

Blue's News On-Line

Official Australian Softball Umpire's Magazine

Contributions to mtoft@ozemail.com.au June Edition 6/2006

National Umpiring Program Website: umpring.softball.org.au

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BNOL looks towards its sixth year By Mark Toft (Editor BNOL)

Next month is the start of the sixth year of Blue's News On-Line, Australian Umpires Official Magazine.

A concept generated under the Margo Koskelainen regime in 2001 BNOL has enabled umpires throughout Australia and other countries to contribute articles regarding fellow umpires both on and off the field.

As editor it has been a pleasure to be in charge of a service which is an intricate part of the National Umpiring Program.

The July 2006 edition will be the magazine's 58th issue (three issues were dual month combined).

To enable this magazine to survive we need more contributions from all umpires from the grass roots level to the international arena.

There is nothing better for the National Umpiring Program than recognition of its members.

BNOL offers a medium where we can read about the efforts of our fellow Blues.

Remember BNOL is written by umpires for umpires. So send in your contributions.

The National UIC's Call By Andrew Rindfleish

National Umpire Program Review

Some months ago Softball Australia initiated a review of the National Umpire Program. Ken Culpitt, as the Board member responsible for the technical areas of our sport (umpiring and scoring), is chairing this committee.

The committee has determined that it is now appropriate to seek input from umpires nationally. I have asked the State UICs to advertise this amongst their respective State umpires.

I encourage any umpire to provide input on any issue of the umpire program that he or she feels worthy of raising in this forum. There is an article on the web site which discusses this call for responses in some detail.

This is not a survey and the request for input has been deliberately left "free form" to encourage all and any feedback.

The simplest way to provide feedback is to do so through your State UIC. We are, however, very conscious of the need some may have to remain anonymous and input can be provided directly to Chet Gray at chet.gray@softball.com.au.

Chet will be consolidating all responses and removing any identifying tags from all responses, prior to submission to the committee. Responses will need to be submitted as soon as possible and no later than July 9.

This deadline is necessary so that the committee can report to the August Softball Australia Board Meeting.

Umpire Program Framework

In this edition of BNOL, you'll find an article describing the framework through which the umpiring program is managed. The article describes the formal arrangements through which we manage our program, specifically the relationships that exist between management of the umpire program and management of the whole of sport by Softball Australia."

Friendship Series

The annual Friendship Series is being conducted in Sydney at the Blacktown Olympic venue. An Advanced umpire clinic will be conducted during the course of the clinic. Umpires from NSW, Queensland, Victoria, South Australia and New Zealand will attend.

This is marvellous that we have a group from such wide spread areas. Lets hope Sydney's fickle winter weather is kind to all those involved in the series.

What's new at Umpiring.softball.org.au

By Jason Carter (Webmaster)

If you've visited the National Umpiring Program web site recently you'll have noticed there have been a few changes. It was recognised that the site wasn't the easiest to navigate and finding information was problematic, so an overhaul was initiated.



So what's changed?

Resource Library

The first thing you'll notice is that information that used to be stored in the Resource Library has been separated out into relevant sections. The new menus make it very easy to quickly zero in on the exact information you're after.

BNOL

Blues News Online now has its own section to reflect the importance of this publication to the program. With each edition separated by month and year, you can quickly download previous editions going back to 2001.

Technical Bulletins

Technical Bulletins provide updates and clarification of rules in between releases of the official rule book. Here you can easily find and view all Tech Bulletins that have been released since August 2002.

Training Resources

The Training Resources section provides PowerPoint Presentations that can be used as learning or training aid. Microsoft PowerPoint or the PowerPoint viewer are required to view the presentations. The PowerPoint viewer is available for download from the same section.

Umpires Diary

All umpires should keep a diary of the activities they undertake. This is especially so for those umpires wishing to attend National Tournaments. The activity

diary has been created in Microsoft Excel and is an excellent way of recording the things you do for your sport. Download a copy today!

Forms

The Forms section contains various forms that you'll need at some time or another. From availability forms to clothing order forms – if you're required to provide information, you'll find the form here.

Past Examinations

In the Past Exam Papers section, you'll find – you guessed it – past exam papers. This is a relatively new initiative and one that I think will be welcomed by umpires around exam time. Downloading past exam papers is an excellent way for umpires who are just starting out to get an idea what the exams are like and the format of the papers.

