

BLUES NEWS ON LINE

Contributions to mtoft@ozemail.com.au

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Changing of the guard by Mark Toft

For the past decade and more Patricia Sibraa (nee Bichel) has held the position of State Director of Umpiring in Queensland, but that has all changed.

In a decision recently Tricia decided not to stand for re-appointment from the Softball Queensland Board and opened the door for someone to step into her shoes. Those shoes are rather big considering the work Tricia put into the position she has held since 1990. Of course the questions started flying, Who would take over? Who was qualified? Who wants the job? Do you want to do it?

Queensland Softball extended the nomination period and awaited nominations for a position that was taken for granted (excuse the casualty of the statement). "Well the position is only a figure-head and you don't do much!" (Of course those statements have come from those who have no idea about the Queensland and National Umpiring Program).

Level 5 and Level 6 umpires in Queensland have had the opportunity to send in an application for the position. But WHO would do the position justice and maintain the high standard set by the outgoing State Director. Everyone has had an opinion and of course there were a number of applications (I don't really know how many applicants there were).

What I do know is that many senior umpires in Queensland did not even think it necessary to consider the position as Tricia was there year in, year out. (maybe there needed to be thought of a replacement one day).

Tricia's contribution to the position of State Director has been beyond the call of duty and the State's umpiring program has grown under her guidance of 13 years. Tricia's reason to not run for re-appointment is hers and if she felt it was time I believe no-one can question that.

Many umpires in Queensland and of course around the country have been influenced by Tricia and I can speak extensively on this subject (but not now).

Tricia thanks for everything you have done over many years for umpiring, especially in Queensland. You are a true ambassador of the sport especially in the eyes of so many Blues.

Blue's Tracksuits



Order before it's too late: Tracksuits have been ordered and are in stock. If you wish to order get the order form from the website complete and send to Sue Itzstein, be quick if you don't want to wait as only a limited number have been ordered in the first run.

OUR ROLE: Officials have a key role to play in ensuring the spirit of the game/event is observed by all. And by so doing, officials are helping our young athletes develop through sport and making the game happen.

Making Rules Simpler

with Alan McAuliffe (Big Al)

Legal & Illegal Slides

Extracts of an Article in Referee Magazine by Jay Miner 1993

Hard-nosed play is common in men's Fastpitch, especially around second base, with plenty of "takeout" slides used when trying to protect the batter-runner in double play situations. Let's have a look at what is legal & illegal in the execution of these slides.

Slide or avoid

A runner who goes in standing up on a force play at second (or third or home), risks a severe collision and the chance of being seriously injured if hit by a throw. But don't tell players they "must slide", as there is no categorical rule support for such a statement. Regardless of your good intentions, runners do not have to slide; they may slide. They may also attempt to avoid contact, veer out of the way, give up, or retreat to a previous base.

Types of slides

Before making an interference call you must understand what slides are legal and what slides are illegal. The degree of contact between opponents does not determine whether the slide is legal. There are no rules prohibiting hard, legal slides, even though someone will complain nearly every time a runner upends a fielder with a good, clean, legal slide.

There are two acceptable forms of sliding; (1) The foot-first slide, where at least one leg and buttock must be on the ground; and (2) the head-first slide, with arms extended.

A runner whose slide technique is legal is still guilty of interference if his slide direction takes him away from the base, toward a fielder, and the runner is unable to touch the base in some manner. The rules allow a runner to slide beyond the base and contact a fielder with no penalty, if the slide technique is legal and if the runner is still able to touch the base.

Roll blocks, pop-up slides, and football-style cross-body blocks are illegal slides that could result in interference calls. The runner may not slash or kick at the fielder's legs, nor may the runner's leg be raised higher than the height of the fielder's shin (when the fielder is standing). If any of those acts make it more difficult for the fielder to make a play, call interference at once.

At times, a slide that starts legally finishes with the runner rolling toward the base or the fielder. Take a good look to see if there is any real interference. If the runner is going toward the base and the fielder has cleared the area, it is likely that nothing illegal occurred. If the runner's angle takes him more toward the fielder than the base, be ready to penalise the runner's actions.

