



National UIC's Call

With Tricia Sibraa

Welcome to our July edition of BNOL, and what a busy month July has been! Congratulations to the Aussie Spirit team on their 3rd place at the World Championships, recently concluded in Whitehorse, Yukon, Canada. Next month, we'll hear about Di Waller and Debbie Grove's experiences in Canada, where they officiated at both the World Championships, and the Canadian Fastpitch Championships, which Aussie Spirit attended as part of their preparation for the World Championships.

This month, we welcome Ron Houison back to Australia and hear about his experiences at the USA World Cup of Softball VII, the first warm-up event the Aussie Spirit attended. Ron's article can be found on pages 2 and 3.

The NUC also extends their thanks to all umpires involved in two recent SAL events - the International Youth Cup (IYC), held at Blacktown International Sportspark, and the U15 Regional Championships, hosted by Rockhampton Association in Queensland. A special thanks to the management crews at both events for their tireless work: Leanne Gearside, Mark Toft and Ryan Thorneycroft at the IYC and Alex Turnbull, Yvonne Kahler and Haydyn Wood at the U15s. Read about the IYC on pages 5 and 6, and check back next month for the report about the U15s.

Lastly, news from Queensland - Ian Frame has announced his retirement from State and National events. Ian will be greatly missed on and off the diamond, where he has been an amazing supporter of the umpiring program at all levels. Ian, we cannot thank you enough for all you have given to our sport, and the diamonds will be a little emptier without you out there. BNOL will feature an article next month about Ian's involvement in the umpiring world.

Wishing you all good calling,
Tricia.

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USA World Cup

USA World Cup of Softball VII - 28 June – 2 July 2012 – by Ron Houison

Fridays are usually study days, so when the phone rang at around midday I was dividing my time between lunch and a text book. “Chet Gray (SAL GM – Operations and Technical) here...” said the voice on the phone and at that point my study day was no longer relevant – I was going to travel to Oklahoma City with the Aussie Spirit team to the USA World Cup of Softball VII.

The next 13 weeks literally flew by with paperwork to complete, uniform ordering and, importantly, gym sessions to get my fitness up for the event. It was a great feeling on the day that the courier rang the doorbell: It was my kitbag and Australian uniform. It was finally starting to feel real.

On Saturday 23rd June, Amanda drove me to the airport to join the team for the flight to San Francisco (13.5 hrs), followed by a 3-hour flight into Oklahoma. The first impression was it was HOT! The temps for the first few days were all over 40 deg. C with high humidity. Water was going to be my best friend.

I joined the team on Monday 25th June for their training day at Oklahoma University, and was blown away by the scale of the sporting facilities – The football stadium would dwarf Penrith’s (NRL) home ground, and the softball facility was excellent. I watched the team going through their drills and could now appreciate the dedication that team members brought to each and every task. After a quick lunch break we entered a training room and were addressed by Patty Gasso, coach of the Oklahoma University softball team who were runners up to Alabama in the NCAA competition. She was very complimentary regarding NSW’s Georgia Casey (who studies at and plays for OU); her ability and her level of softball maturity. She then went on to discuss how softball is a game of failure - e.g. NOT getting on base seven times out of ten, resulting on a batting average of .300 is regarded as good – and it is how we deal with failure that defines us as successful individuals and teams. Finally, Coach Gasso talked about the importance of self-belief, and that if you do not go into a game believing that you can defeat your opponent, then you have already lost. Good advice for players and umpires alike.

The time I spent with the team was very interesting. I could see that the team had spent a long time working together and the esprit de corps was obvious. I was hoping for the same feeling when I joined my crew on 26th June.

I had heard it before from other umpires, but it was a relief to find that the saying was true – no matter where in the world you travel, the umpire’s room is always the same. Two crews were to share the facilities concurrently, the World Cup crew and the Border Battle (Slowpitch) crew. Within 10 minutes we were laughing and joking as if we had known each other forever... and it only got better as the week went on.

The crew was: Kevin Ryan (UIC, USA), Fernando Silva (Brazil), Peter Kluszczynski (Canada), Bob Gieskens (Netherlands, and my roommate), Reynaldo Mora (Puerto Rico), Diane Carden (USA), Mike LaTona (USA), Sue Sawyer (USA) and I.

