

# BLUES NEWS ON LINE

Contributions to mtoft@ozemail.com.au

November Edition Vol 10 of 2003

## Groover wins Viv Triplett Umpire of the Year Award



**And the winner is....** Debbie Grove. Above: Victorian umpire, Debbie Grove accepts the 2003 Umpire of the Year Award from ISF Hall of Famer Vivienne Triplett at a gala night recently.

**Deadline for  
NEXT ISSUE (DECEMBER) -**

**NOVEMBER 21, 2003  
Publication date (approx) of  
December Issue -**

**DECEMBER 5, 2003**

### Get Well Soon

To Ian Lee (hubby of Northern Territory's Director of Umpiring Marg Lee).

The thoughts of many are with you while you are away from home.

Speedy recovery as God knows they need you back in the top end.

## Congratulations Margo, Alan, Neville & Damien

For those who are not up with the goss in recent times there has been three huge announcements.

Firstly congratulation to Margo Koskelainen (Australian National Director) and Alan McAuliffe (Australian Deputy Director) who were inducted into the International Softball Federation Hall of Fame at the recent ISF Conference.

It be recognised at that level is surely the accolade of accolades. These two Umpires have done so much for the sport in Australia and world-wide and have led the way for the rest of us to follow.

On behalf of all Blue's in this country I take the opportunity to congratulate you both and I know everyone believes that you both are an inspiration to softball especially in umpiring circles.

### Olympic Bound

Congratulations to Neville Lawrance who was named as Australia's representative at the 2004 Olympics in Athens next year. Neville has been in and around many World Championships and now he has the opportunity to officiate at the premier event in our sport... the Olympics.

Neville joins an elite few to represent Australia at an Olympic Games. Alan McAuliffe (1996, Atlanta), John McAuliffe and Kerry Franklin (2000, Sydney) and now Neville have enabled many of us to set a goal in the greatest arena the world of sport can offer.

### World Championships - Wellington

Congratulations to Damien McCauley who has been selected in the crew for the Men's World Championships in Wellington next year.

Well done! We could not be more proud.

Mark Toft - Editor

### What's in this Edition

- What to do when you don't know the rule
- Letters to the Editor
- Northern Territory wrap
- On tour in South America
- Damien in Canada
- Develop a strategy to manage conflict
- Technical Bulletin (speeding up of games)
- Much more

## WHAT TO DO WHEN YOU DON'T KNOW THE RULE!

What should you do when you have to make a ruling but don't know the rule that applies? Most of us have been faced with that at one time or another.

For example, have you ever been unsure what to call when faced by any of these situations?

- The batter's swing hits the catcher's glove.
- The first baseman is standing in the runner's path as he rounds first, forcing the runner to stop or go around the defender.
- When the infield-fly rule applies, an infielder goes back to catch a pop-up, but is called off by an outfielder who then drops the ball.
- A batter is hit on the hands during his swing and the ball bounces toward the pitcher.
- A runner sticks out his leg to deliberately get hit with a thrown ball during a rundown play.

If those situations occurred, would you know the rules that applied? Or instead, would you just "let it go" because you don't really know what to do?

You certainly can't pull out the rulebook and look up the play before making a decision. And you can't wait for your partner to make a call. Something has to be called and the call rests with you. You're paid (??) to make those types of decisions and to control the game.

### Using common sense

The fundamental aim of umpiring is to allow the game to progress smoothly within the rules. If you're not familiar with a rule and have to make a call, the best suggestion I can offer you is to apply *common sense* to your decision.

If you invoked the infield-fly rule because an infielder would be able to make the catch, common sense tells you it cannot be negated if he is called off by an outfielder who then drops the ball. However, if you have not invoked the infield-fly rule, then common sense tells you that when an outfielder makes the play, the infield-fly rule doesn't necessarily apply.