Of course, in order to progress to the next level, umpires are required to be assessed on the diamond. Forms for examiners are available in the Practical Exams section. Again, umpires wishing to progress to the next level can download these forms to see what the examiners will be looking for.

NOAS

The NOAS section describes what the National Officiating Accreditation Scheme is about and provides links for more information. As the National Umpiring Program is accredited with NOAS, all umpires in Australia should be a member of the scheme. The cost is \$2 and can be collected by your State Director of Umpiring.

For those umpires wishing to attend a National Championship, information and timeframes is available in the National Championships section. To be eligible for selection, you must follow the instructions provided here.

Rules - with Big AL

For interpretations of rules explained in a way anyone can understand, the *Rules - with Big Al* section is the place to visit. Alan McAuliffe has a way of explaining rules that makes you wonder why you never understood it in the first place. From time-to-time, Alan includes articles in Blues News Online and you will find these articles in this section also.

National Appointments

When umpires are allocated to national or international tournaments, these are announced in the Umpire Appointments section. It is a particular honour to be



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appointed to an international / ISF tournament so these umpires are listed prominently.

NUC Nominations and Surveys

The NUC Nominations and Surveys sections are fairly self explanatory. If anything is updated in these sections, you can guarantee there will be a related news item relating to the update. However, feel free to have a look anyway! That pretty much covers the new sections. All the "old" standard features, such as the Calendar, Committee and Links, are still there and are updated whenever required. The Calendar will be updated whenever new events are announced.

Photo Gallery

The area that is probably now the most in need of some attention is the Photo Gallery. The NUC are aware that umpires out there would like to see photos of interesting happenings out in the real world. If you have any photos you think would make an interesting addition to the photo library, please feel free to forward them on.

I can't finish this article without mentioning the latest addition to the web page. You can't really miss it – the big Blues News Online "Subscribe Now" graphic. It may be big, it may be ugly and distracting – but you know what? – I've had 10 new subscriptions this month!

So it's doing its job. Maybe I'll design a more discreet graphic in the future. Unless one of you out there is a graphic artist and would like to supply one? The gauntlet is laid down – no prize but you may see your graphic on show for all to see!

Seeing as I've mentioned Blues News Online subscriptions - I'm changing the format of the new edition notification email. There are a couple of reasons for this. Firstly, some email systems reject email if there are too many CC or BCC recipients (which is how I used to send out the email).

Secondly, I can personalise the email a tad, which is always a nice thing. Seeing as you're reading this now, you have probably already seen the new format.

It's addressed directly to you and therefore I won't be sending the email as a BCC (which is a Blind CC for those who don't know. CC is carbon copy for those that didn't know that either).

So that's my tour of the site complete. If you haven't visited the site recently, I encourage you to do so. Also, I appreciate any feedback or suggestions so if you have either, please send me an email – my email address is on the web site.

Western Australian UIC Steps Down

After nearly four years in the role of State Umpire in Chief, I have notified Softball Western Australia that I intend to step down from the role, effective July 1, 2006.

While my commitment to the Western Australian Umpiring program remains strong, I am simply unable to dedicate sufficient time to the role to do it justice. As such, I feel that it is time to step back and let someone else take on this role.

**Western
Australia**

I will still continue to be involved with training, examining and on-diamond work, with this a step back from the administrative side. Softball WA will be calling for nominations shortly and as such, no replacement has been named. Until then, I will act in a temporary role.

I would like to thank past and present members of the WA SUB who have provided great support and assistance over my time. In particular, I would like to call out the work of Rob Harris, Jason Carter, Graham Bancroft and Allen Cheesman. I would also like to acknowledge the assistance of the Softball WA Board Member's Shirley Schneider, Phil Mathewson and Kevin Fuller.

Hope to see you on the diamond soon.

Thanks.

Warren Duff

WA Welcomes New Level 3

Congratulations to Kathy Garbutt on passing her Level 3! Examiners used included Graham Bancroft, Peter Baker and Warren Duff, with assistance from Bill Killmurry and Rob Harris.