A runner who becomes airborne and crashes the pivot-player before returning to the ground is guilty of an illegal slide and may be guilty of malicious or flagrantly unsportsmanlike conduct. Penalise that act, which is designed to injure the fielder.

Who's out? Most "takeout" slides are by retired runners. Rule 8 Section 9n indicates when a retired runner interferes with a fielder's opportunity to make a play on another runner, the ball is dead and the runner closest to home is out. Since a retired runner interfered, the second out is automatic. The interference does not have to be intentional.

If a runner is safe, but interferes with the fielder attempting a subsequent play, call interference and declare out the guilty runner. However, it would take some doing to find solid rule support for calling two outs in that case. If a runner who is not out interferes, he is declared out; but the Note for Rule 8 Sections 9k-m indicates the immediate succeeding runner is also out only if you judge the interference was an *obvious attempt to prevent a double play*.

Runner from first struck by throw

Consider a "routine" (second to first) double play. What happens when the runner from first is hit by the relay throw? By rule, if a retired runner is hit by a throw, the ball is dead and the runner closest to home is out.

A retired runner is obligated to get out of the way of the throw, as there is some concern that a retired runner might let a thrown ball hit him to prevent a double play. That's understandable, but it could lead to "open season" with fielders aiming throws at retired runners, then claiming interference.

The official interpretation of this type scenario is that there is no interference (a) if a retired runner is hit by a relay throw that is off-line with no chance of retiring another runner, or (b) if the retired runner could not avoid being hit by the relay throw.

Sliding runner from first struck by throw

Again, by rule and interpretation, if a retired runner is struck by a throw while sliding into a base, the ball is dead and the runner closest to home is out. Calling double-play interference is difficult. It becomes impossible without a thorough understanding of the rules, blended with common sense and a realistic approach to umpiring.

Many years ago I was advised that "Intentional interference is in the eye of the beholder. If you feel a runner interfered when he could have done otherwise, rule intentional interference."

After all, two outs are better than one!



Why? Why? Why?

One of the questions that I often ask umpires, both new and old, is "Why did you get into umpiring?"

Their answers are varied and include,

"Daughters/sons played and the team needed an umpire."

"I want to give back something to the sport."

"I just love the sport and thought that I could contribute something other than playing."

"My association did not have any umpires and I thought I could help."

These and all the other reasons given are commendable, but it is the answer to the next question I ask that requires a little more insight, especially in the current climate of that good old Australian pastime "umpire-bashing".

"Why do you keep umpiring?"

Some of the reasons for continuing may still be the same as when they started, and still part of the motivation to umpire, but usually the reasons the majority of umpires continue to umpire are different from those that got them involved in the first place.

The most common answer is, "Because of the people I've met and the friendships I have made."

When I got into umpiring my reasons included some of those mentioned but they were not what kept me involved. Far from it! After a while I discovered that my continuing involvement with umpiring was because of the people with whom I umpired and what I was learning - life skills as it turned out. Not that I knew it at the time.

Topics learned at umpire clinics or people management skills learned during games can, and do, apply to work or life related circumstances.

After game discussion about situations that occur during a game can be enlightening. How other umpires handled a particular game situation [well or badly], or should/would have under the same circumstances, is invaluable in learning both game and people management. Quite often, we will build the result of that experience into our game.

Importantly we are likely to use what we have learned "on the park" in our everyday lives — and become a better person along the way.

**"Because of the people
I've met and the friendships
I have made."**

As umpires we do not learn alone and because of shared experiences we unknowingly start new friendships. When you reflect on the people you know and count as friends, many are probably associated with you as an umpire.

In my case, the "lessons" I learned in those days I have used in my employment over the years and friendships started in the early 70's when I took up umpiring are still strong. Most do not umpire now but each time we manage to catch up we share some great memories and stories, both happy and sad. They all, unknowingly no doubt, helped to make me the person I am today.

So, for whatever reason you took up umpiring and for whatever reason you continue, umpiring, as your chosen path within Softball, will give you invaluable life experiences and, as a bonus, friendships that will last a lifetime too.

Margo.

Know your drinking partners

A man and his pet giraffe walk into a bar and start having a few quiet drinks. As the night goes on, they get pretty drunk. The giraffe finally passes out near the pool tables and the man decides to go home.

