



BLUES NEWS ON-LINE

www.umpiring.softball.org.au

Edition January/February 2008

NATIONAL UIC's CALL **Andrew Rindfleish**



Any one believes that time is not racing by at an ever increasing manner, is certainly not involved in softball umpiring in Australia at this time. As this edition of BNOL goes to print, albeit a little later than expected, we have completed six national Championships; three National League 3 day weekends; played host to the Olympic teams from Japan, China and Canada at the NTC International Series in Sydney as well as the Pacific Series in Canberra in December. Gone are the days when we can nominate for one or two nationals, and think that's our commitment to our sport. With so many more demands, particularly in Olympic years, the support of all nationally accredited umpires is greatly appreciated. The fact we love what we do keeps us coming back and I sincerely thank those of you who love what it is we do.

January is the biggest month for umpire accreditations and it is pleasing to mention the following umpires who were successful at their respective practical assessments. Level 6 – Dave Roberts (SA) and Helen Strauss (Qld) at the Open Women in Sydney and Howard Watt (NSW) at the Under 19 Men in Brisbane; Level 5 – Mark Gallagher (ACT) and Leanne Gearside (NSW) at the Under 16 Boys; Richard Barrow (Vic) and Matt Blake (Qld) at the Under 19 Women; Peter Walsh (Qld) at the Under 16 Girls. On behalf of all umpires in Australia, my congratulations to each of you.

Since the last edition of BNOL, the ISF have announced that Darren Sibraa (Qld) and Scott Rindfleish (NSW) have been selected to officiate at the Under 19 Men's Worlds in Canada in June. Darren and Scott join Deb Grove and Di Waller, who are off to the Beijing Olympics, appointed to world class events making 2008 a great year for Australian softball umpiring on the international stage. I'm sure we all wish all four the very best as they prepare for their respective tours.

Leigh Evans, our National Rules Interpreter, has a small but keen group working on the development of an automatically generated theory exam. This, I'm sure we can all envisage, is not a simple task. I mention this to pay my respects to the work of one member of Leigh's team. Geoff Fox, a Level 3 umpire from Orange in NSW, has poured many hours into this task and I know Leigh is very appreciative of his efforts, as am I. Thank you very much Geoff. I am certainly waiting to see the day, which is fast approaching, when we'll have exam papers produced with the help of today's technology, based on the hard work of individuals like yourself.

After participating in two Nationals myself, talking with umpires and game participants from a number of others and witnessing many of the other quality games played in the last 6 months, I think it is timely to raise the issue of the need to continually update one's self. I'm not talking about rules knowledge or a formal assessment process, rather the need for us all to check point our own on and off diamond performance to ensure we do not rest on our laurels. We all have to be proactive, rather than reactive, in managing our own performance and development. Those of us who go to Nationals should prepare immediately before hand by doing as many games as we can, being conscious of our performance and any specific developmental needs. The first couple of days at a National Championship are NOT the place to do this. We also have to ensure we are up to date with all mechanics and game management initiatives, especially those which are to subject of recent technical bulletins.

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NEW SOUTH WALES

www.nswumpires.softball.net.au

National League 3 by Ron Houison

*"There was movement at the stadium as the word was passed around,
That the trophy for the competition was at large,
It was priceless in its value,
And all the best were gathered for the fray."*

With apologies to Banjo Patterson, this was the scene at Blacktown Olympic Park for the final round of the National League Women's competition. This competition was conducted over 3 rounds and included the Open Women's Championship in January. Under Tricia Sibraa's eagle eyes were a crew equal to any challenges that may be presented, including Di Waller (Vic), Darren Sibraa and Helen Strauss (Qld), Darrell Shephard, Scott Rindfleish, Amanda and Ron Houison, Nick Beashel and Vicki Lansley (NSW). Sue Itzstein was a late withdrawal under doctor's orders due to an injury that was suffered at Open Women; however Itzy was invaluable in providing feedback, encouragement and more than a few laughs during the three days of competition.



**The NSW Boys: Under 19 Men's Crew in Brisbane in January.
L to R: Col Davis, Howard Watt,
Graham Boyle, Scott Rindfleish.**

Game One and someone decided that things were a little too quiet for his liking. After all... 2 rounds of competition and no tie breakers or protests? Thank you Darrell "Tie breaker" Shephard for addressing these shortcomings in such quick fashion. On a serious note, the competition was very close, and tie breakers occurred on a number of games. In fact, the closer we got to Sunday the more intense the games became.

Itzy and Helen were watching a game on Diamond 1 and listening to the comments from a few guys... Their commentary on the performance of the plate umpire was quite enlightening. Apparently strikes were being called and the peanut gallery's reaction was, "It was a foot off the plate!!!" That the pitch was inside and the batter made no move to get out of the way, let alone limp to 1st base after being hit was lost on the commentators... But not to Itzy and Helen! Helen was later heard to comment that she was glad Itzy made a few comments in return as her reaction would have included some very colourful expletives.