2007 National Competitions

Women's National Competition (formerly GP)

Round 1: 17-19 November, 2006 Brisbane, Qld
Round 2: 8-10 December, 2006 Melbourne, Vic
Round 3: 23-25 February, 2007 Sydney, NSW

2007 National Championships

Open Women's & Open Men's: 7-13 January, 2007 Sydney, NSW
Under 16 Girls: 14-20 January, 2007 QLD
Under 16 Boys: 14-20 January, 2007 SA
Under 19 Women's: 21-27 January, 2007 WA
Under 19 Men's: 21-27 January, 2007 ACT
Under 23 Women's: 10-14 April, 2007 NT

Reg Stabb passes away

One of Australia's more senior umpires, Reg Stabb passed away on Sunday, June 18, 2006. BNOL recognises his contribution to the Australian Umpiring Program over many years of service.

BNOL takes this opportunity to thank Margo Koskelainen for supplying the following resume of Reg.

REG STABB

Administration:

Became involved in softball at Geelong Women's Softball Association in 1966.

President Geelong Women's Softball Association 1967-1975.

Initiated the VSA Tournament Committee in 1975 - inaugural Chairman.

Umpiring:

Commenced umpiring in 1966-67.

Attained "State" Umpiring badge [Level 4] in 1971 at the Victorian Championships held in Geelong.

Umpired at Victorian Open Women's and Underage Girl's Victorian Championships from 1969-1980.

Attained "All Australian" umpiring badge [Level 6] in 1973 at the Australian Championship held in Brisbane. AA #45.

Umpired at Australian Open Women's Championships from 1973-1980

Attained ISF Accreditation in 1979. ISF #95

Umpired at all international series held in Australia from 1974-1980, including the Mini World Series held in Brisbane that year.

Retired from umpiring in 1980 due to ill health.

Australia loses another umpire By Margo Koskelainen

It is with great sadness that I report the passing of Catherine [Cathy] Vincent [nee Lloyd] at the age of 51 of cancer on March 9.

Born in August 1954, Catherine was an Australian umpire, Badge #60, attaining her All Australian badge [Level 6] in Brisbane in 1980 at the Women's Open Championship that year.

Catherine started her involvement with softball in 1969 with the Red Sox Softball Club in Sydney and became involved in umpiring the same year.

A primary school teacher, Catherine was the Vice President of the NSW Softball Umpires' Association for six years until 1979/80 and then President for four years until 1983/84. She attended all NSW State Championships from 1971 until 1983.

Catherine also officiated at National Under 16 Championships in Brisbane, Melbourne, Adelaide and Hobart and Under 19 Championships in Canberra and Melbourne.

Catherine retired from umpiring and softball after she married Arthur. She has two children, Andrew and Clare. The family live in Manilla, northern NSW.

Catherine was a contemporary and friend of Vivienne Triplett, Felix Menke, Peg Cutts, Kay Thompson, Lyn Bishop and Margo Koskelainen, amongst many other umpires and players of that time.

Vivacious, energetic and committed, with a quick and wicked sense of humour, she is shown in one of the photographs [though not acknowledged] in full umpire gear of the time, along with Peg Cutts in the book on softball basics written by Troy Martin which also features Cathy Kerr [nee Watt][as a 16 year old].

Thanks to Warren Duff By Mark Toft

As editor of Blue's News On-Line I take this opportunity to thank Warren Duff for his contribution to the National Umpiring Program. Warren has been inspirational leader as Western Australia's UIC and will be missed in that position.

This year I saw Warren in another role, that of, National Examiner and I must say I was very impressed with the debriefs I was involved in at the Under 23 Men's National Championships in Brisbane. His professionalism within the role was first class and he has shown that he will be a valuable cog in the future of the National Umpiring Program.

I thank Warren for his continued support of BNOL with articles from the West, keeping the recognition of his State umpires in the forefront. Well Done Waz!

CONTRIBUTIONS TO BNOL

BNOL IS AUSTRALIAN UMPIRING OFFICIAL MAGAZINE AND IS WRITTEN BY UMPIRES FOR UMPIRES. IF YOU HAVE ANYTHING TO CONTRIBUTE SEND IT TO THE EDITOR. mtoft@ozemail.com.au

Closing date - 15th of each month

WANTED

WANTED

WANTED

BLUES TO HELP OFFICIATE AT THE 2007 WORLD POLICE & FIRE GAMES 18-24 MARCH 2007 INC.

The **World Police & Fire Games** is one of the world's largest mass participation events held every two years to promote ~ COMPETITION ~ UNITY ~ FRIENDSHIP ~ and encourage individuals from all over the world to participate in a multi-national and multi-sport event regardless of sporting ability, gender or race.



