

Blue's News On-Line

Official Australian Softball Umpire's Magazine

Contributions to mtoft@ozemail.com.au

January Edition 1/2007

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NOTE:

- **Under 19 Women**
- **Under 16 Girls**

Reports will be in the next edition

What a Good Idea

By Mark Toft

As you can read on this page there has been an indicative from the National Umpiring Committee which I find very valuable in regards to recognising Australian Umpires who have obtained Level 6 or its equivalent in years previous.

The caps are a great idea as it brings umpire recognition in line with player recognition. I know from a personal view point to be recognized at National Championships this year was a buzz to say the least.

Those involved with the cap idea should be congratulated as it was a great thrill. Probably the biggest thrill was to be recognised on the same day as umpires from the past.

In Canberra the lowest number presented was to Dan McKay and I felt a real sense of achievement to be recognised with Dan as well as the members of the crew which worked all week.

Again, a Great Idea. Thanks.

Send in your contributions

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

Deadline: February 28, 2007

Softball Australia Recognises Umpires' Contribution

By Andrew Rindfleish

Softball Australia continues to introduce initiatives to recognise the contribution, at the highest level, of its members. Some time ago, Softball Australia introduced the presentation of player numbers, hats and certificates to players, both female and male, who have represented Australia, at the open level.

Umpires who have gained Level 6 accreditation, or the previous, equivalent, All Australian Badge, will also now be similarly recognised. These umpire will receive a certificate and a hat, both carry their "number". The All Australian Badge was first introduced in 1954, with Esther Deason being awarded Number 1. To date there have been 145 Australian umpires.

The first presentation of numbers, hats and certificates occurred at the 2007 combined 60th Anniversary Open Nationals in Sydney. Similar presentations have been held at each of the 2007 Nationals Championships. The umpires, who have been presented, to date, are

At the 2007 Opens – Ken Culpitt (ACT) – 68; Andrew Rindfleish (NSW) – 82; Patricia Sibraa (nee Bichel) – 87; Darrell Shephard (NSW) – 96; Debbie Grove (Vic) – 100; Damien McCauley (SA) – 113; Debbie Keogh (Vic) – 122; Leigh Evans (Vic) 123; Dianne Waller (Vic) – 125; Bruce McCahon (NSW) – 126; Kevin Broomhall (Vic) – 128; Scott Rindfleish (NSW) – 133; Graham Boyle (NSW) – 134; Warren Duff (WA) – 138; Darren Sibraa (Qld) 139.

At the Under 16 Girls in Brisbane – Audrey McLaughlin (Qld) – 19; Neville Lawrance (SA) – 104; Sue Itzstein (NSW) – 124; Ian Frame (Qld) – 140; Ron Houison (NSW) – 141; Ron Trow (Qld) – 145.

At the Under 16 Boys in Adelaide – George James (Vic) 114; Greg Baker (NSW) – 127; Yvonne Kahler (Qld) – 136.

At the Under 19 Women in Perth – Peter Baker (WA) – 105; Julie Richardson (WA) – 117; Kevin Offer (Vic) – 143; Kevin Tannebring (SA) – 144.

At the Under 19 Men in Canberra – Dan McKay (ACT) – 54; Trevor Pascall (Qld) – 115; Mark Toft (Qld) – 130; Phillip Waller (Vic) – 135; Colin Davis (NSW) – 142.

Further presentations will be made around the country during the course of 2007.

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. Revised from 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.

2007 - UNDER 19 MEN'S NATIONAL CREW By Mark Toft

A is for Atkinson, they call him the yocal,
B is for BBQ; at times we were quite vocal.

C is for Canberra, the capital of the nation,
D is for Damien; he's from a very small location.

E is for Evans; he was the leader of the crew,
F is for Friends, this week we rekindled a few.

G is for Greg, the one they call Baker,
H is for Harrison, no, not the candlestick maker.

I is for Ice, the heat we tried to fix,
J is for Jason; our newest Level six.

K is for Kingston, that's where we stayed,
L is for Liaison; Nathan was the man we paid.

