and a basic understanding of officials' coaching techniques to plan, organise, communicate, observe, analyse, evaluate and assist improving performance. The outcome of the process may be a set of **SMART** self-improvement goals that are **S**pecific, **M**easurable, **A**chievable, **R**ecorded and reviewed, and **T**ime bound.

Your Mentor can help you to:

- See your strengths and weaknesses;
- Clarify your goals;
- Identify options and directions;
- Assist you to decide actions necessary to achieve your goals;
- Assist in overcoming barriers to progress; and
- Access skills and knowledge you require.

As a Mentor you should:

- Be willing to assist another person's growth and development;
- Have good communication and feedback skills;
- Have current skills, technical competence and experience;
- Be trustworthy and maintain confidentiality;
- Be empathetic and prepared to share experiences;
- Have effective listening skills;
- Have knowledge of organisation and culture;
- Be flexible and open to new ideas;
- Maintain a network of contacts;
- Be accessible and commit the time required for a mentoring relationship;
- Enjoy giving encouragement and support on a one-on-one basis;
- The ability to handle conflict;
- Status/credibility/personal power/charisma;
- Be prepared to act as a role model;
- Have a sense of humour;
- Be enthusiastic.

Before the Game

Preparation for a game should include discussion of short-term goals to be achieved during a game. It must be clear to all members of the umpiring crew which aspect of knowledge and skills each member will be working towards improving. If no specific goal has been set or discussed there may be a request to observe and identify problems, which can then be discussed during or after the game.

During the Game

Your primary focus should be on managing the game, for the benefit of the game and the players. Pre-defined mentoring tasks should be attempted when possible, as the game allows. Take time between innings, as required, to meet and discuss issues - but remember that between innings elements of the game (warm-up pitches, substitutions, etc.) must take priority.

If things are not going too well (bad positioning, blown calls, etc.) do not dwell on the negative aspects. Discuss what should have happened and agree to either correct the problem now or, if a complex issue, mutually decide to defer working on that issue until after the game.

When things are going well it can be easy to forget the pre-defined tasks as you settle in and enjoy the game. Talk about why you are enjoying the game so much as you discuss aspects of your game - positive attitudes can have an affect on the whole umpiring crew which in turn can add value to the game for everybody.

During some games it may not be possible to work on, or discuss, any of the

planned mentoring tasks. When this happens you must be prepared to take advantage of what did happen during the game and use this experience as a basis for debriefing discussions after the game.

After the Game

You may only have a few minutes after the game, before getting ready for the next game, in which to carry out a debriefing. This time is very valuable and not to be wasted. The trainee should first be given the opportunity to discuss the game. The mentor must listen carefully and be ready to ask questions, correct errors, suggest alternative methods, provide rule interpretations and finish with a summary of the positive aspects (positioning, calls, decisions, timing, etc.) of the trainees' game. If a short term goal was set for this game it is important to discuss it to ensure that goal was observed and achieved to the satisfaction of both trainee and mentor. Keeping a diary to record each game, and the issues discussed during the debriefing, is recommended. Trainees should set at least one short-term goal for their next game, which should be recorded in the diary.

Long-term Goals

The information you receive from your mentor will assist you to plan your long-term goals. Such goals may be set for completion in a month or over a number of years (examples may include aiming for a specific level or future event). Try to set goals which are realistic and achievable, because overestimating one's own abilities is common and often a source of personal disappointment.

Understanding this Guide

Organisations and individuals intending to use this guide must understand the mentoring process and the terminology used. A training session conducted by an experienced umpire should be attended before taking part in any mentoring program. This guide is intended as a quick-reference reminder of that training.

SEEK PRIDE IN EXCELLENCE AND BE THE BEST YOU CAN BE

Elements of this guide are based on the NOP Officials Coach Training Program and may be used freely for not-for-profit Officials Training within Australia.

Martin Turnbull - Softball Umpires Association ACT Australia. August 16, 2002 (Version 1)

Umpiring Tip

(Reference www.calgarysoftballumpires.com)

Brushing home plate - When you brush home plate, turn your back completely to the pitcher. Call time to avoid a play developing while your cleaning the plate. If necessary, do a quick sweep between batters and after a foul ball or other delay. Also, remember that the bottom of your shoe is not a brush. If there is enough dirt on the plate to merit a cleaning, do it with your brush.

ADELAIDE 2005

A is for Alan, Mac and John were there to score,
B is for Broomhall, wine taster and a little more.

C is for Calling, We did a bit of that,
D is for Deb, Strike she said when it was fat.

E is for Entertaining, In 22 the party room,
F is for Fun, We had a lot to break the gloom.

G is for Gear, We made sure it was clean,
H is for Houison, A candidate, he was especially keen.

I is for Itzy, In the crowd she did pose,
J is for Julie, The true English Rose.

