



# Blues News On-Line

[www.umpiring.softball.org.au](http://www.umpiring.softball.org.au)

Edition May 2010



## National Address with Leigh Evans

Due to our National UIC, Tricia Sibraa recuperating from a full knee reconstruction, this month's address was compiled by UIC – Technical, Leigh Evans. This is the time of year where some states are winding down, while others are gearing up for their winter seasons.

UIC, Debbie Grove's Development Stream is in its final stages of International Softball Clinic participant selection. The criteria matrix has been completed and the information is being compiled by Matt Gowty, Matt is a past ISF umpire and National Umpiring Committee Member and SAL Hall of Fame member. These Level 6 umpires will be assessed for their International Umpiring competencies at the next Open Championships.

This is also the time of year where most umpires across the country are thinking of or already hitting the rule and case book to brush up on their rules knowledge for this year's National Rules Examination. This year it will be held on the 31<sup>st</sup> of May 2010 at 7.30pm, and it will be based on the 2006-2009 rule book, so ignore the latest technical rules bulletin for the 2010 season. 900 National Rules Exam papers in total have been ordered by all states plus the basic exam. We are still trialling the scanning software to scan the answer sheets, but more importantly to carry out the analysis which is very time consuming, collating all the results, from all umpires across the country.

Despite requests every year not to make any marks on the answer sheet, this is still proving difficult. The exam paper has small lines after the Question number to place your answer, this is to help you check your answers later at home and also to help you to transfer your answers to the answer sheet. I remind you to please fill in the circle with black pen. If you happen to make a mistake then we would prefer you to take a *correction tape* with you on the exam night and white out the incorrect answer.

To help umpires study, the [past exams](#) are posted on the umpiring web site. The SAL rule book also has a section on case plays, an excellent way to test your understanding of the rules. The international web site also has a web site called ump school (<http://www.ruleboxsoftware.com/isf.aspx>), this is an excellent medium to test your knowledge and is an excellent umpires resource platform.

There are several ways an umpire can sit the exam to advance or maintain their level of accreditation. There is a bulletin explaining this procedure [SAL TB 2008-2](#).

- The basic exam: New umpires can sit the SAL Basic Rules Examination for level 1. Level 1 umpires can maintain their accreditation, or umpires wanting to advance to level 2 can also sit this exam in an environment with less pressure.
- The SAL National Rules Exam: All umpires Level 2 and up must sit this exam, naturally all level 0 and 1 umpires can also sit the SAL National Rules Exam.
- Umpires that are away overseas, sick or have to work may apply (within certain time frames) to their State Director of Umpiring to sit a Supplementary exam, which is then forwarded to the NUIC Technical.

Nationally, the new pitching rule regarding foot work seems to have been accepted by players and coaches. It is not easy implementing these changes, so SAL and I thank you all for your efforts. This is a very important rule and its implementation is especially important for our teams going away to represent Australia at International Championships and competitions. For your information a copy of the recent SAL Scoring Technical Bulletin highlighting these and other changes has been attached to the end of this edition of BNOL.

The ISF has released another clarification for pitching and a copy is in this edition of BNOL. This clarification focuses on the changes to the rule after this year's rule changes from the International congress of the feet, the 2 second STOP and the hands separating as the pivot foot pushes from the plate, also keeping the pitching arms in motion throughout the leap or drag.

The National Umpiring Technical Committee has forwarded the first draft of the new Rule and Case book to SAL for print set up. I would like to thank Alan McAuliffe ISF umpire, past DUIC, and SAL and ISF Hall of Fame member for his tireless efforts in setting up the Rule Book. I would like to take this opportunity to wish you all well in the upcoming rules exam.

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### National Umpiring Program

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# Umpires Exam Tips

## Hints:

- Eat before you attend
- Arrive ready for the exam
- Do you have a black pen, Correction tape?
- Do you need a coat
- Have you a drink, etc – be comfortable
- Try not to arrive after the exam has started, however do not rush, as this places unnecessary pressure on you
- Take your time – there is no time limit
- Attend any rules sessions ran by the state
- Read through your rulebook and the case book
- If unsure of the answer, answer what you would do in a game situation, it is usually correct
- Rules are written with fairness in mind

## Questions & Exam Hints

- Exams always include
- Definitions & Exceptions
- Rules 4, 7 and 8 esp. Obstruction or Interference, Batting Out of Order, Substitutes.
- Last year's most incorrect answers– however not in the same format.
- Many of the questions are scenario based (R1 on 1st etc) therefore use the diagrams at the bottom of the page indicating each player and play as the scenario unfolds. If a statement is not entirely true then it is false (doesn't mean it will recite every part of a rule e.g. "May be hand or machine wound" True)
- All the answer may not be given in a ruling, as long as what is given in the ruling is true, it is true.

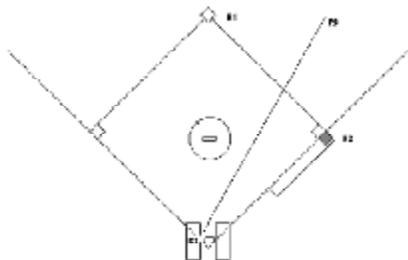
Look for definitive Keywords such as:

- Only
- Always
- Never
- Must / Must not
- Completely
- "This is"

Answer the questions you know first, the answer may come to you later in the exam. You may also be more relaxed once most of the questions are answered.

## Draw the Question

R1 is on 2<sup>nd</sup> Base. R2 on 1<sup>st</sup> when B3 hits a fly ball to F9....



	4	5	6	7	Score
<b>RED</b>	0	1	2		1
<b>BLUE</b>	1	1			2

In Score and innings type questions, use a box score to help you.