The ball is dead if a pitched ball hits the batter. Common sense should tell you that the ball is similarly dead even when a batter swings at the pitch. The only difference between the two is that the batter is not awarded first base for being hit when he swings. Instead, that's a strike and a dead ball because of the swing: The hands *are not* a part of the bat.

On an overthrow that goes out of play or is blocked, the rule says two bases are awarded. Common sense tells you that if a runner was at first base at the start of the pitch, a two-base award sends him to third base - no matter which

direction he was moving when the ball was thrown.

When a defensive player without the ball is in the runner's path and due to that the runner has to stop, slow down or change direction, common sense tells you that the runner was put at a disadvantage.

Because you can't allow that to occur without penalising it, you must protect the runner. (It's a form of obstruction). You may not know how to protect him, but whatever you do, don't allow him to be put out between the bases where he was obstructed.

### Appear to be convincing

That leads to another recommendation: *Be convincing*. Whatever decision you reach, when you make the call, sell it. Be poised. Whether you're right or wrong remember one thing:

The manager, coach, or players probably won't know the rule either. If you sell your call and are convincing when the coach wants to talk about it, he'll probably accept what you tell him.

If you build good *human relations*, you'll be a long way toward controlling the game and gaining the respect of players and coaches. A "no call" when everyone expects a decision shows a lack of knowledge and a lack of confidence - respect is quickly lost. When a call must be made, make it with poise, then be confident if a confrontation occurs.

Each decision must be made with *integrity*. Don't be influenced by the score; the reactions of players, coaches or fans; or by a previous call. Above all, don't be intimidated by a discussion with a player or coach. Many coaches believe they can influence your next call by arguing your last one. Call the game as you see it, not as they want it.

When you talk with a manager, if he brings up a rule (or section of the rule) you are not aware of and asks you to discuss it with your partner, do it. But be sure you and your partner talk alone (don't allow anyone else to participate in the discussion).

Once you have informed your partner what you saw and what you called, he'll either support your decision or correct you. If you are corrected and by rule have the right to alter your original decision, do so. You'll gain more respect by changing a call in order to be right than by being bull-headed and misapplying a rule.

From Page 2.....

### Quoting specific rules

In a discussion with a manager, you don't have to quote a complete rule reference. However, if you know Rule 6 refers to pitching, Rule 7 deals with batting and Rule 8 covers running, you'll be way ahead. Most of your problem calls fall under one of those rules.

Chances are the managers won't know one section from another, so you'll be more convincing if you offer a confident statement such as, "Rule 8, Section 8 covers that play."

When both teams recognise from the start an official's confidence and poise, the game is more likely to progress smoothly. Your goals include making sure an offending team doesn't gain an unfair advantage not intended by rule.

Any player who breaks a rule and places an opponent at a disadvantage should be penalised. If he gets away with a violation, he may repeat the offence, which could lead to unsportsmanlike acts creating the potential for injury.

Of course, the best advice I can give you is to learn the rules so you're prepared for any situation. "Just let it happen" and "test me" should be your philosophy.

But if you don't know "the rule", remember to use common sense when making the decision, make a convincing call, be confident and poised during any subsequent discussion, build good human relations with players and manager, and make every call with integrity.

If you do those things, you're likely to reach your fundamental goal: To allow the game to progress smoothly.

Merle Butler (Referee, May 2003)

## Hobart International Series

The following umpires have been selected to officiate in the Hobart International Series held December 10-15. The teams to compete are Australia A, Australia B and Japan.

The crew is: Leigh Evans, Debbie Grove, Neville Lawrance, Dianne Waller and Lindsay Whitehead.

**Deadline for NEXT ISSUE (DECEMBER) - NOVEMBER 21, 2003**  
**Publication date (approx) of December Issue - DECEMBER 5, 2003**

## Logan City recognise their hard working Blues

## Letters to the Editor

Send letters to  
[mtoft@ozemail.com.au](mailto:mtoft@ozemail.com.au)

Hi Mark,

These listed are the Umpires that worked very hard for the Logan City Winter Season 2003. Danny Griffiths is the Umpiring Coordinator and did a terrific job as usual and also was the UIC for our Mustang Mini Masters held in June 21 and 22 and all of these worked that weekend as well as play and coach.