It should be noted that Sydney's weather managed to co-operate for the whole weekend. Only two weeks before the NSW Open Men's Championship was rained out after two games on the Sunday. Yet for this weekend the sun shone down and not a drop of rain was sighted. A bit of water may have been appreciated as we endured some hot temperatures on both Friday and Saturday.



A Saturday night dinner turned out to be a good idea for Itzy. It was reported that she made a killing on the pokies and walked away a very happy camper. As usual, her timing was spot on!

Congratulations to our Final crew (pictured, L-R): Nick Beashel (2nd Base), Di Waller (Plate), Darren Sibraa (1st Base), and Darrell Shephard (3rd Base).

Many thanks to Tricia and Itzy for a great weekend.

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Matt receives his Level 5

Matt Blake from the Redlands Association in Brisbane received his Level 5 accreditation at the Under 19 Women's National Championships in Hobart recently.

The Redlands umpiring coordinator is one of the young brigade who is advancing through the National Umpiring Program with a great deal of success.

Matt is a big believer of the mentoring system as he has learnt a great deal from his mentor, Darren Sibraa and is a mentor himself for a few Brisbane umpires.

Matt's understanding of the game can be attributed to his knowledge as a State player for Queensland and is himself a very astute representative coach.

It is hoped that Matt will be able to be a role model for young Queensland umpires who themselves advance through the program.



Queensland Umpires set for Busy Month

Queensland umpires will be gearing up for four main championships over the next month. Many umpires will be officiating, examining and acting as Tournament Chief Umpires at these championships.

- Secondary School Girls – Gold Coast - March 27- March 31
- Under 14 Boys – Wynnum – April 4 – 6
- Under 14 Girls – Hervey Bay – April 4 - 6
- Sothern Cross Challenge – Brisbane – April 25 - 27



Umpires receive Aussie caps

Derrin Clark (pictured foreground) and Michael Palmer were on hand to receive their Australian Caps at the Under 19 Women's National Tournament in Hobart this year.

Both are gentlemen of the sport were very pleased with the recognition in the forms of the numbered caps.

As part of her Tournament Chief Umpiring duties Deputy National Director, Debbie Grove was on hand to present two of our sports finest umpires their Green and Gold caps.

Congratulations to Michael and Derrin on their recognition and for their contribution to the National Umpiring Program over many years of service.

Tasmanian B Grade State Championships

January 26 – 28 saw, for the first time, the B Grade championships being held as a championship on their own (they have always been in conjunction with the Open Championships). Also for the first time they were held in Hobart. The grounds were in excellent condition considering earlier in the week the only way to get to the ground was by boat, due to the 30+mm of rain that fell in the one afternoon!

Once again we were short of umpires, which meant mostly 2 umpire rotations. Kelvin decided that the workload was going to be too much for him and had better do something about it. Halfway through the first game on Saturday he took ill and had to be replaced, and wasn't seen (on the diamond) for the rest of the weekend.

The workload obviously got to Craig as well, as he required a lie down during his 2nd game on Saturday. As he was moving into position at one to make a call, his feet went out from underneath him and ended up flat on his back. He ended up having to make his call while lying on the ground. Luckily only his pride was injured, which suffered a little bit more when he came into the change rooms after the game.

As always with this tournament the games were played with great spirit and were very enjoyable to umpire. We are now, all looking forward to the Open Championships in February.

Congratulations to the umpiring crew in the final:
L to R Bob Cluley, David Williams, Wayne Clarke



National Umpiring Program

Congratulations New Level 2 Umpires with Stacey Evans (UIC)

The Victorian Under 16 State Championships were held December 1 - 2. Twenty one umpires were in attendance at the tournament held at Waverley. Over the weekend three umpires were successful in obtaining their Level 2 accreditation. Congratulations go to Chris Trengrove from Waverley, Casey Fogarty from Dandenong and Mick Thorneycroft from Albury. **(Pictured right)**



The weekend ran very smoothly thanks to the valuable contributions of Deb Keogh (DUIC & examiner), Di Waller (TEO & examiner) and Rhonda Scammel (examiner). Thanks to the crew for a weekend of great softball.

Finals allocations:

A MEN - Plate: Ryan Thorneycroft **Base:** Richard Barrow, Stuart Tyler

A WOMEN - Plate: James Loveridge **Base:** Stan Tolmie, Dave Addlem

B WOMEN - Plate: Trevor Murphy **Base:** Aaron Wallace

Victorian State Open Championships By Diane Waller



The Open Champs were held in November at the Knox & Districts Association. We had two candidates striving for their Level 4. Congratulations go to Ryan Thorneycroft from Albury/Wodonga Association who passed.

