



National UIC's Call

With Tricia Sibraa

Firstly, a change to our softball schedule: the proposed Oceania ISF Certification Seminar tentatively set down for March 2013 in New Zealand is deferred by request to the following year, 2014. It is proposed that the Seminar would be held in tandem with the National Fast Pitch Championship, mid-February, 2014 and hosted in New Zealand. The National Fast Pitch Championship is SNZ's Provincial Premier Championship and is for both men and women.

Congratulations to Ron Houison (NSW) who has been appointed to the World Cup of Softball VII, travelling with the Australian Women's Team as they begin their journey to the XIII World Women's Championship. The World Cup will be held in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, from 28th June until 2nd July, 2012.

Applications have now been called for the positions of Tournament Chief Umpire, Assessors/Trainers and Mentor Umpires for the SAL U15 Regional Championships. These Championships will be held from 10th-14th July, in Rockhampton, Queensland. State Directors have now received the application forms for these positions. These application are due to be returned to Debbie Grove, UIC – Development (deblus@aapt.net.au) by Tuesday, 10th April.

Finally, the dates and venue for the SAL International Youth Cup have been confirmed. The IYC will be held in Sydney, NSW at Blacktown International Sportspark, from 2nd-6th July. Information for umpires will be available shortly.

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Technical Updates

Technical updates by Leigh Evans – Umpire in Chief – Technical
National Umpiring Program

When to use the throw out?

Throw out or not throw out, that is the question????

As umpires we are taught to use a sell out (throw out) or sell safe call. Over use of the throw out could lose its effect if not used at the right time. We as umpires should be reserving the throw out for the *very close* sell out call.

- When calling an *obvious safe or out* we should use a routine out or safe mechanic and verbal.
- *One step* off base should be a strong out call with a more animated mechanic and stronger voice.
- *Bang bang* out plays, are and should be, an animated throw out with a loud verbal.

You should also develop a sell safe call and mechanic to be used in a small number of very close plays.

It is important to note that you may not get the opportunity to do a throw out in some games.

Players and coaches should only see the throw out when it's a very close call; thereby lessening the times the coach comes out to question your judgment.

Make sure you concentrate, use good judgement, ensure you have all 4 essential elements in front of you (the Base, Runner, Ball and Fielder), and use good timing, '*stop, wait, call, and signal*'. In fact delaying the call can help you take in all the inputs, this also adds to the intensity, all these including using strength of purpose will go a long way to improve the control of your game and in turn your enjoyment.

I wish you good calling, Leigh.

Plate Work

General Pelvic Alignment (GPA)

SAL MB 2009-3 states “An angle of the hips and shoulders approximately 15 degrees to the pitcher – with the navel (belly button) pointing between the centre of the front of home plate and no further than outside front corner of the plate should be used, and the feet should follow the body’s natural stance.”

While observing and discussing Plate Mechanics with different Trainers and Assessors around the country it has become apparent that plate umpires are over wrapping the catcher.

This causes poor vision, upper torso twist, knee and back issues and it also opens up the side of the body to be hit by pitched or batted balls.

It may also cause outside pitches way off the plate to be called strikes.