M is for Mates; with these guys you have no blues,
N is for Newcastle, that's where Col removes his shoes.

O is for Official; K C was as busy as a bee,
P is for Protest; we managed to have only three.

Q is for Quiet, not a noise was made,
R is for Roberts, the boy from Adelaide.

S is for Scotty, equipment he will sell,
T is for Tofty, Turnbull and Trevor as well.

U is for Umpire, a well balanced team of Blue,
V is for Vision, thankfully, we had some clue.

W is for Waller, the return of Mafia Phil,
X marks the spot, to sign to pay the bill.

Y is for youngest, that's Alex's claim to fame,
Z is for zero; again the Blue's didn't win a game.

Final allocations: (Five umpire system)

Damian McCauley, Mark Toft, Brett Atkinson, Trevor Pascall, Phil Waller.

Open National Championship – Sydney

By Jason Carter

Crew: Tricia Sibraa (UIC), Ken Culpitt (Examiner), Andrew Rindfleish (Examiner), Leigh Evans (Examiner), Debbie Grove, Neville Lawrance, Kevin Broomhall, Warren Duff, Sue Itzstein, George James, Bruce McCahon, Damien McCauley, Scott Rindfleish, Darrell Shephard, Darren Sibraa, Di Waller, Jason Carter (Candidate), Amanda Houison (Candidate), Greg Baker (p/t), Ron Houison (p/t), Heather Kennedy (p/t).

This tournament was BIG. I feel as though I've written a whole report by just typing in the crew! For the first time the Open Women and Open Men were competing at the same national tournament and I felt very lucky and honoured to be involved (especially as a candidate).

With a full time crew of 18 and three part time umpires, logistics were always going to be an issue. With help from Cathy Kerr's husband (a 4WD and trailer as well), and also cars from NSW umpires, we managed to get our gear to Blacktown Olympic Park where we quickly used up every available space in the umpires room. More on that later.

After a ground inspection, we all walked over to the athletics stadium (5 mins away) for the technical meeting. Don Porter, ISF President, addressed the room and congratulated Softball Australia on 60 years of Championships, followed by the usual welcomes and instructions from the tournament management team, including Tricia in her role as UIC.

After wandering back to the park, we all jumped in the cars and headed back to the accommodation at Parklea Holiday Park. There were 4 bungalow type units that slept up to 10 people. So basically one "parent" room with a queen bed and 2 "kiddy" rooms, each with 2 sets of bunk beds. In our unit, Darren and I shared a room, Damien and Darrell shared another and George got the queen bed. No one wants to see a grumpy George.

After a little bit of shopping (including refreshments, of course) we headed to Rooty Hill RSL club for the Diamond Days celebration dinner. I know I shouldn't, but the name Rooty Hill still makes me snigger. Must be the child in me.

The highlight of the night was Ken Culpitt's induction into the ISF Hall of Fame, presented by Don Porter. It was also good to catch up with Margo Koskelainen, Viv Triplett and Al McAuliffe, who I must admit seemed like he was trying to hide. Big Al trying to be inconspicuous? Riiiiight. A good night was had by all, some better than others, especially some lady who dropped an entire tray of drinks during Don Porter's speech. She was so embarrassed that she looked like she wanted to dissolve into the floor. What was worse, I think red wine splashed all over Ron Houison's jacket and shirt. He was trying to be gracious

about it but just below that I thought I saw his desire to reach out and choke the life out of the woman. Anyway, we headed back to the accommodation relatively early as it had been a long, hot day and a bigger day was in store. More on Ron later.

Travelling to and from the grounds was always an adventure. One member of the crew was geographically challenged and there were often reminders of "turn left at the cows!" (there were large metal cow sculptures at the turnoff to the accommodation at Parklea. Why cows? Who knows).

Typically, each day of the tournament, except for finals, was hot. On one day early in the tournament, Harvey Milson measured the temperature as 45 degrees. Couple that with a hot dry wind and conditions were very uncomfortable for umpires and players. A number of people asked me if Jasmine was going to visit, but she stayed in Melbourne. If you don't know who Jasmine is then I'm not going to tell you!