The Grand Final Umpires were:

A Men – George James (plate) Phil Waller, Diane Waller, Deb Keogh

A Women – Stacey Evans (plate) Jason Carter, Richard Barrow

B Women – Stuart Tyler (plate) Jarna Cherry, Casey Fogarty

C Women – Graham Cherry (plate) James Loveridge, Tracey Reid.

Victoria would also like to congratulate Richard Barrow on achieving his Level 5 at the Under 19's Women's Nationals held in Hobart.



WHAT'S THE CALL BLUE?

Softball Rules discussed by the National Rules Interpreter - Leigh Evans

The 2008 Softball Australia rules exam date is fast approaching (May 26th 2008). 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.

Umpires wishing to become a level one can sit the basic exam. The basic exam can in fact be sat anytime on or after the 26th May 2008, so talk with your Association or Umpires co-ordinator. This exam can be used for Association umpires, up and coming level 1 umpires. It is also of benefit to players, coaches and administrators. Come on and test your knowledge.

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.

However, if you wish to present yourself for examination for levels 2 – 6, want to maintain your accreditation or are attending nationals you will need to sit the Australian Exam on the last Monday in May, this year it is the 26th of 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 2008.

Affiliates need to notify their State Umpire in Chief and, in turn, the National Umpiring Committee by the 1st of March.

Thank you for your help on this important part of our program.

If you have any concerns or questions please [email me](#).

Leigh Evans

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INTERNATIONAL APPOINTMENTS

Duff and Broomhall off to NZ

Warren Duff, from Western Australia, and Kevin Broomhall, from Victoria, will participate in the Tasman Umpire Exchange this year.

Warren and Kevin will both officiate at the NZ Men's Club National Championship in Hutt Valley from 25 to 29 March. This Championship will feature current and many past Black Sox players and also a number of Australian Steelers team members.

The tournament precedes the Oceania Qualifier for the 2009 World Championships, scheduled to be held in early April 2008.

The New Zealand umpire to participate in the reciprocal leg of the Tasman Exchange is Jeremy England. Jeremy, who hails from Wellington, will attend our Men's national Championship in Melbourne in March.



Sibraa and Rindfleish World Championship Selection

ISF have announced the umpire crew for the World U19 Junior Men's Championship. Darren Sibraa and Scott Rindfleish have been named in the 18 member crew.

Both Umpires achieved their ISF accreditation in 2006 and have been busy travelling with Australian teams over the past 12 months as well as officiating at international series' in Australia.

Scott is a recent member of National Staff in the Development Stream. He has been an integral part of the New South Wales umpiring development program for many years. The programs Scott has developed are acclaimed by many around the country. Scott is currently the National Umpiring Program's Web master.

Darren is currently the State Director of Umpiring in Queensland, a position he held for five years. His leadership in this role as well as training throughout Queensland has produced a number of good quality umpires at all levels.

Both umpires were delighted with their appointments. "The news absolutely made my day! Having watched my father umpire at this level for so long, this appointment is a dream come true. I am also thrilled to share this experience with colleagues from both Australia and New Zealand." Rindfleish said.

"It is fantastic to see the Australian program with two Australians appointed and to share the experience. I was elated to get the news!" Sibraa said.

Also named in the World championship crew were Glen Nalepa and Lance Brown from New Zealand.

The Championship will be conducted in Whitehorse Yukon Canada from 19 - 29 June.

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Sending Out The Right Signals by: Merle Butler

Every sport you officiate, play, or observe has signals.

American football referees are important and provide meaningful signals to convey why a flag was thrown. The referee is anxiously watched to see if there was holding, interference, a loss of down, illegal motion, illegal block, or some other violation that took place.

Soccer (football) officials are watched for signals for holding, pushing, tripping, illegal blocks, or, when a ball is kicked out-of-play, which team will be putting the ball in play.

Basketball officials inform players and spectators if a block, push, travel, an illegal screen, or another violation takes place. Yes, signals are important for all sports.

It should be noted that in softball, meaningful signals are provided not just for the catcher, the batter, the runner(s), or the defensive player making the play, but also for all teammates on the field or in the dugout, the coaches, and the spectators.

Umpire manuals state that signals are a very important aspect of umpiring. The adopted signals are to be dignified, informative, and meaningful. Poorly executed and unauthorized signals serve only to confuse. The manner in which a signal is given determines, at least to a degree, its acceptance by players, coaches and spectators.

Do you ever notice unnecessary signals at American football, soccer, or basketball games? No. Do you see them given in softball? Yes. Now the question is, WHY? I wish there was an answer. The proper signals are discussed and demonstrated in clinics, training classes, and schools or umpire seminars. Poor signals and unnecessary signals are downgraded. Yet they are still seen around the world, particularly by the plate umpire.