Plate Stance

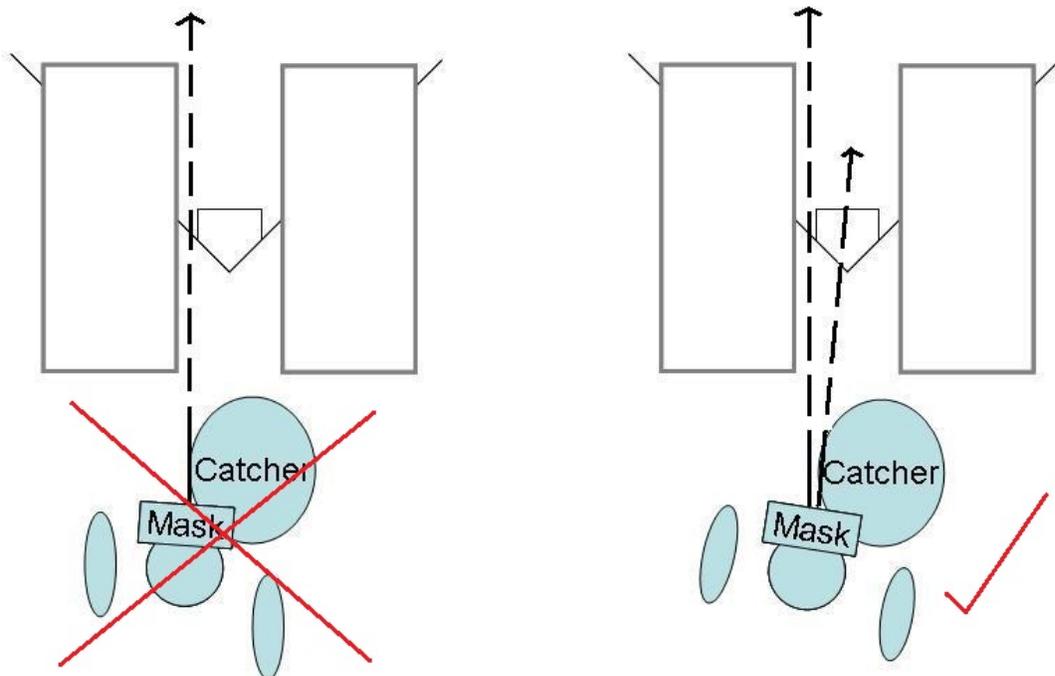
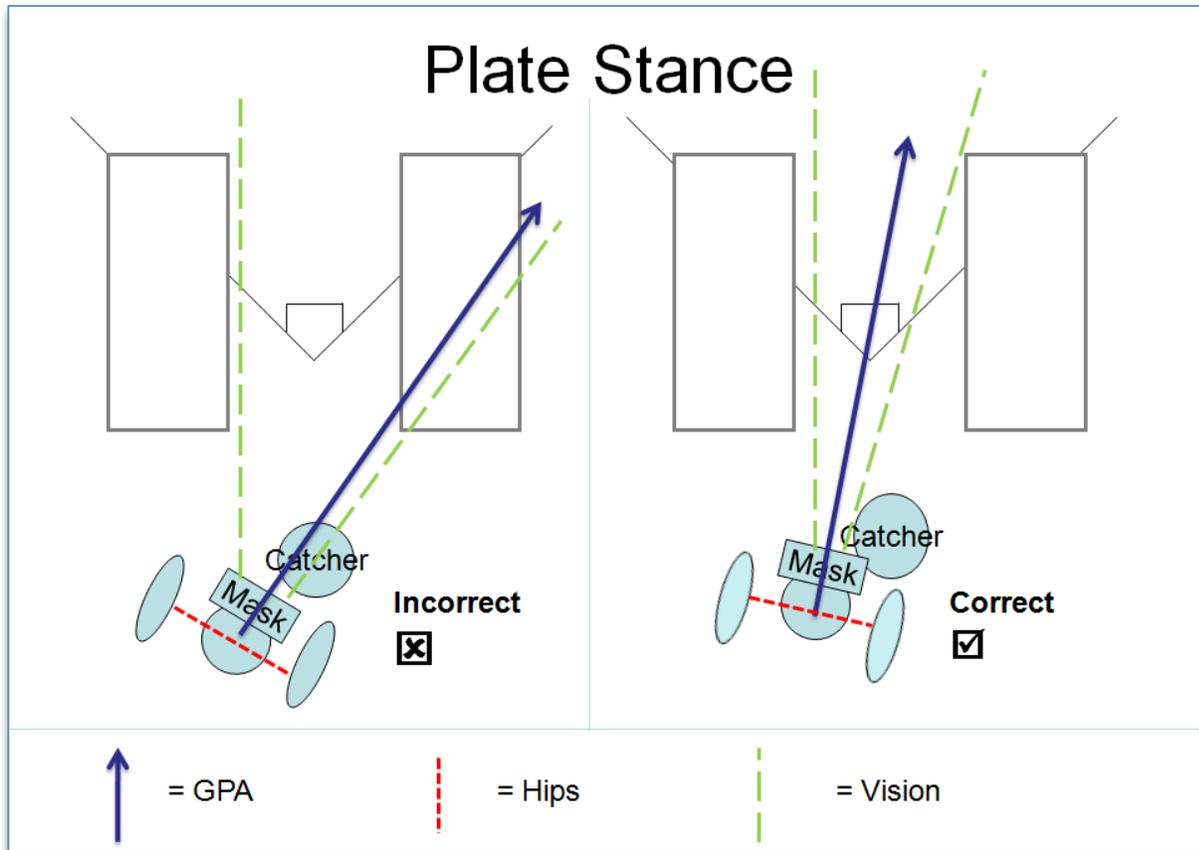


