



National UIC's Call Andrew Rindfleish



Last BNOL I talked about how important a development plan is to an umpire who is aspiring to improve his or her performance or to reach higher levels of accreditation. I hope that the last point I made was not lost on anybody working on their own development plan - that is that the plan must be actioned.

If you do not clearly organize your areas of improvement into actionable tasks, with measures of success, timeframes, resources and who will help you on the way, the plan is doomed to fail.

We all receive advice on our performance as an umpire, at whatever stage of our developmental journey we are. Some we seek and some we have thrust upon us. The term often used by fellow umpires in offering advice is feedback.

Feedback is certainly important, and an integral part of the fulfilment of our development action plan. Unfortunately, despite the best intentions of those of us providing the feedback, it is not always provided in the most enlightening manner.

I have been promoting a feedback model for a couple of years now, called The Effective Feedback Model, and would like to describe some of the more important points of the model.

Feedback is advice given and accepted to help you progress from where you are to where you want to be. Apart from advice to help in one's development, it is important to provide feedback as the lack of feedback is an indication that poor performance or behaviour is acceptable.

There are two types of feedback, namely affirming feedback where we catch umpires "doing it right" and adjusting or corrective feedback. These are sometimes referred to positive and negative feedback, respectively.

It is important to always provide feedback from both sides of the spectrum. It is equally important that umpires know what they are doing right as it is to know those areas where they need more work.

It is really important to understand that feedback is provided about observed behaviour and the resultant impact of that behaviour. We want to encourage the continuation of positive behaviour and work toward the correction unacceptable behaviour.

There are four steps to the Effective Feedback Model. These are:

1. Ask if you can provide some feedback
2. Describe specific behaviour
3. Describe the impact of the behaviour
4. Discuss the next steps

.....Continue Page 6



Aust Capital Territory

www.suaact.softball.org.au

Slow Pitch Umpiring in ACT with Sarah Houston

Softball ACT conducts a Slow Pitch League each year (this season there were 18 round robin games plus finals) and two carnivals, the Tainn Hunter Carnival which is a charity carnival in October each year and an Invitational Carnival in April.



Slow Pitch umpiring: ACT umpire, Bob Miles in action at a recent tournament in Canberra.

In the last year these carnivals have been attended by ACT, Bega and Sydney teams. There are also plans to conduct a Slow Pitch Family Winter League for the first time starting in July.

In the ACT we like to take our umpiring seriously, so to ensure our slow pitch games are conducted at an acceptable level, we decided that qualified umpires were required.

We set about to adapt some of the official Slow Pitch rules to suit local conditions and given the many obvious differences between Slow and Fast pitch, our fast pitch umpires needed further education.

One specific difference (many see it as an advantage!!) between the

games for umpires is that the Slow Pitch plate umpire does not have to squat to call strikes.

The fact that the plate umpire doesn't need to squat, opens a greater opportunity for members (for example, with bad knees or back) to be involved as an umpire of the game.

To this end, the Slow Pitch League President and SUAACT member, Michael Hill, along with senior umpires Bob Miles and Dick Gallagher (the three wise men), took steps to create a complete set of rules, to document the variation of the game played in the ACT.

These rules are based on a social competition and all Slow Pitch games in the ACT are conducted using these local rules (which do also include many of the official rules).

With the rules in place, SUAACT and the State Director worked with these three wise men to develop a program to qualify umpires to ACT Slow Pitch Level 1 (State accreditation only). The program consisted of successfully completing an ACT Slow Pitch Umpire Exam and an on field evaluation.

The ACT Slow Pitch Umpire Exam is an open book 25 question exam based on the ACT Slow Pitch rules. Umpires are required to achieve a mark of 80% (20 of 25 questions correct).

National Umpiring Program

Website: www.umpiring.softball.org.au BNOL Submissions to mtoft@ozemail.com.au



Aust Capital Territory

www.suaact.softball.org.au

For on field evaluations, Slow Pitch umpire mechanics (both 1-umpire and 2-umpire systems) were required, as they are different to Fast Pitch mechanics. These were developed by the 'Three Wise Men' with the full support of SUAACT and have been successful with their use for games and evaluations.