We also give thanks to all the other umpires that came with their teams for this tournament. This Tournament will be a biannual tournament and hopefully a 3 day one in 2005.

Graeme Skachill, Danny Griffiths, Sallyann Lewis, Jeffrey Lewis, Melissa Gorman, Mick Gorman, James Hailstone, Vicianne Hailstone, Brian Harding, Amanda Crouch, Belinda Jenkins, Julie Peters - trainee, Paul & Michelle May - Tweed Heads - came up for some practice getting ready for his next level and Michelle going for Level 1.

Of course Darren Sibraa came for a couple of trainee days and showed us how it can be done especially with the 3-man system which we don't get the opportunity to do very often.

Mrs Sallyann Lewis  
Secretary - Logan City Softball Assoc. Inc

Logan City Softball have a perpetual trophy for "Umpire of the Year" which was donated by Jason & Kerri Johnson in 2001

The recipients are chosen by the Umpiring Coordinator - Danny Griffiths

This season the award went to Miss Belinda Jenkins. Belinda showed a keenness to umpire even though she wasn't playing softball due to work commitments but umpired whenever she wasn't working. Throughout the season she umpired 17 games and also helps out with schools softball.

### Previous winners

2002 Season Mr Graeme Skachill - being very new to the Association and to Australia. Worked extremely hard doing a minimum of 2 games every Sunday

2001 - Miss Amanda Crouch - was chosen by Kerri-anne Johnson - working hard and willingness to change.

## It could only happen in the Territory by Yvonne Newman

### Darwin Softball Season 2003 Grand final

The softball season in Darwin has finally concluded with the Grand Final being played in very warm conditions. The A Team for this year's finale was Yvonne Newman on the plate, Derek Quong at 1st and Mark Bently at 3rd base. Unfortunately the final was a fairly one sided event.

SO!!!!!! One weekend later.....

The umps jumped into the Blues Mobile and headed down the track to the Daly Community of Nauiyu. The Blues ( Groundsmen, Linemarkers, Litter Patrol, Dog Wranglers, Scorers, Coaches, Cultural Attache's and lets not forget UMPIRES) were: Yvonne Newman, Derek Quong and Mark Bently. Just getting there is a fair ask. The journey takes around 2 and a half hours over fairly ordinary roads, that's nothing compared to the running around you do before you even depart, to pickup supplies for the community. This can range from trophies for the upcoming carnival to disco lights and medical supplies for the local clinic.

Once we arrived at the community we checked into our modest but comfortable accommodation, the local Contractors quarters. No the frogs, the flies and the roaches are not optional room extras. The next morning it would be rise and shine to go out onto a football oval and mark out a softball diamond. This is standard practice when you umpire at a community. Even the back net is fashioned from the materials at hand. Materials used were: 2 Sprinklers, 2 Poles some rope and a roll of chicken wire. I must admit the boys did a fine job considering what the conditions were like. Of course I stood back and gave the orders, as it should be. The change room consisted of a tarp slung over the top of the truck under a tree.

Most games had a 2 man system with one umpire sitting down with the locals and explaining the basics of scoring in a proper scorebook. The scorers picked up the basic skills very quickly by the second game, and continued on without assistance for the remainder of the carnival. Community softball is played barefooted Most catchers required help to don the protective equipment as most had not even seen a mask and chest plate or leggings before. This needed to be handled very carefully as a cultural aspect with male umpires.

The games flowed smoothly in very hot conditions, the days averaging around 36-38 degrees, after each game the diamond would need to be taken apart so that the football could be played.

The grand final was played in stifling heat, which resulted in a tiebreaker at

the bottom of the 7th. What a tiebreaker is, was explained in great depth. Tiebreakers played out here often consist of 3-4 runs coming in each half innings.