K is for Kevin, He fussed around a lot,
L is for Laughter, Rae made us lose the plot.

M is for Margo, She was in charge of the crew,
N is for Nifty, He couldn't function without his brew.

O is for Officiating, Deckerd in our new clothes.
P is for Protest, Yeah, we had one of those.

Q is for Quick, Witted you have to be,
R is for Richo, He's faster than most you'll see.

S is for Swing, We checked a few of them,
T is for Tofty, The call at first, not really a gem.

U is for Umpires, From the west Baker made three,
V is for Veal, Schnitzel, too much to eat for me.

W is for Waller, The shortest by far,
X marks the spot, Where the ball hit Toula's car.

Y is for Yellow, Ribbon, they said I couldn't say more,
Z is for Zero, Some of the teams they did score.

The Crew

Margo Koskelainen
Neville Lawrance
Peter Baker
Julie Richardson
Peter Richardson
Kevin Tannebring
Ron Houison
Kevin Broomhall
Mark Toft
Debbie Keogh
Diane Waller
Rae Robinson

Grand Final Crew

Plate: Debbie Keogh
First: Di Waller
Third: Neville Lawrance

Grandfather passes on legacy by John E. Chambers

NORTH TOPEKA --- David W. Freeman, 62, gave up more than 23 years as a softball umpire last summer while recuperating from surgery, but he isn't through yet. Freeman, of Northern Shawnee County, is passing on his knowledge of the sport to his two granddaughters, whether or not he wants - or is able - to return to the game himself.

A diabetic, Freeman underwent surgery on June 2, 2004 for removal of more than half of his left lung after a malignant tumor was found there. He is now on chemotherapy. Now in his 24th year of umpiring, his decision on whether to return to the sport will depend upon how he feels. He still is registered as an umpire, and he is still a member of the State Board of the Kansas Amateur Softball Association.

He began coaching the elder granddaughter, Kristen Hall, 18, the finer points of umpiring softball two years ago. Kristen played both fast pitch softball and volleyball. She quit playing softball herself but still loved the sport and found that umpiring was a good way keep herself immersed in it without actually playing the game.

Last year, Kristen's sister, Kelsey Hall, now 15, joined the "club" with her granddad and sister. The two girls are the daughters of Wayne and Deborah Hall, and both attended Shawnee Heights High School. Kristen now is a student at Southwest Missouri State University at Springfield. She umpired 15 games last season - all fast pitch. Kelsey began umpiring in June 2004. She attended a one-day state umpiring clinic in March at the Holiday Inn Holidome in Topeka. The clinic taught concepts as well as rules of the game.

If 15 seems young to be an umpire, there is no minimum age limit, and a lot of softball umpires are in that age range. Umpiring is a matter of knowledge of the game, its rules and a common sense grasp of human nature. Freeman said a lot of confrontations can be avoided by defusing potential conflicts.

Kristen began playing softball as an 8-year-old, and her experience as a player helped her to learn the umpire's craft. She actually began umpiring with her grandfather, who helped her to learn the signals that umpires pass between them. She also learned to overcome the butterflies that inflict even experienced umpires.

"If an umpire goes out without butterflies in his stomach, he is no good as an ump," Freeman said. "I still get butterflies."

Kristen graduated from Shawnee Heights High School this past spring. She was among 23 girls playing in the KVA All-Star Game on July 27 at Silver Lake. Kelsey shrugged off any concern about pressures on an umpire. When her grandfather asked her whether or not she would like to learn umpiring, she replied, "Yes, I would like to try."



Blue Convention 2005

The 2005 Blue Convention will be held March 24—March 27 and is open to everyone.

Contact Information

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Email dthibodeau@softball.ca
Address 704-2197 Riverside Drive, Ottawa, Ontario K2H 7X3 Canada



What has Debbie done to her pants?

It seems to be the interest of the day as we await the official photographer to take the official photograph with the official camera at the official National Open Women's Championships in Adelaide.



I believe we have a strike here! Mark Toft at the plate in Adelaide Open Women's 2005

ARAFURA GAMES - DARWIN

Less than 115 days to go to the Arafura Games 2005!!

Participants in the Arafura Games 2005 are now able to enter accreditation details online

If you are intending to be an:

- athlete
- delegate for the International Sport Conference
- media representative
- or an official

If you would like to visit the Official Website go to www.arafuragames.nt.gov.au and follow the links to the online accreditation site. Paper entries will also be accepted, the accreditation form can also be downloaded from www.arafuragames.nt.gov.au.

Entries close 8 April 2005.