The on-field evaluation was conducted by senior Slow Pitch umpires to determine that the umpire applied the rules correctly during game situations, used correct umpire mechanics (both 1-umpire and 2-umpire systems) and the umpire was able to manage the game in a appropriate manner (especially given the social nature of the game).

Currently, SUAACT has only developed the program to accredit umpires to ACT Slow Pitch Level 1 (State accreditation only). We are working to develop the program to accredit Slow Pitch umpires to higher State levels starting from next season.

The National office has shown some interest in what we are doing here in the ACT and we hope that these Slow Pitch accreditation levels will one day soon be recognised at a national level.

The accreditation process is working well. We now have nine accredited ACT Slow Pitch umpires. They are Mathew Camp, Dick Gallagher, Michael Hill, Josh McGovern, Bob Miles, Scott Murtagh, Danielle Pring, Michael White and Patrick White.

Out with old and in with the new by Mark Toft

The Australian Capital Territory Board has recently endorsed Mark Gallagher as its new State Umpire in Chief. Mark is a National Level 5 umpire and is one of the youngest State Directors to be appointed in this country.

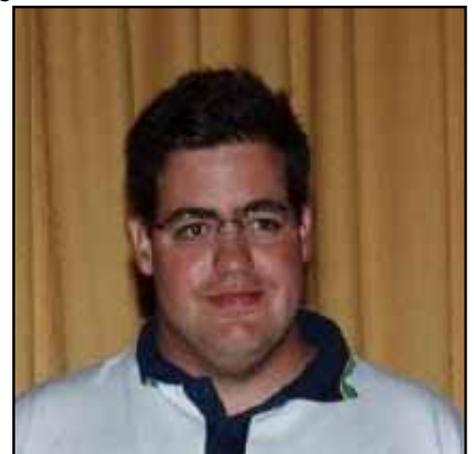
Mark's first official representation as State Director will be at the National Umpiring Conference in Melbourne in two months time. Mark has had some experience at the NUC meeting as an observer, now he takes the ideas of his State into the National "brain-storming" weekend.



Brett Atkinson

Outgoing State Director, Brett Atkinson, has listed personal matters as the reason he has stood down from the top job. Brett is looking to return to New South Wales to work with more experienced umpires.

"I have thought about this long and hard for the last few months and have decided that i still need to learn more," Brett said.



Mark Gallagher

National Umpiring Program

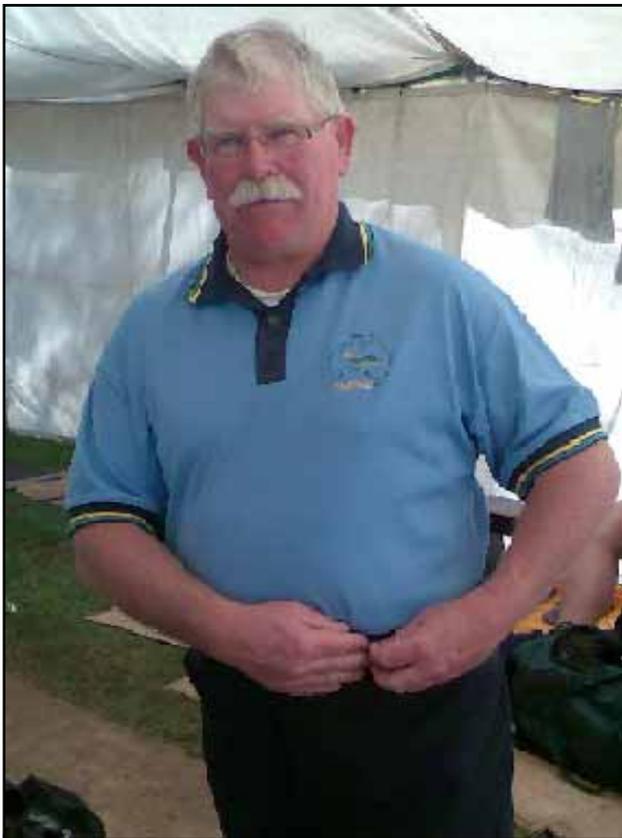
Website: www.umpiring.softball.org.au BNOL Submissions to mtoft@ozemail.com.au

A different view from the Classic by Sally Crawford

The South Brisbane Club Classic, held over the June long weekend, was a fantastic opportunity for all umpires involved. With such an experienced crew of umpires, the opportunity to run 4-umpire systems on every game of the Classic was grasped with both hands.