As the man is leaving, he's approached by the barman who says, "Hey, you're not gonna leave that lyn' here, are ya?"

"Hmph," says the man, "that's not a lion, it's a giraffe."



Eye on the Ball: Queensland Umpire, Ron Trow set to make the call on a Queensland batter at the Under 23 Championships this year.

New Levels in Queensland

Level 1— Jessie Janson, Stephanie Harris, Brendan Riddell, Laura Ballantyne (Brisbane), Stacey Love, Nita Fleming, Monique Fleming, Peter Bostock, Evan Kaddatz, Kyle Kaddatz, Rebecca Roberts, Kerry Rowe (Bundaberg), Ken McIntyre, Amie McIntyre, Courtney Burns, Brendan Burnett, Greg Bulow, Ron Ward (Ipswich), Craig Clark, Scott McIntyre (Redcliffe)

Level 2—Tony Whitchurch (Cairns), Neville Love (Bundaberg), Malcolm Daniels (Central Highlands).

Queensland State Championships

Men's Open & Men's Qld Cup - Caboolture - 5, 6, 7 September
 U16 Girls - Hervey Bay - 3, 4, 5 October
 U16 Boys - Rockhampton - 3, 4, 5 October
 U19 Women - Brisbane - 20, 21, 22 September
 U19 Men - South Brisbane- 20, 21, 22 September
 Open & Women's Qld Cup - Toowoomba - 17, 18, 19, October

Mt Isa gets a JUMP start

Having received Office of Sport and Recreation Queensland funding, the Queensland Umpiring Committee has commenced the delivery of its Junior Umpiring Program, otherwise known as JUMP. The launch of the training program was a pilot clinic conducted at Mt Isa in March, by the State's training officer, Darren Sibraa. He recently returned to Mt Isa, to present the follow-up clinic.

Mt Isa, along with Cairns, Mackay and Rockhampton were selected as District Associations to be involved in the program, which integrates a PowerPoint presentation with on-diamond practical sessions. Mt Isa Umpiring Coordinator, Brian Macpherson, and his crew of enthusiastic umpires have really taken to the program and are showing enormous potential.

Future clinic dates are proposed for:

Mackay – August 8-10
 Rockhampton – August 15-17
 Cairns – October 10-12
 Mackay – October 24-26

QUEENSLAND

Future examiners tested

Queensland SDU, Patricia Sibraa, conducted an Examiner's Clinic on the weekend of July 4-6. The 23 participants gathered at Downey Park on Friday evening to be educated on the complexities of the examination process. For many of the umpires it was an eye-opening experience to appreciate the amount of "paperwork" involved.

Participants were assigned a mentor and divided into groups during Saturday and Sunday, to observe local fixture games and "assess candidates". The clinic concluded with a group debrief and discussion on communication techniques.

Blonde in Pain

A blonde told her doctor that she was really worried because every part of her body hurt.
 The doctor looked concerned and said, "Show me where."
 The blonde touched her own arm and screamed, "Ouch!"
 Then she touched her leg and screamed, "Ouch!"
 She touched her nose and cried, "Ouch!"
 She looked at her doctor and said, "See? It hurts everywhere!"
 The doctor laughed and said, "Don't worry; it's not serious. You've just got a broken index finger."

We can always learn a little more about life.....

The philosophy professor stood before his class and had some items in front of him. When the class began, wordlessly he picked up a very large and empty mayonnaise jar and proceeded to fill it with rocks about 2 inches in diameter. He then asked the students if the jar was full? They agreed it was.

So the professor then picked up a box of pebbles and poured them into the jar. He shook the jar lightly. The pebbles, of course rolled into the areas between the rocks. He then asked the students again if the jar was full. They agreed it was.

The Professor picked up a jar of sand and poured it into the jar. Of course the sand filled up everything else. He then asked once more if the jar was full. The students replied with a unanimous - yes.

The professor then produced two cans of beer from under the table and proceeded to pour their entire contents into the jar - effectively filling the empty space between the sand. The students laughed.

"Now said the professor, as the laughter subsided," I want you to realise that this jar represents life.

The rocks are the important things - your family, your partner, your health, your children - things that if everything else was lost and only they remained, your life would still be full.