Arafura Games 2005
GPO Box 1448, Darwin NT 0801

Ph: +61 8 8982 2305
Fax: +61 8 8982 2353

Email: arafuragames@nt.gov.au

Improving Concentration

(From: Psychology of Officiating)

Concentration is defined as the ability to focus attention on proper cues in the environment and maintain that focus. As in learning to cope with pressure, you must practice your attentional control to systematically develop your concentration skills.

Paradoxically, trying to concentrate is not necessarily the approach either. Concentration is usually best achieved when you don't try to force it to happen. But, although the act of concentrating is passive, it can only be achieved through active preparation on your part.

In preparing to concentrate. You must learn how to:

- Cope effectively with pressure and anxiety;
- Selectively attend to relevant cues while ignoring irrelevant ones;
- Rapidly refocus attention on your immediate task if distracted; and
- Properly employ the rules, mechanics, and positioning to officiate your sport.

Testing Your Ability to Concentrate

You can become more aware of your concentration skills by completing the Self Help Test. This test will give you a rough idea of how well you concentrate and whether this is an area you need to improve in to become a better official.

Self-Help Test Concentration Skills

The following questions refer to your ability to concentrate while officiating. There are no right or wrong answers. Just choose the box that best describes you for each statement.

Umpiring Tip

(Reference www.calgarysoftballumpires.com)

Recovery Time - When you work the plate, you likely appreciate catchers who catch or block the ball, thus preventing potential injury. You can return the favour by giving the catcher some recovery time if he's shaken up. You don't have to draw attention to the situation; there are a couple of subtle acts you can perform to give the catcher some recovery time. Dust the plate (whether it needs it or not) or walk a few slow steps toward the mound to give the pitcher a fresh ball. Once back in your position, ask the catcher if he's OK. You'll be surprised how many catchers will thank you for the gesture.

Concentration Question	Almost never	Rarely	Sometimes	Frequently	Almost Always
1. If I blow a call, I have difficulty putting it out of my mind.					
2. When I officiate, I am good at quickly analyzing what's happening in the game.					
3. It is easy for me to keep irrelevant thoughts from entering my mind.					
4. I am good at blocking out the noise of spectators and focusing on the action.					
5. While officiating, I get confused when many things happen quickly.					
6. When I officiate, I find myself distracted by my own thoughts.					
7. I am good at analyzing what I need to focus on during the event.					
8. When officiating, I focus on the moment and don't think about what has happened or might happen.					
9. I can maintain my concentration, even during hassles with coaches and players.					
10. I am good at analyzing what I need to do before starting an officiating assignment.					
11. When officiating, I can focus on my assignment and forget all my other problems.					
12. When officiating, I can keep my concentration, even when I get anxious.					
13. When officiating, I can keep my concentration, even when my fellow official is doing a poor job.					
14. When Officiating, I have no trouble staying focused on the action during the entire event.					
15. After a break in the action, I have trouble regaining my concentration.					

After completion you can work out your score with the answers. (Listed on Page 8)

Send in your contributions

Next edition of BNOL will be published at the end of February. You can start send your items now.

Deadline: February 15, 2005

Exercise #1: Learning how to shift attention

You may practice this exercise in its entirety or break it down into separate exercises. Before starting the exercises, sit or lie down in a comfortable position and take a few deep breaths from the diaphragm.

Begin the technique when you are relaxed and comfortable.

1. Pay attention to what you hear. Take each separate sound and label it, such as voices, footsteps, or the radio. Next, listen to all the sounds around you without attempting to label or classify them. Simply listen to the blend of sounds as if you were listening to music and dismiss all other things.
2. Now become aware of your bodily sensations, such as the feeling of the chair or bed supporting your body. Mentally label each sensation as you notice it. Before moving on to another sensation, let each sensation linger for a moment while you examine it closely, considering its quality and source. Finally, attempt to experience all of these sensations simultaneously without trying to label any of them. This will require a broad internal focus.
3. Turn your attention to your own thoughts and emotions. Let each emotion or thought just arise; do not try to specifically think about anything. Remain relaxed and at ease, no matter what you are thinking and feeling. Now try to experience each of your feelings and thoughts one at a time. Finally, see if you can just let go of all these thoughts and emotions and relax.
4. Open your eyes and pick some object across the room and directly in front of you. While looking straight ahead, see as much of the room and the objects in the room as your peripheral vision will allow. Simultaneously observe the entire room and all the things in it. Now try to narrow your focus of attention to just the object centered in front of you. You should continue to narrow your focus until that is the only object in view. Now expand your focus little by little, widening your perspective until you can eventually see everything in the room. Think of your external focus as a zoom lens; practice zooming in and out, narrowing or broadening your attentional focus according to your preference.

This exercise helps you to experience different attentional styles by shifting your focus across the internal-external and broad-narrow dimensions. This procedure also demonstrates why different types of attention are required to effectively perform the various skills associated with officiating.