At the end of the 5th innings, Blue leads 2 runs to Red 1 run. Red score 2 runs in the sixth innings with 2 out when the game is called. SCORE REVERTS Blue wins 2 runs to Red 1 run

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# Queensland

[www.umpires.qld.softball.org.au](http://www.umpires.qld.softball.org.au)

## Qld Girls U15 State Titles By Sally Crawford

This was the inaugural Under 15 state titles and the weekend kicked off with enthusiasm from all teams and umpires. With 5 Level 2 candidates and a Level 3 pre-assessment we all knew we were in for a big weekend.

The level of softball being played was outstanding and our umpires were up for the challenge. The atmosphere in the umpire's tent was quite relaxed and jovial which enabled our candidates to enjoy their weekend without feeling too much pressure. All umpires performed well over the weekend, which was one of the hottest we have seen in April for some time.

Congratulations are to be extended to our successful Level 2 candidates; Jodie Knight, Kylie Knight, Colleen Thomson, Adam Reddacliff and Leigh Torrens and our Level 3-to-be; Jeff Hooper. All of us look forward to seeing them continue to achieve their goals throughout their umpiring careers.



Under 15 Girls Grand Final Crew: L-R: Martin Turnbull, Keith Thorburn, Ross Winn



Under 15 Girls President Cup Crew: L-R: Ian Goodman, Tina Thorburn, Jeff Hooper



Successful Level 2 Candidates  
Front: Colleen Thomson, Leigh Torrens.  
Back: Jodie Knight, Adam Reddacliff, Kylie Knight.

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# Tasman Umpire Exchange

## Trans Tasman Umpire Exchange by Jason Carter

I was at home when I received the call from Debbie Grove. "Are you sitting down?" asked Deb. Being a bloke, there being sport on TV and it being a weekend – I was. Deb then told me I was heading to New Zealand to participate in the Trans Tasman Exchange. Needless to say I was very excited to be given the opportunity to represent our umpiring program outside of Australia.

### Prior to Departing

The night before I was due to leave I checked the Air New Zealand web site and discovered I could take 20kg without paying for excess baggage. So I packed my bags as light as I could, got the scales out and picked up the bags. 30kgs. D'OH! Took my shoes out and put them in my backpack and remembered an episode of Border Security where a stash of drugs was packed into the soles of shoes. "Any reason you're bringing a pair of steel capped shoes into the country, Mr Carter?" Shoes went back in the suitcase. OK, I'm paranoid. Anyway, I slimmed down as much as I could but was still 8kg over and decided to cough up the excess when I got to the airport. Minor in the scheme of things!

### Day 1

I was at the airport by 6:30am, paid my excess baggage (D'OH!) and went through customs. I must have a guilty conscience because I always feel nervous going through customs. It's like when you have a police car behind you but you've done nothing wrong. Or is it just me?

The flight was uneventful and I even managed to watch "X-Men3: Wolverine". The plane landed on time in Christchurch at 2:30pm local time. Customs presented no problems and I was into the terminal after about 20 mins to be greeted by the friendly face of John Hickman.

We drove to the ground first so I could have a look. On the way I asked John about our accommodation. "Four to a room, two to a bed", says he. "You're obviously all very close over here", says I. Obviously a mistake (I hoped). We had a good laugh about that.

Mainland Ballpark has two skinned diamonds, one of which has lights. There's also a sports ground adjacent to the ballpark which has room for another 6 open diamonds (but only 4 were required). Dropped off gear at the park and then went to Mark McFarlane and Nicky Ogier's place for a roast dinner. Wayne Saunders (TCU) went to the managers meeting and met up with us at Mark and Nicky's. We had a crew meeting where the primary discussion was around zero tolerance of illegal pitching.

Picked up some ice and Coke to mix with my favourite drink back at the accommodation which, luckily, was a two bedroom apartment, two to a room and one to a bed! I was delighted to be sharing with Wiremu Tamaki, Dave Shedlock and Gavin Shepard.

### Day 2

I must admit that I was expecting cool weather. What we got was clear skies and 27 degrees – nice! The allocations were placed on the board and I had a plate and two bases. I was feeling a bit nervous but quickly got over those as my heightened senses and supreme physical conditioning took over. Yeah, right! I think it took until the 3<sup>rd</sup> inning before the nervousness stopped and got into the swing of things.

The toilets at the ground presented a challenge. All of the latches on the doors on each of the cubicles were broken and the doors were sprung to remain open. I discovered that a filled water bottle, placed "just so", would keep the door closed enough for me to retain some modesty.

### Day 3

Oh my gawd, it was cold! Even the kiwis were complaining about the cold. Two bases and a plate. Apparently I was having too good a time because a lady from the losing side (funny that) spoke to me after one of the games and said that "I shouldn't laugh on the diamond – it's unprofessional". Riiight.

Can't believe the wide variety of pitching styles – and the catchers ask questions to work out your zone and then get the pitcher to pitch to it! Had a plate where the catcher was a man-mountain. In between innings I quietly mentioned to Glen Nalepa (my base umpire) how the hell I was supposed to see around him (jokingly, of course). Glen yells to the catcher, "Hey catch, the blue can't see around you!" What a dobber! Glen knew the catcher apparently. Anyway, the catcher and I agreed that when he was going to move left, he'd tilt his head left and vice versa. Worked well!

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# Tasman Umpire Exchange

Getting to the pointy end tomorrow. Wayne had written on the white board “Piki ake” (pron. Picky arky), which means “Step Up”. We were all asked to “piki ake” for the start of the finals.

## Day 4

A crew from NZ’s TV1 was doing a live cross from diamond 1. Amazing that the sport has enough profile to warrant a visit from the morning show! Had a base, plate then base. No issues at all in any of the games so far!

There was a team from the NZ Defence Force at the tournament. They were using a NZ Air Force bus which had their logo on the side - a kiwi - a small flightless bird. <insert \*snigger\* here>.