Fast pitch umpires do not have to indicate high, low, inside or outside pitches with hand motions. If some indication is necessary, a simple head movement towards the location of the pitch can be used. It certainly draws less attention.

Slow pitch umpires do not have to indicate where a pitch crossed the plate, hit the ground in front of the plate, hit the plate, or missed the strike zone. These are all unnecessary and a waste of the umpire's time.

If the ball is in the strike zone, ring it up. If it isn't, simply state, "ball." If anything else is needed, the plate umpire can tell the catcher and let him/her pass the information on to the pitcher, coaches, or other defensive players.

Another unnecessary signal is tapping both closed fists together to indicate a full count. How can a no-no count also be a three balls, two strikes count? Talk about unauthorized signals being confusing. Umpires should show three fingers on the left hand and two on the right. Then all players and spectators will know the count is three-two.

When requesting the count or the number of outs from their partner(s), umpires should simply step out and verbally request either, and then expect a verbal reply from their partner. When asking for help on a check swing, step out and point to your partner and verbally ask "Swing?" The partner should immediately reply back with a strike hammer signal and verbal "Yes" or a safe signal and verbal "No!" There is nothing secretive to these signals.

Possibly the only umpire-to-umpire signal still maintained without verbal comment is the "infield fly" signal which is asked by placing the right hand to the left chest. The partner will reply with a similar signal. This reminds both that the infield fly is in effect, if it occurs. When the "infield fly" situation is no longer in effect, rubbing the right palm down the left arm indicates there are no longer runners at first and second; first, second, and third, or that there are two outs.

Give meaning to your signals at all times. When "safe" or "out" calls are made, remember to sell them if they are close. This involves pointing at the play to show you have seen a tag, a miss, or a pulled foot. Then step towards the play and give a clear signal – either with arms straight out (safe) or an overhand signal (out). If the play is routine, keep the signal high and in view of all.

Making a clear and distinct signal will show confidence in yourself and help show all that you are in control of the game. Work on your signals in the off-season, or when a new year is beginning, work hard to improve if you have been offering unnecessary signals. Observe yourself in a mirror or have someone take a video of your game to show you how you look on the field. Have a great season!

*Merle Butler is the former ISF's Director of Umpires and a member of the ISF Hall of Fame.
(This article appeared in the Jan.-Apr. 2005 issue of World Softball magazine, Volume 33, Number 1.)*

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NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIPS

NOTE: Authors of all reports in this section have been withheld

Open Women's Report – Sydney

Crew: Andrew Rindfleish (UIC), Bruce McCahon, Diane Waller (Examiners), Dave Roberts & Helen Strauss (Candidates), Deb Keogh, Debbie Grove, Greg Baker, Sue Itzstein, Warren Duff.

Most of us that flew in to Sydney arrived on time, Warren had a slight mix up with his flight details and had to hang around the Qantas Club in Perth for five hours, the only problem was that the bar was not open. Before I left home I was keeping an eye on the weather forecast for Sydney and showers were forecasted for the next five days. When we arrived in Sydney it was raining, but no games were interrupted at all.

By the time we picked everybody up from the Airport and got back to the accommodation, we had time to put our bags in and then head off for our Harbour Cruise. All the teams we lined up ready to go and trying to keep out of the rain. The cruise went for 4 hours, we were feed and then some announcements were made and also they were trying to get players to sing. Troy Baverstock was brave enough to let us hear his talent (lucky he can coach), but it was all in good fun.

The Technical meeting was held at 8.30am prior to the commencement of the Championship. The games went along with not much fuss. Most of the games we used the 3man system, but during the tournament we managed to get in some 4man systems, which were helpful for Debbie and myself.

Because some games in this tournament were part of the National League games we had a few varying rules. Speed up catcher rule – this had to be a bench player and the coach had to make the change before the next pitch to the next batter. Intentional Walk was only one per game.

On one of the 4man games, Itzy was the rabbit at 2nd. The ball was drilled at Itzy and hit her on the inside of her foot (refer to photo). Needless to say Itzy was out of action for the rest of the week. I think Dave went out in sympathy with Itzy as he put himself on the ice as well. (Dave's was just preventative maintenance).



The crew all got on well and it was good that the washing machine was in the guy's house. This meant that they had to do all the washing. One night we had a big sing-a-long to Roy Orbison's "Black and White night". The only one that didn't know the words was Warren, he is so young.

Congratulations must go Dave and Helen for their efforts for the week. They both achieved their Level 6.

The Grand Final was played between NSW and Qld, with NSW winning. The crew on the final was Diane Waller (Plate) Debbie Grove, Deb Keogh and Warren Duff. The closing ceremony is always a treat at Blacktown with the roar of the motorcycles and the fireworks.