Fig 1. Old Stance Toe and heel with square hips and facing forward toward pitcher

Fig 2. New Stance, relaxed body, still heel and toe with hips facing to centre to the outside corner of plate

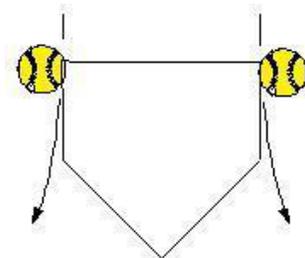


The diagrams above show the incorrect and correct stance that should be used by Plate Umpires.

Our GPA should be to the centre and no further than the outer corner of the plate. Some umpires have been observed facing the right fielder.

Judging the Strike Zone

See also SAL TB 2010-1 and an article on the Fast Pitch Plate Umpire both available on the Softball Australia Web site www.softball.org.au under Umpiring and resources



We have also found some umpires are still struggling with outside pitches.

Judging the outside of the zone is not a simple task. Particularly with a moving ball, a catcher in our way or moving, a moving batter and possibly a swing or check swing from the batter.

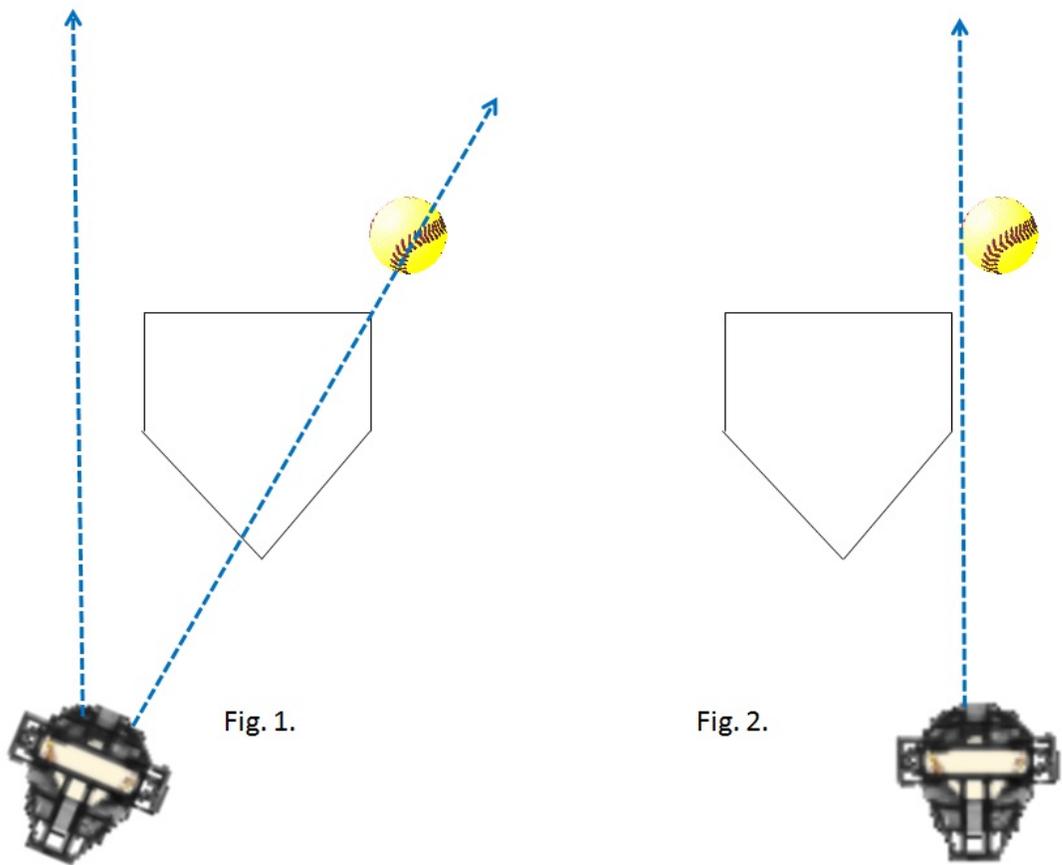
We should do everything we can to call strikes, even if blocked by the catcher.