Picture this, one out 2 runners on base, the tying run at first and the heavens opened. This brought a great deal of relief to the umpires, but the players wanted to run for cover as they don't like to get wet. A result was needed as this was the grand final. We waited for as long as we could, then called the players off the diamond. Thankfully the rain eased after a ten minute down-pour and the game concluded in very pleasant conditions. Peppiminarti won the carnival, with a score of 26-25. These girls like to hit the ball.

In conclusion the carnival was played in very good spirit. Mark Bently was a first time visitor to the community and community softball, and thoroughly enjoyed his visit. The locals were happy to see Derek and Yvonne back umpiring at the community again.

This is umpiring Territory Style. I promise I will never whine about conditions in tournaments in Capital cities ever again.

Pictures Page 5



### NT Blues on the move

Some of the action or non action at the Daly Community of Nauiyu.

Umpires Yvonne Newman, Derek Quong and Mark Bently made the trek to Nauiyu this year.



## Nifty Nev's diary - On tour in South America

I left Adelaide at 7:00am on Wednesday, July 16 flying to Puerto Rico via Sydney, LA and Orlando. The first snag came when the flight from Sydney was delayed for three hours.

This, of course, delayed the arrival in LA and as a result I missed my connection to Puerto Rico. I was then re-routed via Miami arriving in Puerto Rico at 1:00am on Thursday morning, four hours late.

After claiming my luggage and establishing that there was no-one to meet me I set off to find somewhere to sleep as that seemed to be the most important thing to do at 2:30am.

After a restless night's sleep I headed down to reception to see if I could make contact with anyone from Puerto Rican softball.

The phone book in Puerto Rico is written in Spanish with only a small section in the middle that is in English. Softball is not listed in the English section of the phone book so don't bother to look for it.

The receptionist, who had very little English, had even less idea about Softball or Baseball. So what do you do (outside of going into an all-out panic, that is)?

I went back to the phone book where I found a listing for a Baseball/Softball Uniform manufacturer. With the help of the girl at reception I found out that the uniform manufacturer was not too far away and a taxi was called.

After a twenty minute ride in the taxi we stopped at a small office/factory that, while still closed, a number of employees were gathering around waiting for the boss to arrive.

So I unloaded all my gear and waited. After the boss arrived and opened up I explained to her my predicament and that I needed to get in touch with the local softball community. She was fabulous.

After making two or three phone calls she informed me that she was making progress and that I had nothing to worry about. She had spoken to somebody and while she would have to make some more calls she established that I was a "very important man." I was told to leave my cases and to go to the local shop for a cup of coffee and everything would be alright.

After returning I was told that they had finally found the right person and that I would be picked up soon. They were just waiting for one of the English-

speaking girls to get to work and they would come and take me to the accommodation. I was then asked to go out into the workshop where I was introduced to all the workers and shown how the uniforms were made.

I was also made to select a number of playing uniform shirts and under-shirts that had been made on the premises to take. I was only thankful that I had some souvenirs that I was able to give them in appreciation of all the effort that they went to.

If you find yourself lost in Puerto Rico just make your way to KINGS SPORTSWEAR. Tell them that you know Neville the Australian Softball Umpire and you will be looked after like Royalty.

The accommodation for the umpires was at the INTERCONTINENTAL HOTEL and was twin share. I roomed with Ken Bosk, the umpire from Netherlands Antilles.

The hotel was very much at the upper end of 5-star accommodation. Breakfast started at \$19.00. The swimming pool with waterfall to massage the back and shoulders, hot spa pool to revitalise tired legs and sun lounges to relax on and survey the scenery or just sleep in the morning sun were a great way to start the day.

The umpire crew was made up of eight umpires. Four from Puerto Rico and one from each of Netherlands Antilles, Canada, USA and Australia with the TUC also from Canada. The experience levels of the umpires varied enormously with the Puerto Rican umpires relying on, in varying degrees, a mix of softball/baseball skills.