The pebbles are the other things that matter like your job, your house, your car. The sand is everything else. The small stuff."

"If you put the sand into the jar first," he continued, "there is no room for the pebbles or the rocks. The same goes for life. You spend all your time and energy on the small stuff, you never have room for the things that are important to you. Pay attention to the things that are critical to your happiness.

Play with your children. Take time to get medical checkups. Take your partner dancing. There will always be time to go to work, clean the house, give a dinner party and fix the disposal."

"Take care of the rocks first - the things that really matter. Set your priorities. The rest is just sand." One of the students raised her hand and enquired what the beer represented? The professor smiled. "

I'm glad you asked. It just goes to show you that no matter how full your life may seem, there is always room for a couple of beers."

THE BUSIEST REGION IN OZ (OF COURSE)

The 2002/2003 season in the National Capital wound up on a high note for ACT umpires who achieved their goals to attain higher accreditation levels in the National Umpiring Program. The successful candidates this year were:

Mike McCartney (Level 3)
Brendon Le Lievre (Level 4)
Nathan Levy (Level 2)
Mark Gallagher (Level 2)
Giles Thompson (Level 2)
Alex Turnbull (Level 4)
Martin Turnbull (Level 5)

AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

The end of season also saw the presentation, by SDU Denise Culpitt, of the ACT Umpire Of The Year Award to John Maxwell. John has served as an umpire in the ACT for many years and, after a grueling final year of doing the weekly allocations, has decided to retire from Umpiring (it was the knees, not the stress of managing allocations that triggered this decision). We thank John for his efforts and wish him well for the future.

Although the local season has ended, many ACT umpires traveled to Melbourne at Easter to officiate at the annual Dandenong (boys) and Waverley (girls) junior tournaments.

These events, along with the Adelaide (October long weekend) and Canberra (Australia Day weekend) are important not only for junior player development but also for umpire development where the small group of ACT umpires have the opportunity to work and learn with so many other umpires from NSW, Vic, SA and Tasmania.

Our next opportunity to take to the diamond will be when Softball Canberra hosts the NSWSA Waratah League on the July 26, 27.

Not having a winter league in the ACT makes a few of us a bit edgy after a couple of months off so we are looking forward to dusting off our gear - and our winter woolies for the 9.00am games because it will still be frosty until the fog lifts at midday!

Southern Cross International Challenge – Darwin N.T.

What does a sunset cruise on Darwin Harbour sipping champagne, fishing early in the morning and catching big queen fish (cooked on the barbie that night), wandering through the Mindill Beach sunset markets watching artists perform and munching on all sorts of treats or even breakfast at the Casino have to do with softball?

Well those umpires in Darwin for the “not Arafura Games” or the “Southern Cross International Softball Challenge” sampled most of these tropical delights (in between umpiring of course!!).

The southern representatives were Margo Koskelainen (accompanied with Karl) and Alan McAuliffe along with two Australian Defence Force umpires – Trevor Murphy and John Priolo, Jason Carter came from the west and the locals were Cathie Allen (Alice Springs), Derek Quong, Ian Lee, Marg Lee, Yvonne Newman, Leah Schwartz and Mark Bentley. Unfortunately Robyn Pellenat from Nhulunbuy was unable to make it due to a family illness.

Games were held from 17 May – 24 May at Gardens Oval in Darwin. Prior to the tournament Margo Koskelainen and Alan McAuliffe held an umpiring clinic over 4 evenings. All umpires involved are wearing yet another Aborigine design shirt with a distinctive logo.

Teams competing in the Challenge were USA College team, ADF men’s and women’s and NT men’s and women’s. Games were held over the first week-end and then each afternoon at 4:00 p.m. with the semi finals and finals on Saturday 24.

The first men’s game was going along at a fast pace when a warm up pitch struck the plate and flew off at sharp angle felling the plate umpire (Marg Lee) who was doing changes. A quick trip to the hospital followed brilliant first aid on the spot from the ADF and eight stitches (and huge black eye) later Marg was allowed to go home. Needless to say that was the end of her umpiring for the rest of the carnival.