Some umpires are missing pitched balls half on the plate while others are over compensating for the vision error.

Judging the outside edge of the plate is made more difficult because we set up on the inside of the plate in "The Slot" (the area between the batter and the home plate), there is also what's known as a parallax error.

Parallax, more accurately **motion parallax**, is the **change of angular position** of two observations of a single object relative to each other as seen by an observer, caused by the motion of the observer or the motion of the object.

Simply put, it is the apparent shift of an object against a fixed background that is caused by a change in the observer's position.



The fact that as umpires are set up on the inside edge of the plate, means that an umpire must judge the balls position while not being in a direct line with the flight of the pitch.

Usually you need to judge that the pitched ball misses the plate by approximately $\frac{1}{2}$ a ball width from the slot position (Fig. 1).

Taking your nose to the flight of the ball watching into the catcher's glove will also help.

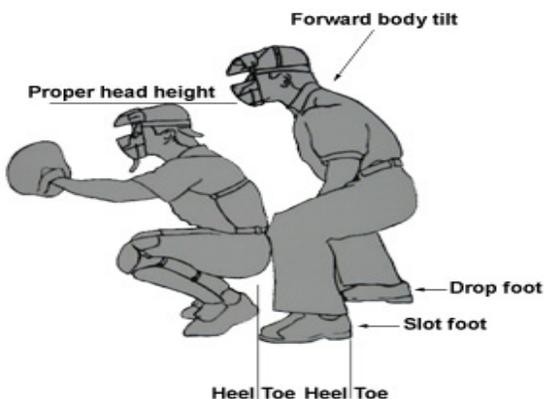
This requires lots of hard work, practice, feedback from a trustworthy catcher, reviewing video or simply using a ball on a stick.

To practice using a ball on a stick you will need a home plate, a helper and a softball attached to a stick or just tape it to the knob of a bat.

Set up in the Plate Umpire position behind the home plate, the use of a chair or even a catcher will make it more natural. The helper should hold the ball on the stick over the home plate and slowly move the ball outward until the Plate Umpire judges it's a "Ball" (Fig.1 above).

The Plate Umpire should then move to the outside of the plate and see whether their judgment was correct (Fig. 2 above).

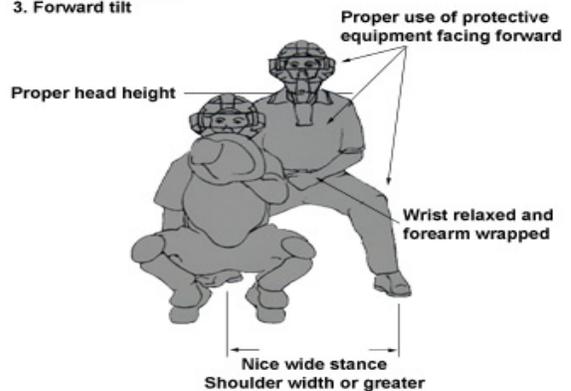
The Slot
(side view)



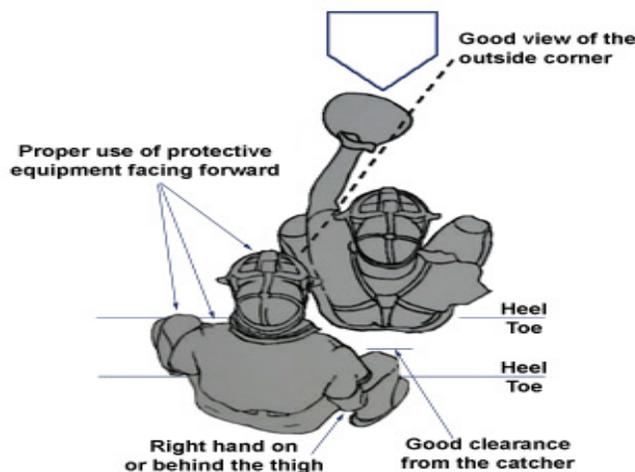
The Slot
(front view)

Proper HEAD POSITION is controlled by:

1. Width of stance
2. Amount of squat
3. Forward tilt



The Slot
(top view)



Date for your Diary – Softball Australia Rules Exam

On the horizon is the **Softball Australia Rules Exam**. The date this year is **Monday, 28th May, 2012**.