From 16-25 March 2007, Adelaide will host the biggest multi-sport festival on earth, the **2007 World Police & Fire Games!** An expected 10,000 to 12,000 competitors will be set and ready to play serious sport and party hard!

Typically about 65 sports are included in a World Police & Fire Games programme. In addition to the 45 'core' sports, which for the most part are those sports included in an Olympic Games, the **World Police & Fire Games** offers competition in events specifically designed to challenge the professional skills of Police Officers & Fire Fighters.

Slow Pitch softball is one of the sports offered and is to be conducted at the South Australian Softball Association grounds, located on Barrett Reserve at West Beach, from 18-24 March 2007.



Competition is planned for men, women & Co-ed and we are in need of additional umpires to enable all games to be adequately serviced.



It does not matter if you do not have any experience at Slow Pitch umpiring, as it is intended to conduct a training clinic for participating officials in the days prior to the commencement of competition. All that is required is that you are an accredited softball umpire.

If you can assist, or you would like further information, please contact **Alan McAuliffe**, Softball Sports Manager, 2007 WPF on 08 8265 4847 (H), 0411 079447 (M) or email at almac8@chariot.net.au

YOU CAN BE GUARANTEED A MOST ENJOYABLE & REWARDING EXPERIENCE!!!



An Umpire Program Leader in Canberra

By Ken Culpitt (ACT UIC)

Mark Gallagher undertook the lion's share of managing umpiring in the ACT during 2005/6 and must be congratulated for the dedication and quality of his contribution.

The year was personally a very successful year one for Mark. Off the field he coordinated the umpires assigned to officiate the Saturday afternoon competition, was Vice President of the Umpires' Association, was Chief Umpire at the ACT Championships as well as Chief Umpire at boys venue for the Australia Day tournament and was umpire liaison for National Under 16 Championship hosted by Softball Canberra.

He played a large role in umpire communication. Beyond the umpire management he created game reports to be used by the media and on the Internet for the Men's regular competition and the National Under 23 Championship played in Canberra.

On the field Mark's results were no less impressive where he officiated at all levels of male and female play. His season performance resulted in him being accredited as a new Level 4 during the Grand Final day presentations. Not surprisingly he was named ACT Umpire of The Year.

Margo appointed to Women's World Championships

By Mark Toft

Former Australian National Director, Margo Koskelainen has again been recognised for her contribution to the sport by being appointed as the Assistant Umpire in Charge at the upcoming World Championships in Beijing. Margo is the current Oceania Region UIC and she will assist ISF Director of Umpires, Merle Butler at one of the most elite competitions on the sport of softball's calendar. The on diamond crew also contains two of Australia's finest female umpires in Debbie Grove and Diane Waller.

Entire Crew

Merle Butler, Margo Koskelainen, Liu Juan (China), Li Zhe (China), Jia Leiming (China), Jia Ali (China), Nicola Ogier (New Zealand), Duncan MacLean (Great Britain), Jill Tuckey (Canada), Greg Pipher (Canada), Gianluca Magnani (Italy), Lori A. Bish (USA), Traci Stoelting (USA), Vince Maoeng (South Africa), Debbie Grove (Australia), Diane Waller (Australia), Yang, Hung-Yueh (Taiwan), Kenzo Kato (Japan), Haruhi Goto (Japan), Carolien Stadhouders (Netherlands), Pedro R. Jimenez (Venezuela), Silvie Mesa Herazo (Colombia)

WHY KIDS LOSE INTEREST IN SPORTS AND WHAT OFFICIALS CAN DO ABOUT IT

(Extracted, in part, from an article in Referee Magazine – June 1996)

Is it fun for kids to play sport anymore? If you haven't been to a youth sports event in a while, take the time to check it out. More often than in decades past, young players ~ sometimes as young as 6 years old ~ are playing *competitively*.

There are many factors that cause kids to lose interest in sports today. Arguably, the more competitive things are at a young age, the less fun it is to play. Plus, there are many other "fun" things for kids to do, like playing video games and watching TV. When those activities turn destructive, like vandalism or even alcohol or drug abuse, consider if a positive sports experience enhanced by positive people could have impacted a wayward child.