Umpires on the gold medal game between Darwin 1 and USA were Cathie Allen (plate), Derek Quong (first) and Yvonne Newman (third).

Mark Bentley assisted by Jason Carter plated the men’s final game. After the presentations and a few drinks, most of the umpires went out and partied on well into the wee small hours.

Who’s coming in 2005???????



The one that did not get away: Karl Koskelainen shows off a catch during the Sunset Cruise. As you can see Karl did not have much fun in Darwin.

Thanks Logan City

I take this opportunity to thank the Logan City Softball Association for sending BNOL a copy of their newsletter. It was very interesting reading.

Logan City is in Queensland between Brisbane and the Gold Coast. Thanks again to their secretary Sally-Ann Lewis.

Umpiring & The Injection Myth

by Martin Turnbull

Over the period of about the last ten years, Officials training in most sports has focused on the rules of the game and not the skills of the official that are demanded by the participants of the game.

In our current fast-paced information-rich society the expectations of the general population is getting higher and higher. Therefore, the expectations by players of their umpires are getting higher. Because of this, umpires at all levels need to be aware of this trend and act to improve their performance to meet these expectations.

Today we find ourselves facing a customer service attitude among our players and spectators who will act in a number of ways if they are dissatisfied with product they are paying for. We are finding that they:

- are leaving the sport
- are behavioural changes/problems in the game
- form alternate associations for their sport
- use other officials who are:
 - o more suited to the level of game being played (social/junior/local/state/national)
 - o better at managing the game, as opposed to those who over officiate (e.g. preventative Vs curative officials)
- cease hiring officials altogether

One of the most important aspects of umpiring, which affects participant expectations, is the ability of the umpire to be able to manage the people involved in the game. One key aspect to managing people is effectively communicating your intentions and actions to game participants. This article introduces the Injection Myth as a way of analysing communication problems.

The Injection Myth

We are probably all guilty of succumbing to the injection myth in our communications. That is, we assume the intended meaning of our message. This implies that all we need to do is 'inject' our message into our listener and it will be fully understood.

It's even worse in the umpires' environment where distractions such as crowds and the high arousal levels of the coaches and participants in the heat of competition make effective communication even more difficult.

If umpires are to be better communicators, and therefore better managers of

participants and competitions, then the focus has to be on "what will the participant (listener) be likely to do with my intended message?"

Once umpires start thinking down this path then we start to break down **the injection myth that our messages have inherent power to change others**. This should lead to unlocking the *meaning* rather than just hearing the message.

It is worth noting that 90% of conflict, both on and off the field occurs because of the *tone* or *how* something was said rather than *what* was said.

In other words, if sports officials treat participants as recalcitrant children then the chance of the message being understood is remote.

Ten Laws of Human Communication

(Hugh Mackay (1994) *Why Don't People Listen?* Chipendale, NSW: Pan Australia)

1. It is not what our message does to the listener, but what the listener does with our message, that determines our success as communicators.
2. Listeners generally interpret messages in ways that make them feel comfortable and secure.
3. When people's attitudes are attacked head on, they are likely to defend those attitudes and, in the process, reinforce them.
4. People pay most attention to messages that are relevant to their own circumstances and point of view.
5. People who feel insecure in a relationship are unlikely to be good listeners.
6. People who are more likely to listen to us if we listen to them.
7. People are more likely to change in response to a combination of new experience and communication than in response to communication alone.
8. People are more likely to support a change that affects them if they are consulted before the change is made.

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9. The message in what is said will be interpreted in the light of how, when, where and by whom it is said.
10. Lack of self-knowledge and an unwillingness to resolve our own conflicts make it harder for us to communicate with other people.

Task:

Work through the 10 Laws (above) and try to remember examples, either positive or negative, that you may have experienced in a game situation. If the example was a negative one, write down the Law and write down what you could do to improve the situation next time.

Set Goal:

Identify one personal communication problem (it is most likely in the list created in the task above!) and describe, in writing, how you intend to resolve the problem - then try it, if you get the chance, in your next game.

The information in this article is based on a lecture 'Managing People', presented by Graeme Murphy, at the AIS on 30 April 2003, as part of the ACT Sport & Recreation Skilling Of Officials Series. Martin Turnbull is a Level 5 umpire, based in the ACT, who holds a degree in Adult Education and is a qualified ASC Sports Official Coach.