ALL umpires should be aware of the exam especially those who have a level and want to stay current and maintain their level, or those who wish to progress to the next level.

The annual Rules Exam is held at your association. If you have small numbers, you may coordinate with a neighbouring association and host the exam at one shared venue. Make sure your copy is ordered!

Please note that sitting the exam is not exclusive to umpires. Players, coaches and other participants are able to test their knowledge of the rules, and many report that it is quite beneficial.

The **SAL National Rules Exam** is part of the umpire accreditation process and is set in multiple-choice format, and is sat around Australia on the last Monday in May. Those wanting to attain their Level 1 or 2 accreditations are able to choose to sit the **SAL Basic Exam on the same night**, which is a modified form of the standard paper. The Basic Paper is less intimidating for the beginner umpire and eases newcomers into the program. The Basic Paper can be sat at any time of the year. It is distributed via email and associations may make as many copies as required.

Australian Capital Territory

Welcome to Alex Turnbull as the newly appointment ACT State Director of Umpiring.

A recent interview revealed a little more about Alex, his passion for the game and the future of the ACT umpiring program.

THE INTERVIEW

My softball career started at the ripe old age of 7 with my first game at the North Canberra Softball Association resulting in tears after being told by a coach that my call was wrong. After being advised that I was right and some words of encouragement from my father (Martin Turnbull – QLD), I returned to the diamond and became a part of a fantastic development squad lead by Helen Wallis Dunn (our development squad made the cover of the World Softball Magazine). I was very fortunate to grow as an umpire surrounded by Ken & Denise Culpitt as well as so many national and state umpires that created an amazing family feel for the sport. I was always very excited to iron my powder blue shirt and head down to the park to call some more games!

My progress through the levels went fairly well for a young person, gaining my level 2 at 11, level 3 at 13 and level 4 at 15. A highlight for me was being appointed the plate of the National Schoolgirls Championship in 2004 where the grand final was a nine innings thriller between arch rivals Victoria and NSW. The game ended with a Victorian 2-1 victory but the atmosphere and the skill level of the players made it an unforgettable game! I was incredibly happy to be given the opportunity by the UIC John Larter considering I had not umpired at a National Championships before.

2005 saw my first national appointment as a skill share to the U19 Women's Championship in Melbourne, where I experienced my first taste of a real Nationals and saw Helen Strauss and Jason Carter obtain their Level 5. At the 2006 U16 Girls' National Championship in Hawker (my home town) I was presented my Level 5 Accreditation by UIC and mentor Sue Itzstein. Definitely a career highlight.

After my success on obtaining my Level 5, I moved to Albury Wodonga for University, which saw me become a member of the Albury Wodonga Softball Association and the Victorian Umpiring Committee. This move provided an opportunity for me to work with Rhonda Scammell, senior Victorian umpires and Ryan Thorneycroft (another young umpire). I credit the support of the Victorian umpires for my success in gaining my Level 6 at the 2009 U19 Men's Nationals – again at Hawker.

Whilst in Albury I umpired all around the country in various State Tournaments and started the administration side of my career, coordinating the umpires in Albury and helping NSW Association Wagga Wagga with umpire development.

Since 2009 I have lived in Dubai, UAE and the USA working as an Outdoor Adventure Instructor and effectively placing my umpiring career on hold. I was fortunate enough to attend a few nationals with the highlight being the rescheduled 2011 U17 Girls' National Championship, where I was able to umpire for the first time at Nationals with my father, Martin Turnbull.

With a slight career change (Rookie Travel Adviser) and a settling of my home base in Canberra, I now have the honour and opportunity to be back at ACT Softball and continue with the development of the ACT Umpiring program.

WHAT CAN THE ACT'S UMPIRING PROGRAM LOOK FORWARD TO?