Under 19 Women's Report - Tasmania

It appeared that the tournament could have got off to a shaky start, with Itzy getting injured at Open Women's, however, our TCU proved to be super-organised, knowing that Itzy only had one game a day for the first few days at 19's, and switches to plates or bases could be easily made. Debbie continued to prove to be most organised throughout the tournament, albeit a little gullible later in the week.

With our arrival in Hobart, we are greeted with weather the locals call "pleasant", and the mainlanders call "winter-like". On-diamond jackets certainly got a workout through the week, with the weather gradually getting warmer as we got closer to leaving!

Our first day saw the Melbourne Tourism Commission's song of "Run Rabbit Run" changed to "Run Ronnie Run", as it appears the girls brought some bats to the tournament with the express purpose of using them. Debbie decided it would be a good idea to put all the girls on a crew together, and the players commented that it was really good to see that ... however, THAT allocation wasn't to be repeated, thanks to the girls turning it into an 8-innings, 2 hour + game! And, speaking of Melbourne, Hobart channelled their weather patterns of 4 seasons in one day, as it was possible to get burnt whilst watching the rain approach over Mt Wellington ... when you could see Mt Wellington. And who comes to Hobart without an on-diamond jacket??? Well ... Ron, and Darren, and Nick!

Our first *Guess Who* segment ... which crew member ordered a dish called "Fireballs" at Amigo's Mexican Restaurant, and after eating 3 or 4 mouthfuls, decided to tip water on the meal to "cool" the heat factor???

A new concept in umpiring was invented on Day 2, named "pre-emptive umpiring". A NSW batter decided to try the old "let's go to first on Ball 3" trick, and Ron, not wanting to be seen as "off the ball", hastily rotates to second, unaware that the BR has been called back. Upon reaching his starting position, Ron realises he has been caught short, especially when he hears Itzy laughing from the clubhouse balcony! To save Ron's bacon, the NSW batter kindly hit the ball to shallow CF, and Ron was able to simply turn and give the out. Hence, "pre-emptive umpiring"!

Our next *Guess Who* ... it's important to go to a game with either a hanky or tissues in case of an emergency, but one crew member takes it to the next level, with only light blue and dark blue hankies. The suggestion has been made that maybe they could be colour-coded in the future for plates and bases!

Nothing exciting really happened again until Day 4, when the record for longest game and most amount of runs was comprehensively broken ... Congratulations to Ron, Steve, and unfortunately, me, on 7 innings, 2 hours and 25 minutes, with 28 runs being scored! WA defeated ACT 17-11. A special mention to Steve, and his fitness ... you'd think there's plenty of prep time to get ready for the 5pm plate when you've got a base at 1.30pm! Great job, buddy!

That night saw the inaugural round of the "National Umpires' Poker Challenge." Texas Hold 'em at its best, \$5 entry, winner takes all. Congratulations to our winner, Darren "I don't have a poker face" Sibraa.

The end of the week brings us to our last *Guess Who* segment ... the SA girls proved to be a clutch of kleptomaniacs, regularly stealing this crew member's brush during the pre-game equipment checks. However, this umpire's brush was ably lifted by our illustrious leader prior to the umpire's umpteenth SA game. Many a poker face was used as this umpire was convinced by both the 9.30am crews that the SA girls had snuck up and lifted said brush. The brush was returned at the pre-game meeting, with the plot thickening even further!

I did mention at the start of the report that Debbie proved to be a little gullible at the end of the week – well, it comes to the final day, and Debbie asks me if she can borrow my joggers, as she only has thongs, and has been asked to throw the opening pitch for the final. I'll admit, we were all caught out by this one, and we thought it to be a great recognition for Debbie. So, Debbie has my joggers, albeit much too big, and about 10 minutes later, she returns, looking most upset, and threatening to throw my joggers at members of the Softball Tasmania executive! Turns out a bit of a prank was played (without any umpire intervention!), and the opening pitch was thrown by a member of the Special Olympics Australian team.



Congratulations to Matt Blake and Richard Barrow on their success as two of our new Level 5s, and thanks to Debbie, Darren and Itzy for a great championship. A big thank you to everyone at Softball Tasmania, especially Di Palmer and Wayne and Kelvin Clarke for all their assistance over the week – nothing was too much trouble!

Under 16 Girls Report – South Australia

As the saying goes – Out of the frying pan into the fire- that is exactly what Kevin Tannebring (fondly known as KT) and I did! We both accepted to umpire back to back championships this year.

After very warm days in Canberra at U16 boys, we were both looking forward to some cooler weather in Adelaide. It was a very early start to the day on Sunday. Getting up at 4.30am, finish packing and getting ready for a flight out of Canberra then connection in Melbourne to Adelaide was a little of a trial for me but I managed to be ready and waiting for our lift to the airport by 5.30am.