## Day 5

Finals day! I got a plate on a semi-final and base on a final. Felt very honoured to be given the plate in an important game. A photographer from the local paper was there and I told the crew that, obviously, he was there to interview me. Funnily enough no one believed me.

The semi-final plate was an interesting affair. It went like this:

- Pitcher puts the ball through the batter’s box to hit the opposing side’s pitcher. He doesn’t appear to react and heads up to first. Defensive coach immediately subs the pitcher, giving the impression that “Your jobs done, you can come out of the game now”. Does not bode well.
- Next dig, the pitcher who was hit puts one through the batter’s box and nearly takes the batter’s head off. We avoid a brawl at this point with some wild gesturing and puffing our chests out a bit.
- After another 2 pitches, another one through the box and it hits the batter. And it’s on. Benches clear and we have an all in brawl! 15 mins and a couple of ejections later we’re back into it with no more issues. Phew!

I was very proud of the crew on that game (Gavin Shepherd and Kevin Tippett). They did their part in ensuring the right things were done and I felt like we were a team the whole time. Thanks guys!

The base on the final, thankfully, was without incident.

Following the last game, Wayne presented me with a New Zealand badge and patch. Most of the umpires packed up and left following the presentation. I was lucky to be staying another night and stayed with Mark and Nicky who were very hospitable. Not having a TV, we had a few drinks and talked until late into the evening. Mark dropped me at the airport around 4am for a 6am flight back to Melbourne.



Some observations about the tournament in general:

- The respect for the game shown by players and coaches (generally) was fantastic.
- We were calling illegal pitches for the slightest breach, regardless of whether (or where) runners were on. By the 2<sup>nd</sup> day most pitches were *completely legal* !! This was a highlight for me and a real eye opener.
- Our mechanics and rotations are very similar and it’s a testament to their program, and ours, that we can slot into each other’s tournaments so easily.
- I’m really glad that I’ve been to a few Skins and Open Men’s tournaments in Australia before umpiring at this tournament. Calling ball at that level is good preparation for this tournament.
- Breakfast, lunch and dinner were all provided at the park by local umpires. These guys did a magnificent job and we ate like kings! John, Dave, Charlie and gang – Thank you very much!

## In Closing

I’ve made a heap of new friends and gained invaluable experience. I’d like to thank Softball Australia and Softball New Zealand for making the trip possible and the National Umpiring Committee for selecting me for this appointment. I’d also like to thank those umpires who have helped me reach my goals along the way – you know who you are!

I feel very proud to have represented the Australian program and I thoroughly recommend that if you’re given the opportunity you grab it!

The crew: Lance Brown, Mark McFarlane, Glen Nalepa, Nicky Ogier, Wiremu Tamaki, Lance Type, Jeremy England, Dave Shedlock, Riki Tourangi, Dave Beaumont, Charlie Gaze, John Hickman, Gavin Shepherd, Rikki Thompson, Kevin Tippett, Ross Emerson, Dave Fortin and myself.

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## Tasmanian State Championships by Wayne Clarke

Latrobe held their second ever championships on Sunday 14 February hosting the U14 Boys and Girls. Due to the number of teams involved and lack of diamonds a grand final would not fit into the schedule for the girls, so the winner was decided by who finished on top of the ladder.

The next Sunday, 21 February, a few umpires made the trip to Launceston for the U16 Boys State Championship. This time due to the lack of teams a "skins" format was decided for the day, so no grand final was needed. It was good to see the boys out there getting a game and enjoying themselves.

Sunday 28 February saw the men head to Launceston. Only two umpires had called a men's game in the past 12 months, while for the others it had been years. So it was with a little trepidation we went onto the diamond, wondering what we had got ourselves into, but in the end, all went well.



Open Men Final Crew



L to R: Jason Featherstone, Peter Clarke and Kelvin Clarke

The standard of play was surprisingly high, considering the men only play once a year, at the State Championships. The only worrying thing was that some of the catchers weren't quite up to the standard of their pitchers. So, after coping a few hits, a couple of the not so brave umpires decided the "slot" was not for them.

The Grand Final was tight game, going down to the wire. A small reminder to Debbie, after the lead off batter makes it safely to one; there can not possibly be 2 out!

The final championship, B Grade, was held in Hobart from Saturday, 6 March to Monday, 8 March. With the Open Women's tournament cancelled earlier in the season, it meant that all women were eligible to play, which a few teams took advantage of.

## National Umpiring Program



# Tasmania

[www.tas.softball.org.au](http://www.tas.softball.org.au)

This made for some very good games.

In one game there was a 3 pitch innings. The next innings the plate umpire let the catcher know his disgust when it went a for a “marathon” 4 pitches!

The weather was absolutely superb for the Saturday and Sunday (maybe a bit too hot on Sunday), but on Monday all games except for the grand final were played in the rain.

Even with the rain the temperature was still high, so everyone had the dilemma of whether to wear a coat to keep dry, but possibly overheat or not to wear one and get wet but keep a little cooler.

At this tournament Peter and Kelvin Clarke were able to successfully complete their level 3 assessments, while Jason Featherstone successfully completed his level 2 assessment (Pictured above).

Bruce Jacob was also presented with his level 1 certificate. Well done to Peter, Kelvin, Jason and Bruce.

It was a great tournament to finish off with and being over 3 days gave ample time to catch up with what everyone had been up to in the past year. With state commitments already over it is just another couple of weeks before the end of all local rosters for another season.