2003—The Year of the Official

In 2002, the Australian Sports Commission organised a series of national Fair Go For Officials forums that explored the issues surrounding abuse of officials.

The successful Fair Go For Officials forums highlighted the fact that the abuse of officials is a national problem threatening the future of sport.

The forums generated a momentum and interest and Minister for the Arts and Sport, Senator Rod Kemp announced 2003 was to be designated the Year of the Official.

The term 'official' includes all persons who, by whatever designation, officiate on technical aspects at a sporting event e.g. referee, umpire, judge, etc.

An official controls the actual play of a competition by applying the rules and laws of the sport to make judgments on rule infringement, performance, time or score.

“Officials have a key role to play in ensuring the spirit of the game/event is observed by all. And by so doing, officials are helping our young athletes develop through sport and making the game happen.”

2003 ASF Friendship Series by Ryan Benson

The 2nd Annual ASF Friendship Series was held at Blacktown Olympic Park, NSW, bringing together some of the countries best junior players. Teams competing included: Women: USA Coast to Coast 1 & 2 (U19), Australia Green & Gold (U16 Development Squads), NSW Metro (U19) & NSW Country (U19). Men: Australia Green & Gold (U19 Men's World Championship Squad), NSW Metro (U19) & NSW Country (U19).

More than 50 games over the seven days of competition provided many umpires with the opportunity to umpire some top quality games. Under the guidance of National Deputy Director Alan McAuliffe (Big Al), umpires ranged from Level 2's through to members of the International Development Squad and Level 8 Andrew Rindfleish.



Green and Gold: NSW umpire Graham Boyle calling the balls and strikes in the final of the Friendship Series in Sydney recently.

New South Wales

The majority of games were serviced by 3 umpires operating under the 3-2 Umpire system, but the odd 2-Umpire was often used when the numbers weren't available.

Some great games were umpired during the week of competition with many ending up with only 1 or 2 runs in it. Both of the Male & Female Finals (both Australia Green v Gold) finished up with a score of 3-2 with the Women's final going into a tiebreaker.

Umpires on the final's included:

WOMEN: Plate: Graham Boyle (L5), **1ST:** Dinga Bell (L2), **3RD:** Doug Stracey (L3)

MEN: Plate: Doug Stracey (L3), **1ST:** Graham Boyle (L5), **3RD:** Ryan Benson (L2)

Firstly, I would like to thank the crew of umpires for making the experience so enjoyable, and to Alan, who was great in handing me some tips about my game and who was always approachable when I had a question or query I was unsure about.

Occurrence and Type of Harassment

(Australian Sports Commission Harassment of Officials Survey Results 2002)

Most verbal abuse is directed at officials by athletes and involves yelling, profanity, taunts and insults. Coaches and parents deliver slightly less abuse in the form of yelling and profanity, while other spectators are more likely to taunt or insult officials. Administrators and officials are unlikely to abuse other officials.

Most Physical assault is also directed at officials by athletes and involves hitting and/or kicking, throwing objects and spitting.

Thirty percent of survey participants believe the rate of harassment is higher for males, while 24% believe males and females are harassed equally.

Forty percent of survey participants believe the rate of harassment is higher for adults, while 17% believe adult and junior officials are harassed equally.

Forty five percent of survey participants are unsure whether the rate of harassment is higher for officials from English or non-English speaking backgrounds.

Most harassment takes place in community/local sport, followed by district and state amateur sports. Least harassment is considered to take place in International amateur sport.

Most harassment is considered moderate in nature.

Moderate – 61% (Involving arguments or comments directed at an official's position not them personally)

Moderate to severe – 30% (Involving disruption of play, warning from an official, insults or profanity)

Severe – 12% (Involving fines, suspension, removal from the playing area, legal ramifications, actual bodily harm)

Disagreement with rule interpretations and perceived lack of competence of the official are the leading triggers for harassment.

Support

Survey participants believe that fifty percent of the time there is no support given to officials after they have been harassed. Mentoring is provided thirty one percent of the time by a peer or colleague.