This was also a great opportunity for both Leigh Evans and Warren Duff to get some last minute preparation in before winging out of Australia to the Open Men's Worlds in Canada and the Japan Cup, respectively.

This was my first taste of what it could be like at a National tournament and I loved it. Having only ever run one 4-umpire system before, I was looking forward to getting on the diamond with some of our nation's best and giving my all. After an initial hiccup in my first game, things started to smooth out. By my third game, I was feeling quite comfortable out there.



Kiwi or Aussie? You are right on both answers. New Zealand umpire John Hickman was coaxed into wearing an Australian umpire shirt for the Classic grand final.

The camaraderie within the umpires tent ensured everyone felt comfortable and relaxed. After every game each crew discussed the intricacies of their game and what could be done to improve for the next one.

The biggest challenge for the weekend was dodging and weaving the slush on the diamonds. Many players braved the pools of water and mud and took a few dives retrieving balls. As for the umpires, we were more than happy to get amongst it also, but tried to avoid the worst of it. I have never seen so much shoe polish in my life. I wonder if it was really the fumes from the shoe polish that had most umpires in hysterics over the weekend, rather than the aforementioned camaraderie.

The Semi-Final crew was made up of Warren Duff (Plate) with Yvonne Kahler (1st), Jay Gibson (2nd) and Helen Strauss (3rd). The game was between Sharks and Brisbane Giants and went for 9 innings ending with a 1-nil win to the Brisbane Giants, gaining them a spot in the Grand Final against WA Mariners. It was a fantastic game and a great lead up to the grand final.

The Grand Final crew consisted of Leigh Evans (Plate), Darren Sibraa (1st), Mark Toft (2nd) and John Hickman (3rd). Once again it was a close game with the WA Mariners taking out the Grand Final, 2-0 in seven innings.

In closing, I would like to thank my fellow umpires who assisted, encouraged, provided useful feedback and ensured the weekend was fun for all involved. I look forward to expanding my experiences with the hope of being on the National circuit soon.

Awarded her umpiring green cap by Mark Toft



Victorian umpire Stacey Evans, was presented her umpiring green cap from Australian Softball Umpiring icon, Margo Koskelainen at the recent Victorian Awards dinner.

Stacey and South Australian Umpire Dave Datson attained their Level 6 accreditations over two weekends of the Gilley's Shield rounds in Brisbane and Canberra last year.

This was the first time an accreditation was conducted over a two weekend period for a Level 6 and both umpires came through with flying colours.

Stacey is a third generation Level 6 umpire with her grandmother, Betty McGuire and father, Leigh Evans attaining their Level 6

Number 152: Stacey Evans became the 152nd Level 6 umpire to reach that milestone since softballs inception in Australia more than 60 years ago.

and who are both ISF accredited. Stacey is one of the young brigade of umpires who are the future of the National Umpiring Programme.

Victoria award dual winners for top award by Mark Toft



Victorian Umpire of the Year: Beijing umpires Debbie Grove and Diane Waller were dual winners of the Victorian Umpire of the Year Award presented at the annual Awards night. Pictured above Margo Koskelainen presenting Diane with the award (Debbie was unable to be present at the Awards dinner)

In what was a memorable 2008, Victorian umpires Debbie Grove and Diane Waller were dual winners of their State's top umpiring gong.

The inseparable pair represented Australia with honour at the final (maybe) Olympic Games in Beijing last year.

Both umpires are leaders not only on the field but as administrators, with Diane the current Victorian State Director, while Debbie is one of the National Deputy Directors.

These ladies also lead the way for the National women's umpiring program which is rated by many overseas as the best in the world.

Victorian stalwart umpire, Kevin Broomhall was also nominated for the award. Kevin's work in administration and training of umpires throughout the State has established a solid platform for all Victoria officials.



WA umpire State 1000 club with Warren Duff



1000 Badge: Bill receiving his 1,000 game badge from Kathy Garbutt.

Congratulations to Bill Kilmurray (Level 4 from South East Dale Softball Umpiring Association) who recently chalked up his 1,000 game for the association. Bill is only second behind Graham Bancroft who is currently sitting on 1178 games over his long career.