On one of my examination games, I was trailing a runner to first when Ron Houison (at 1st base) decided to take a rest on the ground. It seems the right fielder wanted to throw directly to F3, which would have taken a direct path through Ron's head. Ron's instincts took over and he executed a perfect commando role. He got 10 points for quick thinking but only a 7 for style.

A group of us went to dinner at the local pub one night. We all ordered our dinner when we noticed that George had disappeared. It was the night of his anniversary and we assumed he was ringing his wife. Half an hour later he comes back with a grin and said he'd won \$300 on the one cent pokies. Some guys get all the luck.

On Tuesday night, there was a special ceremony on diamond one prior to the 8pm game for Matt Gowty's induction into the Softball Australia Hall of Fame. All the tournament umpires provided a "guard of honour" for Matty as he collected his well earned award to the applause of the crowd. Afterward, all the umpires were invited to a function where all food and drinks were provided and everyone was able to reminisce – or just have a drink and watch the game. It was great to see John and Yvonne Larter there as well. (You should have been there Nev, Damo and Warren – the drinks were icy cold! Such a shame you were on the diamond). Thanks to Softball NSW for the terrific hospitality on the night.

On Friday, Kenny was in a grumpy mood. He was very frustrated at his inability to locate his umpiring pants amongst the chaos in the umpires' room. He looked high and low but they were nowhere to be found. Until someone looked on my clothes hook and found them. They'd been washed and put on my hook. Thanks for helping the candidate, everyone. It wasn't me Ken, I swear!

The remainder of my games were, luckily, uneventful and it was a great relief to find out on Saturday night that Amanda and I had both passed our assessment.

The crowd for most of the tournament was very good, but grand final day saw the stadium fill quickly and I don't think I've seen a tournament so well supported. The atmosphere was fantastic and it would have been a great experience to be on the diamond for the grand finals. Congratulations to Leigh, Andy, Bruce and Damian for getting the nod for the men's GF and Di, Debbie, Kevin and Warren for getting the women's.

The closing ceremony was fantastic. The winning teams were brought out onto the field on Harley Davidson bikes – what a sound! Amanda and I received our certificates and, as you can imagine, were very pleased with ourselves. Then each level 6 umpire received their Australian Cap and certificate. It was great to see the teams and crowd applauding the umpires receiving their caps.

Then the lights at the park went out and the fireworks began. Going for 20 minutes, the fireworks were a fitting close to a week long celebration of 60 years of National Championships.

When we got back to the change room after the ceremony, several people asked if Amanda and I were going to get a cap. Leigh very kindly provided two hats for us. See the photo – you'll see how generous Leigh was :-)

I think everyone who attended would agree that the organisers did a sensational job. Cathy Kerr, the groundsmen and all the volunteers did a wonderful job and the planning that had gone into the event was obvious.

Thanks to our liaison officers, Sandra and Jess, for keeping us fed and our stock of goodies full. Thanks also to the NSW umpires who used their vehicles to provide transport.

Finally, I'd like to thank the entire crew for making the tournament the success (in all ways!) that it was.

Finals allocations:

Women - Diane Waller, Debbie Grove, Kevin Broomhall, Warren Duff

Umpire Reaccreditations

The following National Umpire reaccreditations resulted from practical assessments conducted at Nationals in January 2007. Congratulations!

Level 6 - Jason Carter, Vic and Amanda Houison, NSW, at the Open Women
Level 5 - Nick Beashel, NSW, at the U19 Women, David Casey, Qld, at the U16 Girls, David Datsun, SA, at the U16 Boys, Stacey Evans, Vic, at the U16 Girls, Vicki Lansley, NSW, at the U19 Women, Greg Zucchetti, NSW, at the U16 Boys.

Men - Leigh Evans, Andrew Rindfleish, Bruce McCahon, Damien McCauley.

Successful Level 6 Candidates:

Jason Carter Victoria, Amanda Houison New South Wales

Classic comments from the tournament:

Umpire X on players after a call goes against them. "When they shake their heads together like that it's like a maraca band".

Overheard in the umpires room after the closing ceremony...