With the 3-man system being used for all games in the rounds and the finals as well if Puerto Rico and Canada played off. It was very much a matter of watching the back door at all times and, on more than one occasion, variations to the 3-man system that are not normally taught, being used. Communication between the umpires was not a major problem with only one of the Puerto Rican umpires having little or no English.

I got to see a lot of the Puerto Rican team (seven of their eight games), with only four umpires able to do those games and only three eligible to umpire Puerto Rico v Canada. This was a problem that was pointed out to the ISF by the TCU and they may have to re-think the way that umpires are appointed to future Olympic Qualifiers.

The assignments were based on umpires working three games every two days. This was necessary because of the mix of umpires that we had and that

.....from Page 5

as a result, only three umpires could do the Puerto Rico v Canada games. For fairness to all teams, three man systems were used for the whole tournament. The only exception would be the finals if Puerto Rico were not playing. The other factor of concern was the heat and humidity.

I had 8 games over the five days of the round robins (3 plates, 2 first and 3 third bases). With only two of the three finals needed I was allocated a third base in the first game and a plate in the second.

The softball was great and the experience was indescribable. I would urge all umpires to work hard and make the most of any opportunity to umpire at the highest level that they can.

I thank Margo Koskelainen (National Director of Umpiring) for her help, patience and guidance that has, over the years enabled me to develop into the umpire that I have become.

I would also like to thank all the people responsible for my appointment to the Qualifier event. I would especially like to thank the ASF for its support of Umpiring and the Umpiring Program. We would not be regarded as highly internationally if it were not for that support, as costly as it might seem at times.



**Thhhhe Crew:** Well you have to take your hats off to these guys and gals. They were the backbone of the Australian Masters in Canberra recently. This pic was downloaded from the website mentioned in the article on page 9. Thanks to Steve Cuff. **(more pics on that website to view and order)**

## The Man from Kangaroo Island takes Canada

**(What a great name for a movie)**

I was appointed to the position of team umpire to accompany the Aussie Steelers Men's team to attend their different tournaments in Canada. I arrived in Vancouver on Wednesday, July 2 with the first games being played the following day. As these were warm up games neither side were interested in paying attention to the rules, especially the pitching rules.

Of the ball parks that were used for the games, all the diamonds were very good. All the infields were skinned, and all played very well. Unfortunately the lighting at most of the parks was not very good and it was not uncommon for there to be shadows and dull areas across the outfield and parts of the diamond.

With the exception of myself, all the other umpires were from Canada, either local or visiting from other Provinces. At the games that we attended, there were no umpires from other countries outside Canada. Generally the umpires that were appointed to the games were considered to be the more senior in the Canadian umpiring program.

During the various tournaments I umpired 24 games (11 Plates, 4 First base, 3 Second base and 6 Third base) on 13 days, averaging 2 games a day with the odd day off between tournaments. While in Ontario we had a day off which I spent visiting Niagara Falls.

The standard and quality of the games was excellent. The intensity at which the games were played was well above that which may be found in an Australian National tournament. This included games between two local teams. When the Aussie Steelers played the Canadian National team in a series of four exhibition matches (Victoria, Vancouver Island) the skill levels of the players were at their best.

Although some of the provincial games scheduled at Milverton (Ontario) were very good, generally the competition did not measure up to the same standard that was seen at the start of the tour. Unfortunately there was more quantity of games here, than quality.

In conclusion, I would like to thank Margo Koskelainen and the Australian Softball Federation for seeing fit to trust me with this appointment. It has been a tremendous experience to travel with the Men's National team to help represent the sport and our umpiring program. This has been a thoroughly enjoyable and rewarding opportunity to be a part of this National team. I hope that I have been able to meet any expectation that may have been placed upon me, and that such opportunities will continue to be available in the future for others like myself.