On Days 1 and 2 we worked in two 4-umpire teams, rotating around the diamond. My first ISF game was at 2nd base and it was a ripper – Darrell Shephard couldn't have scripted it better, with game 1 of the championship (Puerto Rico v Brazil) going to a tie-break. My first plate was on Day 2 at 9am, before the heat of the day. Or, so I thought. Bottom 5 and someone turned the heat up to 11! Over the course of the game I drank almost 6 litres of water, a figure I went close to matching during my 3rd base later that day.

On Saturday (Day 3) I was given a 1-game day... but what a game! I had the plate on USA v Canada. All of the USA games were televised live on ESPN or ESPN2, and they were usually evening games to encourage the crowd to attend. It was an interesting experience being wired up with a microphone and being told to "just be yourself." Right... Better not talk to myself on THIS game! We had already found out that we were "hot-miked" – that is, the feed from the mike was on all the time. Luckily, I kept the comments relevant. I had a nervous start but settled in for a short (5 inning) game that was the highlight of my career thus far. More was to come.

Sunday (Day 4) and I had a great view (from 2nd base) of Australia defeating the Netherlands to qualify for the Championship game against Team USA. The late game (7:30) saw me at 1st base for Canada v Brazil. We ended the day having dinner as a crew (as we always did) and Peter had the bright idea to tell the wait staff that it was Rey's birthday. Balloons were produced and Rey was given applause and song, much to his embarrassment and our entertainment.

Monday (Day 5) and the pointy end of the competition: The appointments had been announced the night before – I was to be on 1st base for the Championship game. A big crowd was in attendance and the atmosphere was amazing, especially in the 7th with the crowd chanting "U-S- A", stomping and clapping. The game was much closer than the 3-0 score indicated and it was a privilege to be on the game.

The farewells were said as we relaxed at the local restaurant and we all cheered when the game made ESPN Sports Center's Top 10 Plays of the Day (startling the few patrons who were left). The Facebook comments and emails are flowing already and lasting friendships have resulted from the trip. The next day was loong, with another 17 hours flying time, arriving in Sydney to the double shock of rain and cold.

My thanks go to SAL, the NUC and the Aussie Spirit management and team for the best experience (so far!) of my umpiring career. Thank you to Kevin Ryan (Championship UIC and ASA Supervisor of Umpires), Wayne Vaught (Umpire support) and the crew for a fantastic championship. Finally, thank you to all of those who kept in touch via Facebook and SMS whilst I was away.



Final Crew: Ron Houison (Australia, 1st Base), Sue Sawyer (USA, Plate), Mike LaTona (USA, 2nd Base), Peter Kluszczynski (Canada, 3rd Base)



USA World Cup of Softball VII Crew: Reynaldo Mora (Puerto Rico), Fernando Silva (Brazil), Bob Gieskens (Netherlands), Peter Kluszczynski (Canada), Mike LaTona (USA), Sue Sawyer (USA, Rear), Diane Carden (USA, Front), Ron Houison (Australia)

SAL International Youth Cup

SAL International Youth Cup – Blacktown Olympic Park, Sydney

The 2012 SAL International Youth Cup wrapped up under wet conditions in Sydney on Friday 6 July, but in no way did this dampen the spirit and enthusiasm of those involved.

Sixteen teams from across Australia and the Tasman united at BISP for five days of fast-paced, electrifying softball.

Players were equally represented with this year's Cup hosting eight men's teams and eight women's teams from New South Wales, Australian Capital Territory, Victoria, South Australia and New Zealand, in addition to U17 and U19 Australian Boys and Girls squads.

The extensive representation of players and officials created immense opportunities in development and friendship. As usual, the tournament showcased the most elite youth softballers in the region.

A thirty-strong umpiring crew worked tirelessly through the tournament, covering ten hours of games each day, spread over six time slots.

The crew was led by TCU Leanne Gearside (New South Wales), who assured all games were covered by 3-umpire systems and the development needs of umpires were exceeded. Working with Gearside were deputies Ryan Thorneycroft (Victoria) and Mark Toft (Queensland).