(Download from ESF Website)

We will continue with more exercises next month

Calling All WA Umpires – State Championships 2005

That time of year is fast approaching!

When the country affiliates and various metro teams compete over the March long weekend (5th – 7th March 2005).

The competition will be run at Mirrabooka and Yokine.

If you would like to umpire at this event, please contact Western Australian State Director Warren Duff via any means listed below:

Phone: 041 793 8468
Email warrenduff@tpg.com.au,
Fax 6389 1447
Post U3 / 96 Beatty Avenue
East Victoria Park WA 6101

PRICELESS

Marty wakes up at home with a huge hangover. He forces himself to open his eyes, and the first thing he sees is a couple of aspirins and a glass of water on the side table.

He sits down and sees his clothing in front of him, all clean and pressed. Marty looks around the room and sees that it is in perfect order, spotless, clean. So is the rest of the house. He takes the aspirins and notices a note on the table.

"Honey, breakfast is on the stove, I left early to go shopping. LoveYou!" So he goes to the kitchen and sure enough there is a hot breakfast and the morning newspaper. His son is also at the table, eating. Marty asks, "Son, what happened last night?"

His son says, "Well, you came home around 3.00am, drunk and delirious. Broke some furniture, puked in the hallway, and gave yourself a black eye when you stumbled into the door."

Confused, Marty asks, "So, why is everything in order and so clean, and breakfast is on the table waiting for me?"

His son replies, "Oh, that! Mum dragged you to the bedroom, and when she tried to take your clothes off, you said, "Lady leave me alone! I'm married!"

Self-induced hangover -- \$100.00

Broken furniture -- \$2,000.00

Breakfast -- \$10.00

Saying The Right Thing While Drunk -- PRICELESS

Memo

From: Softball Australia Umpire in Chief (Andrew Rindfleish)

Subject: Easton Synergy Bats

Easton Bats are distributed in Australia by Addlon Trading Company. More recently the Easton Synergy Composite bats sold in Australia have been marked in an inscription referencing the local distributor. This inscription, shown in the photograph below, reads

DISTRIBUTED BY
ADDLON T C
AUSTRALIA



I have received advice from Easton in the USA that this marking is applied by the manufacturer, that the “engraving is done to the clear coat finish and in no way compromises the bats’ integrity”.

On this advice, from the manufacturer, these bats will be considered as legal bats for use in Australia.

Andrew Rindfleish

Andrew Rindfleish
Softball Australia
Umpire in Chief

6 January 2005

Rating Chart

Total Score	Rating of Concentration
75 - 70	Zoned In
69 - 60	Need some target practice
59 - 50	Must find the target
49 - 40	In the twilight zone
39 and Below	Zoned out

The highest possible score is 75 and the lowest is 15. The closer you are to 75 the **better** your concentration skills.

If you scored less than 60, you **need to work** on your concentration skills.

Even if you scored pretty high, there may still be some specific areas you need to develop.

Now that you have a sense of your level of concentration skills, you are ready to begin exercises to improve this skill.

See the variety of on-site and at-home strategies, techniques, and exercises to further develop your concentration skills. Choose the ones that work best for you.

Good luck!

.....From Page 6 - Testing your ability to concentrate

Answers—Note read carefully

1. Almost never - 5, Rarely - 4, Sometimes - 3, Frequently - 2, Almost always - 1.
2. Almost never - 1, Rarely - 2, Sometimes - 3, Frequently - 4, Almost always - 5
3. Almost never - 1, Rarely - 2, Sometimes - 3, Frequently - 4, Almost always - 5
4. Almost never - 1, Rarely - 2, Sometimes - 3, Frequently - 4, Almost always - 5
5. Almost never - 5, Rarely - 4, Sometimes - 3, Frequently - 2, Almost always - 1
6. Almost never - 5, Rarely - 4, Sometimes - 3, Frequently - 2, Almost always - 1
7. Almost never - 1, Rarely - 2, Sometimes - 3, Frequently - 4, Almost always - 5
8. Almost never - 1, Rarely - 2, Sometimes - 3, Frequently - 4, Almost always - 5
9. Almost never - 1, Rarely - 2, Sometimes - 3, Frequently - 4, Almost always - 5
10. Almost never - 1, Rarely - 2, Sometimes - 3, Frequently - 4, Almost always - 5
11. Almost never - 1, Rarely - 2, Sometimes - 3, Frequently - 4, Almost always - 5
12. Almost never - 1, Rarely - 2, Sometimes - 3, Frequently - 4, Almost always - 5
13. Almost never - 1, Rarely - 2, Sometimes - 3, Frequently - 4, Almost always - 5
14. Almost never - 1, Rarely - 2, Sometimes - 3, Frequently - 4, Almost always - 5
15. Almost never - 5, Rarely - 4, Sometimes - 3, Frequently - 2, Almost always - 1