Thankfully, many youth sports situations positively impact kids. Under the right conditions, sports play a vital role in kids accepting responsibility, developing self-esteem and learning team concepts ~ all tools vital in later life.

As officials, we play a significant role in developing youths through sports. The way we handle situations and people in youth games has an impact on whether a kid's athletic participation is positive or negative. Officials can be part of the solution.

Listed below are some of the reasons why kids lose interest in sports and following each item is how officials can deal with the situation and help improve the welfare of young children.

1. Poorly trained coaches and supervisors/organisers. Host informational meetings for coaches, parents and others regarding rules and sports philosophy. The more they know about the game and how it should be played, the fewer problems exist.

2. Over-emphasis on winning in overly competitive programs. There are few worse things than a win-at-all-costs coach in youth sports. Gently remind those coaches they're out there for the kids (even if they're not). If problems continue, file reports to the proper personnel. If that doesn't lead to action, assess the entire competition. Is it a competition-wide problem? Can it be fixed? If not, consider officiating in a different competition that provides a more positive atmosphere.

3. Mismatches between children's expectations and reality. Too much pressure on kids equals less fun. Keep things fairly light-hearted at times. Humour at the right time can ease tension.

4. Poor examples of parents, coaches, administrators and organisers. Ensure competition rules are established that effectively deal with unruly parents

and coaches. If coaches, parents and others are screaming at the officials, how can a 10-year old be expected to show respect? In one youth softball league, the parents were so ridiculous that organisers removed the scoreboard and simply let the kids play for one & half hours, no matter how many or few innings were played. No winner, no loser; just kids having fun.

5. Difference between youth-sport coaching and non-youth-sport coaching (attempting to coach youth sports in a similar fashion as the professional sports). That goes for officials, too. There's a difference between youth officiating and non-youth officiating. Think about the manner in which you address kids and the way you handle yourself during games. As an official, you can set an example of how to remain calm and how to effectively communicate with people. If you're a screamer, you have the same impact on the kid as the loud-mouthed coach.

6. Parents attempting to live vicariously through the efforts of their children. Encourage parents at opportune times to get more involved in the process. Being a part of a child's athletic participation means more than dropping the child off and picking him or her up three hours later. As officials, we should constantly search for new officiating recruits. Encourage parents to give officiating a try. At best, the adult will like it and make a positive contribution. Or, the adult will try it, quit, but have a newfound respect for the officials. A better atmosphere results, meaning a better experience for all involved.

Brisbane Classic another Classic

By David Casey

QUEENSLAND

During the Queens Birthday Long Weekend, South Brisbane Softball Association played host to the annual South Brisbane Classic.

This tournament is Queensland's premier men's club tournament. In addition to attracting Sydney United, a number of Australian men's team players also attended. This ensured that the standard of player was of a very high level.

The umpiring crew consisted of Queensland based umpires Yvonne Kahler, Ian Frame, Helen Strauss, David Casey, Jamie Harries, Steve Gutteridge, Ken McIntyre and Darren Sibraa. Also in attendance were Phil and Diane Waller from Victoria.

I wish to pass on our thanks to Phil and Diane for their attendance. We all enjoyed umpiring with them and hope to see them again next year at the Classic.

The grand final for the championship game consisted of Darren Sibraa on plate with Phil Waller, Yvonne Kahler and Diane Waller on 1st, 2nd and 3rd respectively.

"This article describes the framework through which we manage the National Umpiring Program. The article specifically describes the relationships that exist between management of the umpire program and management of the whole of sport by Softball Australia." - Andrew Rindfleish, National UIC

Umpire Program Framework

The Umpire Program framework is built on and compliments the Softball Australia Strategic Framework. Key elements of the framework are a business plan, a management structure for delivering the Program with associated reporting and accountability and regulations for Program Operation.

Business Plan

The Umpire Program has operated with a business plan since late 1992. The plan has sometimes been referred to as the Umpire Program Strategic Plan.

Currently the Umpire Business Plan is developed from the Softball Australia Strategic Plan and is updated each year. The Umpire Business Plan is used to document Umpire Program priorities for the coming year and forms the basis of funding allocation for the Umpire Program. The Umpire Business Plan is reviewed and developed through input from National Umpire Program staff, State Umpires-in-Chief and the Board Member responsible for Technical matters.