On arrival in Adelaide at 10am, Kevin and I were met by our liaison officer, Haydyn Wood. He is a great guy who, along with his lovely wife, Karen, did a great job looking after the whole crew all week. We certainly appreciated all the food and special treats they prepared for us. Thank you!!

After collecting our bags, I was wondering if I was in for another week of jokes when Haydyn asked me if I had my plate gear as I had a game at 12 noon. I must have looked dumbfounded but there was my name on the allocation sheet along with KT on base – Neville is a hard task master! Well, no rest for the wicked as they say! It was straight to the grounds, dump the bags, check in with Neville, a quick hello to fellow umpires, down a drink to try and re-hydrate and have a quick look around before getting ready and check there was nothing different to the week before.

After the game, I grabbed some lunch and sat down to watch some games – time to relax a bit before changing again for the Opening Ceremony! That's when all the short jokes come to the front! Where are all the other vertically challenged umpires when you need them!

Last game was 6pm then discussion on where we were going for tea! I didn't care as long as it was soon! The final vote was Fasta Pasta – delicious food in a relaxed atmosphere. After tea, I think Graham Webster was trailing for the Jack Brabham School of drivers – Graham, isn't it illegal to do a u-turn at that speed!

Back at the accommodation, Julie, Raelene and I were sharing a unit. There was washing to be done before showers and bed. It is amazing how many tunes you can get out of a control board of a

washing machine before it finally does what you want! What happened to the old push the dial in and turn models! I must be getting too old for technology.

With the washing started, Julie decided she would be first to shower. Too bad we didn't read the instructions on the washing liquid on how much to put in the load. Julie was standing in the bathroom when she felt something crawling across her foot. When she finally built up enough courage to look, she was relieved that it was only the soap suds rising out of the drain hole in the floor. We all had a little laugh about this and decided it would be best to put a towel down so that no one would slip. Afterwards, it looked like the towel was alive as the suds rose and made a little pulsating mound on the floor!

Monday's weather was certainly cooler than Canberra – around 27. Comfortable weather to umpire for all. Tea tonight was at Villis. This is a 24hr café next to their bakery with laminated tables but good food and cakes. There was a little mix up in the orders – we ended up with an extra meal but you know some umpires, they have bottomless stomachs so it did not go to waste!

Now, it must be said the UIC never does anything wrong but who's car was locked with the keys inside???

Was it Neville driving his car or did he give the keys to Steve?

Back to the accommodation again to play with the washing machine tunes! Julie and I had it down to a fine art with a 23 minute wash. Too bad for KT who told us later that he had to wait 2-1/2hrs for his to finish the night before!

Tuesday, teams began to show some dominance with 5 from 7 games being completed under the run-ahead rule. Haydyn and Karen invited everyone to their home for a barbeque tea after the games. This was a great night and everyone enjoyed the relaxed time together.

Wednesday's games were a lot closer. Four of the seven games played were won by only 1 run. We were all asking – Who will have the first tie-breaker? Not on this day! Even the last game of the day was a nail-biter. Northern Territory played South Australia on diamond 1. Until the top of the sixth innings Northern Territory had a lead of 4-2. South Australia came back to score 2 runs so that going into the seventh innings, it was a tied game. On the plate, I was thinking that it was going to be a slab for the umpires especially when it got to the bottom of the seventh with two out. South Australia stole from 2nd to 3rd base and a wild throw by the catcher saw the winning run score! Certainly a crowd pleaser for everyone especially for the home team supporters.

Tea was down to Central Markets for most of us that night. Raelene and I decided on take-away at a Chinese restaurant and Julie chose a dish from a noodle house. When we got back home, we were all amazed by the number of dried chillies in Julie's tea. In the end, she put them aside in a container. We decided we would have a bit of fun and have a guessing competition – pay \$1 to guess and the closest to the count would win the pot as well as the chillies. I think Julie was astounded by the number in the container as she counted twice just to make sure!

Thursday, we had some fun with everyone guessing the number. The prize of \$12 went to Greg Zucchetti with an exact guess – 80! I think if Julie had eaten all these, she would have been seeing either the inside of Adelaide Hospital or spending time in the bathroom!

KT checked with Neville if we could continue some fun we had in Canberra so Tofty's charades were again on the agenda for the next day's allocations! Thursday night, we all got together in Neville's room for a display of fun and laughter.

KT went to the trouble of getting props as well.

National Umpiring Program

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The charades started with:

A tray of coffee and the cups	(where's my coffee – Neville Lawrance)
A very constipated chicken laying down the law	(Raelene Robinson)
An English flag and a somewhat wilted white rose	(Julie Richardson)
Twisting a top off a beer bottle	(Alex Turnbull– yes, it has still stuck!)
A sleeping person listening to his i-pod with an open book on his lap (Graham Webster – always falling asleep)	
A bike pump with a piece of metal	(pumping iron in the gym – Greg Zucchetti),
A clump of hay and a small stump of wood	(Haydyn Wood)
A stretcher run	(Brett Atkinson – had a knee injury)
A sheep shearer	(Steve Wallace-Yarrow – hobby farmer)
A moustache that needed a hair brush	(Ian Goodman)
A pair of pants needing to be invited down	(Ian Frame – wore his base pants for a plate!)
Praying to Mecca	(Peter Walsh)
A short ass	(yes, the vertically challenged person again- me)

As for KT, I can't remember but I'm sure we had something for him too!