Umpire A: "What (Australian Cap) number are you?"

Umpire B: "68"

Umpire C: "(laughing) You're one number off!"

Blonde Umpire D: "What? 67 ??"

Park to accommodation trip 1:

Umpires in Minivan: "TURN LEFT AT THE COWS!!"

Park to accommodation trip 2:

Umpires in Minivan: "Weren't we meant to turn there?"

Park to accommodation trip 3:

Umpires in Minivan: "No, not THAT set of lights!"

On Neville Lawrance's appointment to mostly night games:

Umpire X: "We should call him Nocturnal Nev!"

Umpiring Tip

(Reference www.calgarysoftballumpires)

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.

2007 Under 16 Boys Nationals

By George James.

With the late withdrawal of Raelene Robinson from the crew, and having two candidates and also two skill share umpires, it was always going to be hard for John Mc to work the roster. But he came through it ok at the end.

The weather was going to play a big part in this tournament as the Weather Bureau had predicted rain for the last two days of the tournament. (The locals laughed, as it had not rained for 8 months)

Wednesday was 40+ and after the first two time slots that day we had a 5 hour break, and came back at 7pm to start again.

Then come Friday the heavens opened up and some games had rain delays (The locals were dumbfounded).

On the Saturday the first game had rain delays, but was able to finish.

The grand final was not so lucky and at the top of the 5th the game was called off with NSW leading. The result was that ACT was declared the winner, as they finished on top at the end of the round robin.

During this time we found out that one of the senior umpires was keeping a secrete, from us. It was Yvonne Kahler's birthday and to, surprise her there was a cake and good wishes waiting. (Proves that you can't keep secrets from umpires)

Both candidates Dave Datson and Greg Zucchetti passed and were relieved that the pressure was over.

Both skill shares Leanne Gearside and Jamie Harries did really well and are looking forward to returning as candidates next year

The rest of the crew had an enjoyable time, and some moved onto other tournaments or went home to veg out.



2007 Softball Australia Exam (May 28 2007)

The 2007 Softball Australia exam date is fast approaching. (May 28 2007) Wow how time flies when you're having fun. Time to hit the rule books, especially the case book, and get yourself involved in your local club or Association rule sessions.

There are two separate umpires rules exams in Australia, the Basic Exam and the Australian Exam, so we want to know how many Basic and Australian exams are required.

The Basic Exam is a simplified version of the Australian Exam, it contains rule book verbatim questions, every day issues on the diamond and it is presented in an easier format for the person who is an umpire, a first timer or just wants to brush up on their rule knowledge.

You do not have to be an umpire to sit this exam, in-fact players, coaches, administrators and anyone who has an interest may complete the exam. It is a very good place to start. So come test yourself.

Umpires wishing to become a level one can also sit this exam, "come on be a candidate today!", come and enjoy the testing but fun side of the game. The basic exam can in-fact be sat anytime on or after the 28th May 2007, talk with your Association or Umpires co-ordinator.

However, if you wish to present yourself for examination for levels 2 – 6 or are attending nationals you will need to sit the Australian Exam on the 28th May.

Your help is required to enable me to order and have printed sufficient copies of the exam for all states, so I would ask that you talk with your state Affiliates and advise them that you require a copy of the exam for 2007.

Affiliates need to notify their State Umpire in Chiefs and intern the National Umpiring Committee by the March 1.

Thank you for your help on this important part of our program. If you have any concerns please email me

Leigh Evans

leighevans@westnet.com.au



Successful Candidates—Under 16 Boys
Dave Datson (Right) and Greg Zucchetti (Left)



Preliminary Final Crew Under 19 Men's Nationals: From left Greg Baker, Dave Roberts, Scott Rindfleish, Col Davis and Mark Toft.



Andrew and Scott Rindfleish displaying their
Numbered caps in Sydney in January.