### Final Allocations

Open Men - Plate – Debbie Rodman	1 <sup>st</sup> – Kelvin Clarke	3 <sup>rd</sup> – Wayne Clarke
B Grade - Plate – Wayne Clarke	1 <sup>st</sup> – Craig Williams	3 <sup>rd</sup> – Bob Cluley
U14 Boys - Plate – Scott Bartlett	1 <sup>st</sup> – David Lipscombe	3 <sup>rd</sup> – Peter Clarke



Pictured right, Bruce Jacob has taken the first step in his umpiring career when he was presented his Level One certificate at these championships

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## Men's challenge continues to impact by Richard Barrow

The 09/10 Impact Challenge concluded last week. Top male players in the State have been coming together on a Tuesday night under lights for the last three seasons to play high-level softball. Played at various locations, but most notably Altona, Casey and Geelong, this season saw 29 games staffed by 16 umpires covering 86 appointments using the 2, 3 and 4-umpire systems. Many umpires use this tournament to prepare for their next level and the VUC use this tournament to provide feedback and to carry out assessments.

Over 3,100 combined kilometres were travelled by umpires this season and with many double-headers in the draw, getting home well after midnight was common. With the odd rain-out, venue switch and forfeit, I'd like to thank all umpires for their flexibility, often at short notice. The grand final game was umpired by Deb Keogh, Richard Barrow and Stacey Loveridge (Pictured above).



I would like to thank the Umpiring Crew across the season: Dave Addlem, Steven Lloyd, Stacey Evans, Trevor Murphy, Richard Barrow, Leigh Evans, Deb Keogh, Jason Carter, Kevin Broomhall, Rhonda Rowe, Chris Hutchings, Ryan Thorneycroft, Roy Arscott, Chris Trengove, John Junker and Stan Tolmie. Examiners who performed assessments included Deb Keogh, Kevin Broomhall and Jason Carter – again, much appreciated.

The players and organising committee have expressed their thanks and appreciation of our work, enabling them to have a top quality competition.

Now for the plug – I would love to see more umpires nominate early for the new season later this year and to utilise this as a place to develop further on the 3-umpire system, especially for up and coming candidates. With the quality of game provided, valuable feedback can be given at this level by senior and experienced umpires.

### DATE CHANGE FOR 2011 JOHN REID SHIELD AND GILLEY'S SHIELD FINALS

The dates for the John Reid Shield (Open Men's Championship) and the finals of the Gilley's Shield have been brought forward by one day to allow for the Grand finals to be played on the same day with a joint closing ceremony.

The new dates are as follows:

- John Reid Shield- 15<sup>th</sup> – 19<sup>th</sup> February 2011
- Final Round of the Gilley's Shield – 17<sup>th</sup> – 19<sup>th</sup> February 2011

Please adjust your calendar of events accordingly.

## National Umpiring Program



# Victoria

[www.vuc.softball.org.au](http://www.vuc.softball.org.au)

## Kevin named Victorian umpire of the year by Stacey Loveridge

Victorian stalwart umpire, Kevin Broomhall has been named as Victorian Umpire of the Year at the recent Victorian State Dinner. The Margo Koskelainen Umpire of the Year was selected from three of the best from the Victorian ranks of umpires, Jason Carter, Leigh Evans and Kevin Broomhall.

**Jason Carter:** His achievements this year include Participation in 4 National events in 2010: Skins, Gilley's shield, u16's (examiner), and Open National Championships; Umpired in Trans-Tasman exchange 2010- selected to umpire on one of the finals, Umpired preliminary final at National open championships, selection in National Umpire Development Squad, work with players and coaches to develop policies, and leading VUC training committee.

**Leigh Evans:** His achievements include umpiring at the Men's World Championships in Canada, current UIC- Technical including writing annual umpires exam, work training developing umpires.

**Kevin Broomhall:** Kevin has been involved in softball umpiring for 20 years.

He mentors junior umpires at his local association weekly and has been heavily involved in umpire training and education since 1997, including the development of training materials and resources.

Kevin achieved level 5 accreditation in 2000, level 6 in 2002, and ISF certification in 2007. Kevin has participated in the Tasman exchange in 2008, and has been appointed to umpire at the Canada Cup and the US World Cup in 2009.

Kevin takes pride in his role as an official and it doesn't matter what level of ball he's umpiring – he always gives 100%.

Kevin recently took on the role of SDU, the number of hours he has already put into this new role clearly demonstrates his commitment to the Victorian Umpiring Program.

We are proud to announce that Kevin Broomhall was selected as the 2010 Margo Koskelainen Victorian Umpire of the Year

The Victorian Umpiring Committee would also like to congratulate Leigh Evans and Kevin Broomhall on being presented with Softball Australia Service Awards.



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## Victorian Under 14 State Championships by Jason Carter

The 2010 Victorian Under 14 Championships were held at Horsham on the weekend of 6-7 March. As usual, the Future Umpires Program was run at this event and Stuart Tyler, in his capacity as FUP Trainer, did a great job along with Ryan Thorneycroft as assistant trainer. It was great to have the assistance of Kevin Broomhall and Leigh Evans to help with training and umpire feedback.

Unfortunately, the normal area for umpires to get changed was being renovated so we were provided an area in the Racing Clubs Tote room. This room proved to be a little too small (perhaps it's manned by ex-jockey's?) so we took over the Tote room veranda as well. Luckily, we found a tarp we could wrap around the veranda to provide some privacy and protection from the weather. Thanks to the tallest member of the crew, Brett Tyler, for climbing onto a chair to hook the tarp up each day! Privacy wasn't too much of an issue though – we were located a fair distance from the diamonds which were on the inside of the trotting track. I don't think I'm alone in saying that if I have to duck underneath a trotting track barrier again it will be too soon!

The first morning began with a miracle...all of the umpires were in attendance! In my experience of managing underage tournaments, having all of the umpires present for the 8am meeting is just plain incredible. To all the umpires' credit, I didn't have to chase anyone up for the entire tournament. Thank you to all the umpires for making that part of managing the crew easy, at least!