Umpires benefited from video technology employed during the tournament, with games being filmed for later analysis. This added to feedback delivered by senior umpires.

New South Wales umpire Todd Winsor praised this initiative: "The gamut of national experience on the crew was invaluable to junior umpires looking to develop their own skills and knowledge of the game."

Two umpires made the trip from Auckland, both excited to call some quality games and forge new friendships. Both Andrew McManus and Judy Leaper were impressed with the skill of the players and the hospitality provided by the rest of the crew. Australian umpires expressed their eagerness to work with both umpires again here in Australia and across the ditch.

TCU Gearside was impressed by the professionalism and dedication of the crew throughout the week-long competition.

"Thank you very much to everyone who umpired this year's Youth Cup. I trust you had an enjoyable weekend and were able to take some things from your experience to help you in the future."

Despite rain interfering with the final day of play and rendering two diamonds unplayable, the final series was action-packed and the blues put in a sharp performance.



Front Row: Megan South, Andrew McManus (NZ), Rob McIntosh, John Walker, Leanne Gearside (TCU), James Townsend, Joe Kellermier, Ryan Thorneycroft (VIC), Steve Wallace-Yarrow (SA), Vikki Lansley.
Back Row: Lucy James (VIC), Thomas Sutomo, Matt Guillaumier, Kevin Tannebring (SA), Brett Tyler (VIC), Mark Toft (QLD), Bree Watt, Todd Winsor, Judy Leaper (NZ), Katrina Bulmer.

Congratulations to the following Grand Final crews:

Men's Youth Cup: Namadgi Dragons (6) def Western Civil (2)

Plate: Andrew McManus (NZ)

1st Base: Brett Tyler (VIC)

3rd Base: James Townsend (NSW)

Women's Youth Cup: Australian U19 Women's Green (7) def Australia U17 Girls (0)

Plate: Robert McIntosh (NSW)

1st Base: Steve Wallace-Yarrow (SA)

3rd Base: Brooke Whitfield (NSW)

Congratulations to Leanne Gearside and her teams of blues on a great effort!

Queensland

Queensland Softball Awards dinner

The annual Queensland Softball State Dinner was held on 7 July 2012 at Rendezvous Studio Hotel in Brisbane to recognise the achievements of the softball community in the last 12 months.

State Umpiring Director, Darren Sibraa and National Umpire in Chief, Tricia Sibraa were on hand to present the umpiring awards and certificates to our recently accredited Level 5 umpires, Jamie Harries and Norelle Thomas and Level 6 umpire, Bridget Cameron (cap #162).

The Junior Umpire of the Year award was present to Keana Homes of Caboolture. Keana has worked exceptionally hard on developing her umpiring over several years and has been a valued member of the umpiring crew when attending State and Schoolgirl Championships.



Photo: Darren Sibraa presenting Keana Homes as Queensland Junior Umpire of the Year



The Tricia Bichel award for Queensland Umpire of the Year was awarded to David Casey of Wynnum. The award recognises David's exceptional commitment to umpiring and softball at a local, State and National level. David holds multiple positions within softball as the Umpiring Coordinator for the Wynnum District Association, is a member of South East Queensland Junior Development Squad; Queensland Softball Events Committee, and the Queensland Umpiring Directorate. David has been appointed to many examining and UIC roles for Queensland State Championships. David officiates and is committed to Queensland and the National Umpiring Program.

Photo: Tricia Sibraa presenting David Casey with the Tricia Bichel Award for Queensland Umpire of the Year.

David stated “[he] was so surprised to be named the Tricia Bichel Umpire of the Year when you consider the calibre of the other worthy nominees in Helen Strauss and Yvonne Kahler who have had amazing years. I am so grateful and overwhelmed in achieving this award”.

The Brisbane Softball Umpiring Association (BSUA) took out the Queensland local association’s award for Brisbane’s commitment to umpiring development and the association’s commitment to the umpiring program. Yvonne Kahler, BSUA’s district’s coordinator accepted the award on BSUA’s behalf. Yvonne was overwhelmed at the recognition which honoured Queensland’s largest umpiring association and BSUA’s representation at a State and National participation level.

Writer: Bridget Cameron