The National Umpire-in-Chief submits the Umpire Business Plan in a format consistent with the Softball Australia Strategic Plan to the Softball Australia Finance Manager for consideration by the Softball Australia Finance Committee and subsequently the Board of Softball Australia.

Once the priorities and funding are approved, the Umpire Business Plan then forms the primary source of direction and accountability for reporting.

Management Structure

Generally, the Umpire Program is managed day to day by a National Umpire-in-Chief, two Deputy Umpires-in-Chief and other senior umpires as considered appropriate by the National Umpire-in-Chief. Close links exist to the Chief Executive of Softball Australia and National Office staff as well as Board Members including the Board Members with Technical and Championship responsibilities and from time to time the President of Softball Australia.

Management of the Umpire Program also occurs through National Umpire Staff for projects and recurring initiatives such as umpire examination management and communication publications (Blues News). State Umpires-in-Chief manage the Umpire Program delivery at the State level and in the larger States have committees and district chief umpires to assist.

National Championship Umpires-in-Chief have a lead role in the practical implementation of rule and mechanic changes as well as individual umpire performance assessment. These chief umpires play a significant role in the quality

of umpire performance.

Softball Australia Code

The Softball Australia Umpire Code define roles, responsibilities and method of operation for the Umpire Program. The Regulations describe the method of assessing and accrediting umpires from a rules knowledge, practical application and participation perspective. Aspects of the Umpire Code are currently under review.

Reporting and Accountability

Reporting and accountability are an integral component of the Umpire Program. The National Umpire-in-Chief provides an annual report on the performance of the Umpire Program and, for each Softball Australia Board meeting, a report which advises the Board of key activities within the Umpire Program.

The Board reports are used to gain Board approval for matters that are beyond the routine included in the Umpire Business Plan and for matters that are significant or likely to attract particular attention from the Softball community.

Each year the State Umpires-in-Chief meet with the National Staff to review the delivery of the Umpire Program in the previous year and to determine outcomes for the year ahead. State Umpires-in-Chief provide a written report on the operation of the Umpire Program within their State. Their Reports are also provided to their State Boards.

A review of the Umpire Program takes place between the Softball Australia Board Member responsible for Technical matters and the National Umpire-in-Chief (and senior staff if possible) prior to the annual update of the Umpire Business Plan.

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Hi Mark

While we were away we visited Schutt and I thought you might be interested. They have a umpire's chest plate that is a pull over mesh plate and comes with ice packs to insert into a cooling compartment.

You may or may not have already heard of them, but thought you might be interested. I've attached a link for you to have a look at <http://www.schuttsports.com/ShowProduct.aspx?PK=2267>

Cheers Jo

**Joanne Paez Business Manager
Australian Softball Federation**



MALAYSIAN ISF UMPIRES CLINIC By Neville Lawrance

The Malaysian Softball Association requested an umpire's clinic from the ISF with a special request for a non-Asia clinician. Due to Alan McAuliffe being unavailable to conduct the clinic Merle Butler asked if I could go to Malaysia to run the clinic. With some fast-talking at work, an understanding boss and the blessing of Softball Australia I was appointed to conduct an ISF clinic. The focus of the clinic was to be the recent rule changes, the sitting of an ISF exam and had to be flexible enough to deal with anything else that might be thrown at me.

Two three-day clinics were to be conducted the first in Penang from 29 – 31 May with the second clinic in Kuala Lumpur from 2 – 4 June. Arrangements were made for me to fly into KL before the first clinic so as to allow me to meet with the KL organizing committee. I was then to fly to Penang to meet with the Penang organizing committee prior to the first clinic. Upon arrival in KL a number of requests were made that resulted in a considerable number of changes to the presentation. This was fixed after spending half the night and most of the next day making changes to and producing a new PowerPoint display. I think this is where the flexible bit came in.



Arrangements were made for me to be driven to Penang rather than fly – giving me an excellent opportunity to see some of the fabulous Malaysian countryside. My driver and constant companion from the time of my arrival at KL International Airport to my departure 11 days later was Softball Association of Malaysia Secretary and ISF umpire Ong Ka Aun. Ong made sure that I sampled everything that Malaysian cooking has to offer, I don't think

I want to know what some of it was. He also made sure that I got to see as much of Malaysia as was possible in the limited time available.