With an overview in place, the short term goals are to overcome a few hurdles that will assist with the positive outcomes long term. The SUAACT committee have been working hard to improve the development and quality of the ACT Umpiring program and I would like to thank them for their support. One of the short term goals is to create a family-type environment where umpires and volunteers can share in the passion and enjoyment of the sport. The enjoyment that umpires have is critical to the improving development and positive role-models for Softball ACT umpires.

As technology advances so must the way sports administrators prepare, communicate and deliver programs. Establishing clear lines of communication focusing on facts rather than emotion is one way that our goals can be achieved more effectively. This is especially important when it comes to umpire retention considering the amount of choice that is out there for the general public.

Through clear and concise communication, as well as an optimistic outlook, I hope to create a positive umpiring environment for all our members. The benefits are not just restricted to the umpiring community. With better communication and increased development, players, officials and spectators will all benefit from our achievements.

Over the 15 plus years I have been involved with umpiring, I have met some amazing people all around the country. Each person has given me their time to share their experiences and teach me new skills and to everybody who has helped me so far, thank you! I hope that now moving forward in my new role I can impart my experiences and skills upon our ACT umpires, and work together with the SUAACT committee to improve the experience of softball umpires in the ACT.

Alex Turnbull
ACT State Director of Umpiring

Victoria

Victorian Under 15 State Championships 2012

The 2012 Victorian Under 15 State Championships were held at Presidents Park, Werribee on the weekend of 25-26 February. As usual, the Future Umpires Program (FUP) was run at this event and Ryan Thorneycroft led the FUP Training team. Several senior umpires assisted throughout the weekend and their assistance was greatly appreciated. My thanks to Kevin Broomhall, Ryan Thorneycroft, Trevor Murphy, Richard Barrow, Dave Addlem, Mark Williams and Rhonda Rowe who all gave their time to assist in training.

We were very lucky to use Werribee's new umpires room! There were separate change rooms for the males and females, with toilets/showers in each, and a common area in the middle. Heaps of room and a great place to relax between games. Thank you Werribee!

Both days were very hot (higher than 36 degrees on-diamond) and windy, which made for very difficult conditions. A round was cancelled on Saturday afternoon due to the high temperature (37.5 degrees wet bulb). This was welcomed by umpires and players alike.

With all games being playing in good spirits there were no ejections of tribunals required. The senior umpires were required to assist on a couple of rules but otherwise all umpires did a fantastic job.

We had a very friendly crew and there was a lot of laughter in the umpires' room. It seemed that a lot of that laughter was directed at me until I reminded them who did the allocations and how incredibly hot it was outside!

There was terrific camaraderie in the room and I thank all the umpires for their good humor in hot conditions and also for ensuring the FUPs felt welcome.

Finals Allocations

Congratulations to the following umpires on their finals allocations:

	Plate	1st Base	3rd Base
A Grade Boys	Brett Tyler	David Luisetto	Adrienne Hnatjuk
A Grade Girls	Hayden Croft	Alan Van Breda	
B Grade Girls	Louise Trickett	Connor McMorrow	

Finally, thanks to Chris Trengove, who was excellent as my Deputy TCU

Writer - Jason Carter - Tournament TCU



U15 State Championships Crew (Including FUP)



A Grade Girls Finals - Hayden Croft and Alan Van Breda



B Grade Girls Finals Crew - Connor McMorow and Louise Trickett



A Grade Boys Finals Crew - Adrienne Hnatjuk, Brett Tyler and David Luisetto

Queensland

South Brisbane Club Classic - Brisbane

The 2012 South Brisbane Club Classic is being held on the June long weekend from Saturday 9 to Monday 11 June 2012.

This year will see a strong contingent of players as it precedes a World Championship, and a number of players will be looking to impress selectors as this is a selection event.

If you are interested in umpiring at this event, please contact Darren Sibrra - dsibraa@tennis.com.au

Queensland Umpires heading to New Zealand

Two Queensland umpires will also be representing us in Christchurch - New Zealand for the Southern Cross Challenge. Congratulations on the successful appointment of Norelle Thomas (Redlands) and David Casey (Wynnum).

Enjoy the experience and we looking forward to hearing about your international umpiring adventure.