Survey participants believe that sixty eight percent of the time there is no support provided for the offender after harassment has occurred. Counseling is provided twenty percent of the time by the sporting body.

Different forms of harassment are resolved at different rates. Resolution falls somewhere between rarely and mostly.

General Opinion

Eighty three percent of survey participants believe there is not enough being done in Australia to eliminate or reduce harassment of officials.

Suggestions to prevent or reduce harassment include:

- Educating stakeholders about rules and the role of officials;
- Imposing tougher penalties;
- Training for officials in conflict resolution and to improve officiating competency standards;
- Educating about and enforcing Codes of Conduct with stakeholders; and
- Establishing clear organisational guidelines about how to deal with harassment.

Ninety percent of survey participants believe Australian officials are generally competent across all levels of sport. Coaches are least likely to say officials are competent.

Survey participants who have chosen to become an official have done so for the love of the game or to give back to their sport. Many believe becoming an official is a natural progression from competition, especially when they become too old to compete or they have to retire due to injury. Some also see officiating as a way to help the sport keep running. Some officiate to gain knowledge of the rules and others officiate because there is no-one else to do it.

Sixty six percent of survey participants would not consider becoming an official because they have other preferences or commitments or are simply not interested. Twelve percent believe there is too much harassment.

Ex athletes, parents then athletes are considered to be the most likely people to become officials. Many consider that ex athletes and athletes become officials because they do not succeed in sport or struggle in the competitive environment. Some consider officiating as an avenue to elite competition that is otherwise unobtainable. Parents generally help out because there is an identified lack of officials in their sport or they have children competing.

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Survey participants consider officials possess many positive personal attributes and professional skills and abilities (78%), while others are seen to possess some negative personal attributes (22%). Positive skills and attributes include being:

- Dedicated;
- Community minded;
- Confident;
- Knowledgeable;
- Forward thinking;
- Energetic and
- Enthusiastic.

Negative skills and attributes include being egocentric and power hungry. Thirty six percent of survey participants consider spectators have no rights in relation to officials not performing competently. Sixty four percent of survey participants believe spectators have a right to voice concerns through the appropriate procedures.

Previous editions of Blue's News On-Line are available from the Resource Library on the Umpire's Website
nuc.softball.org.au

ANY UMPIRE WHO HAS SOMETHING OF INTEREST OR EVEN A JOKE OR TWO PLEASE SEND THEM TO THE EDITOR OF BLUE'S NEWS ON LINE C/- mtoft@ozemail.com.au Remember that BNOL is a monthly magazine written by umpires for umpires. Send your email today so we can publish in August.

Curtains for sale

This blonde walks into a curtain shop and asks the attendant for curtains the size of her computer monitor.

"We don't have curtains that size and why would you want them for your computer?", the salesman asked.

"DURRRR", said the Blonde. "I have Windows."

Federal Minister launches Year of the Official

The Federal Minister for the Arts and Sport, Senator Rod Kemp, earlier this year launched the Year of the Official, a national campaign aimed at arresting the decline in volunteer participation and ensuring the future growth of grassroots and junior sport.

Launching the Year of the Official at the Melbourne Cricket Ground, Senator Kemp said the campaign was about reducing abuse of sports officials such as umpires, referees and judges, recognising their invaluable contribution, and increasing their participation rate.

'One of the biggest challenges facing grassroots sport is recruiting and, most especially, retaining officials.

'Despite undertaking successful recruitment campaigns, nearly all sports say they are only just managing to maintain their overall number of officials.'

'Research clearly indicates the most common reasons why officials quit is the high level of abuse they receive and a lack of respect for their role in sport,' Senator Kemp said.

Australian Sports Commission figures demonstrate that 95 per cent of this abuse is verbal, with 22 per cent coming from coaches, 37 per cent from athletes, 19 per cent from spectators, and 17 per cent from parents.

'This is a very big problem—one which threatens the future growth of grassroots and junior sport,' the Minister said.

'As evidence of seriousness of the problem and the need for it to be tackled head on, seven key national sporting organisations will today also sign a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with the Australian Sports Commission,' Senator Kemp said.

The MOU will help guide Year of the Official activities and initiatives by the Sports Commission, State departments of Sport and Recreation and the seven national sporting organisations.