After interest from several level 2 umpires, Kevin Broomhall provided 3-umpire rotation training for several umpires. Three of those umpires were then provided a game to put what they learned into practice. Although there was some nervous jitters on-diamond, all three umpires showed they understood the basics and the game was completed without any major issues. Great stuff!

Unfortunately, two umpires injured themselves which limited their ability to be allocated to games. One umpire broke her finger during a game and was limited to bases only. The other tripped over off-diamond and twisted her ankle and was removed from allocations entirely. It sounds kind of cruel but the tripping accident provided much mirth for all present. We are a nasty bunch sometimes, aren't we?! It was fantastic to see some of Future Umpires from last year at the tournament as pool umpires this year. It's a testament to our program that one of those umpires was allocated to a final. Well done Talia!

As you would hope at a junior tournament, there were no protests or ejections for the weekend. Of course, that's because we had such terrific umpires, right? Right.

### ***Finals Allocations***

Congratulations to the following umpires on their allocation to grand finals:

	<b>Plate</b>	<b>Base</b>
A Grade Girls	Alan Van Breda	Kate Pristov
B Grade Girls	Bernard Vella	Talia McDonald
A Grade Boys	Aaron Wallace	Adrienne Hnatjuk
B Grade Boys	Brett Tyler	Lachlan Swann

I would like to thank the VUC for giving me the opportunity to be the UIC for the U14 Championships. Being part of the development of our umpires is an honour and I get great satisfaction in being able to provide useful feedback to umpires and hopefully put something back into the system that supported me.

Thanks to my leadership team at the tournament – Kevin, Leigh, Stuart and Ryan. We had a hoot back at the accommodation each night. Thanks especially to my deputy, Trevor Murphy, who did a great job. Trevor put in a huge amount of work prior to, and during, the tournament and it would be great to see Trev managing a tournament in the future.

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# International Development Program

## International Development Program Update

Last year the Australian International Umpire Development Programme was commenced whereby all level 5 and 6 umpires were given the opportunity to submit an application to join the squad. The applications were assessed against a published criteria and the nine level 6 and seven level 5 umpires who applied were accepted into the squad. This is an ongoing programme and any level 5 or 6 umpire may apply to be assessed to join the program at any time.

The program provides training and assessment to each individual umpire leading up to assessment for selection to attend an ISF clinic.

The next ISF clinic will be held in February 2011 and selection of the Australian participants is well underway. All current level 6 umpires in the Australian Development Program have been rated by a panel of senior umpires using a criteria matrix developed and independently overseen by Matt Gowty. Matt is a past ISF umpire and National Umpiring Committee member and SAL Hall of Fame member.

Recently, the successful candidates were announced by the National Umpiring Committee.

Those selected for the ISF Clinic were: Amanda and Ron Houison, and Howard Watt (NSW); Ian Frame, Yvonne Kahler and Helen Strauss (Qld); and Jason Carter, Stacey Loveridge and Phil Waller (Victoria).

The successful candidates will now attend the ISF Certification clinic and be assessed for their International Umpiring competencies at the next Australian Open championships in February 2011.

**Debbie Grove**  
**Umpire in Chief - Development**  
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# The Fastpitch Plate Umpire

## THE FASTPITCH PLATE UMPIRE

### INTRODUCTION

There are many things that contribute to the making of a competent and complete umpire. There is no one thing more important than learning the culture of Plate Umpiring. It will take you time and many top class performances to earn and develop respect and to maintain the focus and attention on the players. The Crew Chief leads the umpiring team and is the central point of communication with managers, players, statisticians and your fellow crew members.

Today's officials above all else are expected to get the call right. We have seen the introduction of television replays to confirm the accuracy of calls in other sports. In softball we rely solely on the **Quality** of an umpire's judgment to deliver this accuracy and client satisfaction. Plate umpiring is physically and mentally demanding. The Plate Umpire needs to have game knowledge, presence, and composure and be a clear and confident communicator.

To develop the skills you will require "**to be the very best you can be**" at Plate Umpiring will take you time. We hope this article, along with your field training and observations of other umpires in action, will assist you to become a more confident umpire tomorrow.

### BEFORE THE FIRST PITCH

Let's start by looking at what we can do to add **Quality** to our game before the first pitch.

#### Mental Preparation

**Self Confidence** – In everyday life we are faced with new challenges, softball is no different. It is essential for you to develop and outwardly convey your self-confidence in your own ability and the **Quality** of your judgment. Managers, players, spectators, the media and your fellow Blues expect you to be able to do your job.

You will feel your confidence grow as you gain more experience on and off the diamond. Just a word of caution, don't become too over confident as this could affect your concentration and ability to listen.

Plate Umpiring will confront you with personal challenges. Remember you will never make it as an umpire unless you can work the plate with confidence.

**Physical and Personal Presentation** – The demands of umpiring require all umpires to pay attention to their general physical condition. Umpires that keep themselves in shape look the part on the diamond alongside today's athletes. It is well known that good physical preparation helps mental sharpness. Attention should be given to your protective equipment. It must fit you comfortably and be of good quality. Put trust in your equipment, this will boost your confidence.

**Mental Toughness** – A game of softball can be recreational or highly competitive. The rules of the game are there to ensure fairness and ultimately find a winner. One very competitive manager has told me on more than one occasion that they would do anything to win.

Everything from the **Quality** of your judgment to your pedigree may be questioned. You will be intimidated if you are weak and indecisive. At some point in your career you will need to draw your line in the sand. If you make your tolerance threshold known, both the managers and players will seldom challenge you beyond this point. You will need to back this up with firm but fair management. For an umpire it's not about winning, it's not about losing; **it's about staying in control.**

**Rules Knowledge** – With a good working knowledge of the rules, you have one less thing to worry about when you step out on the diamond. With the frequent changes to today's rules, you need to continually study your rule and casebook. Talk through unusual plays with your colleagues.