New South Wales

New generation of umpire trainers for SNSW - 5 March 2012

A total of 10 umpires descended on Blacktown International Sportspark on Sunday, March 4, to participate in the first installment of this year's Train the Trainer Clinic.

The SNSWUA Train the Trainer Clinic is one of Softball NSW's umpire development programs targeted at umpires wishing to facilitate association-based umpire development clinics and programs.

The purpose of the clinic was to introduce and practice the concepts, skills and techniques used to effectively develop and facilitate the information and skills sessions that comprise an umpire development clinic or program.

For many of the umpires in attendance, including Canberra-based umpire Alex Turnbull who travelled to Sydney to participate, the clinic offered all that it promised to and more.

“It was worth the trip from Canberra. It was an opportunity to get feedback on my own performance and was valuable to hear other participants’ perspectives,” Turnbull said.

The clinic obviously assisted James English think about his preparation: My main “take home” point was a reminder of how much preparation is needed. I can see how my performance at the next umpire clinic will be far better than my last performance.”

There were also participants who were happy to learn new skills in a softball setting but could also see how they could be applied more broadly.

“This workshop has application, for me, that goes beyond softball and right into my passion with the Rural Fire Service. I would have liked to have seen other younger people here,” Penrith City umpire Christiaan Zaiter said.

Ron Houison, Facilitator and Chair of the SNSWUA Umpire Development Sub-Committee, said the program was “an ideal way to help umpires develop facilitation skills and to promote consistency in umpire training across NSW.”

“We covered a range of topics with the participants, including the theory behind information and practical sessions, session planning, use of icebreakers and questioning techniques.”

“Those who attended were also given the opportunity to turn their skills into practice in a simulation-type situation with the assistance of an experienced umpire facilitator.”

John Walker said that “these interactions were not possible for me at my home association,” so he was very pleased to have made the trip from the Central Coast.

“Facilitators from New South Wales with ISF Accreditation, Training/Teaching Accreditation and extensive training experience, notably Amanda Houison and Scott Rindfleish, were constantly on hand to help our new trainers and I very much thank them for their assistance,” Houison added.

“I would also like to congratulate and thank the participants for their willingness to partake in this clinic and, in advance, thank them for the important work they will do back in their local associations.”

The SNSWUA is pleased to announce that the second part of the Train the Trainer Clinic will be held on Sunday 26 August 2012. This workshop will concentrate on softball-specific information such as how to create relevant training programs in an association environment.

Umpire development to dominate 2012 as Intermediate Clinic is heralded a success - 6 February 2012

The 2012 Intermediate Clinic was held over Saturday 4 and Sunday 5 February at the home of Softball NSW, Blacktown International Sportspark.

A total of 13 umpires, representing 8 associations across NSW, participated in the two-day clinic facilitated by some of the state's most senior umpires.

For Clinic Facilitator and Chair of the SNSWUA Umpire Development Sub-Committee, Ron Houison, the weekend's clinic signals a positive beginning to the many development initiatives set to be rolled out across 2012.

"We've always had a strong development focus in NSW and this weekend's Intermediate Clinic was a successful beginning for us," he said.

"This year we were able to incorporate a live pitching and catching session to enhance the delivery of our plate mechanics session using players from the NSW U17 Boys team."

"We were also able to capture video footage of umpires' plate mechanics and store this on USB devices for feedback and analysis."

"The clinic was a great success and I'd like to thank all of the participants and facilitators for their hard work and commitment over the weekend. It was great to work with this group of umpires and I look forward to working with them in the near future," Houison said.

With the clinic content covering everything from rotations to plate mechanics to rules, the participants are now well positioned to continue their development by becoming members of the 2012 Softball NSW Umpire Academy.

The Softball NSW Umpire Academy is yet another new and exciting initiative that will help NSW umpires prepare for higher accreditation by completing a structured program leading up to practical examinations.

The Academy aims to provide a structured umpire development program, specifically focusing on preparing umpires for practical examinations as well as expanding and building on the core topics covered at the SNSWUA Intermediate Clinic.

For the 13 participants who recently participated in the SNSWUA Intermediate Clinic, as well as other interested Level 2 and 3 umpires, the year ahead is set to offer many more umpire development opportunities.

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