Friday and Saturday I spent some time getting some interesting facts about our umpires. If anyone remembers Felix Unger and Oscar Madison from the Odd Couple then they can relate Ian Goodman and Brett Atkinson to these two individuals! Ian is very much like Felix when it comes to being tidy! Julie and I took Alex to do some shopping during a break and he has decided on a 5 year plan. Unfortunately, it is not about his umpiring career. After chatting to some Queensland players, he has decided they were too young. He plans to put them on lay-by for 5 years then he should be fine! Good luck Alex! I have also been told he takes his laptop into the bathroom when having a shower – to listen to the music so he says!

As we had a bit of time in the day before the final, the guys needed to expend some energy. It is amazing that some black tape and 5 plastic plates can make a very cheap Frisbee! Kept them going for about an hour!

Saturday night's final dinner had Julie's shoes end up in a pot plant and a certain umpire working hard on his 5 year plan.

Sunday morning everyone either had planes to catch or finally go back to home in Adelaide. After our good-byes, Graham took Greg and I to the airport and we were wondering if Raelene thought Julie was going back to England seeing she took the Export Departure turn off!

Thanks everyone for a great time both on and off the diamond! Catch you next time!

Under 19 Men's Report - Redlands

Rain, rain, go away come again another day.....This is what the Queensland Softball officials were praying for as they prepared for this year's Under 19 Men's National championships in Redlands. With rain coming down daily for a fortnight before the event it was incredible how the grounds were in great condition for tournament play. The Redland grounds are a top class facility. During the week we only had one game disrupted by rain. This game was completed the very next day to keep us on track.



The umpiring crew for the championships was led by Tricia Sibraa (UIC), Scott Rindfleish and Yvonne Kahler (Examiners). Other crew members were Neville Lawrence, Mark Toft, Phil Waller (**Pictured left, in the Final**), Jason Carter, Col Davis, Graham Boyle and Howard Watt (Level 6 Candidate). It was necessary to bring in Darren Sibraa, Trevor Pascall and Ron Yardley to officiate on some games during the week. All in all a great bunch of Australian umpires.

It was hard to find an umpire who did not have battle scars from the week of intense competition. Bruising, stitch marks from foul balls were displayed by most of the crew, but all in a day's work as a fast pitch umpire.

A typical day for the week saw Howard, Graham and Col up with the sparrows for their daily walk into Cleveland for coffee and site seeing and back for a swim and spa at the pool. Tofty and Phil also early risers did a lot of uniform preparation which gave their room mates Neville and Ron the hint to get out of bed. Now we had Jason who woke at a decent time which left Scott (who is not a morning person to say the least). Invariably he was the last of the crew to rise each morning (some say the smartest of all).

Yvonne and Tricia made appearances mid morning as they were in Room 1 which was serviced first by the house maid. Down to the park to do what we came for (umpiring games) and then back to the accommodation to reflect on the day's performance. Some hit the pool first, of course. With the new feedback model in full swing it was refreshing the feedback that was received from the management crew members and others.

If you have been on the National circuit for a few years you have come across many liaison officers who do their very best to look after the crew for the week. Well we had a real pro in Brisbane. Ron Yardley was super and would be rated as the best umpire liaison officer on the National circuit. Nothing was too much trouble for the man behind the scenes of the umpiring crew. It was great that he got to take the diamond for a couple of games during the week.

The mantle of the worst snorer on the umpiring circuit has finally been taken off Tofty and this award has now been handed over to Ron Yardley. Phil Waller describes the unusual noise as "a poddy calf looking for its mother for milk".

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The organising and cooking of breakfast by the pool, barbeque dinner (by the pool of course), breakfast on Australia Day in Cleveland and the final day reception for our past umpiring greats were just some of the events Ron was responsible for during the week.

One of the highlights of the tournament came on the last day as many former umpires were in attendance for the closing ceremony to receive their Australian caps. Merv Lane who received cap number 27 was asked to throw the first pitch in the grand final, a truly special moment. Other umpires who attended included, Patricia Bumstead, Peter Orlicki, Cheryl Featherstone, Desleigh Armitage, Leon Leach, Adrian O'Connor, Karen Kuhn, Mark Jeppesen, Helen Wallis-Dunn and Helen's daughter, Shakira was in attendance to receive her father's Tony Dunn cap.