## Develop A Strategy To Manage Conflict

by Brian Rubino (Referee, May 2003)

Umpires must realise that conflict is normal and inevitable. Unfortunately, many umpires go to great lengths to avoid confrontations. That's human nature. However, an umpire who shuns problems that should be addressed is not properly doing the job. Additionally, that umpire is not being a good partner and is doing a disservice to the game and officials assigned to future games.

Officials will always face some degree of discord during their games. When conflict arises, umpires should understand it could be based on many factors. Some factors may not even be related to the game. For example, a normally mild-mannered coach may have a short fuse because of a troublesome day at work or because of a family problem. Umpires are human, too, and can likewise be affected by off-the-field issues.

It is important for umpires to always act professionally when managing arguments. Professionalism must be maintained even if the official has had a difficult day. Good umpires plan to handle conflict and will implement that strategy when it arises. That plan must be employed before any negative situation escalates.

To become successful at the avocation, an umpire must recognise and manage conflict consistently and appropriately. No two situations can or should be managed the same way. An umpire who can manage conflict effectively will gain tremendous respect with coaches and fellow umpires. Obviously, that umpire's career will be enhanced because of good game management skills.

An umpire who jumps into a situation too soon and does not handle conflict effectively may gain a reputation as having rabbit ears and for being too confrontational. An umpire's success in managing conflicts is not based on how many players or coaches the umpire ejects. Often, success is determined by how an umpire defuses potentially volatile situations before they explode, and - when possible - by keeping all participants in the game.

**Setting standards.** The umpires should establish the proper tenor for the day when they enter the field. That theme of professionalism must be continued during the pre-game meeting at home plate and throughout the game. A positive demeanour before the game will minimise future conflicts. Two ways to establish game control and get started on the right foot are to identify the head coach during the pre-game meeting, and to address coaches courteously and respectfully, because they're the only people with whom the umpires will consult if any conflicts arise during the game. Avoid greeting any coach by first name unless you know and use the first names of both coaches. That will help eliminate any appearance of favouritism.

Once the game begins, disagreements may arise at any time, sometimes when least expected. A good umpiring crew should always be on the lookout for potential problems. There are two types of problems for an official to recognise.

**Simmering conflicts.** Dissonance may arise from a simmering or type one conflict that eventually boils over. For example, two close calls early in the game go against a particular team and that team becomes upset. Later in the game, another close call against that team triggers the explosion that the umpires must address. Hopefully, the umpires planned accordingly and will be prepared for the discord. That situation will be easier to manage if the umpires have planned for the disagreement.

The umpire not directly involved in the earlier conflicts may serve as a buffer by engaging in a little small talk with the affected coach. During that time, if an opportunity presents itself, that umpire may explain the earlier calls made by the partner. Properly done, that information may help the coach's understanding of the calls and establish better umpire-coach accord. Some umpires have the people skills to calm and gain the confidence of a coach. Other umpires, without such skills, should stay away from the coach so as not to exacerbate the situation.

A partner should be ready to intervene quickly if the simmering anger is about to boil over. For example, two calls on the bases have gone against a team and the coach is irate. When another call goes against that team, the coach comes to the foul line and yells to the base umpire, "That's terrible! That's three calls you've blown!" Because the base umpire is so far away, it's difficult for that umpire to manage the situation.

To combat the showing up of the base umpire, the plate umpire should assertively step up to the coach and say, "Coach, you're showing up my partner. That's not acceptable. Either go out and talk to the base umpire or go back to the bench." Using good management skills, the plate umpire may successfully defuse the situation. An inexperienced or tentative plate umpire will incorrectly avoid the situation and allow it to escalate. That could cause an unnecessary ejection by the base umpire.

On some calls that the coach shows displeasure, a stern glare may be effective. By simply glaring at the coach, the umpire is communicating, "I heard you and I understand you disagree with the call. But that's enough."