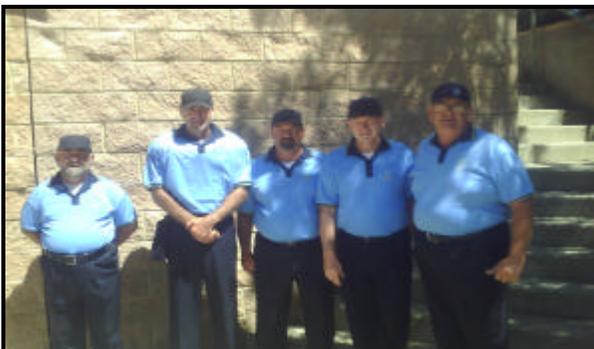


Level 6 Umpire Mark Toft receives his cap from
Ken Culpitt (Softball Australia Representative
and Leigh Evans (UIC) in Canberra recently.

NATIONAL PHOTO GALLERY 2007



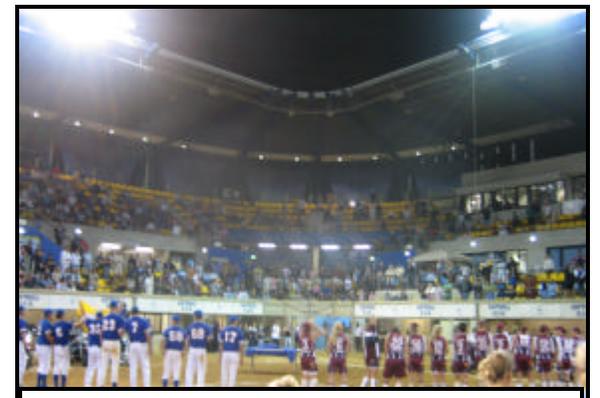
Successful Level 6 Candidates at the Open
Nationals Jason Carter and Amanda Houison.



Grand Final Crew Under 19 Men Nationals from
Left: Phil Waller, Damien McCauley, Brett Atkin-
son, Trevor Pascall and Mark Toft.



Darren and Tricia Sibraa in Sydney 2007



Open Men and Women National Championships
Closing Ceremony Sydney 2007

South Australia loses a favourite son - Brian Robinson

Brian has been battling cancer since it was discovered just over twelve months ago.

Brian was a long-standing member of the South Australian Softball Umpiring community attaining Level 4 accreditation and held the positions of Deputy Director of Umpiring and Training Officer during his years of active umpiring.

He also assisted in the production of umpiring rosters for the Adelaide Competition, State Open and Junior Championships.

His help and assistance with umpiring at numerous championships and events held at West Beach including Uni and Masters Games was invaluable.

Brian will be greatly missed by not only the umpiring community but also by all who knew him.

Neville Lawrance
South Australian Softball Association
Director of Umpiring

Maxine Bullion loses battle with Cancer

Queenland umpire Maxine Bullion passed away on Thursday, February 8.

Maxine, a Level 3 umpire from the Redland Association in Brisbane. Many umpires throughout Queensland had worked with Maxine at a local level and State level over a number of years.

Visiting Blues to Queensland for Masters Games would have come across Maxine at time to time.

A very enthusiastic umpire who will be sadly missed.



LET THE GAME BEGIN (NSW V VIC)

Under 19 Men's
National
Championships
Grand Final.

Miss Ann in Blues By Bev Allan

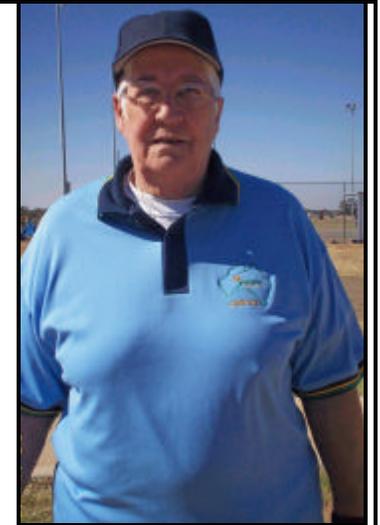
Ann Stone has been involved with Werribee Softball Association as an umpire for over 25 years.

Miss Ann as we all call her, has overcome a stroke and major heart surgery to continue on with her beloved umpiring.

Miss Ann also umpires for the local schools 3 times a week. She achieved a level 2 accreditation in umpiring last year.