Sit the annual rules examination to get a personal benchmark on the extent of your knowledge. Get involved with rules training at your local association. The **Quality** of your rules knowledge will set you apart from others in the game.

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# The Fastpitch plate umpire

**Game Knowledge** – Be a student of the game. Study and learn to breathe the culture of the game. Know and understand as much as you can about the roles of the managers, coaches and players.

**Visual Awareness** – Today we observe the pitch in a 3D environment (some say a 4D environment as time is the fourth dimension).

To successfully work in a 3D environment we need to use both eyes. We set-up to one side of the strike zone and then the other, and view the pitch in flight from release and as it passes through a 3D strike zone into the catcher's glove.

**Clear Mind** – Arrive at the ballpark with a clear mind and ready to do your game. Leave behind any business or personal problems; you will learn that there is little you can do about them while you're umpiring a ballgame. Thinking about them will affect your concentration and distract from the pleasure you will get from umpiring a good game

**Being Prepared** – Allow yourself time to check to see that you have all your gear before you leave for the ballpark. Arrive in good time; you don't need any extra pressure. Hydrate before and during the game.

**Pregame with your Crew** - If you are not familiar with the ballpark, arrive a little earlier and walk the field, noting any problem areas. Get into the habit of having a pregame with your crew. Allow more time if you are working with a new crew. Do a final **Quality** check on your gear before you leave the dressing room.

**Gear Check** – If this is the first game of the season or a tournament, arrive at the diamond early so you and your fellow umpires can complete a check of all playing equipment. Be aware of all your legal obligations and ensure that they are always carried out.

**Pregame with both Managers** – This is a must before every game. If need be introduce yourself and your crew. State clearly any ground rules. Take this opportunity to convey to the managers by the way you handle yourself that you are relaxed and in control.

If you are umpiring at a tournament check to see that your statistician has arrived and introduce yourself, be ready to start the game on time.

## PLATE UMPIRING OUR BALLGAME STEP BY STEP

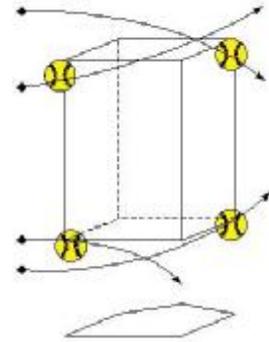
**Game Statistics** -Let's look quickly at our potential workload as a plate umpire. We cannot predict how long the game will go for and our workload will vary from game to game.

For an average seven-inning game we can expect some 210 to 230 pitches to be thrown. This sounds a lot but we must remember we only have to deal with one pitch at a time. We must peak focus and look for a strike on our next pitch to deliver the **Quality** in our judgment that is expected. You will quickly learn that the more strikes you call the less pitches the batter will leave for you to judge.

**Warm-up pitches** - Most umpires like to take these pitches from behind the catcher so they can try out their stance and adjust to the delivery. An alternative is to position yourself just outside the right-hand batter's box. Either position will allow you to observe the pitcher's timing sequence and track each pitch from release point into the catches glove. This will assist your concentration on tracking the ball and accustom you to speed and movement. Whilst there, commence a simple dialogue with the catcher. A quick few words with the catcher will provide you with information that will assist you with handling the tempo of today's game. After the catcher throws the fifth pitch over to second base move-in and clean the plate.

**The Stance** – Let us now look at our stance in some detail. Getting your own stance position right is the most critical field mechanic for any umpire. We have been created or have naturally developed into many different shapes and sizes. When we move into our set position we will need to make finer adjustments to suit our own circumstances. There are a number of generic principles that we all must follow.

- Set-up in the slot between the batter and catcher. We must have an unobstructed line of vision from the pitchers release point through our strike zone to the catcher's glove. We must be able to see the full profile of home plate. Adjust your position as required but do not set-up too far inside or tucked in behind the catcher.



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# The Fastpitch plate umpire

- In the set position our eyes should be set at the top of each batter's strike zone with our eyes lining with the inside edge of home plate. When in position visualise this as the batters strike zone.
- In the set position we must be comfortable and relaxed, and most of all singular focused. We must be well balanced with our weight slightly forward of our centre of gravity. This will allow you to push off either foot to clear the catcher. We should set-up as close to the catcher as practical, providing just sufficient clearance for the catcher to operate without making contact with you.
- Our back and neck should be as straight as possible with our height adjustment achieved by bending at the knees and lowering our buttock.  
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.
- The advantage of the Staggered Stance is that we will be slightly closer to the plate thus enhancing our view of the outside corner of home plate and we will more readily see the ball on the outside enter the catcher's glove.

**Timing** – The timing of when we drop into the set position is very important. We don't want to go down too early nor do we want to be moving down while the pitch is on its way. We take our timing off the pitcher. As the pitcher starts his motion to pitch, drop to the top of the zone with your eyes. Be sure to keep both eyes on the release point as you are going down to the set position.

**Tracking** – This is the terminology given to continually following the ball on its path from the release point, through the strike zone and into the catcher's glove. Our stance position should allow us to do this with our eyes. There should be no need to move our head on inside or pitches at the top of the zone, taking our nose to the flight of the ball on low or outside pitches into the catcher's glove helps to call an aggressive zone. A steady head position gives us a constant view of the pitch.

Like a batter, the umpire, by tracking the ball from the release point will observe the flight of the pitch and better detect the direction of any movement. Stay down in the set position and verbally call the pitch. On a strike stand up straight immediately after the verbal before executing your strike signal.