The clinic in Penang was conducted in conjunction with the Malaysian Ministry of Education through the Department of Sports and Physical Education. An av-



erage of around 65 attended the various sessions made up of mainly teachers with a number of local umpires also attending. The teachers were mainly involved in coaching/umpiring softball at school level with a number also involved in coaching/umpiring at a national level. The Malaysian National UIC and ISF umpire – Saw Hok Eng also attended and at the conclusion of the Penang clinic Ong and I were invited to his place for the night.

The presentation was very well received with numerous questions being asked. This at times resulted in a departure from the planned presentation but it was stressed that I needed to be flexible enough to cover any issue that maybe raised. While at times this became a contest to try and outsmart me I managed to stay one step ahead. Use was also made of the DVD's of Australia playing in Athens and in particular the Australia v Chinese Taipei game.

An outdoor session that was used to get away from the class room was particularly well received. The problem was a class of 65 being put through the basic principals of the three-man umpire rotation.



This was done with the assistance of Ong and Saw and resulted in a huge round of applause when everyone was able to get it right. Later while watching one of the Olympic softball games it was noted that the Olympic umpires were doing the same things that they had been doing. This brought about further discussion about the consistency of umpiring around the world.

The clinic in KL was run on very much the same basis as the Penang clinic. The main difference being around 20 umpires attending as apposed to around 65 and most were umpires rather than umpire/coaches.

While the level of experience varied from new umpires all the way to ISF their approach to questions and eagerness to learn was very much umpire orientated. Beng Choo Low was able to attend one of the session during the KL clinic having just returned from an ISF meeting in Beijing and before flying out again that evening.

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Beng is the Deputy Secretary General ISF as well as being the President Softball Association of Malaysia and Vice President, Chair, Women & Sport Committee and Chair, Media & Public Relations Committee for the Olympic Council of Malaysia. While Beng is very small in stature she has a very powerful presence and is very committed to Softball and women's sport.

One of the things to stand out from both clinics was a general lack of available teaching resources. This seems to be a worldwide problem. The Australian Olympic games DVD's were very well received with the games giving a glimpse of top-level softball previously not seen or available in Malaysia. A number of copies were made of the Olympic games DVD's and left with Ong and Saw for use by umpires and coaches alike.



A request was also made to Softball Australia for any coaching material that maybe useful to the Softball Association of Malaysian. A number of items have been received and will be forwarded for use by umpires and coaches throughout Malaysia.

In conclusion a very successful trip that will benefit not only umpiring but also coaching and softball in general within Malaysia. The following is extracted from an e-mail received from Beng after my return to Australia.

“The feedback I received was that every one of the participants truly appreciated your patience and for so unselfishly sharing your wealth of knowledge and experience, and they all gained tremendously and invaluable.”

School Sport Australia Softball Championship

By Alex Turnbull

The 2006 School Sport Australia Softball Championships were held at Hawker, ACT on the chilly week from Sunday May 7 through to Saturday May 13. Despite the dreadfully cold and sometimes wet weather that Canberra gave to us the tournament went well with no major issues.

This tournament is run by the school system and brings from across Australia some of the most elite players in the 17 and under age group. Along with the players, student umpires come along with the teams to participate on the national scene and learn from the experience, while of course having fun!

For the week, the nine umpires on the crew often worked back to back games and many did three games in a row through testing conditions, all up a total of 33 games, and 94 appointments. Although some of the umpires commented that they never have had 45 minutes between games and were often ready well ahead of schedule. The mix of older and younger people on the crew was great with the magnificent stories about softball and life experiences from the older guys and the younger umpires relishing the opportunity to gain contacts and further their umpiring careers.

The Grand Final was a tight fought game with NSW winning the championship 3-0 over QLD. The umpiring crew was

Plate: Alex Turnbull

1st Base: Travis Albrecht

3rd Base: Ryan Thorneycroft

Many thanks to this great crew and to Dan McKay who did a wonderful job holding the fort as UIC, and a big thanks to Garry Grimes who wasn't expecting to umpire the week but gladly helped out all week as we were short of umpires.

The crew

Bob Miles	ACT
Ken Ryan	ACT
Mike Sandford	ACT
Garry Grimes	NSW
Alex Turnbull	VIC

Student Umpires

Jess Rooke	NSW
Joel Grimes	NSW
Ryan Thorneycroft	VIC
Travis Albrecht	ACT

UIC: Dan McKay ACT