A slice of Queensland history saw three of four former State Directors in attendance along with current director Darren Sibraa. Patricia Bumstead, Peter Orlicki, Tricia Sibraa (nee Bichel) and Darren Sibraa have been responsible for the development of the umpiring program in Queensland for more than five decades.

Howard was a successful Level 6 candidate and his cap number will be 149, which again highlights the achievements of Merv Lane (27). The championship game was manned by Phil Waller, Jason Carter, Mark Toft and Scott Rindfleish a job well done.



Left: Preliminary Final crew: Col Davis, Yvonne Kahler, Scott Rindfleish, Graham Boyle.

Right: Grand Final crew: Mark Toft, Phil Waller, Scott Rindfleish, Jason Carter



Under 16 Boys Report – Canberra

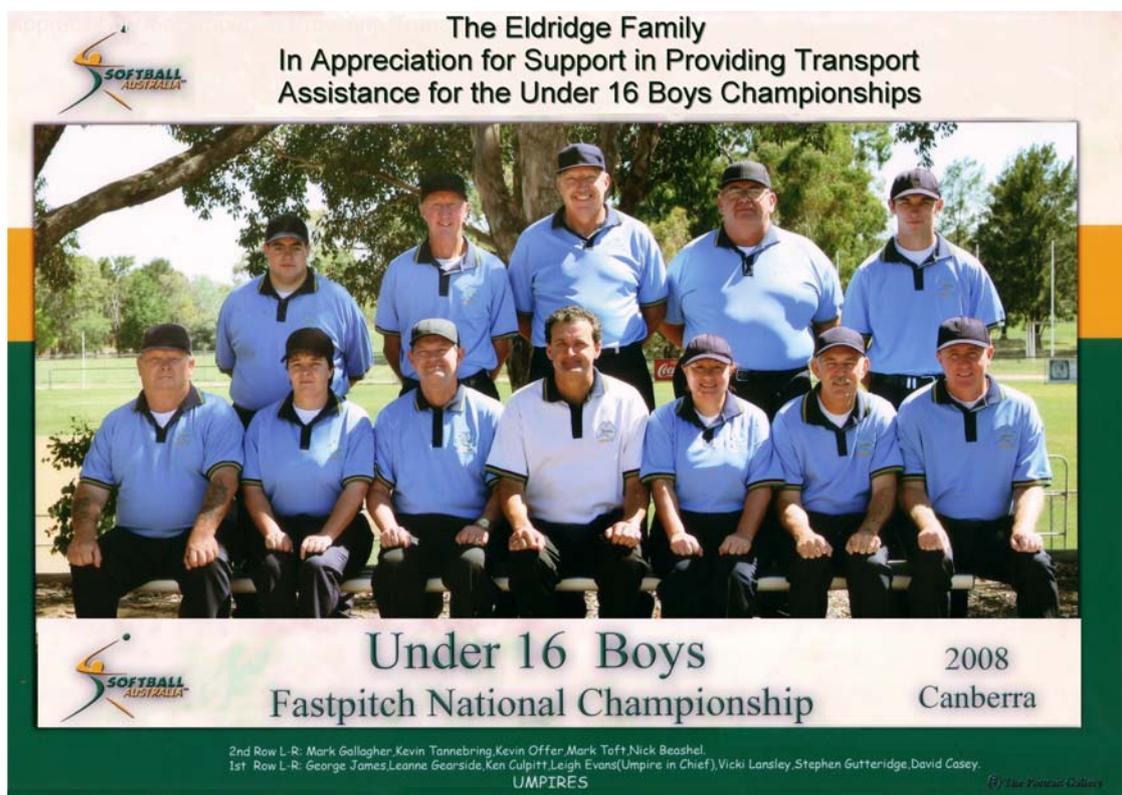
This report may never see the light of day as it has been lost in Cyber Space. By the way it was not Kevin Tannebring's fault, although he can be blamed for lots of things which are lost in Cyber Space.

Firstly, we the crew would like to recognise and thank the Eldridge family for the use of their bus for the week. It was very much appreciated by all members of the crew. It so happened that we had the Service Manager from Melton Toyota (Victoria) on the crew and he had identified a slight problem with the overheating of the bus.

A close inspection necessitated that the bus needed to go into the local Toyota agent for repairs to the radiator. This was done which brings us to the second appreciation certificate from the umpiring crew. We the umpiring crew wish to acknowledge the support of Canberra Toyota for the use of their courtesy vehicle while the Eldridge's bus was in for repair. It was very much appreciated by all crew members.

The other person we the crew would like to thank is the State Director of Umpiring, Brett Atkinson, who doubled as our liaison officer for the week. His work to look after us in the heat and the supply of and the preparation of tucker during our stay in Canberra was nothing short of brilliant.

When and if we do find the article written on this championship we will ensure everyone will share in its humour.



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