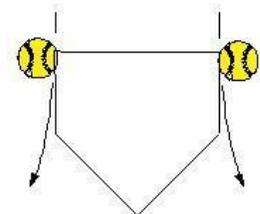
**Strike Zone** – This is the big one in terms of umpire judgment. We have included an article by Merle Butler on Survival Techniques to help you with today's view on the interpretation of the strike zone.

"Do you still enjoy umpiring? Many umpires do. Some officials love every minute on the field. These umpires retain their enthusiasm game after game, year after year and decade after decade. Other arbiters struggle from pitch to pitch, play to play and inning to inning. Why is this so?"

It's important that you look forward to each ballgame on your schedule. Approach each game as a new challenge. The more you enjoy umpiring, the better you'll become; the better you become, the more you'll enjoy umpiring. Let's examine some survival techniques and mechanics used by veteran officials that elude newer umpires.

**Call the Real Strike Zone** – To survive in fastpitch, you must "**open**" your strike zone and be consistent throughout the game.

Many beginning umpires call a strike zone that's too low and narrow. Those umpires believe the strike zone width is the 17 inch (43.2 cm) white portion of the plate. In fact the zone is much wider. Any part of the ball can pass over any part of the plate and be a strike. The ball is 4 inches wide, so a ball either side of home plate, plus the 17 inches means the zone is actually 25 inches wide (63.5 cm).



For long-term survival, widen your zone. Judge any pitch passing down the edge of the plate as crossing the white.

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# The Fastpitch plate umpire

Don't get a reputation as a "postage stamp" umpire who only calls strikes on pitches from above the knees to the batter's belt. Work on keeping the top of the ball at the top of the zone and the bottom of the ball at the bottom of the zone. Consider a pitch a strike until it convinces you it's a ball, marginal pitches should be called a strike.

By calling an aggressive strike zone, the batters will become aggressive. Pitches will be hit. Plays will be made and your game will flow. You'll find some of those three hour games can be over in less than an hour and a half.

Your strike zone will be determined according to the level of play. Top-level players hit many home runs that are outside the strike zone.

In the lower levels, it is necessary to call strikes on pitches close to the zone to get batters swinging. Many hitters in the lower divisions will not swing until a strike is called.

Bases on balls not only lowers participants and spectators interest it also slows the game. So, call strikes and get the batters swinging.

**Establish your Strike Zone** – Establish your strike zone early in the game. Setting an early zone will help the players play the game. The pitchers and catchers will know what you are calling and the batters will know when to swing. What the players really want is for you to call a good, **consistent strike zone and you to control the game.**"

**Put your last call behind you** – A focused umpire will make each call as it comes, they will have conviction. With each call you make ensure good positioning, because timing is paramount. There is no rush to call outs or safes, the call should be based on all the 4 essential inputs you observed just prior to the play or pitch, without bias (the runner, the fielder, the base/tag and the ball).

There will be times on reflection you may have made a different call, however it is of utmost importance you get on with the game with a clear mind.

You often cannot change what you have called, and while playing the situation over and over in your head you may find something else happens in the game requiring your attention. Reinforce in your mind that your call was unbiased and without favour and this will help you to mentally deal with it.

The **Quality** of our umpiring at home has a bearing on how well our teams perform at National and International level. Make sure you spend the time to be right up with today's game.

**Check to see that you are delivering the Quality of performance that is expected of you.**

This presentation has been edited by the NUC – The original titled "Working the Dish" by Wayne Saunders Regional UIC and includes the latest International Best Practices. BNOL acknowledges the use, as reference material, including published presentations on Plate Mechanics by the Canadian Softball Associations. The section on "Survival Techniques" was written by the late Merle Butler, Past International Softball Federation Director of Umpiring.

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April 2010

## Clarification of the ISF Fast Pitch Pitching Regulation RE: ISF POE issued 15, January 2010.

### 1. Signal

- a. Pitcher must take or appear to take a signal from the catcher.
- b. Both feet must be in contact with the pitcher's plate.
- c. Ball must be in either the glove or the pitching hand and the hands separated.



### 2. Pause

- a. Pitcher must have hands together.
- b. Ball may be in either the glove or the pitching hand.
- c. Both feet must be in contact with the pitcher's plate.
- d. Body must be completely motionless for 2 seconds. Pitching hand may move within the glove to grip the ball.



### 3. Start of the Pitch

- a. The pitch begins when the hands separate or when any movement that is part of the pitching motions begins.
- b. The pivot foot may slide from side to side as part of the pitching motion provided contact is not lost with the pitching plate. Lifting the cleats a minimal distance to allow movement is permissible however lifting and resetting the pivot foot is not permissible.
- c. The stepping foot and the pivot foot must remain in contact with the pitchers plate until the forward step is taken.
- d. Lifting the front of the pivot foot (toes) is permitted as long as the rear (heel) of the pivot foot remains in contact with the pitcher's plate.
- e. Lifting the heel of the pivot foot and using the front of the pivot foot (ball and toe of foot) to start the push off is permitted. In this action the heel of the pivot foot lifts and the pivot foot twists to push off however the foot does not move forward of the pitching plate.

## Clarification of the ISF Fast Pitch Pitching Regulation RE: ISF POE issued 15, January 2010.



#### 4. Pitching delivery

- a. The start of the pitch begins with the separation of the hands or with any motion that may be considered as part of the pitching delivery.
- b. The pitching hand with ball must begin separation from the glove with when the pivot foot loses contact with the pitcher's plate or the ground.
- c. The pitching arm must maintain constant motion throughout the push off and landing or the end of the push off.
- d. The pitcher may hide the ball behind the glove however the pitching hand with the ball and the glove must be separated.
- e. Once the pitch or pitching motion starts, the pitching arm may not stop its motion.
- f. The pivot foot may land and twist with a follow through at the release of the ball provided there has been not stoppage in motion or delivery.