**Single-event arguments.** In other instances, the problem may be caused by single event or type two conflict. Sometimes umpires are unprepared for type two problems. For example, in an important game, a coach may get extremely upset over a single key pitch when the coach had not previously voiced any strike zone concerns. The umpire's reaction to and management of that type of friction may be different from the simmering disagreement. Those problems can be the toughest to manage, since the umpire can be surprised by the spontaneity of the situation.

There is much more to a game than outs and safes, balls and strikes. Managing hostility properly is unquestionably a big aspect of officiating, and one that will help make or break your career.

# TECHNICAL BULLETIN

Issue Date: November 2003

For some time now administrators of the game have been concerned at the length of time being taken to complete a standard 7-inning game of softball. Games

that once took 1½ hours to play are now taking up to 2 hours and, in some extreme cases, 2½ to 3 hours. This is not acceptable.

**There are several reasons for this, not the least being a perceived reluctance by umpires, for whatever reason, to enforce existing rules limiting the time taken between innings and between pitches. However, the reasons do not rest solely with umpires.**

Over the past few years we have seen teams develop habits that have contributed to the length of games, some of which have been

- At the change of innings, the team taking the field gathering in front of the dugout waiting for ALL players before running onto the diamond as a group ~ sometimes up to 45 seconds while waiting for a player who has been a batter or runner to enter the dugout, have a drink, collect his glove and then join his fellow players for a last second 'hurrah'.
- Teams taking the field without the pitcher, who waits for the catcher to 'suit up'; both players then taking the field and using in excess of 1 minute to complete warm-up pitches.
- Teams taking a full minute or more for warm-up pitches and then gathering at the pitcher's plate after the throw around, thereby using up more precious time, before the catcher returns to the catcher's box in readiness to begin receiving pitches.
- Batters stepping out of the batter's box between pitches and taking several practice swings before returning to the box for the next pitch, or spending an inordinate amount of time taking signals from the coach.

**The amount of 'down time', i.e. time lost for some of the above reasons, in a game has so concerned the International Softball Federation that they have seen fit to introduce a time clock (similar to the shot clock in basketball) for World Championships and Olympic Games, in an endeavour to have games completed within an appropriate time frame.**

IT IS NOT DESIRABLE FOR SOFTBALL IN THIS COUNTRY  
TO HAVE TO ADOPT THIS MEASURE FOR CLUB MATCHES  
OR NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIPS.

**As such, umpires, coaches and players must now accept some responsibility and become more pro-active in ensuring this does not occur.**

**Some of the measures that can and should be taken by umpires to minimise the loss of actual playing time are**

- At the pre-game meeting with coaches, encourage the coaches to support all efforts to 'keep the game moving'.
- Enforce Rule 6 Sec 9a by not permitting warm-up pitches that will extend the change of innings time by more than the permitted 1 minute, unless a new pitcher is taking the pitching position. (If the catcher was on base or last batter out, and the pitcher wants warm-up pitches, they must be taken by another team member ~ DO NOT allow the pitcher to wait for the catcher and then permit warm-up pitches that will exceed the time).
- Encourage teams to 'hustle' on and off the diamond between innings, and in particular, discourage teams entering defence from gathering in front of the dugout before taking the field.
- Request the catcher to remain at the plate after throwing the last warm-up pitch across the diamond.
- Permit a quick 'throw around' by the defence after an out but discourage any gathering of players at the pitcher's plate after the throw around.
- Limit the number of times the catcher goes to the pitcher to discuss pitch options or for any other reason.
- Discourage batters from leaving the batter's box and taking several steps toward the coach to receive signals (if this continues, charge an Offensive Conference).
- Use and enforce Rule 7 Sec 3a by requesting the batter to return to the box upon leaving to take practice swings, especially if the pitcher has the ball and is waiting for the batter to return.

There is no limit to the initiatives that umpires can utilise in maximising playing time; however, common sense must always prevail when game situations or weather conditions may require a more refined approach in enforcing these measures.