'The Australian Cricket Board, Australian Football League, Australian Rugby League, Australian Rugby Union, Basketball Australia, Netball Australia, and Soccer Australia—have thrown their support behind the Year of the Official campaign by signing the MOU, and I welcome that support.'

During 2003, the Sports Commission along with State departments of Sport and Recreation, and national sporting organisations will undertake a social education and awareness program to begin changing community attitudes towards officials.

Further details are available on the Year of the Official website at:
<http://www.ausport.gov.au/yearoftheofficial>

Another story you like to hear about in sport which is very rare..... Especially these days! Reference: Referee, May 2003

One Extraordinary Touchdown by Joe Sample

Officials usually see sportsmanship in the form of a pat on the back or helping an opponent up from a pile. Once in a while, an official gets to experience the remarkable when it comes to sportsmanship. Such an example took place in McDermott, Ohio, on October 18, 2002.

McDermott's Northwest High School was hosting its final home game of the season against Waverly High School. The night was dedicated to seniors and their parents for their roles in and support for Northwest's football program. One senior on the team was soon to be thrust into the national spotlight.

Northwest Head Coach Dave Frantz informed referee Bernard Hensley that one of his athletes, Jake Porter, had a mental disability and would likely enter near game's end. Porter lives with Fragile X Syndrome, which affects a child's ability to learn and process information.

Therefore, Porter would not be asked to participate in a live contact situation that might cause him injury.

With the score 46-0 in favour of Waverly and only seconds left in the game, Coach Frantz called a timeout and put Porter in at tailback. The plan was to have Porter take the ball and then take a knee.

"Coach Frantz had me go let Coach (Derek) DeWitt know that Jake was entering the game, and that he'd take a knee as they had discussed prior to the start of the game," said Hensley.

"But DeWitt told me to tell Frantz that Jake should get the ball and run it all the way for a touchdown. His kids would let Jake pass." After taking the handoff, Porter started to kneel as he had practiced during the week leading up to the game. He stopped, ran to the line of scrimmage and started to kneel again. "I yelled at him to go that way and pointed to the end zone," said Hensley.

"Then, Jake took off. Crowds from both sides were applauding, and both teams were pointing. It was a proud moment to see those kids come together."

After the game, Hensley and his crew of Chuck Delawder, Tony Payne, Larry Mucche and Andy Compliment continued to receive positive feedback for supporting Porter's run. "People were offering us hugs and thanking us for allowing it to happen," said Hensley. "We were only part of the package. It was

really Jake's moment."

Northwest's athletic director, Mike Smith, said of Hensley's crew, "They had a bigger part than others might think. Everyone wanted to see Jake score. Everyone involved was unified and the good side of sports was seen."

Henry Zaborniak, assistant commissioner of the Ohio High School Athletic Association, agrees. "Everybody did it without thought of self-aggrandizing," he said, adding, "It was the right thing to do."

Hensley and his crew have worked numerous state finals and semi-finals. But of this game, Hensley and the crew recognized that it was a unique and rewarding experience. "We were humbled," he said. "It helped us to continue to recognize that there is more to life than Friday night football."

Porter's story continues to be told on national television and radio shows. It was a moment that those involved are likely not to forget. Porter's touchdown was worth six points for Northwest High School. The sporting act of assuring that he scored that touchdown by all involved was invaluable.

"GREAT STORY"

This article was lifted from 'Strike me Blue' South Australia's Umpiring Newsletter and BNOL wishes to thank Steph Parker for making it available for this edition of BNOL.

UMPIRES UPDATE - NSW

Congratulations to the following Umpires who were appointed to the final of the U19 Women's State Championship.

Plate – Darrell Shephard 1st - Sue Itzstein, 3rd – David Crowe, 2nd Greg Baker

UMPIRE TRACKSUITS—The new Umpires Tracksuit is now in contact Sue Itzstein if you wish to purchase one.

UMPIRE DEVELOPMENT CLINICS

23/7/03	Game Management
20/8/03	Balls and Strikes
17/9/03	Timing
15/10/03	Balls and Strikes
19/11/03	Managing Ejections – Tribunals

Visit the NSW Umpires Website at www.nswumpires.softball.org.au