Example of legal push and drag style:





## Clarification of the ISF Fast Pitch Pitching Regulation RE: ISF POE issued 15, January 2010.

Example of legal leaping style



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## Scoring Technical Bulletin

**Subject:           RULE CHANGES AND THE EFFECT ON SCORING:**  
                          - **ILLEGAL PITCH RECORDING**  
                          - **DESIGNATED PLAYER RULE**  
                          - **CATCHER SPEED-UP RULE**  
                          - **RECORDING OF CONFERENCES**

**Date:               16 February 2010**

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A number of rule changes have occurred and taken effect as at 1 January 2010 Championships. The Tournament Chief Statistician Handbook has been updated to reflect:

- *Rules now included as an appendix to the Australian Championship Regulations*
- *Catcher Speed-up rule included for all Championships.  
Catcher speed-up rule (REG 24) An eligible player is any player who is on the team list that is not up to bat within the next four batters.*
- *Temporary Designated Player is now called Offensive Player Only*

**Scoring implications/modifications to take effect immediately:**

Temporary Designated Player (TDP) is now called Offensive Player Only (OPO)

**Scoring of Illegal Pitch**

Under the championship rules, a pitcher being called for 5 illegal pitches, must be removed from the pitching position. He/she may remain in the game in another position. The umpires will warn the pitcher at the first Illegal Pitch of the game (without penalty). Note that, irrespective of the outcome of any Illegal Pitch plays, all illegal pitches are counted toward the maximum illegal pitch limit.

In order to ensure that a record is kept of all illegal pitches – the following method is to apply for the recording illegal pitches:

- *On the warning, indicate in the pitch count box with a **W** in blue.*
- *Subsequent illegal pitches are to be recorded with a blue **I** in the pitch count box – previously recorded with a blue . which was often difficult to see (particularly when sheets are photocopied)..*
- *If the event of an **IBB** (Intentional walk) being awarded where no pitch is thrown, note that the actual award of the IBB constitutes one ball. Where pitches have been thrown, the pitch count is as recorded, with one additional ball for the IBB award.*
- *In the event of the illegal pitch resulting in a Base on Balls, record as follows: **BB<sub>IP</sub>**  
(Note that for the purpose of counting balls and strikes, the IBB award is counted as a ball, even if no ball is pitched – to a max 4 balls)*
- *In the event of the illegal pitch being hit safely, record for example, as follows: **-7<sub>IP</sub>**  
(Note that for the purpose of counting balls and strikes, this is counted as a strike if the hit is recorded)*



### **Scoring of Catcher speedup**

Enter the player name and uniform in the relevant batter line. Record the number of the player being utilised as the speedup in black circle eg, Ⓢ where the runner has come into the game. "Remove" the catcher speedup with a "replacement line" in black. No re-entry is recorded.

**Defensive** and **Offensive Conferences** are also to be recorded above the innings in which they occur.

### **Reminder to Tournament statisticians**

Umpires and Statisticians work in tandem to achieve the correct outcome during a game – a good relationship helps with the game management.

The role of a statistician is to provide relevant and accurate information to the chief umpire to enable a decision to be made. Note that a statistician is required to receive changes from the umpire in charge of the game, without being judgemental as to the legality of any change/substitute/re-entry etc. It may be appropriate to advise the umpire discreetly at the time where an incorrect change is thought to have occurred, however, the umpire has the final say on interpreting any information provided to determine its impact on the game.

**Chet Gray**  
**General Manager**  
**Operations and Technical**  
Softball Australia Limited

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "M. J. Hannelly".

**Mike Hannelly**  
**National Chief Statistician**  
Softball Australia Limited

This is an Approved Softball Australia Limited Technical Bulletin for use in Australia and is current as of 16 February 2010.

For the most up to date version, visit [www.scoring.softball.org.au](http://www.scoring.softball.org.au).



Extract from the  
Technical Bulletin: 2010 Playing Rule Changes from the 2009 ISF Rules Congress (SAL TB  
2009-2)  
Date: 02/12/09

#### **RULE 1. Sec. 68. Offensive Player Only**

An Offensive Player Only (OPO) is a player in the batting order that continues to play offence, but not defence, when the DP plays defence for that player rather than for the FLEX PLAYER for whom he is batting.

*Comment:*

*"Temporary DP" is a term used when an offensive player remains in the line-up but no longer plays defence because of the DP playing defence for other than the FLEX. The term used now is an "Offensive Player Only" and refers to the offence player batting only and not fielding as the DP is fielding for them.*

#### **RULE 4. Sec. 5g. Players and Substitutes**

The DP may play defence at any position. Should the DP play defence for a player other than the FLEX, that player will continue to bat, but not play defence, and is NOT considered to have left the game. **This player is referred to as the offensive player only (OPO).**

*Comment:*

*See comments above Rule .1 Sec. 68.*

#### **RULE 4. Sec. 5i, EFFECT 5 g-i. Players and Substitutes**

The provisions of Rule 4 Sec 8 and penalties for violations apply. Placing the FLEX in a position in the batting order other than that of the starting DP, results in **the ejection of both the manager/coach (whose name appears on the line-up card) and the FLEX, or his substitute.**

*Comment:*

*Now there is a consistent penalty for the D.P. or the FLEX batting in a position which is illegal.*

#### **RULE 4. Sec. 8g, Effect 2-4 note 2. Players and Substitutes**

NOTE 1: Should an Ineligible Player return to the game, it is declared a forfeit to the team not at fault.

NOTE 2: After an upheld appeal for an unreported substitute or an illegal re-entry, the original starting player or his substitute is considered to have left the game.

*Comment:*

*The status of the player entered during an unannounced substitute is not stated in the rule book. The fact that an illegal substitute takes place should constitute a substituted player. The fact that a player was found guilty of being unannounced means the substituted player is considered to have been in and left the game.*