She is now our Werribee umpiring co-ordinator and an Executive member and still loves to play in the Masters games.

Miss Ann in her hey day was a champion swimmer, diver and trampolinist. We believe that she deserves a mention in B.N.O.L.



Number 54: Canberra umpire Dan McKay accepts his cap in recognition at the closing ceremony of the Under 19 Men's Nationals in Canberra. Making the presentation to Dan was ASF Representative Ken Culpitt (Right) and Tournament UIC Leigh Evans. Congratulations Dan.

News from New South Wales By Kyira Cox

NSW Softball Umpires Association had their Annual General Meeting and Awards Dinner in December 2006. Congratulations to the following people that were award the annual awards

- Andrew Rindfleish Umpire of the Year – **Scott Rindfleish**
- Directors Award for Services to Umpiring – **Sue Itzstein**
- Individual Award for the development of Umpires – **Heather Kennedy**
- Encouragement Award - **Kyira Cox**
- Affiliate Award – **Orange**
- Junior Development Award - **Sandra Horne**
- Country Junior Development Award - **Jessie Smith**

At the Annual Softball NSW State Team Dinner Sue Itzstein was awarded Life Membership of the NSW Umpires Association for her many years of dedication towards the development of umpires, administration of the umpires association and years of time on and off the diamond. Congratulations very well deserved.

Congratulations to all the umpires that attended Nationals this year and congratulations extend to the successful candidates:

Amanda Houison – Level 6 at Open Men & Women in Sydney

Greg Zucchetti – Level 5 at U16 Men's in Adelaide

Nick Beashel and Vicki Lansley – Level 5 at U19 Women's in Perth

NSW Umpire's State Championship campaign for 2007 kicked off with a road trip to Tweed Heads for the Open Men's State Championship. With a late flight up to Tweed on Friday night most of us just wanted to get some sleep, with the gear in the bus we set off to find the hotel but we had to get out of the airport car park first. This posed a challenge for the driver and co pilot that didn't listen to instructions very well. A code was required to open the boom gate but they were looking for a ticket. After about 15mins (well it felt a lot longer then that), and a queue of people we found the code and were on our way. We find our hotel with no real worry and everyone got settled in.

Saturday morning wasn't the earliest of starts but was too early for some people that decided Pizza was a good idea at midnight but not so good the next morning. The games got off to a feisty start with State team mates going up against each other for there associations. The day was

long but all the umpires pulled

With Saturday's games over with we head out for some dinner and presented Jessie (sorry Jessica) Smith with his 2006 Country Junior Development Award that was announced at the Awards Dinner in December. Congratulations. After dinner a hunt for Ice Cream and Coffee was on. A few trips up the main street before we descended on "Cold Rock" were we ate ice cream a swapped various stories of resent and past adventures.

Congratulations to the following umpires who were appointed to the final:

Plate: Bruce McCahon, 1st Base: Sue Itzstein, 2nd Base: Scott Rindfleish, 3rd Base: Andrew Rindfleish, Left Field: Greg Baker & Right Field: Ross Harrison

At the presentation Jay Gibson & Jessie Smith were presented with their Level 3 Certificate which they achieved in July last year and Kyira Cox was awarded her Level 4 (State Badge) at the Championship.

The flight home was set to be an interesting one when Baker has to split his 4 bags weighing 47kg over two planes. We fare well our country umpires and we wait for our flight. With the flight instructions out of the way (which Itzy and I made sure that were covered) conversation and laughter begins.

During flight Bruce decides to pick up some rubbish off the floor but when this hand slips off the seat whilst trying to get up he falls causing the umpiring crew to laugh in hysterics and other passengers to complain. So finally home late Sunday night we all say our goodbyes and go our separate ways.

On Sunday the crew were surprised by a visit from Tricia and Darren Sibraa. It was great to see both of you hope you take care of Wendy Boyd who has moved up to QLD.

I personally would like to thank everyone for there help and support they gave me during my preparation and throughout my candidacy in Tweed Heads. Thank you for the memories.

Wendy from all the NSW Umpires we wish you all the best in QLD and hope to see you on the park again someday soon.