.....Continues Page 9

## 9th Australian Masters Games, Canberra, Oct 31- Nov 9 2003

The combination of 96 teams, 57 full time umpires and spring in Canberra created an experience that few who were there, will never forget. Old friendships were renewed and new ones formed as the umpiring crew, working as the largest single team at the event, made sure that the Masters Games Softball ran smoothly with games being managed in a professional manner, whilst maintaining the spirit of Masters.

As the UIC of this event, in my first year as SDU ACT, I was rather apprehensive that things might not go as well as they could. However, with the support of Dan McKay as deputy and with other ACT umpires doing odd jobs around the place things ran fairly smoothly over the week. We planned the event such that each team registering could nominate either one 'full time' umpire or two 'playing umpires'.

Although many of the 'player umpires' turned up when rostered, or made additional visits to the UIC's office to volunteer to do additional games, a number of teams didn't actually bring an umpire - nor could they even be bothered to look at the umpiring roster. The ethos of doing the right thing and umpiring some games was sadly lacking with these teams.

Because of this, there were a few one-umpire games and many times I had to stop running around in tiny circles and ask for last-minute volunteers to do extra games. This was one aspect of the event that showed just how hard some umpires do work and just how great they can be - I did have one problem in this area however; there were four umpires who I could never work out who put their hand up first! A special mention must go to Dinga Bell, Ian Kennedy (player umpire), and, our favourite couple, Vi & Bob Gray.

The 'Pride of Canada' team (M35A) brought Lindsay Barfoot, a Softball Canada umpire with them to the event. I managed to find the time to work one game with Lindsay where he told me that "It was great to come half way around the world and find out that umpiring is the same". Keeping with his wishes to not umpire the Canada team, I tried to spread his duties across a number of grades so that I could assign a variety of both experienced and inexperienced umpires to work with this gentleman of our sport. Lindsey was last seen wearing a mix of clothing from all parts of Australia, having swapped all his Canadian softball clothes, which appeared to be in great demand.

Most of the games were officiated by two umpires. However, where possible, three umpires were appointed to the Men's & Women's A grade games. This was done because the standard of play required it and it was seen as an opportunity to assist a number of national candidate umpires with their development and preparations for January. Also, where possible, some of the lesser experienced umpires were teamed with some of our more experienced ones

so that umpiring skills could be shared.

The management of the allocations was done using a database of all available umpires and having the draw in spreadsheet format, from the Convenor, made the job of doing the allocations easier (it only took seven hours to do it for the long days). Working only 1-2 days ahead with the allocations allowed me to make assignments that better suited the individual, in between making sure the billy was boiled and the water was cold. The database has also made it easier for me to complete a summary of the event:

523 scheduled games  
1100 umpiring duties  
19 games (average) for full-time umpires  
\$2 per beer

This event was, at the same time, the most difficult event I have been involved with, as an umpire, and the one that has given me the greatest pleasure. It was difficult coping with the size of the event with occasional shortages of umpires but worth every minute of it to be around such a great group of people: Umpires!

*Martin Turnbull*  
UIC 9AMG Softball

p.s. the crew photograph may be viewed online at  
<http://www.stevecuff.com/store/index.php?id=557>

### ....from Page 8

It is of particular interest to note that the above measures were utilised, and adopted by the respective Squad Teams, at the 2003 ASF U16 Development Squad Program games played in Sydney. After their introduction the results were outstanding, with the average game time being reduced from 2 hours to 1½ hours.

Remember, in the main the players are paying good money for the privilege of playing softball, so let's make every effort in our part of ensuring they have *quality* time, rather than quantity time, to do just that ~ Play softball!

All coaches, players and umpires should be cognizant of the fact that these measures are to be implemented for the 2004 National Championships.

Alan McAuliffe  
National Rules Interpreter  
Softball Australia

Margo Koskelainen  
National Umpire-in-Chief  
Softball Australia

Chet Gray  
Coaching Operations Manager  
Softball Australia