Bill umpired his first association game in 1999, after umpiring for a number of years at a club level.

Bill's contribution to the game and SEDSUA is not only on the diamond, but also as a trainer, UIC and mentor for a number of years.

Since its inception, SEDSUA umpires have covered a total of 23,979 games of softball. Prior to heading out to his 1,000 game, Bill was heard to say "Hopefully this one will be as good as the first one". Congratulations Bill, on behalf of SEDSUA, may the next 1,000 games be as enjoyable.



UIC call continues

.....from Page One

1. It's important to get a "yes" answer at step one. If the recipient is not in a "yes" frame of mind the feedback discussion will be wasted and even infuriating.
2. If you cannot describe specific behaviour, the recipient will not be able to develop an action plan to modify what she/he needs to, nor understand exactly what it is that she/he is doing well.
3. Describing the impacts of the behaviour, or potential impacts of the behaviour, is often needed to convince the recipient that the (poor) behaviour is not appropriate or to really up sell the benefits of (good) behaviour.
4. The purpose of providing feedback is about building stronger acceptable behaviour or producing a change of behaviour, in the future. It is most defiantly not a tool by which to discipline someone.

Because feedback is about a person's behaviour, about an individual's behaviour, it should be delivered with sensitivity and in private. And to maximize the impact, it should be delivered as soon after the behaviour is observed as possible.

The more senior and experienced of us owe it to the sport, we owe it to the developing umpires to help, assist and guide them on their developmental paths. Use of the Effective Feedback Model maximises the chances of the messages we want to get across being heard.

National Umpiring Program

Website: www.umpiring.softball.org.au BNOL Submissions to mtoft@ozemail.com.au



International Appointments

Aussie Umpire off to Canada and USA Cups with Kevin Broomhall



Kevin Broomhall

Since I gained ISF accreditation in 2006, I have made myself available, at every opportunity to represent Australia as an umpire; earlier this year I applied for available international representation. Fortunately or perhaps unfortunately (for me) Australia has many extremely good and accomplished international umpires who are also keen to do the same.

In early May while my wife and I were planning our annual mid-year holiday (usually August and somewhere warm), I received a voice-mail message from Andy late Friday Night. I have been working with Debbie Grove and others on the application to ASC, so thought not much of it.

On Saturday morning I called Andy who was in country NSW at a Junior State Championship (who'd of thought he'd be at Softball?) and he informed me that I had been selected for not one, but two ISF competitions and was I still available (Yes). Canada Cup in Vancouver, commencing 4 June; and US World Cup in Okalahoma City, commencing 16 June.

After I hung up, my heart skipped a beat (yeah I know it could be dangerous at my age and might have been something else) as it took a little while to realise that I was finally going overseas with the Australian Women's National Team - some of the best Fast-pitch Softballers in the world.

Many of you know that Victoria have a winter sabbatical, with only a few hardy associations braving the Southern weather. As such, although keeping the heart ticking over with light exercise, I grow my "winter coat", however now I had less than 8 weeks to ramp up to my usual svelte self. I am happy to report that my program is on schedule and have added game practice and live ball pitching with a State representative squad.

On my return I will report back, to let you know of my experiences. Until then there is nothing more to say, other than to thank the National Executive and Selectors for the trust they have placed in me; and that I will represent Australia with pride and to the my best ability, both on and off the Diamond.

WA umpire heading for Japan Cup



Warren Duff

Western Australian umpire Warren Duff has been selected to represent Australia at the 2009 Japan Cup. Warren recalls what he was doing when he received the word from National UIC, Andrew Rindfleish.

"I had only just gotten home from taking the dogs to the beach when Andrew called me asking if I was still available for a tour in July. I said that I was and he informed me that I had been selected to tour with the Aussie Spirit team to the Japan Cup. For once, I didn't have much to say other than "thank you for the opportunity".

"I am excited by the opportunity to visit Japan - a place I have never visited before - but to also tour with the team. It is going to be a great experience as I have heard only positive things from other people who have attended".

National Umpiring Program

Website: www.umpiring.softball.org.au BNOL Submissions to mtoft@ozemail.com.au